



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

In one sudden awakening the Arabs have decided to deal with the intellect, and so they have created an institution dedicated to it which they called the "Institute of Arab Thought" and placed at its helm the Saudi Prince Khalid Al-Faysal. Then they held a forum in Beirut at which they took turns at the podium dispensing speeches that resonated with eloquent prose and composition, yet were utterly empty of any substantive and scientifically challenging intellectual content. In typical manner, they rehashed the same slogans and political positions pertaining to the regional conflict and the Arab-American duel – the clash of cultures, as they refer to it – with all the repetitiveness, superficiality, and endless droning they are reputed for.

In order for our comments not to be taken as slander or self-serving critique, we sincerely hope that this belated awakening is the door through which the Arabs finally move from the Jahiliyyah, the pre-Islamic period they refer to as the "Age of Ignorance", to the modern world. For the Arabs to begin the journey of dealing with the intellect in a sound and rational manner, they must renounce the culture of violence, terrorism and religious extremism, open up to civilized societies and adopt dialogue as the means of communicating with them, accept others for who they are without trying to eliminate them, and undertake political reforms in their closed and suppressed societies that are crushed under individualism and the worship of persons. They must abandon the practice of these embarrassing referenda that give the ruler 99% of the popular vote and renew his mandate until his death, then turn around and bequeath that mandate to his genetic heir in another referendum and a similar 99% majority of the vote!!

In fact, the first thing that the Arabs should begin with, assuming they recover their minds and decide to substitute responsible and sober language for the sword, is to replace their dictatorial regimes with democratic governments and broaden the range of liberties in their countries instead of tyranny, repression, liquidation of opponents, and elimination of the opposition. They must combat the religious fundamentalism that is raging in their societies like a straw fire, shut down its schools all over the world, stop financing it, and detain its leaders and all those who incite to kill in the name of God and religion.

They must also fight illiteracy, whose average in the lands of the Arabs remains one of the highest in the world, bridge the deep chasm between the Arab regimes and their peoples, and transform their societies from purely consuming ones to productive and developed ones. In sum, they have to respect human rights.

These are the priorities to which the Arabs must dedicate themselves immediately, especially in the midst of the successive events and developments that are taking place in the region, and these priorities must take precedence over the race to establish intellectual institutes whose horizons do not go beyond decorum, entertainment and political luxury.

Lebanon, at your service,

Abu Arz,
December 20, 2003