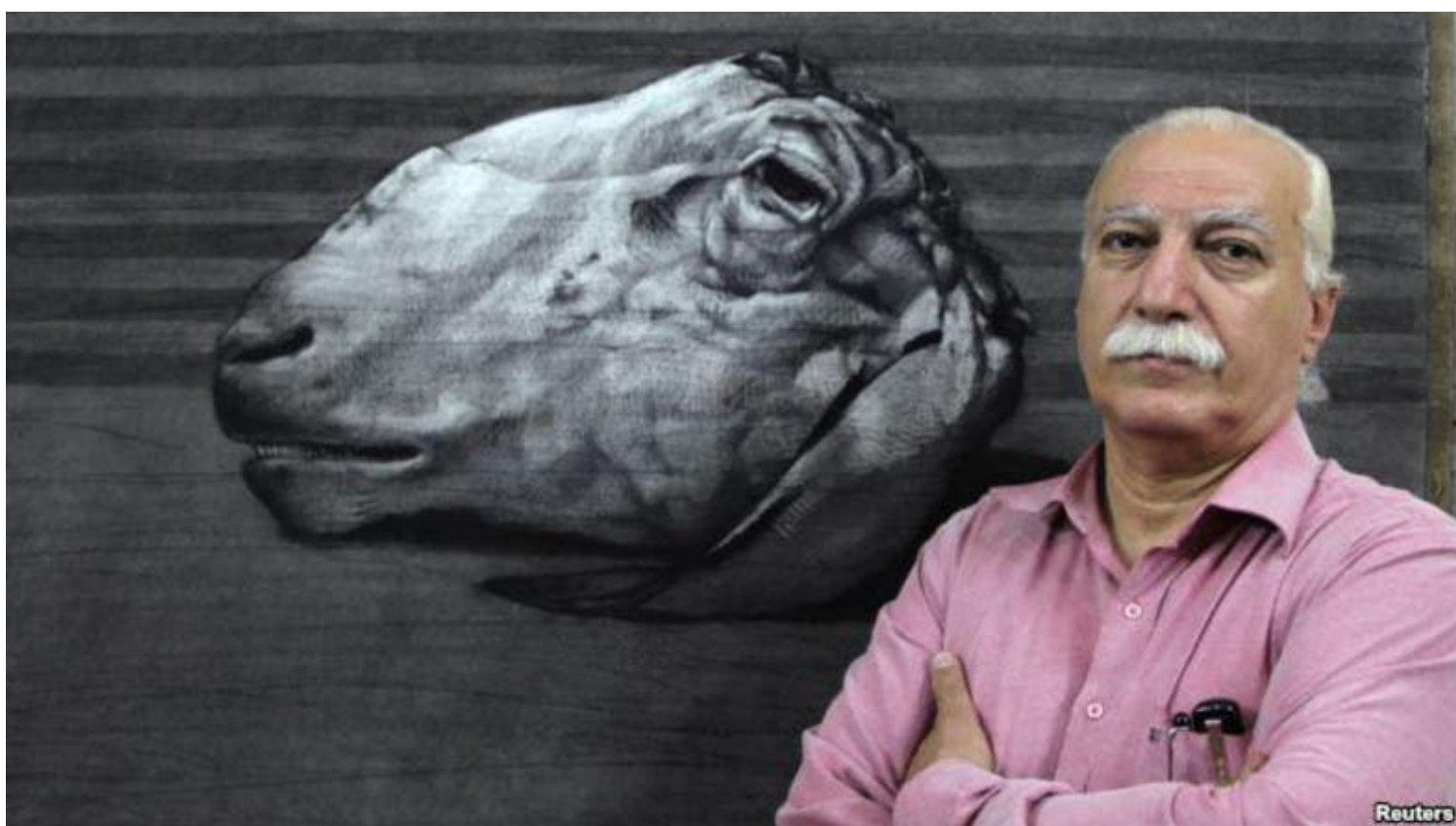


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Syria frees opposition artist held for month



Syrian painter Youssef Abdelke in front of one of his works at his atelier in Damascus. (File photo: Reuters)

The Syrian authorities have released painter Youssef Abdelki more than a month after the opponent of President Bashar al-Assad's regime was arrested, his wife said on Friday.

The security services arrested the Christian artist on July 18 in Tartus, on the Mediterranean coast, along with two members of the banned Communist Labour Party, Alawite

Tawfiq Omran, and Druze Adnan al-Dibs.

“Yussef was released on Thursday and I spoke to him on the phone,” his wife, filmmaker Hala al-Abdallah, told AFP. “For five weeks we knew nothing about him.”

The 62-year-old painter is a member of the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change -- the internal opposition which supports the principles of Syria’s 29-month uprising but rejects any foreign intervention.

Famous for his black and white paintings, he is a leading artist in Syria and the Arab world, and his arrest was widely condemned.

He was arrested in the late 1970s for membership of a banned communist party, before moving to Paris where he lived for 25 years.

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