



August 14, 2009

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Your Excellency,

### **Release Mohanad Al-Hasani**

**We, the below-signed 1,187 individuals, join Human Rights First** in writing to express our grave concern about Mohanad Al-Hasani, a leading Syrian human rights activist and lawyer who has been the victim of repeated harassment for his work as the President of the Syrian Human Rights Organization and as a monitor of the controversial State Security Court. In the most recent incident, on July 28, State Security detained Al-Hasani for his human rights work.

This is only the latest in a series of harassing incidents carried out by government officials to disrupt Al-Hasani's ability to carry out his important human rights work. Most notably, over the last three years, Syrian security forces have significantly curtailed Al-Hasani's ability to travel outside of Syria.

It is our understanding that on July 19, Al-Hasani was in the midst of monitoring trials at the State Security Court when a security employee destroyed his trial notes. The security employee later stated that he had been following the orders of Habib Nejmeh, the head of the prosecutor's office at the State Security Court. Nejmeh confirmed that he had given these orders and argued that Al-Hasani was "revealing secrets" and "committing felonies" by taking the notes, even though Court proceedings are public according to Syrian law.

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On July 23, Al-Hasani was summoned for interrogation and on July 26 and 27, he was questioned again. He has been detained in Adra prison in Damascus since July 28. He was charged with “weakening national sentiment” and “spreading false or exaggerated information.”

It is our understanding that Al-Hasani’s arrest and charges result from his actions as a human rights defender. The right to free expression is protected under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and his reporting on the court does not violate Syrian law since the proceedings are public. Thus, we urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Mohanad Al-Hasani.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We will continue to closely follow this case.

Sincerely,

*(The names of the 1,187 signatories have been removed for privacy reasons.)*