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### **PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement\* submitted by Pax Christi International, International Catholic  
Peace Movement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is  
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 August 2008]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the  
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **On Torture in Lebanon**

Pax Christi International is a global Catholic peace movement working with its partners and Member Organisations in the Middle East and northern Africa region. On behalf of its Lebanese partner organisation ALEF (*Association Libanaise pour l'Education et la Formation*), Pax Christi International wishes to draw the Council's attention to the issue of torture in Lebanon. As documented in ALEF's report "Lebanon: The Painful Whereabouts of Detention"<sup>1</sup>, according to research carried out in 2007, torture is commonly practiced by law-enforcement and military agents in Lebanon, despite the body of treaties prohibiting torture that have been signed by the State.

Lebanon has ratified the United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) in 2000. Lebanon has also signed, but not yet ratified, the Optional Protocol to the Convention, a positive step few States have taken. Lebanon is also a State Party to the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their two additional protocols (1977) which prohibit torture. The conventions also recognise the principle of "command responsibility" according to which a superior can be held responsible for acts of his subordinate.

Despite Lebanon having signed relevant international treaties, Lebanese domestic laws fail to prohibit torture. Neither the Lebanese Constitution, nor the Criminal Procedures Law, nor Criminal Law reflects the international definition of torture. Other laws, such as drug-related laws and laws regulating prisons and detention centres also fall short of explicitly prohibiting torture.

According to ALEF's research, during 2007, torture has been practiced by the ISF (Internal Security Forces) against a disturbing number of arrested persons, including, but not limited to, illegal migrants, drug addicts and sex workers. The military intelligence has also tortured suspects of crimes against national security and dozens of Palestinian refugees during the conflict in Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in Northern Lebanon in May 2007, and in the aftermath that lasted until September 2007.

Allegedly, torture has been routinely practiced by the military intelligence against suspected Fatah al-Islam fighters and Palestinian refugees in 2007, as well as by members of the Drug Repression Bureau against certain groups such as drug addicts. Torture against these groups is initially used to extract information, but sometimes turns into becoming a tool for deterrence and collective punishment, with impunity for the perpetrators and with at least the implicit consent of the relevant authorities.

According to ALEF, Hobeich detention centre in Beirut is particularly well known for torture and ill-treatment of drug addicts. Beating by sticks, hosing down suspects, and hoisting the suspect to a stick until he collapses are amongst the methods reported there. Such practices reportedly also take place in Zahle prison.

Interviews conducted by ALEF document the different torture methods used in the Yarzeh detention centre at the Ministry of Defense, and the Kobbah detention centre (North

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<sup>1</sup> Association Libanaise Pour l'Education et la Formation, "Lebanon: The Painful Whereabouts of Detention", June 2008.

Lebanon), including electrocution, *balanco* - a method in which the detainee is hung from the wrists, tied behind his back, and “balanced” back and forth, rape, beating on genitals and weak or injured parts of the body. Other forms of ill-treatment reported by ALEF are sleep deprivation, blindfolding, humiliation, standing up for long periods and beating.

Pax Christi International views torture as morally unacceptable, practically useless and politically counterproductive. Morally unacceptable because it is contrary to the value of human dignity; practically useless because numerous studies have confirmed that testimonies retrieved under torture are unreliable; and politically counter-productive in the case of the struggle against terror, since it only leads to more hatred and creates a breeding ground for extremism.

Therefore, Pax Christi International and ALEF recommend the Human Rights Council to consider carrying out the following measures:

- Ask the Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Lebanon, and especially visit the detention centres.
- Engage in a constructive dialogue with the Lebanese government that aims to ensure that Lebanon:
  - sends its overdue periodic reports to the CAT committee
  - ratifies the Optional Protocol to the CAT
  - includes CAT provisions in the domestic law
  - works towards a better law enforcement and ends the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations.
  - accepts article 22 of the CAT allowing for individual complaints to be brought up before CAT committee

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