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UN Prosecutor Files Hariri Slaying Indictment

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BEIRUT — The prosecutor of the U.N. tribunal set up to bring to justice the assassins of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri filed the first indictment in the case Monday, the court announced.

Details of suspects named in the indictment and the charges against them were not released.

Hariri was killed along with 22 other people by a huge truck bomb blast on Feb. 14, 2005, on Beirut's Mediterranean sea front.

Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Shiite militant group Hezbollah, said last year he expects members of his group to be indicted, a move that many fear could re-ignite sectarian violence that has erupted repeatedly in the tiny nation

The Iranian- and Syrian-sponsored group fiercely denies any role in the killing.

Hariri was a Sunni, and many Lebanese worry that if the tribunal draws links between the assassination and Hezbollah it could provoke bloodshed between Lebanon's Shiite and Sunni communities.

Tribunal registrar Herman van Hebel said in a statement that prosecutor Daniel Bellemare sent the indictments to Judge Daniel Fransen, who must decide whether to confirm or dismiss them or ask for more evidence.

A billionaire businessman, Hariri was credited with rebuilding Lebanon after its 15-year civil war ended in 1990.

Fransen is expected to take six to 10 weeks studying the evidence before reaching a decision. The names of suspects and evidence against them will only be released if he decides the evidence is strong enough to merit putting them on trial.

News of the indictment came as Lebanon's government has been plunged into turmoil by the resignation last week of Hezbollah and its allies from a broad coalition administration led by Hariri's son, Saad, who remains as caretaker prime minister until a new government is formed.

Hezbollah quit the government after Saad Hariri refused to renounce the U.N.-backed tribunal investigating his father's killing.

Nasrallah has said the group "will cut off the hand" of anyone who tries to arrest any of its members, raising concerns that the indictments could lead to civil strife.

The U.S. has called Hezbollah's walkout a transparent effort to subvert justice.

Lengthy negotiations lie ahead between Lebanon's factions. Hezbollah says it will not support Hariri again for prime minister, but Hariri's backers say they have no other candidate.

According to Lebanon's power-sharing system, the president must be a Christian Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni and the parliament speaker a Shiite.

Each faith makes up about a third of Lebanon's population of 4 million.

The leader of Hezbollah on Sunday defended the decision to bring down Lebanon's government, saying his movement did so without resorting to violence. The speech by Nasrallah — who commands an arsenal that far outweighs that of the national army — appeared aimed at keeping tensions low at a time when many Lebanese fear another outbreak of civil conflict.

Associated press writer Mike Corder contributed to this report from Leidschendam, Netherlands.

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Breaking news

UN indicts Hezbollah chiefs in Hariri assassination

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Prosecutor for international tribunal investigating assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri files indictment with pre-trial judge; Nasrallah threatens to "cut off the hands" of anyone attempting arrest of Hezbollah members; turmoil grows following last week's collapse of government



Scene of the detonation of 1000 kg of explosives used in assassination // Source: freedomist.com

The prosecutor of the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon issued a draft indictment on Monday over the 2005 killing of former prime minister Rafik al-Hariri and 21 others

The contents of the draft indictment, which will now be reviewed by pre-trial judge Daniel Fransen, were not revealed, and details of the charges may not emerge for another several weeks, when Fransen is expected to decide whether there is enough evidence to

proceed with a trial. Another blow to stability in Lebanon, already in crisis when the government collapsed last week after ministers from the Shi'ite Hezbollah group and its allies walked out of Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri's coalition, increases the potential for sectarian violence.

Anticipating the filing, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a Sunday evening address threw down the gauntlet, rejecting the re-nomination of Saad Hariri as Prime Minister, vowing to defend the Shiite group's members against the indictments, and calling for a "Lebanese solution" to the crisis, devoid of international interference.

Nasrallah warned repeatedly that after the indictments will be "too late" to strike a deal to avoid plunging Lebanon deeper into turmoil, and threatened to "cut off" the hands of anyone attempting to arrest Hezbollah members.

Adding to the building tension, the Lebanese TV station Al-Jadid broadcast an audiotape of a 2005 meeting in which Saad Hariri, a UN investigator, and a Lebanese security official met with one of the so-called "false witnesses" in the UN investigation. The taped discussion will cast further doubt on the tribunal's credibility at a key turning point in the UN process.

"The prosecutor of the tribunal has submitted an indictment and supporting materials to the pre-trial judge," the U.N.-backed tribunal said in a statement. The documents were handed to the registry, but added that the contents of the indictment will remain unpublished at this stage.

It has been expected for some time that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, or STL, would indict Hezbollah members in the assassination, a prospect Lebanese politicians fear could fuel further tensions. Hezbollah has repeatedly denied any involvement in the killing.

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Photo by: AP

'UN tribunal to link Iran's Khamenei to Hariri murder'

By JPOST.COM STAFF
15/01/2011

According to separate reports, Iranian supreme leader gave order to kill former Lebanese PM; indictment due to be submitted any time.

A [UN tribunal](#) investigating the assassination of Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is expected to accuse Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei of giving the order to murder Hariri, according to a Saturday report by news website Newsmax.

The report suggested that the investigative body will lay out evidence showing that the murder was committed by Iran's Quds force and their allies, Hezbollah in Lebanon.

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The order to murder Hariri was transmitted to Hezbollah's military leader, Imad Mughniyeh, by Quds force chief Qassem Suleymani, sources told Newsmax.

According to the report, Mughniyeh put together the hit team that carried out the attack, with the help of his brother-in-law.

"The Iranians considered Hariri to be an agent of Saudi Arabia, and felt that killing him would pave the way for a Hezbollah takeover of Lebanon," the sources told Newsmax.

Iran was not the only country involved in the assassination plot, according to the sources that spoke to Newsmax. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and his brother-in-law, Assef Shawkat, the head of Syrian intelligence, also played key roles in the plan to murder Hariri, a source was reported as saying.

The UN tribunal intended to submit a draft indictment later in the day Saturday, according to report by Lebanese daily *An Nahar*.

According to the *An Nahar* report, the tribunal is set to hand in a draft indictment to Pre-Trial Judge Daniel Franssen in the afternoon on Saturday.

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