

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 03/98 (MDE 15/01/98), UA 130/98 (MDE 15/30/98), UA 268/98 (MDE 15/85/98), UA 186/99 (MDE 15/53/99), UA 247/99 (MDE 15/72/99), EXTRA 128/99 (MDE 15/69/99), EXTRA 130/99 (MDE 15/71/99), EXTRA 142/99 (MDE 15/50/99), UA 21/00 (MDE 15/04/00), UA 51/00 (MDE 15/06/00), UA 66/00 (MDE 15/04/00), UA 89/00 (MDE 15/16/00), UA 96/00 (MDE 15/19/00), UA 123 (MDE 15/25/00) - Fear of torture or ill-treatment/legal concern/fear for safety

ISRAEL/ SOUTH LEBANON Inmates of Khiam Detention Centre

All the 144 Lebanese men, women and even children who were detained as hostages in Khiam Detention Centre were freed on 23 May.

Khiam Detention Centre was the main detention and interrogation centre in Israeli-occupied south Lebanon, run by the South Lebanon Army (SLA), Israel's proxy militia. Detainees held there without charge or trial for up to 15 years were subjected to systematic torture, relentless interrogation through beatings, dousing with water and torture with electric shocks. For the past seven years detainees were cut off from the outside world, their families and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) denied access to them.

Amnesty International was told that after Israeli forces started to withdraw from South Lebanon, the people of Khiam town went to the detention centre demanding that the prisoners were released. The SLA jailers, after negotiating a safe passage, left to join other SLA members streaming to the border to seek refuge in Israel.

The detainees, hearing shouting and shooting in the air, at first feared that people were being executed. One of those now free told an Amnesty International team in Khiam: *"We got close to the window in our cell to try to hear better as we did not understand what was happening. There was shouting and we heard shooting. Then we saw a boy out of the window. He said 'where is the door'? We knew then we were free"*. The people of Khiam then broke down the doors using what tools they could find.

While in Khiam, Amnesty International delegates were able to show the freed prisoners some of the hundreds of letters from Urgent Action network members that the Israeli authorities had claimed they could not deliver to the SLA. This international solidarity will be essential as those detained in Khiam start to rebuild their lives. Amnesty International has already seen how this solidarity does have an effect as prisoners learn that people from different countries, including countries they associated with their tormentors, had been campaigning on their behalf for many years.

Although Urgent Action appeals are thankfully no longer needed for the detainees of Khiam, work must continue to ensure that those guilty of the crimes, including torture, committed in Khiam are brought to justice in fair trials and that practical and psychological support is given to those who are now free.

For more information see: AI news service *Amnesty International welcomes Khiam releases...*, (23 May 2000, MDE 02/05/00) and *"Where is the door?" Letter from an Amnesty International delegation visiting Khiam detention centre in South Lebanon* (30 May 2000, MDE 18/08/00).

No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.