

Number of Lebanese ordered out of UAE stands at 300, says deportee

Contributed by DPA
Saturday, 03 October 2009

Beirut - Some 300 Lebanese, mostly Shiite Muslims, have been forced to leave the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the past three months for political reasons, one of the deportees said Saturday. Hassan Alayan, a Lebanese Shiite businessman deported two months ago, said many of the 10,000 Shiite Lebanese living in the UAE faced being forcibly returned to Lebanon.

He said most of those deported had been asked by UAE authorities to inform on fellow Shiite Lebanese living in the country and on officials from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

"Some of the deportees were accused of sending funds to Hezbollah," Alayan said. He insisted that the allegations were baseless against most of those who had been ordered out.

The number of deportees has not been confirmed by authorities either in the UAE and in Lebanon.

A committee set up to represent the deportees said the deportations may be the result of US pressure to stop funds being sent to Hezbollah, which the US has listed as a terrorist organization.

According to Alayan, some of those deported had been forced to leave even after Lebanese President Michel Suleiman intervened five weeks ago.

Alayan said UAE authorities had also deported Palestinians who refused to spy on the militant Hamas group, which rules the Gaza Strip, before the issue started with the Lebanese.

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