

Lokman Slim's family denounces investigation suspension



The family of Lebanese writer and journalist Lokman Slim, a known Hezbollah opponent assassinated four years ago, denounced the suspension of the investigation by the Lebanese judiciary on Sunday.

"This is already the fourth commemoration" of Slim's assassination "and justice has not been served, quite the contrary," stated his widow, Monika Borgman, criticizing the fact that a new judge, "very close to Hezbollah," has been assigned to the case following the retirement of the predecessor. She added that the family had twice requested that this judge be removed from the case. "But as soon as he found out, he ordered the indefinite suspension of the investigation," she said.

"Impunity: that is the message delivered to the killers and their masters," she emphasized during a ceremony attended by political figures and Western ambassadors commemorating the assassination of her husband on Feb. 3, 2021.

Slim, 58, was found dead in his car, shot, in the south of the country. A staunch proponent of secularism, he was one of the few dissenting voices within his community, relentlessly criticizing the party. This activist and researcher, whose work notably focused on the memory of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), had claimed to have been threatened multiple times before his assassination. Shortly before his assassination, he had repeatedly stated in television interviews that Hezbollah was holding Lebanon hostage for Iran.

In 2023, U.N. special rapporteurs had already criticized the slow pace of the investigation.

A Lebanese judicial source told AFP on Sunday that "the judge has completed his investigation and has not been able to determine the identity of the perpetrators of Slim's assassination." However, she added that the investigation could be reopened if new elements emerged.

His widow stated on Sunday that the investigation had gathered all the necessary elements, including surveillance camera footage and DNA analyses, "except for the names of the assassins."

The news has sparked outrage among numerous figures and organizations opposed to Hezbollah and has put the new executive duo — President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Nawaf Salam — under scrutiny.

"The handling of the information revealed by Monika Borgmann regarding the absence of an investigation into Lokman Slim's assassination is a decisive test for the new Lebanese presidency and the new government's commitment to putting Lebanon on the path to state-building — or not. No excuses!" the Samir Kassir Foundation wrote on its X account.

"Four years after Lokman Slim's assassination, the killer remains protected and at large, while the system of murder and impunity continues to obscure the truth and close the case, as demonstrated once again by the scandalous indictment that concluded the investigation by merely charging unidentified individuals," said Michel Moawad, a Zgharta lawmaker and member of the Renewal Bloc, along with Mark Daou, a protest movement MP from the same parliamentary group.

"The names of the known criminals will be written in the pages of shame, and the dawn of justice will rise, even if after some time. Lokman Slim's assassination was a desperate attempt to silence the voice of truth. His words will remain a testimony to crimes of injustice and oppression," wrote the Chouf MP.

The ceremony held Sunday night was also an opportunity to present the annual Lokman Slim Foundation award. This year, it was given to journalist Sobhiya Najjar for her documentary series titled *Justice Is the Foundation of Sovereignty*, which examines the human cost of impunity in Lebanon.