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

SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

**Mandates of the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.**

REFERENCE: UA G/SO 217/1 G/SO 214 (67-17)
SYR 6/2013

25 November 2013

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 16/16 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 alleged abductions of Mr. Abdulwahab Almullah and Mr. Rami Al-Razzouk.

According to the information received:

On 7 November 2013, Mr. Abdulwahab Almullah, broadcaster and civil rights activist, was allegedly abducted from his home in the Hanono neighborhood of Aleppo city, Syrian Arab Republic, by a group of unidentified armed men who reportedly forced him to enter into their car. Previous to his alleged abduction, Mr. Almullah has participated in the establishing of "Aleppo News Network" as a member and media consultant, and also contributed in establishing the "Aleppo Reporters Union."

It was further reported that, on 1 October 2013, Mr. Rami Al-Razzouk, journalist, was allegedly abducted by a group of armed men at a checkpoint between the cities of Raqqa and Toubqa, Syrian Arab Republic. According to the source, Mr. Al-Razzouk might have been tortured before being transferred to the city of Deir ez-Zor. Mr. Al-Razzouk works as director of the office of "Ana Foundation of New Media" in the city of Raqqa.

At the time of the present communication, the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Abdulwahab Almullah and Mr. Rami Al-Razzouk remain unknown.

Concerns are expressed that the alleged abductions of Mr. Abdulwahab Almullah and Mr. Rami Al-Razzouk may be related to their work in defence of human rights, specifically in promoting freedom of expression and the right to information in Syria.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances which sets out necessary protection by the State, and in particular:

- articles 2 and 3 which provide that no State shall practice, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances and shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance in any territory under its jurisdiction;

- articles 6 and 7 which provide that no order or instruction of any public authority, civilian, military or other, may be invoked to justify an enforced disappearance and that no circumstances whatsoever, whether a threat of war, a state of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances;

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 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, that Syria acceded to on 21 April 1969, 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 persons 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 above summary of the case accurate?

2. Please provide information on the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Abdulwahab Almullah and Mr. Rami Al-Razzouk. If their fate and whereabouts are unknown, please provide the details on any investigation or other queries which may have been carried out. If no queries have taken place, or if they have been inconclusive, please explain why.

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

We would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government that should the sources submit the allegations concerning Mr. Abdulwahab Almullah and Mr. Rami Al-Razzouk as cases to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, they will be considered by the Working Group according to its methods of work, in which case your Excellency's Government will be informed by separate correspondence.

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

Ariel Dulitzky
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary
Disappearances

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