

UA 202/01

Possible prisoners of conscience/Fear of Torture/Legal concern 9 August 2001

LEBANON

**Tawfiq al-Hindi, leading member of the Lebanese Forces party  
Nadim Latif, leading member of Free Patriotic Movement  
Over 150 other political activists**

Scores of members of outlawed opposition parties, including students and teenagers, have been arrested by military intelligence over the last three days. All are said to be detained incommunicado, and they are at risk of torture and unfair trial.

Among those arrested for alleged involvement in anti-government activities and opposing the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon are Tawfiq al-Hindi, a senior member of the Lebanese Forces (LF) and Nadim Latif, a leading member of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM). Arrests are said to be continuing, in what appears to be a mass roundup of LF and FDM members. Scores of young men and women have been arrested, reportedly at their homes or while they were distributing leaflets or attending meetings.

Amnesty International believes that they may have been detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association, and may be prisoners of conscience. All are said to be held at the Ministry of Defence Detention Centre in all-Yarze, in the capital, Beirut, where torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners is routine.

Many of the detainees are believed to be facing trial by the Military Court in Beirut, whose procedures are deeply flawed and fall seriously short of international standards for fair trial. Ten of them, all students, were brought before the Military Court on 8 August and convicted of "distributing leaflets harming the reputation of the Syrian army" and "defaming the president of the Lebanese republic". They were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Eight other student members of the LF and FPM were acquitted. A 16-year-old girl, identified as Lolita Kashar, was referred to a juvenile court on the same charges.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The LF and FPM were outlawed by the Lebanese government after the end of the civil war in 1990. Both political groups oppose the Syrian military presence in Lebanon, now estimated at 20,000. The Lebanese government accepted the presence of Syrian troops when it signed a treaty with the Syrian government in 1991.

LF and FPM members are routinely arrested, often as they engage in legitimate political activities critical of the authorities. They are detained incommunicado, sometimes for weeks on end, which puts them at greater risk of torture and ill-treatment. LF member Fawzi al-Rasi died in custody at the Ministry of Defence Detention Centre in 1994, reportedly as a result of torture. The Lebanese authorities have failed to investigate allegations of torture, and to bring perpetrators to justice. Confessions extracted under duress have often been used as the main evidence in trials of political detainees.

Former detainees at the Ministry of Defence Detention Centre have stated that they were routinely tortured during interrogation. Methods of torture frequently used against LF and FPM members include severe beating, food and sleep deprivation and hanging by the wrists, which are tied behind the back (known as *Ballanco*).

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic, French or your own language:**

- calling for all prisoners of conscience detained for their involvement with the LF and the FPM to be released immediately and unconditionally;

- seeking assurances that all the detainees are being well-treated and not tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to their families, lawyers and whatever medical care they may require;
- stating that civilians should not be tried by the Military Court.

**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  
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Lebanon

**Fax:** + 961 1 862 622

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:**

Judge 'Adnan 'Addoum  
Prosecutor General  
Palace of Justice  
Beirut  
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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 21 September 2001.