



URGENT APPEAL
June 5, 2008

ALEF calls on the Government of Lebanon to ensure the protection of Human Rights defenders

1) Background Information

According to interviews conducted by the Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO), on April 8, 2008, a disabled Palestinian refugee, Mr. Rabieh Rashed Hussien, was kidnapped from his home as per the orders of Mr. Jamal Mahmoud Dandashli, known as “Gateaux”, a Palestinian refugee responsible for a Military Unit at the Fateh Movement, due to the involvement of Rabieh’s brother – Mr. Nader Rashed Hussien in a family problem with Mr. Dandashli “Gateaux”.

After failing to resolve the issue through dialogue with involved parties, PHRO issued a press release on the situation. Another NGO, Monitor, issued a release confirming the facts despite having been approached by members of the Fatah movement for appeasement.

After issuing the release, the heads of both organizations, namely Ghassan Adballah (PHRO) and Abdelaziz Tarakji (Monitor) began receiving threats against their person and advice from some political leaders to give up on investigating further.

At that point, Mr Tarakji filed a lawsuit for the threats he received.

In the meanwhile, Mr Rabieh Rashed Hussien, who had been kidnapped in the first place, was released on April 23. He reported having been subjected to physical and psychological torture. He explained the situation of his brother, Nader, as follows: Nisreen, the daughter of Mr Dandashli – “Gateaux” – fled to Nader after she feared her family would subject her to rape by her husband, with whom she refused to have relations due to the fact that she had been raped in her childhood. The victim later withdrew her testimony regarding the rape by her father but maintained that she had been repeatedly subjected to domestic violence by her husband, to whom she was married by force.

After his brother was released, Mr Nader’s wife was threatened by Gateaux that she and her three children are under compulsory residence in Rashidieh camp until his daughter returns.

2) Current situation

In the latest developments, the Government referred the case to the Department of the Fight against Terrorism, within the Internal Security Forces, which in return increased the pressure against PHRO, Monitor, and the family of Nader.

Nisreen is only protected through PHRO's own resources due to the absence of a witness protection program in Lebanon, and despite such requests by PHRO before the General Prosecutor Said Mirza.

Neither Human Rights defenders nor other witnesses are protected to date.

3) Recommendations

The above situation reflects several shortfalls in the Lebanese legal system, as follows:

- Protection of witnesses and victims
- Protection of Human Rights defenders whose life and safety are at risk
- Prosecution of perpetrators of criminal acts in Palestinian refugee camps according to the Lebanese legal procedure and respecting international standards

Under International Law, the State of Lebanon has a duty to prevent such threats from happening, to protect individuals under its jurisdiction from threats to their safety and physical integrity, and to provide a remedy for any such violations.

Therefore, ALEF recommends the following steps to be undertaken by the new Government:

- Ensure the immediate protection of victims, witnesses, and Human Rights defenders through making available to them a wide array of options for their protection
- Ensure to victims of violations the right to a fair trial and prosecute perpetrators according to international standards

4) Who to contact

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