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## **Lebanese cabinet approves regional Amnesty International office in Beirut**

Amnesty International today welcomed the Lebanese Cabinet's approval yesterday of the human rights organization's application to open a regional office in Beirut.

"This is a very exciting step for us -- it offers Amnesty International an opportunity to contribute more fully, here as elsewhere, to the movements in the Middle East actively engaged in building up a human rights culture in the region," said Pierre Sané, Secretary-General of Amnesty International.

"Amnesty International looks forward to cooperating with the Lebanese Government and other governments in the region in promoting human rights and contributing to a culture of justice and tolerance."

"We regard this decision as a further consolidation of the Lebanese Government's positive opening towards human rights," he added.

Amnesty International, a world-wide human rights organization with more than one million members in more than 150 countries, already has regional offices in the Americas (Costa Rica), Africa (Kampala) and Asia (Hong Kong). Its Beirut office, which will serve the Middle East, will focus initially on programs for human rights education and awareness and in providing training in various fields.

The go-ahead for a deconcentrated office in Beirut was initially given during a visit in November 1999 of Amnesty International delegates, who had meetings with the Prime Minister, Salim el-Huss; Deputy Prime-Minister and Minister of the Interior, Michel el-Murr; and Education Minister Mohammed Youssef Beidun.

Members of Amnesty International seek to assist in human rights promotion or education work and also take part in international activities on behalf of human rights worldwide. In order to safeguard the human rights organization's impartiality, its members are not permitted to conduct research or make public statements on the human rights situation in their own country.  
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