



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

**Eighteenth special session**

2 December 2011

### **Written statement\* submitted by Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 December 2011]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Insure the security of journalists during civil unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Last August, at the 17<sup>th</sup> special session of the Human Rights Council, Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) requested the Syrian authorities to grant immediate access to the country to any foreign journalist wanting to carry out an assignment on the country's territory. Today, PEC deeply regrets that this call has been ignored by the Syrian government, in violation of international standards subscribed to by the Syrian Arab Republic.

More than three months later, PEC notes that the situation of press freedom has deteriorated in Syria. As the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (IICI) pointed out<sup>1</sup> that "A number of journalists and web activists claimed they had been detained and tortured for reporting on demonstrations". PEC holds information on threats, arrests and torture during interrogation, committed against employees of international media in Syria. The family members of some of them were subjected to threats and reprisals.

Last November 20, was found in Al-Qasir the mutilated and lifeless body of Ferzat Jarban, a freelance Syrian cameraman. PEC condemns in the strongest terms this deliberate killing.

Cases of disappearances have been reported among journalists and media. PEC calls upon the IICI to further investigate these cases to clarify their fate and to prosecute those responsible.

This case demonstrates once again the need for a new international instrument that provides greater protection for journalists and their staff.

PEC supports the recommendation addressed by the IICI to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>2</sup> to ensure full access for media and allow both national and international journalists to cover the events in the country without harassment or intimidation.

PEC demands that those responsible for violations of freedoms and rights of journalists be brought to justice and that the victims and the members of their families be entitled to reparation.

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1 para.56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, para. 112(h).