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Lebanon: Summary killing of Lebanese soldier is a war crime

The reported summary killing of Lebanese soldier Abbas Medlej by Islamic State (IS) militants on 6 September 2014 is a war crime.

An IS commander told the Anadolu news agency that Abbas Medlej was beheaded after trying to escape and images of the purported killing have been seen by Amnesty International.

Abbas Medlej, aged 20, was among several dozen Lebanese Army and Internal Security Force (ISF) members taken captive by IS and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) militants during armed clashes in Aarsal, north-east Lebanon, from 2 August.

Video-clips emerged on 28 August of the beheading by IS of Sergeant Ali al-Sayyed of the Lebanese Army, also a war crime, who had been captured during the same period.

The two armed groups have reportedly conveyed a list of demands for the release of the Lebanese security force members, believed to include the release from Lebanese prison of several detainees and the halting by Hizbullah of its military activities in the Qalamoun area of Syria. Both IS and JN reportedly threatened that if Syrian refugees in Lebanon were attacked then others among those held might be also killed.

IS and JN must cease holding people as hostages – also a war crime – and should ensure that all security personnel held by the two armed groups are treated in line with international humanitarian law.