

UA 300/96

Fear of torture

23 December 1996

LEBANON Members of opposition groups - dozens of people arrested from 18 to 21 December 1996

Lebanese security forces have arrested dozens of people, mostly from Christian opposition groups, following armed attacks on Syrian targets in Lebanon on 18 December 1996. A number of reports of torture during interrogation have been received. One man arrested and later released, Charbel Shami, was reportedly suspended from his arms for many hours during interrogation and there are reports that a second person who was released, George Fayyad, is currently receiving treatment in hospital after being beaten on the head and subjected to electric shocks during interrogation.

Amnesty International fears that those still detained may be subjected to torture to extract confessions and information. Arrests were reportedly made without warrants and detainees have not been allowed access to lawyers.

Amnesty International does not condone acts of violence and acknowledges the right and responsibility of the Lebanese Government to bring perpetrators of such acts to justice. However, Amnesty International opposes torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees in all cases and calls on the Lebanese authorities to ensure that the treatment of those detained conforms with international standards.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 18 December 1996 a Syrian mini-bus was attacked by gunshots in the mainly Christian town of Tabarja, north of Beirut. The driver, Mussa al-Hamrein, was killed, and a passenger, Muhammad Helwa, was wounded. On the same day two bombings were reported in Tripoli and Antelias, wounding six people. Leaflets opposing the Syrian presence in Lebanon were reportedly distributed in the towns of al-Batroun, al-Metn, Jbeil, and Kisrawan. Syria maintains a force of 35,000 troops in Lebanon. Dozens of people were arrested in the four days following those incidents. Some were released after interrogation and the rest are believed to be still detained at the Ministry of Defence.

According to news reports, Prosecutor General 'Adnan 'Addoum said on 21 December 1996 that the detentions were legal and followed activities by "disruptive elements" who wanted to harm Lebanon's ties with friendly countries, (reference to Syria), and who were suspected of involvement in violence. The activities included "... armed attacks against civilians with hand grenades and firing machine guns at a van carrying Syrian workers ... distributing leaflets attacking state officials and inciting sectarian strife." He added that none of the detainees had been formally charged and that many had been released on 20 December 1996.

Opposition sources in Lebanon estimate the number of detainees to have reached 200. They also claim that some were accused of belonging to a pro-Israeli network in Lebanon. Those arrested include followers of the exiled Christian leader Michel 'Aoun, members of the banned Lebanese Forces headed by Samir Geagea, and members of the National Liberal Party headed by Dory Cham'oun.

Amnesty International has sent letters to the Ministers of Justice and Interior in Lebanon on 20 December 1996 expressing concern over the allegations of torture.

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

- making it clear that you do not condone acts of violence and respect the Lebanese Government's responsibility to bring perpetrators to justice;
- stating your concern over allegations of torture during interrogation of some of those arrested between 18 and 21 December in connection with the attacks on Syrian targets;
- calling on the Lebanese Government to ensure that torture allegations will be promptly investigated and that the remaining detainees will be protected from acts of torture;
- reminding the Lebanese Government of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Lebanon is a state party, in particular Article 7: *"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"*;
- asking the Lebanese Government to ensure that all detainees are permitted access to their lawyers, families and medical treatment where necessary.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency President Elias Hirawi
Office of the President
Ba'abda Palace
Ba'abda, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 425 393
Tel: +961 1 220 000
Telegrams: President Hirwai, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Rafiq al-Hariri
Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and
Minister of Post and Telecommunications
Office of the Prime Minister
Grand Serail
Rue des Arts et Metiers
Sanayeh, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 200 469
+961 1 354 318
Tel: +961 1 221 000
Telegrams: Prime Minister al-Hariri, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Bahij Tabbara
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Palais de Justice, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 422 957 (say fax please)
Tel: +961 1 422 956
Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Michel Murr
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

Office of the Prime Minister
Grand Serail
Rue des Arts et Metiers
Sanayeh, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Fax: +961 1 869 813
Tel: +961 1 369 135
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 12 February 1997.

LIST OF NAMES OF SOME DETAINEES REPORTEDLY ARRESTED BETWEEN 18 AND 21 DECEMBER 1996:

Michel Touq
Mansour Touq
Charbel Mattar
Elie Kayrouz
Fadi al-Shamati
Riad Sam'an
Charbel 'Aql
George 'Assi
Charles Rustom
Michel Kayrouz
Antoine Abou Jaoude
Fouad Abou Musleh
Elie Hadchiti
Sami Rahme
Antoine Bared
Pierre Dagher
Charbel Nakad
Roland Touq
Joseph Ghosn
Ghassan Abu Nader
Samir Tayeh
Ziyad 'Abss
Elie Hashem
'Abbad Zouein
Nabil Teyan
Ass'ad 'Abboud
'Atef 'Eid
Joseph Khater
Pierre al-Qazzah
Jan 'Aqouri
Ne'mat-allah al-Barid
Shawqi Dakkash
Elie Salibi
Pierre Jabour
Nader Nader
George al-'Allam
Ronnie Haddad
Bassam al- Bassbouss
Aghnatiou al-'Allam
Nabil Abu al-Nasr
George Rahme
Walid Sulieman
George Touq
Tony Rahme
Jan Khouri
Charbel Boulos (released)
Francois Abi Tayeh (released)
Youssef al-Andry (released)
George Fayyad (released)
Charbel Sami (released)