



The Commander

The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

Political circles in the West have resumed talking about the final settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in other host countries in which they took refuge in 1948. And to this day it is not clear whether those circles truly aim at achieving that objective or if they only release these test balloons once in a while to gauge the mood of the concerned countries.

One thing is certain though. And that is that the decision-making centers truly wish that the settling of the refugees take place in their host countries because this will make it easier to find a peaceful resolution between the Arabs and Israel, especially since the latter categorically and permanently rejects the return of the refugees.

It is equally clear that Arab countries, which are virtually empty, immensely vast, and with enormous wealth like Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait, the Arab Emirates, and others also refuse to absorb the refugees. By the same token, these Arab countries are strong supporters of the idea of settling the Palestinian refugees in their present host countries and stand ready, according to rumors, to pay enormous sums of money to compensate those countries that agree to absorb the refugees. Also true is that the majority of the Palestinians have given up on the idea of returning to their homes and prefer to stay where they are. This is especially true of the younger generation of refugees who were born and raised in the host countries and are by now used to living there.

For all these reasons, the shadow of the settling of the Palestinian refugees looms large over Lebanon and threatens the country with a clear and present danger. And in order that it does not become an imposed fait accompli, we must fight it by all the means and resources we have because of its imminent danger. We must lay out a coherent plan of action whose principal tenets include the rejection of the principle of refugee settlement no matter how appealing the financial incentives or how strong the political pressures may be.

The regime in power in Lebanon seems for now to be moving in the right direction, even if only in words. The officials of the regime are at least in agreement to reject the settling even if only in form. But the regime is impotent and has no free decision-making or final discretion, and therefore whether the refugees are settled in Lebanon or not remains entirely dependent on the will of Damascus until further notice.

We fear that Syria will make a sudden about-face and agree to the settling of the refugees in Lebanon for one reason or another, perhaps through a deal it strikes with the funding countries in which Syria receives the monetary incentives in exchange for forcing the refugees on the Lebanese people. And since the Lebanese regime constantly links a rejection of the refugee settlement with the right of return, we fear that the regime might change its mind and accept the refugees when the return turns out to be impossible. The regime has been adept at finding exit strategies and formulas to justify its actions.

As to us, and with us the bulk of the Lebanese, we absolutely and categorically reject the settling of the refugees. Not only because the Palestinian refugees constitute a future danger to the small country with a high population density, a demographic burden that will destabilize its composition, and a time bomb that could re-ignite the war, but also because the Palestinians are ungrateful to the people who have hosted them for nearly half a century. They waged a savage war against Lebanon and carried out barbaric massacres and genocidal acts against our people in all the Lebanese regions, districts and cities.

When we launched the slogan "Not one Palestinian will remain on Lebanese soil", we did so with a commitment to implement it. It has become part of the ideology and a trust we carry and transmit to the next generation. We will continue to pursue this idea even if and when, God forbids, the Palestinian refugees are settled in Lebanon.

Mistaken are those who think that we will one day forget the blood of our dead and our heroes. Neither will we forget, not for one moment, the children of Lebanon whose bodies were torn apart by the bloody hands of the Palestinians. Terribly mistaken are those who think that a single Palestinian will ever remain on our sacred and pure land.

Lebanon, at your service,
Abu Arz,
November 15, 2003