

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

LBN 002 / 0811 / OBS 105

Judicial harassment

Lebanon

August 5, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Lebanon**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the judicial harassment against Mr. **Saadeddine Shatila**, activist of the international human rights organisation Alkarama.

According to the information received, on July 22, 2011, Mr. Saadeddine Shatila received a phone call requesting him to appear on July 25, 2011 before the Lebanese Military Intelligence headquarters in Beirut.

Mr. Saadeddine Shatila went to the headquarters at 8 a.m. on that day, and was interrogated continuously for more than seven hours. The interrogation focused on Mr. Saadeddine Shatila's work documenting human rights violations in Lebanon. He was interrogated in particular regarding the information submitted by Alkarama to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in 2010, on allegations of torture committed by the Lebanese Army. Mr. Saadeddine Shatila was also interrogated on his visit to Geneva in the context of the examination of Lebanon by the Human Rights Council at the Universal Periodic Review process that took place in November 2010.

Mr. Saadeddine Shatila was released the same day at 8 p.m. on the basis of a declaration issued by a Military Judge, and after having been charged with "publishing information affecting the Lebanese Military reputation" and "giving false information". In the morning of July 26, 2011, Mr. Saadeddine Shatila was called by the Military Police for further investigations. He was then interrogated by the Commissioner of the Government on behalf of the Military Tribunal, who asked him the same questions than the day before. He was also questioned about his relations with Alkarama in Geneva, and whether he was getting money for denouncing the Lebanese Army.

The Observatory recalls that on March 14, 2011, two representatives of the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (*Centre libanais des droits de l'Homme* – CLDH) were also summoned by the criminal investigation service in Beirut in relation to the publication on February 10, 2011 of a report by CLDH, entitled *Arbitrary detention and torture: the bitter reality of Lebanon*, and a criminal investigation was opened against CLDH¹. A hearing on this case has been scheduled by the First Judge of Instruction of Mount Lebanon for October 11, 2011.

The Observatory condemns the judicial harassment against Mr. Saadeddine Shatila and the representatives of CLDH, and calls upon the Lebanese authorities to conform in all circumstances with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998 (UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders).

¹ See Urgent Appeal LBN 001 / 0311 / OBS 036.

Actions requested:

Please write to the Lebanese authorities urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Saadeddine Shatila, the representatives of CLDH, as well as of all human rights defenders in Lebanon;
- ii. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the administrative and judicial levels, against Mr. Saadeddine Shatila, the representatives of CLDH, and more generally against all human rights defenders in Lebanon;
- iii. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially:
 - its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;
 - its Article 6 (b) and (c), which states that “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others [...] as provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms and [...] to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”;
 - its Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”.
- iv. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Lebanon.

Addresses :

- Mr. Michel Suleiman, President of the Republic, Presidential Palace, Baabda, Lebanon. Fax: + 961 (0)5-922400
- Mr. Najib Mikati, Prime Minister, Grand Serail, Beirut, Lebanon. Fax: + 961 (0)1-983060
- Mr. Chakib Kortbaoui, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Adlieh, Beirut, Lebanon. Fax: +961 (0)1-612564
- Mr. Marwan Charbel, Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior, Sanayeh, Beirut, Lebanon. Fax: +961 (0)1-751622
- Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations in Geneva, rue de Moillebeau 58, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: mission.libanon@ties.itu.int, Fax : +41 22 791 85 80
- Embassy of Lebanon in Brussels, rue G. Stocq, 2 1050 Brussels, Belgium. E-mail: ambassade.liban@brutele.be Fax: +32 2.645.77.69

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of Lebanon in your respective countries.

Geneva-Paris, August 5, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.



To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org
- Tel and fax OMCT + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 22 809 49 29
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