

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern/Fear of Torture/  
Fear of Ill-treatment

7 September 1992

**LEBANON: Mass arrest of suspected supporters of General Michel 'Aoun**

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Amnesty International is concerned about reports of the arbitrary arrest between 23 July and 29 August 1992 of scores of suspected supporters of General Michel 'Aoun and allegations that some of them have been tortured or ill-treated while in detention.

The organization has received the names of 50 men and women who were reportedly arrested without a warrant, many of them from their homes. The total number of those arrested is unknown, although some reports indicate that over 200 have been taken into custody. The majority are believed to be held at the Ministry of Defence building in Beirut. One of the young men released after being detained for two days has testified that he and many others were kept handcuffed and were severely beaten during interrogation by members of the military police.

He also alleges that he saw the detainees being systematically tortured by having their heads immersed in water and by being given electric shocks. Amnesty International fears that all those being detained are at risk of being tortured.

Following the reported arrest of 15 people on 23 July 1992 for distributing leaflets, Amnesty International wrote to the Lebanese Minister of Justice requesting details of the legal basis for their arrest and seeking assurances that they were not being held incommunicado. No reply has so far been received from the Lebanese authorities. Since then the organization has received the names of 35 other people reported to have been arrested between 23 and 29 August 1992, including six serving officers in the Lebanese armed forces. They are: Andre Rahall, Fayyad Koussa, Tony Abu Samra, Gaby Chamoun, Wilson Njaim and Michel Shlela.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

During the past two years there have been periodic arrests of supporters of General Michel 'Aoun, the former interim Prime Minister, whose forces were driven from their East Beirut bases by Syrian forces and Lebanese army units in October 1990. Many of those arrested in July 1991 were released without charge within a month, but at least four continue to be held while awaiting trial on charges including the distribution of leaflets and of non-violent activities in support of General 'Aoun. Some were reported to have been tortured and severely beaten.

The recent wave of arrests of 'Aoun supporters coincided with demonstrations calling for a boycott of the first general elections in Lebanon for 20 years, which were scheduled to begin on 22 August 1992. Some of the Christian opposition

parties had called for a postponement of the elections until after the agreed re-deployment of Syrian troops from Beirut and surrounding areas to eastern Lebanon in September 1992.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telexes/airmail letters either in French, English or in your own language:**

- expressing concern about reports of the arbitrary arrest between 23 July and 29 August 1992 and the continued detention without charge of suspected supporters of General 'Aoun;

- expressing concern at reports that some have been tortured or ill-treated while in detention;

**page 2 of UA 280/92**

- urging that immediate steps be taken to ensure that all detainees are protected from torture or ill-treatment;

- requesting that all allegations of torture be promptly and impartially investigated, that the findings be made public and that any official found responsible for such treatment be brought to justice;

- urging that all detainees be given prompt access to their families and lawyers;

- expressing concern that some of those detained may be prisoners of conscience and urging for the immediate and unconditional release of all those who are being held solely for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs;

- urging the authorities to release all detainees unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence within a reasonable time and given a prompt and fair trial.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President

His Excellency President Elias Hrawi  
Presidential Palace  
Ba'abda  
Beirut, Lebanon.

**Telexes: 21000**

**Salutation: His Excellency**

3) Minister of Justice

His Excellency Nasri al-Ma'luf  
Minister of Justice  
Rue Sami Solh  
Beirut, Lebanon

**Salutation: His Excellency**

2) Minister of the Interior

His Excellency General Sami  
al-Khatib  
Minister of the Interior  
Grand Serail  
rue des Arts et Métiers  
Sanayeh, Beirut, Lebanon

**Telexes: 20900**

**Salutation: His Excellency**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 10 October 1992.