

Suspension of the investigation into the Beirut port explosion again, and the judge issues an arrest warrant

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The investigation faces hurdles since the judicial investigator sought to interrogate some of Lebanon's most powerful political figures on suspicion that they knew about the chemicals but did nothing to avert the disaster.

Bitar is under tremendous pressure from groups accusing his investigation of political bias and launching a smear campaign against him.

The explosion of August 4, 2020, which was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history, killed more than 200 people and destroyed large swathes of the capital, Beirut.

As part of the investigation, senior political officials refused to accept Bitar's calls for questioning and it is now unlikely that any arrest warrants will be executed.

Bitar wants to interrogate them on criminal charges of negligence because they held positions where they were in a position to learn the status of unsafely stored ammonium nitrate in the port for years.

An official source said that the meeting of the Supreme Defense Council headed by President Michel Aoun on Tuesday did not grant permission to prosecute Major General Tony Saliba, Director General of State Security.

The investigation was suspended in late September after a complaint questioning Bitar's impartiality. The court dismissed the complaint on procedural grounds, allowing Bitar to continue his work.

Bitar has been leading the investigation since Judge Fadi Sawan was removed from the case in February following a similar complaint by politicians who are now challenging Bitar's impartiality.

Lawyer Paul Morcos, a professor of international law, said, "For the first time, the judiciary proves that it is a judiciary that wants to work, but it is under political pressure and suffers from political interference."

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