



Parents and relatives of people kidnapped during the war demonstrate at Barbir against ineffectual attempts by politi-

cians to secure the release of those abducted. The protesters later burnt tires at the crossing point.

Daily Star photo by Ahmed Azakir

Agreement for kidnap victims to be released this weekend

By Dinah Kassir
Staff Reporter

Kidnap victims held by the three main militia groups in East and West Beirut are to be freed Saturday or Sunday under an agreement reached Friday by militia representatives, government ministers and relatives of the victims.

The agreement was reached as angry relatives of the victims burned tires and set up barricades at the Barbir entrance to the Museum crossing, closing the only road between the two halves of the capital for more than three hours.

Although the hour agreed by the militias for the simultaneous release of their prisoners was not announced a West Beirut militia source said Friday night the prisoners would be set free "within 24 hours."

The midday meeting, at the headquarters of the Four-Party Security Committee near the race track, was attended by representatives of the committee, acting Interior Minister Joseph Skaff, Education Minister Salim Hoss and a two-member delegation representing the relatives of the victims.

Skaff said late Friday night that lists of all the kidnapped

people had been completed and that all those people named in the lists will be released.

But he said that prisoners held by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party militia were not included in the agreement.

"The SSNP has refused to take part in the release because they believe they are not represented in the Four-Party Security Committee," he said.

Skaff refused to give the number of people detained by the SSNP. He said Hoss had been appointed to mediate between the Lebanese Forces and the SSNP to reach an agreement.

A delegation of eight women, four from East Beirut and four from West Beirut, originally attempted to meet with the committee. The committee groups Representatives from the Amal Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Lebanese Forces and the Lebanese Army, and meets around the clock at Beirut's race course, beside the Museum crossing.

As the women arrived, one of them, who asked not to be identified, fainted. "She was taken to Barbir hospital," said Wadad Halwani, 32, whose husband is among the kidnapped, said Friday.

Two women were eventually admitted to the conference room.

"We were told that the kidnapped will be released very soon. All of those on the lists compiled by the militias will be released without exception," Halwani said.

"We were not told of the exact date of the release however," she added. "They are keeping the secret to avoid any last minute complications."

A statement issued by the committee after the meeting said the release operation

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Gold drops by \$23 to two-year low as dollar continues strong

Combined Reports

Nerves finally broke Friday over the continued world-wide strength of the U.S. dollar as gold plunged \$23 an ounce on the London bullion market to close at \$341.50, hitting its lowest level in Europe for nearly two years.

Gold mining stocks were dragged down in its wake with falls up to \$5 per share. Silver also slumped.

"The market has been extremely nervous as the dollar's strength continues worldwide," a dealer in London for bullion sellers Sharps Pixley said.

He said "the British bank base rate increases to 10 percent and the likelihood of further rises in U.S. rates drained the market of any confidence it had left in the wake of this week's dollar strength."

It was gold's lowest price since Aug. 17, 1982 when the metal closed at \$338.75 in London and \$338.625 in Zurich.

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South Africa, which relies on gold for about half its export income, watched the plunge with trepidation.

The decline is likely to force the government into emergency action on the local economy, possibly by further boosting interest rates, already at record highs, to reduce demand in line with the cut in foreign income, economists in Johannesburg said.

A drop of \$100 an ounce in the bullion cuts \$2 billion off South Africa's annual foreign income.

Gold's sharp fall after a com-

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Mountain clash kills one

While Beirut's Green Line remained free of fighting for the second day Friday, one person was killed in a firefight between the Lebanese Army and Progressive Socialist Party militiamen near Souk al-Gharb, police said.

The daybreak incident took place between the Army garrison at Souk al-Gharb in the mountains of Beirut and militiamen at the nearby village of Aitai, a spokesman said.

"After the shooting we were informed that one of our soldiers had been killed," a Lebanese Army source said.

"Thy body was retrieved from the battle front and it turned out that he was not a soldier but a Druze in civilian attire," he added.

Another brief round of fighting broke out in the afternoon between the villages of Bsaba and Maaroufieh south of Souk al-Gharb, but there were no reports of casualties, Radio Lebanon said.

Spokesmen for both the Lebanese Army and the PSP avoided apportioning blame for the incident, apparently to avoid endangering the peace process in Beirut.

Car bomb in Byblos kills two

An explosion Friday night in the port of Byblos, 30 km north of Beirut, killed two people and wounded three others, civil defense officials said.

Phalange Voice of Lebanon radio said the explosion blew up the private car of a policeman from Tripoli and the civil defense officials said his wife and mother were killed.

The driver's condition was not immediately known, but the officials said his four-month old son and two bystanders were injured.

The radio said the bomb was set off at 8.30 p.m. in the Renault 12 by remote control as it drove through the main market of the ancient port town.

Kidnap

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would be supervised by Lebanese police, in conjunction with the International Red Cross.

It was also decided to set up a special committee to trace those who have been reported missing but whose names do not appear on the militias lists.

At the latest count, 3,560 people have been reported kidnapped, but the militias admit to holding only 150 between them. The International Red Cross confirmed Thursday that its delegates have been allowed to visit some 120 people detained by the three major militia groups.

The women who attended the meeting asked to see the lists of kidnap victims, but were not allowed to because the lists have not yet been completed, Halwani said.

Throughout the morning, angry relatives of the kidnapped burned tires and erected barricades on the nearby Museum crossing, still the only link between East and West Beirut.

The demonstrators, mostly mothers, wives, and sisters of the kidnapped, assembled early Friday morning at the western end of the crossing.

At 10 a.m. the crossing was ordered closed to traffic by the

Lebanese Army, although pedestrians were able to cross.

"Pedestrians are slipping through barricades of burning stone and burning tires, but the demonstrators are not allowing cars to get through. There is no violence," a police spokesman said, adding that the authorities understood the women's grievances.

Eyewitnesses said police and Lebanese troops made no attempt to disperse the demonstrators.

"We do not want the government. We do not want the Red Cross. We will break their heads if need be. There will be no peace for any citizen as long as people are being detained," Ghassan Badreddin Badreddin, brother of one the kidnapped victims said.

"If they do not release our sons, we will go out and kidnap people ourselves," said Umm Zakar, the mother of another victim.

A security forces spokesman said the crossing was ordered closed "because we feared the women would start indiscriminately kidnapping people coming from East Beirut."

On several occasions in recent weeks, women from West Beirut, irritated by repeated delays and unfulfilled promises, have threatened to kidnap people at random themselves if their loved ones were not released.

The families of kidnap victims have stepped up their efforts over the past few months to secure the release of their relatives. Hardly a day has passed without some attempt to draw attention to their plight, organized by the official com-

mittee of the kidnapped set up jointly by relatives in East and West Beirut.

The Museum crossing was reopened at 1:30 p.m.

Arrangements for the release, agreed in principal by the Cabinet, have reportedly been held up because the issue of the release of victims of random tit-for-tat kidnappings had become confused with the release of what the militias term "security prisoners," a source close to the prisoner issue said.

Although the Red Cross has been able to confirm that 120 kidnap victims are being held, the organization has not been allowed to visit the "security prisoners," those alleged by the militias to have committed a crime.