

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 18/009/2002

15 July 2002

Further information on UA 202/01 (MDE 18/012/2001, 9 August 2001) - Possible prisoners of conscience/ Fear of torture/ Legal Concern

LEBANON **Tawfiq al-Hindi (m), leading member of the Lebanese Forces Party (LFP)**
Nadim Latif (m), leading member of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)
Over 150 other political activists

Tawfiq al-Hindi, a leading member of the unauthorized Lebanese Forces Party (LFP), was sentenced to 15 months in prison by the Military Court of Appeal on 11 July. At a separate trial on 10 July, the Military Court in Beirut acquitted Nadim Latif, a leading member of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), of all charges including "defamation of the Syrian Army".

Following an unfair trial in March, the Military Court found Tawfiq al-Hindi guilty of "contacting" Israel and "providing the enemy with information detrimental to Lebanon's relations with its neighbours". He was allegedly tortured and ill-treated in order to make him "confess" to the charges, which he later denied before the Military Court of Appeals.

Amnesty International issued a public statement expressing concern at the allegations of torture and ill-treatment of Tawfiq al-Hindi and his co-defendants, journalists Antoine Bassil and Habib Yunes during their pre-trial incommunicado detention. (See NS 45; MDE 18/004/2002; 13 March 2002). Most of those arrested by military intelligence, as part of a mass round-up of LFP and FPM members in August 2001 have been released.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International considers the procedures of the Military Court and the Military Court of Appeal to be deeply flawed. Both are under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Defense and have procedures which seriously fall short of international standards for fair trial.

Only one in four judges in the Military Court is a civilian and the President of the court is always a military officer. The Military Court of Appeal always has a civilian judge as the president and four military officers as members. Proceedings which are often summary, are not subject to independent judicial review.

Before trials, violations of procedures such as arrests without warrants, incommunicado detention and torture at the hands of the security forces are frequent occurrences.

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. We will now use longer-term campaigning methods on behalf of Tawfiq al-Hindi and his co-defendants. If possible, please send a final round of appeals in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern at the unfair trial of Tawfiq al-Hindi;
- urging the authorities to launch an independent and impartial investigation into Tawfiq al-Hindi's allegations of torture and ill-treatment;
- stating that confessions extracted under duress are inadmissible and reminding the authorities of their obligations under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- seeking assurance that Tawfiq al-Hindi is being well-treated while held in prison.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency President Emile Lahoud
Office of the President
Ba'abda Palace

Ba'abda, Beirut
Lebanon

Telegram: President Lahoud, Beirut, Lebanon

Fax: + 961 1 425 393

Telex: 21000

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Samir Jisr
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Rue Sami Solh
Beirut
Lebanon

Telegram: Justice Minister, Beirut, Lebanon

Fax: + 961 1 611 142 (It may be difficult to get through to this number,
but please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Judge 'Adnan 'Addoum
Prosecutor General
Palace of Justice
Beirut
Lebanon

Fax: + 961 1 611 142

Salutation: Dear Judge 'Adnan 'Addoum

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 26 August 2002.