

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Amnesty International calls for investigations into Beirut protest killings to be independent and for findings to be made public**

Amnesty International welcomes Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's announcement that an investigation will be conducted into Sunday's killing of seven people during protests in and around Mar Mkhail, south Beirut. The organization calls for this investigation to be carried out by an independent and impartial body rather than by the Army or other security forces involved in the events.. It must be thorough, prompt and impartial as required under international standards.

Ahmed Hamza, Ahmed 'Ali 'Ajouz, Mahmoud 'Ali Hayek, Mahmoud Mansour, Mohammed Arslan, Yusef Sheqir and paramedic Mustafa Amhaz died during the protests which turned violent in Beirut. Tens of others were injured. The protests were against power cuts affecting the largely Shi'a southern suburbs, where support is strong for Amal and Hizbullah, two political parties currently opposed to the Siniora government. According to reports, there was gunfire from Lebanese Army soldiers and also from some unidentified individuals. One other man, 'Ali Hassan Ma'atouq, was killed in a road accident in related protests in Nabatiyeh, south Lebanon.

The role of the Lebanese Army in the events, including as a possible source of lethal gunfire, underlines the need for such investigations to be conducted independently, as required under international standards. The results of such investigations must be made public and anyone reasonably suspected of involvement in the killings must be held accountable. When policing demonstrations, security forces should adhere to the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials that call upon officials to employ non-violent means and to use lethal force only when "strictly unavoidable in order to protect life" and then only in proportion to the danger presented. ..

Demonstrators must have the rights to the freedom of expression and freedom of assembly ensured, but the demonstrators and the authorities should ensure that the demonstrations do not escalate into violence leading to human rights abuses.

The protests which took place two days after an explosion in Beirut killed a senior intelligence officer in the Internal Security Forces, Captain Wissam 'Eid, a bodyguard and two civilians. The attack was the latest in a series of apparently politically-motivated assassinations and the second within six weeks against senior security officials.

Public Document

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International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

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