

## March 8 Forces Tried to Prevent the Broadcast of Sfeir's Stance

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March 8 influential circles pressured Information Minister Tareq Mitri to prevent media outlets from broadcasting Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir's statement on Saturday, An Nahar daily reported.

The newspaper said on Sunday that Mitri did not comply with the demands. Sfeir's statement came in response to an appeal by Michel Khoury, Dory Chamoun and Samir Franjeh as the siblings of the 1943 independence figures.

Sfeir on Saturday spoke of "a threat to the Lebanese entity and its Arab identity." The patriarch added that this danger should receive attention.

"We must be alert to the schemes being plotted for us and thwart the intense efforts which, if they succeed, will change the face of our country," Sfeir said.

His remarks were reported by the National News Agency and were later carried by several TV stations.

Political sides wondered why Sfeir's comments would be opposed since Hizbullah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy Sheikh Naim Qassem, who are also clerics, have for weeks stressed a certain political viewpoint.

Speaker Nabih Berri's NBN TV network said Sfeir's speech "left negative reverberations" because "it included a biased electoral stance" and came at a time when the law prevents such stances.

NBN added that some March 14 interferences prevented the election supervision committee from issuing an official statement to stop the broadcasting of Sfeir's statement.

The committee, according to the network, only reminded media outlets to refrain from publishing or broadcasting any stance that backs a certain candidate or a list or any political side.

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<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&2365C97A28262EF4C22575CE001DB9AE>