

# Jumblatt calls for firing security chief over expulsions

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Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblatt called on the Lebanese government to fire “if need be” the head of General Security over the deportation of 14 Syrian men to Damascus.

“We call on the Lebanese government and the relevant authorities to clarify all the circumstances relating to this issue and to launch a probe to determine responsibility and take disciplinary measures against the director general of General Security [Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim] — leading to his sacking, if need be, to stop this ongoing farce,” Jumblatt said in a statement.

Lebanon’s deportation of 14 Syrians on Wednesday also drew criticism from human rights activists.

A HRW representative told AFP Wednesday that the men were deported, despite the fact that four of them had asked not to be expelled for fear of persecution if handed over to Syrian authorities.

General Security said in a statement Thursday that the reason for the expulsions was not political, but due to the Syrians having committed violations and criminal acts during their stay in Lebanon.

“Therefore, the decision to deport the 14 Syrians was based on criminal acts and violations committed during their stay in Lebanon,” General Security added.

The security apparatus said it was within its power to deport the Syrian men.

“Any decision to deport Syrian, Arab or foreign nationals is a decision based on judicial and security cases in line with the standards set forth in regional and international agreements and treaties,” it said in the statement.

Exempted from this, the statement added, “are those where evidence shows their lives might be at stake in their country if they were deported.”

“This procedure has been used with Syrian nationals since the beginning of the painful events in their country,” General Security added.

But Jumblatt, a fierce critic of Syrian President Bashar Assad, accused Ibrahim of carrying out Damascus’ orders.

“Here is the director general of the General Security showing new evidence that he is utterly following the orders of the Syrian regime,” Jumblatt said.

“After his [Ibrahim’s] police adventures in the arrest of Shadi Mawlawi, which threatened to ignite Tripoli and the north and plunge the region into massive strife, he hands over 14 Syrian citizens who sought refuge in Lebanon to escape the brutality of the [Syrian] regime – including four political activists – under the pretext that they are wanted by the Syrian judiciary,” he added.

Jumblatt said he opposed the handover of any Syrian citizen who sought refuge in Lebanon “under any pretext or for any reason.”

## **Reaction to the deportations**

The Lebanese Forces expressed surprise over the deportation of the Syrians, saying the move showed “a complete bias” to the Assad regime.

On the other hand the Marada Movement which is headed by MP Suleiman Franjeh a staunch ally of the embattled Syrian president defended in a statement the deportations

“Has implementing the law become a crime in Lebanon? the statement said

The statement added that, “We wish the General Security had issued a decision to deport certain politicians who have not served anything but the interest of Lebanon’s enemies.”

U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Maura Connelly said her country was deeply disturbed by the deportation of the 14 Syrians, according to a statement released by the U.S. Embassy.

Connelly also “stressed the importance of protecting all Syrians, including dissenters and deserters, who have rejected violence, in keeping with Lebanon’s international humanitarian obligations,” the statement said.

Connelly’s comments came during a meeting with Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun, at his residence in Rabieh, north of Beirut, with whom she discussed the political and security situation in Lebanon and developments in Syria.

“She praised the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces for their efforts to maintain calm in Lebanon, and supported the government’s decision to increase the Army’s presence along the border,” the statement said.

EU Ambassador to Lebanon Angelina Eichorst expressed concern over the deportation of the Syrians. Asked to comment on the Syrians’ deportation, Eichorst told the state-run National News Agency: “Lebanon has endorsed the U.N. Agreement to fight torture and it must respect its international obligations. It must not deport people who might be exposed to torture or mistreatment.”

Ibrahim was appointed about a year ago as the director-general of the General Security Department. He is known to be very closely associated with Hezbollah.

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