

29 January 2014

Re: Syria – Attempted killing of human rights defender Mr Raed Fares

On 29 January 2014 leading media activist and human rights defender Mr **Raed Fares** was shot at close range in front of his home in Kafranbel in the North-west Syrian province of Idlib. The human rights defender is in a stable condition at Al-Aqra' hospital, despite having sustained serious injuries in the attack.

With the advent of popular protests in Syria in 2011, Raed Fares founded the **Kafranbel Media Centre**, an independent organisation that documents and organises protests in support of a peaceful Syrian revolution. The protests organised by the human rights defender and his colleagues in Kafranbel have gained widespread attention in recent years due to their creative banners and signs in English, which are designed to reach out to a wide audience.

It is reported that on 29 January 2014, unknown gunmen had been hiding near Raed Fares' house, and when he arrived home shot the human rights defender using 10 bullets from a range of approximately 5 metres. Two bullets lodged in his right arm and shoulder. Raed Fares' colleagues report that before the attack he had been receiving threats of abduction from radical armed groups in the area. The threats came upon his return from a visit by the human rights defender to the United States in January 2014, during which he gave a talk about the Syrian revolution. Furthermore, on 28 December 2013, militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) stormed and vandalised the media centre.

Raed Fares was an attendee at the [Seventh Dublin Platform](#) in October 2013, and on that occasion stated that the message of the Kafranbel Media Centre is that the people of Kafranbel will condone neither the violence of the state regime, nor the violence of the armed groups which currently proliferate across the country.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the attempt on Raed Fares' life, as it is a clear effort to prevent the human rights defender and his colleagues from carrying out their peaceful and legitimate activities in defence of human rights in Syria.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities and other relevant actors in Syria to:

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of Raed Fares, as well as that of his family and colleagues;
2. Cease the threats and targeting against Raed Fares and the Kafranbel Media Centre;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Syria are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.