

Huge Lebanese-Syrian Quarrel at Cairo Meeting over Words "Welcomed Launch of International Tribunal"

Contributed by Naharnet
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The daily An Nahar said the confrontation occurred on Tuesday during a meeting in Cairo of Arab League foreign ministers who gathered to discuss the latest developments in the Arab world and the Middle East.

It said the quarrel pitted the Syrian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, against the Lebanese side, represented by Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh.

According to information obtained by An Nahar, Muallem did his best to prevent the inclusion of any reference to the Hariri court in the final Arab League statement.

Salloukh reportedly made an effort to include a phrase on the court. His bids, however, went unanswered.

The endless debate, An Nahar said, prompted urgent intervention by Prime Minister Fouad Saniora, who spoke at least six times with Salloukh, and then with Arab League chief Amr Moussa, "to face Syria's rejection."

The daily said Damascus' rejection was based on the idea that the tribunal was cut between the Lebanese government and the United Nations, thus, it has nothing to do with the Arab League Council or an Arab summit.

Saniora warned Moussa that if Syria is to stand by its position, then Lebanon will follow suit.

"If they want us to acknowledge that Premier Rafik Hariri was not assassinated, but instead died in a traffic or shooting accident or perhaps killed himself, then let us raise this issue during the Arab summit," Saniora was quoted as telling Moussa.

An Nahar said consultations led to the exclusion of the phrase "away from revenge and politicization," a clause refused by Saniora.

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