



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

The political establishment in Lebanon, opposition and loyalists alike, is all busy with the upcoming legislative elections, and so are the media. Everyone is talking about the new electoral law and arguing about the size of the electoral districts – small, medium and large. Some are demanding international observers to ensure the integrity of the elections. One has the feeling that the country has suddenly turned into one big ballot box, and that Lebanon's accumulated problems, as diverse as they are, will magically be resolved in this box of magic. All this, while the people have no interest in these elections, let alone any enthusiasm. To the contrary, people go on with their daily worries of making a living and paying for their medicine, school tuition, and the bills for a rationed electricity...etc.

Not that we want to minimize the importance of elections. We in fact strongly support any action that contributes to strengthening democratic life in the country. But we have, throughout our political journey, listened to people's feelings and convictions, and our positions have always been a reflection of the pulse in the street. We have often said that the voice of the people is from the voice of God, and the people right now are not interested in the elections and do not see in them the promised salvation that the opposition is predicting. And the reasons are many, of which:

- There is a prevailing impression among people that these elections will be exactly like the previous ones, if not worse, given that the Syrians will resort to all means to secure the victory of a majority loyal to them that will continue to provide a cover for their occupation and help them confront the international pressure arising out of resolution 1559 and its repercussions.
- The elections have lost their zest because the Lebanese have seen enough of this charade taking place every four years in their country under the sponsorship of the occupation that has converted the elections into appointments granted only to those who perfect the art of crawling and prostrating themselves at the gates of Damascus.
- Because the new electoral law will be drafted in Damascus, it will be tailored to meet the occupation's needs and decreed to the Lebanese people through the "Syrian High Commissioner" in Anjar. It will be submitted to the sitting Parliament to approve it like it approved the mandate extension. Crying wolf by the opposition will then be useless.
- Because the participation of the opposition in this charade will grant the occupation a free and legitimate cover that it does not deserve, even if it succeeds in obtaining a few more seats inside the Chamber.
- Because international observers, should there be an agreement to allow them in, will not be able to uncover the professional artsy crafty fraudulent methods that the Syrian occupation and its Lebanese tools will use, beginning with the skillful drawing of electoral lists and imposing alliances by enticements and threats, through the brilliant marshalling of tractors and buses, and ending with cheating in vote counting and disappearing ballot boxes or stuffing others with extra votes...Not to mention the use of the votes of the naturalized and altering the registry records to resurrect the dead and bring back the absentees so they can participate in the poll.
- Because the standing regime has come into being by non-democratic means, it is difficult for it to leave by democratic means. Change through elections is a long and arduous process whose outcome cannot be guaranteed in the foreseeable future, while the country is disintegrating and people's lives are choked. The situation in the country does not afford us the luxury of waiting, especially with 90% of Lebanese families now below the poverty line and cannot meet their basic needs according to the latest study by economic experts. Between the year 2000 and today, 472 factories have shut down their doors according to the president of the Lebanese Industrialists Association, in addition to the rotting agricultural output caused by the Syrian competition. And the public debt that continues to pile up year after year, threatening the State with bankruptcy...

For all of this, it is clear that the shortest route to terminating this anomaly called the Lebanese regime is to declare general civil disobedience and to boycott the State in all its institutions. We are confident that the regime will not last long and will collapse faster than many expect it to last.

Lebanon, at your service

Abu Arz

December 17, 2004