



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

For the fifth time the Syrian regime has announced that it is withdrawing its troops from Lebanon without effectively or seriously withdrawing, repeating yet again its charades of evacuating certain areas for the press and the cameras in broad daylight only to return to them in the dead of night or staging troop transfers from one area to a neighboring one. And so its withdrawals were always from Lebanon to Lebanon, and never from Lebanon to Syria as would be expected or as announced by the Syrian regime.

For thirty years the Syrian regime has played this cat and mouse game with the Lebanese people when it comes to withdrawing – "re-deploying" as the regime prefers to refer to them – its troops from their country. Whenever outside pressure mounted or internal opposition became vocal, the Syrian regime would resort to this old new trick to defuse tensions or cool things down, and for no other reason.

Assuming for the sake of argument that Syrian forces decided to really withdraw this time to the Bekaa and stay there until the Israeli-Arab conflict is resolved, as stated by Syrian officials and their local agents. But isn't the Bekaa a Lebanese region? And doesn't UN resolution 1559 call for the withdrawal of Syrian forces from all Lebanese territory and without exception? What if the Israeli-Arab conflict is not resolved for another fifty years? Will the Syrian forces stay on our soil for fifty more years? And who guarantees that these forces will indeed leave after a solution to the conflict is found? Who can even guarantee that these forces will not return to Beirut and the Mountain tomorrow or the day after tomorrow or at any other moment?

Many questions on the minds of the Lebanese, but without any clear answers. Their long and enduring tragedy made them trust no one, especially the Syrian regime that has lost its credibility long time ago. There is not a single fool today in Lebanon who believes that the Syrian army will one day voluntarily leave Lebanon, even after a resolution of the regional conflict. No one believes that UNSCR 1559 is sufficient to force Syria to withdraw, nor are the political pressures sufficient. On the contrary, everyone knows that the Syrian regime derives its strength and continuity from its control over Lebanon, and only the naïve would think that the regime will easily relinquish the Lebanese card, and that it will commit suicide to please the Lebanese, the Americans, the French or anyone else!

If the Syrian regime were serious about its withdrawal from Lebanon, it would start by changing its language from "re-deployment" – which means nothing in military jargon and is pure Orwellian doublespeak – to "withdrawal", which it has avoided using even once during thirty years of occupation.

If the Syrian regime were honest, it would have withdrawn long time ago and on many occasions that presented themselves, such as after the passage of resolution 520 in 1982, or in implementation of the Taef document in the early 1990s, or after the evacuation of Israeli troops from the South in 2000.

If the Syrian regime were credible, it would start withdrawing its large intelligence apparatus that it deployed across the country and its security operatives whom it planted in every public and private administration and institution. These contingents – or rather these invisible ghosts – control the country and run the government from Anjar, and they have hijacked its decision-making and destiny to the whims of the Syrian regime.

If the Syrian regime were honest, it would have allowed the democratic process to take its course in the presidential elections, and it would not have challenged the will of the international community by imposing the extension of the mandate of the dummy perched in Baabda.

What the Lebanese people want is that those concerned with the Lebanese file be wary of the treachery and maneuvers of the Syrians if they truly wish to save Lebanon from the malignancy of the Syrian cancer. The US administration, the French government and the United Nations must not acquiesce to deceiving appearances, but must insist on the substance of their goals. The Lebanese people also request the Secretary General to be keen in his upcoming report on uncovering all the facts with clarity, precision and transparency, and calling things by their names without ambiguity, equivocation or concealment. He should reject the recent "re-deployment" move as compliant with UN resolution 1559, and instead take it for what it is, a tactical bending in the face of the storm and until the Syrian regime can circumvent and contain the pressures.

When we stood against the Syrian occupation from the beginning and qualified it as a cancerous tumor in the biological sense, we were slandered and were accused of extremism. Now the tables have been turned after thirty years to confirm the truth of what we had been saying and warning about.

The time has come for those who claim moderation to understand the following:

*Extremism for the sake of truth is an obligation, And moderation in truth is subservience and weakness.*

Lebanon , at your service

Abu-Arz

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