



The Guardians of the Cedars Party issued the following weekly communiqué:

Conditions in Lebanon will not straighten out under the existing sectarian or denominational system that has segregated the Lebanese people into competing sectarian and religious tribes, and which has resulted into the logic of mini-states overruling the logic of the one state.

Therefore, the existing system must be replaced sooner or later by a secular system resting on the principle of the separation of church and state and allowing all Lebanese to vie for all political offices, including the highest, according to the criteria of competence and merit, and nothing else.

We raise this discussion prior to the looming presidential elections in which the conflict has reached its paroxysm between leaders of the Maronite community, a conflict that has weakened this community and diminished its role, which in turn has weakened all of Lebanon. With the benefit of hindsight, we see that the primary reason for the catastrophes that have plagued Lebanon is the successive concessions made by the Maronite leaders to the enemies of Lebanon without so much as anything in return, concessions made against the background of these leaders' frenzied battles over the highest office, including but not limited to the following examples:

First, opening the borders to the throngs of Palestinian refugees in 1948 led in a straight line to the destructive war of 1975 and its corollary wars, and all the way to today's Nahr Al-Bared war. And there is no end in sight, it seems. Second, signing the Cairo Accord in 1969 and converting Lebanon, to this day, into a confrontation state with Israel. Third, accepting the Arab Deterrent Forces in 1976; those forces became the Syrian occupation forces that destroyed all the foundations of the Lebanese state. Fourth, approving the 1989 Taef Agreement, which consolidated the sectarian regime, compounded the divisions among the Lebanese, and voided the Presidency of the Republic of any substance. Not only have those concessions led to the exhaustion of the Maronite community, but they have also bled the country to death, as stated earlier. Maronite leaders have been on a downward spiral since independence, and to this day they, or a majority among them, have been short-sighted, naïve and rabidly greedy for power and money, unlike their predecessors who were pioneers in the rise of Lebanon, and who spared nothing to preserve the nation's existence, freedom and distinct cultural identity throughout its long history.

Therefore, based on the preceding, and on behalf of all those who care for the interests of Lebanon and the Maronite community in particular, we wish that the leaders of the Maronite community relinquish the post of the Presidency to others, in the hope that they would thus recover their senses, unite their ranks, and end their eternal disputes and destructive conflicts, as a way to preserve what dignity the community, the Presidency and the nation still have.

For our part, and in our capacity as a secular party, we recognize that we have always avoided the use of sectarian, denominational, or religious expressions or terms, yet we have

broken this rule this time around out of the need to be clear and avoid ambiguity. And for that, we apologize.

Lebanon, at your service
Abu Arz
August 24, 2007