

# THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

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 record \$400,000 deal



## Tripoli braces for Mawlawi decision

Lebanese leaders fear  
 but strife across  
 try if clashes  
 nue in north

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BEIRUT: A judicial decision to test the fate of an Islamist group in Tripoli Friday, as Lebanese leaders warned that tension in the second city could plunge the country into sectarian strife.

Mawlawi, whose arrest triggered deadly violence in Tripoli, was referred to Military Prosecutor Saqr Saqr, who is expected to decide Friday whether the Islamist group should be released.

Violence was running high Thursday



Lebanese Armed Forces to contain and stabilize the situation," Fletcher said in a statement following discussions with Army commander Gen. Jean Kahwaji, U.N. coordinator Derek Planby and political and religious leaders.

"It is now important that a political process is established that addresses the challenges faced by the people of Tripoli, and establishes reliable ongoing security for the city. Solutions will be found in dialogue rather than violence, and should be driven by Lebanese interests," he added.

Editorial PAGE 7

Although the heavy Army deployment in Tripoli prevented a wide-range renewal of hostilities between gunmen from the rival neighborhoods of Bab al-Tabboun and Jabal Mohsen, at least 12 people, including two soldiers, were wounded Thursday by sporadic sniper fire that threatened to shut

predominantly Alawite Jabal Mohsen back the Assad regime.

Prime Najib Mikati's meeting on security and military chiefs imposed security in Tripoli by setting checkpoints in the city's streets to arrest anyone carrying arms in public.

Mikati chaired a meeting in Tripoli residence attended by military and security chiefs, the Lebanese Mufti Sheikh Malek Saad, Minister of State Ahmad Karami, Youth and Sports Minister Fadi Kabbara to discuss ways to restore order to the city.

The participants tasked the Lebanese Army and the Internal Security Forces with maintaining security in Tripoli, while calling on the factions to defuse tension by eliminating all armed manifestations.

However, despite the Army's efforts to restore normalcy, Interior Minister Marwan Charbel sounded the alarm bell that the continued tension



# Lebanese furniture maker plays with perception



Kuzbari began her career as a muralist.

Renaissance by interior designer, painter Randa Kuzbari mixes modern and classical elements

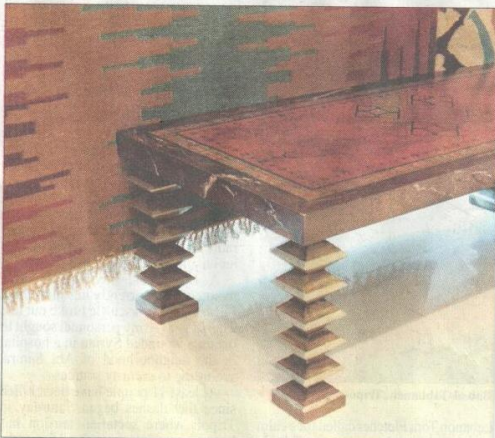
By Alex Taylor  
The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Upon first glance you see a marvelous marble table, but take a closer look at the meticulous brush strokes – your eyes have been deceived. The technique is called “tromp l’oeil,” and Lebanese furniture-maker and painter, Randa Kuzbari, is a specialist.

“When people touch the piece, they say ‘ah, it’s not marble!’” says Kuzbari of the surprise element of her work and her training in tromp l’oeil (“deceive the eye” in French), a technique that creates an optical illusion to convince the eye they are seeing three dimensions where there is just one.

In Kuzbari’s case, the deception is about the material of her furniture pieces, adding the appearance of a variety of textures by her painting skills on plain wood.

“I imitate. For an example, this



Kuzbari paints a table to create the illusion of marble.

table is not made of marble, it’s an illusion – with my painting I imitate the marble,” Kuzbari – who began her artistic career more than 20 years ago

after studying at the elite Institut Supérieur des Peintures Decoratives et Panoramiques in Paris. Upon returning to Beirut with her family after the



Kuzbari has matched some of her pieces to carpets at Samovar.



end of the Civil War, Kuzbari set up her company, “Atelier Renaissance.”

Marble is not the only material that Kuzbari’s brushstrokes create. She

also paints pieces to look like wood, lapis, metal and all kinds of stone. Textured patterns on the flat surfaces of her tabletops look as though they are rising out of the surface, when, with a touch, the viewer confirms they are simply two-dimensional.

Kuzbari now exclusively deals in furniture – tables, coffee tables, chairs, cabinets, panels, side and end tables – but, originally, she began her career as a muralist.

“After 20 years, I’ve become older and I can’t reach or go up the steps and work on the walls – it’s a lot of physical effort. So I stopped with murals and moved into furniture,” she explains, adding that at her atelier in Verdun, where she works and displays her pieces, she still has a number of paintings on view.

Her pieces are also available for purchase and displayed at Samovar Gallery, the lavish rug and antique store, recently opened in Downtown Beirut.

Kuzbari believes her furniture, which mixes classical renaissance style and painting with modern and art deco shapes, are a perfect match for the genre-mixing carpets sold at Samovar. She has even produced pieces to match specific rugs on display at the gallery, including a coffee table with a pat-

terned, silvery surface to match the silvery threads of the carpet beneath.

Kuzbari describes her inspiration as coming from all around her – from carpets at Samovar, to designs she sees every day or at museums.

“I travel a lot. I try to take an idea from here and here and match it all together. I don’t like to stick to only one style. I try to mix the modern with the classic. Especially when I saw the carpets here, they are modern with classic design and modern textures. I tried to make tables with the same textures and design but with painting,” Kuzbari explains.

Every piece Kuzbari makes is one-of-a-kind and she refuses to make two of the same piece “even for \$1 million.”

“Even if I wanted to make duplicates, I can’t – not with the same colors, the same designs,” she says, adding that each item of furniture or art she produces is a singular artistic expression.

This kind of artistic integrity is essential to Kuzbari’s work. She will sometimes take commissions for pieces, but the majority of her work she produces as she is inspired, with the help of just one assistant at her atelier.

“I don’t like people to tell me, ‘I want this, this and this.’ I can’t work that way ... I want to feel free with my design.”