

## CRN Radio - Phares comments about the long term fate of Lebanon

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In his second message via CR News to address the rise of Hezbollah power in Lebanon and the return of Syrian and Iranian influence to Beirut, Dr Walid Phares reviewed the international and regional developments which may affect the situation in Lebanon throughout 2010 and asserted that the majority of Lebanese are still opposed to terror forces.

CRN Radio from Washington D.C. with Professor Walid Phares on the long term fate of Lebanon

CRN Radio - Dr. Walid Phares

{mp3}Walid Phares-10Jan-2010{/mp3}

He addressed "especially those who in Lebanon continue to struggle for freedom to regain what was lost in 2008 and in 2009." Internationally, he explained, a major point of interest is the strategic moves by the United States which are as we know dealing with its economic crisis. The Obama Administration and Congress are trying to create some financial and economic stability as they are also addressing serious security issues inside the country and terrorism in two battlefields. So the question is what is important for Lebanon and the Cedars Revolution in the geopolitical developments. We find there are three directions: One, the US are at war with terror organizations, mainly al Qaeda and its allies both in the Middle East and worldwide. Two, it also working on protecting its national security after the the Abdelmutalib terror act. Three, domestically America is bracing for the next congressional election in November which will see some change in foreign policy regardless of the results and who obtains the majority. Hence the next relevant benchmark regarding US policy for Lebanon and the Middle East seems to be the elections in the fall of 2010. However the most important game changer in the region and regarding Lebanon is the Green Movement in Tehran streets. What we see there, regardless of international reaction, that popular movement in Iran is at a stage of non return. The Ayatollahs regime has entered in a struggle with entire sectors of the Iranian civil society. Observers are projecting more confrontations and Tehran's regime which is under pressure will escalate in Yemen, in Gaza, in Iraq and in Lebanon. Thus expect that Iran will press more to put Lebanon under its umbrella, including the possibility that its allies in Lebanon, that is Hezbollah could trigger wars and violence. Internally the balance of power as changed in Lebanon since May 2008. Hezbollah and his allies have won. Those who lost are trying to dodge the discussion and their responsibility in that loss. That discussion is unavoidable now and in the future. But reality is that the balance has shifted but didn't change irreversibly. The forces of the Cedars Revolution lost power and the decision making process but it didn't lose geography. March 14 still has a majority in Parliament and has a Prime Minister. But that is not the issue. The most important matter is that there is a popular majority in Lebanon opposed to the terrorist organizations and to Syrian and Iranian influence. The shift in power didn't affect that reality. Hezbollah controls Lebanon's national security and defense policies but didn't shift the popular support to the Cedars Revolution. Actually the popular majority against terror has increased. If you subtract the followers of the March 8 coalition and those who support politicians who have been shifting from March 14 to the other side the masses are strongly supportive of the Cedars Revolution. The political realignment is only representative of politicians changing coats not of the popular mood. Will this popular majority have an impact on the political scene now? No, because politicians do not have a plan. We hear some voices criticizing our comments in the old ways of the 1980s and 1990s accusing our analysis of inciting for divisions. But we tell them that their voices are from the past and their narrative doesn't work outside the Beirut Airport. The international community doesn't give credence to those who wants to reinstall anti democratic forces in power in Lebanon. Times have changed. Hezbollah controls its traditional areas. But there are many regions opposing Hezbollah and its pro-Syrian allies. The popular sentiment in the Christian, Sunni and Druse areas oppose the agenda of Hezbollah regardless the politicians agendas. Within the Christian community the same equation persists: Some politicians are allies with Syria and Hezbollah, that is a fact. But those who oppose such policies are a vast majority. Besides many of the opposition to terrorism inside the Christian community are now in the process of thinking about an alternative strategy. Cadres in civil society and intellectuals are rethinking the political resistance. Change will certainly come. It needs its own time