

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 18/15/97

16 May 1997

Further information on UA 300/96 (MDE 18/06/96, 23 December 1996) and follow-ups (MDE 18/07/96, 30 December, MDE 18/08/96, 31 December, MDE 18/01/97, 7 January 1997) - Fear of Torture/Legal Concern and new concern: Fear of unfair trial

LEBANON Pierre 'Attallah, aged 34

On 14 May 1997, a military magistrate demanded between three and 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour for journalist Pierre 'Attallah. No date has been set for the trial but it is thought to be imminent.

Pierre Attallah was arrested on 23 December 1996 and was released on bail on 6 January 1997.

Amnesty International is concerned that Pierre 'Attallah is reportedly being charged with contacting Israeli agents in Lebanon, (a charge frequently used by the Lebanese authorities against people suspected of political opposition). This relates to a published interview he conducted with Etienne Saqr, former head of the Guardians of the Cedar, in 1993, in his professional capacity as a journalist (see previous update). The indictment reportedly states that Pierre 'Attallah "published Saqr's ideas [such as] his opposition to the Lebanese government, to the Syrian presence in Lebanon and to Hizbullah". If Pierre 'Attallah is convicted on this charge Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience.

The organization is also concerned that Pierre 'Attallah will be tried before a military court which, by virtue of its procedures and lack of adequate judicial supervision as recently confirmed by the UN Human Rights Committee, does not guarantee that defendants receive fair trials.

Magistrate Riyad Talee' also reportedly charged Pierre 'Attallah with "distributing leaflets that incite strife, disturb Lebanon's relations with a friendly country [reference to Syria] and slander the army." Pierre 'Attallah denied this charge.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, French, English or in your own language:

- calling for the charges against Pierre 'Attallah that relate to his professional work as a journalist be dropped;
- expressing concern that Pierre 'Attallah is being tried before a military court without adequate safeguards for fair trial;
- requesting assurances that Pierre 'Attallah will receive a fair and prompt trial if he is charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency President Elias Hirawi
Office of the President
Ba'abda Palace
Ba'abda, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 425 393
Telegrams: President Hirawi, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Rafiq al-Hariri
Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and
Minister of Post and Telecommunications
Office of the Prime Minister
Grand Serail
Rue des Arts et Metiers
Sanayeh, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 200 469; +961 1 354 318
Telegrams: Prime Minister al-Hariri, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Bahij Tabbara
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Palais de Justice, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 422 957 (if voice ask for fax)
Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Michel Murr
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior
Office of the Prime Minister
Grand Serail
Rue des Arts et Metiers
Sanayeh, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 869 813
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Lebanon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 July 1997.