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LEBANON

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# Two years after Lokman Slim's assassination, his family renew their calls for a UN investigation

Relatives of the intellectual, a staunch opponent of Hezbollah, want to determine whether his murder is linked to the Aug. 4 deadly Beirut port explosion.

L'Orient Today / Richard SALAME, with the Live news department, 03 February 2023 20:00

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The family of intellectual Lokman Slim commemorate his death, in Beirut's southern suburb of Harat Hreik, Feb. 3, 2023. (Credit: Joao Sousa/OLJ)

**HARAT HREIK, Lebanon** — On the second anniversary of the murder of Lokman Slim, a publisher, researcher, political activist and staunch Hezbollah opponent, his family Friday called for a UN fact-finding mission to determine whether his murder was linked to the deadly Aug. 4, 2020, Beirut port explosion.

"I'm really calling for a UN fact-finding mission" on the Beirut port tragedy, Monika Borgmann, wife of the Shiite intellectual, stressed during Slim's memorial ceremony in Harat Hreik, in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Borgmann also called on the mission to look into the killings of retired former customs colonel Mounir Abou Rjeili, who was killed in Kartaba, as well as photographer Joe Bejjani, who was murdered in Kahale in 2020, as well as her husband's murder, to determine whether these executions were related to the port blast.

"This is complementary to the local investigation,"

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rather than replacing it, she said, calling on the UN to "commit to supporting Lebanon."

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"For two years, we have not stopped pursuing the criminals who killed Lokman. We have not been intimidated. For two years, the investigation has been moving forward but slowly," Borgmann added, stressing the need to "reveal the identity of the perpetrators and those who provided them with cover."

"They thought we would be afraid ... but they were wrong. We pledge that your assassination will be the end of the era of impunity ... that is commonplace in Lebanon. We commit ourselves to take all the paths, to consult all the judicial authorities, and to continue to defend your cause, even if it takes a century," she said.

Borgmann told *L'Orient Today* during the ceremony that even if an investigation would "find out that there wouldn't be a link between the port explosion and the assassinations then nevertheless the investigation should go on," adding that "nobody can exclude [the possibility] that the interview that Lokman gave on the 15th of January played, somehow, a role [in his murder]."

One month before his murder, in January 2021, the activist spoke on Saudi's al-Hadath television

about what he alleged was Hezbollah involvement in the shipment of ammonium nitrate. That load was unloaded and stored at Beirut port, later causing a massive explosion that killed over 220 people on Aug. 4, 2020.

## **Perpetual struggle**

Slim's widow also told *L'Orient Today* that the first investigating judge in Beirut, Charbel Abu Samra, "still holds monthly hearings," about the blast and indicated that she has proposed the idea of a UN investigation to relatives of the port blast victims. She said they were in favor of her initiative.

"I was in Washington with one of the relatives of the victims and she was open to the idea," Borgmann said. "Starting next week, I will work towards this. We are all fighting the same battle."

At least nine ambassadors of Western countries were present at the ceremony, among nearly 40 invited guests. Security forces were also heavily deployed at the scene.

The French ambassador to Lebanon, Anne Grillo, who had traveled to Paris, was not present at the commemoration but sent a representative.

For her part, US Ambassador Dorothy Shea, who was also present at the ceremony, said her government "reject[s] impunity for those who perpetrate such acts," renewing her "call for justice."



U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea attends the ceremony commemorating the assassination of Lokman Slim in Harat Hreik, Jan. 3, 2023. (Credit: Joao Sousa/OLJ)

## Journalist Marie-Jo Sader awarded

Also during the Friday ceremony, Slim's sister Rasha el-Ameer honored several personalities, including former *L'Orient-Le Jour* journalist Marie-Jo Sader, who was rewarded for her [investigation](#) of the circumstances surrounding Slim's assassination. Other figures recognized for their work included Dima Sadek, artist Alfred Tarazi and Hezbollah critic Sheikh Abbas Yazbeck.



Marie-Jo Sader (first from right), former journalist at L'Orient-Le Jour, receives an award from Lokman Slim's sister in Harat Hreik, Feb. 3, 2023. (Credit: Joao Sousa/OLJ)

Slim was kidnapped in February 2021, as he left the house of his friend, writer Mohammad el-Amine in Niha, South Lebanon. His body was found about 30 kilometers away, in Addoussiye, Zahrani, South Lebanon, near the Saida-Tyre highway. He had been shot six times.

Some 14 months before his assassination, the fervent human rights activist had received multiple death threats, posted at the entrance of his Haret Hreik residence. He had called on the Lebanese Army to protect him against these threats, for which he blamed, in advance, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, and Nabih Berri, head of the Amal Movement.

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