



American Lebanese Coalition

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Press Release

An unprecedented gathering, by any measure, of American and Lebanese officials came together this May 12, 2006 to commemorate the first anniversary of the Cedar Revolution and to express gratitude for the support that the US administration had given to the Lebanese cause. The event was hosted by the American Lebanese Coalition (ALC).

The keynote speaker and the recipient of the Cedar Shield honor, Permanent US Representative to the United Nations Ambassador John Bolton, delivered the keynote speech, in which he affirmed the commitment of the US Administration to the freedom, sovereignty and independence of Lebanon.

Present at the event were Representatives of the White House, National Security Council, the State Department, the Defense Department and Congress. Current and former Lebanese members of parliament from the March 14th Alliance were also present at the exceptional occasion, along with more than five hundred Lebanese American participants from across the United States.

After the welcoming remarks, the Master of Ceremonies and Vice President of the ALC Mr. Milad Zohrob introduced the President of the ALC Dr. Joseph Gebeily. Dr. Gebeily gave the ALC remarks on the first anniversary of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, characterizing it as one of the greatest historic events in the annals of democracy in the 21st century. He called the gathering a salute to the courage and determination of the Lebanese people and the bravery of those leaders who refused the intimidation of the ruthless Baath Regime. Dr. Gebeily recognized the sacrifices of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, Minister Basel Fleihan, journalist Samir Kassir, political figure George Hawi and journalist and member of the Lebanese parliament Gebran Tueini.

Dr. Gebeily lauded President Bush and the US Administration for their support to the efforts of the Lebanese people to be free to determine their own future without foreign interference.

The president of the ALC went on to describe the Lebanese-American community's relentless efforts, with the help of the American Administration and Congress, to restore sovereignty to the Lebanese Nation. He asked everybody to remain vigilant because the enemies of Lebanon, the

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enemies of America and the enemies of peace have not given up yet. He described the members of the March 14th alliance as true patriots who, with the support of the US Administration and other friendly nations, would safeguard the restored Lebanese independence. Dr. Gebeily ended his remarks praising the “Partnership of the Free” among the Lebanese people, the American people and the Lebanese-American community.

Mr. Adib Farha, Senior Policy Advisor of the ALC spoke next. His remarks emphasized the fact that “the success of the Cedar Revolution was the result of the convergence of three main efforts: the heroic bravery of the Lebanese people, the unwavering support of the US government and the firm resolve of the international community”. By way of introducing Ambassador Bolton, Mr. Farha remarked that Ambassador Bolton is “cognizant of the fact that the battle to restore democracy and sovereignty to Lebanon is an issue that surpasses Syria’s historic goal of annexing Lebanon and the financial interests of the joint Lebanese-Syrian intelligence mafia that wreaked havoc in Lebanon for thirty years”. He added that Mr. Bolton “realizes that the battle lines have been drawn between advocates of regression, terrorism and theocracies and advocates of freedom, human rights and democracy. A battle between forces of good and forces of evil. Between those who work for a better future and those who work for a return to the dark ages. Between people who believe that governments should be of the people, by the people and for the people and people who remain in the throws of the Middle Ages and believe in the Divine Rights of Ayatollahs, despotic rulers and oppressive autocrats”.

Then Ambassador Bolton took the podium and addressed a cheering crowd of grateful admirers. He spoke of Syria’s refusal to demarcate the border with Lebanon and attributed it to deeply-rooted conviction among the Syrian rulers that Lebanon does not exist as an independent country. “Whether they like it or not, Lebanon will be free and independent”, added Mr. Bolton. Moreover, he added that Syria should stop supporting terrorism in Iraq, and stop finding excuses to patrol the border. He asked “why doesn’t the Syrian regime use the thirty thousands troops it pulled out of Lebanon to guard the Syrian Iraqi border?”

Referring to the implementation of UNSCRs 1559 and 1636, the Ambassador said that the report of the investigating committee looking into the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and into fourteen other assassination attempts, would lead one to conclude that there was involvement in these crimes by the Syrian regime at the highest level.

After a lengthy and thunderous standing ovation, ALC Board member Elias Semaan spoke of the symbolism behind the Cedar Shield and what it represents. Then the ALC board joined the ALC President at the podium and handed the Cedar Shield award to Ambassador John Bolton.

Subsequently, Ambassador Bolton responded to questions from the audience.

American officials unable to attend had sent letters of support, which were read out by ALC Vice President Joseph Hage. These letters included statements from US Ambassador to Lebanon Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Senator Sam Brownback, Senator Mike De Wine and Senator George Allen

Next on the program was a question and answer session between the audience and the visiting Lebanese dignitaries It was moderated by board member Pierre Maroun, who also introduced members of parliament

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Tony Zahra and Ghazi Youssef, former MP Fares Souaid and National Liberal Part Leader Mr. Dory Chamoun.

Among the statements made during the said session, were remarks made by Ms. Rita Karromi, Youth Activities Chairperson at the ALC, who eloquently described the hopes and aspirations for Lebanon of second generation Lebanese American.