



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

At long last, the American president has decided to impose some sanctions on Syria in accordance with the "Syria Accountability and Lebanon Sovereignty Restoration Act" passed by Congress in 2003. While the Lebanese people can only be thankful, they raise many serious questions, of which the following are a few:

- Why has it taken President Bush so long to agree to implement the law, when it passed unanimously in both chambers, the House and the Senate, of Congress? And why did he apply only a fraction of the sanctions and not all of them, since their impact is anyway more symbolic than effective? Economic sanctions, for example, are of little impact, and there are loopholes for evading financial restrictions, consisting primarily of Lebanese banks and financial institutions that are totally controlled by the Syrians. Political pressure has never, and it won't now, change the Syrian position. To the contrary, it will harden it vis-à-vis American policy in the region. Lest we forget, the policy of sanctions that was used by US administrations for decades on certain countries like Cuba, Iran, and North Korea, have so far fallen short of their objectives and have met with total failure.
- Which leads us to the second question: What is the reason for the difference in the US position towards the two Baath regimes of Iraq and Syria? While the former was handled with severity, decisiveness and determination, the latter was dealt with timidly, at times cajoled and favored, even as the US knew for a fact that the Syrian regime was more dangerous than its Iraqi twin, surpassing it in violence, oppression, and blood-thirstiness, possessing a large arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, and sheltering the most dangerous terrorist organizations, some on its own soil and some in Lebanon. And the US also knew that its shaky situation in Iraq is in large part due to the constant fanning by Syria of the flames in Iraq, the continued dispatch by the Syrian regime of volunteers across the border into Iraq, and its incitement to resist the American project in the region in general and in Iraq in particular, and its zeal to ensure that it fails and see the defeated US forces evicted from Iraq as they were defeated and evicted from Lebanon. All the evidence points to the success of Syria in its endeavor – or is at least on its way to succeed – if the American administration persists in dealing softly with the Syrian regime.
- Assuming that Syria ultimately will decide for one reason or another to control its borders with Iraq, shut down the offices of the terrorist organizations present on its soil, and give up its weapons of mass destruction, will the American administration maintain the pressure on it until it withdraws from Lebanon? Or will it be satisfied with this much cooperation by the Syrians to lift the sanctions regime and reward them with a free for all *carte blanche* in Lebanon, yet again, as happened after the first Iraqi Gulf War???
- But the question that befuddles the Lebanese the most and stirs their anger is: What is the secret behind the warm courtship between the European Union and Syria? For even before the ink had dried on the signatures over the American sanctions regime on Syria, a European economic delegation rushed to visit Damascus to discuss means of cooperation in exporting Syrian oil and natural gas to Europe and integrate Syria into the regional power networks and link it with the power market of the European Union. In fact, to a question by a reporter on the position of the European Union vis-à-vis the American sanctions on Syria, the head of the delegation, Mrs. Loyola DiPalacio answered: "the European Union will continue a long-term strategy of engagement with Syria and it hopes to sign the Association Agreement with Syria in the near future..."!!!

The Lebanese people have many questions, and more than the questions, they are utterly disgusted and despaired by the negative policies of Western governments towards their country. Lebanon is marching to its certain death and elimination because of the Syrian occupation that has been choking the country for the past 3 decades, without so much as an eye blink by American or European officials. Instead, their reaction has been one of competing with one another for supporting the executioner in finishing off the victim!

The only hope that the Lebanese have these days has become limited to the growing phenomenon of beatification of saints in Lebanon year after year, which may help free them and their country from the grip of all the Satans and Lucifers.

Lebanon, at your service,

Abu Arz,

21 May 2004