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*(Translated from Arabic)*

**Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva**

N/Ref. 14/1/2/4 and 15/1/15/3-A – 4/2022

**Annex to letter No. 71/z p/w of 7 January 2022**

**Reply from the Ministry of National Defence to the letter from the Special Rapporteurs concerning allegations that lawyer Mohammad Samir Sablough was subjected to harassment and threats in relation to his work**

The interaction of the Lebanese army with human rights activists and workers is characterized by transparency and willingness to engage in constructive discussions with organizations and individuals who operate in a credible manner without seeking any material gain or influence and without using human rights as a means to obtain specific privileges.

The Lebanese army is required to comply with international human rights norms and relevant national legislation, particularly Act No. 65/2017 criminalizing torture, and to implement all legal orders. Furthermore, military prisons are subject to the authority of the Government Commissioner at the Military Court pursuant to Decree No. 6236 of 1995, and the military units responsible for prison administration implement relevant written or oral directives.

The functions assigned to the Directorate of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights by the Army Command include communicating with human rights activists, listening to their concerns and taking action to address them. No objection or complaint has been registered on their part regarding work-related harassment. On the contrary, there has been continuous cooperation aimed at promoting human rights norms.

With regard to lawyers in general and the relevant legislation, the Army Command issued written orders to the units responsible for military prison administration in chapter IV, section 3 (3), of the Regulations governing On-site Service, Internal Service and Prison Administration, which stipulates that: “The lawyer may request to pay a visit to his client on any day. The visit shall take place for a period based on the lawyer’s request, following approval by the authority responsible for the prison, in the location designated for reception and in the presence of the guard duty officer, unless the prisoner or his representative requests his absence. He shall then be required to withdraw. In such cases the visit shall take place under the supervision of the guard duty officer.” Lawyers are thus permitted to perform their duties without any restrictions. In addition, humanitarian activists are allowed to visit prisons after obtaining the approval of the Office of the Military Prosecutor. Work is currently under way on a protocol of cooperation with the Restart Centre against torture and with other organizations so that they may visit prisons and conduct humanitarian activities aimed at improving inmates’ living conditions.

With regard to the lawyer Mohammad Sablough, the Army Command confirms that he was not subjected to harassment by its units and that he was permitted to perform his activities freely. He was not prevented from entering any military prison, in accordance with the laws in force, and he was not subjected to any type of assault with a view to obstructing his work or limiting his activities. On the contrary, action to defend his clients was facilitated, for instance as follows:

- On 14 November 2021, a notary came to the military prison and organized a power of attorney on behalf of one of the detainees for the lawyer Mr. Sablough.
- On 18 August 2021, the lawyer Mr. Sablough entered a military prison and held a 20-minute private meeting with his client.

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- On 3 November 2021, he also held a 20-minute private meeting with one of his clients.
  - During the period since 7 October 2015 the lawyer in question has visited one of the military prisons and has held meetings on 15 occasions with his clients who were arrested on diverse charges (creation of armed groups to carry out terrorist acts, membership of a terrorist organization, etc.). It should be noted that he met with more than one detainee per visit. Furthermore, he received responses to the requests that he submitted through the Office of the Public Prosecutor to the military prisons.
  - In addition, prior to his personal visits to deal with his clients' administrative issues, lawyers visited and interviewed his clients.

The Army Command adopted a number of measures aimed at guaranteeing human rights in military prisons, for example:

- Broad dissemination of international human rights law by preparing relevant references for training purposes and integrating them into diverse educational programmes at all levels, in cooperation with governmental organizations (the [REDACTED], the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), etc.) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (the [REDACTED], the [REDACTED], etc.);
- Ensuring that the rights of all detainees are protected and respected without discrimination on grounds of religion, gender, nationality or any other ground by organizing specialized training courses for investigators and detention centre personnel on various topics, including international standards for the treatment of prisoners, respect for human rights during investigation and interrogation procedures, human trafficking, combating torture, protection and handling of displaced persons, etc., under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [REDACTED] and other international and local governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- Circulating and explaining the content of the Anti-Torture Act, which permits detainees to submit complaints to the judiciary, bearing in mind that no infringement or act of torture is subject to the statute of limitations;
- Strict application of amended article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (permitting detainees to contact their family, informing them of the charges against them, assignment of a lawyer and interpreter, arranging for a medical examination) and of all other relevant legislation, with provision for disciplinary or judicial accountability, depending on the relevant authority;
- Establishment of a complaint mechanism in military prisons with a view to improving all prison conditions and addressing any abuses that occur; all prisoners have a basic right to resort to the mechanism without disclosure of their identity or the content of the complaint;
- Unremitting efforts to improve prison conditions and the quality of life in prisons, in cooperation with [REDACTED] which conducts periodic visits to places of detention.

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**The Lebanese Republic**  
**Ministry of National Defence**  
**Army Command**  
**Army General Staff**  
**No 557/p d/1 d i h a/m q**  
**Classification: 15510/1**

**Ministry of National Defence**  
Registration number: 12588/2021  
Date: 6 January 2022

**From the Ministry of National Defence**

**Subject: Allegations that lawyer Mohammad Samir Sablough was subjected to harassment and threats in relation to his work**

The Army Command has the honour to state the following:

The Army Command received letter No. 5440/p p/w from the Ministry of National Defence, dated 3 December 2021, enclosing letter No. 8/1434, dated 1 December 2021, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Directorate of International Organizations, Conferences and Cultural Relations, which contained a copy of communication No. 673/8, dated 17 November 2021, from the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations and international organizations in Geneva concerning a joint communication from the Special Procedures Branch of OHCHR requesting clarifications from the Lebanese Government regarding allegations that lawyer Mohammad Samir Sablough was subject to harassment and threats while working in Lebanon.

The Army Command requests you to take note of the attached response.

The Lebanese Republic  
Ministry of National Defence  
Army Command

6 January 2022

General Aoun, Commander of the Army

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**Directorate General of the Internal Security Forces****General Staff, Service and Operations Division**

No. 1127/203 SH 2

Date: 15 December 2021

**From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants****Subject:** Request for information

In response to your letter No. 8/1434, dated 1 December 2021, containing the joint communication, dated 16 November 2021, from the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants concerning the allegations against the lawyer affiliated with the Tripoli Bar Association, Mr. Mohammad Ahmed Samir Sablough, we wish to inform you that this Directorate General has nothing to do with the matter.

We propose that it be reviewed by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Defence, the Lebanese Army Command, the Military Court and the Directorate General of Public Security.

**The Director General of the Internal Security Forces****Major General Imad Osman**