

Lebanese man freed after 40 years in Syrian prison

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An outside view of a prison in Syria on 4 March 2018 [Hişam El Homsî/Anadolu Agency]

The Committee of Families of Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon announced Friday that a Lebanese man, who had been detained in Syria for decades, has been identified, *Anadolu Agency reports*.

In a statement, the committee said: “News from military opposition sources has sparked both hope and anxiety among the families of the missing, particularly

those believed to still be held in Syrian prisons since the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990).”

“We have been unable to verify the identities of those released from Hama Prison, except for one individual, Ali Hassan Al-Ali from Akkar Governorate, northern Lebanon, whose name appears on our lists,” it added.

The committee further highlighted the likelihood that other Lebanese detainees could also be among those released.

During Syria’s 29-year presence in Lebanon (1976-2005), many Lebanese were arrested and transferred to Syrian prisons for reasons such as “opposition to Syrian control” or “suspected collaboration with hostile entities.” Numerous others disappeared under unclear circumstances.

The committee urged the Lebanese government to take swift measures by setting up an emergency committee to confirm the identities of the freed individuals, engage with relevant Syrian parties, and facilitate the safe return of detainees to their families.

It also pointed out that its lists include not only Lebanese nationals but also individuals of other nationalities who vanished in Lebanon.

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On Thursday, Lebanese media quoted Naif Ahmad Al-Mouri, the mayor of Tasha in Akkar, as saying that residents of the Wadi Khaled area had received information from sources in Hama confirming the release of Ali Hassan Al-Ali, along with other Lebanese detainees whose exact numbers remain unknown. Photos and a video, reportedly showing Ali’s release after 40 years of imprisonment, were also circulated by Lebanese media outlets, according to the same sources.

The Syrian regime had previously released Lebanese detainees in two waves: 121 in 1998 and 54 in 2000. However, Lebanese organizations estimate that hundreds are still detained in Syrian prisons — a claim that Damascus denies. The Association of Lebanese Political Prisoners in Syrian Prisons reports that 622 Lebanese have been forcibly disappeared in Syrian jails.

Meanwhile, fighting in Syria has intensified in recent days. Anti-regime groups, led by Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, have been engaging regime forces since Nov. 27, making significant gains.

Anti-regime forces gained control of much of central Aleppo on Nov. 30 following an advance from its western countryside.

In their latest assault on Thursday, the groups seized the center of Hama, consolidating their control of the city and forcing regime forces to withdraw.