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Israel/South Lebanon: Suha Beshara free –now release remaining Khiam hostages.

Welcoming the release today of Suha Beshara after nearly 10 years detention without trial in the notorious Khiam Detention Centre in South Lebanon, Amnesty International called on Israel and the South Lebanon Army to immediately release all others held as hostages in Khiam.

“The continued detention of other detainees held as hostages in Khiam is unacceptable and must stop,” said Amnesty International. “No one should be held outside the law.”

Suha Beshara was the only person held in Khiam whose offence was known: she tried to kill General Antoine Lahad, the leader of the South Lebanon Army (SLA), Israel’s proxy militia in South Lebanon. Around 140 other detainees, including about five women and 10 minors, have been held in Khiam for up to 13 years without any charge or trial. They are held outside any legal framework.

Khiam Detention Centre, administered by the SLA, is in the area of South Lebanon occupied by Israel. Although Israel denies being involved in the running of the centre, as occupying power it is ultimately responsible for the area. Moreover, such involvement has been affirmed by Israeli soldiers and General Lahad himself.

Detainees in Khiam appear to be held as hostages for Israeli soldiers missing in action or killed. In June 1998, 50 detainees from Khiam and 10 Lebanese detainees held in Israel were released in exchange for the body of an Israeli soldier who died in Lebanon in 1997.

Amnesty International has consistently called on the Israeli Government to release all hostages and abide by the international human rights instruments it has ratified which state that people must not be detained arbitrarily and must be tried within a reasonable time or released. ENDS.../