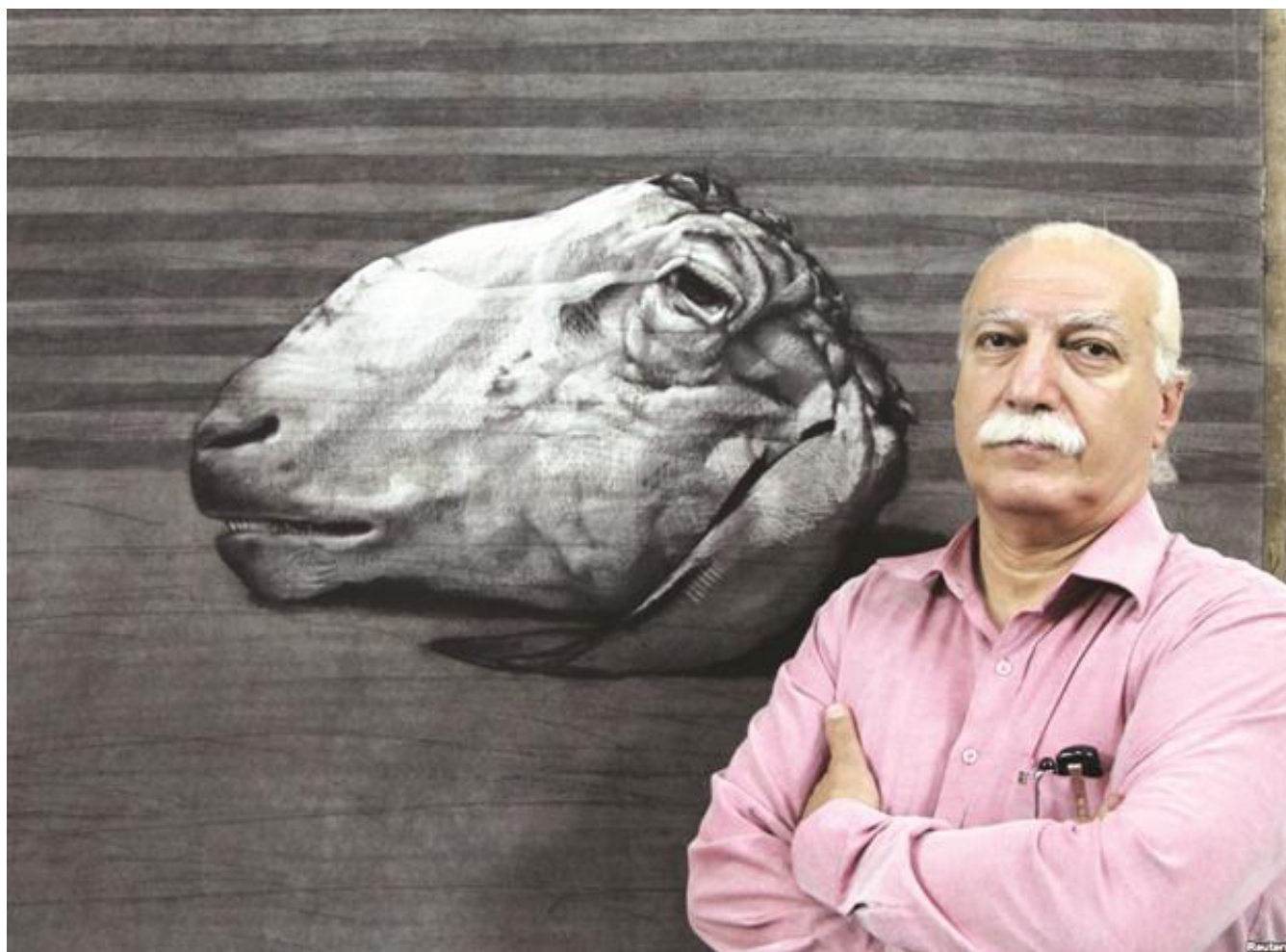© 2019 Hürriyet Daily News

Syrian artist Abdelke released by authorities

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The 62-year-old Abdelke has condemned al-Assad's regime and recently signed a petition initiated by Syrian artists calling for the removal of the president.

Youssef Abdelke, a leading Syrian artist, has been released after being held by Syrian authorities for more than two months, according to Artnewspaper.com.

Abdelke was arrested July 18 by forces loyal to the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. Abdelke posted a statement on his Facebook page in late August, saying he "is healthy and in anticipation of leaving the palace of justice,

free as [he] has always been."

The artist's wife, Ala Yakoub, launched an online appeal in a bid to gain the release of her husband.

The 62-year-old artist has condemned al-Assad's regime and recently signed a petition initiated by Syrian artists calling for the removal of the president, according to the news website France 24. A former member of the Syrian communist party, Abdelke was jailed from 1978 to 1980. He moved to Paris after his release, returning to Syria in 2005. The civil war in Syria began in late 2011.

Abdelke was arrested along with two colleagues, by forces loyal to al-Assad at a checkpoint in Tartous, a western port city. The emailed petition, co-organized by Yakoub, states: "[He] was keen to stay in Damascus in recent years, despite the difficulties of daily life and the dangers of surviving under a regime with an unlimited capacity for violence."A painter of still-lifes, Abdelke participated in the 2011 Sharjah Biennial as well as the eighth Cairo Biennial in 2001. London's British Museum expressed in a statement that it was "greatly concerned" by his detention.

"[He] is one of the most significant artists of the Middle East of his generation and a great inspiration to others. It is hoped that he will soon be freed in order to be able to continue his work," said Venetia Porter, the museum's curator responsible for modern and contemporary art.