



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

In the aftermath of last week's skirmishes along the southern border between Israeli forces and the so-called Hezbollah, international diplomacy took its usual initiative to try and stop the deterioration and prevent escalation. France demanded that the Lebanese government spread its authority over the south, and Mr. Kofi Annan expressed the need to dispatch the Lebanese Army to the Blue Line and recover the South from the grip of Hezbollah. However, the most salient position was that by US Ambassador to Beirut, Mr. Vincent Battle, who said that Hezbollah is a foreign terrorist organization that should not have existed in the first place, and that there is no other solution but to extricate the south from Hezbollah's control and deploy the Army there instead. He was also reported to have said in private meetings that Lebanon must regain its political role and take into account its own interests, and not sit idly by watching ongoing developments and regurgitating Syrian positions as if its only raison d'être was the appeasement of Syria.

We stand in amazement at Mr. Battle's words, and for a minute we thought he was our spokesman and representative given the previously unheard of substance, courage, precision, and candor of his statements. Of the many positives in this novel position is, first, that Mr. Battle is the ambassador of the superpower and the preeminent international decision-maker and primary determinant of the fate of entire nations. Second, he indeed hit it on the nail with his statements about the Lebanese crisis and his accurate expression of the Lebanese people's deep feelings that are repressed because of terrorism and oppression. Third, Mr. Battle demonstrated that the American administration is fully aware of the goings-on in our land and knows all the details and the political conduits behind the scene. And fourth, because His Excellency the Ambassador displayed a much greater concern for the interests of Lebanon than the regime installed in power, to the point where he stood in direct opposition to that regime that has ruined the country and never refrained from betraying it.

Besides the positives mentioned above, there are too many unknowns that are best condensed in the following three principal questions:

- 1 – How can ambassador Battle ask of this puppet regime that calls itself the Lebanese government to behave as if it were in control of its decision and is the final arbiter in all matters at hand? He knows well that the regime's absolute subordination to Syria prevents it from acting in Lebanon's supreme interests and makes it completely irrelevant.
- 2 – Why does American diplomacy persist in recognizing the legitimacy of this impotent, bastard, and corrupt puppet regime, and refrain from dealing with free and patriotic Lebanese constituencies that can change the rules of the game and adopt a saner path, if only they are given the chance and the required support?
- 3 – How does the Ambassador, and France and the United Nations with him, see the way to ending Hezbollah's role and recovering the South from its grip in preparation for dispatching the Army in its place? And who does the Ambassador think is the party that is capable of doing just that? And when?

These are the questions that are on the minds of the Lebanese people every waking hour of their day, but alas, no one is there to provide answers.

And before concluding, it is important to note all the statements denouncing Ambassador Battle's comments, most of which were unfortunately made by a group of politicians belonging to a particular community and who is preparing to wage the presidential election battle. This is in our mind both dishonorable and disgusting and is a reflection of the fact that the culture of deception, boot-licking, and opportunism remains alive and kicking in the extant political establishment of Lebanon.

Till when will foreign ambassadors care more about Lebanon than the country's own rulers?
How much longer will our people remain silent?
How much longer before they boil with anger?
That is the question!!!
Lebanon, at your service,
Abu Arz,
January 30, 2004