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Jun. 08, 2019 | 12:02 AM

No more monkey business as chimp returned



Summary



Tachtouch, the monkey who crossed the border into Israel after escaping three weeks ago, is safely back home in Lebanon after being returned to his owner Friday.

Tachtouch's return moved his owner, who celebrated that he was back home in time for the start of children's summer holidays.

Tachtouch's trip became something of an international novelty since Lebanon and Israel remain in a technical state of war, with U.N. peacekeepers monitoring the well-patrolled border.

One outlet published a map of at least three reported sightings -- two in Israel and one in Lebanon.

Mohammed Zaatari Aina De Lapparent Alvarez | The Daily Star

BINT JBEIL/BEIRUT: Tachtouch, the monkey who crossed the border into Israel after escaping three weeks ago, is safely back home in Lebanon after being returned to his owner Friday.

Sister Beatrice Mauger, who lives in the Bint Jbeil town of Qouzah, told The Daily Star that she learned Thursday through several contacts that Tachtouch had been captured in northern Galilee by a monkey sanctuary that had tracked him over the course of five days.

"Once I had photos as proof, I contacted UNIFIL," she said.

But the U.N. peacekeepers "already knew that [Tachtouch's repatriation] was going to take place [Friday] morning," she said.

Mauger met with UNIFIL Friday morning to pick up the wayward animal. She said Tachtouch had become more nervous from once again being in a cage and had yet to recover from a lack of food during his border-crossing romp. Mauger, who runs the Ship of Peace, a space for interreligious dialogue, saw meaning in Tachtouch's journey. "I was certain he had a mission to accomplish, to make the project of the Ship of Peace known on the other side of the sealed-off border," she said.

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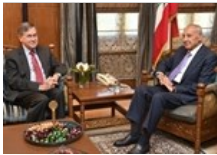
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Tachtouch's return moved his owner, who celebrated that he was back home in time for the start of children's summer holidays. "They're going to be very happy to see him and give him bananas and corn," she said of the youngsters.

Tachtouch's trip became something of an international novelty since Lebanon and Israel remain in a technical state of war, with U.N. peacekeepers monitoring the well-patrolled border.

Images and videos of the monkey appeared on Israeli social media and news sites, showing the rascal roaming around farmland and swinging from balconies. One outlet published a map of at least three reported sightings - two in Israel and one in Lebanon.

A version of this article appeared in the print edition of The Daily Star on June 08, 2019, on page 3.

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