



The Commander

The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

On the heels of the Maronite Synod comes the Catholic Synod to again wade in political matters abuzz with many of the same misconceptions.

We will stay clear of church matters because they are internal and concern the Church alone, and we fully respect all the decisions of the Synod in organizing the church and raising its visibility so it can continue to carry its highest spiritual message to the people.

We also value all the recommendations the Synod took in the social context of “calling for strengthening the institutions that care for the poor and the sick, and for mobilizing all resources to combat poverty and offer a wider array of social services to the needy through both short- and long-term programs in which both the laity and the clergy contribute...”.

We are also gratified for the objective nature of these recommendations, first because they translate words into action and call for creating realistic projects aimed at social work that includes the largest possible number of church members and society. Second, because these recommendations come at a time of terrifying living conditions in which the Lebanese live under the threat of poverty to the point where some are seen sifting through garbage bins, under the cover of darkness, looking for discarded food. This is a scene that Lebanon has not witnessed since the infamous famine of the last years of the Ottoman occupation during World War I.

Sadly, however, the political recommendations of the Synod are generally disappointing, except perhaps for the specific item of “ the commitment of the Church to the causes of justice, peace, development, co-existence, solidarity between peoples and the interaction between religions and cultures...”.

First, the Synod identified the Church as having an Arab identity instead of its Near-Eastern identity, given that the Church in principle does not have a political identity, but rather has a universal and spiritual identity that is not bound by time or place.

Second, the statement that “We wish that Lebanon recovers the Shebaa Farms so it can enjoy tranquility and prosperity...” , as if merely recovering these Farms will guarantee peace of mind and prosperity!! We know that the people of the border zone in South Lebanon remain nostalgic of the Israeli occupation to this day, and that the whole world, including the UN, refused to acknowledge Lebanon’s rights to the Farms and certified that they are in fact located outside the Blue Line. It is clear to everyone that the issue of the Shebaa Farms is one big lie fabricated by the Syrian regime in order to keep South Lebanon aflame at war with Israel for the purpose of linking the fate of the Golan with that of the Farms, and the Lebanese track with the Syrian track.

Third, the Synod called on the Great Powers to “bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the Holy Land so that the Palestinian people can exercise their full rights in an independent state with its capital Jerusalem...” without not a single word about the Lebanese people reeling under the yoke of occupation and deprived of an independent state and of their most basic human rights. The Synod has forgotten or chosen to ignore that the Palestinians were the first people to attack Lebanon and try to destroy it after it sheltered them, and continues to do so, for 50 years. Which begs the question: Why is everyone so reluctant to condemn the Syrian occupation ? Why is everyone so careful not to mention it, even in veiled terms? Why all this catering to the Syrian regime and the denial of the cause of Lebanon, as if it has become a forgotten and orphan cause??

It is becoming increasingly obvious by the day that the solution is in separating Church from State. The principle of secularizing the Lebanese state, which we put on the table since the founding of the party, remains the best remedy for lifting Lebanon from its slumber so it can resume its civilizational mission in line with Western democracies who secularized long time ago. In the least, we should follow the example of Turkey which was liberated from the claws of the religious order and the clergy by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In lightning speed, Turkish society was converted from the “Sick Man of Europe” to “Young Turkey”...May Lebanon follow suit.

Lebanon, at your service,
Abu Arz,
July 4, 2003