

L'Orient Today

# Lokman Slim assassination: Five years on, renewed hope for the family

L'OLJ / By Claude ASSAF,



Chebli Mallat receiving the Lokman Slim Prize from Racha al-Ameer. From left: Moussa Khoury, Monica Borgmann and Adel Nassar. (Credit: Claude Assaf/L'Orient-Le Jour.)

Lokman Slim, a Shiite writer, researcher and political activist, was killed on Feb. 3, 2021 – a high price to pay for the freedom of expression.

Five years on, his murderers have yet to be identified.

Yet, on the anniversary of the crime, Lokman's family voiced renewed hope in the judiciary for the first time since the investigation began.

Speaking at the Slim family residence, in the

presence of Slim's sister, Rasha al-Ameer, and his widow, Monika Borgmann, as well as Justice Minister Adel Nassar, who attended to express solidarity, family lawyer Moussa Khoury told journalists and supporters that the case is now in the hands of an investigating judge who is working with "integrity, honesty, rigor and professionalism."

After spending the day with a friend in Niha, southern Lebanon, Slim was found dead near the Saida-Sour highway in Addousieh, in the Zahrani district, an area considered a Hezbollah stronghold. He was shot six times – five bullets to the head and one to the back.

One month before his killing, Slim appeared on Saudi television channel *al-Hadath*, accusing Hezbollah of being involved in the import of the ammonium nitrate that caused the Aug. 4, 2020 Beirut port explosion. In December 2019, about 14 months before his assassination, death threats were posted at the entrance of his home in Haret Hreik, in Beirut's southern suburbs.

After those threats, Slim issued a statement calling on the Lebanese Army to protect him and explicitly holding then Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah and Amal leader Nabih Berri responsible for any harm that might come to him.

Without naming the magistrate for professional reasons, lawyer Moussa Khoury was referring on Tuesday to Beirut investigating judge Roula Sfeir, who was appointed last May to revive the probe.

The investigation was suspended in December 2024 by the then acting Beirut investigating judge Bilal Halawi, who ruled that "no further

measures were required” and shelved the case pending the emergence of new evidence.

Three months later, following a recusal request filed by Ameer and Borgman accusing Halawi of bias and obstruction of justice, the Court of Cassation ruled in their favor and ordered the case transferred to a new judge.

Speaking to L’Orient-Le Jour, Borgman said this was “the first time a judge has genuinely wanted to move the case forward,” adding: “We trust her.”

### **A political will not to interfere**

While welcoming the judicial progress, Khoury pointed to what he described as a “new approach,” which he attributed to the presidency of Joseph Aoun and the formation of the government led by Nawaf Salam. He also praised Justice Minister Adel Nassar for pushing to reopen investigations into multiple political assassinations in Lebanon.

In Oct. 2025, Nassar appointed 11 investigating judges to probe as many assassinations dating back to 1978.

Speaking to L’Orient-Le Jour, Borgman said her family had met with both Aoun and Salam and received positive signals. She added that the family remains in contact with the justice minister, stressing that political will has been key to moving the case forward.

For his part, Nassar said this will translate above all into preventing any interference or obstruction of the investigation. More broadly, he said independent judges who carry out their duties “with courage” provide a real guarantee for accountability, particularly in cases involving

political crimes.

Still without naming her, Khoury said Sfeir is working to gather evidence and leads in order to “exercise her discretionary authority.” In the same vein, Ameer said the judge has questioned witnesses and requested information from the relevant authorities, particularly the security services. She added that she hopes these agencies will “fully cooperate” with the judiciary.

According to L’Orient-Le Jour’s information, Sfeir is set to hold a hearing on Feb. 26, after convening another session last Thursday.

### **‘He broke the silence’**

During the commemoration, the Lokman Slim Foundation awarded its 2026 prize to Chebli Mallat, a lawyer known for his work on justice, human rights and political reform. Mallat recently published a book on the origins of Lebanon’s Constitution. In his remarks, he highlighted Slim’s teachings on nonviolence, ethics, reform and the rule of law.

He also stressed the need for legal and political accountability, saying that achieving it would mark “a victory for Lokman Slim and for thousands of victims of human violence.”

Journalist and political activist Jad Akhawi then paid tribute to Slim’s legacy, saying he “broke the silence” within his own community. Slim, he said, refused to let that community become “a cage” for its members and rejected what he called the normalization of fear.