

Advocacy dossier

Lokman Slim

لقمان سليم

Killed Lebanon

Lokman Slim, a Lebanese publisher, researcher and co-founder of the UMAM Documentation and Research archive, was found shot dead in his car in south Lebanon on 4 February 2021. No one has been charged; the investigation was closed in early 2025 without naming suspects and ordered reopened by the Court of Cassation in March 2025.

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The case at a glance

Lokman Slim, a Lebanese publisher, researcher and co-founder of the UMAM Documentation and Research archive, was found shot dead in his car in south Lebanon on 4 February 2021. No one has been charged; the investigation was closed in early 2025 without naming suspects and ordered reopened by the Court of Cassation in March 2025.

Status **Killed**	Country **Lebanon**

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Order a full, independent, and impartial investigation into the killing of Lokman Slim, with timely public reporting on findings.

02 Identify and prosecute those responsible, both the direct perpetrators and any state officials who ordered, enabled, or covered up the killing.

03 Provide effective reparation to the family of Lokman Slim.

04 Take immediate steps to protect other defenders working in the same field from similar attacks.

02

How the case unfolded

December 2019

Threats and intimidation

Threatened at his home in Haret Hreik

His family says he was threatened several times by supporters of Hezbollah, most notably in December 2019. In late 2019 he published an open letter saying that Hezbollah and the Amal Movement should be held responsible if he were harmed.

4 February 2021

Killing

Found shot dead in his car in south Lebanon

He went missing on the evening of 3 February 2021 while driving back to Beirut from a visit in the south, and his family reported him missing. On 4 February 2021 he was found dead in his car in south Lebanon with six bullet wounds, five to the head and one to the back. Human Rights Watch later reported that the area around the car was not properly cordoned off and that people in civilian clothes touched, entered and on one occasion drove the vehicle.

3 February 2022

Other act

Human Rights Watch documents serious flaws in the investigation

Human Rights Watch reported significant procedural violations and gross negligence in the investigation into his killing and into other politically sensitive killings in Lebanon.

February 2023

Other act

Reporters Without Borders calls for an international investigation

Two years after the killing, Reporters Without Borders said the Lebanese judicial system was paralysed by political interference and called for an impartial international investigation. The case was then before Beirut investigating judge Charbel Abou Samra, with a hearing set for 7 February 2023.

December 2023

Other act

Case passes to a new investigating judge

Investigating judge Charbel Abi Samra retired in November 2023; according to the family he had questioned only three witnesses in more than two years. In December 2023 Beirut investigating judge Bilal Halawi took over the case.

3 February 2024

Other act

Human Rights Watch: still no justice three years on

Human Rights Watch said the assailants remained unidentified and urged the prosecutorial and investigative authorities to follow up on evidence collected by intelligence and other agencies and to question witnesses present at or near the scene.

February 2025

Case closed or dropped

Investigating judge closes the case without naming suspects

Around the fourth anniversary of the killing, Judge Bilal Halawi issued an indictment decision that closed the case without identifying any suspect, citing a lack of data from the security services. A judicial official said the case could be reopened if new information emerged. His widow, Monika Borgmann, said justice had not been done and that the judge had suspended the probe after learning of the family's two requests to remove him.

March 2025

Appeal outcome

Court of Cassation orders the case moved to a new judge

Acting on an appeal filed by the family's lawyers in November 2024, a Court of Cassation panel presided over by Judge Randa Kfoury reversed the closure and ordered the case transferred to a new investigating judge, shortly before Judge Kfoury retired on 27 March 2025.

April 2025

Investigation opened

Investigation set to reopen

Lebanese media reported that the investigation would reopen after the Court of Cassation tasked the acting president of the Beirut Court of Appeal, Judge Habib Rizkallah, with appointing a new investigating judge. No one has been charged with the killing.

03

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: more than five years after Lokman Slim was killed, no one has been identified or charged. The investigation, closed by an investigating judge in early 2025, was ordered reopened by the Court of Cassation in March 2025; we could not confirm any later judicial step from a trusted source.

Background and Work

Lokman Slim was a Lebanese publisher, researcher, filmmaker and writer from a Shiite family in Haret Hreik, in the southern suburbs of Beirut. He was a secular activist and a long-standing critic of Hezbollah. With his wife, the German filmmaker Monika Borgmann, he co-founded UMAM Documentation and Research, an archive in Haret Hreik that collects material on Lebanon's civil war and its legacy of violence and disappearances. He also ran the publishing house Dar al-Jadeed and worked on films and civic projects. His sister, the publisher Rasha al-Ameer, and his mother, the novelist Salma Merchak, survived him.

According to his family, he was threatened several times by Hezbollah supporters, most notably in December 2019. In late 2019 he published an open letter saying that Hezbollah and its ally the Amal Movement should be held responsible if he were harmed. Human Rights Watch reported that, months before his death, threats were posted on the walls of his home.

The Killing

On the evening of 3 February 2021, Lokman Slim was driving back to Beirut alone after a visit in the south, and his family lost contact with him and reported him missing. On 4 February 2021 he was found dead in a rented car in south Lebanon, between Addoussieh and Tafahta, near Saida. Human Rights Watch reported six bullet wounds, five to the head and one to the back. He was 58 years old. Hezbollah denied any involvement.

Human Rights Watch later documented that the crime scene was not properly secured: the area around the car was not cordoned off, and people in civilian clothes touched and entered the vehicle and on one occasion drove it.

Legal Proceedings

The investigation was first handled by judicial authorities in the south and later moved to Beirut for security reasons. Reporters Without Borders said the initial police investigation ended in 2021 without naming any suspect. In March 2021 a Lebanese judicial source told The National that 20 people had been summoned for questioning but that no arrest warrant had been issued.

The case was then handled by Beirut investigating judge Charbel Abou Samra (also written Abi Samra). According to the family, he questioned only three witnesses in more than two years and several people summoned did not appear. He retired in November 2023, and in December 2023 investigating judge Bilal Halawi took over the case. In February 2022 Human Rights Watch had reported significant procedural violations and gross negligence in this investigation and in those into other politically sensitive killings in Lebanon.

In November 2024 the family's lawyers filed an

appeal. Around the fourth anniversary of the killing, in early 2025, Judge Halawi issued an indictment decision that closed the case without identifying any suspect and recorded the perpetrators as unknown, citing a lack of data from the security services. The family had filed two requests to remove him from the case. Monika Borgmann told AFP that justice had not been done and that the judge was very close to Hezbollah, and that he suspended the probe after learning of the requests.

In March 2025 a Court of Cassation panel presided over by Judge Randa Kfoury reversed the closure and ordered the case transferred to a new investigating judge. In April 2025 the Court tasked the acting president of the Beirut Court of Appeal, Judge Habib Rizkallah, with appointing the new magistrate, and the investigation was reported to be reopening. No one has been charged with the killing.

International Response

In March 2021 three United Nations special rapporteurs, Agnes Callamard, Diego Garcia-Sayan and Irene Khan, called on Lebanon to ensure a credible and effective investigation, noting the lack of meaningful results in the six weeks after his death and describing the area where his body was found as under the de facto control of Hezbollah. They recommended an independent commission to examine the failure of past investigations into killings of activists, human rights defenders and politicians. Monika Borgmann described the statement as a first step.

Reporters Without Borders called in February 2023 for an impartial international investigation, saying the Lebanese judicial system was paralysed by political interference. Human Rights Watch said on 3 February 2024 that there was still no justice for his family and urged the authorities to follow up on evidence held by intelligence and other agencies and to question witnesses at or near the scene. Human rights groups have linked the case to a wider pattern of impunity in Lebanon, including the lack of accountability for the Beirut port explosion of August 2020.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/lokman-slim/

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