

# General Security Hits Back at Critics, Says Deported Syrians Committed Crimes in Lebanon

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The General Directorate of General Security hit back anew on Friday at those who criticized the deportation of 14 Syrians to their strife-torn country, reiterating that those deported were convicted of crimes committed in Lebanon.

“Any decision taken by the General Directorate of General Security stems from the laws and regulations that govern its work and is under the authority of the Lebanese judiciary,” the directorate said in a statement.

It stressed that it is “in constant coordination and communication with the international humanitarian organizations and the international Red Cross concerning the affairs of the foreign and Arab expatriates,” adding that “these organizations are being informed on a regular basis of the General Security’s measures and procedures.”

“The persons deported received judicial verdicts for crimes they committed on Lebanese territory, which the Syrian state has nothing to do with,” the directorate said, adding that “these verdicts were related to theft, forgery and rape attempts, not to anything else.”

“The General Directorate of General Security is not concerned with the remarks about the political and factional issues and other statements that are aimed at distorting the facts,” the directorate added.

It noted that it “refrained from deporting a Syrian held in Lebanon on charges of slaughtering 10 Syrians in his country because, during interrogation, he said he was a member of the opposition, prompting the directorate to freeze his deportation given that the element of politics entered his judicial case, despite the horridness of the crimes he had committed.”

The directorate also noted that it had refrained from deporting Syrians held in connection with the seized arms ship Lutfallah II, and other arms smugglers, after they said during interrogation that they belong to the Syrian opposition.

“This proves that the deportation measures taken by the directorate have nothing to do with politics or the factional or political affiliation of the person facing deportation,” it said.

The directorate called on everyone not to deal with laws and regulations with a political approach and not to turn them into a subject of controversy, stressing that its decisions are always in line with the applicable Lebanese laws.

Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblat accused on Thursday General Security chief Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim of utterly following the Syrian regime’s orders by deporting the 14 Syrians.

The cabinet should “take all the disciplinary measures against the Maj. Gen. and to sack him if necessary to halt this ongoing charade,” Jumblat said.

The Druze leader lashed out at Ibrahim, saying that the fate of these 14 men will be “their murder and liquidation before proving them guilty.”

“The accusations are fabricated and match with the Syrian regime’s traditional methods in eliminating anyone who opposes it,” Jumblat said.

He stressed his rejection of handing over any Syrian national who had fled into Lebanon for safe haven under any excuse and for any reason.

Former premier Fouad Saniora, head of al-Mustaqbal parliamentary bloc, on Friday called on EU and U.N. officials to condemn the Lebanese government “in the strongest terms” over the deportation, voicing concerns that the step might be repeated in the future and stressing that the government will be held accountable.

Following separate talks with EU Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst and U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly, Saniora said: “Amid these circumstances, the timing of the operation is very suspicious, and this could be a precedent made by the Lebanese government following a request or pressures from the Syrian government to hand over these people, and thus it might be the first move and other people might be handed over.”

The General Security deported 14 Syrians on Wednesday, drawing criticism from human rights activists.

A Human Rights Watch representative in Beirut said some of the deportees had expressed fears of persecution on their return.

"Fourteen men were deported to Syria today, despite the fact that four of them had asked not to be deported for fear of persecution if handed over to the Syrian authorities," the HRW representative told Agence France Presse.

One of them might be a political activist, the representative said, noting that the detainee had contacted HRW prior to being handed over to Syrian authorities at the border and expressed fear about what might happen to him.

But a General Security official told AFP that those deported were wanted for common law not political offences.

"These people were handed over to the Syrian authorities because they had problems with the judiciary and had committed crimes, and as far as we know they were not political activists," the official said.

"If they were, we would not have deported them."

HRW said those who had requested not to be deported should have been given leave to stay -- regardless of whether they were politically active or not.

"We think that if someone has indicated a fear of persecution, they should not be deported," a HRW researcher said.

Human rights watchdogs accuse the Syrian authorities of resorting to torture and other ill-treatment against

detainees.

In July, HRW charged that Syria was holding tens of thousands of detainees in a "torture archipelago" in which they were subjected to beatings, electric shocks and other abuse.

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