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19:25 26 Aug . Syria frees 11 Lebanese detainees, families say

BEIRUT, Aug 26 (Reuters) - The families of Lebanese who disappeared during the 1975-1990 civil war said on Monday that 11 of the missing had been freed by Syria.

The Committee for the Relatives of Detainees, which says the group were among an untold number believed to have been abducted in Lebanon and taken to Syrian jails, issued a list of 11 men who it said had been freed.

It also said Syria had handed the body of another man who had died in jail over to his family.

More than 10,000 Lebanese went missing during and shortly after the war, and human rights groups believe that Syrian troops and intelligence agents as well as Lebanese militias were responsible for many of the disappearances.

The committee did not say when the men had been released, but called on Syria to free the remaining detainees. No comment was available from Syrian authorities.

"We were informed by the relatives that a number of persons...were quietly released and that one of them had died in jail and his corpse was handed over to the relatives," the committee's statement said.

Damascus promised about a month ago to look into the fate the missing, after groups of relatives went to Damascus to plead with President Bashar al-Assad for their release. He refused to see the group but referred them to Interior Minister Ali Hammoud.

Lebanon declared there were no more Lebanese prisoners in Syria after Damascus freed about 50 detainees in 2000. But families of missing Lebanese -- some affiliated to groups opposed to Syrian dominance over Lebanon -- say hundreds remain.

Syria poured troops into Lebanon early in the civil war to save Christian militias from defeat by Muslim and Palestinian forces. It later turned on the Christians when they sided with Israel, but has had political power over Lebanon ever since.

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