



Date: 09/11/2025

UAE Activist Jassem Al-Shamsi's Arrest in Syria Marks a Dangerous Regression to the Era of State Repression

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) stated that the arrest of Emirati political activist Jassem Rashid Al-Shamsi by Syrian security forces in Damascus on Thursday, 6 November 2025, without a judicial warrant or formal charge, followed by his enforced disappearance and total loss of contact, constitutes a grave breach of both Syrian law and international human rights obligations.

AOHR UK noted that Al-Shamsi, who had previously been sentenced to life imprisonment in the UAE for peacefully advocating political reform and fundamental freedoms, has committed no offence beyond exercising his right to free expression and defending the legitimate aspirations of Arab peoples. The organisation emphasised that he was among the voices who stood in solidarity with the Syrian people since the outbreak of the 2011 revolution, supporting their pursuit of dignity, justice and self-determination.

AOHR UK reaffirmed that the UAE government has consistently positioned itself as one of the most aggressive adversaries of democratic transformation in the region, actively working to undermine or reverse the outcomes of popular



uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria, regardless of cost. These interventions have contributed to widespread repression, the killing of thousands, and the imprisonment of countless others who remain in detention under harsh and abusive conditions.

AOHR UK underscored that Al-Shamsi's arrest, reportedly carried out at the request of the UAE, is not an isolated event, but rather part of an entrenched pattern of transnational repression and forced rendition of Emirati dissidents, previously documented in states including Indonesia, Jordan and Lebanon, reflecting a deliberate strategy to pursue and silence political opponents beyond national borders.

AOHR UK condemned the Syrian authorities' actions as unjustifiable under any political framing, warning against attempts to legitimise the arrest under narratives of "regional diplomacy" or so-called "Arab rapprochement." The organisation stressed that a state born of a revolution in which Syrians paid an extraordinary human price — hundreds of thousands killed, millions displaced, and tens of thousands arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared — must not reproduce the practices of the very tyranny it overthrew.

AOHR UK acknowledged the complexity of Syria's current political and economic realities, but maintained that diplomatic engagement must not supersede or erode the core principles for which Syrians rose, foremost among them the categorical rejection of security collaboration with regimes that



instrumentalise counter-terrorism frameworks to persecute dissidents — the very same pretext under which Syrian revolutionaries themselves were brutalised.

AOHR UK warned that this case represents a defining test of the new Syrian administration's trajectory — whether it will integrate into the region's long-standing architecture of political repression, or whether it will establish a genuinely distinct path rooted in accountability, justice, and respect for human rights, safeguarding the moral legacy of the Syrian struggle.

AOHR UK demanded the immediate and unconditional disclosure of Jassem Al-Shamsi's fate and whereabouts, guarantees of his physical and psychological safety, and an unequivocal refusal to engage in any transfer or extradition arrangements with the UAE. The organisation further urged Syrian authorities to uphold their ethical responsibilities, honour the sacrifices of the Syrian people, and reject any role in the cross-border targeting of Arab dissidents. Failure to do so, AOHR UK warned, will be remembered as a new and grievous stain on Syria's human rights record and a disheartening indication that no lessons have been drawn from the tragedies of its recent history.

AOHR UK called upon the United Nations, the Special Rapporteurs on Enforced Disappearances and on Human Rights Defenders, and all states committed to the protection of civil liberties, to act without delay to pressure the Syrian authorities to ensure Al-Shamsi's protection, prevent his extradition, and promptly reveal his fate.



Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK
المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK

AOHR