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**ENVELOPE**



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WARNING: TOPIC: CRIME, DOMESTIC POLITICAL, HUMAN RIGHTS, MEDIA

SERIAL: GMP20121220711001

**BODY**

COUNTRY: SYRIA, TURKEY, UNITED STATES

SUBJ: (U) SHRC CONDEMNS KIDNAPPING OF AMERICAN JOURNALIST BY  
'MILITIAS LOYAL TO REGIME'

SOURCE: LONDON SYRIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE IN ENGLISH

19 DEC 12

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TEXT:

(U) Statement issued by the SHRC on the kidnapping of Journalist  
Richard Engel

Internet

OSC Transcribed Text

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Opposition groups in Syria have managed to free one of the most  
prominent American journalists (TV Journalist Richard Engel)  
after he had disappeared for five days and after he had left the  
Turkish lands for Syria last Thursday, according to NBC news  
network, for whom Richard Engel works.

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The news network mentioned in its press release that, "following his kidnapping and detainment for five days by an unknown group, NBC's chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel and his production team were released with no harm." The news network also added, "We are happy to announce that they have left the country safely."

In further details of the kidnapping, it was said that Engel and his team were put into a truck and taken to an unknown place, thought to be close to the city of Ma'arat Masreen. They were blindfolded and had their hands tied behind their backs, although they were not harmed. When the kidnappers attempted to transport them to another area at a late time on Monday evening, they drove into a checkpoint belonging to an opposition group called "Liberators of Shaam". This led to clashes between the two sides, in which two of the kidnappers were killed whilst the rest escaped. Engel and his group were not harmed, and were freed. They left the country on Tuesday morning.

After being freed, Engel commented that his kidnappers were militias loyal to the Syrian regime known as the "Shabiha", and that they had threatened him and his crew more than once. He said they were not hurt physically but subjected to "psychological torture," including threats that one or all of them would be killed.

"They made us choose which one of us would be shot first, and when we refused, there were mock shootings. They pretended to shoot Ghazi several times," Engel said, referring to Balkiz. "When you're blindfolded and then they fire the gun up in the air, it can be a very traumatic experience."

The Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC) condemns the kidnapping of journalists in Syria and demands that they are given protection in order to be able to provide a more neutral picture of what is happening on the ground. Since the beginning of the events in Syria, a number of journalists have been killed, including foreign journalists, and many have gone missing due to their reporting of events. Under article 79 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 "journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians."

Thus, all international humanitarian law applicable to civilians also applies to journalists, yet the way journalists are treated

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in Syria, is once again, another daily violation of human rights which takes place in the country. SHRC calls for the release of all journalists and media activists who were arrested during their covering of the events, and that their whereabouts are revealed immediately.

Signed Syrian Human Rights Committee

Dated 18/12/12

Description of Source: Syrian Human Rights Committee in English  
 -- Official website of the London-based SHRC, the Syrian Human Rights Committee; URL: <http://www.shrc.org.uk>

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Source Metadata

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Article Metadata

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**ADMIN**

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