

U.S. Official: Polls to Decide Between Independence and Extremism

Contributed by Naharnet
Saturday, 06 June 2009

A high-level U.S. official told pan-Arab daily al-Hayat that Lebanon's parliamentary elections would either put Lebanon on the path of independence or extremism.

Sunday's polls would either put the country on the path of "completing independence and sovereignty" away from foreign meddling or the path of "the forces of violence and extremism to reach political objectives," the source said in remarks published Friday.

The official reiterated that Washington will await formation of the upcoming government and its policy statement to assess its policy and aid to Lebanon.

He also said that the Obama administration is hoping that the Lebanese would make progress and protect "the principles of independence, sovereignty and freedom that they fought for."

Washington "will continue to provide support to such principles after the elections," the official told al-Hayat.

Asked about Hizbullah's criticism of visits by U.S. officials to Lebanon, particularly Vice-President Joseph Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the official said: "The visits and assistance to the army reflect our support for constitutional institutions and the Lebanese government."

"If there are some sides who are bothered by this, that's because they know that the presence of a strong central government and institutions would prevent them from moving freely and as a militia," the U.S. official added.

He told his interviewer that supporting the army and security forces is crucial to guarantee the independence of Lebanon, fight terrorism and implement U.N. Security Council resolution 1701.

On the Syrian role in Lebanon, the official said: "It is important for Syria to continue with what it started in terms of diplomatic relations with Lebanon."

He added that Damascus should stop interfering in Lebanese internal affairs and demarcate the common border.

Beirut, 05 Jun 09, 08:41

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&87FBDC8E223F54ACC22575CD003C9D93>