

Late-Night March 14 Meeting Stresses Commitment to STL, Lebanon Stability

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Leaders of the majority March 14 coalition held a late-night meeting under Prime Minister Saad Hariri at Center House ahead of Wednesday's Cabinet meeting.

A statement from Hariri's office said the leaders "reviewed the latest developments in Lebanon and the region."

Those who attended the meeting at Hariri's mansion in downtown Beirut, better known as Center House, were Phalance Party leader Amin Gemayel, Deputy Speaker Farid Makari, ex-PM Fouad Saniora, Ministers Boutros Harb, Michel Pharaon, Salim Warde and Jean Oghassabian, Lebanese Forces boss Samir Geagea, as well as MPs Sami Gemayel, George Adwan, Dory Chamoun, Ahmed Fatfat, Sebouh Qalbakian, Antoine Zahra, Tony Abou Khater and Sethrida Geagea.

March 14 General Secretariat Coordinator Fares Souaid, and former MPs Bassem Sabeh, Samir Franjeh, Solange Gemayel, Nayla Moawad, Ghattas Houry, Mansour Ghanem el-Bone and Elias Atallah also were present.

March 14 parliamentary sources said that the "comprehensive debate was not over."

"We stressed commitment to the fundamental principles of March 14 and (the need) not to compromise on key issues," one source told the daily Al-Liwaa in remarks published Tuesday.

Ad-Diyar newspaper had said the meeting was designed to discuss a "peaceful confrontation plan" launched by March 14 leaders from Bkirki.

The plan, which aims at mobilizing Christians and the civil society against threats in the event the International Tribunal issued an indictment against Hizbullah members accusing them of killing ex-PM Rafik Hariri, was launched from Bkirki following a broad weekend meeting of Christian leaders.

Ad-Diyar said March 14 plans to expand its peaceful mobilization reach to include civilians where 300 personalities, including media and judicial representative as well as members of parliament, will meet on Tuesday at Hotel Gabriel in Ashrafieh under the slogan "Beirut Initiative" to discuss a peaceful confrontation against efforts to shake stability.

As-Safir newspaper, for its part, said Hariri was firm during the meeting at Center House: No compromise on the International Tribunal or the Taif Agreement.

It quoted an official who attended the meeting as saying that the conferees did not give much focus on a Cabinet meeting to be held Wednesday.

He said Hariri stressed in this regard his unshakable stance toward recognition of the existence of false witnesses and refusal to refer the issue to the Judicial Council.

The official said the conferees tasked Hariri with following up on contacts based on the fundamental principles of March 14.

He pointed to the importance of the timing of the meeting following the Christian gathering in Bkirki "in a clear message that shows Hariri's support for the declaration made from Bkirki."

The Christian meeting, held under Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir on Friday, declared Lebanon is in "grave danger" and called on the International Community to implement its commitments toward Lebanon.

"Lebanon as an entity and a democratic system is in grave danger – a danger on all Lebanese, Christians and Muslims," said a statement at the end of the Bkirki meeting which included officials from the March 14 coalition and independent figures.

"We call on all Lebanese who have faith in their country to get up and defend Lebanon," the statement urged.

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