

**The Guardians of the Cedars**  
National Lebanese Movement



حراس الأرز  
حركة القومية اللبنانية  
القيادة المركزية

**The Central Directorate**

**The Central Committee of the Guardians of the Cedars- National Lebanese Movement, held its weekly meeting on December 13, 2000 to discuss and focus in particular on the Lebanese Detainees in Syrian Prisons. The Party issued the following remarks:**

A few months ago, the Lebanese Authorities issued a decree by which all missing persons for more than 10 years are considered dead and their heirs could initiate the legal procedure of inheritance. Similarly, the Syrian government issued an official statement that there were no Lebanese prisoners in Syrian jails.

A great uproar was raised by the parents of the missing persons who refused to believe without proof or convincing information that their relatives are dead, especially since some of them have undeniable proof that their kinsmen are still (or at least were) in Syrian jails. Moreover, they argued, why have the Syrian Authorities never allowed any independent Non Governmental Organization (NGO), e.g. the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit their jails and investigate the matter! They pointed out that the ICRC representatives are allowed to visit periodically all 17 Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails except one: Hajj Moustapha Dirani. This caused his parents to raise an international commotion that he was tortured and on the point of death. But on the occasion of his appearance before a court to extend his detention, he appeared fit as a fiddle and the commotion ceased!

They organized sit-ins first in the Maronite Patriarchate, then before the Parliament where they met the Speaker (who happens to be one of Syria's top yes-men) and some MP's to whom they exposed their complaints. They also exposed to the main International NGO's e.g. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc., evidence of their capture by the Syrians and in some cases, eyewitness documents by liberated prisoners who had seen them and detailed localization by Syrian Security personnel of their lieu of detention and even official documents, e.g. a letter from the Lebanese Ministry of Defense concerning two Lebanese soldiers regarding their conditions of detention in a Syrian jail! They even set up a Lebanese-French Committee under the name SOLIDE with the express intention of doing all that can be done for their release. But all this was to no avail!

The Speaker visited the Maronite Patriarch on 25/11/2000 and, upon leaving, he addressed the Press saying, among other things, that the Lebanese prisoners in Syria would be released before the feasts, but that their number would not exceed 50! The next day, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs retorted by saying that the Lebanese Speaker was not mandated to speak in the name of the Syrian Government! The Speaker remained silent, but most of the top officials, attainted with an exuberant verbal diarrhea, declared that any more talk on this question is equivalent to starting a sectarian conflict.

Then, on 7/12/2000, the new President of the Syrian Republic suddenly declared that he was issuing a pardon for all the Lebanese imprisoned in Syrian jails. That was the first time that the Syrian Government officially admitted to have Lebanese prisoners!

The Maronite Patriarch continued his action with the Lebanese officials because relations between the Maronite clergy and the Syrian Government were on the hold especially since they began a campaign for the redeployment of the Syrian Expeditionary Force to Lebanon, which Syria claims are in Lebanon at the demand of the Lebanese Authorities, whereas the Lebanese insist that the late President Hafez Assad in his July 20, 1976 speech explicitly said that *he sent in his troops to Lebanon without anyone's permission in order to save the collapsing Palestinian Liberation Organization!* The Lebanese officials – remembering perhaps that two Presidents of the Republic, a Mufti of the Republic (the highest Sunni religious authority), several Cheikhs, a President of the Press Syndicate, and a host of other personalities were killed, sometimes

after terrible torture by the Syrian *Moukhabarat* (Secret Service) –, avoided them or, when cornered, gave evasive promises to investigate the matter.

Then a few weeks ago, the Maronite Clergy issued a fiery declaration castigating Syrian military presence, and incidentally, the matter of Lebanese imprisoned in Syria without trial, stirring a pandemonium in Lebanese (and apparently Syrian) political circles. Syria's yes-men were all mobilized to attack the Clergy's declaration. All except one, Walid Jumblatt – known for his unforeseeable actions, but a major political power on the Lebanese scene since he is the chief Druze leader –, broke ranks and gave a tremendous boost to the Declaration that was also fully backed by Christian Lebanese Associations!

And suddenly, the matter of Lebanese-Syrian relations that were until then taboo, became splashed in the Press and even in the audio-visual organs! What is more important, MP's also began to raise questions in Parliament, not only concerning Syrian troops redeployment as stipulated in the Taef Agreement, 8 years overdue, and one even demanded their complete withdrawal!

Again suddenly, the Lebanese President declared that he agreed with President Bachar Assad that a Lebanese ad hoc Committee would go to Syria and receive the Lebanese prisoners who would be freed soon.

Then a date was fixed for the Committee's departure to Damascus and return with the prisoners but without giving either their number or their names. And when the buses carrying the prisoners appeared on the border, the prisoners were blindfolded and the buses carried them full speed to the Lebanese Ministry of Defense. The next day their names were given in a press conference by the Attorney General and their number was 46 Lebanese, 7 Palestinians and one Egyptian! But the Press was not allowed to meet them because they were sped non-stop to the jail of the Ministry of Defense! The Attorney General added that there still are about 85 common law prisoner's (95) that will serve the remainder of their sentence in Syria. He added that all the other missing persons are considered killed by the various militias during the war.

### **Many questions remain unanswered:**

Where are the others, estimated to be at least 250 civilians and 45 Lebanese Army soldiers loyal to Gen. Michel Aoun? Are they still alive or have they been executed? Why only 46 detainees were allowed to be released?...

Despite the warning by the top officials that this matter should now be closed to avoid serious sectarian conflicts, the parents of the missing persons sent detailed files on each of them to NGO's and insist on keeping it open until satisfactory answers are given to all the queries. And so will we.

At the service of Lebanon,

Alfred Murr.

List of the detainees that were released

**Names of the 46 Lebanese, 7 Palestinian and 1 Egyptian as published today:**

**1- Mohamed Nizar Hallaq**

**2- Ali Abou el-Dihn**

**3- Mohamed Sa'id Seif el-Din**

**4- Raja Qabalan**

**5- Marwan Fahim Izz el-Din**

- 6- Jamal Mustafa Karara
- 7- Hassan Sadeq Wehbe
- 8- Naji Aziz Harb
- 9- Jihad Mahmoud Jamal
- 10- Ibrahim Harakeh
- 11- Sa'id Adel el-Jourdi
- 12- Moussa Mohamed Moussa Saab
- 13- Elias Chalita Bou Ghosn
- 14- Isam el-Mistrah
- 15- Nafez Mohamed Bahjat Shamleh
- 16- Joseph Abi Najm
- 17- Khaled Yassine
- 18- Amal el-Khoudari
- 19- Abdel Rahman Mahmoud Ashasha
- 20- Salim Houssein Awada
- 21- Fadi Chahine Saaed
- 22- Khaled Khodr Tawfiq
- 23- Fouad Salem Abou Nader
- 24- Samir Mahmoud Tibeh
- 25- Amir Amir Yassine
- 26- Omar Moustafa Khawli
- 27- Adnan Omar Seif el-Din
- 28- Samir Abou el-Kheir
- 29- Hikmat Qasem Baydoun
- 30- Hassan Mahdi
- 31- Nazih Khanji
- 32- Qasem Badran

- 33- Wahib Ikkawi
- 34- Radwan chakib Ibrahim
- 35- Elias Lutfallah Tanious
- 36- Jamil Dib Dib
- 37- Joseph Aziz Hallit
- 38- Camille Bawaridi
- 39- Abdel Nasser Mohamed al-Asmar Hamawi
- 40- Ahmed Rashid
- 41- Mohamed Youssef Abou Ali
- 42- Mounir Ahmed
- 43- Adel Youssef Araji
- 44- Sleiman Ahmed Khallouf
- 45- Farouq Wajih Jammal
- 46- Nimr Abou Zayyan
- 47- Wael Nasser Nasser
- 48- Ahmed Yassine Serhan
- 49- Ahmed Abou Faraj
- 50- Ala'a Mohamed Abdel Rahim
- 51- Youssef el-Issa
- 52- Abdallah Zeid
- 53- Ali Hassan Zeidan
- 54- Rabii Talal Hassan