



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué

Syria persists in its hostile political posturing towards Lebanon on many fronts, and no one so far has been able to deter it. Syria refuses the exchange of diplomatic relations in form or substance, and instead of agreeing to delineate the borders, it is acting to chip away at those borders as is happening in the regions along the Eastern Anti-Lebanon mountain range such as in Deir Al-Ashayer, the Shebaa Farms, and Ersal. Syria is digging trenches, establishing barricades and creating new military positions inside Lebanese territory in those areas, and it continues to smuggle weapons and armed men to its groups inside the country. It continues its interference in Lebanese internal affairs, particularly in crippling the National Dialogue and those provisions that have been agreed upon while obstructing those still under discussion. And it brandishes the sword of terror over the heads of the anti-Syrian opposition around the clock, turning them into prisoners inside their own homes.

By the same token, everyone is asking what has the Lebanese government done to counter this dangerous Syrian escalation? The answer is not much so far in terms of serious actions, other than the globe-trotting from one foreign capital to another beseeching their help in pressuring Syria, and blathering over endless reiterations of traditional tired and stale middle-of-the-road positions. This government has not taken any initiative to approve a complete, daring, coherent and far-reaching plan of action that it can present to the decision-making capitals of the world and seek help on its basis. Moreover, it continues to send appeasement messages to Syria that have gone nowhere.

There are obvious truths that the government ought to consider if it wishes to overcome the Syrian obstacle. First, No one is willing to help Lebanon on behalf of Lebanon itself, for as the saying goes, “Help yourself, and the Heavens will help you.” Second, the most that the international community can do is more political pressure, and possibly economic pressure, that do not change the behavior of outlaw States who do not obey the United Nations. As to international resolutions, they remain mere ink on paper no matter how many are passed if they are not matched by effective implementation on the ground. Therefore, one cannot put too much reliance on the international community to solve all Lebanese problems, both internal and external. Third, Bu the same token, not much can be expected from the Arabs with respect to the Syrian-Lebanese dispute because experience has taught us that Arab regimes will always side with Syria and only pay lip service to Lebanon’s demands, noting that the latest shepherding by Saudi Arabia and Egypt has improved Syria’s position and made it stronger than it was a year ago.

As we are discussing the government, there is a question on everyone’s mind: What has it accomplished to date? And where is the much-promised reform? And if it is unable to stand up to the enemies of the outside, why doesn’t it stand up to the enemies of the inside, namely confronting the crises of poverty, emigration, medical care, electricity and the debt, etc.? What is it waiting for to fight the rampant corruption deeply ingrained inside the State’s apparatus? And does it need a permission from Syria to do this? And why doesn’t the government go after the thieving gangs, the money pirates and all those with swollen pockets based on the principle of accounting for the sources of all this suspicious wealth? This way it will strike three birds with one stone: First, it recovers the embezzled money to breathe a little life into the Treasury; second, it will reduce the tax burden off the backs of the poor and the struggling families, rather than thinking of raising taxes; and lastly, it recovers some of its prestige vis-à-vis the international community, in order to encourage it for greater support for Lebanon and for the success of the Beirut I Conference.

Otherwise, this conference will suffer the same fate as the Paris I and Paris II conferences, and at that point, the government will have to either step aside or face the wrath of the poor and a revolution by its own people.

Lebanon, at your service

Abu Arz

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