



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

The Doha Agreement received noticeable welcome among the grassroots in Lebanon, even though it is only a compromise over the existing crisis and not a solution to it. So let us not indulge in over-optimism, but rather deal with the situation with a dose of realism in order to avoid being disappointed at the first expected setback, particularly since the road to that desired solution remains littered with mines and the journey to genuine civil peace is only at its beginning.

And if we examine this agreement in all its aspects, we find in it positive as well as negative elements, as one would expect from a compromise that relies on half-way solutions in order to get the adversaries to concur, or on general principles far removed from the details where the devil is, as they say.

Among the positive elements of that compromise:

- 1- It stopped the dangerous sectarian killings, opened the way for the election of a new President after a vacuum that lasted several months, and it returned the democratic process to the heretofore dysfunctional constitutional institutions.
- 2- It contributed to letting off the internal tensions and gave the Lebanese an opportunity to take a deep breath after at least 18 months of anxiety. It laid the groundwork for a truce which may be long or short depending on the political and security developments, both domestic and regional.
- 3- It paved the way for a resumption of economic activity and pumping life into an otherwise comatose economy, as well as a promising tourist and summer vacationing season, particularly now that the sit-in tents in downtown Beirut have been removed from the heart of the capital, and all air, sea and land ports now re-opened.

As for the negative elements:

- 1- The Doha Agreement did not mention the UN resolutions pertaining to Lebanon, specifically those addressing the mini-states and their weapons, and that is where the crux of the matter lies. Instead, it threw the ball back to the politicians who are basically impotent at addressing this chronic problem. This may re-ignite the situation again or it may require yet another return to Doha. In the meantime, the Lebanese will have to coexist with this anomaly for an indefinite period of time.
- 2- The “blocking third” which the opposition has scored will lead to a paralysis of fateful government decisions, especially on the issues of the International Tribunal and Lebanon’s foreign policy which will remain in limbo between the US-European program on one hand, and the Syrian-Iranian program on the other hand.
- 3- Also, the reduction in the President’s share in the government or the next governments will limit his ability to act decisively on hot button issues and to soundly manage the country’s affairs. We would have liked the Doha Conference boost the authority of the President to compensate for the truncation it suffered at the Taef Conference.

Despite all of this, we shall remain cautiously optimistic.

Lebanon, at your service
Abu Arz
May 23, 2008