

## Walid Phares: "Not electing a President is a serious miscalculation by March 14"

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Phares to a forum at the European Parliament on Lebanon

"Not electing a President is a serious miscalculation by March 14"

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Addressing a Breakfast chaired by MEP Mihal Brejc at the invitation of the European Parliament, Professor Walid Phares underlined the necessity for legislators, intellectuals and researchers on both sides of the Atlantic to develop a common strategy in confronting the threat of terrorism, which "is growing global, lethal and showing all signs of a long term planning." Dr Phares, senior fellow with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies was the guest speaker of a major European think tank. The meeting, which took place at the European Parliament, was attended by a number of experts and members in addition to MEPs Mihael Brejc, Maria Martenes, Angelika Niebler, Jan Olbrycht, John Purvis and Peter Stastny.

Phares, who was introduced by European Ideas Network director Guillermo Martinez Casan, referred to his latest book *The War of Ideas* and announced his forthcoming newest book *The Confrontation*. Answering a question about the Lebanese crisis Phares said: "The Syrian-Iranian axis has been successful in delaying almost all international initiatives aimed at implementing UN resolutions 1559 and 1701. Tehran and Damascus regimes have relayed on multiple means including Terrorism and wars. Between July 2005 and February 2008, a number of legislators, journalists, officers and civilians have been assassinated by Terrorists and a regional war waged by Hezbollah to obstruct the implementation of the UN resolutions. Unfortunately, added Phares, the Lebanese Government and its parliamentary majority could have moved faster to counter the strategies of the Syro-Iranian axis. As of 2005, the Lebanese Government should have called for the control of the Syrian-Lebanese borders, an open space for supplying Terror networks in Lebanon. For three years the Government could have called for the implementation of chapter 7 to receive additional international support. That didn't happen."

Phares said that the main miscalculation by the parliamentary majority of Lebanon, which has the full support of the international community, was not to elect a President for the Republic. "We've heard the arguments from many politicians that electing a President without the consent of Hezbollah will lead to catastrophe but we aren't convinced. Electing a new President for Lebanon needs a simple majority and has the backing of the international community once it is performed. Not electing a President because of a Hezbollah so-called threat is playing into the hands of the Syro-Iranian axis, and that is the catastrophe." Phares said there is still time for the Lebanese legislators to fill the gap of the Presidency but not too long.