Human Rights in Lebanon - 2001

A Report by the the Lebanese Information Center

Setback for Liberties has been the title for Lebanon in 2001. The statements of Prime Minister Rafik Harriri's government about respecting liberties and human rights have not materialized into deeds.

The apparent conclusion to any objective recapitulation of year 2001 events affirms that the liberties and human rights in Lebanon are deteriorating continually and that the violation of these rights are occurring daily for the citizens of Lebanon.

We would like to refer to the statement made by the United Nations General Secretary, Mr Koufi Anan, on the Anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights Convention, in which he said, "Any vast violations of human rights in any country represent a dangerous sign that alerts us to the possibility of an upcoming struggle". In his statement, Mr Anan also warned, "we may not be able to save the people of that country from the calamities of the war-and in most cases also the neighbors of that country-unless we are alerted to this early warning and unless we take early steps to safeguard human rights…"

The following report is a warning on the dangerous situation facing Lebanon.

Part One: Political and Legal Rights

1. Local Councils By-Elections in South Lebanon

After several experiences regarding the parliamentary elections in years 1992, 1996 and 2000, the word elections became devoid of its content regardless of how important were the elections. Last September, and after 38 years of not having elections, citizens of local councils in South Lebanon went to the polls. The elections were nothing more than power sharing between groups that were controlling the area since May 2000, i.e. Hezbollah and Amal movement, as well as some cronies and loyal political parties of the State (namely, the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Part and the Syrian backed Baath Party).

The coalition between Hezbollah and Amal dashed forever any democratic participation of any group, organization, or independents in those elections. There was a prior agreement on the candidates before going to the polling booths. In addition, as usual, Christian villages and towns were under the "grace of this imposed coalition", starting from Gezzin and its surroundings to Margiyoun and Hasbaia Districts. To win a seat against the best skilled and popular candidate, it was enough for any Christian candidate to receive the approval of Amal or Hezballah.

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2. Elections of the General Union of Workers

It had become clear that the Lebanese authorities do not favor even any minimal Union demand. For this reason, the 15 March 2001 "elections" brought a Union which was ultra loyal to the authorities.

Minister of Labor, Ali Kansou, (the former leader of the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party) approved on 1 March 2001 the conducting of elections for the Executive Office of the General Union of Workers despite that such approval contravenes Article 22 of the Union's constitution, which stipulates that pronouncement of elections should come from an authorized person.

It should also be noted that membership of the Executive Office of the Union cannot be cancelled except in cases of death, unexplained absence and resignation. These three conditions do not apply to the former Secretary of the General Union of Workers, Elias Abu Rizek.

The new elections brought to the helm of the Union, Ghassan Ghossn, a close confident of the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party.

3. Human Rights as stated in Trials Protocol Act

Trials Protocol Act, which was amended on 16 August 2001, spelled out the situations of human rights regarding defendants or those asked to testify, and the treatment they should receive from the moment of their arrest until their trial.

i. If the suspects refrained from talking or kept silent in the presence of Judicial Officers, they should not be forced to speak and nor should they be interrogated. If interrogated under these circumstances, their statement should be annulled. Judicial Officers are not allowed to detain suspects in their centre unless they have an order from the Public Prosecution, and in this case, they cannot detain the suspects for more than 48 hours. Judicial Officers can extend the detention time to another 48 hours after securing the approval of the Public Prosecution.

ii. Detention time becomes part of arrest time.

iii. A suspect or a defendant subject to investigation should enjoy the following rights upon his or her detention:
    a. Contact a member of their family or employer or solicitor of their choice or one of their acquaintances.

    b. Meet a solicitor that he or she appoints according to a statement recorded in the minutes without the need for the usual power of attorney.

    c. Provide an interpreter in case the detainee does not speak Arabic.

    d. Present a direct application or through his or her lawyer or member of the family to the Public Prosecutor to allow a doctor to examine him or her. The Public Prosecutor appoints a doctor as soon as he receives the application. The doctor should examine the detainee without the presence of any judicial officer, and should send his report within 24 hours of examining the detainee. As soon as he

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receives the report, the Public Prosecutor gives a copy of the report to the applicant, the detainee and to any of the above-mentioned persons. In case of extending the detention of the detainee, another application for medical examination should be presented.

iv. The defendant has the right to contact freely his or her solicitor during the whole time of detention. These contacts should be confidential and no evidence should be admitted to court because of violation of this confidentiality.

v. If the defendant refused to answer and opted to remain silent; the Judge should not force him to talk.

vi. The investigating or presiding judge should adhere to the principle of free will of the defendant during interrogation, and the Judge should ensure that the defendant makes his statement away from any outside moral or material influence.

vii. Any defendant except those charged with murder, drug trafficking and assault on the security of the State should be tried while on bail; however they should be detained from the start of the concluding court session until the proclamation of the verdict.

viii. Any defendant who has been charged with a felony that carries a sentence, which does not exceed two years in prison, should be released after five days of his or her arrest.

ix. If the convicted is pregnant; the execution of the sentence should be delayed for ten weeks after the childbirth.

4. Human Rights according to the Lebanese Constitution

The Lebanese constitution guarantees personal liberty. Article 8 stipulates, "Personal liberty is protected under Law, and no one should be arrested or detained or imprisoned except in accordance with Articles of Law. Any criminalization or declaration of sentence should happen according to Law."

Article 14 of the same Law stipulates, "People's homes are inviolable, and no one has the right to enter a house except in circumstances and ways spelled in the Law…and that laws ensure the protection of people's lives, assets and human and social rights. These laws and approved measures do not allow the reduction of individual rights for the sake of public interest except in limited spheres and in a way that does not violate the basic rights on which the personal human entity stands. The security forces carry its duties in regard judicial control under the scrutiny of public prosecutions in accordance to law and approved measures, in other words, except in the case of a flagrant crime, security forces do not summon any person to investigate him or her unless it had obtained a permit from the authorized public prosecution…"

5. Application of Human Rights

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Arrests, which took place, last year and the subsequent investigations, violent acts, referrals to military courts and pressing of charges contravene the standards set above by the Lebanese Constitution, especially Articles 224 and 225 of Law No 17 of 9/6/1990, which relates to the regulation

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of internal security forces and the task of judicial control.

Consequently, we here present the notorious violations and offences that contravened the legal protocols from investigations and referrals to pressing of charges:

a. It has been proven that many citizens were arrested and investigated by the security forces last year including those taken from their houses such as Dr Toufic Hindi, solicitor Elie Keyrouz and Mr George Alalam. Others were arrested at private offices where they were attending meetings such as General Nadeem Latif, Mr Salman Samaha, Mr Hikmat Deeb and solicitor George Haddad. Many others received calls on their mobile phones. They were asked to present themselves to the Intelligence Bureau in their area at a particular hour, (such as Fadi Alshamati who was summoned to the Intelligence Bureau at Alqubba in Tripoli, and Saoud Abu Shibel who was called to the Intelligence Bureau at Serba; notwithstanding that, both of them were moved to the Ministry of Defense). Media reports indicated explicitly that the above persons were arrested "for investigations" and without the presentation of any sort of permit from the investigation judge.

   As all the above arrests happened outside the frame of a flagrant crime, any arrest or investigation should be either carried directly by investigation judges or indirectly through delegation from these and other relevant judges. Thus, the execution of these measures by the Public Prosecutor in particular and through the security forces constitutes violation of Article 47 of Trials Protocol Law even if the Public prosecution issued deputised notices earlier or later to cover itself.

b. The raids on houses and private offices, which in most cases occur at times not authorized by law, have taken place without obtaining search or arrest orders from investigation judges, a fact which contravenes the regulations of raiding and searching houses as spelled in Article 219 of Internal Security Forces Regulation Act No 17 of 9/6/1990.

c. Article 19 of Chapter six of Military Judicial Law No 68/24 demands that tasks of military judicial control are to be carried by:

   - Commissioner of the government and his deputies;
   - Investigation judges at the military court;
   - Officers and noncommissioned officers who are appointed for this purpose by Minister for Defense on recommendation from the Higher Military Authority (on court level);
   - Military police officers and non commissioned officers and superintendents (arrest and initial investigation level); and
   - Head of Registrars at the Permanent Military Court.

   Members of the judicial control should swear the following oath: "By God, I shall carry my duties in truthfulness, loyalty and preservation of the confidentiality of the investigation."

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Unequivocal and media information indicate that the Military Apparatus of the Lebanese Army Intelligence Bureau made the arrests during the raids. The reports also showed that all detainees were taken to the Ministry of Defense and those officers and non commissioned officers of the Army's Intelligence Bureau conducted the

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investigations.

It is known that Army Intelligence Bureau has a role only inside the army and is not considered part of the judicial control, which has the role of arresting people. The military law is also clear in differentiating between the military police and the army's intelligence. Consequently, Army Intelligence Bureau has no right to arrest, detain, or investigate. Furthermore, the judiciary has no right to deputize, since such an action is an obvious violation of the limits of authority.

It is also shameful that Public Prosecutor, Judge Adnan Addoum, secured the required cover for the Army Intelligence Bureau by issuing illegal deputization. Mr Addoum commissioned an unauthorized security agency to carry out the arrests and investigations. He was also wrong in regards to the meaning of "collective deputizations" which affects any one that the security forces tend to arrest because of his views or because he annoys her or because his allegiance to other parties may constitute danger on the ruling class, (which the security agencies aim to protect). After a journey of suffering, the detainee is freed or referred to a judicial authority. It should be said here that the judicial deputization is a legal way to assign to the security forces the task of obtaining information about perpetrators of a particular crime and informing the relevant pursuing authorities immediately before issuing the necessary orders regarding their tentative fate. However, none of the former ever took place.

To make matters worse, during the latest arrests, neither the Public Prosecution nor the Military Public Prosecution knew the names of those arrested or those who were going to be arrested in accordance with the judicial deputization. Based on Addoum's open deputization, any security agency can arrest any person on the Lebanese territories under the pretext that he has played a role in a particular crime even without the provision of any real suspicion or evidence against him to the judicial apparatus to pursue him. A point in a case, (the arrest of the teenager children of solicitor Ellie Keyrouz and the arrest of two women who were in the same building that houses the General Committee of the Free National Movement in Antilias…)

d. The holding of investigations and interrogations by the Army's Intelligence Bureau represents the core of violations to the legal protocols. There are several reasons for this: Firstly, the Army Intelligence Bureau is not under judicial control as specified. Secondly, such tasks are not assigned to the Bureau under the Military Courts Regulations Law. Lastly, and most significantly, the initial investigation is the most important chapter in every case. As known, the initial investigation builds a file, which the investigating and ruling judges refer to in shaping their convictions before reaching a verdict. The file of the initial investigation contains the statements of the suspect, and the incriminating elements that are based on forensic evidence, tests and statements of witnesses. The concurrence of these elements constitutes a very important role in reaching a convincing decision; and from here comes the importance of this phase of the investigation and the danger represented by any violations.

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It is also shameful that Public Prosecutor, Judge Adnan Addoum, falsely legitimized the investigations of the Army's Intelligence Bureau. Judge Addoum took part in the set up of Dr Toufic Hindi's filmed admissions, which was presented to the media, by visiting the Ministry of Defence and attending part of the investigations proceedings and by giving the Army Intelligence Bureau the opportunity to extend the

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investigation…! By doing so, Judge Addoum ignored the main legal principle of "confidentiality of the investigation". Michelle Lean, former Secretary of the Beirut Lawyers Association, brought up this point "I have studied in the Faculty of Law that the initial investigation should be held in secret while the trials should be made public, because the disclosure of information regarding the initial investigation contravenes the principles of the factual evidence of innocence and the confidentiality of the investigation." Said Mr Lean. Judge Addoum also ignored the fact that there is no legal value for using the recording (or filming) as a base to pursue the investigation.

In addition to all the above, there were the extraction of statements by material and moral intimidation and toughness. Detainees were forced to sign interrogation minutes without being read to them or knowing its contents. The minutes were ready made and do not match at all with the answers of the detainee or the prisoner. The detainees were very surprised when the investigation judge started to read baseless minutes. Solicitor Ellie Keyrouz and Salman Samaha spoke in a press conference following their release how they were subjected to torture and physical and psychological pressures at the prison of the Ministry of Defence in Alyarza. Solicitor Keyruz reported that he was subjected to "leg stretching" to force him to admit to matters he did not commit.

e. The arrests, which part of them were filmed outside the Palace of Justice during the picket by lawyers and relatives of the detainees, were conducted by force, violence and other means that degrade human integrity. These actions contravene the Lebanese constitution and current laws, especially Articles 554, 555, 556 and 402 of Penal Act, furthermore, it violate the Anti- torture Convention, which Lebanon had signed and integrated in its internal law through Act 185 of 23 May 2000.

f. Another point in the new law which should be looked at is one that relates to the period of arrest for an investigation. Recently this period was amended to 48 hours subject to renewal (after the approval of Public Prosecution, of course). This period was not adhered to in the case of Dr Toufic Hindi who has been in detention since he was arrested on August 7. In addition, General Nadeem Latif, Salman Samaha, Fadi Alshamati, Saud Bu Shibel and Milad Assaf had spent more than a week in the Ministry of Defence without their relatives knowing anything about them.

The above-mentioned persons and other detainees at the Ministry could not after 48 hours contact any member of their families or their employers or their lawyers. Furthermore, doctor did not see them after 24 hours of their arrest despite the fact that some of them suffer from medical problems including heart condition, high blood pressure, shortness of breath and other health problems.

To make matters worse, the wife of Dr Hindi and the three lawyers appointed by the Lawyers Association could not obtain a permit from the Public Prosecutor to visit him until one week after his arrest. Nevertheless, after waiting hours to visit Dr Hindi, his wife and the solicitor were turned away.

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g. The referral to the military judiciary contravenes the law itself, since the military courts are exceptional courts in terms of their formation or specialization when dealing with crimes expressed in the General Penal Act. It had become evident after observing the

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sessions of the referred detainees that the military court adopts the criminal description that was issued by the Army's Intelligence Bureau and after the military investigation judge had left his opinion on it. Consequently, variable sentences are imposed on the defendants without allowing the lawyers their duty of defense and the defendants their right to defense.

Regardless of the rapid nature of these trials (as if what had been written should stand), we find that it ignore and violate the main law Articles. For example Article 58 of Chapter Four-Defense, Military Judiciary stipulates: "The case's file should be available to the lawyer at least twenty four hours before the time of the session and the lawyer has the right to make photo copies of all the documents except those that are classified as secret. The lawyer has also the right to read the secret documents in the presence of the President of the Court or his deputy." This and other Articles are not applied while the time limits are not respected.

Although the High Court had recently accepted applications of dismissal from several persons who were referred to the military court; and despite the admission of the High Court that the Military court was not authorized to deal with charges laid against those persons, a new phenomenon in the history of the Lebanese judiciary appeared. The Military Public Prosecution, in the person of the Government's Commissioner at the Military Court, Judge Nasri Lahoud, (brother of President Emile Lahoud), had asked for the dismissal of verdicts related to the detainees made by the Court of Cassation. This has been happening despite the fact that no verdict from a court of cassation could be dismissed by another court of cassation. This proves that the security and military authorities are deeply involved in violating laws and judicial protocols.

We should also draw attention to the mother of all violations. The new Trial Protocols Law was amended in the Parliament on 13 August 2001 after the President of the Republic and security agencies applied direct pressures to ensure the necessary numbers. The amendments that were approved, even by deputies who opposed it one week earlier, contradicted the constitutional protocols (Article 38) and against liberties, human rights convention and the principle of the separation of powers. Some of the amendments are as follows:

i. The consolidation of The Public Prosecutor powers through a law passed this time by the Parliament and awarding him the authority to adjudicate any dispute with any judicial or other authority even if he was a party to that dispute, thus becoming the defendant and the judge at the same time.
ii. Increase the time limit of the arrest "for investigation" for 48 hours subject to extension.
iii. Award the Public Cassation Prosecutor the right to investigate directly or through his deputies.

Finally, the charges against those referred to the court have no legal base whatsoever. For which Article of the Law covers "the demand for the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon". Since there is no sentence without a text and no felony without a text, the penal laws should be explained in a narrow manner. In other words, one should adhere literally to the law and its spirit without going further away from the legal text, since in penal law we cannot depend on the principle of measure.

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That is to say one can not consider the demand to withdraw the Syrian army from Lebanon similar to the legal text related to cause harm to a friendly country, especially that such demand did not make Syria severe its relations with Lebanon (Penal lawyer Badwi Bu Deeb).

The charges against persons who spread political views against the Authority and its policies are against democracy and right of expression, which are secured by the Constitution.

Part Two: Civil Liberties

1. Freedom of Expression and the Media

* On 14 February 2001, and after an interview on LMT TV with General Michelle Aoun, the Directorate of General Security stated that General Aoun would be judicially pursued. The Directorate also threatened MTV TV with legal proceedings if it did not apologise for airing the interview.

* In February 2001, the Directorate of General Security prevented the airing of a television documentary about corruption in Lebanon featuring former Parliamentarian, Najah Wakim.

2. The Prison System

The Lebanese prison system suffers from the lack of minimum human treatment. Mr Radwan Shakeeb died inside Roumieh prison in February 2001 after being released from Syrian jails in which he was detained for nine years. As usual in these cases, the authorities blamed a heart attack for the death of Mr Shakeeb, and did not initiate any form of investigation to the cause of his death.

3. Ironies of arrests

Often a person who is arrested and subjected to different forms of pressures, insults and detentions for long periods of time without a trial is found innocent. Citizen Fadi Midhat Mkheiber was declared innocent after being detained for one and the half years.

Citizen Hanna Shalita who is detained in the prison of the Ministry of Defence since 1995 without trial suffers from a real tragedy. As a result of his incarceration he has so far lost 35 kilograms of his weight and experiences difficulties in speech as well as suffering from visible shaking in both hands. Mr. Shalita is incarcerated in a dark and humid room, as reported by his solicitor, Mr Michelle Samaan.

4. *Demonstrations, rallies, arrests and detentions*

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- On 9 January 2001, a Lebanese army roadblock in Jbeil area stopped Member of the Free National Movement Solicitors' Committee, Mr Walid Dagher, for more than one hour because he had a picture of General Aoun on his car.

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- On 9 January 2001, armed men in civilian clothes assaulted Becherri City Councilor, Mr Joe Fakhri, and took him in car to the Army's Intelligence Centre at Alkubba in Tripoli. Mr Fakhri was earlier summoned to the Centre but without presenting him with any judicial permit.

- On10 January 2001, two activists from the Free National Movement, Ms Siham Younes and Mr Marwan Saliba, were arrested and taken to military barracks.

- On 10 January 2001, Mr Ghazi Geagea, another councilor of Becherri City Council, was arrested.

- On 21 January 2001, security forces at the airport assaulted Engineer Mark Sheiban.

- On 23 January 2001, Dr Mohamed Michelle Alghareeb and others were taken to Hbeish Police Station where they were charged with distributing pamphlets that call for the fall of the regime.The pamphlets also criticised the Parliament.

- On 1 February 2001, the Lebanese Army and Internal Security forces set up different roadblocks in Beirut to deter the arrival of picketers and to abort the strike of university staff, schoolteachers and private sector employees.

- On 14 February, a security roadblock on Alawalli Bridge stopped Mr Walid Naim and interrogated him for several hours. He was handcuffed without any legal basis.

- On 13 March 2001, units of the Lebanese army were deployed in Beirut to prevent university student's demonstrations against the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

- On 6 April 2001, security forces allowed two armed men, loyal to the regime to spread pamphlets with death threats aimed at supporters of the Lebanese Forces, Free National Movement, Socialist Progressive Party and Lebanese Communist Party. The supporters were preparing for a peaceful rally for 13 April, the anniversary of events [civil war] in Lebanon.

- On 8 April 2001, the Ministry of Interior decided to prevent all forms of rallies on the anniversary of the Lebanese war.

- On 11 April 2001, security forces allowed a number of men to carry axes, knifes and batons to organize a rally against groups who were calling for the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon.

- On 21 April 2001, and after a large rally in Becherri commemorating the seventh anniversary of the arrest of the Leader of the Lebanese Forces, Dr Samir Gaegae, the security forces pursued some participants at midnight and violated the sanctity of their homes. The harassment campaign resulted in the arrest of George Sukkar, Hanna Rahmeh, Cherbel Sukkar and Bishara Taouk. Meanwhile, Mr Milad Taouk was taken to hospital suffering from serious broken ribs and other wounds after being assaulted by the security forces.

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- On 31 May 2001, Internal Security anti-riot police assaulted students of the Lebanese

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University who were demonstrating in Alnijmeh Square against the government's decision to merge the university's branches in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The reason for the merger as explained by Minister of Education, Mr Abdul Rahim Murad, "was that some faculties have been witnessing student activities and strikes while we need the adoption of one line of thought so that there are no two different lines." Meanwhile, Minister for Defence, Mr Khalil Herawi said that the "streets are for the citizens and not for the students."

- On 7 August 2001, the security forces launched a massive arrest campaign, which saw the detention of 200 Lebanese Force and Free National Movement activists on the eve of the historical visit of the Maronite Patriarch, Mar Nasrallah Sfeir, to Mount Lebanon which culminated in his meeting with the Druze Leader, Mr Walid Jumblat.

- On 8 August 2001, the security forces continued arresting supporters of the Lebanese Forces and the Free National Movement, and extended the campaign to include activists of the National Liberal Party.

- On 9 August 2001, in the clear view of the public and journalists, plain clothed security officers assaulted picketers at the Palace of Justice. The attackers were never held responsible or brought to justice for their actions.

- On 17 August 2001, journalist Antoine Basil was arrested and taken from his house.

- On 18 August 2001, Alhayat journalist, Habib Younes was arrested and taken from near his house.

- On 10 September 2001, the security forces prevented the convening of a press conference for the Free National Movement at St Lady of the Mountain in Adama.

- On 14 September 2001, 200 activists from the Lebanese Forces were arrested as they were attending a mass in the anniversary of the assassination of the late President Basheer Gemayel. The activists were taken to Intelligence centres in Beirut and military police centres in Sin Alfeel.

- On 20 September 2001, the Public Prosecutor, Adnan Addoum, resolved that he personally held the power to issue permits for any future visits to detainees Dr Toufic Hindi, solicitor Ellie Keyrouz and Mr Salman Samaha. Mr Addoum made this statement after a delegation from Karnat Shahwan Meeting visited the above-mentioned prisoners.

- On 20 November 2001, security forces prevented a dinner at a restaurant in Jbeil on the anniversary of independence. The dinner was going to be attended by former President Ameen Gemayel.

- On 21 November 2001, at around midnight, internal security squads stormed the Faculty of Engineering at the University of St Joseph and destroyed placards that were raised on the anniversary of the independence. At that time Public Prosecutor, Adnan Addoum, stated that the security forces acted without a permit from the public prosecution.

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5. Issue of the Leader of the Lebanese Forces, Dr Samir Geagea

The Leader of the Lebanese Forces, Dr Samir Geagea, is still under detention in an underground solitary cell at the prison of the Ministry of Defense. Dr Geagea is still subject to pressures by the Lebanese political and security authorities. In this context, the following matters were noted:

- The Human Rights Committee of the Lebanese Parliament did not visit Dr Geagea to observe the conditions of his incarceration but they did make an effort to visit other prisons. The parliamentarians of the nation are supposed to represent all the Lebanese without exception, which shows the political nature of Dr Geagea's arrest. It should be noted that a Ministerial Decree pronounced the prison at the Ministry of Defense in 1995 to justify the state of Dr Geagea's incarceration.

- Mr Elie Lahoud and Robert Haddad, who are lawyers of Dr Gaegae, were prevented from visiting him in May 2001, despite of having obtained a permit from the Public Prosecutor, Adnan Addoum. The decision to ban the lawyers from seeing their client came 24 hours after they published a statement issued by Dr Geagea in which he vehemently refused to abandon his principles in return for having back his freedom.

6. *The control of Fait Accompli Forces in the South*

Fait Accompli forces remain in control in the area. In May 2001 alone, more than 12 assaults on former members of South Lebanon Army were recorded. The assaults ranged between gun attacks to bashing, burning crops, cars and houses.

7. Religious freedoms

Record of religious freedoms did not see any improvement last year. Several assaults on religious centres and churches were recorded last year including:

- On 12 January 2001, two stores belonging to Christians were bombed. The first store was in Gadra Alshamali, north of Sidon owned by Mr Antoine Kazzi. The second store was in Tyre and owned by Mr Antoine Kheirallah. Another store owned by Paul Maron was bombed at Majdylion near Sidon .

- In February 2001, an Orthodox church was vandalized in Aita Alfoukhar village in Western Bikaa. Crosses were destroyed and the fires were shot at the church while degrading slogans were written on its walls.

- On 9 October 2001, St George's Orthodox Church in Tripoli was firebombed and burnt.

- On 17 October 2001, several sticks of dynamite were thrown on the entrance of the Maronite Church in Sidon.

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8. The Abuse of Children

Lebanon continues to violate the International Convention on Children's Rights. Statistics show that 6 per cent of children in Lebanon between the ages of ten and fourteen are abused and work without wages. The reports indicate that 13 percent of those children live in Bikaa District, 10 per cent in South Lebanon. In North Lebanon, there are 5 per cent who work 5 hours a day, a fact that adversely affects their health.

9. Refugees

Refugees in Lebanon live in very difficult situation. They are subject to arrests and torture. Many refugees are forced to go back to their countries although their files are under process by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

Often the refugees who are from Sudan, Somalia and Iraq are deported back to their country of origin where they face life imprisonment in the best of cases, notwithstanding that some of them die in prisons and detention centre.

It should be noted here that Lebanon (since the publication of this document) is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Geneva Convention and neither the 1967 convention's protocol.

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