

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: MDE 18/02/92

Distr: UA/SC

UA 385/92 Legal Concern/Fear of torture

7 December 1992

**LEBANON: Further arrests of suspected supporters of General Michel 'Aoun
including Antoine Samieh**

Amnesty International is concerned about reports of the arbitrary arrest of up to 200 people believed to be supporters of General Michel 'Aoun. At least 10 and possibly as many as 50 remain in detention. They may be prisoners of conscience and it is feared that they may be tortured or ill-treated.

The arrests are believed to have taken place shortly after the Independence Day celebrations on 22 November 1992. Amnesty International has received the names of 23 people reportedly arrested at this time, six of whom are known to have been released shortly afterwards. Of the other 17, Antoine Samieh is reported to have been hospitalized after torture in detention.

According to a Lebanese lawyer, about 10 of perhaps 50 Lebanese illegally detained in the Beirut district started a hunger strike on 30 November 1992 as a protest against their detention. The lawyer said that he had not been able to visit them and that he believed their detention was linked to their alleged involvement in printing and distributing a leaflet on the occasion of Lebanon's Independence Day which had called for Lebanon to become "truly independent" and for an end to the occupation of Lebanon by foreign forces.

On 2 December, the Lebanese Army issued a statement denouncing the practice of the clandestine distribution of political leaflets and the night time writing of slogans.

The army confirmed the detention of about 10 people who had, they alleged, financed and distributed leaflets which "incited a return to internal strife and which were prejudicial to the stability of the state." The statement also said that rumours about the conditions of detention, a hunger strike and ill-treatment of the detainees were an attempt to lead public opinion astray and would not deter the security forces from carrying out their duties.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the past 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 were arrested in July 1991 and 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, including by being severely beaten.

Another wave of arrests occurred between July and August 1992 (see UA 280/92, MDE 18/01/92 of 7 September 1992). There were allegations that some were tortured or ill-treated in detention. Many were released shortly after, but more than a dozen

are believed to be still held without charge or trial, including four serving officers in the Lebanese armed forces. In September, 19 cases were referred to the military prosecutor on charges of distributing leaflets and carrying out acts of sabotage.

Six were ordered released and the 13 others remanded pending further investigation.

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

- expressing concern at reports of the arbitrary arrest of up to 200 people on or around 22 November 1992;

Page 2 of UA 385/92

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

- asking for the reasons for these arrests and the current legal status of the detainees;

- expressing concern that supporters of General 'Aoun have reportedly been tortured or ill-treated in detention and urging that these and all other detainees be protected from torture or ill-treatment and asking for information on the situation of Antoine Samieh, who was reportedly hospitalized because of torture;

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

APPEALS TO

1) President Elias Hrawi
Presidential Palace
Ba'abda
Beirut
Lebanon

Salutation: His Excellency

Telegrams: President Hrawi, Beirut, Lebanon
Telexes: 21000

2) Bechara Murhej
Minister of the Interior
Grand Serail
rue des Arts et Métiers
Sanayeh, Beirut
Lebanon

Salutation: His Excellency

Telegrams: Interior Minister Murhej, Beirut, Lebanon
Telexes: 20900

3) Bahij Tabbareh
Minister of Justice
rue Sami Solh
Beirut
Lebanon

Salutation: His Excellency

Telegrams: Justice Minister Tabbareh, Beirut, Lebanon

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 18 January 1993.