

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 18/04/97

UA 28/97 "Disappearance" / Fear of Torture / Health Concern 28 January 1997

LEBANON Gabi 'Aql Karam, born 1958

Gabi 'Aql Karam is being held at an unknown location where Amnesty International fears he may be facing torture. Concern for his well-being is heightened by the fact that he suffers from a back injury and psychological problems, reportedly as a result of torture in Syria in 1994 (see below).

Four officers, reportedly from the Lebanese intelligence forces, arrested Gabi 'Aql Karam from his home in Sin al-Fil at 9.15am on 6 January 1997. They took him away in a civilian car, a navy blue Honda. Two of the officers were armed and wearing police uniforms, and the other two were in civilian clothing. They reportedly did not have an arrest warrant.

It is not known if Gabi 'Aql Karam has been charged or if he has access to medical treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gabi 'Aql Karam is married and has a son and two daughters aged 15, 14 and 10. He is unemployed due to his back injury. His mother, who works in a bakery, supports his family.

Gabi Karam was previously arrested in 1994 in a wave of arrest of hundreds of suspected political opponents. He was charged with at least 15 others with having supplied Israel and the USA with information. He was allegedly tortured in Syria where he spent six weeks before being returned to Lebanon. He served 18 months in prison in Lebanon following a sentence that was apparently based on statements made in incommunicado detention. He was also reportedly denied access to a lawyer and a doctor, and was released on 28 June 1995. (See UA 68/94, MDE 18/01/94 and update MDE 18/09/94, and AI 1995 annual report)

Gabi Karam's wife, Halla al-Haj, was reportedly detained in Syria for seven years. She was arrested in Lebanon in 1989 or 1990 and was recently released. Amnesty International does not have information about the reasons for her detention.

The transfer of political detainees for questioning from Lebanon to Syria is not uncommon, but is a practise that is not publicly acknowledged by officials in Syria and Lebanon. Amnesty International receives numerous allegations of torture from Lebanese and other Arab prisoners who were transferred to Syria.

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

- requesting information about the current whereabouts and any charges against Gabi 'Aql Karam, arrested in Sin al-Fil on 6 January 1997;
- seeking assurances that he is not being subjected to torture and that he will receive adequate medical treatment if necessary;
- calling for his immediate release unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence. You may remind the Lebanese Government of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR, to which Lebanon is a State Party: "*Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him*";
- calling for him to have access to his family and a lawyer of his choosing. You may draw the attention of the Lebanese Government to the United Nation's

Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, General Assembly Resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988, adopted without a vote: "... communication of the detained or imprisoned person with the outside world, and in particular his family or counsel, shall not be denied for more than a matter of days".

APPEALS TO:

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Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Rafiq al-Hariri
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His Excellency Bahij Tabbara
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
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Fax: +961 1 422 957 (if voice ask for fax)
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Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Michel Murr
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior
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COPIES TO:

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and 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 20 March 1997.