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LEBANON: "LEBANESE FORCES" TRIAL SERIOUSLY FLAWED

The trial of Samir Geagea, leader of the banned *Lebanese Forces*, and 12 others for the 1990 killing of National Liberal Party leader Dany Chamoun and his family was seriously flawed, Amnesty International said today.

In the verdict issued today by the Court of Justice, Lebanon's highest court, Samir Geagea was sentenced to death, but this was reduced to life imprisonment with hard labour. Camille Hanna Karam was sentenced to one year in prison and Rafiq Salim Sa'adeh was acquitted. Of ten others tried *in absentia*, eight were sentenced to prison terms of between life imprisonment and 10 years with hard labour.

The trial began in November 1994 and ran concurrently with another trial in which Samir Geagea and eight others (six *in absentia*) were accused of the bombing of a church in February 1994 which killed at least 10 people.

"We are awaiting a copy of the full verdict which we will study carefully. However, we are concerned that important aspects of this trial did not meet international standards for fair trial," Amnesty International said. These include:

- reports of torture or ill-treatment of detainees which do not appear to have been investigated. This is all the more important in light of reports that statements introduced as evidence may have been given under duress.
- reports that detainees held in connection with both cases were denied prompt access to families and lawyers. In Amnesty International's experience, such conditions facilitate torture and ill-treatment.
- the lack of right to a judicial review of the conviction and sentence, in contravention of the principle set forth in Article 14(5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Lebanon acceded in 1972.

The human rights organization urges the Lebanese authorities to ensure those convicted are provided with a full judicial review of their convictions and sentences. It further calls on the Lebanese Government to introduce into legislation such a judicial review in cases tried by the Court of Justice, particularly since this court may sentence people to death.

Amnesty International is calling on the Lebanese authorities once again to ensure that no one in custody is tortured or ill-treated; to fully investigate all allegations of torture; to bring to justice anyone found responsible for torture or ill-treatment; and to provide safeguards from torture or ill-treatment for detainees, including a clear division between the authorities responsible for interrogation and custody of detainees in all cases. As an additional safeguard against torture or ill-treatment, all detainees should be allowed immediate and frequent access to lawyers, doctors and relatives, as well as prompt judicial review of their detention.

ENDS/