

Lebanon, France to boost judiciary cooperation

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BEIRUT: Lebanon and France will sign a joint agreement for cooperation at the level of the judiciary, the French and Lebanese Justice Ministers said Thursday. "The agreement aims at combating organized crime, money laundering and terrorism, in addition to providing necessary training for the judicial police," French Justice Minister Rachida Dati told reporters after talks with her Lebanese counterpart, Ibrahim Najjar.

Dati arrived in Beirut Thursday for a two-day official visit at the invitation of Najjar.

"The joint agreement also allows for judicial training and exchange of expertise between France's National School of Magistrates and Lebanon's Institute of Judiciary Studies in order to boost the Lebanese judicial body by bringing in new judges building on the French experience," Dati said.

"Also," she added, "France will help train and form prison wardens especially since the Interior Ministry is [gradually] turning over prison administration to the Justice Ministry."

She stressed the need for the full implementation of a 2002 law, under which judges can reduce prison verdicts. "This issue is of

international concern, especially the aspect related to facilitating reintegration into society once freed," Dati said.