

Suleiman Remains Under Minority Fire

Contributed by Naharnet
Saturday, 17 January 2009

President Michel Suleiman returned to Beirut Friday night as minority forces continued their campaign against him for objecting to the reference of suspending the Arab peace initiative and insisting that its objection would be mentioned at the Doha summit's concluding statement.

The pro-minority Al-Akhbar daily described Suleiman's speech as being out of the context of the summit, adding that the president used wording aimed at evading "the anger of Arab and Western capitals and the (majority) March 14 forces in Lebanon."

The newspaper also said the president's presence at the meeting seemed "obligatory."

Proposals adopted in Doha call for "an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces and suspension of the Arab peace initiative," while accusing Israel of "committing crimes of war and genocide," the final statement said.

Other demands mentioned in the statement were "the opening of all border crossings, lifting of the blockade, and holding Israel responsible for paying compensation."

The Arab peace initiative, adopted in Beirut in 2002 and again in 2007, offers Israel peace if it retreats from all territories it has occupied since 1967.

As-Safir daily said there were three reasons for Suleiman's decision to object to the reference of suspending the Arab peace initiative.

One of the reasons is that the initiative was adopted during an Arab summit held in the Lebanese capital. Another reason is that the suspension of the initiative is inconsistent with the Lebanese government's policy statement and Suleiman's oath.

Third, Suleiman made it clear to the Arab leaders attending the Doha summit the initiative is the only document that adopts the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

The issue of Palestinian refugees is a sensitive topic in Lebanon, particularly when the Constitution's prelude clearly rejects naturalization.

According to An Nahar, official sources welcomed Suleiman's speech at the Doha summit. The president held onto the Arab peace initiative, stressed that the meeting should not worsen inter-Arab relations and all participants should reach a common stance in support of Gaza.

The sources also lauded Suleiman's objection to the reference of suspending the Arab initiative in the summit's concluding statement, saying such a stance is in line with the cabinet's position.

Beirut, 17 Jan 09, 09:50

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&123B818B1BFDC6E8C2257541002A60DF>