LEBANESE INFORMATION CENTER

# Lebanese-American Organizations and Esteemed Government Officials Commemorate Tenth Anniversary of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution on Capitol Hill

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Lebanese-American organizations, notably the Lebanese Information Center (LIC) in the US, the Assembly for Lebanon and the American Lebanese Policy Institute, commemorated the tenth anniversary of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution and the withdrawal of Syrian occupation forces, as has become custom, with an event on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, April 30.

At a time when Lebanon is facing a series of challenges, including jihadists entrenched on its borders, a year-long presidential vacuum, and a crippling refugee crisis, members of the US government and the Lebanese-American diaspora joined hands to show firm support for a free, sovereign, and stable Lebanon.

Administration officials, notably Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Lawrence Silverman and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Alexander Arvizu, as well as officials from the White House, State Department, and Department of Defense, also joined the commemoration.

US Secretary of State John Kerry sent a letter to LIC President Dr. Joseph Gebeily sending his "best wishes to the Lebanese-American community" and commending the LIC for "highlighting the continued spirit of the Cedar Revolution for Americans."

"We remain deeply committed to supporting the Lebanese people as they work to fulfill their country's potential in line with late Prime Minister [Rafik Hariri's] vision for a sovereign, secure, and prosperous Lebanon," Secretary Kerry wrote.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Silverman delivered a passionate speech, saying "the courage the Lebanese people showed during this time not only ended the Syrian military's occupation; it foreshadowed demands for change and accountability that we later saw elsewhere in the Middle East."

On behalf of the US government, he called for Lebanon to immediately elect a president, to hold accountable those who boycott said elections, and to fully respect UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Alexander Arvizu described the main components of the US aid programs to the Internal Security Forces (ISF), stressing the importance of American security assistance to Lebanon especially during such a challenging time for the region.

Esteemed members of Congress reiterated that message. Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (HCFA) Ed Royce (R-CA) said the US Congress would continue to support Lebanon's armed forces in their fight against jihadist groups along the Lebanese-Syrian borders.

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Middle East Subcommittee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) said the US would stand by Lebanon to fight off the threats of Iran, Hezbollah, Bashar al-Assad, and Islamic State jihadists.

HCFA Ranking Member Congressman Eliot Engel (D-NY) said the US would remain an ally to Lebanon because they shared the same aspirations: freedom and democracy.

Prominent Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee: Steve Chabot (R-OH), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Darrell Issa (R-CA), Mark Meadows (R-NC) spoke in support of Lebanon's sovereignty and full independence from dangerous influences including Hezbollah and the Syrian regime, and recognized the acute political and economic challenges facing the Lebanese people at this time.

Lebanese-American organizations were also honored by the presence of Congressman Mike Turner (R-OH), and by the letters sent by Middle East subcommittee Ranking Member Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Congressman Charles Boustany (R-LA), though they could not attend.

American officials were echoing the demands of Lebanese-American organizations, which distributed a statement calling for speedy and fair presidential elections in Lebanon, increasing aid to help Lebanon cope with its burgeoning refugee crisis, and continued US military assistance to legitimate state security forces, while condemning the Iranian and Assad regimes' violations of Lebanon's sovereignty.

LIC President Dr. Joseph Gebeily reiterated that a safe, secure, and independent Lebanon is in the interest of the United States, and that the US government had manifested its commitment to this cause with its steadfast support, politically and financially, for Lebanon's legitimate institutions.

The event was also attended by His Excellency Lebanese Ambassador to the United States Antoine Chedid, Deputy Chief of Mission Carla Jazzar, other embassy and consulate representatives, and a large number of Lebanese-Americans, as well as members of US think tanks and research centers.

The LIC continues to work towards a free, democratic, and independent Lebanon, a Lebanon that is in the interest of the Lebanese people and the United States.

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