

Lebanon: Flawed Investigations of Politically-Sensitive Murders

Donors Should Review Assistance to Internal Security Forces, Judiciary



Security forces inspect the scene where Lokman Slim, a political activist and researcher, was found shot dead in his car in Addoussieh in southern Lebanon on February 4, 2021. © 2021 AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari

(Beirut) – Multiple failures, gross negligence, and procedural violations in four politically sensitive murder investigations in the past two years reflect that generous donor funding and training to [Lebanon's](#) security forces and judiciary have not resulted in the rule of law, Human Rights Watch said today.

Human Rights Watch examined preliminary investigations by the Internal Security Forces' (ISF) Information Branch under public prosecution supervision into four murders for which there are allegations that politically connected or powerful groups were responsible. None identified any suspects or motives. Repeated failures to follow procedure and politically sensitive leads and to identify those responsible call into question the professionalization and impartiality of the law enforcement response in Lebanon, a risk to justice and accountability.

“The unsolved murders and shoddy homicide investigations are a reminder of the dangerous weakness of Lebanon’s rule of law in the face of unaccountable elites and armed groups,” said [Aya Majzoub](#), Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The security forces and judiciary, often generously funded and trained by donor countries, have the technical capacities to investigate murders, but have failed to identify any suspects in these sensitive cases or to follow obvious avenues of investigation.”

The cases Human Rights Watch examined are: [Lokman Slim](#), a longtime Hezbollah critic assassinated on February 3, 2021; [Joe Bejjani](#), a telecommunications worker and amateur military photographer shot on December 21, 2020; Colonel [Mounir bou Rjeily](#), a retired customs officer found dead in his home on December 2, 2020 who had been struck with a sharp object on his head; and [Antoine Dagher](#), the head of Byblos Bank’s ethics and anti-fraud department and former head of its compliance unit, who was stabbed to death on June 4, 2020.

Human Rights Watch interviewed the relatives of those killed, lawyers, journalists, criminal law experts, and sources close to the families in Lebanon, and reviewed available police files and footage from the crime scenes. Human Rights Watch also sent letters to the Internal Security Forces, Justice Ministry, and the Cassation Public Prosecutor with questions about their conduct during those investigations and the standard procedures for investigating murders. None have responded. Human Rights Watch also sent

letters to the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the European Union embassies in Lebanon inquiring about their assistance and training to Lebanon's security services related to criminal and forensic investigations. The European Union delegation, as well as the German and American embassies responded.

All four of the investigations were conducted by the Internal Security Forces' Information Branch, which, lawyers told Human Rights Watch, has the most technically advanced capabilities to investigate suspected crimes. Preliminary examinations are conducted under the supervision of the public prosecution, which, based on the evidence, files charges against suspects. The public prosecution then refers the case to an investigative judge, who can choose to expand the investigation before issuing an indictment and referring the case to trial.

Lawyers, family members, and sources close to the families described a lack of seriousness on the part of the police in dealing with the investigations and, crucially, failures to follow up on important avenues of investigation to determine plausible motives for their killing. Family members said the questions they were asked were superficial and limited to far-fetched potential personal motivations for the murders, prematurely discounting other possible scenarios, including that the murders could be linked to the victims' politically sensitive work. The families said that key people who may have sensitive and possibly important information about the murders or about motivation were not questioned.

Families and lawyers also expressed incredulity that the investigators were not able to identify any suspects, even though the murders were committed either in proximity to residential and densely inhabited areas, in broad daylight, or even, as in Bejjani's case, caught on camera.

Human Rights Watch documented several procedural violations by the Information Branch in the preliminary investigations.

|

In the Slim and Bejjani cases, videos and photographs that Human Rights Watch analyzed showed a failure to secure the crime scenes. Neither was initially cordoned off, allowing unidentified men in civilian clothing to touch the cars in which Slim and Bejjani's bodies were found, raising concerns about possible contamination. In a letter to the Internal Security Forces that received no response, Human Rights Watch requested information about their standards and protocols for securing crime scenes.

The victims' families and sources close to their families said the investigators reviewed the contents of some witnesses' phones without their consent and returned electronic equipment and surveillance cameras to families with their data wiped. Three lawyers interviewed said it is illegal under domestic law to delete personal data.

In the Bejjani and Dagher cases, the Information Branch officers seem to have given the families a fake name, "Jad Daou." However, when Dagher's family called the agency to speak with Jad Daou, the family said they were told "they are all Jad Daou." This name is likely an Arabized version of "John Doe." Lawyers said that it is also illegal under domestic law for security officers to provide fake names.

Dagher's family alleged that sensitive information that they shared with the investigators about Dagher's work at Byblos Bank, which may be relevant to the investigation, was omitted from the police report, which Human Rights Watch reviewed.

The lawyers and experts interviewed all said that the Lebanese security services, especially the Internal Security Forces' Information Branch, have the training and technical capabilities to investigate murders, and are often able to solve complex crimes.

[Lebanese](#) and [international](#) rights groups have for years documented political interference in the judiciary and criticized its lack of independence. Human Rights Watch has [documented](#) previous instances in which the judiciary

failed to adhere to the rule of law or to conduct independent and thorough investigations into allegations of serious abuses. In 2018, the United Nations Human Rights Committee [expressed concern](#) about the “political pressure reportedly exerted on the [Lebanese] judiciary, particularly in the appointment of key prosecutors and investigating magistrates, and about allegations that politicians use their influence to protect supporters from prosecution.”

The Lebanese authorities should ensure that their murder investigations are prompt, thorough, and impartial, and that they meet the highest evidentiary standards. The public prosecution and the Internal Security Forces should open investigations into the alleged misconduct and gross negligence of their members in handling these investigations, and ensure that those responsible are held to account. The investigative judges should expand these investigations to ensure that all leads are examined impartially. The authorities should also respect victims’ rights under international human rights standards to be informed of the results of investigations in progress. Parliament should urgently adopt a law guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary that meets international standards. Systems should be set up to allow members of the judiciary, prosecution, and police to safely raise complaints about political interference in criminal justice investigations and prosecutions.

The EU, German, and American embassies told Human Rights Watch that they have provided a range of training and assistance to the Internal Security Forces and the Justice Ministry over the last few years, including on the professionalization of the force, the effective use of forensic and biometric evidence, management of criminal evidence, surveillance against organized crime, and crime scene management.

“The international community has funneled millions of dollars to Lebanon’s security agencies over the years, but it has clearly not reversed the prevailing culture of impunity,” Majzoub said. “Donors should review the assistance that

they provide to ensure that they are not funding units engaged in the cover-up of sensitive murders and other human rights violations.”

Lokman Slim

Lokman Slim, 58, was a renowned activist, writer, publisher, and researcher, an advocate for a secular and democratic Lebanon, and a fierce critic of Hezbollah, a powerful Shiite political party and armed group.

Slim was found [dead](#) in his car between the towns of Addousiyyeh and Tefahta in southern Lebanon on the morning of February 4, 2021. A post-mortem examination found that he had been shot six times, five times in his head and once in his back, his family said.

Slim’s wife, Monika Borgmann, said that he left their home in Haret Hreik, south of Beirut, on February 3 at around noon and headed to his friend’s house in the town of Niha in southern Lebanon. Borgmann spoke with Slim at 4:30 p.m., but he did not respond to her call sometime after 8:30 p.m. Slim’s friends told Borgmann he had left their house at 8:00 p.m. When Slim was not home by 10:00 p.m., Borgmann and Slim’s sister alerted their friends, as well as the police, who said they could not investigate until someone has been missing for more than 24 hours.

One of Slim’s friends was able to locate his phone through a web application. It was about 400 meters from the house Slim had visited.

In the early hours of February 4, the media started broadcasting pictures of Slim’s car and body, Borgmann said. Videos and photographs showed that several security agencies, including the Internal Security Forces (ISF), municipal police, and military intelligence, arrived at the scene. “The photos that we saw showed that the scene of the crime was not protected,” said Moussa Khoury, the Slim family’s lawyer. “And when they removed the body and they removed the car, what was left was not protected. Once they removed the body, the scene was left empty ... which could have led to

evidence or information being lost.”

Photos and videos that Human Rights Watch reviewed showed [crowds of people and cars](#) around Slim’s car, many of whom appeared to be onlookers and passersby. The area around the car was not cordoned off, and the street was not blocked, allowing other cars to pass through. [Videos](#) of the scene show unidentified men in civilian clothing smoking cigarettes around the crime scene and touching the car without gloves. In one video, a man in civilian clothing drives Slim’s car forward slightly, also without wearing gloves, and another climbs onto the car. Shortly afterward, another man in civilian clothing opens the door, without gloves, and peers inside. A uniformed Security Force officer approaches him and seemingly asks him to stop.

Slim’s body was first taken to a hospital in Saida, where the first forensic examination was conducted, and then to the American University of Beirut hospital, where the family chose a doctor to perform another forensic examination.

Borgmann said that Slim was first wounded by a bullet in the back and then shot five times in the head. The examination revealed some bruising on his knees and his arms, suggesting that two strong people were holding him and that he was either kneeling or fell to his knees. Borgmann said that there were no signs of torture.

Despite his opposition to Hezbollah, Slim lived and worked in areas predominantly controlled by the group. Slim co-founded Dar Al-Jadeed, an independent publishing house, with his sister Rasha. He also founded, with Borgmann, a nongovernmental group, UMAM Documentation and Research, devoted to researching and raising awareness about Lebanon’s civil war to draw lessons to prevent future violence and impunity. In one of his [last media interviews](#), Slim had suggested that Hezbollah had brought the ammonium nitrate that caused the deadly Beirut Port blast in August 2020 to Lebanon for the Syrian government to use, an allegation Hezbollah [denies](#).

As news of Slim's death broke, the son of Hezbollah's leader [tweeted](#) that "losing some people is actually a win and an unexpected kindness #noregrets." He has since deleted the tweet and said that it was unrelated to Slim's murder.

Slim and Borgmann regularly received threats. In October 2018, American officials [warned](#) Slim that he was in danger and offered him a green card, but he refused, Borgmann said. However, Borgmann said that an incident in December 2019 "crossed the line." People posted flyers containing threats on the wall and entrances to their home and gathered in their garden chanting threats and slurs. On December 13, 2019, Slim published a [statement](#) saying that Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, and Nabih Berri, the leader of the Shiite Amal Movement and the speaker of Parliament, would be responsible if he or his family were harmed. Slim said his safety and his family's were the responsibility of the Lebanese security forces and the army.

Slim's case was referred to the public prosecutor in South Lebanon.

Khoury said that at the beginning, Slim's case didn't get the seriousness it deserved. He said that for a week after the assassination, the investigation was still being conducted by relatively low-level officers at the police stations in Srifa and Zefta. After a week, and only upon the family's request, the case was transferred to the Information Branch.

The ISF's Information Branch interviewed Slim's friends and family members. A source told Human Rights Watch that at least two witnesses were required to leave their phones at the front desk and were then asked to give their passwords as a condition for receiving their phones back. During their questioning, the ISF officers referred to messages, locations, and other data, the source said. After the questioning was over, the source said the witnesses were asked to sign a document stating that they allow the ISF to access their personal data, even though the ISF had already done so. When the phones were returned, the source said, some data was missing and the phones didn't work well.

Borgmann said the Information Branch questioned her once, several weeks after the murder. She said the questions primarily revolved around whether anyone may have wanted to kill Slim due to a personal dispute and whether he had committed suicide. Borgmann said nobody asked her about the threats he had received or the letter he wrote in 2019 preemptively holding Berri and Nasrallah responsible if anything happened to him. “This should have been questioned,” she said. “What threats has Lokman been subjected to, why he wrote that letter, and what happened on those days ... those questions would have made sense, but they didn’t ask any of this.”

The public prosecutor’s investigation was closed in mid-May 2021, but no one was charged or arrested for Slim’s murder. Slim’s wife and lawyer both expressed incredulity at the lack of suspects. The case was then referred to the investigative judge in Beirut.

The German ambassador to Lebanon, Andreas Kindl, told Human Rights Watch that in the aftermath of Slim’s killing, he offered Germany’s full support to President Michel Aoun and to the director-general of the ISF, Major General Imad Othman.

Joe Bejjani

Joe Bejjani, 36, was a telecommunications worker and an amateur military photographer. Bejjani was [shot](#) around 7 a.m. on December 21, 2020, just outside his house in the village of Kahaleh in Aley, while he was in his car waiting for his two daughters and sister.

[Surveillance footage](#) from Bejjani’s house, reviewed by Human Rights Watch, showed him getting into the driver’s seat and closing his door. Two men then jogged down from a nearby stairwell. One of the men, wearing a hat and only a medical mask to hide his face, opened the car door and shot Bejjani, apparently using a [silencer](#). The other man, wearing a helmet and backpack and carrying what looked like a toolbox, leaned into the car and apparently took Bejjani’s phone. The two men then ran down a steep dirt path and

escaped on a motorcycle toward the town of Bsous.

The bushes and greenery on that steep dirt path [were burned](#) twice before Bejjani's murder, in September and November, making the house more visible and allowing the assailants to escape down it more easily, a source said and video footage confirmed.

Youssef Lahoud, the lawyer for Bejjani's family, [said that](#) Bejjani's murder "indicated a very high level of professionalism and also indicated that an organized group or entity committed this crime." The mayor of Kahaleh, Jean Bejjani, similarly [remarked](#) that "this crime is very well planned."

A source at the scene said that the Lebanese Red Cross moved Bejjani's body to the hospital between 7:30 and 7:45 a.m., but that the security forces did not arrive at the crime scene until about 9:30, when members of various agencies began arguing among themselves. The source said that the security forces did not seal off the crime scene, and that the media and passersby were taking photographs of Bejjani's car, touching it, and opening the car door to look inside. The security forces only cordoned off the crime scene much later that evening, the source said.

Footage Human Rights Watch reviewed seems to confirm the account. In [one video](#) taken that day, an officer wearing an ISF uniform opens the front door of the car and a man in civilian clothing standing next to him opens the rear door, both without gloves.

The source said that the Information Branch searched the house thoroughly, "turning it upside down, as if Joe was the criminal, not the victim." The source said that the ISF took all the electronics, including laptops, cameras, and hard disks, from the house, including those belonging to his wife. They also took all the surveillance cameras around the town that may have captured the assailants' movements. However, the source said that the family was not able to see any of the footage, including from their own personal security cameras. They added that when the agency returned the cameras two

weeks later, they had wiped all the data. The source also said that the agency had also wiped all the data from the electronics owned by Bejjani's wife.

The source said that the Information Branch found Bejjani's phone at around 11 a.m. on the steep road on which the assassins had presumably escaped. Bejjani's wife Nayla [told the media](#) that while her husband's phone was with the security forces on the day of the murder, his WhatsApp account appeared to be "online" and actively viewing his contacts' statuses. Despite this, she said, the investigators asked her to unlock her husband's phone using her fingerprint at around 11 p.m. that night.

The ISF first interviewed her at the hospital where Bejjani's body was taken on the morning of her husband's murder. She [said](#) to the media that the officer told her that there are only three theories for such murders, and never a fourth: gambling, drugs, or women. When she called the agency to complain about him, the person she reached told her "We're sorry, he is an idiot."

The Information Branch summoned her two days after the murder. The source said that the officers introduced themselves to the family with fake names, such as "Jad Daou."

The source said that the questions that asked were very "superficial" and revolved almost exclusively around whether there were personal motivations for the crime, including whether he had marital problems.

The public prosecution's investigation was closed six months after Bejjani's murder, without filing any charges and was referred to an investigative judge. A source who read the investigation file said there was "no evidence of a thorough investigation." The DNA tests on the car and Bejjani's phone, as well as the data from the electronics and cameras, apparently did not lead to any findings.

The source said that in late 2021, an officer from the Security Force Cybercrimes Bureau called Bejjani's wife and asked her for her husband's

electronics, which she said were with the Information Branch.

The mayor of Kahaleh, Jean Bejjani, [said](#), “We are very sorry ... that today, there is nothing new at all. They spoke about expanding the investigation. I don’t know if that would lead to any result, given that when the armed criminals appeared on camera, that didn’t lead to identifying them. I don’t know, it’s as if this crime should remain mysterious.”

A source close to the family said that Bejjani’s wife met with a minister in March 2021, where he allegedly told her “I advise you not to go to the media. Why should your daughters lose their mother? We can’t protect you, we live on a farm,” – a Lebanese expression denoting that we live in a lawless place.

The possible motivations for Bejjani’s murder are still unclear. Bejjani’s work at the telecommunications company was in commercial support, and he did not have access to sensitive communications data, a source close to his family said. However, Bejjani also [described himself](#) as an amateur military photographer, and he sometimes freelanced for the Lebanese Army. Although some media [claimed](#) that Bejjani was one of the first photographers to arrive to Beirut’s port after the explosion on August 4, 2020, his family has credibly denied such reports.

Bejjani’s portfolio included images of military aircraft, tanks, and soldiers. A source close to his family said that Bejjani had taken photographs in 2017 during a ceremony at Beirut’s port where the US Embassy was giving military equipment to Lebanon’s army. Hangar 12, where the ammonium nitrate that exploded on August 4, 2020, was stored, appeared in his photos. Bejjani’s family says they believe his murder is most likely linked to the work that he did as a military photographer and to the photos he took of Beirut’s port.

On August 14, 2020, Bejjani posted one of those photos on [his Twitter page](#), and wrote:

#throwback @usembassybeirut delivering #M2Bradley to the

#LebaneseArmy in 2017 at the #BeirutPort

In the background we can see the grain silos and the “Warehouse number 12” where the #BeirutExplosion happened 10 days ago

<http://joebejjany.com> @cnni @BBCWorld #beirut #lebanon

On August 18, Bejjani [tweeted](#) “the further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it.” On August 31, Bejjani [tweeted](#) that “after 15 years of photography, with a focus on military photograph in Lebanon and abroad, and especially to show the image of progress, strength, and civility of the Lebanese army abroad, I decided today to quit military photography in Lebanon. One needs to beg them to photograph them, and when he goes to photograph, he feels like a terrorist. Let us photograph those who are appreciative.”

Mounir bou Rjeily

Colonel Mounir bou Rjeily, 53, was a retired customs anti-smuggling officer who was found dead in his home in Qartaba on the morning of December 2, 2020, after being struck on his head, according to media reports and a source close to the family. The source said that bou Rjeily had gone the night before to the village of Qartaba to check on his house, which was still under construction. When his wife could not reach him in the morning, she drove to the house and found his body in bed, the source said.

She immediately called the Red Cross and the security agencies. Within half an hour, members of the army and the ISF arrived at the scene. The source said that the murder investigation was conducted by the Information Branch, which took fingerprints and DNA samples from the family members. The source said that the crime scene was preserved, and the house remained sealed for four to five months after the crime.

However, the public prosecutor’s investigation did not lead to any suspects being identified or charged, and the file was referred to an investigative judge a source close to the family said.

Fares Souaid, a former parliament member from Qartaba, [remarked](#) that “If the state wanted to know what happened to him, it could have done so in two to three days. There are security cameras in the town, as well as the municipal police and a company of the ISF, and if it doesn’t announce who the killer is, it means it wants to hide him.”

The motivations for bou Rjeily’s killing are still unclear. The murderers stole a TV from the house, but a source close to the family as well as a [security source](#) were skeptical that theft was the primary motivation. The source said that the home was a simple and basic village house with little to steal.

In his role as a customs officer, bou Rjeily led a division that combats overland smuggling, and worked at the airport, and headed a division of the Higher Customs Council, [according to a CV](#) that his lawyer shared with Reuters.

Bou Rjeily was [friends](#) with Colonel Joseph Skaf, the first customs officer to warn in February 2014 about the dangerous and explosive ammonium nitrate that had arrived to Beirut’s port and subsequently led to the Beirut blast. Skaf died in March 2017 under [suspicious circumstances](#), leading some to believe he was assassinated. Although the official medical report found that Skaf died in an accidental fall, a second report, commissioned by his family, [concluded](#) that Skaf had been attacked.

Antoine Dagher

Antoine Dagher, 62, was the head of Byblos Bank’s group ethics and fraud risk management department and formerly head of the bank’s compliance unit. Dagher left his house around 6:45 a.m. on June 4, 2020. At around 9:30 a.m., having received a call from Dagher’s office informing her that he did not come to work, his wife found his body slumped next to his car in the garage near their home where he parked his car. Dagher had been stabbed five times, four times in his abdomen and once on the right side of his neck, according to a police report that Human Rights Watch reviewed.

After a call from Dagher's family, the ISF arrived at the scene. At 12:10 p.m., the officers called the Cassation attorney general in Mount Lebanon, informing her of the crime, and she ordered an investigation. According to the police report, a forensic examination was conducted on Dagher's body, and a technical team found blood marks on the back left door and the front left seat of his car. They took fingerprints from the door and Dagher's body, and took cotton swabs from under his fingernails and from the car, the keys, and the bloodstains. They found no sign that the contents of the car had been tampered with.

The ISF questioned Dagher's wife and a neighbor who saw him enter the garage that morning. They also noted that they found two cameras in the building facing the one where the crime happened, and the recordings were taken by the Information Branch. The report stated that there were no other cameras in the area or in the garage. At 5:30 p.m., the police officers informed the prosecutor of their findings, and she ordered them to refer them to the ISF's Information Branch. "This was good, because it meant that they were taking it seriously," Dagher's family said.

The police report said that the Information Branch interviewed several members of Dagher's family, as well as his neighbors and some of his bank colleagues. During her questioning, Dagher's sister told the investigators that a month before her brother was killed, he had told her that he was working on a big fraud case. The investigators asked the head of the legal department at Byblos Bank about this fraud case, but he denied that there was such a case.

The Information Branch also conducted a technical analysis of Dagher's electronic devices and those of the doormen who worked in his building. The report did not describe what they found on the devices but concluded that they did not find anything suspicious. The report did not indicate that the communications data on Dagher's mobile phone had been analyzed. The report noted that the Information Branch reviewed the communications data of the landline in Dagher's office but also found nothing suspicious. The

investigators returned some electronic devices to Dagher's daughter on June 12 and the rest to the Dagher family lawyer on August 14.

On August 19, the police report noted that the prosecutor was satisfied with the investigation, even though it identified no motives or suspects.

Dagher's family said they had several concerns regarding the investigation. Very soon after the police arrived at the scene of the crime, photos of Dagher's body appeared in the media. "It was either the police or the people who killed him, no one else went in," one of his children said. Several family members found out about his murder from the media.

Dagher's family also said that the investigators had not questioned several senior bank employees. "They only asked for the head of the bank's legal department, whose business is to protect the company, and they didn't even press him," one of Dagher's children told Human Rights Watch. "They didn't try to speak with his boss, or the people he worked with."

Dagher's children said they were concerned that the investigators did not try to find out more about the fraud case his sister mentioned, and accepted the bank's claim that there was no case. The police report that Human Rights Watch reviewed seemed to corroborate their account. They also said that potentially relevant and important information that they gave to the investigators about their father's work was not reflected in the police report.

Although the ISF said that there were no cameras in the vicinity except the cameras on the building opposite the garage where Dagher was murdered, Dagher's family disputed this. The Dagher house is in Hazmieh, an area with heavy security due to the presence of several military posts, as well as its proximity to the presidential palace. When Dagher's family challenged the ISF's account, they said, they got different responses from various officers.

"First, they said the cameras were not working, then they said the cameras were turned the other way," one of his children said. "Everyone gave a

different version. And then they said yes there are cameras, but they didn't lead them anywhere." Dagher's children said that the municipality told them that they no longer have the camera footage.

They also said they never got back their father's Apple watch, which they said he was wearing the day of his murder.

As in the Bejjani case, the Information Branch officers introduced themselves to Dagher's family with apparently fake names. Dagher's children said that the name they were given for one of the officers was "Jad Daou." When they called the ISF to speak with Jad Daou, they were reportedly told "they are all Jad Daou."

Dagher's family said that they visited the president in July 2020 regarding the lack of progress in their father's case. They said the president told them that it seemed that he knew too much.

Neither the police report nor Dagher's family have clear answers regarding the motivation behind Dagher's murder. However, his family said that it is most likely connected to his work. Although his most recent position in Byblos bank's ethics and fraud risk management department was not very sensitive, his family said, he previously headed the bank's compliance unit for a decade.

Compliance officers ensure that banks abide by local and international rules on money laundering and terror financing. A former regulator [told the Financial Times](#), "In Lebanon, compliance is a risky business, if you do it properly ... You have Hezbollah, you have [politicians and their families], and you have corrupt banks' management."

The Lebanese banking sector faced a crisis after a US enacted a law in 2015 targeting Hezbollah finances, threatening to bar from the US financial market any bank that knowingly engages with Hezbollah. In June 2016, a [bomb attack](#) targeted a major Lebanese bank, Blom Bank, following the closure of

accounts considered to be linked to Hezbollah.

Dagher's family does not know why Dagher was removed from his position as a compliance officer in 2013. One of his children said that when they asked the reason, he would often reply, "You will find out at some point" and that "it was not a decision by the bank, but a decision beyond the bank." Further, the family said that although Dagher was not officially the compliance officer at Byblos Bank after 2013, emails and conversations that they saw on his phone indicated that he was still performing those functions.