



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

It is only natural that the upcoming presidential elections become the topic of choice and an obsession for people, as well as the focus of political activity in the country. However, for all its importance, the issue should not deflect the spotlight from other issues that may be more important and critical, particularly since the new President won't be able to make miracles, nor will he be able to change the existing political equation no matter how sincere is his intent or strong is his personality. For one, he has limited prerogatives, as they were abridged by the Taef Agreement, and then there is an organic link between the internal crisis on one hand and the external regional and international conflicts on the other hand.

Two issues that are of greater concern to the Lebanese people than the presidential elections are: The continuously deteriorating economic situation, resulting mostly from the growing deficit of the Treasury, and the plan to settle the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

On the subject of the Treasury, there are some who are saying that its deficit was intentional and deliberate, with the objective of holding Lebanon hostage to the Arab oil countries so they can control it financially and economically after they failed to control it militarily via the Syrian and Palestinian wars against the Lebanese people. In support of this statement is the policy of systematic impoverishment and starvation that successive governments have adopted since the early 1990s to this date with the goal of pushing the Lebanese young people to emigrate, void the country of its people and replace them by nationals of Arab States, primarily the Palestinian refugees residing on Lebanese soil. How else then do we explain this huge human drain from Lebanon towards the countries of emigration? How do we explain this absolute silence over the crime of ruining and bankrupting the State? Why is it that, to this date, not one inquiry commission has been set up to look into the facts of this big crime whose danger exceeds all other crimes, to expose the names of those involved in it willfully or by neglect, and prosecute them before the competent judicial authorities?

It is the right of the Lebanese people to know the causes that led to this terrifying deficit and to know the culprits behind the plan to impoverish and starve the Lebanese people! What is the size of the public debt and the real amount of the deficit?

It is the obligation of the State to answer those questions candidly, accurately and clearly because the future of all the Lebanese, of every Lebanese family in the last village of Lebanon, hinges on this issue.

We will take up the question of the settlement of the Palestinian refugees in our next weekly statement.

Lebanon, at your service

Abu Arz

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