

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 168/97

Fear of torture / Legal concern

15 December 1997

LEBANON Hikmat Dib, engineer, member of the Engineers' Union
Georges Haddad, lawyer
Tony Harb, lawyer
Dani Aoun
Rabi' Trabulsi
Patrick Khouri, businessman
Wadi' Chukaib Ghurtubawi, trainee lawyer
Georges 'Attallah
Toni Munayber
Shafiq Sassin
Wasim Sa'b
Toni 'Attiq
Ziyad 'Absi, engineer
Elias Nimr Haddad
Elane Germani
Pierre Hayek
George Soma
Rita Kirouz
Bassam Latif
Nazar Khouri
Gilber Chahine
Rahi Sam'an
Michel Kirouz
Husam 'Unaysi

And many others

The people named above, and many others, were reportedly arrested by the Lebanese security forces in east Beirut on 14 December 1997 as they demonstrated in front of the MTV television station. Amnesty International fears they may face torture or ill-treatment while held incommunicado. The organization is also concerned that they may have been detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

The demonstrators were protesting against the Lebanese authorities' decision to ban the broadcast of a live MTV interview with former Lebanese army commander General Michel 'Aoun. The protestors were reportedly confronted by hundreds of police and security forces who appear to have used excessive force against the demonstrators including the use of batons, tear gas and water canons. A number of demonstrators reportedly suffered injuries, including George Attallah who reportedly had his leg broken, and Patrick Khouri who reportedly sustained bruises and was taken to hospital. One of the detainees, Kikmat Dib, has been detained and reportedly tortured in the past.

The arrests appear not to have followed the normal judicial procedures required by Lebanese law as it seems that they were not ordered by a prosecutor or examining magistrate. Some of the detainees are reportedly being held in al-Hulu barracks prison in Beirut.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A live interview with General Michel 'Aoun, former Lebanese army commander, which was scheduled to be broadcast by MTV on 14 December, was barred by the Minister of information Bassem al-Sab', who reportedly said the broadcast was

harmful to Lebanon's "national peace" and "reconciliation", and its relations with other countries.

General Michel Aoun, who headed an interim military government between 1988-1990, was critical of Syria's military presence in Lebanon. He was later ousted from the Presidential Palace by a joint Syrian-Lebanese force and sought refuge in the French Embassy in Beirut. He currently lives in exile in France.

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

- calling for the immediate release of the above detainees unless they are charged with recognizably criminal offences and brought to fair trial according to international standards;
- demanding that the detainees be allowed unrestricted access to their families and lawyers and to any medical attention they may need;
- seeking assurances that these detainees are being held in accordance with provisions of the Lebanese law and are being protected from any form of torture or ill-treatment;
- protesting against the reported excessive use of force by the Lebanese security forces on 14 December.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency President Elias al-Hrawi
Office of the President
Ba'abda Palace
Ba'abda, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Faxes: +961 1 425 393
Telegrams: President, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Rafiq al-Hariri
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Grand Serail
Rue des Arts et Metiers
Sanayeh, Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Faxes: +961 1 354 318
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Michel al-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
Faxes: +961 1 869 813
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Beirut, Lebanon
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Mr. Adnan Addoum
Prosecutor General
Palais de Justice
Beirut
Republic of Lebanon
Faxes: +961 1 423 790

Mr Antoine Aqlimous
President, Bar Association
Palais de Justice
Beirut, Lebanon
Faxes: + 961 1 602 329

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 January 1998.