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DNA test confirms remains of French hostage at Anjar

By Rym Ghazal

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BEIRUT: French officials have confirmed that human remains found in mass graves in Anjar in December have been positively identified as belonging to French researcher Michel Seurat.

"DNA analysis conducted in Paris confirmed that the remains belong to French citizen Michel Seurat," said a spokesperson for the French Foreign Ministry.

Seurat, a researcher and analyst missing since May 22, 1985, was one of many Westerners kidnapped during the throws of Lebanon's 1975-90 Civil War.

"Now the French Judiciary will be notifying the Lebanese Judiciary of its findings, and all the necessary legal steps will be taken," the spokesperson said.

Sources within the Lebanese Judiciary confirmed the finding, as well as the fact that Seurat's remains were found in the graves at Anjar.

Lebanese authorities in December sent human remains to French anti-terror judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere, the French official in charge of investigating Seurat's abduction, in order for a DNA analysis to be conducted and compared against Seurat's.

The deceased's widow, Marie Seurat, was the first to make the DNA results known to the public, telling French media Tuesday night "the test is positive."

She had filed a complaint with French courts in 2002 over her husband's disappearance, and has been persistent in her hunt over the decades to discover her husband's fate.

Frustrated over the seemingly slow pace of investigations, she wrote an open letter in January to France's Le Journal Du Dimanche that read, "I find this situation unfair, unbearable, even shameful."

Pro-Iranian Shiite group Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for Suerat's abduction and announced his death in March 1986, but his body was never found.

At the time, the group said it had killed the Frenchman in retaliation for France's extradition of two pro-Iranian Iraqi dissidents to Baghdad.

However, other freed hostages said Suerat died of either hepatitis or cancer. - Rym Ghazal