



Letter to congress from Lebanese-American Organizations

February 13, 2009

Dear Member of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, represent a broad cross-section of Lebanese-Americans and the cause of a sovereign and prosperous Lebanon. On behalf of our members, we thank the United States Congress for an ongoing commitment to peace, democracy, and human rights throughout the Middle East.

Several members of Congress currently are preparing to travel to Syria, and when they visit with Syrian officials we hope that you and your colleagues will keep in mind some important principles:

First, the UN Security Council has passed Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701, which deal with the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon. Security Council Resolution 1701 specifically calls for the «disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon» and «no sales or supply of arms and related materiel to Lebanon except as authorized by its Government.» Syria must comply with these resolutions.

Second, Syria should expedite the workings of the Lebanese-Syrian «Joint Commission on Missing Persons,» whose mission includes investigating the hundreds of Lebanese believed to be detained in Syria, and promptly release the findings.

Third, Syria should quickly and seriously implement the declaration of Lebanon's President Michel Sleiman and Syria's President Bashar Assad on August 14, 2008 to delimit and demarcate the borders between Lebanon and Syria.

Fourth, we welcome the exchange of embassies between Syria and Lebanon, including the opening of the Syrian embassy in Beirut on December 26, 2008, and urge that Syria appoint an ambassador expeditiously as an important sign of its respect for Lebanese sovereignty.

Fifth, all United Nations member-states, including Syria, are required to cooperate with the International Independent Investigation Committee probing the assassinations of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri and others and to cooperate with the Special Tribunal to try those indicted in the said assassinations.

Members of Congress who visit Syria have an opportunity to raise the above issues directly with Syrian officials, and to make clear the historic interest of the United States in the well-being of Lebanon and its people. We hope that visiting American officials emphasize to Syria that the United States expects Syrian compliance with UN resolutions and cooperation with UN bodies if Syria wants normalization in US-Syrian relations.



Upcoming congressional visits to Syria provide an opportunity to deliver a clear message to Syria's leaders that they must respect the sovereignty of Lebanon and respect the independence and dignity of the Lebanese people.

Respectfully,

Lebanon Renaissance Foundation (LRF)
American Task Force for Lebanon (ATFL)
Lebanese Information Center (LIC)
National Association of Lebanese Americans (NALA)
American Lebanese Coalition (ALC)
American Lebanese Coordination Council (ALCC)