

## Siniora accuses Syria of sending arms to camps

Contributed by Administrator  
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Prime Minister Fouad Siniora accused Syria on Wednesday of sending arms to Palestinian camps in Lebanon and threatened to raise the issue with the Arab League. Siniora was speaking from Paris the day after independent experts handed the UN Security Council a report saying that Lebanon was largely incapable of preventing arms smuggling from Syria.

The Lebanese premier, who met with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner on Wednesday, told reporters in France that he had not seen the report to the UN but that it was clear that Syria was sending weapons to two camps.

"In recent weeks these camps have been reinforced with munitions, arms and fighters," he said, adding that one of the outposts was controlled by the Fatah al-Intifada group and another by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. He did not identify the camps.

"Everyone knows that these groups are supported and armed by Syria," Siniora said, echoing allegations leveled earlier this month by UN Middle East envoy Terje Roed-Larsen.

"This is something I will talk to the Arab League about," Siniora added.

The report's authors said that during a three-week stay in Lebanon they had not heard of any weapons being seized along the border, despite widespread talk of illegal shipments.

Asked whether the Lebanese government was planning to have borders with Syria monitored by Arab or international forces to put an end to the arms smuggling, Siniora said the issue was the responsibility of "both Syria and Lebanon."

"I haven't had a chance to read this report, but we will look at it today and we will certainly take a position that is in the interests of Lebanon," he said.

Addressing a French offer to host a meeting of Lebanese leaders, Siniora said only second-tier officials would attend the event and warned against setting expectations too high.

Siniora said dialogue should not be governed by predetermined outcomes, "for dialogue as a concept is meant to operate as an ice breaker where conflicting parties get together, and this in itself is a major step."

"I think we should be open-minded and not box it in with specific objectives," he said.

Commenting on the car-bomb attack that killed six members of the Spanish UN contingent Sunday, Siniora said the Lebanese government was "determined to uncover the true identity of assailants in association with the UNIFIL."

The United Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has operated in the South since an Israeli invasion in 1978.

Siniora said predictions by a number of Lebanese parties of an assault on UNIFIL troops after the UN Security Council approved the establishment of an international tribunal to try suspects in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri "ought to be clearly examined during investigations."

Siniora was scheduled to leave France on Wednesday night for Italy, where he is to meet with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi on Thursday.

Siniora will then continue to Spain to pay condolences in person for the deaths of the Spanish peacekeepers. - Agencies

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