Lebanon and Syria: Whether Syrian intelligence infiltrates or surveys Syrians living in Lebanon

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information about whether Syrian intelligence [also known as mukhabarat (Daily Star 13 June 2005)] has infiltrated or conducts surveillance on the Syrian population residing in Lebanon was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.


In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 19 October 2009, an editor of Mideast Monitor, a non-profit publication that provides political analysis on Middle East issues (n.d.), alleged that Syrian intelligence monitors "everything in Lebanon" including Syrian workers. The Editor suggested that Syrian intelligence may use Syrian workers in Lebanon as potential informers or agents (Mideast Monitor 19 Oct. 2009). Daily Star indicates that there is public belief in Lebanon that there is a close relationship between Syrian workers and the mukhabarat, although the Syrian dissident featured in the article questioned the nature and extent of this association (Daily Star 13 June 2005).

In his book, The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon, John Chalcraft, a Reader at the London School of Economics, indicated that the view among pro-Lebanese groups in the early 2000s was that Syrian workers in Lebanon were "in league with Syrian intelligence," but he argues that this position was "highly misleading" (Chalcraft 2009, 143). Without providing details, Chalcraft asserted that Syrian intelligence services were a source of anxiety rather than comfort for Syrian workers in Lebanon (Chalcraft 2009, 144).

In a profile on a Syrian human rights activist living in Lebanon, the Jordanian newspaper The Star reported that the Syrian activist believed that Syrian intelligence was stronger than ever and that he was at risk from them (27 Dec. 2008).
This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


**Additional Sources Consulted**

**Oral sources:** Attempts to reach representatives of the Syrian Human Rights Committee were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this response.

**Internet sites, including:** *Al Bawaba, Al Jazeera, Amnesty International (AI), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), European Country of Origin Network (ecoi.net), European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (ESISC), Human Rights First (HRF), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), International Crisis Group, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld, UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Washington Institute for Near East Policy.*
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