

Syrian artist Abdelke tells wife, 'I'm free'

By Lauren Williams
22/08/2013

BEIRUT: High profile Syrian artist Youssef Abdelke who was arrested by authorities on July 18 has been released, his family have confirmed to The Daily Star.

Abdelke, 62, a prominent and outspoken critic of the Syrian regime and member of the “internal opposition,” the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (NCB), was arrested at a checkpoint as he traveled in the coastal area of Tartous. He had not been heard from until Thursday.

His arrest generated outrage among the intellectual and artistic Syrian communities, with thousands petitioning for his release.

Abdelke’s wife, Hala Abdallah, told The Daily Star by telephone that she had received the news of her husband’s release around 3.30pm Thursday.

“Yes, it is true,’ she said.

Abdallah, in France, said she had spoken briefly to her husband who told her he was free.

“He said it has been very hard, but that he’s OK,” she said.

“We don’t have many details, but we’re very happy.”

“Until now we have had no real news, just rumors.”

She said she hoped her husband’s release would draw attention to other political detainees.

“We hope all the political prisoners will be free, because nobody should be in prison for asking for liberty,” she said.

Human Rights Activists with the Violations and Documentation Center said Abdelke was released after facing court earlier Thursday.

It was not immediately clear whether he will face any further charges.

There is still no news on the fate of NCB leaders, Abdel-Aziz al-Khair and Iyas Ayyash, who were snatched at a regime checkpoint on their way home from Damascus airport after traveling to Russia and China to discuss possible negotiations with the Syrian government in September 2012.



A portrait of Abdelke taken in 2012.(Photo by Jaber Alazmeh)

**© 2019 The Daily Star -
All Rights Reserved**