

Rights groups ask Court to free Lebanese

They say four prisoners have been repeatedly tortured and denied medical help

By Moshe Reinfeld, Ha'aretz Supreme Court Correspondent

A pair of human rights organizations have asked the Supreme Court to force Defense Minister Moshe Arens to immediately release four Lebanese men being held at the El Khiam detention center in South Lebanon.

Petitioning the court on behalf of the prisoners, two of whom are minors, the **Center for the Defense of the Individual** and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel also asked that the prisoners be allowed to meet with Israeli attorneys and representatives of the two organizations.

The two groups argued that the detentions are illegal and arbitrary. They noted that the four men have never been brought before a judge and have not been charged. Furthermore, the petitioners argued, the four have not been allowed legal counsel and have reportedly been tortured.

The petition is based largely on information collected by the International Red Cross and Amnesty International, and on newspaper reports in Israel and abroad.

From these reports, it appears that the four have serious health problems stemming from the conditions of their detention and from lack of medical care.

One of the detained is Suleiman Ramdan, from the village of Ba'al Beq, arrested in 1985 by a combined IDF and South Lebanese Army (SLA) force. He was wounded during his arrest but did not receive proper medical treatment and developed gangrene in his leg, resulting in an amputation in an Israeli hospital.

Ramdan has reportedly been whipped, subjected to electrical shocks, and tied to a beam. He has been kept in solitary confinement in a dark cell for three years.

Another detainee was identified as Mustafa Taubah from the village of Arnoun, who has been under arrest since October 1997. His wife, Zena, who was held for several weeks says he was apprehended for refusing to cooperate

weeks, says he was apprehended for refusing to cooperate with Israel. He was hospitalized several weeks ago after collapsing from high blood pressure.

The third detainee is the couple's son, Ali Taubah, 16, who was arrested to put pressure on his father. He told his mother he was tortured with electric shocks. The fourth detainee was identified as Rabakh Abu-Fuar, 16, who has been imprisoned for a year.

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