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**UNITED NATIONS**  
**OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS**  
**HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**PROCEDURES SPECIALES DU**  
**CONSEIL DES DROITS DE L'HOMME**

**SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**

REFERENCE: UA G/SO 214 (67-17) G/SO 214 (107-9) G/SO 214 (33-27)  
EGY 8/2012

20 June 2012

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 16/5, 17/5 and 16/4.

In this connection, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to information we have received regarding the death threats against Mr. **Abdulkarim Rihawi**, President of the Syrian Human Rights League, allegedly in relation to his human rights activities and to the exercise of his legitimate right to freedom of opinion and expression. Mr. Rihawi is currently in exile in Cairo, Egypt.

According to the information received:

On 11 June 2012, Mr. Abdulkarim Rihawi appeared on the television channel Al-Jazeera Arabic to speak about a communication which was sent to the International Criminal Court by the Syrian Human Rights League and the Hague Center for the Persecution of Criminals against Humanity in Syria regarding the continued widespread and systematic human rights violations that have been committed in Syria.

From the evening of 11 June to the afternoon of 12 June 2012, Mr. Rihawi allegedly received at least five threatening phone calls from unidentified individuals, accusing him of being a spy for Western countries and a traitor to his nation. The individuals said to him: "how dare you accuse Bashar of being a criminal? You are the criminal". They further allegedly warned him that he would not live longer than supporters of President Bashar El-Assad.

In light of the information received, we fear for Mr. Abdulkarim Rihawi's life. We are further concerned that the alleged death threats against him may be directly linked

with the exercise of his legitimate right to freedom of expression, when appearing on television and speaking out about his human rights activities.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information brought to our attention, we should like to appeal to your Excellency's Government to seek clarification of this case. We would like to draw to the attention of your Excellency's Government the international norms and standards applicable to the present case.

Under article 6(1) in connection with article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Egypt ratified on 14 January 1982, it is incumbent upon States parties to protect the life of every individual on their territory and subject to their jurisdiction and to ensure that no individual is arbitrarily deprived of his or her life. Furthermore, we wish to refer to principle 4 of the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, adopted by the Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/65, according to which it is incumbent upon States to provide "effective protection through judicial or other means to individuals and groups who are in danger of extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions, including those who receive death threats".

In this connection, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in particular articles 1 and 2 which state that "everyone has the right individually or in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels" and that "each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms, inter alia, by adopting such steps as may be necessary to create all conditions necessary in the social, economic, political and other fields, as well as the legal guarantees required to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction, individually and in association with others, are able to enjoy all those rights and freedoms in practice".

Furthermore, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government the following provisions of the Declaration:

- article 5, paragraph c) which states that in order to promote and defend human rights and freedoms fundamental everyone has the right, individually or collectively, both nationally and internationally, "c) to communicate with non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations." Similarly, Article 9, paragraph 4, states that "(a) (...) everyone has the right, individually or collectively, in conformity with applicable international instruments and procedures, to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies with general or special competence to receive and consider communications on matters of human rights and fundamental freedoms."
- article 6 points b) and c) which provide that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others as provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights

and fundamental freedoms; and to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters.

- article 12 paras 2 and 3 of the Declaration which provide that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We would also like to appeal to your Excellency's Government to take all necessary steps to secure the right to freedom of opinion and expression in accordance with fundamental principles as set forth in article 19 of the ICCPR, which provides that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."

In view of the urgency of the matter, we would appreciate a response on the initial steps taken by your Excellency's Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person in compliance with the above international instruments.

Moreover, it is our responsibility under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention. Since we are expected to report on these cases to the Human Rights Council, we would be grateful for your cooperation and your observations on the following matters, when relevant to the case under consideration:

1. Are the facts alleged in the summary of the case accurate?
2. Has a complaint been lodged by or on behalf of the alleged victim?
3. Please provide the details, and where available the results, of any investigation, medical examinations, and judicial or other inquiries carried out in relation to this case. If no inquiries have taken place, or if they have been inconclusive, please explain why.
4. Please provide the full details of any prosecutions which have been undertaken. Have penal, disciplinary or administrative sanctions been imposed on the alleged perpetrators?

5. Please indicate whether any protection measures have been or will be granted to Mr. Rihawi.

We undertake to ensure that your Excellency's Government's response to each of these questions is accurately reflected in the report we will submit to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

While waiting for your response, we urge your Excellency's Government to take all necessary measures to guarantee that the rights and freedoms of Mr. Abdulkarim Rihawi are respected and to provide him with the required protection measures. In the event that your investigations support or suggest the above allegations to be correct, the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations should be ensured. We also request that your Excellency's Government adopt effective measures to prevent the recurrence of these acts.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Margaret Sekaggya  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Christof Heyns  
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Frank La Rue  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression