



**The Commander**

The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

It is not true that the bloody events of this past May 27 in the southern suburbs of Beirut were fomented by the American Embassy, a third column or other outsiders, as propagated by those who seek to deceive and hide the truth.

Nor is it true that the loud demonstrations that spread across the streets of Beirut and the other Lebanese cities were organized by one political side against another. The truth is that this was an uprising of anger by the Lebanese people against the ruling political class in an expression of the accumulated frustration at the terrifying living conditions that prevail in the country and the total indifference of the authorities to the cries of the hungry. For this reason, to rehash the conspiracy theory each time there are troubles in Lebanon is simply laughable and ridiculous.

Many times in the past we have warned against the revolution of the hungry, and we repeat our warning today in the conviction that what happened on May 27 is only the beginning and an introduction to coming explosions that may turn out to be more dangerous and striking.

As to the armed clash that took place between the army and the demonstrators in Hay Al-Sellum in the southern suburbs, its underlying cause is the fact that this region of Beirut does not fall under the authority of the state. Indeed, it is a state within the Lebanese State because it is the principal stronghold of the so-called "Hezbollah" and because the residents of the southern suburbs place themselves above and beyond the reach of the law. They are driven by a complex of superiority and haughtiness over the Lebanese army on the ground that they are fighting Israel in its stead. And so they allowed themselves to throw stones, bullets, and bombs at the army and went on to burn down the Ministry of Labor and loot its contents, while the rest of the country demonstrated peacefully and did not attack the army, neither in this demonstration nor in previous demonstrations, in spite of the savage repression that was used against them in the past.

The response of the authorities to these dangerous events was as usual weak, cowardly and irresponsible:

Weak, because it led to visits of appeasement and conciliation by the president of the Taef Republic to the injured who fell to the army's bullets, and to allocations of monies to the residents of the suburbs to absorb the anger. All of which signifying an implicit admission of responsibility by the army for the events, even before the ongoing investigation is concluded. This also means that the state has created a precedent that will force it to pay similar compensations to each future victim of possible, and expected confrontations.

Cowardly, because it dealt with the citizens using a double standard: It managed the residents of the suburbs with fear, and the others with haughtiness.

Irresponsible, because the authorities did not offer any concrete solutions to resolve the living conditions that are worsening by the day. The regime simply offered sterile verbal measures that added insult to injury even though it knows that all the Lebanese people, from the top to the bottom of the pyramid, stand on a sinking ship that will go under any moment now. Which reinforces the feeling that the coming period will witness greater frustration, anger, and violence. Perhaps the only positive comfort we may take in the midst of this fog of pessimism is to recall Mao Tse-Dung's famous saying: It will have to get worse before it gets better!

Henry Adams once said, "Politics is programmed hatred". But politics in Lebanon has transcended this to become the programming of poverty for the common people and the programming of illegal wealth acquisition for those in power. So much so that there are today two types of hungry people in Lebanon: The people who are hungry for bread and freedom, and the people in power who are hungry for more money and power. The more striking of all that is that there is no hope in sight from the regime, neither on the short term nor on the long term, because its men are all newcomers to whom the saying of Imam Ali Bin Abi-Taleb applies: "Expect goodness from those who had everything then became hungry, because a residue of goodness remains in them. But do not expect goodness from those who had nothing then turned rich, because stinginess and mendacity will always be in them".

Finally, in comment to the visit by the US President to the Vatican, we wish to thank the Pope on behalf of the Lebanese people for his great concern for the return of sovereignty to Iraq and peace to the Holy Land. But his silence over Lebanon is staggering: His Holiness and his advisors need to understand that the fall of Lebanon will signify the *de facto* and definitive end of the Christian presence in the East. Then it will be too late to redeem it with Iraqi sovereignty and peace in the Holy Land.

Lebanon, at your service,  
Abu Arz,  
11 June 2004