

A journey to find the truth about the Beirut port explosion ... an international or local investigation?

Two weeks after the explosion of the Beirut port and the disappearance of the horror of the disaster, the division of the Lebanese society returned between demands for an international investigation of the explosion and a refusal to internationalize the case, and this is accompanied by allegations and arrests pending the case.



Two weeks have passed since the Beirut port exploded, without it being clear what judicial path the investigations will take, and local and foreign calls to speed up their completion with accuracy and transparency have accompanied with a Lebanese division between demands for an international investigation and rejecting internationalization, which considers precedents with international investigations not promising.

In the latest data of the investigations conducted by the local judicial security services, the Public Prosecutor, Judge Ghassan Oweidat, charged 25 administrative, customs and security personnel, among them 19 people arrested in the case of the Beirut Port explosion.

After Judge Fadi Sawan appointed a judicial investigator in the port explosion case, the first problems arose in front of him, which was the postponement of the scheduled session to hear successive chiefs and ministers of works, finance and justice since 2013 under the pretext of their

"immunity", and that whoever is being held is the "Supreme Council for the Trial of Presidents and Ministers." If they were suspects.

However, what does the Lebanese constitution say about this council?

Lawyer Paul Morcos, a constitutional expert, explains to Al-Jazeera Net, the nature of the work of the "Supreme Council of Presidents and Ministers," and considers that it "rarely works or rather never works." Morcos indicated that the task of this council revolves around the prosecution and trial of presidents and ministers, except for the president of the republic, for various crimes, or their breach of office, but "in cases of crimes, negligence and corruption, the ordinary judiciary, including the Judicial Council, is the competent."

Morcos describes this council as a "hybrid", because it brings together the legislative and judicial powers, and "requires that the accusation be referred to it by the House of Representatives with a two-thirds majority in the House, and this is difficult to achieve, and therefore the accusation is political in its content, not judicial."

He added, "The parliament usually appoints members of the Supreme Council, provided that its governing body consists of 7 deputies and 8 judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council at the request of the House of Representatives, which made its performance a dead letter."

Despite France and Britain sending teams of their investigators to Beirut, and the US State Department's Undersecretary David Hale's announcement that a team from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is also participating in the investigations, the Lebanese are still confused about whether or not the investigation should be internationalized, and some insist that international teams participate in the investigation does not. It means internationalizing it, but using their expertise and experts.

The lecturer at the American University of Beirut, Dr. Makram Rabah, considers that the investigations are not on the right track, based on the principle that the security services themselves are responsible for "ignoring the presence of these materials in the port and is charged with conducting investigations, which deprives them of the objectivity and legal legitimacy."

Rabah believes that the demand for an international-international investigation is not out of the ordinary, "especially as it affected victims of multiple nationalities, and whenever the investigation parties multiplied, the attempts to conceal the facts became complicated." He added, "The Lebanese judiciary has yet to prosecute anyone for financial crimes and administrative corruption."

He said that what is required is "to protect the crime scene first, and to allow an international investigation committee, with Lebanese participation, to lay its hand on the investigation, in addition to isolating and dismissing those concerned from security and oversight agencies that are complicit in the file, parallel to the formation of a neutral transitional government, because the Lebanese will not be satisfied with any narrative about the crime presented by the judiciary." this country".

Rabah, who is convinced that Hezbollah was condoning the port of Beirut, is opposed by writer and political analyst Faisal Abdel Sater (who is close to Hezbollah and who is among the first to reject the international investigation), and puts the accusation within the framework of the campaign of political disinformation that Hezbollah faces, and "if it was controlling The port and the country as his opponents accuse him, when he accepted to bring down his government. "

Abdel Sater rejects the principle of international investigation, and considers that every Lebanese should reject it, "because it violates the sovereignty of Lebanon and places its judiciary under the authority of the international judiciary, at a time when the Lebanese judiciary must have the final say in the case, with the help of international experience within a certain scope."

He told Al-Jazeera Net that "the issue of the port explosion took a political turn, and Lebanon became a theater for armies and foreign presence, under the heading of humanitarian aid and experiences in the subject of the investigation."

Abdel Sater refused to question the Lebanese judiciary, "because the issue is not about the identity of the judiciary, but rather about the seriousness and integrity of the judge who manages the file." "We do not trust the international investigation committees, which did not produce justice in various cases such as international criminal crimes, the courts against Israel, and against Saudi Arabia in Yemen, and we are awaiting the initial narration of the Lebanese judiciary in the case of the explosion, to build on what is required of it."

In a related context, Raif Khoury, professor of law and international relations, believes that so far there is no foreign interference in the investigations, but rather the presence of foreign investigators for technical assistance in specific aspects at the request of Lebanon.

He told Al-Jazeera Net that "the local investigation will remain short of its full duties if it does not expand to before the second explosion, that is, to the nature of the first explosion, in addition to answering questions that start from Georgia to Mozambique before the nitrate shipment reaches Beirut port, and all the details." The other is also related to the owner of the goods who did not claim them despite the shipping documents that indicate bank credit.

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