



Lebanon: Killers of activist Lokman Slim must be brought to justice



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The Lebanese authorities must increase their efforts to identify and prosecute those responsible for the murder of Lokman Slim, the intellectual and human rights defender, who was assassinated two years ago today, Amnesty International said today.

There have been no charges or arrests since Lokman Slim was found dead in his car on 4 February 2021 in southern Lebanon. He was an intellectual and an activist at the forefront of the struggle against impunity in post-war Lebanon and an advocate for the right of the families of the missing and disappeared to justice and truth. He co-founded Dar Al-Jadeed, an independent publishing house, as well as UMAM Documentation and Research, a citizen resource centre focused on Lebanon's conflict-laden past using research and documentation as its primary tools.

“Lokman Slim is the victim of a [decades-long pattern of impunity in Lebanon](#), and the perfunctory efforts by the Lebanese authorities to find his killers are yet more evidence of this. Little has been done to find his assassins and the deterioration of the Lebanese judicial system, exemplified by the [farical investigation into the devastating Beirut explosion of 2020](#), leaves even less hope of justice for Lokman

Slim's family," said Aya Majzoub, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

Lokman Slim's widow, Monika Borgmann, told Amnesty International that from the moment his body was discovered, the authorities have failed to make serious efforts to bring his killers to justice. Photos and videos, which Amnesty International has reviewed, show nothing was done to secure the crime scene, with passers-by and journalists touching the car in which his body was found and opening the door.

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Aya Majzoub, Amnesty International

Monika Borgmann said that investigators then asked her "silly" questions that focused on whether her husband had a gambling problem or a jilted lover. She added that investigators even suggested Lokman Slim committed suicide, even though he was shot five times in the head and once in the back. They did not ask about threats received by Lokman Slim and his family over his work and activism, she said. In December 2019 flyers containing threats were posted on the wall and entrances to their home in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and a group of people gathered in the family's garden chanting threats and slurs.

Basic investigative procedures have not been followed, potential politically sensitive leads were seemingly not pursued and the investigative judge questioned witnesses in an open court, where conversations could easily be overheard. According to Monika Borgmann, the judge has only heard testimony from three witnesses who were not family members so far.

Monika Borgmann told Amnesty International: "I want to have hope, but if I look at the history of political assassinations in Lebanon, that doesn't give me a lot of hope. If I see what is happening with Bitar [the

judge investigating the Beirut port blast], I also know where the case is going. It doesn't give me hope."

UN human rights experts issued a [statement](#) on 2 February expressing their deep concern at the lack of progress by the authorities to ensure accountability two years after Lokman Slim's assassination. As the experts note, "failing to carry out a prompt and effective investigation, may in itself constitute a violation of the right to life."

Investigations into the massive Beirut port explosion that killed over 220 people on 4 August 2020 [have descended into a legal tug of war](#) between Tarek Bitar, the investigating judge, and Ghassan Oweidat, Lebanon's public prosecutor.

Amnesty International and other local and international organizations have [documented a pattern of impunity](#), obstruction of justice, and political interference in the Lebanese judiciary.

"The Lebanese authorities must break this cycle of impunity and speedily bring those responsible for Lokman Slim's murder to justice. The investigation must be effective, transparent, impartial, and independent and the findings made public. Forensic help from the international community should also be welcomed," said Aya Majzoub.

"Parliament should urgently adopt a law guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary in Lebanon that is in line with international standards. The public prosecution and the Internal Security Forces should open inquiries into the alleged misconduct and negligence of their members in handling the investigation and ensure that those responsible are held to account. Systems should be set up to allow members of the judiciary, prosecution, and police to raise complaints safely about political interference in criminal justice investigations and prosecutions."