



LEBANESE INFORMATION CENTER

LIC Position Statement on Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's Remarks in Lebanon 04-10-2015

The Lebanese Information Center expresses its sincere appreciation for the United States' continued support to Lebanon, most recently reiterated by Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken during his visit to Beirut.

Deputy Secretary Blinken's visit highlights the importance that the United States places on the sovereignty, independence, and democratic decision-making procedures of Lebanon, particularly during these difficult times in the Middle East.

The LIC also takes this opportunity to stress the following:

- **First**, US assistance to Lebanon is an expression of America's solidarity with the Lebanese people and interest in a stable and prosperous Lebanon.

The US's consistent and significant support to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) has strengthened their military capabilities, helping them face security threats within Lebanon and along its borders. Over the past year, Lebanon's security forces have faced attacks by militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, the Al-Nusra Front, and other extremist organizations. It is therefore imperative that military air support to the LAF be provided urgently, particularly along the Lebanese-Syrian borders where terrorist organizations are seeking refuge and where militants from Hezbollah cross into Syria to fight alongside Syria's regime.

The LIC also thanks the United States for its humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and to Lebanese host communities. We call on the international community and UN aid organizations to develop and immediately implement long-term solutions to support countries with large refugee communities, in particular Lebanon.

- **Second**, the US government clearly understands the core of the problem faced by both the Lebanese and the Syrian people: a political solution for the Syrian crisis cannot include a role for the brutal dictator Bashar al-Assad, and Hezbollah's intervention in Syria has directly hurt both the Lebanese and Syrian people.

The US position on Assad's departure reflects the will of Syria's people, who have suffered for decades under a ruthless regime which has persecuted and tortured them. Furthermore, and as Deputy Secretary Blinken's astutely remarked: the lifeline Hezbollah has provided Assad will only lead to the prolonging of war and suffering in Syria, will present a recruitment tool for ISIS, and will push more refugees into Lebanon.

- **Third**, the LIC stresses that Hezbollah's destabilizing role is not limited to the Syrian crisis. The "Party of Allah" entirely disregards Lebanon's sovereignty and legitimate decision-making process. It violates the core principles of Lebanon's Constitution in order to pursue a theocracy in Lebanon. Its goals are intrinsically contrary to the vision on which Lebanon was founded.

Hezbollah has not only intervened in Syria, but in Iraq and Yemen, and actively works to disrupt Lebanon's relations with the international community, including the Arab and Gulf States. The party has outright rejected the Baabda Declaration, which calls for Lebanon to disassociate itself from the Syrian crisis.

The LIC calls on the United Nations Security Council to assume its responsibility in helping Lebanon implement relevant UNSC Resolutions, particularly UNSCR 1559 and 1701. These resolutions are essential to sustain the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon, as they call for Lebanon's territories and borders to strictly be under the control of Lebanon's legitimate security forces. They also demand the dissolving of all armed militias, leaving weapons solely in the hands of state security forces. The implementation of these resolutions would give the Lebanese state full control over decisions on war and peace, and would prevent any party or armed faction from taking Lebanon hostage in military ventures.

- **Fourth**, the United States, via Deputy Secretary Blinken, stressed the importance of ending Lebanon's presidential vacuum, which has left the country without a head of state for almost a year. Deputy Secretary Blinken called on Lebanon's parliament to elect a president as soon as possible and to hold publically accountable those parliamentarians boycotting the electoral sessions. Not only should these individuals be held accountable in the court of public opinion, but they should also be held responsible for weakening the Lebanese presidency by leaving it empty for so long. This should be considered an offense to Lebanon's democratic system and a major failure by those who have been delegated by Lebanon's people to elect a president.