



The Commander

The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

The Syrian regime is entertaining two desired outcomes these days. One is a political comeback to Beirut to seize the decision-making there again, and the other is to remain in the Bekaa Valley the longest time possible in order to keep a foothold from which to continue interfering in Lebanese affairs.

The regime hopes to achieve the first outcome through the following:

1 - By playing an internal destabilization card in Lebanon through fomenting internecine sectarian and partisan conflicts and the scare mongering of a split in the Army, etc. So far it has failed thanks to the rise of the Lebanese people to the occasion and their attachment to national unity, and the integrity of the military institution.

2 - Its reliance on its traditional political allies and on a parliament whose majority is made in Syria, and its attempts at resurrecting the resigned "government". Again, it will also fail because Syria's allies have become obsolete remnants of irrelevance, corruption and subservience. The Damascus-made Lebanese parliament has begun turning against its masters in synch with the withdrawal pace of a defeated Syrian Army. Resurrecting a defunct government that was brought down by the people is equally doomed to failure.

3 - Its tactic of staging a demonstrations war and leaning on the loyalist street to counter the opposition is dead on arrival because the pro-Syrian loyalist parties are on a path that is opposite the overwhelming path of change originating from Freedom Square. Moreover, those loyalist parties have a platform of slogans that have been overused and consumed to death, and their popularity is on the wane as the occupation shrinks and its pipeline dries. The proof is simply the March 14 demonstration that exposed the pro-Syrian parties for what they really are with its size and purity of identity and purpose, and proved to everyone that the vast majority of the Lebanese rejects the Syrian tutelage and its local parasites. The platform of the opposition is the strongest and the more in tune with the feelings of the Lebanese people, in spite of some blemishes that were expressed by some of the speakers.

4 - The old delay tactic of trying to gain time, akin to bending to the storm until it passes, is laughable because time is no longer on the Syrian regime's side. Time has in fact run out on the regime and is working against it.

The Syrian regime will try to achieve its second desired outcome, namely to stay in the Bekaa Valley, through linking its ultimate withdrawal from the Bekaa to impossible conditions of implementing whatever clauses remain of the Taef Agreement. In other words, to subject that withdrawal to an agreement between the Syrian government and its puppet Lebanese government and enact the political reforms set forth in the Taef Agreement. This is expected to go nowhere because of the enormous pressures that are being exerted on the Syrian regime by all sides, mainly represented by UN resolution 1559 and the international unanimous consensus to see it fully implemented. Not to mention the steadfast position of the opposition calling for a full and definitive withdrawal, and the constantly growing pressure of the Lebanese street. This is particularly so after the March 14 demonstration which, in the opinion of all observers, is the largest ever in the history of Lebanon, and the thousands of people from the Bekaa Valley itself who joined that demonstration to challenge the occupation and reject *a priori* the maintenance of Syrian forces in their region.

One last word to the Syrian regime on behalf of the demonstrators of March 14: Honorable Lebanese will deal with the regime on the basis of resolution 1559 and not the Taef Agreement. They will continue their struggle until every inch of their land is free of every last Syrian soldier. The regime has to reassess its calculations because the cost it incurs by staying in Lebanon will be greater than the cost it incurs by leaving now.

To some of the speakers at the demonstration, we say: The demonstrators who came to Freedom Square did not come to hear talk about "privileged relations" with Syria, or support for the Palestinian Cause, or protecting the so-called "Resistance", or the Arab identity of Lebanon, or adhering to the Taef Agreement, etc... They came to tell Syria: Get out of our country. Those speakers have to understand that only two things liberated Lebanon: "Resolution 1559" and "the voices of the young people on Freedom Square".

To those who continue to make bets on the occupation: February 14 is ground zero in the life and history of Lebanon, much as September 11 is to America. Any party that decides to stay in the pre-February 14 era and refuses to march forward in the movement for change will ultimately be the loser no matter its numbers, and any party that chooses to march forward in the post-February 14 era will ultimately be the winner irrespective of its numbers, let alone if its the majority!