



2009 Activities Report

**Lebanese Center for Human Rights
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LEBANON**

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Moving to a new location

The start of 2009 saw frenzied activity in connection with the move of the main office from one building to another in Dora. We moved to Bakhos Building on Mar Youssef Street; the same building that houses Nassim Centre. The new office was inaugurated in May 2009. The inauguration was a success with several friends, colleagues and well wishers turning up to wish the organization all success.



Le Centre Libanais des Droits Humains



Lebanese Centre for Human Rights

~Invitation to the Inauguration of CLDH New Offices ~

Thursday, May 28 from 5PM to 7PM

The CLDH is pleased to invite you to the inauguration of its new offices. Participate in this event to:

- Discover our new working space
- Learn about our ongoing or recent projects



CLDH OBJECTIVES

- Fight the practice of enforced disappearance
- Fight arbitrary detention
- Fight against impunity
- Rehabilitate the victims of torture
- Reinforce the capacities of civil society

~ Book Fair to Benefit Prisoners~ Donate your books!



For this occasion, the CLDH will collect books for the detainees whom the CLDH regularly visits.

Thank you for donating your books from all genres (fiction, novel, poetry, thriller etc.)

An important number of detainees do not have access to a library in prison. A simple gesture on your part can help enrich their daily life through books.

We thank you in advance for your support!

Contact

Please RSVP before May 25th at cjoseph@cldh-lebanon.org or 01 24 00 23.

~ cocktails will be served~

Lebanese Center for Human Rights
Mar Youssef Str, Bakhos Building, 1st floor
Dora, Beirut

Photo © Hassan Bahsoun



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Team and Funding

The Team at CLDH

The year 2008 was the year of building on our strengths, consolidation of our position and renewing our commitment to our avowed objectives of fighting arbitrary detentions torture, impunity, enforced disappearances, and discrimination, monitoring human rights situation and rehabilitating victims of torture.

The team at CLDH also underwent some changes.

Camille Joseph joined our team in March as Program Manager of projects against Enforced Disappearances and Researcher on Freedom of Association

Nour Hemici was with the organization for a brief period as Program Coordinator for the project, “Monitoring the situation of Human Rights” and setting up a Human Rights Observatory, a joint project between CLDH and ALEF (Lebanese Association for Education and Training).

The organization was also happy to welcome ad-hoc appointees Maya Ghazal and Siham Mustapha for assistance in the ‘Survey Detention’ Project that was conducted between March and November of 2009.

At Nassim, 2009 saw the entry of a new Obs/Gyn doctor, Dr. Walid Antoine Gergi, a new Reception Assistant in Marie Abdelahad, a new psychiatrist in Dr. Jihane Rohayem, Hasna Reda, Lawyer and Paul Salameh our Accountant. Nassim was also sad to bid farewell to some of our old colleagues who left us for various reasons. These include Michel Tohme our Accountant, Rabih Chammay, Psychiatrist, Solange Heybe, Social cum Communications Assistant and Ali-Marc Wazneh, lawyer.

CLDH remains eternally grateful to its numerous volunteers who continue to work tirelessly for the cause of CLDH. Notable among them are:

Joseph Hitti, who volunteers to translate documents into English; Hala Waked, for providing legal assistance and support on various issues; Charbel Jreij, who is creating a new website for CLDH to be launched in 2010; Yamen Soukkarieh, photographer; Maria Semerdjian, and Pierre Obeid for his help with graphic design.



The organization would not be able to achieve its objectives had it not been for the generous support and encouragement that it has always received from its funders/sponsors. The organization wishes to heartily thank them all for their continued trust, support and assistance.

- The Embassy of the Netherlands in Beirut, for financing a major part of Centre Nassim;
- Oak Foundation / Sigrid Rausing Trust for its financial assistance to Nassim through the IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims);
- United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNFVT) for its support to Centre Nassim;
- OMCT (World Organization against Torture), for case specific assistance to some of Nassim's beneficiaries;
- Danish Refugee Council in Beirut for their assistance to Iraqi beneficiaries of Nassim;
- The Embassy of Canada in Beirut for renewing its support to CLDH and financing the project 'Survey of Prisons in Lebanon';
- The European Commission for their support to the project aimed at creation of a 'Multimedia virtual space for Human rights' in Lebanon;
- The Euro-Mediterranean foundation for the support of Human Rights defenders for partially financing the program of monitoring the Human Rights situation;
- ACAT-France (Action by Christians against Torture) for supporting partially activities carried out by CLDH for the victims of torture and arbitrary detention;
- CCFD (Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development), for its renewed support to the Human Rights monitoring program;
- AHRF (Arab Human Rights Fund) for its grant in support of CLDH's activities against arbitrary detention, torture and impunity;
- AEDH (Agir ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme) for its continuous support to CLDH activities.
- The British Embassy in Beirut for its support to the Truth and Justice National Reconciliation Program
- 'La2mit Mahabbe' under the Archbishop Antoine Nabil Al Indari, for their generous donation of foodstuffs and essential provisions for distribution to the needy beneficiaries of Centre Nassim
- Private donors for their regular contributions.



MONITOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION



A. Review of the Strategy

The monitoring project envisaged initially in partnership with ALEF (Lebanese Association for Education and Training), which includes the continuation of the "press review" activity as well as additional joint activities between NGOs of the Lebanese civil society for the creation of an "Observatory of Human Rights", has been redesigned owing to some practical difficulties. The organization has therefore redirected its efforts in this regard towards similar activities under the project titled 'Virtual Multimedia Space for Human Rights' described below.

B. Press Review

Since 2007, CLDH is compiling a daily press review in Arabic, French and English, on all issues related to Human Rights and Justice, as published in the Lebanese media (notably 13 newspapers and several websites in the three languages).

The Press Review is sent daily to more than 70 NGO's, institutions and embassies in Lebanon and abroad, and CLDH continues to receive new requests for subscription.

C. Blogs

CLDH is daily updating Blogs, available on www.cldh-lebanon.org, pertaining to issues related to the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, Detention, and Enforced disappearance:

1. Blog on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (1900 articles posted at the end of 2009)
2. Blog on Detention (more than 600 articles posted at the end of 2009)
3. Blog on Enforced Disappearance (300 articles posted at the end of 2009)

D. Multimedia Virtual Space for Human Rights

The project of "Multimedia Virtual Space for Human Rights" was implemented this year in partnership with COSV, Kafa (Enough!) Violence and Exploitation, and PPM (Permanent Peace Movement), with the financial support of the European Commission.

The proposed action of this project aims at strengthening mutual cooperation among civil society organizations, in order to better integrate human rights issues in national development plans, through various activities, notably the creation of a website, and the opening of a documentation center, hosted at CLDH premises.



The project started on March 2009 and will end on February 2011.

Main activities in 2009:

- **Creation of a Multimedia Virtual Space for Human Rights**

The website on Human Rights in Lebanon in English has been designed - www.humanrights-lb.org. Information will be uploaded onto the database in the coming year.

The Human Rights Library at CLDH office is furnished and efforts are in place to collect and organize the material from willing partners.

Regarding the mapping of the human rights organizations, a list has been drawn with details of contacts of all Partner NGO's and the criteria for their participation in the Multimedia Virtual Space for Human Rights has been formulated.

- **Realization of 6 workshops on Human Rights**

This activity is managed by PPM in collaboration with the founding partners. Between July and August 2009, we organized the 1st workshop titled "*Youth Migrants Training*", in collaboration with INSAN association and on the rights of migrants in Lebanon.

The participants were a group of 25 migrant workers and children of Iraqi and Sudanese refugees. During the workshop, the participants produced 2 short documentaries focusing on the main subject matter of the workshop.

Following on the heels of this workshop, an event called "*Speak up: Children of migrants, Iraqi and Sudanese refugees tell their stories*", (see leaflet below) was organized in September 2009 to present the documentaries and to promote the objectives of the project and the website.

The 2nd workshop that was held in late 2009, involved youth belonging to the Palestinian camps close to Tyre. We organized it in collaboration with a local association called Al-Kabdumi Library inside the Al-Rashidieh camp. The workshop was titled "*Training on the Palestinian refugees rights in Lebanon*" and this resulted in the production of 3 short documentaries highlighting different aspects of Palestinian rights.

- **Publication of 6 researches on Human Rights**

The project includes researches, managed by the different partners, on various Human Rights issues:

- CLDH: "Arbitrary detention and torture", "Freedom of association" and "Refugees rights"
- COSV and CLDH: "Culture of racism and discrimination in Lebanon", "Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon, a Case of Human Trafficking?"
- KAFA: "Female abuse against female migrant domestic workers in Lebanon".



TASTE CULTURE

PRESENTS: "Speak Up"
Children of migrants, Iraqi and
Sudanese refugees tell their stories



The Zico House event is funded by the EU

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 10TH

Location: Zico House , 174

Spears - Sanayeh

Time: 6p-11p

Free Entrance

**African / Asian Cuisine, live music
spoken word, art installation, photo
exhibition**

**Film screening of work created by
migrant and refugee youth**

Project: "Multimedia Virtual Space for Human Rights"



This project is funded by the
European Union





E. Participation in Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) on various Human Rights Issues

The EMHRN, a network of more than 60 human rights organizations, institutions and individuals based in 30 countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region, has members that adhere to the universal human rights principles and are convinced of the value of cooperation and dialogue across and within borders. The Secretary General of CLDH, Mr. Wadih Al Asmar was elected in 2008 as a member of the Executive Committee for the next three year period.

The EMHRN created Working Groups as a part of its strategy of addressing specific human rights issues in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. Three CLDH members, who joined Working Groups on Justice, Migration and Refugees and Women's rights and gender, subsequently participated in several meetings and conferences on these issues. CLDH is also participating in the Freedom of Association Working group, represented by Wadih Al Asmar, who is the political referent of this group.

CLDH also assisted the network in conducting a Seminar on the issue of "*Independence and Impartiality of the Lebanese judiciary – priorities and strategies for reform*" that was held in Beirut on the 23rd and 24th of October 2009. A follow up committee composed of 13 members was set up during the meeting.



FIGHT ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE



It is believed that 17,000 persons have disappeared in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990. As it has done in the past, CLDH continued in 2009, to support initiatives and participated in actions of the local NGOs and Committees of families of victims of enforced disappearance, who have been struggling to find out the fate of their relatives since the 1970s, in the absence of any concrete action by the Lebanese authorities.

A. Legal Recourse

On April 29, the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon and SOLIDE (Support of Lebanese in Detention and Exile) filed a lawsuit aimed at locating and protecting the three mass graves mentioned in the summary findings of the Lebanese Commission of Investigation into the fate of the Abducted and Disappeared Persons released in July 2000. On this occasion, CLDH supported the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon, the Committee of Families of Detainees in Syrian Prisons and SOLIDE at the press conference titled “*It is our Right to Know*” organized in Horsh Beirut.

On October 23, the Lebanese judicial authorities ruled partially in favor of this request and issued an unprecedented decision to make public the unpublished results of the commission’s investigation into disappeared persons. On November 4, 2009, CLDH together with ICTJ (International Center of Transitional Justice), FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and FEMED (Euro-Mediterranean's Federation Against Enforced Disappearances) issued a press release entitled “*Government Should Provide Full Findings of Inquiry into War Era*”, welcoming this decision while also calling upon the council’s secretariat to comply with the order by not only providing copies of the report and its records to the court, but also taking action for publishing the same. Till date, a three-page summary of the commission’s work has only been made public.

B. ICRC Database on the Missing

With the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross, CLDH in partnership with SOLIDE, the Committee of the Parents of Kidnapped or Missing Persons in Lebanon and the Committee of Families of Lebanese Detainees in Syria, launched a database project to identify cases of enforced disappearance.



This project aims to strengthen the partial lists of missing persons gathered over the years by various bodies and committees, to complement and add all relevant information available on the missing and centralize all information and data available by using the ICRC Identification Database as a support base.

This database would be an essential tool for tracking cases of missing persons, given the fact that no reliable census of the missing has been conducted till date. In August 2009, CLDH and representatives of the above-mentioned committees participated in a joint ICRC training on the technical modalities of the database on the missing.

C. Launch of a new project: Truth and Justice National Reconciliation Program

With the support of the British Embassy in Beirut, the organization undertook in late November 2009, a program with a view to help launch a process of national reconciliation and advance the cause of victims of enforced disappearance through legal, lobbying, advocacy and awareness-raising actions.

During the course of the project period, the organization hopes to organize several capacity-building and advocacy workshops with national or international experts and key organizations of civil society to conduct lobbying and advocacy actions in view of an action plan for a truth and reconciliation mechanism in Lebanon and strengthen technical cooperation means between the organizations.

It is also proposed to organize public meetings (Global Civil Society Forums) open to all members of the community (NGOs, local, national and international organizations, students, associations, Lebanese authorities committees of families of missing persons, academics, interested individuals, press etc.) to raise awareness and sensitize members of the civil society regarding the issue of national reconciliation and enforced disappearance. Of course, throughout the duration of the project, the team envisages the provision of legal and logistical assistance to the families of victims of enforced disappearance and their lawyers.



D. Memorial for Odette Salem

On May 16, 2009, Odette Adib Salem, was tragically hit by a car while crossing the street from the tent of the missing in ESCWA, Beirut. Odette, whose two children Marie-Christine and Albert Salem had disappeared in 1985, was one of the pillars of the movement of mothers of the missing and was responsible for managing the tent of the missing (a sit-in organized by the families of the missing since 2005 in Riad el-Solh Plaza, in front of ESCWA in Beirut). CLDH mourns the tragic loss of Odette who was snatched before discovering the fate of her beloved children. CLDH participated in her memorial service organized on May 19th at the tent of the missing.

E. Participation in the third Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of the Families of the Disappeared.

In early December 2009, representatives from associations of the families of the disappeared from across the region (Algeria, Spain, Iraq, Cyprus, Turkey, Morocco, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya and others) along with several Turkish and International NGOs and experts met in Istanbul to discuss the issue of “*transitional justice and enforced disappearances*”, within the framework of the Third Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of the Families of the Disappeared. This event was organized by the Euromed Federation against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED), in partnership with YAKAY-Der, Mothers for peace and the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD).

The meeting provided an opportunity to the participants to familiarize better with the different mechanisms of transitional justice with particular emphasis on the Truth and Justice Commissions, their potential and limitations; means to better reconcile objectives of peace and justice; better reflection on the potentials and the dangers of the different types of amnesty. The meeting also underlined the importance of reparations for the families of the disappeared and the need to promote and encourage the use of technologies that allow the identification of bodies. The meeting saw the participants propose recommendations to their respective countries and to the international community.

On December 14, 2009 the FEMED held its general Assembly, and Mr. Wadih Al-Asmar was elected as a member of the FEMED board and appointed as treasurer of the federation.



FIGHT ARBITRARY DETENTION



A. Project to reinforce the skills of Lebanese lawyers on arbitrary detention/torture

Conduct of workshops:

During the year 2008, the CLDH, with the support of the Canadian Embassy in Beirut, launched its project to reinforce the skills of Lebanese lawyers in the area of arbitrary detention. The aim of this project was to restore to the victims of arbitrary detention and/or torture in Lebanon their due rights as stipulated in international instruments ratified by Lebanon. This was sought to be achieved by training lawyers from Tripoli, Saïda, Nabatieh and Zahleh, on international mechanisms and instruments in the field of human rights protection related to arbitrary detention and torture.

In the four Workshops conducted across the country in 2008, 55 lawyers participated in the same. The ultimate goal of this exercise was the creation of a network of qualified lawyers ready to defend the victims of arbitrary detention and/or torture as and when such cases come to the attention of the CLDH.

So in 2009, a follow up session was held on March 20, 2009 to discuss further the modalities of functioning of this informal network of lawyers and chalk out the further course of action.

A grand reception at the residence of H.E Martial Page, the Canadian Ambassador to Beirut was held during which certificates of participation were handed over to all the lawyers who attended the workshops.

Follow up action:

The informal Lawyers Committee continues to be very active and has, since its inception followed up on several cases of arbitrary detention that have been brought to its notice. During a meeting that was conducted on June 26, 2009, the committee discussed the issue of administrative detention, which is a major concern in the Lebanese prison system. On an average, 13% of the inmates in Lebanon are foreigners who are detained arbitrarily beyond the end of their sentence period, without any legal justification. Under an existing rule, all foreigners at the end of their sentence period are to be transferred to the General Security services; but in view of the fact that the General Security does not have the wherewithal to handle this task, hundreds of inmates wait indefinitely in arbitrary “administrative” detention in the Lebanese prison, pending handover to the General Security. This creates an unlawful and unfair situation discussed by the Committee of Lawyers, who shared their views on the issue and discussed further possible studies and actions.



*Pour souligner la clôture d'un programme de formation du
Centre Libanais des Droits de l'Homme concernant les enjeux juridiques
entourant les détentions,
l'Ambassadeur du Canada, M. Martial Pagé, vous prie de lui faire
l'honneur d'assister à une réception à sa résidence
le jeudi 2 avril 2009 de 19h30 à 21h30*

*Résidence de l'Ambassadeur
Villa 22, rue 8, Rasch*

*R.S.V.P. par courriel
au no 04-713 900, poste 3375*

*On the occasion of the closing of a training programme on legal issues
concerning detentions, delivered by
the Centre Libanais des Droits de l'Homme,
the Ambassador of Canada, Mr. Martial Pagé,
requests the pleasure of your company for a reception at his residence
on Thursday, April 2, 2009 from 7:30 to 9:30 pm*

*Residence of the Ambassador
Villa 22, street no. 8, Rasch*

*R.S.V.P. by email or
by calling 04-713 900, ext. 3375*



(Lawyers with their certificates at the Reception hosted on April 2, 2009)



B. Follow up on individual cases of arbitrary detention

Following up on individual cases of arbitrary detention continues to be one of our core activities. In most cases, the processes are tedious, time consuming, not to mention extremely frustrating and deeply saddening. However there are some brief moments of joy and exhilaration, when the cases result in either discharge or the release of the person concerned. Some of the cases followed up during the year are as follows:

1. Campaign and subsequent release of Youssef Chaabane:

During the year 2009, the organization continued to tirelessly campaign for the release of Youssef Chaabane, a Palestinian residing in Lebanon who had been arrested in 1994 by the Syrian intelligence services in Beirut and had confessed to an assassination under torture. Since his arrest, he had been claiming his innocence. Sentenced to life imprisonment by a special court, the “Justice Council”, Youssef Chaabane had been denied the right to a judiciary review of his sentence.

Several solidarity demonstrations were held demanding his immediate release; notable among them being the one that was held in front of the Palace of Justice on February 5, 2009, in commemoration of 15 years of captivity.

On April 16, a team of CLDH along with the lawyer of Chaabane, Mr. Abou Dib met with the legal advisor of President Sleiman pleading for his pardon. As a follow up of this meeting, officials from the organization also sought a hearing with the First Lady and apprised her of the case. This was followed by more demonstrations and also the conduct of a worldwide “T-shirt campaign”.



Solidarity Demonstration in Burj El Barajni, May 3, 2009



T-Shirt campaign for the release of Youssef Chaabane



(Demonstrators wearing T-shirts demanding the release of Youssef Chaabane)



(Lebanese citizens demanding the release of Youssef Chaabane)



(Members of regional organizations¹ demanding the release of Youssef Chaabane)

¹ Members of the EMHRN Working Group on Justice, and the FEMED



All these actions finally culminated in the release of Youssef Chaabane on July 13, 2009. In celebration of this, a reception was hosted by the organization on July 17, 2009²



² The reception was organized with the kind support of Pharma Lab and Exotica Lebanon



2. Nehmeh el Haj:

Nehmeh Naim El Haj, a Lebanese national, was born in 1963. An interior decorator by profession, this resident of Al Basatin neighborhood (Ain Saadeh, Lebanon), is currently being detained at the Roumieh central prison, after being arrested at the Lebanese-Syrian border in October 1998 and subsequently handed over to the Lebanese authorities on November 25, 1998. The arrest was made, without an arrest warrant, by Syrian intelligence service agents, who placed Mr. El Haj in an illegal Syrian interrogation centre at Anjar in the Bekaa Valley region of Lebanon for almost one month. While he was there, his family was not informed of his whereabouts, or the reasons for his arrest and Mr. Haj was not provided with access to a lawyer. According to the information received, he was tortured during interrogation sessions conducted by members of the Syrian intelligence services. A month after his arrest, he was handed over to the Lebanese authorities at Zahleh and then transferred to Jounieh before being detained in the Roumieh prison, where he has been since.

He was charged with having murdered two people in Lebanon and was sentenced to the death penalty in July 2004. The Lebanese authorities did not question him about the alleged murders. His conviction was based solely on the interrogations conducted by members of the Syrian intelligence services.

On May 12, 2006, the UN working group on arbitrary detention (WGAD) declared that

*“The deprivation of liberty of Mr. Nehme Naim El Haj is **arbitrary**, being in contravention of article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and falls under category III of the categories applicable to the consideration of cases submitted to the Working Group”³.*

On February 12, 2009, and notwithstanding the WGAD opinion, the Cassation Court of Beirut confirmed the death penalty sentence against Nehmeh El Haj, and the Cassation Court's decision is a mere copy of the first decision rendered in 2004. It constitutes a new and serious violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, that states that *“Everyone convicted of a crime shall have the right to his conviction and sentence being reviewed by a higher tribunal according to law”*.

Presidential pardon in r/o Nehmeh El Haj is under review, and letters have been sent to the judges of the Pardon Commission, the Legal Advisor to the President of Lebanon and to the Minister of Justice. Response is awaited.

³ WGAD, Opinion #17/2006, May 12, 2006



3. Assem Kakoun:

Assem Kakoun, Lebanese, was arrested on January 6, 1990 in Hammana at the home of Rustom Ghazali, an official of the Syrian intelligence in Lebanon, for whom he was working. The arrest was made by Syrian security services in Lebanon without presenting a warrant. Mr. Kakoun was taken to a center of the Syrian security located in Anjar in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, then transferred two weeks later to a facility in Damascus (run by Syrian services), where he was detained for eleven months, always in secret. He was reportedly tortured at all the places where he was detained. On November 20, 1990, Syrian authorities handed him over to the Lebanese police and it is only on December 14, 1990 that an arrest warrant was issued against him. For over seven months, he was transferred from one detention facility to another until he reached the central prison in Roumieh, where he now remains.

Mr. Kakoun appeared before a Lebanese court on charges of a murder that occurred on November 25, 1989, and was sentenced to life imprisonment although he has repeatedly claimed his innocence in the matter. His right to appeal the sentence was denied.

In April 2009, CLDH received the opinion of the WGAD⁴, in which

“The Working Group requests from the Lebanese Government to remedy the situation of Mr. Assem Kakoun in accordance with the provisions cited in (its) opinion. The Group believes that in the circumstances of the case and given the length of the detention, the right solution is the immediate release of the person”.

4. Joseph Palangui Ndangua:

Joseph Palangui Ndangua, Congolese, arrested in September 2007 for illegally residing in Lebanon was sentenced to two months in prison. He was however detained for over a year and the organization has been active on his case since 2008 and worked vigorously to seek his release. It is with the view to secure his release and the release of another person from Congo, François Bilolo, that a team from CLDH also visited the Jezzine prison with the representative of the Consulate of the Democratic Republic of Congo on March 28, 2009. These efforts paid off and Joseph was finally released in May 2009 and François a little after.

⁴ WGAD, Opinion # 17/2008, adopted on September 9, 2008



5. Haytham Zantout

Haytham Zantout, Lebanese, was summoned on September 25, 2009 to the Chiyah police station where he was interrogated in a financial case. After spending a night at the police station and subsequent 4 nights at the Baabda Court jail, he was transferred to the central prison of Roumieh. After three hearings before the investigating magistrate, the latter took a decision to release him on October 19, 2009. Due to an administrative problem (the release order was not received by the prison authorities), Haytham Zantout was released on December 10, 2009, more than 7 weeks after his due release date, after efforts in this regard by the CLDH lawyer.

6. Hariri-case detainees

Since 2006, CLDH has followed with great interest the proceedings of the Independent International Investigation Commission on the assassination of Rafik Hariri, as well as of the Lebanese judiciary⁵. Indeed, several individuals were arbitrarily detained⁶ for more than 2 years as part of the investigation into the February 14, 2005 assassination in Beirut of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, without any charges brought against them in the case.

Issue of report and press conference

On the eve of the establishment of a Special Tribunal to look into the assassination of the former PM of Lebanon, Mr. Rafik Hariri, CLDH issued a report titled, “*Hariri Investigation: the truth jeopardized? Arbitrary detention, alarming disappearances and suspicious deaths*”, that implored the Lebanese civil society organizations, international organizations and the International Inquiry Commission to take steps to ensure that the Justice system respects Lebanon’s international obligations in the area of Human Rights, so as to ensure the disclosure of the truth. A press conference to launch this report was also held on March 2, 2009.

⁵ CLDH Press Release, *The Hariri case – Human Rights violations jeopardize the uncovering of the truth*, January 25, 2007

⁶ WGAD, Opinion #37/2007, 30 november, 2007, “*The deprivation of freedom of Jamil El Sayed, Moustapha Hamdane, Raymond Azar, Ali El Haj, Ayman Tarabay, Moustapha Talal Mesto, Ahmad Abdel Aal et Mahmoud Abdel Aal is arbitrary (...) Having expressed this opinion, the Working Group urges the government to take the necessary measures to remedy the situation of these individuals in accordance with the norms and principles set forth in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*”



Detainees' release

Mr. Mohammad Abdel Aal and Mahmoud Abdel Aal were released on bail on February 25, 2009.

The four high profile Generals, namely General Jamil el Sayed, Director General of General Security, General Raymond Azar, Head of Military Intelligence, General Mustafa Hamdan, Head of the Presidential Guard, and General Ali el Haj, Head of Internal Security Forces, were released from custody in April 2009.

C. Coordination and networking:

Cognizant of the large number of cases of foreigners detained across Lebanon, a coordination meeting was held on February, 19, between members of CLDH, AJEM, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Frontiers to share information and strategic decisions in this regard.



D. Survey on detainees in Lebanese prisons

In March 2009, the organization, with the support of the Canadian Embassy in Beirut, launched a project with the idea of gathering statistics and detailed information of all detainees in prisons across Lebanon. While the immediate objective of the project was the compilation of a workable database containing comprehensive and detailed information on all detention cases in Lebanon; the ultimate goal was to use the report to put pressure on the Lebanese authorities to assume greater responsibilities in this arena and to push for immediate prison reforms.

Besides creation of a database tool and the collection and collation of statistics, the main activities of the project included meetings with top rung officials in concerned Ministries and Police and Security Departments. So between April and November of last year, our team members met with Captain Abou Chaaya, representative of the General Security in the Ministry of Interior, Major General Ashraf Rifi, General Director of the ISF (Internal Security Forces), Colonel Elie Bou Serhal, Head of Internal Security Forces (ISF) Human Rights department; Ms. Renée Sabbagh, National Coordinator of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); General Elias Saade, Director of Roumieh central prison and other officials from concerned Ministries.

Between April and November of 2009, members of the organization visited all prisons under the control of the Internal Security Forces. The prisons visited and surveyed (22 in all) include 2 centers for minors, 17 prisons for men, 3 prisons for women and mammoth efforts were made to determine the legal status in respect of more than 5000 inmates.

During the course of this project, CLDH provided assistance to 253 inmates by various means involving referring them to other organizations and institutions, concerned embassies, or planning direct interventions on behalf of those with pressing demands.

The team, with a view to follow up on various cases of detained foreigners, also called upon officials of various Embassies and Consulates such as the Consulate of Romania, Madagascar, Russia, Sudan, Nepal and the Embassy of Australia. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Stephan Jaquemet was also kept regularly apprised of the situation.

The five month project came to a close in November 2009 and the report is expected to be published shortly.



FIGHT TORTURE AND IMPUNITY



A. Working group on Torture Prevention (WGTP)

CLDH, along with ALEF (Lebanese Association for Education and Training), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International Lebanon, Restart and Khiam Centers and PINACLE, are all part of a “Working Group on Torture Prevention”, a group of NGOs that shares experiences and implements joint activities against torture.

Implementation of the OPCAT

Between 2nd and 3rd of March, local and international NGOs came together in order to discuss and analyze different options for the implementation of the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture (OPCAT). Key members of the Parliament attended sessions of the workshop to discuss most effective method for implementation of the same. One of the options discussed was the creation of a National Human Rights Institution integrating the mandate of the National Prevention Mechanism (NPM). The Public Interest Advocacy Centre of Lebanon presented a corresponding draft law. The workshop participants formulated draft recommendations to the Lebanese government on the issue.



(Participation of members in the OPCAT Workshops organized by the WGTP)



Establishment of the National Preventive Mechanism

On May 14, 2009, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East (OHCHR-ME) organized a seminar in Beirut titled, '*Adoption of National Prevention Mechanism*' under the auspices of the Lebanese Minister of Justice H.E Mr. Ibrahim Najjar. CLDH, other local and international organizations were present, along with participants from the Ministry of Justice, Interior and Defense and other non-governmental organizations. Options and proposed recommendations for the establishment of a National Prevention Mechanism (NPM) were discussed. Two options are currently being considered. The first is to create a 'Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Detainees and Persons Deprived of their Liberty' with the aim of improving the treatment of these groups, strengthening their protection against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; preventing such practices, as well as improving the conditions of detention in all places of detention. The current draft proposal foresees the setting up of a Committee of five independent members belonging to different professional backgrounds. The second proposal is to create a National Human Rights Institution with a broad human rights mandate, including explicitly the mandate of the National Preventive Mechanism. The participants recommended to the Minister of Justice to establish a technical follow-up committee to analyze the remaining questions concerning the two options and to subsequently finalize the legal basis for the mechanism.



(May 14 2009, Seminar '*Adoption of National Prevention Mechanism*')



On December, 2009, the organization also issued a Joint Press Release along with other local and international organizations⁷, titled “*Lebanon: Government Misses UN Deadline on Torture Prevention Consider Proposal Commissioned by Justice Ministry*”, raising awareness about the fact that Lebanon had missed the deadline (December 22, 2009) for setting up a national institution for prevention of torture.

B. Follow up on individual cases:

1. Mahmoud Rafeh

Mr. Rafeh was arrested on June 7, 2006 by the Intelligence Services of the Lebanese Army and subsequently detained at the Ministry of Defense.

In the weeks following his arrest, Mahmoud Rafeh is alleged to have been subjected to very egregious acts of torture at the detention center of the Ministry of Defense with the objective of making him sign documents he was not allowed to read.

The acts of torture to which he was allegedly subjected include: extended durations of sleep deprivation (one week without sleep); being constantly blindfolded; hands tied with plastic rope; and the "balanco" method of torture. He also was subjected to psychological torture, including receiving threats of grave physical harm to himself and his family.

According to the information obtained, Mr. Rafeh could not remain standing during his first appearance before the Military Examining Magistrate as a result of torture, and the judge simply asked him to "sit down". He apparently wanted to recant his confessions and show the examining judge the marks of torture on his body, but the judge kept his head down.

⁷ The groups that issued the press release are Human Rights Watch, Frontiers Ruwad Association, Al-Karama for Human Rights, Association Libanaise pour l'Education et la Formation (ALEF), Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center.



The Military Intelligence Services, who were present and watching the exchange, subsequently took their revenge on him by forcing him to remain seated in a corridor without sleep for 10 days because he dared to complain to the judge about torture.

Every time Mr. Rafeh has tried to complain about the torture, he suffered harsh reprisals by the Army's Intelligence Services.

Mr. Rafeh has been for a total of two years and nine months in detention in isolation in the basement of the Defense Ministry. He allegedly was first held in a tiny isolation cell deprived of a toilet with only a bottle to relieve himself. It is only after a year and a half of detention that he was allowed to go outside, once or several times a week, for 10 minutes, while handcuffed to a guard. Family visits did take place under the strict control of the Army's Intelligence Services that denied him any communication with his family. He was able to see an attorney only after two years, in the presence of an officer of the Army's Intelligence Services.

Having been transferred to the Central Prison of Roumieh in March 2009, Mr. Rafeh still bears the marks of torture on his wrists. He also exhibits signs of grave physical exhaustion. He is also deeply affected psychologically because of what he has likely suffered at the hands of the Army's Intelligence Services.

In August 2009, CLDH, ALEF (Lebanese Association for education and training) and Al Karama for Human Rights pleaded with the military judiciary to dismiss the confessions that Mr. Rafeh has in all likelihood signed under torture and demanded an independent inquiry by a non-military body into the allegations of torture to which Mr. Rafeh has been subjected, and that those responsible be held accountable. The signatories of this press release hold the authorities responsible for his physical and psychological wellbeing.

The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Action by Christians Against Torture (ACAT), Act Together for Human Rights (AEDH), the Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) and Amnesty International expressed their concerns regarding Mr Rafeh to the Lebanese authorities.



2. Faysal Ghazi Moqalled

On November 23, 2009, CLDH, ACAT, and AEDH expressed their deep concern to the Lebanese political and judicial authorities about Mr. Faysal Ghazi Moqalled, aged 32, whose trial on appeal began on November 24, 2009 before the Court of Appeal of Beirut's Military Tribunal. Mr. Moqalled has allegedly been severely tortured with a view to extract confessions from him.

According to the information collected, Mr. Moqalled suffered 5 months of illegal detention in a Hezbollah prison (from February 2006 to July 2006), where he was allegedly tortured to make him confess to his assumed membership in the Israeli Mossad, before being detained for 20 months in the Ministry of Defense (until March 26, 2008), where he was reportedly severely tortured yet again.

Faysal Ghazi Moqalled is currently suffering from back pain. His fingers have been visibly broken as well as six of his front teeth. In addition, he suffers from a severe psychological trauma resulting from the exactions that he was allegedly subjected to, including electric shocks, mock execution by gas, the balanco (arms tied behind his back, the victim is suspended from the ceiling using a pulley), the fallaqa (repeated blows on the soles of the feet), rape threats as well as various humiliations and serious deprivations.

His first hearing before the examining magistrate is dated August 5, 2006. Mr Moqalled had no lawyer and, according to our information, has reportedly suffered serious reprisals from his jailers (including being subjected once more to the torture of balanco) as a result of complaining about being tortured before the examining magistrate.

On July 31, 2009, the military court sentenced him to life imprisonment for:

- Giving information to the enemy in order to help the latter win the war (although he was apparently detained several months before the Israeli attack against Lebanon in July 2006).
- Entering Israel without permission (the person concerned denies this information, and there seems to be no conclusive evidence that can either confirm or refute this crime).
- Working with the enemy army.

It is very likely that the conviction in trial court is solely based on confessions signed under torture.



If confirmed, these allegations represent very serious violations of Lebanon's international commitments, in particular of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Lebanon is a party and which stands above the national law according to the country's constitution.

CLDH, ACAT and AEDH asked the competent authorities for an investigation into allegations of torture, including ordering a medical and psychiatric evaluation of the person concerned and stressed that all the evidence that would point to the allegations being leveled should be considered and his confession signed during the preliminary investigation should be invalidated if the allegations are confirmed.

3. Other cases of torture

During 2009, CLDH filed four new cases of torture and ensured the follow up of Mahmoud Rafah's case with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture.

“Lebanon-Vatican: When Torturers Become Diplomats of the Holy See”

In April 2009, the organization along with the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) issued a Press Release titled *“Lebanon-Vatican: When Torturers Become Diplomats of the Holy See”*, following the appointment of Mr. George Khoury as the Lebanese Ambassador to the Holy See. Mr. Khoury, a high ranking officer of the Lebanese army, occupied several high positions in the Army's intelligence services and is also alleged to have committed many torture violations.



REHABILITATE THE VICTIMS OF TORTURE:

CENTRE NASSIM PROJECT



Centre Nassim

A SOLIDA/CLDH Project

Funded by



Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands



Centre Nassim for the rehabilitation of the victims of torture is a project of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) launched in October 2007 with the support of the Netherlands embassy in Beirut. It was deliberately set up in a separate premise so as to offer to the victims of torture a safe and confidential haven, where rehabilitation services could be made available to them away from glare of the media or unnecessary scrutiny of the security services. Centre Nassim is a member of IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for the victims of Torture).

By victim of torture (VoT), Centre Nassim adopts the definition of the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), ratified by Lebanon in 2000, and welcomes as beneficiaries, victims of torture and their direct relatives, including the families of disappeared persons who are considered as direct victims of moral torture. Centre Nassim does not discriminate on the basis of gender, political background, nationality or legal status and, since its inception, has offered support to over 120 beneficiaries and families, from Lebanon (including Palestinians residing in Lebanon), Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Centre Nassim offers rehabilitation to victims of torture through multi-disciplinary professional support and case management. Centre Nassim's success lies in its team that is comprised of well knowledgeable and highly motivated staff from the field of psychology, psychiatry, general medicine, physiotherapy, legal counseling and representation, social work and professional reintegration. The activities undertaken at Centre Nassim may broadly be classified into the following:

- Care and assistance to the beneficiaries
- Training and capacity building of staff,
- Contact building and networking.
- Visibility actions and publicity.



A. Care and assistance to beneficiaries

Centre Nassim team members work individually and collectively as a team to plan and organize the treatment schedule of every beneficiary. First timers or referrals to our Centre are considered by our intake panel comprising of the Social worker, the psychiatrist and the General Practitioner, who assess whether a person falls within our remit, how he/she is coping physiologically, psychologically and practically, and whether our Centre can indeed offer a timely and effective response. Referrals to our Centre are made by doctors, hospitals, voluntary and Non-governmental bodies, other beneficiaries etc. Once the assessment has been made and it has been ascertained that the individual comes under the category of ‘beneficiary’, the treatment options are then thrashed out by the team and a schedule for care delivery is accordingly planned.

i) Medical assistance

The General Practitioners of Centre Nassim play a crucial role in assessing the condition of the new beneficiaries at the medical level and in assisting them in the rehabilitation process that must necessarily begin with some healing or redressal of the victims’ physiological complaints.

ii) Social assistance.

It is often noticed, that VoT’s suffer gravely from the absence of social support and/or isolation that they face in the society and sometimes, within their own families. Centre Nassim’s social worker is often the first person to whom they can openly and freely talk about their horrific experiences and expect to receive empathetic listening.

The social worker assesses their social situation, proposes and arranges for suitable assistance, which may include accommodation assistance, payment of school fees for children for a specific period of time, and also organizes referrals to other resource persons or organizations that may be in a position to offer suitable assistance to the beneficiaries.

iii) Legal assistance:

Victims of torture have many legal issues: claims for reintegration into workplace, clearing of criminal records, processing of asylum applications with UNHCR, help with issuance of stay permits and/or work permits, request for attestations for various administrative reasons, so on and so forth.



Centre Nassim's lawyer provides extensive legal consultations and counseling to the victims on various aspects of laws relating to human rights violations, torture related issues; public interest litigations etc. He/she represents the victims and pleads their case in civil, criminal and military courts, notary office, before security services.

During the year 2009, bulk of the legal assistance provided consisted of legal counselling and consultations, clarification of criminal records, facilitation for grant of work permits, verification of documents, and provision of legal defense in the court of law. Notable achievements in this area during the year 2009 include;

- working closely with UNHCR and General Security on the issue of resettlement to a third country in r/o 2 Iraqi refugees, 2 Syrian Kurdish refugees and 2 Iranian refugees,

- facilitating the grant of legal residency permit in r/o a female Iraqi beneficiary,

- sorting out the legal problems relating to the accommodation in r/o 1 Kurdish-Syrian refugee,

- facilitating an expert appraisal of a shop owned by a beneficiary for grant of suitable evacuation assistance by the landlord.

iv) Physiotherapy:

Treatment of beneficiaries at Centre Nassim is based on various approaches including a kinesiological approach that applies scientific based medical principles towards the analysis, preservation and enhancement of human movement in all settings and populations. Our physiotherapist works out a treatment plan which involves explaining to the patients about the exercise and massage regimen that will be followed at the Centre as also the exercises that the patient will do at home to aid in faster recovery. In short, our beneficiaries benefit immensely from this therapeutic regimen of controlled exercises, ergonomics and lifestyle modifications.

v) Psychiatry and Psychotherapy:

The effects of torture are often a combination of physical injuries as a result of the inflicted violence and the mental trauma associated with experiencing such acts.



The mental suffering due to torture and Post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) are the most commonly observed cases at the Centre. There are also patients who have experienced intense bereavement and grief over the death or disappearance of their loved ones. At Centre Nassim, cases are referred to the psychologist by the psychiatrist, who then puts together a therapy programme involving autogenic training, supportive psychotherapy, psychoanalytical psychotherapy, relaxation or a combination of all, after taking into consideration unique factors that each case may present. The cases are reviewed on a regular basis by the resident psychiatrist. The psychiatrist along with the two psychologists have successfully dealt with several cases of PTSDs, adaptation disorders, acute depression, delusions etc and have facilitated several beneficiaries to successfully reinvest in their social and professional life. Another important observation is that psycho-education coupled with general health education and physiotherapy has led to the alleviation in the physical symptoms of many a patient.

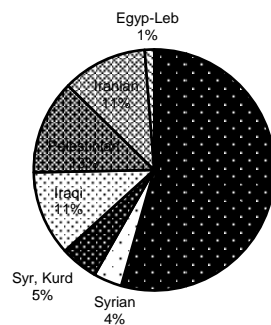
vi) Employment counseling:

Our employment advisor is trained not only to provide sound career counseling but is also someone who has developed and acquired the competencies of working with people of multi cultural backgrounds. The advisor offers assistance to the beneficiaries in drawing up their CV's, helps ascertain from them about their goals, interests and looks for ways and means to help them find a job. In the course of performing these tasks, the advisor has managed to develop good contacts with various Ministries, Institutes, organizations or associations; and with the help of these contacts is constantly trying to explore opportunities for job availability or skills training for our beneficiaries. During 2009, the Employment Advisor visited several institutions/organizations such as the Mira Training Centre, British Council, Join Christian Committee, Computer training institutes such as Formatech, New Horizons, ACT knowledge centre; and several others to introduce the Centre and also to explore possibilities for job/skill training at these institutes. These visits were very fruitful insofar as establishing good networks leading to skill training for beneficiaries on preferential basis and at subsidized costs.



Beneficiaries assisted in 2009:

Intake of beneficiaries in 2009: Fifty six (56) beneficiaries from 2008 continued to visit our Centre and seek assistance in 2009. In addition to these carry forward cases, as many as **52** new beneficiaries also benefited from our assistance during the year 2009. The total number of beneficiaries that the Centre has served so far, since its inception, stands at 119. The breakup of the beneficiaries assisted in the previous year, in terms of their nationalities is given below:



The average age of our beneficiaries is **52** (with the youngest being around 24 years old and the oldest being approximately 80 years old). The Centre has twice as many male beneficiaries as its female ones. Among the case load of 2009, in terms of the kind of torture victims that the Centre has provided assistance, the break up is as under:





Number of visits of beneficiaries in 2009

Visits and in-house consultations/sessions: Throughout the year our in-house care givers had a steady inflow of beneficiaries. The period of relative calm and stability ensured that the Centre was able to go about its operations in a normal and unhindered manner. During the year, in keeping with the growing numbers of women beneficiaries, an Obs/Gyn doctor was also brought on board in March 2009. The following table shows the number of visits of beneficiaries during the year.

Staff/Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Practitioner	34	28	13	12	19	8	3	15	16	12	12	14
Obs/Gyn			10	10	11	4	3	4	8	13	7	2
Psychiatrist			1	5	7	4	4	9	8	14	17	11
Psychologist - Male	9	7	7	5	4	4	2	3	1	2	3	2
Psychologist - female	2	2	1	1			1			1	3	4
Social worker	17	25	21	21	22	12	4	6	18	17	20	21
Employment Advisor	8	8	6	1	13	4	1	1	5	8	5	4
Lawyer	14	9	8	4	4	3	2	2	3	5	6	7
Physiotherapist	11	9	6	6	2	1			3	5	4	2

Home visits: During the course of the year, staff members also visited some beneficiaries for enquiring into the health of the family members and on occasion also visited the workplace of the beneficiaries for a personal assessment of their professional reintegration. Such visits boosted the morale of the beneficiaries who thoroughly welcomed such visits.



B. Training and capacity building of staff

Training programmes are important because they expand knowledge base, try to bring about changes in staff attitudes and impart new skills and build upon existing skills. We at Centre Nassim believe that ongoing capacity building is an essential element in the strengthening of any organization and the empowerment of its staff. This can mean the development of an individual's knowledge and skills or building organizational or even national capacity. So our training plan for 2009 encompassed three important components;

- carry out training programmes with available local or regional resources,
- carry out regular in-house training programmes by our staff;
- bring in reputed trainers and resources persons from abroad to conduct special thematic workshops.

Also besides, in-house training sessions, the staff members are also encouraged to participate in external training programmes or workshops.

- In May 2009, a unique workshop on drama and psychotherapy was conducted by one local expert Samar Kattan, based on the use of 'drama' and 'role playing' as effective tools to approach in an interactive manner the complexity of human nature in all its aspects: body, mind & soul.



- In June, a two and a half days training workshop was conducted at the Centre by two members of **Insan Association** and **MLCT** (Mason Laporte Conflict Transformation based in UK) on '**Relationship building with Non Violent Communication**'. The course provided the staff members with the opportunity to benefit from the transformation of conflict, with the development of trust, support and honest communication and reduction in pain and violence. It also provided the participants with the thinking and skills needed to strengthen relationships with colleagues and beneficiaries alike.





(Staff members participating and sharing ideas and thoughts in the workshop)





- In **September 2009**, the Centre had the pleasure of inviting **Mr. Craig Higson-Smith of South Africa** for a workshop on ‘Trauma Education and rehabilitation’. The two and a half day training programme focused on pertinent issues such as ‘new developments in psychotherapy while dealing with torture survivors’, ‘vicarious trauma’, ‘compassion fatigue’. The workshop was attended not only by members of Nassim but also by members of other organizations such as Restart Centre, Insan and MSF (Médecins sans frontières). Nassim members benefited particularly from the psychological supervision in r/o some critical cases being handled in the Centre.





- **In December 2009**, Nassim also was fortunate to have renowned movement therapist **Amber Elizabeth Gray of the United States of America**, to provide training on ‘body mind connection’ and use of ‘non-verbal therapies in dealing with survivors of torture’.





- In **July 2009**, the two resident psychologists conducted a workshop for the staff members on “*Personality Disorders, symptoms for identification of the various disorders and ways to deal with individuals*”. As a follow up, a refresher training capsule was also conducted in **December 2009** by our Chief Psychologist on the ‘*different episodes in mood disorders, and the different types of depression*’ as well.
- In **October 2009**, staff members also attended a day long workshop organized by the resident physiotherapist on ‘Ergonomics’. The purpose of the workshop was to educate the staff about the need to maintain proper postures and teach them simple exercises that will help ward off aches and pains and lead a better life.
- In October 2009, the Employment Advisor along with the Reception Assistant attended a workshop on ‘**Breaking the cycle of violence; training practitioners to deal with trauma**’ conducted by the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue.
- Counselors working with torture and trauma survivors are also highly vulnerable to vicarious traumatization and burnout. It is in recognition of this that the Centre organized some monthly group counseling sessions of the staff with a renowned Counselor, Dr. Mounir Chamoun. Mr. Craig Higson-Smith and Amber Grey also carried out counseling sessions with the staff of Nassim.



C. Contact building and networking

There are several other organizations/associations in Lebanon and elsewhere that are doing wonderful work in the field of human rights, torture, violence etc. We have always believed that one can never work in isolation and it is absolutely imperative that we work in tandem with other organizations in a manner whereby we are able to leverage each other's skills, knowledge and experience to improve our professional skills and broaden our own networks.

There are several other organizations/associations in Lebanon and elsewhere that are doing wonderful work in the field of human rights, torture, violence etc. We at Centre Nassim have always believed that one can never work in isolation and it is absolutely imperative that we work in tandem with other organizations in a manner whereby we are able to leverage each others skills, knowledge and experience to improve our professional skills and broaden our own networks.

During the year 2009, the staff of Centre Nassim visited several organizations and also had the pleasure of hosting the visits of members of other organizations at the Centre. Notable among our visitors were:

- Dr. Jamileh of the Australian Volunteers International (AVI) to discuss opportunities for possible future collaboration.
- H.E Jan Top Christensen, Danish Ambassador and Jakob Rogild Jakobsen, Head of Section for the Dept of Middle East and North Africa in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark for a briefing about the functioning of Centre Nassim and future plans and projects;
- Mr. Allen Jelich, Country Director of Danish Refugee Council (DRC), to discuss possibility of case assistance to our Iraqi beneficiaries;
- Members of the Italian Development Cooperation in Beirut, for a briefing on the activities of the organization;
- Mr. Ali Gharavi, Director of Technology of the Centre for Victims for Torture, Minneapolis, US;
- Ms. Amanda Gillet, Community Programs Manager of ASeTTS (Assisting Torture and Trauma Survivors, Australia);
- Ms. Emmanuelle Bennani Caillouet, Project Officer for the Mediterranean Region of CCFD (French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development).



During the year, the staff of Nassim also visited various agencies/organizations to introduce the working of Nassim and to also gain an understanding about functioning of these organizations and identify common areas of interest and explore possibilities of future collaborations.

The management of the Centre paid visits to numerous Embassies with a view to enlighten the officials of the functioning of the Centre and keep them abreast with the human rights situation as it exists in Lebanon. Notable Embassies that were visited include the Embassies of Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Spain, and Czech Republic.

The Director also paid a visit to MECC (Middle East Council of Churches) and had a long and interesting chat with Ms. Seta Hadesian, Director of the Unit on Diakonia and Social Justice. The Social Assistant along with the Employment Advisor met with officials of World Vision (an organization working on Children's rights), Ajialouna (non-profit organization dedicated to health and social welfare) JCD (an organization devoted to fighting substance abuse in youth), Caritas Migrant Centre etc.

D. Visibility actions and publicity

It is widely accepted that proper cooperation between an NGO and mass media will lead to greater public knowledge about the working of NGO and will strengthen the NGO's work at the local, regional and national level. As someone once said, 'providing reliable information (to governments, intergovernmental organizations, politicians, the news media, academics as well as the general public) is the most important precondition to be fulfilled for any NGO to have an impact'.

A team from Télé Liban (Public Television Network of Lebanon) also visited the Centre and interviewed the staff members on their roles and also for a general idea of the functioning of the Centre.

In **October 2009**, a team from Al Jazeera (Middle East) also visited our Centre for a story on the general human rights situation in the region with particular emphasis on the situation of torture.



Conclusion:

The year 2009, has been a year of further consolidation for Centre Nassim. While the Centre was launched in the latter half of 2007, 2008 was spent in establishing a good foundation. 2009 was therefore the year of building on the good foundation and widening the linkages so as to be counted as a Centre of repute in the arena of 'torture rehabilitation'. The numbers of beneficiaries continues to climb, with beneficiaries of different nationalities also coming in for assistance; while the staff members continue to improve on their skills and thinking so as to provide for quality care and assistance. The members convey warmth, concern, sensitivity and respect while inquiring about horrifying experiences. The expression of caring is extended through practical social work help in obtaining accommodation, employment counselling, psychiatric evaluation and treatment, psychotherapy, physiotherapy and art therapy. The steady influx of beneficiaries throughout the year is ample testimony of the good, hard work put in by every staff member, under the able guidance and direction of the Board of Directors. The staff of Nassim fully understands and comprehends the enormity of the task at hand. This is a long and arduous journey and we need the support, encouragement and goodwill of one and all to truly make a difference in the lives of those numerous people who are still waiting in the shadows!!



PRESS COVERAGE

عائلة يوسف شعبان اليوم امام قصر عدل بيروت

دعا المركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان العموم الى الانضمام اليه اليوم الخميس، عند العاشرة صباحاً امام قصر عدل بيروت للمطالبة بإصدار قرار العفو الرئاسي عن يوسف شعبان، وقال في بيان وزعه مساء امس انه بمرور 5 شباط يكون قد مضى 15 عاماً على توقيف يوسف شعبان من قبل المخابرات السورية، ونقله الى البويرفاج وتعذيبه لإلزامه على توقيع اعترافات تورطه في اغتيال الدبلوماسي الاردني* وانه منذ اعتقاله في السجون اللبنانية، وحالياً في سجن جبيل، بعد اصدار حكم من قبل المجلس العدلي يدينه في عملية الاغتيال ويقضي بالسجن المؤبد، لم يكن لديه مجالاً للاستئناف*

وطالب المركز بانصاف يوسف شعبان والوقوف الى جانبه*

كتاب مفتوح من أهالي المعتقلين والمفقودين الى الحكومة: إنشاء "الهيئة الوطنية" وتطبيق الاتفاقات القضائية مع سوريا

المستقبل - الجمعة 6 آذار 2009 - العدد 3239 - شؤون لبنانية - صفحة 8

سارة مطر

صرخة جديدة يطلقها أهالي المعتقلين في السجون السورية والمخطوفين والمفقودين في لبنان، وهذه المرة عبر كتاب مفتوح الى الحكومة اللبنانية يطالب بإنشاء الهيئة الوطنية لمعالجة قضية المخفيين قسراً وتطبيق الاتفاقات القضائية المعقودة بين الحكومتين اللبنانية والسورية لاستعادة الـ 107 سجناء الذين اعترفت سوريا بوجودهم، ويؤكد فشل اللجنة اللبنانية - السورية المشتركة في ظل استمرار التعنت السوري، وضرورة رفع القضية الى المراجع الدولية.



وعقدت لجنة أهالي اللبنانيين المعتقلين في السجون السورية ولجنة أهالي المخطوفين والمفقودين في لبنان ودعم المعتقلين والمنفيين اللبنانيين - "سوليد" والمركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان مؤتمراً صحافياً أمس في مقر اعتصامهم في حديقة جبران خليل جبران، رياض الصلح لتوجيه الكتاب المفتوح الى الحكومة ممثلة بالرئيس فؤاد السنيورة.

وتلا رئيس لجنة "سوليد" غازي عاد نص الكتاب وجاء فيه:

"ثلاثة عقود وأكثر مرت على معاناة أهالي اللبنانيين المخفيين قسراً في لبنان وسوريا وعلى تحركهم الدائم، أحياناً كثيرة في أقصى الظروف، من دون نتيجة تذكر،

أربع سنوات مرت على اعتصام أهالي المعتقلين في السجون السورية أمام مبنى الأمم المتحدة في بيروت استمعنا خلالها الى وعود وآمال مخيبة والنتيجة لجنة لبنانية سورية مشتركة لم تأت حتى الساعة بحل جدي أو جواب شافي على الكثير من ملفات المخفيين قسراً في السجون التابعة لأجهزة المخابرات في سوريا.

تسعة أشهر مرت على خطاب القسم لرئيس الجمهورية وسبعة أشهر مرت على البيان الوزاري الذي تضمن الفقرتين 23 و 35 اللتان تنصان بشكل واضح على إيجاد حل لقضيتي المعتقلين في سوريا والمفقودين في لبنان. لقد كنا نأمل أن تكون هاتين الفقرتين تحملاً لتصميم وطنياً ومُدخلاً لإنهاء مأساة الآلاف من الأسر التي تعيش القلق الدائم والعذاب، لكن وللأسف لم نجد أماناً إلا التهميش مجدداً، نص الاتفاقية الدولية لحماية كل الأشخاص من الإخفاء القسري ما زالت عالقة بين الحكومة والبرلمان ولم تصدق حتى الساعة وهذا أقل الإيمان!".

وطالب عاد الحكومة بالتحرك الجدي والحقيقي للرد على مطالبة الأهل في معرفة مصير أبنائهم، مؤكداً "أنها المسؤول الأول والأخير عن سلامة وحقوق المواطن اللبناني وعليها أن تتحرك للموافقة على إنشاء الهيئة الوطنية لمعالجة قضية المخفيين قسراً لتكون أهم بنود عملها القيام بمسح شامل لكل المخفيين قسراً في لبنان وإنشاء بنك المعلومات للحمض النووي DNA.

والطلب من وزارة العدل بتطبيق الاتفاقات القضائية المعقودة بين الحكومتين اللبنانية والسورية للمطالبة باستعادة السجناء اللبنانيين الذين اعترفت بوجودهم السلطات القضائية السورية و عددهم يبلغ الـ 107، والذي تبين وفق اللوائح المعطاة أن أكثر من ستين سجيناً منهم ما زالوا قيد الاعتقال من دون محاكمات. لماذا السكوت عن عذاباتهم وعن عذابات أهلهم الذين يذوقون الأمرين ذهاباً وإياباً لزيارتهم؟".

وناشد الحكومة "العمل مع المجلس النيابي لإقرار قوانين تسمح بالتعويض عن المعتقلين السابقين في السجون السورية وبإعادة الاعتبار لكل العسكريين الذين تم اعتقالهم في سوريا ثم صرفوا من الخدمة بشكل تعسفي"، مشيراً الى "أن اللجنة اللبنانية السورية المشتركة أصبحت بلا طائل في ظل المنهجية السورية المستمرة والتعنت السوري في التعاطي مع قضية المخفيين قسراً في السجون السورية ولن نقبل بعد اليوم أن تكون هذه اللجنة هي الجواب عن موضوع كل المخفيين قسراً في لبنان، وكل بحث خارج هذا الإطار يصبح مضيقاً للوقت وللهدف الذي من أجله أنشأت هذه اللجنة، وفي حال استمر الفشل في عمل اللجنة فعلى الحكومة أن ترفع هذه القضية الى المراجع الدولية من أجل إيجاد آلية تسمح بمعرفة مصير أبنائنا".

وختم عاد بالتشديد على عدم التحجج بالمدة القصيرة التي تفصلنا عن الانتخابات، لأن ذلك لن يجدي خاصة أن آلاف العائلات اللبنانية هم أيضاً من الناجحين وقد سأموا الوعود السياسية التي لم تحقق إلا استمراراً للمأساة والمعاناة،

فالامبالاة لم تفلح في إطفاء شعلة الحق في قلوب الأهل، لن نياس وسنستمر".
بعدها، توجه الأهالي الى السرايا الحكومي لتسليم الكتاب المفتوح، حاملين صور أبنائهم وإخوانهم المفقودين
والمعتقلين وشعارات كتبت عليها: "مخطوف صوتن"، "حرام عليك يا بشار كفاهم ظلم 24 عاماً في سجونك السرية"،
"وينن؟" و"إلى متى؟" و"حقي أعرف".
ورددوا هتافات منددة مثال "ما بدنا لبنانية بالسجون السورية، بدنا المعتقلين طيبين كانوا أم ميّتين" و"إسمعونا"،
"عيب عليهم إسرائيل سلّمت الأسرى، رجّعولنا ولادنا".
ولدى وصولهم، كان في استقبالهم مدير البروتوكول في السرايا درويش قاسم الذي طمأن الأهالي الى "أن الرئيس
السنيرة يتابع الملف بجدية ويعتبره من أولوياته ويطره بقوة وهو بصدد البحث في كل المحافل الدولية رغم
صعوباته ورغم أن الكثير من المعنيين بالملف يسحبون أيديهم منه". وقد وعد الأهالي بموعد قريب مع السنيرة
لبحث الملف والاطلاع على المستجدات.

هيومن رايتس تطالب السلطات اللبنانية

بجدية التحقيق في اختفاء نوّار عبود

رأت منظمة هيومن رايتس ووتش والمركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان أمس أن على السلطات اللبنانية أن تكشف عن كل المعلومات المتوافرة لديها حول مكان نوّار عبود، الذي اختفى قبل ثلاثة أشهر، إثر احتجازه من قبل مخابرات الجيش في طرابلس.

وبعدما طلبت النيابة العامة إعطاءها معلومات عنه، ذكرت مخابرات الجيش في 11 شباط 2009 أنها اخلت سبيل عبود، المعارض السوري، في 25 كانون الأول 2008، لكنه لم يُشاهد منذ ذلك الحين.

ويعمل عبود محاسباً في التجمع القومي الموحد، وهي جماعة سياسية على صلة برفعت الأسد، المعارض السوري وعم الرئيس السوري بشار الأسد، وتخشى عائلة عبود وزملاؤه أن يكون قد نُقل قسراً إلى سوريا.

وقال باحث رئيسي في هيومن رايتس ووتش نديم حوري <للبنان تاريخ مؤلم في احتجاز الافراد ونقلهم بشكل غير مشروع الى سوريا، حيث يختفون... وأفضل طريقة لإظهار ان الايام السوداء قد ولّت، هي ان تجري السلطات اللبنانية تحقيقاً يتسم بالشفافية والجدية في القضية>.

وكان حضر في 24 كانون الأول 2008 عناصر من مخابرات الجيش اللبناني الى مكتب عبود في طرابلس واصطحبوه معهم، برفقة اثنين من الموظفين اللبنانيين، الى قاعدة القبة العسكرية للتحقيق معهم.

وأفرجت مخابرات الجيش عن الموظفين اللبنانيين، احدهما في 24 كانون الأول والآخر في 26 كانون الأول، وذكرت المخابرات انها افرجت عن عبود في الساعة 14.20 يوم 25 كانون الأول 2008، وان ممتلكاته أعيدت اليه، بما في ذلك سيارتين كانت المخابرات العسكرية قد صادرتها، إلا ان عائلة عبود وزملاءه لم يروه او يروا سيارته رغم الجهود الم بذولة لمعرفة مكانه.

وطبقاً لرسالة بتاريخ 14 كانون الثاني 2009 من الامن العام (المؤسسة الامنية المسؤولة عن الاجانب وعابري الحدود في لبنان) لا يوجد سجل بمغادرة عبود لبنان عبر المعابر الحدودية الرسمية.

وحين سألت وسائل الإعلام وزيري العدل والداخلية عن اختفاء عبود، ذكر الوزير ان التحقيق يجريه مكتب المدعي العام. وفي مقابلة متلفزة على شبكة الاخبار العربية <إيه.أن.أن>، ذكر وزير العدل ابراهيم النجار ان مكتب المدعي العام يجري التحقيق في اختفاء عبود، لكنه لم يذكر معلومات اضافية.

من جانبه، قال وزير الداخلية زياد بارود لصحيفة الراي الكويتية بتاريخ 11 شباط ان <الموضوع قضائي، وعندما يكون مدعي عام التمييز يضع يده على الملف، لا تتدخل>.

وإثر الطلب بالحصول على معلومات تقدّم به وكيل عبود، كرّر مكتب المدعي العام أن الاستخبارات افرجت عن عبود في 25 كانون الأول.

وقالت ماري دوناي رئيسة المركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان: <لا يمكن ان تقتصر تحقيقات المدعي العام على ما قاله الجيش، إذ يجب ان يتوسع بالتحقيق وأن يُلغى الضوء على الظروف المحيطة بإخلاء سبيل عبود المفترض وتحديد مكانه بعدا خلاء سبيله>.

وكانت هيومن رايتس ووتش ارسلت رسالة في 5 آذار 2009 الى وزارات الدفاع والداخلية والعدل للمطالبة بأن تؤمن المخابرات العسكرية اللبنانية مزيداً من التفاصيل حول مكان عبود، وحتى الآن لم يصلها أي جواب على الرسالة.

LIBAN

Brèves

L'opposant syrien Nawar Abboud disparaît après son arrestation à Tripoli

Human Rights Watch et le Centre libanais pour les droits de l'homme ont appelé les autorités libanaises à rendre publiques les informations dont elles disposent concernant l'opposant syrien, Nawar Abboud.

Selon le communiqué distribué par Human Rights Watch, « Nawar Abboud, opposant syrien partisan de Rifat Assad, a disparu il y a trois mois à Tripoli, après avoir été interpellé par les services de renseignements de l'armée ». « Au parquet qui demandait des informations au sujet de Nawar Abboud, les services de renseignements de l'armée ont indiqué le 11 février dernier qu'ils l'avaient relâché le 25 décembre 2008 », a ajouté le texte.

Pourtant, depuis cette date, Abboud n'a pas été revu. Sa famille craint qu'il n'ait été transféré en secret en Syrie.

Nadim Houri, chercheur au sein de Human Rights Watch, a souligné que « le Liban a une triste histoire dans la détention des personnes et leur transfert illégal en Syrie, où ils disparaissent ». « La meilleure façon de montrer que cette triste page de l'histoire du Liban a été tournée est que les autorités libanaises mènent une enquête sérieuse et transparente relative à la disparition de Abboud », a-t-il ajouté.

Le texte publié par Human Rights Watch souligne qu'interrogés au sujet de Nawar Abboud le mois dernier, les ministres de la Justice et de l'Intérieur, respectivement Ibrahim Najjar et Ziyad Baroud, n'ont pas fourni de détails, soulignant que le parquet enquête à ce sujet.

مذكرة ومؤتمر صحفي دعماً لقضية المختوفين والمختوفين والمختوفين

قدمت كل من رئيسة «لجنة أهالي المختوفين والمختوفين في لبنان» وداد حلواني، ورئيس «لجنة دعم المختوفين والمنفيين اللبنانيين - سوليد» غازي عاد، ورئيس «المركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان» وديع الأسمر، إلى رئيس مجلس الوزراء فؤاد السنيورة، في السرايا الحكومية، نسخة عن المذكرة الموجهة إلى رئيس الجمهورية ميشال سليمان، والتي تتضمن آلية لحل قضية ضحايا الإخفاء القسري .

وقد استلم السنيورة المذكرة ووعد بأن يولي هذا الموضوع اهتمامه .

وكانت الهيئات الثلاث المذكورة قد ناقشت مضمون المذكرة مع كل من وزير الداخلية والبلديات زياد بارود ووزير العدل ابراهيم نجار بناء على توصية سليمان، وتبنى الوزيران آلية الحل وعنوانها «تشكيل هيئة وطنية»، بحسب ما أشارت حلواني لـ«السفير» .

من جهة ثانية، دعت اللجان الثلاث، مع الهيئات الأهلية الداعمة، إلى حضور المؤتمر الصحفي الذي تعقده تحت عنوان «من حقنا أن نعرف» وتعلن فيها عن برنامجها، وذلك عند الحادية عشرة من قبل ظهر الأربعاء المقبل، في حرج بيروت، مدخل قصص .

LIBAN

Libanais détenus en Syrie : Massoud Achkar réclame la création d'une commission gouvernementale

Le comité des parents des détenus en Syrie, Solid, et le Centre libanais des droits de l'homme organisent ce soir, à 20h, une veillée au flambeau devant la tente dressée par les parents des détenus, dans le jardin Gebrane Khalil Gebrane, face à l'Escwa, à la mémoire d'Odette Salamé, tuée la semaine dernière par un chauffard, place Riad el-Solh.

Dans une déclaration faite hier, Massoud Achkar, candidat au siège maronite de Beyrouth I, s'est dit consterné par la mort d'Odette Salamé, « qui a passé les dernières années de sa vie participant au sit-in des parents des Libanais détenus en Syrie, devant l'Escwa, alors que les responsables ignorent cette affaire ». Il a estimé que le gouvernement « devrait prendre à son compte le projet de Solid, qui prévoit la création d'une commission gouvernementale ayant des prérogatives complètes pour régler ce dossier. Selon lui, celle-ci devrait être financée par l'État « qui est en définitive responsable de la sécurité et de la vie de ses citoyens ».

M. Achkar a en outre mis l'accent sur la nécessité d'établir une banque d'ADN « pour que la cause de ces personnes ne meure pas, et d'essayer d'obtenir des responsables des milices qui sont tous aujourd'hui au pouvoir des informations au sujet du sort de ceux qui auraient été livrés à la Syrie durant la guerre ou qui auraient été liquidés et enterrés dans des fosses communes ». « De la sorte, a-t-il conclu, Odette reposera en paix, surtout qu'elle n'a jamais connu un moment de paix depuis que ses enfants, Richard et Marie-Christine, ont été enlevés, il y a 24 ans. »

"سوليد" و"مركز حقوق الإنسان": المفرج عنهم ليسوا ضحايا إخفاء قسري في سوريا

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صدر عن "سوليد" و"المركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان" البيان الآتي: "نشر يوم الثلاثاء الموافق فيه 23 حزيران 2009 خبر إعلان اللجنة المشتركة اللبنانية - السورية لائحة بأسماء 23 لبنانيا تم الافراج عنهم من السجون السورية. وقد أثار الخبر لغطا كبيرا لدى الأهل وكل المعنيين بهذه القضية الانسانية. ومن أجل إزالة كل التباس حول حقيقة ما يجري يهمننا أن نوضح للرأي العام الأمور الآتية: "منذ 22 نيسان الماضي، والسلطات السورية تطلق سجناء لبنانيين في سوريا من الذين كانوا في لائحة الـ107 التي سلمتها السلطات السورية الى الحكومة اللبنانية. عمليات الافراج تمت عبر مجموعات متتالية بشكل غير معلن وخارج إطار التنسيق الرسمي بين البلدين. ومن خلال التواصل الدائم مع الأهل، علمت منظماتنا بهذا الأمر. ونزولا عند رغبة الأهالي والسجناء الذين أطلقوا، تمئنا عن إثارة الموضوع وعن نشر أسماء من أفرج عنهم وذلك من أجل ضمان استمرار عملية الافراج عن بقية السجناء، ومن أجل إبعاد الموضوع عن الاستغلال السياسي في زمن الانتخابات. التحدث عن 8 لبنانيين مفرج عنهم كانوا من عداد المفقودين تبين أنهم محكومون هو كلام غير دقيق، لأن أسماء هؤلاء كانت على لوائحنا وقت كانت السلطات السورية تجزم بعدم وجود لبنانيين في سجونها ولم تكن على علم بطروفي اعتقالهم وقد وردت أسماءهم نهاية عام 2008 على لائحة الـ107 المحكومين جنائيا التي تسلمتها الدولة اللبنانية من السلطات السورية. إن الأشخاص المفرج عنهم لا يُعتبرون ضحايا إخفاء قسري حسب تعريف المعاهدة الدولية لحماية كل الأشخاص من الإخفاء القسري التي تبنتها الجمعية العمومية للأمم المتحدة في كانون الأول 2006. نحن نرحب بخطوة الافراج عن كل لبناني في السجون السورية لكن يجب ألا تكون الخطوة محاولة لإقفال ملف المخفيين قسرا من اللبنانيين في السجون السورية والذي سيبقى مطلبنا الأساس حتى الوصول الى حل جدي ومنطقي وشفاف، كما قال الرئيس (السوري بشار) الأسد في مؤتمر العلاقات اللبنانية - السورية في دمشق". ورأى البيان "أن تأخر الإعلان الرسمي اللبناني عن عملية الافراج يطرح لدينا التساؤلات الآتية: "ما هو دور اللجنة المشتركة، وكيف يمكن للطرفين القضائيين في اللجنة ألا يكونا على اطلاع على عملية الافراج؟ وإذا افترضنا أن اللجنة السورية على علم بما يجري، فلماذا لم يتم إبلاغ اللجنة اللبنانية؟ هل طلبت اللجنة القضائية اللبنانية من السلطات السورية التصريح عن تاريخ إطلاق الأشخاص المذكورين وطريقة ذلك؟ هل أبلغت اللجنة الأهالي المعنيين قبل نشر الأسماء في الصحف أقله احتراماً لخصوصيتهم؟ يا للأسف، مرة أخرى يحاول البعض الخلط بين المخفيين قسرا والمحكومين جنائيا. وإننا نطالب للمرة الألف السلطات اللبنانية والسورية بالتعامل جديا في ملف الإخفاء القسري بعيدا عن سياسة تسجيل النقط". وختم: "تعيد سوليد والمركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان مطالبة الدولة اللبنانية تبني مشروع إنشاء الهيئة الوطنية للإخفاء القسري الكفيلة وحدها بإيجاد الآليات المناسبة والشفافة لهذه المأساة الإنسانية".

LIBAN

Youssef Chaabane enfin gracié par le chef de l'État

Par Jeanine JALKH |



Youssef Chaabane : quinze années d'injustice à cause d'une aberration judiciaire.

Il pourra enfin savourer la liberté. Youssef Chaabane, emprisonné depuis près de 15 ans, pourra désormais bénéficier du droit de grâce présidentielle, que le chef de l'État, Michel Sleiman, vient de lui accorder. Accusé à tort d'avoir assassiné un diplomate jordanien, Naeb Amran Moaayta, Youssef Chaabane, un Palestinien résident au Liban, a été arrêté et jeté en prison en février 94, pour purger une peine capitale commuée en prison à perpétuité, un jugement rendu la même année par la Cour de justice libanaise, dont les verdicts, rappelle-t-on, sont sans appel.

L'ironie du sort a toutefois voulu que quelques années plus tard, en 2000, les vrais criminels soient retrouvés par la justice jordanienne, et pendus sur place. Or les décisions de la Cour de justice libanaise n'étant pas susceptibles de recours, Youssef Chaabane s'est donc trouvé pris au piège de l'aberration d'un système juridique qui n'accepte aucun recours, quand bien même la prolongation de sa détention était devenue, de l'avis de tous, d'injustice flagrante entraînant des conséquences humanitaires sérieuses pour ce Palestinien qui, depuis, croupit dans une cellule à Roumieh.

Ainsi devait commencer le cauchemar de ce prisonnier pas comme les autres. Par principe mais aussi par fierté, ce dernier avait refusé pendant plusieurs années de demander la grâce présidentielle, puisque celle-ci suppose qu'il soit amnistié pour un crime qu'il ne peut que reconnaître avoir commis pour pouvoir être

libéré.

Rappelons que lorsqu'elle est accordée, la grâce présidentielle implique qu'il y a effectivement eu un crime dont la peine peut être écourtée par une décision du président qui est doté, dans ce cas précis, d'un pouvoir régalien qu'il peut exercer sans pour autant motiver sa décision.

Placé devant une impasse, et ayant épuisé les appels médiatiques et les pressions exercées par plusieurs ONG, dont le Centre libanais des droits humains (ex Solida), Youssef Chaabane a fini par réaliser qu'aucune issue n'est plus possible par le biais de la justice traditionnelle. Il ne lui restait plus qu'à se soumettre, en requérant, en 2002, la grâce auprès de l'ancien président Émile Lahoud, qui le lui a refusé, affirmant à maintes reprises qu'il n'exercerait pas son pouvoir lui permettant de gracier qui que se soit au cours de son mandat. Une demande de révision du procès a également été rejetée par les autorités concernées.

Ne pouvant non plus requérir, par ailleurs, l'amnistie parlementaire dont le processus, plus complexe, ne peut s'appliquer qu'à un cas collectif et non à un seul individu, Youssef Chaabane a fini par réitérer sa demande auprès de la première magistrature dès l'accès du président Sleiman à la tête de l'État. Il s'est vu accorder cette grâce 15 ans plus tard et après que le mal eut été fait.

Ce dénouement heureux n'est toutefois pas sans conséquences morales, voire même pratiques, pour le détenu, puisque, d'une part, il y a eu reconnaissance indirecte de la responsabilité d'un crime qu'il n'a pas commis, et, d'autre part, Chaabane perd ses droits civils et politiques, une deuxième conséquence de la grâce présidentielle qui prive le prisonnier concerné de l'exercice de ces droits.

Sur ce point, il faut cependant reconnaître que les réfugiés palestiniens ne bénéficiant pas de toute manière de tels droits au Liban, Youssef Chaabane ne devrait pas être tout à fait perdant sur ce registre.

Il aura toutefois écopé des années d'emprisonnement injustes qui ne l'ont probablement pas laissé indifférent face à une justice qui ne mérite pas son nom.

L'absurdité de l'épisode vécu par ce réfugié ne peut d'ailleurs que relancer le débat sur ce genre de tribunaux d'exception que certains juristes n'ont pas manqué de critiquer à plus d'une occasion, en réclamant des amendements au niveau de leur structure et de leur fonctionnement.

متفرقات

*توقيف 66 شخصا بأفعال جرمية مختلفة. أوقفت قوى الأمن الداخلي 66 شخصا (أمس) لإرتكابهم أفعالا جرمية على الأراضي اللبنانية كافة، ومطلوبين للقضاء بموجب مذكرات وأحكام عدلية مختلفة يأتي ذلك ضمن إطار مهامها في مجال حفظ الأمن والنظام ومكافحة الجريمة بمختلف أنواعها.

*مركز حقوق الانسان يكرم شعبان . يقيم المركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان حفل استقبال، لمناسبة اطلاق سراح يوسف شعبان، الذي منحه رئيس الجمهورية العماد ميشال سليمان العفو الخاص، عند الثالثة من بعد ظهر اليوم ، في فندق الميريديان كومودور.

*مقتل مواطن وجرح اثنين في قانا. قتل المواطن محمود إبراهيم الأشقر 47 عاماً وجرح حسين عديبي وناصر علي منصور، إثر وقوع حادث سير عند طريق عام بلدة قانا بين سيارة بيك آب تويوتا تحمل الرقم 199867/م يقوده حسين عديبي من بلدة جبال البطم، وسيارة ديو تحمل الرقم 368945/ب يقودها ناصر علي يزون والى جانبه محمود إبراهيم الأشقر، ونقل المصابون الى المستشفى اللبناني الايطالي للمعالجة.

*سلب سيارة نجل الوزير رزق أقدم ثلاثة مسلحين مجهولين يستقلون سيارة رباعية الدفع نوع جيب شيروكي <شمانية> اللون، أمس على اعتراض سبيل سامي رزق نجل الوزير السابق الدكتور اسعد رزق، مواليد 1965، عند اوتوستراد بركي، وشهروا في وجهه اسلحة حربية وأجبروه على النزول من السيارة التي يقودها ويملكها وهي من نوع X BMW5 تحمل اللوحة رقم 354453/ب وقام أحد المسلحين بقيادتها وفر بها الى جهة مجهولة فيما لحق به الأخران على متن سيارة الشيروكي.

*طعن سوري في محاولة سرقة . إدعى علي خالد عيسى (سوري الجنسية)، بعدما أحضر الى مستشفى جزين مصابا بجروح في جسده، على مجهولين حاولوا سرقة مطعم <كازانوفا> الذي يعمل فيه واشتبك معهم فطعنوه بسكين وفروا الى جهة مجهولة.

وقد أوقفت القوى الامنية عمال المطعم بناء على اشارة من المدعي العام وسيتم نقلهم الى الشرطة القضائية في صيدا لمتابعة التحقيق معهم.

*توقيف سوري يصوّر قسم الكتائب في زحلة أوقفت القوى الأمنية المدعو محمد عبدالله الحبيب الجراد سوري الجنسية مواليد 1992 بعدما القي القبض عليه وهو يقوم بتصوير محيط قسم حوش الزراعة الكتائب في زحلة حيث كانت تعقد سلسلة إجتماعات كتائبية يحضرها وزير السياحة إيلي ماروني، وعثرت القوى الأمنية في الهاتف الخليوي للموقوف على صور بعض السيارات التي كانت مركونة في المكان والدرج المؤدي الى القسم والأبنية المجاورة.

*... والاشتباه بجسم غريب صيدا - مكتب <اللواء> اشتبه ليل أمس بجسم غريب في بستان بالقرب من مبنى البريد القديم في مدينة صيدا مقابل جامع الموصلي حيث حضرت الى المكان وحدات من الجيش اللبناني وخبير عسكري وعمل على الكشف على الجسم فتبين أنه عبارة عن قذيفة 120 ملم غير معدة للتفجير وجرى نقلها من المكان حيث بوشرت التحقيقات لمعرفة التفاصيل.

*مقتل مواطن بطروف غامضة في مرج الزهور حاصبيا - حسين حديفة وُجد مساء أمس المواطن خالد أكرم سري الدين مواليد العام 1978 من بلدة بزبدین - الشوف مقتولا في ظروف غامضة داخل سيارته من نوع تويوتا عائدة لإحدى الشركات التي تتعاطى بيع الأدوية الطبية، وذلك على طريق فرعي قرب بلدة مرج الزهور.

وفتحت عناصر درك فصيلة حاصبيا تحقيقاً بالحادث لمعرفة ظروف مقتل سري الدين وترجح المعطيات أن تكون السرقة هي الدافع لوقوع الجريمة.

شهناز الاسود

شعبان يحلم بالبراءة بعد حصوله على العفو: حملة لإلغاء القضاء الجزائي الاستثنائي



استقبال شعبان وعائلته في فندق الكومودور

<لن اكتف بالعفو الذي منحني إياه رئيس الجمهورية ميشال سليمان، وأول عمل سأقوم به هو إظهار براءتي>. هذا ما أكدته لـ <اللقاء>، بدا كعريس ليلة فرحه على صوت زغاريد أمه، التي تزفه الى جانب زوجته لكن مع ابنتهما، وذلك خلال حفل الاستقبال الذي نظمه المركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان في فندق الكومودور امس.

صاحب النصيب الأكبر من كلمات الشكر في حفل الاستقبال، كان رئيس الجمهورية ميشال سليمان، وطالب الامين العام للمركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان وديع الاسمر بإلغاء القضاء الجزائي الاستثنائي في لبنان، وتحدث عن حملة تنوي الجمعية القيام بها في الفترة المقبلة لتتلخص.

- الغاء المجلس العدلي وتأليف لجنة قضائية مختلطة من مهامها الاساسية اعادة دراسة احكام المجلس العدلي واتخاذ القرارات المتعلقة بإعادة محاكمة الاشخاص المدانين من قبل هذا المجلس.

- الغاء المحاكم العسكرية في شكلها الحالي والسماح بأن تكون المحاكم المدنية هي التي تتولى الدعاوى العسكرية بالارتكاز على القانون العسكري.

- الحد من امتيازات مكتب المدعي العام والعودة الى مشروع القانون الذي تم اعتماده في بداية صيف 2001.

اما شعبان فحيا <فخامة الانسان> واصفاً رئيس الجمهورية اللبنانية، وقال: <خط فخامة المقاوم العدالة بيده>، وقال: <لقد تحقق قول امي عندما كانت تقول لا بد ان يفتح باب هذا السجن صاحب ضمير وها هو فتح اليوم>. وشكر شعبان المحامية مي الخنسا الذي وصفها بأشرف الناس واطهر الناس. كما شكر وزير العدل ابراهيم نجار، من دون ان ينسى تقديم التحية الى فلسطين.

المحامية مي الخنسا وصفت خروج شعبان بالنصر، وقالت: كنت واثقة من براءة شعبان وليس لدي أدنى شك ببراءته، وعلينا اليوم البحث عن براءته>.

من جهته، طالب ممثل الجبهة الديمقراطية لتحرير فلسطين علي فيصل، الرئيس سليمان بتوقيع عفو خاص عن الشعب الفلسطيني ومنحهم حق العمل والتملك.

وشكر ادريس صالح رئيس الجمهورية ميشال سليمان، وهناً شعبان بخروجه من السجن بعد 16 عاماً.

22 بريئاً حتى تثبت إدانتهم

استنكر المركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان نشر الزميلة «السفير» في عدد 28 تموز 2009 أسماءً وصوراً ومعلومات شخصية عن اثنين وعشرين شخصاً ينتظرون صدور الأحكام القضائية بحقهم في قضايا التجسس لمصلحة العدو الإسرائيلي والتعامل معه. وعبر المركز أمس عن دهوله «بالكشف عن هذه المعلومات التي تعدّ تعدياً على الحياة الشخصية، وتعرض عائلات المشبوهين للخطر، كما تعدّ خرقاً لمبدأ افتراض البراءة وسريّة التحقيق».

فالاتفاقية الدولية للحقوق المدنية والسياسية التي تعهّد لبنان احترامها تنصّ على أن «كل شخص متهم يتجاوز القانون يعدّ بريئاً إلى أن تثبت إدانته قانونياً» (المادة 14) و«لا يصبح أحد هدفاً للأحكام المسبقة أو التدخلات غير الشرعية في حياته الخاصة، في عائلته، في منزله أو في علاقاته، أو التعديات غير الشرعية التي تطل الشرف والسمعة. كل إنسان لديه الحق بحماية القانون ضد انتهاكات أو تعديات كهذه» (المادة 17).

كذلك رأى المركز «أن نشر هذه المعلومات يمثل مجموعة انتهاكات لحقوق الأشخاص والمبادئ الأساسية للعمل القضائي الذي يفرض مباشرة فتح تحقيق قانوني»، وحمل المركز «القوى الأمنية مسؤولية السلامة الجسدية والنفسية للمعتقلين ولعائلاتهم». يذكر أن «لبنان عضو مؤسس وعامل في منظمة الأمم المتحدة وملزم موثيقاً والإعلان العالمي لحقوق الإنسان، وتجسد الدولة هذه المبادئ في جميع الحقوق والمجالات دون استثناء» (الفقرة «ب» من مقدمة الدستور اللبناني). و«كل شخص متهم بجريمة يعدّ بريئاً إلى أن تثبت إدانته قانوناً بمحاكمة علنية تؤمّن له فيها الضمانات الضرورية للدفاع عنه» (المادة 17 من الإعلان العالمي لحقوق الإنسان) (الأخبار)

«العميل الأول» يثير جدلاً حقوقياً بين سوليدا والخيام

آمال خليل

في المحكمة العسكرية في بيروت تتواصل محاكمة محمود رافع بتهمة دسّ الدسائس وإجراء اتصال بالعدو الإسرائيلي وإفشاء معلومات لمصلحته ووضع عبوات ناسفة واعتقال أبو حسن سلامة وعلي صالح وجهاد أحمد جبريل والأخوين مجذوب. وتصل عقوبة تلك الجرائم إلى الإعدام. أما خارج جدران المحكمة وخارج نفوس ضحايا وعائلاتهم، فإن من وصف «بالعميل الأول» يثير جدلاً بين منظمات حقوقية لبنانية ودولية. شرارة الجدل أطلقتها حركة سوليدا (دعم اللبنانيين المعتقلين اعتباطياً) بإصدار بيان تضامني مع رافع بعد مرور 8 أشهر على احتجازه في وزارة الدفاع. ذكر البيان أن رافع «اختطف على أيدي مخابرات الجيش في ظروف محيرة تشبه عملية الاختطاف (...) ثم بقي مكان اعتقاله مخفياً لأيام عدة حيث استُجوب بدون محام، ما يناهض القانون اللبناني وتعهدات لبنان الدولية».

يجري الإعداد لحملة واسعة تضامناً مع رافع ستقابلها حملة للتشدد في إدانته

وقبل أيام جددت سوليدا تضامنها مع رافع ولحققتها عدة هيئات حقوقية منها جمعية «ألف» ومركز الكرامة و«هيومن رايتس واتش» والمنظمة الدولية لمناهضة التعذيب (OMCT) ومنظمة العفو الدولية والفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان. ويستفيض التقرير الذي سوف تنكئ عليه الحملة التضامنية الواسعة المقررة في الايام المقبلة مع رافع، في تعداد الانتهاكات الجسيمة التي تعرض لها خلال فترة عامين وتسعة أشهر في سجن وزارة الدفاع قبل نقله في شهر آذار الفائت الى سجن رومية. ويعد المتضامنون مع رافع لعدد من التحركات الاعلامية والاحتجاجية «لفضح أشكال التعذيب الذي تعرض له وإن صحت التهم المنسوبة إليه لأنها لا تبرر التعذيب» بحسب رئيس جمعية «ألف» جوليان كورسان الذي شدد على ضرورة «توحيد المعايير الانسانية ومبادئ حقوق الانسان وعدم ربطها بكون الانسان بريئاً أم لا».

ولدى طلب سوليدا من زملائها في المجتمع المدني والحقوق مؤازرة دفاعها عن رافع، لم تجد معارضة سوى من مركز الخيام لتأهيل ضحايا التعذيب، اذ رفض الأمين العام للمركز محمد صفا التوقيع على البيان التضامني وأرسل الى من يتبنونه تقريراً موثقاً عن «اعترافات رافع وسجله التاريخي المليء بالخيانة والعار». وفيما رأى صفا أن «العمالة والإرهاب لا يبرران التعذيب ومطلوب المحاكمة العادلة لأي كان»، لكنه لا يجد أن ذلك «يبرر تبني قضيته كبطل واعتباره بريئاً». ويتساءل صفا «إن كان الامر كذلك فلماذا لم تتحرك الجمعيات للدفاع عن عناصر «فتح الاسلام» على سبيل المثال، بسبب ما تعرضت له من تعذيب على أيدي استخبارات الجيش خلال أحداث نهر البارد وبعدها، بالرغم مما ارتكبته من مذابح بحق المدنيين والجيش اللبناني؟».

وأعلن صفا الإعداد «لحملة موازية لحملة التضامن مع رافع بالتنسيق مع أهالي الضحايا وحقوقيين»، ودعا الى «إعادة النظر في تساهل الدولة في محاكمة العملاء الذين رفعوا الى رتب الابطال ووجدوا من يدافع عنهم». وإذا يواصل المركز اتصالاته بأهالي ضحايا رافع قبل عدوان تموز وبعده للوقوف ضد المتضامنين معه، أكد صفا أن «هذه العائلات التي عذبها رافع وسواه من العملاء، لحساب إسرائيل، من أجل حفنة من المال، ستكون لها الكلمة الفصل في النهاية».

مؤتمر صحفي لأهالي المخطوفين اليوم

تُعقد لجنة أهالي المعتقلين اللبنانيين في السجون السورية، لجنة أهالي المخطوفين والمفقودين في لبنان، دعم المعتقلين والمنفيين اللبنانيين؟ سوليد، والمركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان مؤتمرا صحفيا لمناسبة اليوم العالمي للمخفيين الاولى بعد ظهر اليوم في حديقة جبران خليل جبران؟ ساحة رياض الصلح.

30 آب: اليوم العالمي لضحايا الاختفاء القسري

كتبت فاطمة فقيه: عقدت لجنة اهالي المخطوفين والمفقودين في لبنان لجنة اهالي المعتقلين في السجون السورية، لجنة دعم المعتقلين والمنفيين اللبنانيين (سوليد) والمركز اللبناني لحقوق الانسان مؤتمراً صحفياً أمس، في حديقة جبران خليل جبران - خيمة الاسكوا في الذكرى الـ 26 لليوم العالمي لضحايا الاختفاء القسري.

بداية، وقف الحاضرون دقيقة صمت عن روح والدة المخطوفين ريشار وماري كريستين سالم الفقيده اوديتسالم، وابدى رئيس اللجنة غازي عاد تشاؤمه كون المطالب التي وعدوا بها سابقاً بقيت <حبراً على ورق>، خصوصاً وان اللجنة تفاعلت عندما ضمن رئيس الجمهورية العماد ميشال سليمان في خطاب القسم فقرة لضرورة ايلاء هذا الملف الاهتمام ومعالجته بشكل نهائي، كما ان وعندما تضمن بيان الحكومة الاولى من عهد سليمان بندين منفصلين لاجاد حل عادل وشامل لهذه القضية كما ان الوعود التي اطلقها كل من وزير العدل ابراهيم نجار ووزير الداخلية زياد بارود بالعمل على ادراج موضوع تشكيل الهيئة على مجلس الوزراء الا ان هذه الوعود لم تبصر النور.

ووعد عاد بتشكيل هيئة وطنية تتولى موضوع المفقودين وذلك مع استمرار التهميش لهذه القضية من قبل السلطات الرسمية وسياسة ما اسماء التمييز بين الضحايا.

وتلت رئيسة لجنة اهالي المخطوفين والمفقودين في لبنان وداد حلواني نص الكتاب الذي رفع الى رئيس بلدية بيروت عبد المنعم العريس من اجل وضع لوحة تذكارية على احد اعمدة حديقة جبران خليل جبران (الاسكوا) تخليداً لذكرى الراحلة اوديت سالم.

LIBAN

Ghazi Aad annonce la création d'un comité national pour les détenus arbitraires

C'est un constat très sévère qu'a fait hier Ghazi Aad, président de Solide (Soutien aux Libanais détenus en exil), des autorités, coupables, selon lui, de négligence dans le dossier des détenus arbitraires libanais. Il a annoncé la création prochaine d'un comité national pour les détenus arbitraires, au cours d'une conférence de presse tenue au jardin Gebran Khalil Gebran au centre-ville, organisée par Solide, le Comité des parents de disparus, le Comité des parents des détenus libanais dans les prisons syriennes et le Centre libanais pour les droits de l'homme.

M. Aad, après avoir constaté que les différentes promesses officielles à ce sujet sont restées « lettre morte », a rappelé que « l'année dernière, nous avons présenté un document dans lequel nous avons exposé notre vision d'un mécanisme de solution au problème des détenus arbitraires, qui se résume dans la création d'un comité national ».

M. Aad a précisé que des réunions ont été tenues avec les ministres de l'Intérieur et de la Justice, Ziyad Baroud et Ibrahim Najjar, qui ont tous deux adopté la question du comité et recommandé une accélération dans sa formation. « Sans vouloir douter des intentions et de la volonté des deux ministres, nous faisons remarquer que les paroles et l'action ne sont pas la même chose, a-t-il poursuivi. Nous n'avons toujours pas obtenu le rendez-vous que nous avons demandé au président de la République, et le comité n'a pas vu le jour. »

Et de poursuivre : « Après avoir désespéré des promesses des officiels, après avoir perdu confiance dans ceux qui ne savent pas tenir leurs engagements, nous annonçons avoir progressé sur la voie de la création d'un comité national qui sera chargé de ce dossier. L'annonce de la création de ce comité, de son programme, de son fonctionnement et de ses étapes ne tardera plus, en attendant certaines formalités logistiques et administratives nécessaires. »

Il a précisé que « cela ne signifie nullement que les autorités officielles seront écartées de ce comité, elles peuvent toujours s'y joindre malgré les méthodes d'atermoiements qu'elles adoptent par rapport à ce dossier ».

Notons que les parents de détenus ont adressé une requête au président du conseil municipal de Beyrouth afin de déposer une plaque commémorative sur l'un des piliers du jardin Gebran Khalil Gebran au nom d'Odette Salem, mère des disparus Richard et Marie-Christine, tuée par un chauffard près du lieu du sit-in.

أسئلة إلى السلطات اللبنانية عن معارض سوري

أصدرت منظمة «هيومن رايتس ووتش» والمركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان بياناً أمس لمطالبة «السلطات اللبنانية بفتح تحقيق في ملايسات اعتقال نوار العبود واختفائه». وقد أعلنت لجنة تابعة للأمم المتحدة في 10 تشرين الثاني الجاري «أن السلطات اللبنانية اعتقلت العبود بصورة تعسفية منذ عام، ولم تقدم لاحقاً إجابات مقنعة عن اختفائه». العبود مواطن سوري كان مقيماً في لبنان، وينتمي إلى «التجمع القومي الموحد»، وهو جماعة سياسية على صلة برفعت الأسد. وجاء في البيان أن «الحكومة اللبنانية تُقر بأنّ استخبارات الجيش اللبناني اعتقلت العبود في 24 كانون الأول 2008، لكنها تصر على أنهم أطلقوا سراحه بعد 24 ساعة. ولم يُشاهد العبود منذ اقتياده إلى الاعتقال، وتخشى عائلته ومحاميه من احتمال نقله قسراً إلى سوريا».

Tuesday, November 24, 2009

HRW urges Lebanon to probe Abboud disappearance

Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: The Lebanese authorities should investigate the circumstances surrounding the detention and disappearance of Syrian opposition figure Nawar Abboud, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) said Monday. Abboud, a Syrian who lived in Lebanon, is a member of and accountant for the United National Alliance, a political group affiliated with Rifaat Assad, a Syrian opposition figure and uncle of Syrian President Bashar Assad. A UN panel declared on November 10, 2009, that Lebanese authorities had arbitrarily detained him a year ago and then failed to provide convincing answers concerning his disappearance.

On December 24, 2008, plainclothes members of the Lebanese Military Intelligence came to Abboud's office in Tripoli and took him, along with two Lebanese employees, to the Al-Qubbeh military base for interrogation. Lebanese Military Intelligence released the two Lebanese – one on December 24 and the other on December 26. They also stated that they released Abboud at 2:20 p.m. on December 25 and that his possessions were returned to him, including his two cars, which Military Intelligence had seized.

Abboud has not been seen since he was taken into custody, however. His family and lawyer fear that he may have been forcibly transferred to Syria.

"The UN has reminded Lebanon of its obligation to protect individuals detained by its security services," said Marie Daunay, president of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights. "The only way to do that is to open a real and transparent investigation into the events surrounding Abboud's detention."

On November 10, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), the body mandated to investigate complaints of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, declared Abboud's detention by Lebanese military intelligence to have been arbitrary, and thus unlawful.

The Working Group said the Lebanese government's answer to its queries on Abboud's whereabouts had been "brief and imprecise" and urged the government to "show with precision the proof that he was liberated."

On December 24, 2008, plain-clothes members of the Lebanese Military Intelligence came to Abboud's office in Tripoli and took him, along with two Lebanese employees, to al-Qubbeh military base for interrogation. Lebanese Military Intelligence released the two Lebanese – one on December 24 and the other on December 26. They also said later that they had released Mr. Abboud at 2:20 p.m. on December 25 and that they returned possessions of his that Military Intelligence had seized, including his two cars.

However, Abboud's family and colleagues have not seen him or located his cars despite extensive efforts to find him. According to a letter dated January 14, 2009, from General Security, the security agency responsible for foreigners and border crossings in Lebanon, to the Mount Lebanon public prosecutor's office, there is no record of Abboud leaving Lebanon through an official border crossing.

"Lebanon celebrated its independence Sunday, but it hasn't been able to turn the page on the painful legacy of enforced disappearance," said Nadim Houry, senior researcher at HRW. "If people are going to regain faith that the government will protect them, security services need to operate in a transparent and accountable way."

On March 5, Human Rights Watch sent a letter to the defense, interior and justice ministers to request details about Abboud's whereabouts. To date, no reply has been received. – *The Daily Star*