

International Law Section Letter to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad Expressing its Grave Concern over the Arrest and Continued Detention of Mohammed Raadoun, President of the Arab Organization of Human Rights in Syria.

Note: *The views expressed herein represent only those of the International Law Section and not those of the D.C. Bar or of its Board of Governors.*

August 16, 2005

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Dear President al-Assad:

The International Law Section of the District of Columbia Bar wishes to express its grave concern over the arrest and continued detention of our colleague, Mohammed Raadoun, President of the Arab Organization of Human Rights in Syria. The International Law Section consists of over 1800 lawyers, judges, academics, and other professionals who are members of the District of Columbia Bar and involved in the field of international law. The views expressed in this letter represent only those of the International Law Section and not those of the District of Columbia Bar at large or of its Board of Governors.

We have credible information that members of the Syrian political security police arrested Mr. Raadoun, a lawyer, on May 22, 2005 at his office in Latakia because of his involvement in human rights work – an activity expressly protected by the Syrian Constitution. We have also been informed that, since his arrest, Mr. Raadoun has been held in solitary confinement at the political security police headquarters in Damascus and that his continued detention has left him gravely ill and without proper medical care.

We understand that Mr. Raadoun is being charged with “disseminating false information” in apparent connection with statements he and his organization have made about poor human rights conditions in Syria. Mr. Raadoun’s statements and work in publicizing the persecution of activists and torture of political prisoners are expressly protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, an agreement to which Syria has been a State Party since 1969.

We would like to know specifically whether Mr. Raadoun (1) is in solitary confinement and (2) has been denied medical care. If so, we urge that Mr. Raadoun be released from prison immediately. We look forward to your response and would like to be kept informed of any developments in Mr. Raadoun’s case.

Very truly yours,

Nancy L. Perkins
Chair
International Law Section

cc: H.E. Ambassador Imad Moustapha, Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic
Mr. Stephen Seche, U.S. State Department, Office of Syria Affairs (by fax)