

UA 192/98

Fear of Torture

7 July 1998

LEBANON Kayid Khattar 'Eid

George Tanyus al-Hilu
Nadir Nasri Daw
Firas Hannah Rahmah, policeman
Bassam Antoine Harb
Wadi Adib al-Khuri
Nabil Jirjis Khatir
Tony Tawfiq Rahmah
George Sami al-Birqashi
Elie 'Aql Rahmah, policeman
Camille Muhib Yarid, army captain

Eleven Lebanese nationals are being held in incommunicado detention, reportedly in the Ministry of Defence, and may have been tortured and ill-treated.

The Lebanese authorities stated on 3 July 1998 that the detainees had confessed to plotting to assassinate the Interior Minister, Michel al-Murr, and Water and Electric Resources Minister, Elias Hobeika. The authorities said the detainees had also confessed, among other things, to blowing up Syrian and Lebanese taxi stands, attacking a Syrian bus in Tabarjah, north of Beirut, and killing its driver and detonating an explosive device at Syrian Nationalist Party offices in Northern Matn. Amnesty International fears that these confessions may have been extracted under duress.

The detainees are also accused of belonging to the unauthorized Lebanese Forces and forming a "sabotage ring".

In the past detainees in the Ministry of Defence have suffered from torture. The alleged confessions of the above detainees may have been extracted in contravention of Article 12 of the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Former detainees at the Ministry of Defence have stated they were routinely tortured during interrogation. Methods of torture include electric shocks, food and sleep deprivation, the *Ballanco* (hanging by the wrists, which are tied behind the back), in addition to threats and use of abusive language.

Members of the Lebanese Forces have been tortured in the past while held by the Lebanese military intelligence at the Ministry of Defence; among them was Fawzi al-Rasi who died in custody in 1994 reportedly as a result of torture. The Lebanese authorities have failed to investigate past allegations of torture and to bring perpetrators to justice. Confessions extracted under duress have often been used as the main evidence in trials of political detainees.

Amnesty International does not condone violence and acknowledges a government's responsibility to bring perpetrators of violence to justice. However, the organisation opposes torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees in all cases and calls on the Lebanese authorities to ensure that the treatment of detainees conforms with Lebanese law and international human rights instruments to which Lebanon is a state party.

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

- expressing concern that the detainees may have been coerced to confess to offences under duress;
- stating that Amnesty International does not condone acts of violence and recognizes the Lebanese authorities responsibility to bring those charged with violence to justice, but that this should be carried out according to international law and the Lebanese Code of Criminal procedure;
- requesting that the detainees be well-treated and be given immediate access to lawyers and families;
- reminding the Lebanese authorities that confessions extracted under duress are inadmissible as evidence against the detainees.

APPEALS TO:

President Elias Hrawi
Presidential Palace
Ba'abda, Beirut
Lebanon

Telegrams: President Hrawi, Beirut, Lebanon
Faxes: + 961 1 425 393
Telexes: 21000
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Bahij Tabbara
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Rue Sami Solh
Beirut
Lebanon

Telegrams: Minister Tabbara, Beirut, Lebanon
Faxes: + 961 1 422 957
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Mohsen Dalloul
Minister of National Defence
Ministry of Defence
Yarze, Beirut
Lebanon

Telexes: 20901
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Mr Nasri Lahud
Government Commissioner at the Military Court
Ministry of Defence
Yarze, Beirut
Lebanon

Telexes: 20901

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 18 August 1998.