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Lebanon: Decision to execute three men on Saturday must be immediately revoked

Amnesty International strongly urges President Emile Lahoud to use his powers to immediately halt the imminent execution of Ahmad 'Ali Mansour, Badea' Waleed Hamada and Remi Antoan Za'atar, who are due to be executed at dawn on Saturday. Amnesty International also urges the president to take the necessary steps to commute the death sentences handed down to the three men, and to 24 others.

"The finality and cruelty inherent in the death penalty, and the lack of evidence showing it to be a deterrent to violent crimes, make it an inappropriate and unacceptable response to crime," said Amnesty International.

The executions are due to take place at Roumieh prison in Beirut. Ahmad 'Ali Mansour is to be executed by hanging, while Badea' Waleed Hamada and Remi Antoan Za'atar are to be executed by firing squad. Amnesty International is unable to confirm whether the families of the three men will be allowed to see them before the scheduled time, or to be present during the execution.

While Amnesty International recognizes the right to bring to justice everyone suspected of involvement in criminal acts, the organization believes that executing these individuals will contribute little to alleviating the suffering of the families of murder victims, for whom it has the greatest sympathy and consideration.

"Beams of hope lit by a *de facto* five-year moratorium on the death penalty have been dimmed by Lebanon's decision to kill these men," said Amnesty International. "Their lives and those of 24 others under sentence of death whose fate may well be similar are now at the gravest risk imaginable, and no effort should be spared to save them."

Despite strong protests from local and international human rights campaigners and groups, President Emile Lahoud signed the final execution decrees on 14 January, following approval by Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri and the Minister of Justice, Bahij Tabbara. If these executions take place as scheduled, they will be the first since President Lahoud took office on 24 November 1998.

Background:

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances, and considers it to be a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Ahmad 'Ali Mansour was convicted of killing eight people in 2002. Badea' Waleed Hamada was convicted of killing three soldiers in 2002. Remi Antoan Za'atar was convicted of killing three people in an armed robbery.

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