

The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Lebanon

Oct 19, 2007



In-Depth Reports

On October 19, 2007, Walid Jumblatt delivered a keynote address at The Washington Institute's Weinberg Founders Conference. Mr. Jumblatt is chairman of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon, leader of the Druze community, and an outspoken ally of the "March 14" alliance. The following is an edited excerpt from his remarks.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished trustees, I'm delighted and honored to be able to express some viewpoints concerning Lebanon at this particular and decisive moment of my country's history, here hosted by the prestigious Washington Institute. But to be able to grasp the complex situation, allow me to go back to some historical moments and events that triggered, and are still triggering, the current crisis.

The moment of truth, if I can say so, started on August 26, 2004, when Bashar al-Asad summoned Rafiq Hariri, the late prime minister of Lebanon, to Damascus. The meeting did not last more than ten minutes, and Asad told him bluntly, "Emile Lahoud (then the Lebanese president) is me, and if somebody in Lebanon wants me out, I'll break Lebanon. Go and renew his mandate."

Hariri was prevented from even arguing, and went straight back to Beirut, where he met with me and told me what happened to him with Bashar. For President Marwan Hamadeh and Ghazi Aridi, ministers and members of parliament, and Bassem Sabaa, another member of parliament, the moment of truth had come. Some of you might ask why it took me such a long time to defy Syrian occupation of Lebanon. One day -- if I manage to escape from the butcher of Damascus, correctly described by Bernard Lewis as the inheritor of the assassins -- I will write my memoirs....

A full transcript of the speech and subsequent question-and-answer session can be found in the [Weinberg Founders Conference proceedings \(templateC04.php?CID=287\)](#), available as a free download from the Washington Institute bookstore. ❖

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