

latest edition
back issues >
SR magazine
subscription offer >
contact us >
payments >
Socialist Workers Party >
e-mail bulletin
T-shirts etc
» Reports and video from London Lebanon demo (5 August)
Special issues
» Respect conference
» Pensions
» Asbos
<input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Google search"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> SW <input type="radio"/> web
<input type="button" value="XML"/> <input type="button" value="RSS feed"/>
<input type="button" value="top of page"/>

| [email article](#) | [comment on article](#) | [printable version](#) |

Features

This article should be read after: [» US empire is rocked by Israel's defeat](#)

The hidden story of Lebanese prisoners held in Israeli jails

by *Simon Assaf*

Israel claims its war on Lebanon was triggered by Hizbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers, and says it holds only two Lebanese prisoners.

Yet a secret list compiled by the Lebanese authorities, and leaked to the Lebanese newspaper al-Safir, has revealed the names of 67 men known to have been kidnapped by Israel and its allies during 18 years of occupation. Thousands of others are missing.

The most high profile prisoner in Israel is Samir Kuntar, who is serving a life sentence. Kuntar was captured by Israel in 1979 during an operation by a left wing Palestinian group. He was 16 at the time.

Kuntar has been kept out of prisoner exchanges until the Lebanese find the remains of an Israeli air force pilot downed in 1986. The Lebanese have repeatedly stated that the pilot is just one of 17,000 people who went missing over decades of war.

Hizbollah has demanded Kuntar be released in exchange for Israeli soldiers. The resistance is also demanding the return of hundreds of others held secretly by Israel.

The leaked list names those who were witnessed being seized and then identified as having been transferred to Israeli prisons. The majority were seized by Israeli troops or their allies, the right wing Lebanese Forces and Israel's proxy South Lebanese Army (SLA).

The list gives the dates and locations where the men were seized, followed by verification either by witnesses or newspaper photographs of prisoners.

There is no reason given as to why the men were seized, or whether they are alive or dead. The Israelis have refused to discuss the list, and have given no details on the missing people's whereabouts, or the locations of their graves.

Those campaigning for the families of the missing fear they were tortured, then killed inside Israel.

There are hopes that some of them might still be alive. Many would now be in their 40s. Of the 67 who have been verified as having been transferred to Israel, 43 were in their early 20s or younger.

In the wake of the 1978 and 1982 Israeli invasions of Lebanon, right wing militias stalked the country seizing young men. They would often disappear without trace, joining the tens of thousands of other victims.

However in some cases witnesses logged details of kidnappings with the Lebanese authorities, and in other cases former militiamen provided secret testimony to the committee that shed light on a policy of transferring captives to Israel.

Fifty five year old Shakeen Asaad was seized at a checkpoint near the Shatilla Palestinian refugee camp in south Beirut in 1982. Nothing was heard of him until his wife identified him in a newspaper photograph. He was one of a group of blindfolded prisoners being marched across the southern border.

In one case, a father and his three sons were kidnapped and transferred.

All the kidnappings follow a similar pattern. Men were seized at checkpoints run by right wing militias, taken either to a military jail or the ministry of defence before being transferred to Israel.

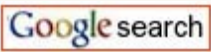

There is no evidence that any of the men were members of left wing parties or nationalist groups. The pattern of abductions was random, in the majority of cases they were stopped by chance.

After the Israelis seized west Beirut in 1982, they handed over control to their allies who took over the Lebanese government. This government was later overthrown in 1984 by an uprising. The only remaining force that remained allied to the US and Israel was the SLA.

The SLA ran a torture centre and prison camp in the southern village of Kham. The prison,



An Israeli attack on south Beirut last week
(Pic: Guy Smallman)

latest edition
back issues >
SR magazine
subscription offer >
contact us >
payments >
Socialist Workers Party >
e-mail bulletin
T-shirts etc
» Reports and video from London Lebanon demo (5 August)
Special issues
» Respect conference
» Pensions
» Asbos
<input type="text"/>

<input type="radio"/> SW <input type="radio"/> web

top of page

which was recently destroyed by Israeli bombs, was filled with those who resisted the occupation of the south. Its prisoners were liberated when crowds stormed the prison as Israeli troops abandoned their positions in 2000.

Yet many remain unaccounted for. The list of names included many young men taken between 1982 and 1989 as Israelis attempted to coerce young men into the SLA. Those who refused were either beaten or killed.

Fahd Abdel Kareem Bazi, 18, was seized by Israeli troops in March 1985. It is believed he was taken to Israel. There has been no word of him since. Whether he was executed, died under torture or is rotting in an Israeli dungeon is unknown. The Israelis have refused to release any information or cooperate with any investigation.

In the case of 19 year old Mohammad Ali Hawa, his mother was able to visit him in a local jail after he was seized in the southern town of Jezine by the SLA in 1984. He was transferred to another prison inside Israel shortly after and has not been heard of since.

The campaign by the families of the missing has embarrassed the Lebanese government. Protests by the families were often attacked by interior ministry police.

Hizbollah, among others, made a pledge to the families that they would try and free the prisoners. This is one reason why they seized two Israeli soldiers. Yet it is the fate of two soldiers, rather than the hundreds and possibly thousands of Lebanese and Arab prisoners, that makes the headlines.

The truth lies somewhere inside Israel's prisons.

The following should be read alongside this article:

- » [US empire is rocked by Israel's defeat](#)
- » [Lebanon: eyewitness to the Israeli attacks](#)
- » [Ilan Pappé on why the Israeli debacle will affect the whole region](#)
- » [A new grouping of forces is emerging in Lebanon](#)
- » [Euphoria across the Arab world at Israel's withdrawal](#)
- » [Best Internet coverage of the Middle East](#)

© *Copyright Socialist Worker (unless otherwise stated). You may republish if you include an active link to the original and leave this notice in place.*

[top of page](#)