



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

The opposition statement issued by the latest “Bristol Gathering” rose to the level of national responsibility in its courage and clarity, particularly in its clause calling for a complete withdrawal of the Syrian army and its security apparatus from Lebanon.

For the first time in thirty years we observe a political assembly consisting of all Lebanese sects and communities addressing the Syrian occupation in a straightforward and courageous language, expressing fully the convictions of the Lebanese people and their repressed feelings without recourse to the customary syrupy language of appeasement, servile flattery and double-speak.

This is a breath of fresh air for the Lebanese people. It was met with profound satisfaction, both internally and externally, and has dealt another fatal blow to the Syrian occupation and its local agents and represents a number of positive developments, of which:

1- It raised the ceiling of patriotic demands to a new high and forced other segments of the opposition to commit to this ceiling such that no one in the opposition can demand any less going forward.

2- It pulled the rug from under the feet of any opposition faction that was thinking of engaging the Syrians in dialog or compromising with them in political bazaar deals that would preempt their complete and unqualified withdrawal from this country.

3- It burned the last bridge with Syria and cut off all ties to it, making it very difficult for Syria to rebuild these bridges and renew those ties. It has become even more difficult for the opposition to retract from its declared positions.

4- It corrected the image of the Syrian-Lebanese conflict and placed it in its right context, giving it its true national dimension. It removed from the people's minds the distorted image that tried to portray the Lebanese as divided along sectarian lines on the issue of the Syrian occupation, with the “Christians” against, and the “Moslems” for, the occupation. It also exposed the diabolical Syrian role that constantly tried to ignite sectarian conflict between various elements of the population, and it defeated the deceiving slogans behind which the occupation always hid: Contribute to stop the “Civil War”, work for the stability of Lebanon, prevent its partition, defend it against Israeli ambitions , and other slogans of lies and fabrications.

5- It abolished the fear complex that has ruled the Lebanese under chronic Syrian terror. It encourages them to rise up in the face of the occupation and loudly express their rejection of it, especially after the leading figure in the Gathering had the courage to openly accuse the “Baath gangs” of killing his father in 1977 and, more recently, of trying to assassinate his partner with a car bomb.

6- It consolidated the unity of the Mountain which is the foundation of the unity of Lebanon. It expanded the ranks of the opposition to all the regions and contributed to unifying the discourse of members of the opposition, at least vis-a-vis the occupation if it could not unify them around the presidential election.

When, in the summer of 1976, we warned of the danger of the Syrian army entering Lebanon and raised our voice against the occupation, we were one lonely voice in the wilderness. We were accused of fanaticism, rigidity and isolationism. And when we called for evicting the occupier before he goes too far in his evil deeds, we were accused of treason, and arrest warrants and sentences in absentia were issued against us... Today, we thank God for this national awakening, even if a belated one. We feel a sense of exultation and satisfaction every time we hear the leaders of the opposition repeating now what we have been saying for thirty years, and use the same language in describing the Syrian occupation that we have used and continue to use.

These words are true: No right will perish so long as there is a claimant to it. And Ghandi was right when he said: Might is not right; rather right is might.

Lebanon, at your service

Abu Arz

February 11, 2005