

## Victims' families mark two and a half years since the Beirut explosion

Activists also set up a tent in memory of journalist and fierce Hezbollah opponent Lokman Slim, who was found killed two years ago today.

L'Orient Today



Families of the victims of the port explosion hold banners on Feb. 4, 2023, as they mark two and half years since the tragedy. (Credit: João Sousa/L'Orient Today)

BEIRUT – Families of the Aug. 4, 2020 Beirut explosion victims gathered on Saturday to mark two and a half years since the port blast, as activists installed a tent nearby in memory of journalist and fierce Hezbollah opponent Lokman Slim, who was found assassinated two years ago today.

The 2020 port blast, caused by thousands of tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrate, killed more than 200 people and injured another 6,500. The investigation has been slowed by political and judicial interference, while victims' families regularly call for justice.

Amid cold weather on Saturday, few people gathered at the port's Statue of the Emigrant to commemorate the blast victims, according to *L'Orient Today* photographer João Sousa. Nearby, a crowd assembled at the tent dedicated to Slim.

The tent recalled similar ones set up by activists in downtown Beirut during Lebanon's October 2019 protests. At the time, one of those tents had been attacked and burnt over the owner's remarks about Israel.



A tent dedicated to journalist and activist Lokman Slim, a fierce Hezbollah critic, who was assassinated two years ago, Feb. 4, 2023. (Credit: João Sousa/L'Orient Today)

"Besieged by supporters of Hezbollah and their henchmen, Lokman Slim and his companions rushed to support the peaceful activists inside the tent," a memorial press release said on Friday, as loved ones held a ceremony marking two years since his killing.

"The tent was burned by the attackers and later removed by the complicit Lebanese government. This brave standoff was the beginning of a malicious attack on all factions of the revolution. The following two nights Lokman and his family received direct death threats, as the slogan 'Glory to the gun silencer' was pinned on the walls of his ancestral home in the southern suburbs of

Beirut," the statement went on. "In response, Lokman publicly accused and held responsible Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and the speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri for any harm that might befall him or his family."



A banner advertising the discussions taking place at a tent dedicated to Lokman Slim near the Beirut port, Feb., 4, 2023. (Credit: João Sousa/L'Orient Today)

Lawyer Moussa Khoury, investigative journalist Riad Kobaissi and William Noun, brother to one of the firefighters killed in the port blast, were set to speak at the tent Saturday evening, with TV journalist Dima Sadek moderating the discussion.