

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 164/94 Death in custody / Fear of torture

26 April 1994

LEBANON

Fawzi al-Rasi
Hanna 'Atiq
Fu'ad Malek and about 17 others

Amnesty International is concerned about the death in custody of one detainee and the hospitalization of another, both held at Ministry of Defence in Yarzeh.

The organization fears that both events may have been the result of torture and that other detainees may be at risk of torture.

Fawzi al-Rasi, in his early thirties, reportedly died in custody on 22 April.

Official sources are reported to have said that he suffered a heart attack in the Ministry of Defence in Yarzeh where he was being held for interrogation.

He was transferred to hospital where he died in intensive care. An autopsy is reported to have been carried out to determine the cause of death, but reports indicate that Fawzi al-Rasi's family was not allowed to see or examine the body.

Another detainee, Hanna 'Atiq, also in his thirties, is reported to be in intensive care in hospital after spending about two weeks in interrogation in the Ministry of Defence.

Both men are members of the Lebanese Forces, an ex-militia turned into a political party. About 20 members of the Lebanese Forces are reported to be held in the Ministry of Defence for interrogation in connection with the bombing of a church on 27 February 1994 in which at least 10 people died. Some are also held in connection with earlier crimes. The Lebanese Forces has since been banned by the government.

Among those held are Samir Geagea, the head of the Lebanese Forces, and Fu'ad Malek, the second-in-command. Fu'ad Malek was arrested on 23 March and has been held in the Ministry of Defence since then. According to reports, during the early days of his detention he was kept in a very small cell where he could only stand, and was subjected to sleep deprivation. No charges have apparently been brought against him yet.

Amnesty International has expressed concern on a number of occasions at reports of torture in Lebanon, most of them in the Ministry of Defence. It is calling for a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the death of Fawzi al-Rasi, which should be carried out in accordance with the UN Principles on Extra-Legal, Summary and Arbitrary Executions. It is also seeking information about the health of Hana 'Atiq and the reasons for his hospitalization as well as assurances that all detainees are being treated in accordance with international standards which forbid any kind of torture or ill-treatment.

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

- expressing concern about the death in custody of Fawzi al-Rasi;
- calling for a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into his death.

The methods and results of this investigation, which should be compatible with the UN Principles on Extra-legal, Summary and Arbitrary Executions, should be made public;

- asking to be informed about Hanna 'Atiq's state of health, including medical reports on the reasons for his hospitalization;

- urging that all detainees be treated in accordance with international standards which forbid torture or ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO

1. Rafik Hariri
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Beirut
Lebanon

Telegrams: Prime Minister Hariri, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

3. Mohsen Dalloul
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
Yarzeh, Beirut
Lebanon

Telegrams: Defence Minister Dalloul, Beirut, Lebanon
Telexes: 20901
Salutation: Your Excellency

3. General Emile Lahoud
Commander-in-Chief of the Army
C/o Ministry of Defence
Yarzeh, Beirut
Lebanon

Telegrams: Commander in Chief Lahoud, Beirut, Lebanon
Telexes: 20901
Salutation: Your Excellency

4. Bahige Tabbarah
Minister of Justice
rue Sami Solh
Beirut
Lebanon

Telegrams: Justice Minister Tabbarah, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 7 June 1994.