



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

For one, the Lebanese people did not need to listen to former Syrian Vice-President Abdel-Halim Khaddam to know what the Syrian occupation has committed over thirty years to the people, land and institutions of Lebanon, from crimes and abuses to the tragedies and destruction it left behind, from the corruption and atrocities it spread around to the dummies it created, calling them presidents, ministers, members of parliament and politicians, and forcing them on the country to rule through them and realize the chronic Syrian dream of annexing Lebanon.

All the Lebanese knew those things. Some of them resisted these attempts from day one of the entry of the Syrian army of occupation under the guise of the so-called Arab Forces of Deterrence, and leading the resistance were the Guardians of the Cedars – the Movement of Lebanese Nationalism, which secluded themselves in the Lebanese mountain in protest and participated in every military and peaceful act of confrontation and resistance against that army, until it evacuated from Lebanon's scared land last April. Others acquiesced to the imposed order, under various pretexts. Some were accomplices to the occupation, and remain so to this day... But now that Khaddam said what he said, though belatedly, he who was a pillar of the Syrian regime and a decision-maker in it, particularly in matters concerning policy on Lebanon, we have to set the record and state the following observations:

- The Syrian regime, now isolated and besieged, increasingly looks like the revolution that is destroying its own people, and Khaddam won't be the last one. His words are more in revenge against those who dismissed him from his position of leadership in Syria than an awakening of his conscience for what his own regime has done to Lebanon and even to the Syrian people themselves.
- The revelations by Khaddam about the reality on the ground inside Syria should assure the Lebanese even more that Syria will never return to Lebanon. The Lebanese should confront the desperate attempts by the Syrian regime to exploit Lebanon again as a conduit through which to send messages, cinch deals and settlements with the international community at its expense, with greater unity amongst themselves. They should insist on building a genuine and strong State, transcending the petty political and governmental disputes, the allocation of shares, and the pursuit of positions, and they should exploit the unprecedented support of the international community to Lebanon and its people at all levels for the achievement of that objective.
- Isn't the unveiling by Khaddam, with facts and names, of the methods used by the Syrian occupation to rule Lebanon enough of an incentive for most of the Lebanese political establishment that cooperated with the occupation – particularly over the past fifteen years – to consider what they have done to the country and their fellow countrymen? Shouldn't they at least admit guilt and present a simple apology, instead of turning Khaddam's revelations into a barricade across which to fire at each other, offering pretexts for their acts and passing the buck from one to the other? Or is it that they have no shame?
- The Lebanese authorities should, before anything else, prompt the United Nations to form an international commission to investigate everything the Syrian regime committed in Lebanon, determine the responsibilities, punish the perpetrators and compensate the Lebanese people for their material and moral losses, especially since Khaddam is a Syrian regime insider whose testimony is invaluable. Do we really need more evidence than this?
- There were many erroneous facts and falsifications in Khaddam's narrative, which the Lebanese people and history will never forgive him. It would have been more honourable of him to apologize for them.

Second, eight months have passed since the sit-in of the mothers of the detainees in Syrian prisons began in front of the United Nations building in downtown Beirut, demanding to know the truth about the fate of their children. As we express our support and sympathy for the detainees' cause, now awaiting resolution for a

quarter of a century, and as we support the actions by the Mothers' Committee and the SOLIDE organization, and as we urge the Lebanese of all stripes to stand by them, we demand that the Lebanese government no longer content itself with creating Lebanese or joint Lebanese-Syrian committees to look into this matter because they are futile. We demand instead that a complaint be submitted against the Syrian regime with the United Nations on charges of committing crimes against humanity on Lebanese citizens who are detained arbitrarily and who were forcibly disappeared, and demand the creation of a fact-finding commission for that purpose. Every delay in presenting this claim will not be in the interests of our detained children and their families.

Lebanon , at your service

Abu Arz

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