

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/54/97
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Middle East Regional Program
Date: 10 September 1997

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Three imprisoned women
ISRAEL / SOUTH LEBANON**

Keywords

Theme: sick prisoners / access to medical care

Summary

AI is concerned about three women aged 17, 19 and 45 currently held at Khiam detention centre in south Lebanon. Please see the details attached. AI is seeking to ensure that they receive whatever medical care they require and that they are released unless they are to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

o saying that you are writing about the cases of Munifa 'Abd al-Hussein Yahya, aged 45, Hanan Hussein Musa, aged 19, and Huda Hamada, aged 17, currently held in Khiam Detention Centre in south Lebanon

o expressing concern that all three appear to have health problems

o asking to be informed of the current state of health of the women, and of the medical care, if any, they are receiving

o seeking information about reports that female prisoners taken to Marjayoun hospital are handcuffed and hooded

o seeking information about the reason for the arrests of the three women

o urging that they be released unless they are to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence

Addresses

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

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Faxes: + 972 3 691 7915 Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

General Yitzhak Mordechai
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
7 'A' Street, Kakir, Tel Aviv,
Israel

Faxes: + 972 3 697 6218 Salutation: Dear Minister

Copies of letters should be sent to:

General Antoine Lahad
South Lebanon Army
Marjayoun
South Lebanon
Via Israel
Telegrams: General Lahad, SLA, Marjayoun, via Israel
Salutation: Dear General

and to diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

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ISRAEL / SOUTH LEBANON

At least seven women are currently held in Kham Detention Centre in the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in south Lebanon. The centre is controlled by the South Lebanon Army (SLA) which is linked to, and supported by, Israel.

Among those held are three women currently in need of medical care. They are:

● **Munifa 'Abd al Hussein Yahya, aged 45, from the village of Rab Thalatin**

She has been detained in Kham Detention Centre since August 1996 with two of her sons (one aged 16) who were arrested in July 1996. AI does not have details of the reasons for their arrest. Mrs Munifa Yahya is reported to be suffering from digestive problems and is reported to have stomach ulcers. Although she is believed to have been advised to eat food in liquid form (e.g. soup) her diet comprises potatoes and beans. When she has been taken to Marjayoun Hospital (some 15 km away from Kham) she was, like other detainees taken to hospital, kept handcuffed to the bed and hooded. It is believed that her medication is not always provided by the hospital due to shortages.

Mrs Munifa Yahya, who has four children still at home, was breast-feeding her youngest infant at the time of her arrest.

● **Hanan Hussein Musa, aged 19, from the village of 'Adisa**

Hanan Musa was arrested on 19 July 1996 and taken to Kham Detention Centre. She is reported to suffer from tuberculosis though no details are available of her treatment or the current state of her infection. She is said to be vomiting food and to be fed intravenously.

● **Huda Hamada, born 1980, from the village of Marun al Ra's**

Huda Hamada was arrested on 10 July 1997, the day after the arrest of her fiancé, Ghassan 'Ali 'Issa. She is reported to suffer from epilepsy and to not have had any medication with her at the time of her arrest. She is reported to have been held isolated from other prisoners. AI does not know whether she is currently receiving appropriate medical care.

In none of the above cases have charges been pressed. Amnesty International is urging that the women be released unless they are to be charged with a recognisable offense and is seeking assurances that they will receive all necessary medical care.

Background

At present at 130 detainees are believed to be held in Kham Detention Centre under the control of the SLA. The camp is built on a hill overlooking the town of Kham. Inside a complex first built by the French in the 1930s, new detention and interrogation facilities have been built. There are cells whose only light comes through ventilation holes in the ceiling, isolation cells, interrogation rooms and communal cells.

Some detainees have been held in Khiam for more than 12 years without charge or trial. For nine years following the establishment of Khiam as a detention and interrogation centre detainees were not permitted access to lawyers, independent medical attention, judges or to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Between 1987 and 1995 they were not even allowed access to their families. They were denied the right of prompt judicial review of the lawfulness of their detention. Eleven detainees have died in Khiam, some of them after torture, others because of lack of medical treatment. Other prisoners have been released after years of torture and incommunicado detention with serious physical or mental illnesses.

Israel is the occupying power in the "security zone" and has a responsibility under the Geneva Conventions for those taken prisoner within the territory it occupies. If the status in international law of the detainees in Khiam is not to be clarified, they should be immediately released.

Detainees interviewed by AI following their release almost invariably describe torture in the weeks after their detention and repeated ill-treatment, including beatings, during the whole of their stay in the detention centre. The torture methods reportedly included electric shocks; suspension from poles, usually with only the toes touching the ground; beating, sometimes after the body is doused in water; and threats of rape of wives and female relatives. For the first period of detention, for between 10 days and two months, prisoners were usually held in solitary confinement in a cell 90cm by 90cm in which it was impossible to stand or lie, and to sleep detainees had to sit with their feet on the wall. After this detainees were usually held six to a cell measuring 2.5m by 2.5m. They were allowed outside for 15 minutes every one or two weeks. They had no access to their families or the ICRC between 1988 and 1995. Detainees were allegedly given inadequate food rations and beaten when they prayed until a riot in 1989, during which two prisoners, Bilal al-Salman and Ibrahim Abu 'Azz, were killed. According to released detainees, conditions improved after the ICRC was allowed access in 1995.



Huda Hamada with her fiancé Ghassan 'Ali 'Issa.
Both are held in Khiam Detention Centre.