



The Guardians of the Cedars -The Movement of Lebanese Nationalism issued the following communiqué:

The series of incidents that targeted the UNIFIL peacekeeping forces in the south were neither spontaneous nor isolated problems as some have described them. Rather, they were organized systematic attacks that some residents carried out on behalf of the de facto forces known as Hezbollah, as was clear to informed observers of the behind-the-scene facts on the ground in the south.

UNIFIL forces have been on our soil for more than a quarter of a century and were never subjected to the violent provocations such as the ones of the past weeks. Those incidents had the aspect of a confrontation against the French forces in particular, beginning with road closures barring their patrols, pelting them with rocks, smashing the windows of their military vehicles, and ending with the disarming of UNIFIL soldiers, something akin to the worst humiliation in military law.

And so we feel, like others, that these incidents are far from being innocent and are definitely not isolated from their local and regional environment. In fact, they are linked in their timing and location to accelerating political developments in the region, namely: 1- Sanctions on Iran in which France played a leading role alongside the United States in approving them; 2- The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) whose first public hearing is set to be held on the 13th of this month and is slated to provide a clear picture of the prosecution's course and process; 3- The decision to renew the mandate of UNIFIL at the end of this August, and 4- The intense military and logistic reinforcements by the de facto forces south and north of the Litani River and elsewhere in the Lebanese regions in anticipation of the outbreak of an expected regional war.

What is striking in all of this is the irrelevance of both the Lebanese regime and the international community in confronting the de facto forces that control the ground in south Lebanon. The official Lebanese position was overall bland, ambiguous and wavering, while the military response came naturally as a copy of the political response, essentially exercising a head-in-the-sand ostrich policy of turning the army from a UN resolution 1701 mandated support role for UNIFIL, to a mere onlooker or, in the best circumstances, to a mediator who placed the calls to contain the "incidents" and uttered expressions of condemnation and disapproval. The best that we can expect the international community to do is to threaten to withdraw its forces from the south, issue a new Security Council resolution to add the dozens or so existing resolutions, or merely issue a verbose statement condemning what happened, demanding the protection of its troops and their freedom of movement, and urging everyone that they must comply with resolution 1701, emphasize "must".

We believe that the international community has so far succeeded in its social role of providing food and medical aid to victimized peoples, but it has failed in its political role, and evidence is aplenty: The Libyan regime remained defiant on its throne for more than 40 years despite strict sanctions imposed on it!! North Korea developed a nuclear weapon with total disregard to sanctions and international resolutions!! The economic blockade imposed on the Syrian regime has exacerbated the regime's ferocity in its negative dealings with its neighbors from Lebanon to Iraq and to Gaza!! The latest sanctions on Iran, not surprisingly then, will not prevent it from continuing its uranium enrichment and developing its nuclear weapons!!

Hence, we see that the international community is left with only two options if it were to preserve its eroding prestige and relevance: First, issue resolutions that are implementable on the ground, or alternatively, stop issuing these resolutions if they are going to remain mere ink on paper.

Lebanon, at your service

Abu Arz

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