

## Slim's family urges UN probe into murder's possible link to port case



The widow of Lebanese intellectual Lokman Slim has called for a U.N. fact-finding mission to determine whether his assassination and two other murders are linked to the Beirut port explosion.

A secular activist from a Shiite Muslim family, 58-year-old Slim was found shot dead in his car on February 4, 2021, a day after his family reported him missing.

Beirut's catastrophic August 4, 2020 port blast killed more than 200 people, injured thousands and ravaged swathes of the capital.

Nobody has been held responsible in either case.

Slim's widow Monika Borgmann urged the U.N. Human Rights Council "to commit itself" to a "fact-finding mission to support Lebanon and its people in its calls for justice and accountability."

Lebanon's own investigation into the blast "is not advancing and is hampered," Borgmann said at a ceremony marking the second

anniversary of Slim's killing at his home in the Beirut southern suburb of Haret Hreik.

In one of Slim's last TV appearances, he accused the Syrian regime of having links to an ammonium nitrate shipment that caused the blast.

Borgmann urged any U.N. fact-finding mission to investigate Slim's killing and two other deaths that she said "could be linked to the port explosion."

She was referring to Munir Abu Rjeili, a retired colonel from the customs administration, and amateur military photographer Joe Bejjany, the circumstances of whose December 2020 deaths have also not been clarified.

"The culture of impunity and lack of accountability has gripped Lebanon for far too long," Borgmann said.

Slim's body was found in southern Lebanon -- a stronghold of Iran-backed Hezbollah, which is also an ally of Syria's regime.

Last month, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called on the U.N. Human Rights Council to "urgently pass a resolution to create an impartial fact-finding mission" into the port explosion.

Lebanese authorities have rejected calls for an international probe into the catastrophe, while the domestic investigation has been repeatedly stalled as high-level officials have mounted a slew of political and legal challenges.

An outspoken activist and a researcher passionate about documenting the civil war that raged from 1975-1990 in Lebanon, Slim was a divisive figure.

His sway over foreign diplomats in Lebanon often sparked the ire of Hezbollah and its loyalists.

On Thursday, U.N. rights experts voiced deep concern at the slow pace of the investigation into Slim's death, demanding that Beirut

ensure accountability.

"It is incumbent on the Lebanese authorities to fully investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of this heinous crime," the four independent experts said.