

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Lebanon: Amnesty International condemns targeting of civilians**

Amnesty International condemns in the strongest terms yesterday's bomb attacks on two buses near the town of Bikfaya, a Christian area of Lebanon, north east of Beirut. At least three civilians are reported to have been killed and some 20 injured. Deliberate attacks on civilians can never be justified and those responsible show complete disregard for the most fundamental principles of humanity.

These deadly attacks on civilians represent a further deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon, which has become increasingly polarised, prompting fears of a possible slide towards a new conflict following the civil war which wracked the country from 1975 to 1990. During that conflict mass human rights violations were committed, including some 17,000 enforced disappearances and the killings of thousands of non-combatants.

Amnesty International is calling on political and other leaders in Lebanon urgently to take all possible steps to ensure that the killings of 13 February 2007 are not used as a licence for further violence and that those responsible for yesterday's attacks on civilians are arrested and brought to justice, promptly and fairly and without recourse to the death penalty.

Yesterday's bomb attacks were clearly intended to inflame current political tension. Today is the second anniversary of the killing of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who was killed with 22 others by a massive car-bomb in Beirut. The UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) into the assassination has implicated Syrian and Lebanese officials, and discussions over a proposed international tribunal to try the alleged perpetrators led to the resignation of six government ministers, provoking a political crisis.

Since early December 2006, thousands of demonstrators led by Hizbullah and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) have maintained a mass and largely peaceful protest in Beirut, in support of demands that Hizbullah and the FPM be given a greater role in the government. In the week beginning 24 January 2007 various political groups set up armed road-blocks, some seven people were killed, and scores of others injured or arrested. Earlier, on 21 November 2006 in Beirut, Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel of the Kataeb (Phalange) Party was shot dead by unknown assassins.

Tensions intensified in Lebanon in the aftermath of the summer war between Hizbullah and Israeli forces in which some 1,000 Lebanese civilians and 43 Israeli civilians were killed and tens of thousands of Lebanese homes and other civilian infrastructure were destroyed.

Amnesty International is urging political leaders to reach a framework for addressing the unresolved issues that have fuelled background grievances and suspicions, including over the international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the killing of al-Hariri, the composition of a new government and

forthcoming parliamentary elections. To be sustainable, any such agreements would need to be accompanied by both adoption in Lebanon of particular reforms of the justice system that Amnesty International has repeatedly called for, and also a wider, international law-based resolution to the regional instability that continues to destabilise and generate human rights violations in Lebanon. Amnesty International is calling upon all sides involved in the perilous situation in Lebanon not to allow a further escalation of violence and accompanying human rights abuses.