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Lebanon: Death in custody and torture claims must be investigated

The Lebanese authorities must conduct a full investigation into the death in custody of Nader al-Bayoumi, a 35-year-old man detained following armed clashes between the Lebanese army and fighters supporting the Sunni Muslim cleric Sheikh Ahmed al-Asseer in Sidon, south Lebanon, last month, said Amnesty International. In a new briefing published today the organization also detailed allegations of torture and mistreatment of others arrested - including a child.

Amnesty International has seen images of Nader al-Bayoumi's body, which bore signs of horrific abuse. A forensic pathologist who reviewed the images concluded that the bruising on the body was consistent with assault and suggested internal haemorrhage was a possible cause of death.

"The obscurity surrounding al-Bayoumi's death, whose body was handed over three days after his arrest, is unacceptable. An immediate, independent and transparent investigation into his case is crucial," said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme Director.

The organization has also collected testimonies of at least three detainees who described being tortured by the Lebanese army and intelligence. One, a 15-year-old boy, said he suffered electrocution and was beaten with a belt and a stick before being forced into signing a false confession.

"The reports of torture are highly disturbing; all detainees must be protected and granted access to a lawyer and any necessary medical care," Philip Luther said.

Two other men, aged 22 and 23, were arrested at army checkpoints before being abused in custody. One told how he was beaten by soldiers and had a cigarette stubbed out on his lower back, before an officer stamped on his face. Later his head was also squeezed between a wall and metal cupboard.

After their torture, two of the detainees were forced to sign statements which they had not been allowed to read. None of the detainees was brought before a court, granted adequate legal representation or allowed to contact their family. All three were subsequently released.