

American Lebanese Coalition

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Statement by
The American Lebanese Coalition on The United Nation Security Council Resolution 1559

(September 8, 2004)

On September 2nd 2004, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolution 1559, *reaffirming its support for the strict respect of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country,* and *calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon and for the disbanding and disarming of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.* This highly-anticipated resolution has come as a result of the continuous efforts of Lebanese-American groups in the United States in coordination with Lebanese groups worldwide particularly in Europe.

Member Organizations[1] of the American Lebanese Coalition have been engaging the United Nations since May 2000 to address the situation in Southern Lebanon following the withdrawal of the Israeli army and the resulting takeover of the area by Hezbollah. Contacts included the Office of the Secretary General and the Delegates of the permanent member nations at the United Nation Security Council as well as Ambassadors from the European Union and the Arab League. The focus was to solicit the support of the international community for a comprehensive settlement of the Lebanese dire situation.

During September 2003, and with the appointment of Mr. Walid Maalouf as an alternate delegate to the US mission at the United Nations, the American Lebanese Coalition (ALC) initiated a series of contacts with delegates of the UNSC, permanent and elected (non-permanent), with the purpose of reaching a new comprehensive resolution on Lebanon which would address the major issues facing the Lebanese people and would call for:

1. The withdrawal of all Syrian troops.
2. The disarming of all militias, particularly Hezbollah and the Palestinians.
3. Supporting the Lebanese sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.
4. The release of all political prisoners in Lebanon and Lebanese detainees in Syria.

The proposed resolution was drafted by the ALC with the help of legal experts and presented in a series of meetings at the United Nations in New York during the month of October 2003 when it was discussed with the

[1] *Prior to the formation of the American Lebanese Coalition.*

ambassadors at the Security Council, starting with US Ambassador John Negroponte and his team including Mr. Walid Maalouf.

The ALC also met with the ambassador of Mexico to solicit the support of the South American delegates, the ambassador of Algeria to engage the Arab representatives and also held detailed sessions with the ambassador of the European Union, Mr. John Richardson concerning the EU Parliamentary Resolution issued in January of that same year and which addressed the issue of sovereignty of Lebanon, the Syrian occupation, the disturbing militias' presence and the abuses of Human Rights.

Following these meetings and consultations, the ALC decided to continue working on refining the text of the resolution while:

1. Pursuing discussions with the UNSC, especially with the American and European members to reach an acceptable wording.
2. Pushing along with other Lebanese organizations for the finalization and signing of the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA).
3. Waiting for the end of Syria's term as an elected member at the UNSC.

After January 2004, and with the advent of a new membership at the UNSC, the ALC renewed its efforts through:

4. A campaign of letters, e-mails and faxes to the White House, Department of State, and the National Security Council requesting the US administration's formal adoption of a new UN resolution on Lebanon. The campaign collected over 10000 signatures, one of the largest efforts by Lebanese Americans in that regard[2].
5. Rounds of meetings and discussions with high ranking US officials at the Department of State, Department of Defense, and National Security Council during March of 2004.
6. Several visits to the United Nations headquarters in New York involving meetings with ambassadors and delegates of the United States, France, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, China, Brazil, and Romania.
7. A campaign launched in Europe by our fellow organizations targeting the European Union and the French government followed by meetings during the month of June 2004 in Brussels and in Paris with EU and French officials.
8. An official address to the World leaders at the G8 2004 summit[3].

As a result of this concentrated effort, the ALC received the proper assurances from US and European Officials that a new and comprehensive UNSC resolution on Lebanon based on the draft presented by the ALC, and coordinated in particular by the French and American governments is on its way to the UN. President George W. Bush stood at the forefront of the key supporters to Lebanon's sovereignty, and had specifically addressed the Lebanese situation in his meeting with President Chirac at Paris in June 2004 as well as with other World Leaders during the G8 summit at Sea Island, Georgia.

During the last week of August 2004, the draft of the resolution was finalized, circulated and forwarded to the UNSC for the final vote where it passed. Resolution 1559 has come at a most crucial time for Lebanon with the imposition of the Syrian dictate over the Lebanese Presidential choice. It constitutes a qualitative leap forward in the struggle of the Lebanese nationals and citizens of Lebanese descent across the globe for freedom in Lebanon. The American Lebanese Coalition extends its gratitude and appreciation to all those who made this effort a success, and looks forward to the day we witness the resurrection of Lebanon as a truly free, sovereign and independent nation.

[2] Annex 1.
[3] Annex 2.

Selected Pictures - ALC Delegations[4] visits key officials



At the US Congress, delegation meets with the Director of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, Yleem Poblete.

From Left to Right: John Hajjar, Joseph Gebeily, Yleem Poblete, Joe Baini, Tom Harb.



At the United Nations, delegation meets with US Ambassador at the United Nations, John Negroponte and Deputy Political Counselor at the US Mission to the UN, Peter Vrooman.

From Left to Right: Fadi Bark, Tom Harb, Walid Phares, John Negroponte, Joe Baini, Peter Vrooman



At the United Nations, delegation meets with European Union Ambassador at the United Nations, John Richardson.

From Left to Right: Ghassan Kiami, Joseph Gebeily, Joanne Fakhre, John Richardson, John Hajjar, Tom Harb.

[4] ALC Delegations were joined in some of the meetings by Mr Joe Baini, President of the World Lebanese Cultural Union and Mr Walid Maalouf, at the time Alternate Delegate in the US Mission at the United Nations.



At the US Department of State, delegation accompanied by Mr. Walid Maalouf meets with Under Secretary of State for International Security and Arms Control, John Bolton.

From Left to Right: Tom Harb, Joe Baini, Walid Maalouf, John Bolton, Walid Phares, John Hajjar, Joseph Gebeily.



At the US Department of State, delegation accompanied by Mr. Walid Maalouf meets with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, James W. Swigert.

From Left to Right: Walid Phares, Tom Harb, John Hajjar, James W. Swigert, Joseph Gebeily, Joe Baini, Walid Maalouf.



At the US National Security Council, delegation accompanied by Mr. Walid Maalouf meets with the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Near East and North African Affairs, Elliott Abrahms.

From Left to Right: Tom Harb, Joseph Gebeily, Walid Phares, Elliott Abrahms, Joe Baini, Walid Maalouf, John Hajjar



At the US Department of Defense, delegation accompanied meets with Assistant Secretary of Defense For International Security Affairs, Peter Rodman.

From Left to Right: John Hajjar, Walid Phares, Peter Rodman, Joe Baini, Joseph Gebeily, Tom Harb

ANNEX 1 – APPEAL AND LETTER IN SUPPORT OF UN RESOLUTION ON LEBANON (JANUARY 22, 2004)

01-22-2004

Dear Friend and Supporter:

The American Lebanese Coalition regrouping 6 organizations in the US, namely (1) the American Lebanese Alliance, (2) American Lebanese Coordination Council, (3) American Maronite Union, (4) Assembly for Lebanon, (5) Lebanese Information Center-USA, and (6) the World Lebanese Cultural Union-USA, is launching a campaign in support of a new United Nations Security Council Resolution on Lebanon to be introduced by the United States Delegation at the UN.

The Resolution calls for:

- the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon
- the disarming of all militias, particularly Hezbollah and the Palestinian armed groups.

The Resolution is based on previous UNSC Resolutions and on the inherent rights of the Lebanese people to be free, and of the Lebanese State to be sovereign and independent.

A draft is being circulated now at the US Mission at the UN. The final decision is in the hands of President Bush and Secretary of State Powell. A nationwide campaign is needed to get their support.

- A free and democratic Lebanon will be a great asset for America in the Middle East
- The "Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act" signed into law by the President clearly states that "***the full restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity is in the national security interest of the United States,"*** **and that** ***"Syria is in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 520 (September 17, 1982) through its continued occupation of Lebanese territory and its encroachment upon Lebanon's political independence"***

We urge you to mail sign and mail the attached petition to the President and Secretary of State, or use our online system at http://www.licus.org/cmerge/action.htm. Also, start immediately your own campaign: Have your family, spouse, friends, neighbors, co-workers, employees sign and mail this petition. Your signatures are needed ASAP.

Thank you,

Joseph Gebeily, M.D.
Executive Director, American Lebanese Coalition
President, Lebanese Information Center

Dear Mr. President:

In what I believe is an important step towards the elimination of the threat of terrorism and the stabilization of the Middle East region, I ask for your **support for a United Nations Security Council Resolution on Lebanon** demanding the end of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon and the restoration of freedom, democracy and human rights for the Lebanese people.

Years of mingling in internal Lebanese affairs by Syria and Iran followed by a full Syrian control over Lebanon, have reduced this once thriving democracy into a breeding ground for terrorists. The continuous erosion of Lebanon's sovereignty, under the imposed Syrian tutelage, will certainly lead to the total disintegration of a once free nation. This will consolidate the belief in the minds of our enemies that the battle against the US, hastened by the bombings of the American Embassy and the Marines barracks in 1983, has finally concluded with a victory of the radicals of the region. To these terrorists, the mere existence of a pluralistic and democratic country like Lebanon, presents an obstacle to the spreading of their intolerant fundamentalism.

Since 1978, there have been 14 UNSC Resolutions "*supporting the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries"* and "*calling for the Lebanese Government to extend its authority over the Lebanese territory through the Lebanese armed forces"*

A new UN Security Council resolution addressing Syria's occupation of Lebanon comes as a logical sequel to the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, which you signed into law on December 12, 2003.

Any decision to reinstate the rules of democracy in Lebanon will certainly regain a staunch ally for the United States. Most Lebanese, if free, will be at the forefront of the war against terror and will work for stability in the region. Your support to the proposed UN Security Council resolution will tremendously enhance its chances of implementation.

May God bless and protect our United States,

Annex 2 – ALC Letter to the World Leaders at the G8 Summit (June 7, 2004)

Dear Sirs:

The American Lebanese Coalition, a group of 6 organizations representing the views of Americans of Lebanese descent, would like to address your Excellencies on the eve of your important meeting on June 8th in Sea Island, Georgia.

We are aware that your conference will address the current threat facing all free nations today, namely Terrorism, and will examine the situation in the Middle East, where the roots of the problem seem to exist. Although the nations of the Free World might not agree all the time over the means and ways to combat this global enemy, they all fear the disastrous consequences of its ominous aspirations.

We realize that there is some good news coming out of the Middle East Region. Political Reforms are starting to materialize encouraged by the liberation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Countries that traditionally have been harboring terrorists, promoting their ideology or aiding their operations, are now realizing the dire consequences of their deeds. Some of them became victims of the same terror they once found justifiable.

But there are still regimes overtly supporting terrorism like Iran and Syria. While in Iran, the winds of change, opposed to the Mullah's iron rule, are starting to be felt, in Syria, a 35 year-old military dictatorship remains adamantly entrenched in its old ways.

Syria succeeded for years in swindling the West and escaping unscathed from its support of terrorist activities in Europe and the United States.

In the Middle East, Syria, by occupying Lebanon, supporting Hezbollah and other radical militants, has retained its ability to disrupt any effort aimed at solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Syrian regime has demonstrated without any doubt that, while it might embark on peace negotiations, it will not sign a peace agreement. The resolution of the conflict with Israel, used for decades as a justification of the Assads' oppressive rule, will devoid the Syrian dictatorship from its reason for being.

While the status quo ensures the survival of the Syrian regime, it is having detrimental repercussions on Lebanon. The Syrian interference in Lebanon culminating in a complete hegemony in 1990 has transformed its once fledging democracy into a puppet dictatorship. This Syrian tutelage did not only strip the Lebanese of their freedom but also brought to power a group of corrupt politicians who drove the country into economic shambles.

Your Excellencies,

It is quite obvious that the stability of the Middle East will be best guaranteed by positive political changes in its countries. A democratic and free Lebanon presents a cornerstone in this process. It is unreasonable to expect Monarchies and Autocracies to embrace democracy while Lebanon, the first democracy in the Middle East, is not allowed to rejoin the ranks of the free nations.

Only free nations can achieve long term peace and prosperity. In the case of Lebanon, freeing it from Syria's grip will allow the Lebanese to recover their once vibrant economy and to emerge from the socio-economic crisis they are currently suffering from. Once Lebanon enjoys again its freedom and democracy, it will become a promoter of dialogue and tolerance in the Region. The members of the American Lebanese Coalition and other similar organizations worldwide can affectively assist in this endeavor and invest in a stable and independent Lebanon.

This G8's meeting comes at a critical historic turn. Its decisions will impact the future of many people. We all hope that this meeting will bring us closer to a safe and better World.

Respectfully,

Joseph Gebeily, Lebanese Information Center
John Hajjar, World Lebanese Cultural Union-USA
Tom Harb, American Maronite Union
Mel Zohrob, Assembly for Lebanon
Joseph Hage, American Lebanese Coordination Council
Tony BouSamra, American Lebanese Alliance