

## Sleiman approves Syria's nominee for ambassador

Contributed by AFP, Dailystar, KUNA, Naharnet  
Wednesday, 25 March 2009

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Daily Star staff  
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BEIRUT: Lebanon approved on Tuesday Syria's nominee for its first ambassador to Beirut, five months after the two neighbors established diplomatic ties for the first time, an official said.

"President Michel Sleiman on Tuesday approved the nomination of Ali Abdel-Karim Ali as the Syrian Arab Republic's ambassador to Beirut," the official in the president's office said.

Lebanon's ambassador to Damascus, career diplomat Michel Khoury, was named at the start of the year and an embassy was opened in the Syrian capital earlier this month.

After several years of strained relations, Lebanon and its former powerbroker agreed to establish diplomatic ties in October for the first time since their independence 60 years ago.

Syria pulled out its troops from Lebanon after almost 30 years of political and military domination in April 2005 following the assassination of former Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri.

Ali, who was born in 1953, has been ambassador to Kuwait since November 2004 and has served as the head of Syrian state radio and television and the official SANA news agency. In 1998, the married father of four published a collection of poems.

In a separate development, Syrian President Bashar Assad said that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon "targets Syria."

"The Special Tribunal for Lebanon is a Lebanese concern," stressed Assad in excerpts of an interview with the daily As-Safir. The complete interview will be published on Wednesday.

In response to a question, Assad said: "We respect head of the Change and Reform bloc MP Michel Aoun who turned friend from foe."

In other news, Speaker Nabih Berri said the June 7 elections "should be a demonstration of the democratic behavior of the Lebanese rather than a deadly battle."

Speaking during a religious conference at the UNESCO Palace on Tuesday, Berri said Lebanon "can no longer bear any more battles."

The speaker also called for Arab unity ahead of the Arab Summit in Doha on March 30-31 and stressed that Shiites "can never be a source for rifts and sectarianism."

In a separate development, Lebanon's Interior and Foreign ministries announced Tuesday that they were taking several measures to facilitate the participation of Lebanese expatriates in the forthcoming parliamentary elections on June 7.

A statement released by the Interior Ministry said it submitted to the Foreign Ministry 7,500 passports to be distributed to Lebanese consulates and embassies abroad.

The passports can now be renewed at the consulates and embassies with no need to be referred to the General Security, the statement added.

The ministry's statement said talks with the company that produces Lebanese passports were under way in case the required amount exceeded the number already delivered to the Foreign Ministry.

The ministry's statement comes after the opposition decided to raise a list of complaints about the conduct of the ruling March 14 Forces regarding electoral procedures before Interior Minister Ziyad Baroud.

Media sources said Tuesday a meeting was held Monday between Aoun, and MPs from Aoun's bloc, and others from the two main opposition blocs - Berri's Liberation and Development and Hizbullah's Loyalty to the Resistance.

The sources said the attendees raised a number of issues, including the travel abroad of mayors with the purpose of taking the fingerprints of Lebanese expatriates who support March 14 Forces and reserving the air fleet for the ruling majority, which would mean, according to the participants, that Lebanon's national carrier - Middle East Airlines - was biased.

An agreement was reached at the end of the meeting to set up a joint committee that would visit Baroud to review the complaints, they added. Sources from Berri's bloc said the meeting also discussed the general rules that must prevail over the election process.

A source in the Hizbullah bloc, however, denied that the meeting was held for election or political purposes, adding that similar sessions would take place between the three opposition blocs to follow-up on issues related to implementation of electoral laws.

Political sources, meanwhile, described as "a basket full of obstacles" the list of complaints to be presented to Baroud.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources quoted by the Central News Agency (CNA) said Hizbullah "intervened in a disagreement between Aoun and Berri over the distribution of parliamentary seats in South Lebanon, in particular in the Christian town of Jezzine." The sources said that "Aoun considered that he had the right to nominate Christian candidates in the district, while Berri refused." They added that an agreement was reached to grant Aoun the two Maronite and Catholic seats in Jezzine, while Hizbullah ceded its Shiite seat in Baabda to Berri. The sources also said Hizbullah would hold a meeting in the coming days to assess the outcome of talks with other opposition parties.

The CNA said opposition leaders decided to announce their electoral tickets by April 7.

Other sources quoted by the CNA said a meeting might be held between Hariri and Berri to discuss means to form a consensual list between MP Osama Saad and Education Minister Bahia Hariri.

Separately, Hariri met Tuesday with British Shadow Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office David Lidington in London. Hariri kicked off an official visit to London on Monday. - The Daily Star, with AFP

[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=100348](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=100348)

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France welcomes appointment of Syrian ambassador to Lebanon

Politics 3/25/2009 4:28:00 PM

PARIS, March 25 (KUNA) -- France has welcomed the appointment of the first-ever Syrian ambassador to Lebanon, saying it hoped this decision would contribute to stability in the region.

A statement issued by President Nicolas Sarkozys office noted that the Syrian move followed a decision by both nations to set up diplomatic relations which had never been put in place at the foundation of Syria and Lebanon in the 1940s.

The statement said that the decision to set up embassies in each others capitals and to appoint ambassadors was "a historic step on the path to normalisation between the two countries".

"France hopes that this decision will contribute to the stabilisation of the region in the respect for the unity, sovereignty and independence of each of the two States," the Elysee said. (end) jk.tg KUNA 251628 Mar 09NNNN

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Williams: Appointment of Syrian Ambassador Contributes to Lebanon Stability, Sarkozy Agrees

The appointment of the first-ever Syrian ambassador to Beirut was welcomed by U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams who said it would contribute to Lebanon's stability.

Syria has named Ali Abdel Karim Ali its first ambassador to Lebanon and President Michel Suleiman on Tuesday approved his appointment.

The appointment was "a really welcome development," Williams said.

"It's very timely and completes the process of establishing diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon," he said, adding that "I've no doubt that this will further contribute to stability in Lebanon."

Lebanon opened its first embassy in Damascus last week and named Michel Khoury as ambassador. Syria opened its Beirut embassy last year, but without appointing an ambassador.

Meanwhile, Elysee Palace issued a statement describing the move as "historic."

The appointment "represents a historic change on the road to normal relations between the two countries," the statement said.

Beirut, 25 Mar 09, 10:14

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&18BDFE3FCEA9288FC225758400321C74>

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Lebanon Approves 1st Syrian Ambassador, Welcomes him Anytime

Syria has named Ali Abdel Karim Ali its first ambassador to Lebanon and President Michel Suleiman on Tuesday approved his appointment.

A presidential statement said Suleiman accepted Ali's diplomatic accreditations.

Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh welcomed the appointment but refused to say when Lebanese authorities received the nomination.

"Lebanon welcomes the new Syrian ambassador Ali Abdel Karim Ali anytime in Beirut to assume his duties," Salloukh told al-Markaziya news agency.

He said the diplomat's arrival was linked to arrangements to leave his post as current ambassador to Kuwait.

Salloukh refused to say when Lebanon received the nomination of Ali. "What is important now is that Lebanon received the demand, studied it and approved it," he told al-Markaziya.

He reiterated that Lebanon's ambassador to Syria Michel el-Khoury will start his mission mid-April.

Lebanon opened its first embassy in Syria last Monday, five months after the neighbors established diplomatic ties following decades of turbulent relations.

Career diplomat el-Khoury, was named at the start of the year and an embassy was opened in the Syrian capital earlier this month.

The Beirut-Damascus thaw came following a joint pledge by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Suleiman in Paris.

It marked a turning point in relations between the two neighboring countries. Syria has dominated Lebanon for nearly three decades before pulling out its troops in April 2005.

The withdrawal came two months after the assassination of ex-PM Rafik Hariri in a massive Beirut bombing widely blamed on Damascus. Syria has always denied the charge.

Ali, who was born in 1953, has been ambassador to Kuwait since November 2004 and has also served as the head of Syrian state radio and television and the official SANA news agency.(Naharnet-AFP)

Beirut, 24 Mar 09, 14:21

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&18BDFE3FCEA9288FC225758400321C74>

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Lebanese Ambassador to Syria Assumes Duties by End of March

Lebanon's ambassador to Syria Michel el-Khoury will assume his duties by the end of this month, al-Liwaa newspaper reported on Saturday.

The daily said that career diplomat Khoury, who is Beirut's current envoy to Cyprus, will assume his duties before the end of March unlike earlier media reports that said the ambassador will travel to Syria in mid-April.

Lebanon opened its first embassy in Syria on Monday, five months after the neighbors established diplomatic ties following decades of turbulent relations.

Charge d'affaires Rami Mortada raised the Lebanese flag over the building located in the Damascus residential neighborhood of Abu Rummaneh, which is also home to the U.S. embassy.

Syria has yet to name an envoy to Beirut, where it opened an embassy in December that is not yet fully operational although it has been staffed with three diplomats.

Beirut, 21 Mar 09, 10:59

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/77FFE12E082888E8C22575800030B6B1?OpenDocument>

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#### Lebanese Embassy Opens its Doors in Damascus, Ambassador Starts Mission in April

The Lebanese embassy officially opens its doors in the Syrian capital's Abu Rummaneh street on Monday but ambassador Michel el-Khoury begins his mission in April, Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh said.

Salloukh's advisor Rami Murtada will act as charge d'affaires until Khoury takes over in the first half of April as the first Lebanese ambassador to Damascus, the foreign minister told As-Safir daily in remarks published Monday.

Salloukh stressed that the timing of the embassy opening is not related to President Michel Suleiman's visit to Paris. It is part of a decision by the Lebanese president and his Syrian counterpart Bashar Assad to establish diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Lebanon still awaits Syria's decision to name its envoy, Salloukh told As Safir.

Three diplomats have been stationed at the Syrian embassy in Beirut's Hamra district since last December but the mission is not yet fully operational.

Salloukh said the opening of the embassies will help "organize and legalize bilateral relations and become a guarantee for Lebanese citizens in Syria and Syrian citizens in Lebanon."

Beirut, 16 Mar 09, 07:26

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/9E9D51C295F359FCC225757B001D2F6E?OpenDocument>

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