

UA 54/99

Fear of t**ISRAEL/SOUTH LEBANON 'Adel Muhammad Yunes, aged 30, serving in the South Lebanon Army and at least two others**

At least three Lebanese nationals have reportedly been arrested in south Lebanon by either the Israeli security forces or the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Amnesty International fears they could be subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

'Adel Muhammad Yunes and two other SLA soldiers have been interrogated in the past few days, according to SLA sources. About 40 other detained Druze residents who had been arrested have now been released. Israel has only admitted that some residents of south Lebanon have been arrested and has not provided details of their identities. The arrests appear to be linked to last month's defection to Lebanon of a Druze SLA officer, Khaled Munzer.

Amnesty International believes these Lebanese nationals have been either taken to Israel, where they could be held for months in incommunicado detention without access to lawyers or delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), or to the Khiam Detention Centre in south Lebanon, where detainees are also frequently tortured or ill-treated and have been held for up to 13 years without charge or trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Methods of torture used by the Israeli security forces against captured Lebanese nationals appear to be even more severe than those routinely used against Palestinian detainees.

A Lebanese national, 'Ali Banjak, who was abducted by the SLA in Lebanon in 1996 and handed over to the Israeli security forces, described being punched and with clubs all over his body, including his testicles; being dropped several times onto a vertical stick, causing terrible pain to his lower body; interrogated while on a 10 centimetre high chair and forced to look into a bright light; being semi-starved and threatened with the death of his family or being branded a collaborator. He was acquitted by the Lod Military Tribunal in Israel in April 1998 of membership of *Hizbullah*, an armed militia which works against Israel and the SLA's occupation of the "security zone".

Those tortured by the SLA have described being beaten or whipped while sprayed with hot or cold water and being given electric shocks. There are presently thought to be around 130 detainees at Khiam Detention Centre, including women and children.

Although Israel asserts that it is not responsible for the actions of the SLA and the operation of Khiam Detention Centre, it is the occupying power in south Lebanon and therefore has ultimate responsibility.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/e-mails/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Hebrew or your own language to the Israeli authorities, and in English, Arabic, French or your own language to the South Lebanon Army:

- seeking assurances that the Lebanese nationals arrested in recent days will not be subjected to any form of torture or ill-treatment, as required by Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment";

- urging Israel and the SLA to immediately disclose the identities and place of detention of these detainees;
- calling for these detainees to be given immediate and regular access to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a lawyer of their own choice and their families, in accordance with international human rights standards and humanitarian law;
- calling for their immediate release if they are not to be promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence, in which case they should be tried according to international standards for a fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

Binyamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, 3 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Jerusalem 91007, Israel

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Jerusalem, Israel

e-mail: feedback@pmo.gov.il

Faxes: + 972 2 566 4838

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

General Yitzhak Mordechai, Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence

7 'A' Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Telegrams: Defence Minister, Tel Aviv, Israel

Faxes: + 972 3 697 6218

Salutation: Dear Minister

General Antoine Lahad, South Lebanon Army

c/o Lieutenant-General Shaul Mufaz, Chief of General Staff

7 'A' Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Telegrams: General Lahad, c/o Chief General Staff, Tel Aviv, Israel

Faxes: + 972 3 691 6940 (write c/o Lieutenant-General Shaul Mufaz, Chief of General Staff)

Salutation: Dear General Lahad

and to diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 May 1999.