

# Miqati Pays Lebanon's Share of STL Funds from 'Premiership's Budget'

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Premier Najib Miqati said he transferred Lebanon's share of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon funding on Wednesday morning.

While Miqati did not elaborate on the funding mechanism, a government official said the \$32 million sent to the Netherlands-based STL were drawn from the prime minister's office's budget and as such did not need cabinet approval.

"This was a decision taken by the premier after consultations with the president," the official, who requested anonymity, told Agence France Presse.

He said the funds were taken from the High Relief Commission, which is under the auspices of the prime minister's office.

For its part, MTV reported that "Miqati sought the help of the central bank governor (Riad Salameh), who quickly provided a loan to the High Relief Commission, which in turn dispensed it to Miqati in order to fund the STL."

"My insistence on funding the STL emanates from my keenness on protecting Lebanon, the people, the army and the resistance," Miqati said from the Grand Serail.

"I transferred Lebanon's share from the STL funding this morning," he stressed, saying that he believes in achieving the truth and justice in ex-Premier Rafik Hariri's Feb. 2005 assassination.

The payment of Lebanon's share also came out of his commitment to Lebanon's international obligations and his keenness to preserve the country's stability, he said.

"The funding is not a victory for one team over the other," Miqati said.

Miqati dubbed his move as a "national decision aimed at safeguarding Lebanon" and steering it clear of "tough experiences."

He was referring to Western warnings that the U.N. could impose sanctions on Lebanon if it fails to fund the STL.

Ministerial sources later told LBC on Wednesday that Miqati funded the tribunal through the premiership funds.

They explained that the prime minister took it upon himself to fund it after the deadline for the funding had ended.

They stressed that his action was coordinated by all sides, both directly and indirectly.

Meanwhile, Information Minister Walid al-Daouq confirmed to MTV that the funding took place from the premiership budget.

He hoped that Miqati would be honest with the public and explain how he invested those funds.

The prime minister also called for the speedy resumption of the National Dialogue at Baabda palace to find common ground among the Lebanese and “build bridges of mutual trust.”

He urged the cabinet ministers “to consider today a new start for the government work” and consolidate the performance of their ministries.

Miqati’s announcement came shortly after postponing a cabinet session aimed at discussing the funding of the STL, which is set to try Hariri’s suspected assassins.

Last week, the prime minister threatened to resign if the cabinet failed to approve the payment of 49 percent of Lebanon’s shares to the STL, around \$33 million.