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In its Fourty-Fifth year of imposing the state of Emergency, the Syrian regime continues to perpetrate major and massive human rights breaches on all levels.

Damascus Declaration Members Detained and Suffered

The Syrian regime began 2008 with its ongoing targeting of the Damascus Declaration members. The Syrian Intelligence corpses threatened and menaced several members of the General Secretariat, and giving them no time, arrested the activist in the communist labour party and former detainee (from 1987 until 2001) Rashid al-Sattoof, from his home in the city of al-Rakka in the north east, although he did not attend the meeting in early December 2007. Before his release on the 5th of January, writer and journalist Fayez Sara was arrested on the 3rd of January. Mr. Sara, born 1950, comes from Jairoud in Rural Damascus. In the meantime, the security authorities sought to re-arrest Engineer Ghassan al-Najjar, the member of the General Secretariat of Damascus Declaration who was released on 14/12/2007 following the deterioration in his health resulting from his food and medicine strike. Mr. al-Najjar (70 years) who is a former detainee from 1980 to 1991 is a syndicate activist and independent Islamic politician. The Internal Branch re-arrested Mohammed Hajji Darwish from Jesr-elshoughour in Idlib province on 7th January. Mr. Darwish who lives in Aleppo and runs a drug laboratory was released last December. On 5th January, the internal branch arrested the geologist Marwan al-Aush (D.O.B 1956) in Damascus.

In the meanwhile, the Syrian authorities led an all scale campaign to disrepute and cast doubts over the patriotic feelings of the detainees and the other activists of the Damascus Declaration. They employed the official media and other individuals linked with the security apparatuses that are known for their misconduct and ill reputation such as the chairman of Aleppo trade chamber. In a step that transcends the law, the public standards, social customs and good conduct, Aleppo woke up on the 21st of January to witness vile acts perpetrated by the agents of the intelligence apparatuses who destroyed the contents of the painting studio of Talal Abu-Dan including his artistic paintings, the contents of the laboratory of the detainee pharmacist Mohammed Hajji Darwish were ravaged, his van and the car of the businessman Sameer al-Nashar were smashed and defaced.

On 27th January, the ten detainees of Damascus Declaration were referred to the interrogation court where the judge accused them of undermining the dignity of the state, stirring racial and sectarian feuds, forming secret societies that aim to change the social and economic structure of the state and spreading false information that weakens the morals of the nation. On the following day (28/1/2008) Mr. Riyad Seif, the head of Damascus Declaration Secretariat was arrested at his home in Damascus and referred to the court. He and the other detainees were transferred to Adra central prison. Then Artist Talal Abu-Dan, a former detainee from 1981 to 1990, was arrested on 31st January from his house in Aleppo. As a result, the Syrian security authorities have opened the door to all vile possibilities against the activists of the Damascus Declaration and all those who strive for democratic change in Syria.

Arrests on Religious Backgrounds

Arrests on religious background have never ceased in Syria, although little is learnt by the human rights groups or the media which show little interest in reporting them. However, we documented the arrest of the student Mohammed Tawfik Karzon at Tishrin University in Latakia on 15th January upon leaving a mosque in Aleppo after dawn prayers. Nothing has been known about him after his arrest. On 22nd January 13 individuals were arrested in Sfeirah in Aleppo province due to their moderate religious backgrounds including the university students Hamza Haj Hamza, Hosam Kana'a and Mohammed Moa'z Kana'a and the primary school teacher Mohammed Raheem and the pharmacist Barakat al-Aswad. Their computers and books were confiscated and they were moved to an unknown place. It was also learnt that Mr. Abdulrahman Wazzan came to spend Eid al-Adha holiday with his relatives in Syria, but he was arrested upon arriving at Damascus International Airport. Mr. Wazzan has been living in France for the last 20 years.

- The former Kurdish detainee (2004 to 2006) Jowan Shamsuddeen Mulla Ibrahim (D.O.B. 1975) was arrested in al Hasaka province on 14th January, his computer and personal properties were seized. The stateless Kurd Izziddeen Mohammed Husein was arrested on 12th January upon arriving in Damascus International Airport coming from Germany to where he had left 9 years ago.

Trials

The leading member in the communist labour party, Fateh Jamoos, was presented before the Court of Appeal on 20th January. His trial was adjourned until 6th February; he is a former detainee for 19 years from 1982 until 2000. He was re-arrested upon his return from a trip to Europe on 1/5/2006; however he was released to be trialed while he is free. His trial is still running.

The trial of the detainee and human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni at a military court was adjourned until 27th February. He was sentenced to 5 years in prison but the public prosecutor started another case against him during his detention.

Scores of Kurds were presented before a military court in Damascus for demonstrating on 5/6/2005 after the abduction and assassination of Sheikh Mohammad Ma'ashouq al-Khaznawi. Their trial is to continue on 31/3/2008.

The trial of the detainee and the political activist Mohammed Kamal Labwani was also adjourned. He was sentenced to 13 years in prison but the public prosecutor started another case against him while in jail.

Prohibited from Travel

The activist and former detainee Hasiba Abdul-Rahman visited the Department of Immigration and Passports to renew her passport, but was denied her rights after being informed of two notes to ban her from travel. The same occurred to the activist in the Syrian Human Rights Organisation Bassam Saeed Issak on 12th January.

Other Arrests

Dr. Ihab Ziad al-Aisami (42 years), nephew of the well known opposition politician Shibli al-Aisami, was arrested in his clinic on 9th January for unknown reasons.

Condition Deterioration in Jail

Following his brother's visit, it was reported that Dr. Arif Dalila (67 years) is suffering from a huge deterioration in his medical condition. He is suffering of an incurable disease in addition to his left leg which faces the danger of being amputated due to poor blood circulation. In addition, the psychological factor stemming from being imprisoned in an isolated cell since 9/9/2001 is a massive factor.

Syrian Human Rights Committee

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