

Alerts, News, and Background from Lebanon

[A Hayya Bina project]

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A Ninth Postponement...

Developments in the Case of Sheikh H. Mchaymech

The most recent hearing in the continuing legal drama of Sheikh Hassan Mchaymech, Lebanon's "Prisoner of Conscience," was held January 18, 2013. During the proceedings, the prosecution presented new evidence—more phone records—to the court. Then, to allow Sheikh Mchaymech's lawyer Antoine Nehmeh sufficient time to review the documents, the court scheduled the next hearing for March 20, 2013. This ninth postponement marked the passage of an entire year since the trial began, a full year during which no significant progress has been made towards determining a ruling in the case.



A recent picture of Sheikh H. Mchaymech taken in his prison cell.

Last September 20, the prosecution entered into evidence usage records from Sheikh Mchaymech's telephone. During the January 18 session of the trial, however, the prosecuting attorney offered no explanation for the four-month delay between submissions of the telephone records. Interestingly, the phone records presented in September 2012 represented the first materials the prosecution submitted to the Military Court since making its initial call for evidence during the Sheikh's first hearing on January 26, 2012—nine months prior.

Notably, Sheikh Mchaymech reiterated his request that the court call Sheikh Ali Damoush as a witness. The Sheikh also criticized the court for having called "fictitious witnesses," including his son Reda Mchaymech and brother Abed el-Karim Mchaymech, rather than producing witnesses able to provide useful testimony regarding the accusations against him. In response, Judge Khalil Ibrahim chided Sheikh Mchaymech directly when the judge stated that he was unconcerned with Sheikh Damoush and would only summon witnesses present in the court and who had been properly called by the prosecution.

Also on January 18, 2013, the Lebanese daily *al-Balad* printed an open letter to Lebanese President Michel Suleiman from Sheikh Mchaymech. In that letter, the Sheikh described some of the experiences he was forced to endure by the Syrian regime owing to his objections to Hezbollah's ideology. Sheikh Mchaymech also accused the "the President of the Primary Court, its predecessors and successors, of being under the influence of

