

Policy Statement Discussions Deadlocked Over Hizbullah Weapons

Contributed by Naharnet
Thursday, 24 July 2008

March 14 Forces Speak of Impossibility of Coexistence with Hizbullah's Arms

Policy Statement Discussions Deadlocked Over Hizbullah Weapons

The ministerial committee assigned to draft the cabinet policy statement reached a dead end in its discussions over the controversial issue of the resistance's arms.

The committee held on Wednesday its sixth session and is expected to meet again on Thursday.

An-Nahar newspaper reported that Hizbullah and Amal representatives in the committee insisted on dealing with the Hizbullah arms issue like in the previous government policy statement.

March 14 forces, however, firmly rejected the formula adopted in the former ministerial statement on Hizbullah's arms, according to An Nahar.

Information Minister Tareq Mitri dismissed allegations that border demarcation with Syria was one of the issues hampering progress in the statement blueprint.

"Media reports mentioned that border demarcation with Syria and establishing diplomatic ties (with Damascus) is one of the controversial issues…which is incorrect," Mitri said Wednesday.

"We are discussing national choices (that we will make) which surpass such issues," he added.

Mitri made the remark to reporters following a four-hour meeting of the committee at the Grand Serail on Wednesday.

The information minister stressed the committee is "carrying out its mission of drafting the policy statement. It isn't playing a role other than the one assigned to it."

Mitri's statement came in reaction to comments made by Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri following a meeting with President Michel Suleiman at Baabda Palace.

Berri criticized the committee, saying its members are behaving as if they were a "national dialogue" conference.

"Let the president handle his own mission," Berri said in reference to the national dialogue conference that Suleiman is to sponsor.

Beirut, 24 Jul 08, 09:06

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&6614F186359BB794C22574900020F8F1>

March 14 Forces Speak of Impossibility of Coexistence with Hizbullah's Arms

The March 14 forces on Wednesday emphasized "the impossibility of coexisting" with Hizbullah's arms during a workshop devoted to the subject of "civil peace and building an independent state."

The workshop, which was held at the Bristol Hotel by the coalition's general secretariat, was the fourth to be organized by the March 14 movement. The first one dealt with the Taif Agreement. The second was to have dealt with Syrian-Lebanese relations, but it was not held because of security reasons. The third workshop was devoted to the election law.

"The secret of this movement lies in the fact that it was created by the Lebanese people and not only the result of a political movement that was established by some politicians in a particular phase," the coordinator of the general secretariat of the March 14 Forces Fares Soaid said during the opening of the workshop.

This means that for the first time in Lebanon and the Arab world there is "a political public opinion that calls to account, retreats, advances, discusses, and does not follow," he said.

Soaid stated that the main questions facing the workshop were: "Is there a possibility of cohabitation between illegitimate arms and the state? Are the solutions that have been proposed adequate to prevent what occurred on May 7?"

The workshop's discussion paper said that after March 14, 2005 there had been "a fragile coexistence between two projects: the project of building an independent state, which had been postponed since the Taif Agreement, and the project of protecting the 'state of the resistance' under the slogan of 'continuing confrontation.' This coexistence lasted until the outbreak of the July 2006 War."

After the war, the southern front was closed and the resistance retreated to the interior to "paralyze the establishment of the independent state by casting doubts about the legitimacy of the movement and closing parliament, and preventing the election of a new president," the paper said.

It added that "on May 8, for reasons that were related to changes in the regional situation…Hizbullah decided to end the duality of authority…and invaded the streets of the capital and its residential quarters, indifferent to the danger of an outbreak of Sunni-Shiite civil discord throughout the country."

This action almost returned the country to the civil war period. However, this was prevented by two key factors: the fact that the people of Beirut refrained from confronting force with force, and the fact that the Arab governments insisted that Lebanon not slide again towards civil war, which "this time would have spread to the entire region," according to the working paper.

The workshop stressed that it was impossible "to coexist with Hizbullah's arms, specially since these weapons and those of the militias allied (with the Shiite group) had been used in the interior."

Beirut, 24 Jul 08, 09:47

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&6614F186359BB794C22574900020F8F1>