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ALI MAHMOUD OTHMAN

CITIZEN JOURNALIST

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OF THE SYRIAN STATE SINCE MARCH 2012**

At the time of the army's assault on the Baba 'Amr neighbourhood of Homs in February 2012, Ali Mahmoud Othman was part of a network of activists who ran the makeshift Homs media centre, a temporary house used as a base by citizen journalists and media activists who were posting footage and information online and broadcasting news reports.

Ali Mahmoud Othman was also well-known for helping foreign journalists enter Baba 'Amr, and for facilitating the movement of foreign journalists in and out of Homs - including journalist Paul Conroy and French reporter Edith Bouvier after they were injured in shelling.

After he disappeared in March 2012, released detainees claimed to have seen him at a Military Intelligence branch in Aleppo and later at the Palestine Branch detention centre in Damascus, but his family was never told where he was being held or why until he appeared on Syria state TV in May 2012, where the presenter explained that Ali Mahmoud Othman had been arrested for being a media worker who co-operated with "external powers plotting against Syria". No one has heard from Ali Mahmoud Othman since the televised interview and his family remains without any information about his fate and whether he was charged with any offences and tried.

ACTION

Please write to the Syrian President through the Syria Permanent Representative to the UN to call on the Syrian authorities to:

- Release Ali Mahmoud Othman immediately and unconditionally if he is held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Urgently inform his family of his fate and whereabouts;
- Ensure that he is protected from secret detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and allowed immediate contact with his family and a lawyer of his choice.

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