

To: His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lebanon
Mr. Fouad Siniora
Government of the Republic of Lebanon

12 June 2008

Your Excellency,

Protection for victims and witnesses of crime, and rights activists in Palestinian refugee camps

Pax Christi International is a global faith-based peace network. Together with tens of thousands of individual members and more than 100 member organizations, we work for peace and reconciliation in over 60 countries including Lebanon.

We are writing today to express our great concern at the situation of victims and witnesses of crime in Palestinian refugee camps on Lebanese territory, and the insecurity of human rights defenders trying to support them, as exposed by the recent case of Mr. Rashed Hussien. Hussien had been abducted and tortured in April 2008 as a result of the protection his family provided to a Palestinian woman who had fled her family. Hussien's family, and the human rights organisations Palestinian Human Rights (PHRO) and Monitor, who spoke out in their defence, received several threats to their lives by the father of the woman concerned, one Mr. Mahmoud Dandashli, and persons associated to him.

With the referral of the Rashed Hussien case to the Department of the Fight against Terrorism, the pressure on PHRO and Monitor further increased. Also, in the absence of governmental protection, the young woman around who the dispute first broke out, now one of the key witnesses in this case, was only protected through PHRO's own resources. While the families have now agreed to an informal settlement of the dispute, their situation reflects severe shortfalls in the Lebanese legal system in terms of the promotion of human rights and the protection of those who take huge risks in defending them.

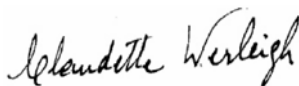
Pax Christi International therefore recommends that you urgently provide for:

- **Protection measures for witnesses and victims of crime in Palestinian refugee camps;**
- **Protection measures for human rights defenders, involved in this case and beyond, who put their lives and safety at risk to protect the human rights of Palestinian refugees;**
- **Prosecution of perpetrators of criminal acts in Palestinian refugee camps according to the Lebanese legal procedure and respecting international standards.**

As you are aware, the Republic of Lebanon has a legal responsibility to protect individuals under its jurisdiction from threats to their safety, and has to provide a remedy for any violations to their physical integrity. Pax Christi International would like to alert your government to the fact that the rule of law is almost non-existent in Palestinian refugee camps as illustrated by this and other cases. Informal settlements often fail to restore justice to victims and to protect witnesses. The current situation thus constitutes a significant threat to the security of Palestinian refugees on Lebanese territory.

Pax Christi International appreciates the efforts taken by your government to promote human rights and justice for all, and we are confident that you will take immediate steps to prevent an escalation of the situation of victims of crimes as well as of human rights defenders in the Palestinian refugee camps. Should you have any questions concerning our movement or our work in Lebanon, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Claudette Werleigh
Secretary General
Pax Christi International

CC: His Excellencies M. Suleiman, President; N. Berry, Speaker of the Parliament; Ministry of Justice