

President al-Assad Gives Comprehensive Interview to the Qatari Daily alWatan

Contributed by SANA
Sunday, 27 April 2008

Damascus,(SANA) _ Commenting on US. Secretary of State denial of any deal reached with Syria regarding Former Lebanese Premier , Rafik Hariri's assassination , President Bashar al-Assad said that Syria was not used to reaching any political deals whatsoever , and the issue of the international tribunal has nothing to do with Syria , and Syria supported the preliminary investigations.

He described the US. Secretary of State statement as worthless particularly in the light of an administration that lacks credibility.

Concerning the aim of the accusation directed to Syria of assassinating Hariri , and other assassination crimes in Lebanon, President al-Assad indicated that Syria has been targeted for a number of years because of her stances and the assassinations crimes in Lebanon aimed at creating instability in Lebanon and goes against the interest of Syria and according to the American proverb "No one opens fire at his own toe" ..that is impossible!!.

Concerning the appointment of Michel Suleiman as president for Lebanon , president al-Assad stressed that he can not speak for Lebanon , but Lt. Gen. Suleiman is well known and is a good person by various standards.

Regarding the continued postponement of electing a Lebanese president, the president said that there ought to be agreement on all issues generally , Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri is entrusted by the Lebanese constitution with a certain establishment and he determines the issue according to his conviction.

He added that Syria did not accept the principle of exercising pressure in dealing with the Lebanese parties.

Concerning the official Lebanese –Syrian diplomatic relations , President al-Assad said he was the first to raise the issue in 2005 at the last meeting of the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council when Syria signed the decision of troops withdrawal from Lebanon , and Syria recognizes Lebanon as an independent state and as a member of the Arab League.

Regarding the Syrian diplomatic action to follow up the decisions which were taken during Damascus Arab Summit, the president indicated that the atmosphere of the summit was a source of optimism for him to make a tour in his capacity as chairman of the summit soon among all the Arab countries and Syria has no problem with Riyadh or with Cairo.

Regarding SharmuSheik Summit which was held after Damascus Summit and linked any détente in the Arab relations with finding a solution to the Lebanese crisis, the president indicated that Syria encourages any Arab or non Arab party to act for finding a solution to the Lebanese crisis.

Regarding the mediation between Syria and Israel, the president indicated that the mediations have been taking a number of forms sometimes by a foreign official visiting Syria or by some Jewish leaders in the world who move toward Syria.

The president added that last week and through a phone call by Turkish Prime Minister, Erdogan , came the news that Olmert is ready to return the Golan .

The president went on to say that Israel has been proposing direct negotiations but direct negotiations need a sponsor and this sponsor should be the United States , but it is regretting that the United States has no vision nor the will for he peace process.

Concerning the Israeli accusation to Syria of violating UN. Security Council Resolution 1701 by supplying arms to Hizbullah , the president stressed that Israel which violates the Lebanese airspace by its warplanes , and the Israeli raid against Syria last September was on a military post under construction , and was not a reactor for a nuclear program.

On Syria's readiness to go to war with Israel , the president indicated that all know that Israel receives a big support from the United States and all know that the Israeli army is a strong army and the July war in 2006 proved that a group of resistance fighters managed to repel the Israeli army.

He stressed that Syria will remain seeking for peace and only considers war as an option when no longer there is a room

for peace , but Syria will remain ready to defend herself.

Concerning Emad Maghnia assassination , the president indicated that the investigation still going on and that it is natural to accuse Israel of the assassination because she is the prime beneficiary , but no clear thing can be announced before the investigations end.

On opening the corruption files which are presumed to be connected with the current reform process, the president indicated that opening the corruption issue which is deeply-rooted and complicated issue , needs a rational approach beginning from the administrative reform in Syria.

Regarding Syria's vision of Carter's efforts to include Hamas in the peace process, the president stressed once again that the current US. administration is lacking credibility within America itself so how such an administration can have credibility in Syria.

With regard to Syria's good offices to mend fences between the Palestinian authority and Hamas, President al-Assad said that Syria is standing at the same distance from both sides , and Syria remains confident that the disputes and differences can only benefit Israel.

Regarding Syria's support to Iran's right obtain nuclear energy, President al-Assad stressed that all states have that right and not only Iran , but Syria is against weapons of mass destruction weapons , and Syria proposed a draft resolution to the UN. Security Council in 2003 for dismantling weapons of mass destruction in the region, but draft resolution remained in the drawers.

Concerning the possibility of eruption of war between the United States and Iran, the president indicated that the region will pay the price of such a war for almost a century.

With regard to the Turkish military operations to uproot Kurdistan workers party fighters from northern Iraq , the president stressed that Syria's position is very clear in that the operations of the Kurdistan Workers Party fighters against the Turkish military and civilians are unacceptable and rejected.

Concerning the tendency of independence of the Iraqi Kurds, the president said that the main Kurdish leaderships denied such a tendency which is considered as posing a danger not only on Iraq , but also on the national security of Syria ,and the neighboring Arabs , Turkey and Iran have the same position.

Concerning the expected peace conference in Moscow , the president indicated that the conference is not determined yet .

Concerning Syria's relations with Qatar, the president said that thanks to the leadership of Emir of Qatar , and the first meeting was him was during his first visit to Qatar in 2003 and the relations between the two countries have been built on candidacy, and Syria deals with Qatar on equal footing and as independent state, pointing out that Qatar is seeking in its policy to extend political aid to Syria as a sisterly country.

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