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Syria: ICJ Commissioner Muhannad Al-Hasani must immediately be released

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today called on the Syrian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Muhannad Al-Hasani, an ICJ commissioner and a prominent lawyer and human rights defender in Syria.

Muhannad Al-Hasani was arrested on 28 July and formally charged with offences of "weakening national sentiments," and for "spreading false news." He has been denied access to a lawyer and his family members. On 19 July, after observing a trial before the State Security Court, a clerk acting on orders from the chief prosecutor seized and destroyed Mr. Al-Hasani's notes from the proceedings. The following day, Al-Hasani received a telephone call from Syrian intelligence officials instructing him to report to their facility for questioning. His arrest followed eight days later.

"Munnad Al-Hassani's unlawful and arbitrary detention accelerates a campaign of harassment against him," said Acting ICJ Secretary General Wilder Tayler. *"It also constitutes an attack on the legal profession in Syria and its independence."*

Prior to his arrest, Muhannad Al-Hasani had come under increasing pressure from the Syrian authorities because of his work as a lawyer and human rights defender, including his monitoring of trials before the Supreme State Security Court. He had been subjected to a travel ban during the last five years which prevented him from representing the ICJ on different occasions. His office, telephone communications and e-mails have also been under constant surveillance by Syrian security forces.

"Under the State Security Court Law and international standards proceedings of the Court are public. Reporting on public proceedings cannot be criminalized under any circumstances," said Tayler. *"Syrian authorities must therefore ensure that all charges against Mr. Al-Hasani be dropped and that he is released immediately,"* he added.

Mr. Al-Hasani has been reportedly kept in poor conditions in Adra prison, and the ICJ fears he may be at risk of ill-treatment. *"It is the legal responsibility of the Syrian authorities to protect Mr. Al-Hasani from any inhuman or degrading treatment,"* said Tayler. *"The Syrian authorities must also guarantee Mr. Al-Hasani access to his lawyer and members of his family and allow him to engage in his legitimate work as lawyer without intimidation or harassment."*

For more information, please contact Saïd Benarbia, Middle East & North Africa Legal Adviser, at + 41229793817

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising fifty-two of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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