



PERSPECTIVES

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Second Explosion Expected in Lebanon Later This Month

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Even as Lebanon tries to recover from the terrible wounds inflicted by the devastating explosion that took place at the port of Beirut on August 4, another explosion could hit the country on the 18th of this month: the Hague's verdict on the alleged perpetrators of the assassination of Lebanese PM Rafic Hariri.

The explosion expected to occur in Lebanon on August 18 will not shatter glass and destroy buildings. It will be a legal and political explosion that could ignite a fire within the Lebanese population (always tense to begin with, and especially now).

This explosion will be the long-awaited decision of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, which is supposed to pass judgment on the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafic Hariri (father of Saad Hariri, who served as PM until January of this year). That assassination tore into the Lebanese consciousness on February 14, 2005 in Beirut, not far from the port that was [devastated](#) last week.

The court's decision was supposed to have been published last Friday, but the preoccupation with the explosion and the emergency situation in which Lebanon finds itself led to a postponement of the verdict. The trial has lasted 11 years.

On Friday, the court administration issued a [notice](#) postponing the verdict:

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) postponed the pronouncement of the Judgment in the Ayyash et al. case, scheduled for Friday 7 August 2020. This was out of respect for the countless victims of the devastating explosion that shook Beirut on 4 August, and the three-day period of public mourning in Lebanon. The Trial Chamber will deliver the judgment on Tuesday 18 August 2020 at 11:00 AM (CET).

The Court's decision will apply to five people, one of whom—Mustafa Badr ad-Din, a senior Hezbollah figure—was killed four years ago.

According to Israel, Hezbollah was definitely behind Hariri's death. The STL [elaborates](#):

The four accused facing trial for this attack at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) are Salim Jamil Ayyash, Hassan Habib Merhi, Hussein Hassan Oneissi and Assad Hassan Sabra. They are charged with conspiracy to commit a terrorist act, intentional homicide, attempted intentional homicide, and other related charges and are tried in absentia.

Salim Jamil Ayash was head of the squad that planned and carried out the assassination. The other defendants were his aides. According to the Lebanese media, the four defendants are members of Hezbollah, are in hiding, and are receiving protection from the organization.

Hezbollah refuses to extradite them or to prosecute them in Lebanon.

It is not clear what the verdict will be. Will the court accuse Hezbollah of killing Hariri, or will they only blame the defendants? Will they also blame the Assad regime for conspiring in and carrying out the crime?

And if there is indeed a verdict, will Lebanon—which is controlled by Hezbollah—hand over the defendants?

As we await the court's decision, voices in Lebanon are demanding an international investigation into the giant explosion that just took place at the port. No Lebanese citizen believes the state has the authority or capacity to conduct a professional investigation without pressure and interference from Hezbollah.

This is an edited version of an [article](#) that appeared in Israel Today on August 10, 2020.

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