

Bush Denounces el-Hajj Killing, Urges Syria to End Interference in Lebanon

Contributed by AFP, Naharnet, Whitehouse
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U.S. President George Bush on Thursday condemned the killing of Brig. Gen. Francois el-Hajj, called for supporting Lebanon's presidential election and urged Syria and its allies to end their interference in Lebanon.

Bush, in a statement released by the White House, said: "I strongly condemn yesterday's assassination of Lebanese Brigadier General Francois el-Hajj and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the innocents who were murdered alongside him".

"This assassination marks the twelfth political assassination or attempted assassination Lebanon has suffered since October 2004. Like the many victims before him, General al-Hajj was a supporter of Lebanon's independence and an opponent of Syria's interference in Lebanon's internal affairs," Bush stressed.

He called on "the international community to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these vicious attacks, and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to safeguard their freedom, sovereignty, and democracy."

"This act of terrorism again reminds us of the importance of the International Tribunal established by the UN Security Council earlier this year and of the urgency of ensuring that the Tribunal is fully funded and capable of commencing its operations as soon as possible, to begin holding accountable those responsible for this systematic campaign of murder against Lebanon's most ardent patriots," Bush said.

"We must work together to support and strengthen an independent and democratic Lebanon," he told the international community.

Bush noted that the attack "comes as Lebanon is seeking to choose a new president. The United States supports the efforts of the democratically elected Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to maintain the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon before the presidential elections."

"As Lebanon seeks to select a president democratically and in accordance with its constitution, interference by the Syrian regime and its allies, aimed at intimidating the Lebanese people, must end. The people of Lebanon deserve the opportunity to choose their leaders in freedom and without fear," he concluded.

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<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&1F2E99AB3FA22F42C22573B00063387C>

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President Bush Condemns Assassination of Lebanese Brigadier General Francois al-Hajj

White House News

I strongly condemn yesterday's assassination of Lebanese Brigadier General Francois al-Hajj and extend my condolences to his family and the families of the innocents who were murdered alongside him.

This assassination marks the twelfth political assassination or attempted assassination Lebanon has suffered since October 2004. Like the many victims before him, General al-Hajj was a supporter of Lebanon's independence and an opponent of Syria's interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. I call on the international community to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these vicious attacks, and to stand with the citizens of Lebanon who continue to struggle to safeguard their freedom, sovereignty, and democracy. This act of

terrorism again reminds us of the importance of the International Tribunal established by the UN Security Council earlier this year and of the urgency of ensuring that the Tribunal is fully funded and capable of commencing its operations as soon as possible, to begin holding accountable those responsible for this systematic campaign of murder against Lebanon's most ardent patriots. We must work together to support and strengthen an independent and democratic Lebanon.

This attack comes as Lebanon is seeking to choose a new president. The United States supports the efforts of the democratically elected Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to maintain the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon before the presidential elections. As Lebanon seeks to select a president democratically and in accordance with its constitution, interference by the Syrian regime and its allies, aimed at intimidating the Lebanese people, must end. The people of Lebanon deserve the opportunity to choose their leaders in freedom and without fear. # # #

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