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# Groups for detained and missing unite

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A group lobbying to free Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails and another trying to discover the fate of thousands of citizens who have gone missing during the war will unite their efforts, the organizations' leaders said Tuesday.

The Follow-Up Committee for the Support of Lebanese Detainees in Israeli Prisons and the Parents' Committee for the Kidnapped said their union would help accomplish a "mutual demand."

"All kidnapers – regardless of identity and affiliation – are identical in their inhumane practices. All imprisoned persons and their families share suffering, waiting and fear of the unknown," said Wadad Halawani, head of the Parents' Committee for the Kidnapped.

The announcement was made during a news conference at the Press Federation, where

the groups' leaders detailed the outcome of the First Euro-Mediterranean Conference for the Families of the Kidnapped and Victims of Forced Disappearance, held in Paris earlier this month.

The groups believe that together they will be able to bring their loved ones back from Israeli prisons faster. They also hope to speed up determining what happened to 17,000 people who went missing during the civil war.

How exactly the two will collaborate is still being worked out, said Halawani.

"We need to coordinate all our actions and organize the same campaigns," he said. "But we want our beloved back, and that's what will bring us together."

"We're taking the first step toward unifying and better coordinating Lebanese humanitarian organizations," agreed Mohammed Safa, head of the Follow-Up Committee for the

Support of Lebanese Detainees in Israeli Prisons.

Both committees have mobilized a large number of supporters and staged regular protests to publicize their plights.

The fate of an estimated 17,000 people who went missing during the war years remains unknown. At least 150 others are detained in Khiam detention center, run by the Israeli-backed SLA, and other Israeli prisons.

The Paris conference, which sparked the collaboration, brought together humanitarian NGOs from countries throughout the region.

The conference, held on Feb. 7-12, was organized by the International Federation for Human Rights and other international humanitarian watchdog groups.

An international declaration condemning kidnapping in Mediterranean countries and the lack of punishment of culprits was issued at the end of the conference.