



The Commander

The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following weekly communiqué:

The Ministry of Defense has uncovered the remains of thirteen bodies found in a pit that was dug up in the backyard of the Ministry. The bodies are those of Lebanese soldiers who were killed by the Syrian occupation army on October 13, 1990 during the invasion of the Eastern regions. The local media barely made mention of this news, saying that the recovery of the remains was made based on a motion submitted by MP Gebrane Tueni to the government.

The news did not surprise anyone because everyone knows that the Syrians created many mass graves on Lebanese soil, particularly the one around the perimeter of Deir Al-Qalaa in Beit-Mery, and because mass murder and concealing bodies is a known Syrian tradition. But the surprise was in the following:

First, the tight silence of the Lebanese State over this crime for the length of 15 years and its willful refrain from searching for the fate of its own soldiers and who were buried mere meters away from their own command headquarters, which makes it an accomplice in the crime and places it squarely in the box of the accused in the crime of continued collusion and the willful concealment of information.

Second, in the perhaps deliberate blackout imposed by the media on this massacre, since they contended themselves with burying the news - ever so succinctly - in their inside pages, without giving it the coverage it deserves. The horror of this crime would have toppled governments and unseated rulers in a country that respects its own citizens.

Third, the current government refrained from publicly denouncing this crime and failed to task the appropriate judicial authorities with uncovering the circumstances of the crime and those involved in it, and then taking the issue to the courts as is being done with the Hariri assassination. The two crimes are equivalent in their horror. There is no difference between a rich and a poor victim, and the poor victims should not have to suffer insult in addition to injury twice, once in their loss of life and then again in their death. The investigation of this crime is, after all, easy and does not require a Detlev Mehlis. Just the will and a decision.

This subject leads us to the issue of the Lebanese who remain missing in Syrian jails, because the two issues are intertwined and the perpetrator is one and the same. There has to be an end to this chronic tragedy. It is time to close this wound now festering for decades. We support the demands of the families of the missing and the detainees for mandating an international commission with the task of determining the details of this matter and its circumstances after all Syrian and Lebanese committees have utterly failed in achieving any tangible progress.

Sixty-four days have passed and our comrades remain under forced detention, the victims of a policy of repression of free speech and free opinion. This denies the government any right to hail itself from the ranks of the March 14 movement as it claims. We remind the government that, were it not for the free speech that emerged on March 14 through the voices of the young of Lebanon, there would not have been any liberation and this government would not have even seen the light of day.

Lebanon, at your service

Abu Arz
November 18, 2005