**Carlos Ghosn says he has 'escaped injustice' after fleeing Japan for Lebanon**

Former Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn, who was awaiting trial in Japan on charges of financial misconduct, arrived in Beirut on Monday, saying in a prepared statement he “will no longer be held hostage by a rigged Japanese justice system.” It was not clear how Ghosn, who is of Lebanese origins, left Japan where he was under surveillance and is expected to face trial in April. “I am now in Lebanon. ... I have not fled justice — I have escaped injustice and political persecution,” Ghosn said in the statement.

Ghosn criticized the Japanese justice system where “guilt is presumed, discrimination is rampant, and basic human rights are denied, in flagrant disregard of Japan’s legal obligations under international law and treaties it is bound to uphold. I can now finally communicate freely with the media, and look forward to starting next week,” he said.

Ricardo Karam, a television host and friend of Ghosn who interviewed him several times, said Ghosn arrived in Lebanon on Monday morning. “He is home,” Karam said. “It’s a big adventure.” Karam declined to elaborate. Local media first reported Ghosn arrived in Lebanon but didn’t offer details.

Ghosn, 65, had been on bail in Tokyo since April and is facing charges of hiding income and financial misconduct. He has denied the charges. He had been under strict bail conditions after spending more than 120 days in detention. Lebanon does not extradite its citizens. The Tokyo District Court said the terms of his bail remained unchanged, banning him from traveling abroad, and legal experts in Japan said he may have left the country without permission.

One of Ghosn’s lawyers, Junichiro Hironaka, said Tuesday afternoon the defense team knows nothing more than the facts reported by media outlets. “We told the court that we are in a bind as well,” he said. “If he actually left this country, it violates the conditions for bail.”

Hironaka also said the defense counsel is holding Ghosn’s French, Brazilian and Lebanese passports, as required by the terms of his bail, and he could not have used any of them to leave Japan. Later in the day, Kyodo News reported that the Immigration Services Agency has found no records of Ghosn’s departure from Japan, raising suspicion that he may haveused a pseudonym to leave the country.

Under the conditions set by the Tokyo District Court, he was not allowed to meet in Japan with his Lebanese wife without being granted special permission, though the court recently decided to allow him to talk with his wife via videoconference, sources said last month. Ghosn’s defense team has repeatedly criticized Japan’s prosecution procedures, saying he was subjected to a host of questionable practices during more than 100 days of detention prior to his release on bail. His lawyers also said he was determined to fight all the allegations against him.

Many Lebanese view Ghosn as a symbol of their country’s large diaspora and a prime example of Lebanese entrepreneurial genius, and have been shocked by his arrest. He is expected to hold a news conference in Lebanon in the coming days. The Lebanon-based newspaper Al-Joumhouriya said Ghosn arrived in Beirut from Turkey aboard a private jet. It was not possible to confirm those details or how he was able to leave Tokyo. A house known to belong to Ghosn in a Beirut neighborhood had security guards outside with two lights on Monday night, but no sign otherwise of anyone inside. The guards denied he was inside, but one said he was in Lebanon. Ghosn has been charged with underreporting his compensation and other financial misconduct.

His lawyers say the allegations are a result of trumped-up charges rooted in a conspiracy among Nissan, government officials and prosecutors to oust Ghosn to prevent a fuller merger with Nissan’s alliance partner, Renault SA of France. Ghosn, one of the auto industry’s biggest stars before his downfall, is credited with leading Nissan from near-bankruptcy to lucrative growth.

Even as he fell from grace internationally, Ghosn was still treated as a hero in Lebanon, where many had long held hopes he would one day play a bigger role in politics, or help rescue its failing economy. Politicians across the board mobilized in his defense after his arrest in Japan, with some suggesting his detention may be part of a political or business-motivated conspiracy.

The Lebanese took special pride in the auto industry icon, who holds a Lebanese passport, speaks fluent Arabic and visited regularly. Born in Brazil, where his Lebanese grandfather had sought his fortune, Ghosn grew up in Beirut, where he spent part of his childhood at a Jesuit school. Minister of state for foreign affairs Keisuke Suzuki visited Beirut earlier this month where he met with the Lebanese president and foreign minister.