

## Washington accuses Salloukh of violating diplomatic protocol

Contributed by An-Nahar  
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On September 27, the pro-government An-Nahar daily carried the following report: "An-Nahar correspondent to Washington Hisham Melhem quoted an official American source as stating that his government was maddened by what it considered a "violation of diplomatic protocol" after the contents of the private discussion between President Bush and President Suleiman was leaked to the press. The official accused Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh of having leaked the information. He said: "We noticed he did not do the same following the talks between President Suleiman and the Syrian officials" in Damascus. He then stated that the leak might have aimed to "reassure" the Syrians vis-a-vis the content of the discussion.

"He assured that President Bush requested a private meeting with President Suleiman which lasted 14 minutes, while none of its content was leaked. The American officials for their part are not concealing their negative attitude toward Minister Salloukh and his tight relations with Hezbollah, Syria and Iran. They previously said on more than one occasion that his presence in official meetings was causing them problems at the level of the honest discussions that occurred between them and Lebanese officials, for they feared he would directly relate the content of the discussions to Hezbollah, Iran and Syria.

"The American official was pointing to leaks which appeared in Naharnet and featured the response of President Suleiman to President Bush's question regarding the ways America could help Lebanon. Suleiman's response included advice to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process and listen to all the Arab sides concerned with the conflict, while making sure not to exclude any of them and especially not Syria. He also added that Lebanon should be dealt with while understanding its diverse nature, implementing resolution 1701, aiding the Lebanese army and supporting national dialogue.

"He also said that the war against terrorism will not succeed unless accompanied by a final solution to the Middle East problems. The official indicated that besides the fact that it was inadequate, this leak showed the disrespect of the American side by the leaking side. He stated: "We decided that President Bush should speak frankly and clearly in Salloukh's presence and he did not say anything unusual. However, we did not expect his statements to be leaked to the media". He added: "If Suleiman's message to Bush were the same as Salloukh's message to the press, it would be unfortunate." - An-Nahar, Lebanon

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