



URGENT
Lebanese prisoners detained in Syria:
A priority question to raise before the Syrian authorities

Paris, 8 July 2005

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

You will soon examine the report presented by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the article 40 of the pact. In this document, we are taking the liberty of bringing you some precisions in the absence of relevant answer from the Syrian government about point 13 of the list of issues. ***“13. Please provide information on steps taken to establish an independent commission of inquiry on the alleged disappearances of Syrian nationals and Lebanese nationals arrested in Lebanon by Syrian forces, then transferred to Syria (concluding observations of March 2001, paragraph 10)”*** (Syrian Arab Republic 28/04/2005. CCPR/C84/L/SYR)

The SOLIDA movement (Support for Lebanese Detained Arbitrarily) feels sharply concerned by the situation of Lebanese detained in solitary confinement in the Syrian prisons.

Since 1976, Syria resorts to kidnapping on the Lebanese territory.

Nowadays, we assess that **at least 200 Lebanese are still detained in Syria without having been judged, in solitary confinement and suffering from inhuman conditions.**

To give one example of conditions of detention suffered by these prisoners: in 1998, a Lebanese released from of a Syrian prison declared that he blinded himself in the eyes in order to be released and to escape his torturers.

Their families, gathered together in the Committee of families of Lebanese prisoners detained in Syria, do not succeed in getting any answer concerning the situation of their relatives extradited in Syria.

The Syrian authorities remain silent on the issue.

On July 22nd 2002, the Syrian Minister of the Interior received in Damas a delegation from the Committee of families. He confirmed them the detention of Lebanese in Syria and promised the families to review the prisoner's files submitted to him (a list of 174 names) and to provide answers to the families within a 2-3 months period of time. Today, almost three years after this promise, families still remain without any answer and they have been repulsed at the Syrian border on November 2nd although they had taken beforehand an appointment with the Minister.

Until now, Lebanese intelligence services, devoted to the Syrian regime, have actively practised acts of intimidation and used blackmail on families.

Therefore, for example, in 2000 Lebanese military authorities asked some families to sign a death certificate for the prisoner, threatening them of being deprived of their social welfare and thus, to lose the access to medical care.

We have to note that some prisoners considered as dead have been released since then.

With the support of the Lebanese organization SOLIDE (support for Lebanese In Detention and Exile), of the Franco-Lebanese movement SOLIDA (support for Lebanese Detained Arbitrarily) and of NHR-Lebanon (New Human Rights), since April 11th 2005, the committee of families of Lebanese prisoners detained in Syria carries on with a sit-in for an unlimited length of time in front of the ESCWA (representation of the United Nations in Beirut) in order to claim the complete clarification about all the persons illegally transferred to Syria after their kidnapping in Lebanon.

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At the beginning of April, the committee of families was in possession of a list of 280 persons kidnapped by the Syrian authorities. With the set up of this permanent sit-in and after the program "Kalam El Ness" broadcasted on April 21st on the Lebanese channel LBC which, during five hours gave an opportunity to speak to the families of Lebanese prisoners detained in Syria and to the ex-prisoners of Syrian prisons, more than 300 families who until now did not dare to express themselves, came to give the file of prisoners detained in Syria to the committee. Thus, **the number of cases reported to the committee amounts to almost 600** and every day, new families coming from all the country rejoin them.

Moreover, several former prisoners of Syrian prisons came to testify and numerous are those who recognize among the photos of prisoners those ones they have left behind them in Syrian prisons.

On April 25th, the demonstration of prisoners' families was violently repressed by the Lebanese police banning them the access to the parliament, which met to vote support to the new government. This repression was made public by the medias and has made a lot of Lebanese members of parliament to react and to ask for an intervention from the government on the issue.

On April 30th, the Bar who attended the works of the investigating committee ordered in 2001 by the government of Hariri on "presumed detained missing person" made public a list of 750 names collected by the official commission about which Lebanese authorities has not still lead any serious investigation to determine what happen with them, especially because of the Syrian implication in numerous cases.

We can assure you, thanks to testimonies collected to former prisoners and thanks to information we have, that these hundred of Lebanese cannot be considered as "missing person", they are alive in Syrian prisons.

Several Syrian official mails, coming from European embassies, as well as several decision of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recognize the arbitrary detention in Syria of Lebanese citizens considered as missing person by the Lebanese state.

M. Fouad Saad, a former minister and the president of the previous commission of information collection on missing person set up by the Lebanese government in 2001, confirms that he has had evidence and the conviction that Lebanese citizens were alive in Syria according to the testimonies he has collected. The report of this commission has never been published in order to avoid the Lebanese state having to recognize the presence of Lebanese prisoners detained in solitary confinement in Syria.

Forced disappearances practiced in Lebanon by the Syrian army and its auxiliary have been carried out in a logic of generalized intimidation of the population and with the will to shield the kidnapped persons from the protection of the law. Unfortunately, the method has been successful because almost 30 years after the first cases of forced disappearances that we are aware of, "missing persons" and their families are always waiting and do not have any intern way out.

The current withdrawal of the Syrian occupying forces from Lebanon, every day confirms the way disappearances were made in Lebanon. Each person arrested in Lebanon systematically

followed the same trip from the place he was kidnapped to the place of detention. The last two obligatory stopping places before arriving in Syria during this macabre trip were Anjar and Chtaura in the Bekaa valley. Before arriving in these two places of detention, the ""missing persons"" went through the different local and regional sections of the Syrian intelligence services.

The terrible phenomenon of forced disappearances has been used with full knowledge of the facts by Syria, as in Lebanon as on the Syrian territory.

It seems important to precise that in spite of the forced silence of Syrian victims' families, it is common knowledge that several thousand Syrian citizens are also victims of forced disappearances.

It is not only a matter of human rights violation but of **crime against humanity** as defined in the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court.

Article 7 of the statute stipulates that forced disappearances are crimes against humanity "when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack".

Furthermore, this article precises too that "forced disappearance of persons means the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time. " These two definitions perfectly fit over in the case of forced disappearances practiced by Syria.

Lebanon and Syria have not ratified the Rome Statute, therefore **the only means to submit a case to the ICC goes through the adoption of a resolution by the United Nations Security Council's.**

Dear Sir, dear Madam, today Lebanese people considered as ""missing persons"" by the government of Beirut still stagnate in solitary confinement in Syrian prisons. We evaluate that their number exceed 200. In spite of the different appeals from the international community in favour of a human answer from the Syrian authorities concerning this tragedy, in spite of the commitments taken by official Syrian representatives on several occasions, especially in front of a European parliament delegation in June 2003, the Syrian government remains insensitive in front of the grief of the victims' families.

In May 2005, the Lebanese Prime Minister M. Mikati declared that he spoke with the Syrian president Bashar El Assad about the issue of Lebanese prisoners detained in solitary confinement in Syrian prisons and that the president Assad clearly demonstrated his will to put an end to this situation. M. Mikati declared too that he would name a Lebanese judge, famous for his independence and his impartiality. This judge would form a working group responsible for transmitting to Syrian authorities files on prisoners asked by their families.

As for the Syrian Prime Minister Muhammad Naji Otri, he declared to the daily Spanish newspaper "El pais" that Syria indeed detained Lebanese people who, according to him would be accused of terrorism and collaboration with Israel. He noted that this issue dated to 25 or 30 years ago and he admitted that these Lebanese people had been arrested on the Lebanese territory and then (illegally) transferred to Syria.

The promise formulated by the Prime Minister Mikati to name a judge has been finally respected two months later. The working group do not comprise independent prominent figures and therefore do not respect the international norms recognized for this kind of commission. **While families waited for a real will to work on the release of their relatives detained in Syria, they are now facing the third commission in 5 years.**

We ask the Human Rights Committee to provide assistance to the victims of these violations:

1. By demanding the immediate release of prisoners detained arbitrarily in Syria.
2. By demanding the creation of an independent investigating committee in order to know the situation of thousands of Lebanese and Syrian "missing persons".
3. Drawing the Syrian government attention to the ratification of the first optional protocol granting competence to the committee to examine communications from private individuals.
4. By asking the Syrian government to permit the International Committee of the Red Cross to access to all places of detention.
5. Drawing the Syrian government's attention to the lift of reservations to the Convention Against Torture and to the support of the Optional protocol to CAT.

In this context, an international intervention to Syria in favour of these forgotten prisoners is urgent. We think that this is a priority matter in so far as human lives are threatened.

We hope that you will raise the issue to the competent authorities; please find enclosed 8 files of prisoners detained arbitrarily in Syria.

Last, we would like to end this letter with the quotation of a six-year old child whose father is one of the "missing persons".

"I would like to be dead because once in the sky I will know where my father is.", It sums up all the tragedy.

Lebanese Detainee in Syria



JIHAD GEORGE EID

Jihad EID was born on April 29, 1970. He is both a student in Management Information Technology Systems and a Corporal in the Lebanese Army. He was called to serve on the Hadath (Beirut) frontline on October 13, 1990, when Syrian troops entered the area.

On that day, October 13, 1990, Jihad EID was posted to the Al-Ayyass building, west of Saint Theresa's Hospital in Hadath. With the Syrian troops arriving to the area, he left his position in the building with his friend Claude JITTI. Both men wearing their military fatigues, they sought refuge in the nearest shelter located in the Abou-Jaoudeh building, where many civilians were hiding from the shelling.

As the Syrian military began searching buildings and shelters looking for Lebanese Army soldiers, the two Lebanese soldiers were discovered in the shelter and arrested in front of the residents who beseeched the Syrian soldiers to let them go.

However, the area was under intense shelling and the two Lebanese soldiers, along with the Syrian soldiers transporting them in custody, were hit by a shell. The Syrian soldiers were instantly killed. Claude JITTI was seriously wounded and evacuated by Lebanese Red Cross paramedics from the Baabda sector. Before dying, Claude told the paramedics that he was with Jihad Eid who had been wounded in the leg and rescued by the Red Crescent.

The following day, October 14, 1990, Jihad EID's family learns what had happened from eye witnesses and goes on a search of all city hospitals looking for him, but to no avail. In the course of its search, the family learns that Jihad had first spent a night in a Hezbollah center (Al Marija School), and then was transferred to another Hezbollah position (Cite Sportive) before being handed in to the Syrian Army Command.

Jihad EID was detained for 4 days with several Lebanese soldiers at the Syrian Intelligence Services center at the Beau Rivage Hotel in Beirut. On October 18, 1990, Jihad EID and other

Lebanese soldiers were transferred to the detention center in Anjar (Syrian Intelligence Services center in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon).

On the intervention of former Minister Elie HOBEIKA, two individuals detained at the same center in Anjar were released. One of the two individuals, a resident of Ain Roummaneh, confirmed having been held with several Lebanese soldiers, including Jihad EID.

Jihad EID was then transferred to the Palestine Section, the Investigation Center in Syria that was headed at the time by General Mustapha AL-TAJER. The family of Jihad EID began then a series of contacts in an attempt to have him released:

On April 2, 1991, they EID family meets with Lt. Dergham YOUNES, member of the Coordination Committee of the Inspector General Office. Lt. YOUNES gives them a letter of recommendation addressed to his friend, Major Jilal AL-HAYEK of the Military Inspections Bureau in Syria, and asking the latter to "Take care of this matter".

The next day, Jihad EID's parents make the trip to Syria to visit with some friends where they also meet members of the AL-NEHME family who tell them that the detention of their son in Syria will probably be denied, but offer to help them. Later on that same day, Jihad EID's family goes as planned to meet Major Jilal AL-HAYEK to whom they deliver the letter of recommendation from Lt. YOUNES. Major AL-HAYEK instructs his assistant with the task of finding out if Jihad EID was indeed still detained at the Palestine Section. Whereas the assistant did immediately confirm by telephone that Jihad EID was detained there, and also informed the family of this finding, Major AL-HAYEK promptly denied the veracity of the information.

The next day, April 3, 1991, the EID family, accompanied by a member of the AL-NEHME family (who had offered to help), pays a visit to the Syrian Colonel Ahmad AN-NAASAN, an examining judge from the Military Investigations Department. The judge, displaying an absolute lack of interest in helping the EID family, addressed himself in very harsh language to Jihad's mother Sonia EID, who fainted. The Colonel went on to say: "Sister, you should be grateful to God that Jihad is with us and in good health, but he is denied any visits and is not allowed any meeting whatsoever because people like him are the men of General AOUN, and only a decision by President Hafez El-ASSAD will set them free". He further added: "It is strange that the Lebanese authorities themselves never claim them".

In the end, Sonia EID managed to obtain permission for a single "visit" to her son at the Palestine Section, on condition that she keeps it secret and that she does not speak to him. She did see him, as he was led to an interrogation session along with other individuals. They were topless, shackled to one another in a single file with their hands behind their backs. Jihad EID was the seventh in line and he limped because of the injury to his leg.

On Army Day on August 3, 1995, and having exhausted all avenues, Jihad's father George EID wrote the following letter to General Emile LAHOUD, then Commander-In-Chief of the Lebanese Army:

General Emile Lahoud
Commander-in-Chief of the Army

Greetings,

It is with great sadness that we, parents and families of Lebanese Army military personnel who have been detained since October 13, 1990, witness the passing of Army Day for the fifth year in a row while our children are absent from their barracks because they are in the prisons of sisterly Syria. Our children are from all Lebanese regions, but not one official of the Lebanese State has put forward requests to bring them home, not one official has given us a single answer to our many questions, and not one official has dared ask the Syrian authorities about this matter. We have ample evidence of their presence (in Syria) even though everyone denies their existence.

Commander,

The officers who issued the orders have been released thanks to many intercessions on their behalf, but the soldiers who were merely executing these orders remain incarcerated in their jails where they are subjected to torture and inhumane treatment because no one claims them. Because the officers were taken away from their offices, no one can deny their detention. But the soldiers were taken away from the frontlines while carrying out the orders of their superiors. The reason given to us to justify a denial of their existence is that they were killed. But where are their bodies? They couldn't have just evaporated into thin air nor could their clothes have vanished into space. How could there be no trace of them?

All those who were killed have been found, their remains were found even on the most dangerous fronts, such as Dahr El-Wahash. We looked and looked in all the hospitals of West Beirut and East Beirut to try and identify their bodies, even of those who were mutilated. Then all those whose bodies were found were buried. We know from Syrian sources that those were not killed are in prison in Syria, that there are many such detainees, and that their liberation depends on a broad decision by the Syrian president Hafez EL-ASSAD. The question for which we find no answer is: Why are they still held prisoners? What are their crimes? What is the crime of their parents to let them die of anguish or sickness? Yes, indeed General, some parents have died without being able to see or visit their children. Some parents have undergone open-heart surgery, others are diabetic or suffer from nervous disorders, headaches, and other chronic illnesses.

Five years have passed, and fathers no longer hear the word "Dad" from their missing sons, and mothers patiently wait to hug and hold their sons in their arms. This is a tragedy that the families of the detainees live day in and day out, always worrying about the fate of their children.

Many officials have repeatedly shut their doors in our face as if this matter is of no concern to them. They are afraid of dealing with this issue. For more than a year now, we have unsuccessfully tried to meet with you in order for us to communicate to you all the information that we have on this national and humanitarian matter that concerns you as much as it concerns us, since you are the father of all the military in the Lebanese Army. Which is why we bring this letter forward, hoping it will resonate in you and that your wise leadership will take this matter paternally to heart, so that our children could come home again. And if it is impossible for you to set them free, perhaps you could perhaps see to it that their families are able to visit them.

Sincerely,

Beirut, August 3, 1995

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Following this letter, an emissary visited the EID family on August 29, 1995 informing them that the High Command of the Lebanese Army has obtained new information about the whereabouts of 17 Lebanese military personnel seized on October 13, 1990.

This is the description of the emissary's visit, as related by George EID in a letter he sent to General LAHOUD on September 12, 1995:

(After your emissary's visit that confirmed to us your interest in this matter),

*General Emile Lahoud, Commander-In-Chief of the Lebanese Army,
Greetings,*

(...)

On the morning of August 29, 1995 we received your emissary who informed us that the High Command of the Army has obtained new information according to which 17 military personnel of the Lebanese Army are detained in Syrian prisons, after transiting through the Anjar Center, and among whom is an officer. They have been detained since October 13, 1990.*

Finally, and after long years of categorical rejection and denial, Syria has admitted the existence of (Lebanese) detainees inside its prisons. This information did not surprise us, since we were certain of that fact, even though Lebanese officials continuously tried to tell us otherwise.

In addition to the information on the 17 military detainees, they also told us that you had personally handled our letter of August 3, 1995, that you tried to promptly bring a resolution to our problem, and that they were sent by the Army High Command to inform us of these facts.

Sir,

It is thanks to your efforts and your intervention, and on behalf of all the detainees' parents and families, please accept our gratitude (...)

Which is why we rely on your courage and your honesty, and we allow ourselves to put our faith in you as the only responsible party for the fate of our children – your children – because you are the only one of the people in government who has the courage and whose only goal is to serve others. Indeed, Sir, you are the only one to understand our pain (...)

Beirut, September 12, 1995.

George EID

** The emissaries were Officer Cadet FARHAT, accompanied by Chief Warrant Officer Karam NASRALLAH, from the Security Bureau of Baabda, Tel. 457558 / 456978 / 468931*

Pursuant to this letter, George EID was summoned at 9:00 AM on September 20, 1995 to the Military Security Section where he met Major ABOU CHAKRA. The latter interrogated George EID about the thank-you letter that he sent (cf. text cited above), and George EID explained that Officer Cadet FARHAT and Chief Warrant Officer NASRALLAH had visited him and brought him information. Major ABOU CHAKRA then asked for some time in order to bring in Officer Cadet FARHAT, and asked the family to give him information about their son's detention. He also promised to get them additional news. Two days later, he visited the family and completely denied the whole episode, saying that Officer Cadet FARHAT was

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totally unaware of what had happened, that he had never visited them at their home (even though the meeting took place in front of several witnesses and he had left at the EID home a note with his own handwriting.)

George EID then asked Major ABOU CHAKRA to have Officer Cadet FARHAT testify in a military court, at which point ABOU CHAKRA smiled and told him to forget the whole thing.

In 1996, a former detainee who had been released visited the EID family and related to them that he had been detained with Jihad. He further stated that Jihad had had his leg amputated because of his injury of October 13, 1990.

The family has since tirelessly continued its contacts, still without obtaining permission to visit Jihad, even though several individuals have confirmed his detention in Syria.

For example:

- General Mozher FARES, former director of the Palestine Section (prior to General Mustapha AL-TAJER), stated: "I have spoken with General AL-TAJER and asked him for a visit permit (...); It is possible to visit him very soon".
- Mohamed ARABI, a friend of General Mozher FARES: "If you had come before Christmas, it would have been much easier because General MOZHER headed the Palestine Section at the time, and we could have visited Jihad immediately."
- Minister Nicolas FATTOUCHE and Hassan AZZEDINE have also confirmed in front of witnesses that Jihad EID and other Lebanese military personnel remain in detention in Syrian prisons.

After becoming President of the Republic, General Emile LAHOUD finally received Sonia EID, who since 1997 had become president of the Committee of the Families of Lebanese Detainees in Syria. The President asked her for a complete file on her son Jihad, promising a rapid answer on this case.

Yet, and two years after sending the requested file, the EID family continues to wait for President LAHOUD's promised answer. Worse yet, the family continues to be harassed with psychological pressure and blackmail, with the objective of forcing them to cease any activity on behalf of the Lebanese who are illegally detained in Syrian jails.

The most shocking of these pressures was the request by the Army at the end of 2000 summoning the families of the detained military to sign death certificates for their detained loved ones, short of which the families will see their social security benefits cut off. Many obviously refused to sign, having established through their own means and beyond doubt the facts of their loved ones' detention. In fact, the mother of one of the detainees who had been asked to sign the death certificate of her son saw her son suddenly "reappear" three weeks later after being released from a Syrian jail.

Several detainees who have been freed from Syria's jails between 1991 and 2000 have confirmed the detention in Syria of individuals who had been taken in custody in Lebanon on October 13, 1990, according to the latest information from the Tadmur (Palmyra) prison.

Lebanese Detainee in Syria

Johnny Salem Nassif



Born in 1974, Johnny NASSIF is a Corporal in the Lebanese Army and has been illegally detained in Syria since his abduction by Syrian Armed Forces in Dahr El-Wahash, Lebanon, on October 13, 1990.

Whereas Lebanese authorities today assert that all persons who were reported missing during the war in Lebanon were actually killed during the war, Johnny NASSIF's family is certain that he remains in detention in Syria.

In point of fact, Johnny NASSIF was seen soon after his abduction in a convoy of Syrian military vehicles that were transporting Lebanese detainees en route to Damascus, Syria.

The Lebanese Army High Command to which Johnny reported as a soldier has also admitted that he was not killed in action during the fighting that opposed the Lebanese Army to the Syrian Army on October 13, 1990. (See Lebanese Army memorandum in Appendix 1, p. 12).

In 1994, Johnny's family even managed to obtain a visitor's permit, but the visit was ultimately never allowed. (See Visitor's Permit, Appendix 2, p. 14).

According to her own testimony, on the day Johnny's mother was due to visit her son in his place of detention in Syria, the prison official in charge sent a guard to bring Johnny from his cell, only to quickly realize that Johnny's family should not have obtained a visitor's permit because he was one of several military prisoners seized on October 13, 1990 and whose detention is secret. He promptly reneged on his word by saying he had no idea who Johnny NASSIF was.

APPENDIX 1: Lebanese Army Memorandum



(Copy of original Arabic document)

Translation:

High Command of the Army
Staff Headquarters
Classification 881-1
Wire registered under No. 9399/AAD/MM
From: General LAHOUD, Commander-In-Chief of the Army
To:
Notice No. 2/1 One-page only

1. For informational purposes, the following individuals were deceased on 10/13/1990:

8622024	Gerges MOUSSA	Sergeant	Battalion 102
8820553	Roland SALAME	Corporal	Battalion 102
37776	Charbel HANINI	Sergeant-Major	Headquarters
39546	Khaled HAMMOUD	Sergeant	Military Police
28712	Habib NASR	Warrant Officer	Headquarters
8621786	Nawaf ESSEBAALI	Corporal	Headquarters

2. We request Administrative Services to notify the Army Staff of the family status of the above-mentioned military personnel and the addresses of their families.

3. The names of the following military personnel are to be deleted from the Wire No. 8349/AAD/MM dated 11/16/1990, after it was determined that they were not deceased.

XX20158	Johnny NASSIF	Corporal	Battalion 102
Number N/A	Marwan EL-ZOGHBI	Sergeant-Major	Battalion 101
44067	Youssef EL-HASBANI	Sergeant-Major	Presidential Guard
48796	Joseph AZAR	Sergeant-Major	Presidential Guard
8520405	Elie HADDAD	Sergeant-Major	Presidential Guard
8621565	Elias AOUN	Corporal	Presidential Guard

Beirut, 12/27/1990
By Order of Brigade General Al-Tannir, Joint Chief of Staff

APPENDIX 2: Visitor's Permit – Johnny NASSIF



(Copy of original Arabic document)

Translation:

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of the Interior
Internal Security Forces – Command Headquarters
Prison Administration
Attn: Director of the Damascus Central Prison

The individual herein named (Violette Johnny NASSIF), a Lebanese national, is hereby authorized to visit with the prisoner (Johnny Salem NASSIF), incarcerated in the Damascus Central Prison, section: ().

Permit is for one visit only according to prison regulations.

Damascus, March 2, 1994
General Bassim EL-TAEF, Director of the Prison Administration.

Lebanese Detainee in Syria

Tanious Kamil EL HABR



I. Detainee or Arrested Individual's Personal Information

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Last Name: | AL-HABR |
| 2. First Name: | Tanious Kamil |
| 3. Gender: | Male |
| 4. Date of Birth or Age (at abduction): | 1965 |
| 5. Nationality(ies): | Lebanese |
| 6. Civil Register: | No. 55 – Ain Al-Halzoun |
| 7. Profession or Activity (if there is reason to believe it is linked to the detention or the arrest): | Sergeant in the Lebanese Army |
| 8. Permanent Residence: | Kamil Abdo EL-HABR (father)
Dekwaneh, Al-Kharroub Street
Antoine Al-Soukhen Blvd.
LEBANON |

II. Circumstances of the Abduction

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Date of Abduction: | 10/13/1990 |
| 2. Place of Abduction (Provide all details): | Aain Saade Villa – Lebanon |
| 3. Services that carried or presumed to have carried out the abduction: | Syrian Army |
| 4. Was a warrant or other official document presented? | No |
| 5. Authority issuing the warrant of other document: | |
| 6. Applicable law (if known): | |

III. Detention

1. Date of Detention: **Incarcerated in Syria on October 17, 1990**
2. Duration of Detention (If not known, provide estimate): **Not provided to kin**
3. Services holding the individual: **The Syrian Prisons Administration**
4. Place of Detention (including all transfers up to present place): **Held first at the Syrian Intelligence Services Center in Anjar (Bekaa Valley, Lebanon). Transferred to the Palestine Section (Damascus, Syria), then to the Mazze Prison (Damascus, Syria) where he was allowed visits. Currently held in secret detention.**
5. Authority ordering the detention: **The Syrian military justice system (Military Examining Judge: Colonel Ahmad AN-NAASAN)**
6. Facts cited by the authorities justifying the detention: **Undisclosed.**
7. Applicable Laws (if known): **Unknown**

IV. Describe the circumstances of the abduction and/or the detention

Tanious Kamil AL-HABR was arrested in Lebanon by the Syrian Army upon the entry of the latter into East-Beirut on October 13, 1990. An estimated 200 Lebanese nationals were arrested on that day by the Syrian Army and taken across the border into Syria. Most have been released, but some, like Tanious Kamil AL-HABR, were never released and remain detained to this day.

Please describe the precise motives for which you think this deprivation of liberty is arbitrary or illegal:

Tanious Kamil AL HABR was abducted in Lebanon and transferred to Syria without an extradition request. No public trial was ever conducted and his family knows of no charges filed against him and does not know the duration of his detention.

V. Please provide an account of the measures taken in the country, including internal appeals made to the judicial or administrative authorities, to obtain an admission of the detention, and if so, the outcome of such appeals. Alternatively, please provide the reasons why these measures were not followed up or were not implemented.

The Lebanese and Syrian authorities have exhibited a total disregard for the requests of the families of the Lebanese detained in Syria.

Lebanese Detainee in Syria

Bechara Tanious ROUMIEH

The following is a translation of an Arabic document submitted by the family of the detainee in January 2001.

Bechara Tanious ROUMIEH, born in 1962, has been detained in Syria for 23 years.

In March 1978, Bechara was arrested along with two of his friends by the Syrian Intelligence Services. The two friends are Daniel A., now deceased, and George L. K., a Sergeant Major in the Lebanese Army. They were arrested in the city of Ryiak, in the district of Jazira, as they were riding in a white Volkswagen matriculated under the name of Roukoz Bechara ROUMIEH. They were taken to the Syrian Intelligence Services Center located in the School of the Pères Blancs (...). At the time, the officer in charge of the Intelligence Bureau was one Abou Ali. When Bechara's mother learned of his arrest, she went to the center to see her son (...), but Abou Ali told her he was not there. The mother then went to see community leaders and asked for their help. Two individuals who had good relations with Abou Ali accompanied her back to the center, namely Ibrahim ABOU ZEID who died later, and one Khairallah K.

Accompanied by the two individuals, Bechara's mother is permitted to see her son. She then returned to the village to seek a means to get her son released. In the meantime, Officer Abou Ali released George K, who at the time was a civilian, and Daniel A, also a civilian. In addition, Gerges Boutros A., a Syrian national, was also released after having denounced Bechara for an alleged affiliation with the PNL (Liberal National Party). Bechara ROUMIEH's family requested that an investigation be launched and that Gerges Boutros A. be interrogated because of his close involvement in this matter.

Bechara's mother obtained her visitor's permits in the city of Ryiak from Miss Noura HALLIT, the Acting Mayor of Ablah, in exchange for money since Miss HALLIT had excellent relations with the Syrian officers in Ryiak and in Chtaura. Bechara's mother stayed in Ryiak for a period of a week waiting for the release of her son. Her permanent place of residence being in Beirut and not in Ryiak.

Within a period of 2 weeks, Bechara is taken to Chtaura, then to Anjar, and on to Masnaa. When his mother wanted a visitor's permit, she would have to obtain an authorization from the Syrian Intelligence Services Center in Chtaura, specifically from Captain Mohammad LAHAM and Officer ASSAAD. At the time, Captain Ghazi KENAAN and Officer Muhammad GHANEM were in charge of the Chtaura center. Bechara's mother, brothers and sisters continued to visit him in Masnaa from March 1978 until 1979 (for a period of 1 year). At their last visit, they were denied the visit. When they asked why, they were told that he was transferred to Mazze (Damascus, Syria) to be interrogated, and that he will be back in a week. The Syrian Army has been saying this for the past 23 years. Bechara's mother has been to all Syrian jails and was never allowed to see her son.

At the time, the war between the Syrians and the Lebanese was going through different stages. In 1986, the first piece of information suggesting that Bechara was still alive in Mazze came from Lebanese detainees who had been released upon the intervention of the Chief of the Lebanese Forces (militia), Mr. Elie HOBEIKA, and Mr. Jean GHANEM who was working for the release of Lebanese detainees in Syria. Bechara's brother spoke with Dr. Jean GHANEM at the General Hospital of Baabda, who told him that Bechara would be back, along with his fellow detainees in Syria, after the Christmas and New Year holidays. Then the 1986 events between Samir GEAGEA and Elie HOBEIKA took place.

(The ROUMIEH family has appended to this file a photocopy of a newspaper clip from the January 1, 1986 issue of the daily AN-NAHAR entitled "A Christmas gift from Syria: The liberation of 12 detainees".)

Among the individuals who were released in 1986, many told Bechara's family, Mr. Elie HOBEIKA, and Dr. Samir GEAGEA that Bechara was in the ALOUE prison where he has been for 6 years. After one year with visits, one year without any information about his whereabouts, Bechara had been detained for 8 years.

In 1994, Hussein M. E. told his mother who was visiting him in prison that there was one individual from Riyak by the name of Bechara ROUMIEH who was held for 18 years and who had not seen his family since 1979. Hussein told his mother "Please, Mother, tell them that their son would like to see them. He does not understand why they don't come to visit him. Tell them discreetly to come and visit him, but be careful that the Syrian Army learns nothing of this, because then they would forbid you from visiting me." Hussein's mother promised to do what she could.

When HK (the detainee's mother) got back into the taxi that brought her to visit her son in Syria, she asked the taxi driver A.A., who died in 1997 and who was from Riyak and had a son also held in Syria, about the ROUMIEH family. The driver replied to her that this was Bechara ROUMIEH whose family lives in Beirut since 1976. She then asked him to relay the information to us so that we go and see Bechara in prison because he is asking for us and wonders why we don't visit him or care for him. A.A. forwarded the information through Elie R. J. known as J., also from Riyak who sent it in turn with Eugene R., who now works at the Baalbeck station of EDL (Electricité du Liban). Eugene visited George K., Bechara's cousin, to tell him what was learned from the detainee Hussein M. E., namely that Bechara was alive, that he was detained at the Mazze prison, upper floor, cell #2, and that his prison matriculation number was 14.

George K. then visited Bechara's family to tell them what had happened and that they should go visit him in Syria. Bechara's mother and his aunt, Rose K., then visited Hussein M.E.'s mother who confirmed the information to them and asked them not to publicize the story so that she is not prevented from visiting her son. They returned to Beirut to prepare food, clothing, and money and go see Bechara with Hussein's mother a month later.

Unfortunately, the story broke out and everyone was talking about the reappearance of Bechara after 18 years in Syrian prisons. When the family prepared to go see him,

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more than 7 people from the ROUMIEH family went to see Hussein M.E.'s mother first. The latter became afraid and said she knew no one by the name of Bechara ROUMIEH, and that she did not have a son detained in Syria. Her son was later released in 1998 (...)

Case Summary

- 8 years after his disappearance, and after the wave of releases of 1986, several released individuals indicated that Bechara was with them in the Mazze prison, upper floor, cell #2, Matriculation #14.
- During the term of President Hrawi, nine people were discreetly released in 1994, and they reported to us that Bechara was with them in cell #2 when they left the prison and returned to Lebanon.
- The AL HAYAT daily, issue of March 6, 1998, page 3 (...) reported that he was among the people released.
- In 1998, former detainees who were released from Syrian prisons reported that Bechara was held with them under No. 14. Several detainees were ready to testify that they were not being subjected to any pressures and did not run the risk of being returned to prison in Syria.

(The family has the names of all the witnesses)

Of those who helped us try to have him released:

- Former President Elias HRAWI
- Minister Mohsen DALLOUL
- Minister Khalil HRAWI
- Minister Nicolas FATTOUCHE
- Minister Elie HOBEIKA
- Former MP Jean GHANEM

We thank all those who have helped us, former detainees and people of good will, in particular His Eminence Cardinal SFEIR. We refuse to give up on this matter, and we reject the idea of denying Bechara's presence in Syria. If he is dead, we demand that his remains be returned to us so we can bury him. If he is alive, we demand his release because we have not seen him in 23 years.

Lebanese detained in Syria

Shamel Hussein KENAAN



Personal Data :

Date of Birth: 05 January 1959
Place of Birth: South Lebanon – Registration N°#186 Shebaa
Name of Mother: Ghalia Daher
Date of Abduction: 18 June 1986

Case Summary:

Shamel was a Corporal in the Lebanese Army, having volunteered in 1978. His military ID# is 35052. He disappeared on his way to work on the road between his village Shebaa in South Lebanon and Beirut. He was married to Jaleela Daher who died of cancer six months before his disappearance. He has one daughter named Seema who was born in 1985.

Last time seen:

According to his brother in Lebanon, an ex-prisoner saw Shamel in 1994 at the Palestine Section prison in Syria.
Also his family received information in Sept. 2000 that he is now detained in Saidnaya prison in Syria.

Lebanese Detainee in Syria

Ali ABDALLAH

IV. Detainee or Arrested Individual's Personal Information

1. Last Name: ABDALLAH
2. First Name: Ali
3. Gender: Male
4. Date of Birth or Age (at abduction): 1965
5. Nationality (ies): Lebanese
6. Civil Register: No. 313 – AITAROUN
7. Profession or Activity (if there is reason to believe it is linked to the detention or the arrest):
8. Permanent Residence: Aitaroun, Bint Jbeil District
LEBANON

V. Circumstances of the Abduction

1. Date of Abduction: **21 July 1981**
2. Place of Abduction (Provide all details): **COLA Rotary, Mazraa, Beirut**
3. Services that carried or are presumed to have carried out the abduction: **Syrian Intelligence Services**
4. Was a warrant or other official document presented? **No**
5. Authority issuing the warrant of other document:
6. Applicable law (if known):

VI. Detention

1. Date of Detention: **Precise date of transfer to Syria is unknown**
2. Duration of Detention (If not known, provide estimate): **Not provided to kin**
3. Services holding the individual: **The Syrian Prisons Administration**
4. Place of Detention (including all transfers up to present place):
Currently held in secret detention. But he was tracked in the Tadmor (Palmyra) prison in 2000.
5. Authority ordering the detention: **Unknown**
6. Facts cited by the authorities justifying the detention: **Undisclosed**
7. Applicable Laws (if known): **Unknown**

IV. Describe the circumstances of the abduction and/or the detention

Three days after his arrest, his family found out he was being held in a Syrian Intelligence Services Center in Lebanon. Syrian officers Major Hussein WATFA and Corporal Rustom GHAZALI have admitted to his detention in Syria.

In 1993, a former detainee released from the Tadmor (Palmyra, Syria) prison stated that he was held with Ali ABDALLAH.

In May 2000, a Lebanese national who was released from the Tadmor prison testified to his family about the presence of Ali ABDALLAH in that prison (Fifth Court). His family went to the prison where they were told that Ali ABDALLAH was indeed being held there, and that he needed clothes and food. However, no visitation rights were granted.

Please describe the precise motives for which you think this deprivation of liberty is arbitrary or illegal

Ali ABDALLAH was abducted in Lebanon and transferred to Syria without any request for his extradition. No public trial was ever conducted, the family knows of no charges filed against him, and does not know the duration of his detention. He is not allowed any visits.

V. Please provide an account of the measures taken in the country, including internal appeals made to the judicial or administrative authorities, to obtain an admission of the detention, and if so, the outcome of such appeals. Alternatively, please provide the reasons why these measures were not followed up or were not implemented.

The Lebanese and Syrian authorities have exhibited a total disregard for the requests of the families of the Lebanese detained in Syria.

Lebanese detained in Syria

Yousef Daoud AOUN



(Appeal from Amnesty International January 2003)

Lebanese youth held without trial for 20 years

Yousef Daoud 'Aoun was a child aged 17, when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982. On 3 June 1982 he and his friend were arrested near the town of Seghbine in the Eastern Bekaa region by members of the Syrian Nationalist Social Party. They were handed over to the Syrian Military Intelligence reportedly on charges of belonging to the "Lebanese Forces" militia, which fought against the Syrian forces in Lebanon. Since then Yousef Daoud 'Aoun has been held without trial in a prison in Syria.

Yousef Daoud 'Aoun's parents visited him regularly for many years in Tadmur Prison until 1999 when they were refused any further visits. It is not known where Yousef Daoud 'Aoun is now being held, since large parts of Tadmur Prison were closed down in 2001 and many political detainees were transferred to other prisons.

On 22 July 2002, Yousef Daoud 'Aoun's parents traveled with 50 other relatives of Lebanese believed to be detained in Syria to Damascus, where they were received by the Syrian Minister of the Interior, Major General 'Ali Hammud. During the meeting the Minister promised to answer their queries about Lebanese detainees held in Syria within three months. However, no answer has been received.

Please write, asking the Syrian authorities where Yousef Daoud 'Aoun is being held. Call for his immediate release as he has been held for a long period without trial. Seek assurances that Yousef Daoud 'Aoun is well and not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment. Call for all information about the detention of Lebanese in Syria to be given to their relatives immediately. **Send appeals to:** His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad, President of the Republic, Presidential Palace, Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic. Fax: +963 11 332 3410; **and to:** His Excellency Major General 'Ali Hammud, Minister of the Interior, Ministry of Interior, Merjeh Circle, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 222 3428

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