

Hariri to Paris after talks with Obama Who Voiced Support for PM

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Hizbullah move to thwart Special Tribunal will not work: Clinton

Hariri to Paris after talks with Obama Who Voiced Support for PM

Prime Minister Saad Hariri was meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama Wednesday at the moment that the ten ministers of the March 8 coalition resigned from the Lebanese government.

The two men were meeting in the Oval Office at the White House, smiling as they posed for photographers, without making any statements.

At the same moment, Hizbullah ministers and their allies resigned from the Lebanese cabinet in a crisis linked to a U.N. probe into the murder of former premier Rafik Hariri.

Just minutes later the Lebanese government collapsed as an 11th minister close to President Michel Suleiman, State Minister Adnan Sayyed Hussein, tendered his resignation, thus providing the minimum necessary number of resignations to topple the cabinet.

"After the meeting, PM Hariri did not make any statement and left Washington for Paris, where he will meet with French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Elysee," Hariri's press office announced.

A White House statement released later Wednesday said the actions by Hizbullah "only demonstrate their own fear and determination to block the government's ability to conduct its business and advance the aspirations of all of the Lebanese people."

Obama commended Hariri "for his steadfast leadership and efforts to reach peace, stability, and consensus in Lebanon under difficult circumstances.

"The president and prime minister expressed their determination to achieve both stability and justice in Lebanon during this challenging period of government volatility, and agreed that all parties should avoid threats or actions that could cause instability," the White House statement said.

"The president and prime minister specifically discussed united efforts with France, Saudi Arabia, and other key international and regional actors to maintain calm in Lebanon and ensure that the work of the tribunal continues unimpeded by third parties," the White House statement added.

Present at the meeting from the Lebanese side were Lebanese Ambassador to Washington Antoine Shedid, Hariri's chief of staff Nader Hariri, his advisor for U.S. affairs Amal Mudallali and his media advisor Hani Hammoud.

From the U.S. side, the meeting was attended by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, Assistant to the President for homeland security and counter-terrorism John Brennan, and the head of the Middle East Desk at the National Security Council Dan Shapiro.

Lebanon's hard-won unity government was made up of 30 ministers, 10 of them representing Hizbullah and its allies.

Hizbullah and its allies have for months been pressing Hariri to disavow the U.N. tribunal on the grounds that it is part of a "U.S.-Israeli plot."

According to unconfirmed press reports, the tribunal is set to indict senior Hizbullah members in connection with Rafik Hariri's 2005 assassination, a scenario the armed party vehemently rejects.

Syria and Saudi Arabia have for months been attempting to mediate the crisis but their efforts have failed, with rival Lebanese camps accusing each other of refusing to compromise.(Naharnet-AFP)

Beirut, 12 Jan 11, 19:12

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/>

Lebanon/A8D21D5E7EBCE819C2257816005DAA97?OpenDocument

Clinton: When Israel Pulled Out of Lebanon it Got Hizbullah and 40,000 Rockets

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Thursday that Israel was cautious in making peace with the Palestinians because of its bad experience with Hizbullah and Hamas.

Clinton acknowledged the limits of U.S. power in a combative exchange with an Al-Jazeera reporter, saying, "We can't stop a lot of countries from doing things that we disagree with and we speak out against."

In the Qatari capital of Doha for a regional development conference, Clinton was asked why Arab countries should listen to her criticism when the U.S. can't even get its longtime ally, Israel, to make peace with the Palestinians.

"Israel is a sovereign country and it makes its own decisions," Clinton responded.

"I wish there were a way we could tell a lot of countries what they should do because there are a lot of countries doing things that are not in the best interests of their own people, their neighbors or the world," she added.

Clinton pointed out that Israel has reasons to be cautious. "You often make decisions based on your own experience and history," she said. "And when the Israelis pulled out of Lebanon they got Hizbullah and 40,000 rockets and when they pulled out of Gaza they got Hamas and 20,000 rockets."

Still, she said, the U.S. will continue to work toward achieving a separate state for the Palestinians.

"We have spent a lot of time and we will continue to spend a lot of time working to build enough confidence on both sides that they can make decisions that will by necessity mean compromises," the secretary said.(AP-Naharnet)

Beirut, 13 Jan 11, 13:26

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Hizbullah move to thwart Special Tribunal will not work: Clinton

By The Daily Star

Compiled by Daily Star staff

Thursday, January 13, 2011

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Wednesday that Hizbullah's move to topple Lebanon's government and undermine a U.N.-backed tribunal into the murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri "will not work."

"Trying to bring the government down as a way to undermine the Special Tribunal [for Lebanon] is an abdication of responsibility, but it also will not work," she said. "We view what happened today as a transparent effort by those forces inside Lebanon, as well as interests outside Lebanon, to subvert justice and undermine Lebanon's stability and progress," Clinton told a news conference in Doha, Qatar, where she is attending a meeting of regional leaders.

"The work of the Special Tribunal must go forward so justice can be served and impunity ended," Clinton said.

“Lebanon needs now to rally behind its own interests. The Lebanese people need to get beyond political party. It’s not political parties that would be put on trial, its individuals,” she said.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon threw his “full support” behind the tribunal.

“The secretary general is monitoring closely developments in Lebanon, where the situation is fast evolving,” said spokesman Martin Nesirky in a statement. “He emphasizes the importance that calm be preserved. The secretary general further calls for continuing dialogue among all parties and respect for the Constitution and the laws of Lebanon. He reiterates his full support for the independent work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon,” Nesirky added.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani said Qatar had no plans to mediate as it has in previous Lebanese political crises, but added that the Gulf region hoped the Saudi initiative to find a solution could still move forward.

“We still hope that there will be a solution which will avoid Lebanon slipping into conflicts of any sort,” he said at a joint appearance with Clinton.

A White House statement issued after U.S. President Barack Obama met with Saad Hariri in Washington commended Hariri for his “steadfast leadership and efforts to reach peace, stability and consensus in Lebanon under difficult circumstances.”

“The efforts by the Hizbullah-led coalition to collapse the Lebanese government only demonstrate their own fear and determination to block the government’s ability to conduct its business and advance the aspirations of all of the Lebanese people,” the statement said.

Obama also stressed the importance of the tribunal’s work as a “means to help end the era of political assassinations with impunity in Lebanon.”

Amr Moussa, Arab League secretary general, said the mass resignation “comes in dangerous circumstances and fears that Lebanon would enter once again the tunnel of crisis, political tension and disharmony among the Lebanese, which carry risks and threats to the march of security, stability and development in Lebanon.”

He called on Lebanese political leaders to seek calm and keep greater national interests and avenues for dialogue in mind.

The United Kingdom said Hizbullah’s withdrawal from the government was “extremely serious” and could have “grave implications” for stability across the Middle East.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague condemned any attempt to undermine the tribunal.

“This is an extremely serious development which could have grave implications for Lebanon and for regional stability,” Hague said in a statement.

“I call on all parties to work together for a peaceful resolution of the crisis caused by Hizbullah’s decision to withdraw from government.”

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal urged Hizbullah, which is backed by Iran and Syria, to rejoin the government. “The resignations will be dangerous as they will cause clashes once again,” Faisal told a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart in Ankara. “They have the potential to cause everything built so far to collapse,” the Saudi minister said, warning of repercussions around the region.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said that he hoped Hizbullah would rethink the resignations and voiced support for Syrian and Saudi mediation efforts. — Agencies, with The Daily Star

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Politicians pass blame, call for domestic solution
By The Daily Star
Thursday, January 13, 2011

BEIRUT: As news of the impending collapse of Lebanon’s national unity Cabinet spread Wednesday, local

politicians exchanged blame, but agreed that the solution to the crisis over the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (S.T.L.) will have to come from within the country.

Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea blamed the rival March 8 camp for seeking what he called "Stalin-like" powers, accusing it of seeking to steal away the prerogatives of the president and the prime minister.

Geagea said the March 8 camp had made an "illogical" demand of Prime Minister Saad Hariri, namely to openly renounce the S.T.L., which is investigating the 2005 assassination of his father, Rafik.

"The other side caused the failure, since it didn't want to enter a true settlement," Geagea said, adding that the solution lay in "Lebanese-Lebanese dialogue," provided that no side sets down preconditions.

The L.F. leader also predicted that there would be no "Doha II" or foreign-hosted meeting, to solve the country's domestic political crisis. But he said that any call for a new prime minister other than Hariri was tantamount to calling for civil strife.

Politicians on all sides have urged that no group take to the street to support its demands, action that leaders of the opposition have said they have no intention of taking.

For his part, Progressive Socialist Party (P.S.P) leader Walid Jumblatt attributed the failure of mediation efforts of Saudi Arabia and Syria to the "forces of darkness," alluding to leading Western powers.

"It appears the forces of darkness got involved and stymied the Syrian-Saudi initiative, through which we would have seen a blocking of the negative repercussion of the [S.T.L.] indictment," the P.S.P leader said following a visit to the Maronite patriarch in Bkirki.

"If I had been apprised of the items contained in the settlement, sponsored by Syria and Saudi Arabia, I would have suggested that the [opposition's] demands be contained in a single basket, with Syrian-Saudi sponsorship, in Riyadh," he added.

Voicing a call for a domestic solution to the political crisis, Jumblatt said that contacts between Lebanese political groups were never interrupted, even during the height of the Civil War, and asked, "so why can't we talk to each other today?"

Jumblatt blamed March 14 for the failure of the Syrian-Saudi initiative. Addressing supporters of March 14, he said that in contrast to the rhetoric of their leaders, there had been "violations" by their camp with regard to the implementation of items contained in the settlement dealing with the S.T.L.

"The easiest thing is to speak in demagogic terms, while the hardest thing is to confront the public and tell the truth," he said. — The Daily Star

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(The Daily Star :: Lebanon News :: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb>)

Sidon views of Cabinet resignations

By Mohammed Zaatari

Thursday, January 13, 2011

SIDON: Supporters of the March 14 and March 8 camps in Sidon spent much of Wednesday following news of the impending collapse of Prime Minister Saad Hariri's government, with little satisfaction on either side.

A Hariri supporter, whose family hails from the city, began her morning by picking up a copy of Al-Mustaqbal newspaper and sighing at the news that the Cabinet appeared headed for caretaker status. "The whole world is with us," she said, before eyeing a poster of Hariri and adding: "The hell with them … they didn't let you build a state … but you will be back."

The Lebanese Army stepped up its presence in the city, with patrols deploying and setting up sandbags around a checkpoint in Downtown Sidon.

The announcement of the resignation of Hizbullah-backed ministers should have brought joy to the ranks of the opposition's supporters. In recent days, they had painted graffiti in Sidon demanding that the Cabinet be toppled as "the only solution."

But ironically, the Hariri family's staunch rival in Sidon, the Popular Nasserite Organization, was angry at being left out of the political move by March 8. Sources from the group told The Daily Star that it was formally notified of what was going on only after the resignation announcement. The sources said trying to "neutralize Sidon" by keeping the P.N.O. at a distance would instead boost the standing of Sidon M.P. Bahia Hariri, a March 14 stalwart.

Read more: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=123608#ixzz1Av2ZMvS9
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Government crisis prompts mixed public reaction

Blame spread widely across domestic and international forces as few see return of Hariri

By Elias Sakr

Daily Star staff

Thursday, January 13, 2011

BEIRUT: Ordinary Lebanese were sharply divided over whom to blame for the collapse of Prime Minister Saad Hariri's Cabinet Wednesday after the withdrawal of ministers loyal to Hizbullah and its allies.

But irrespective of their political affiliations, the majority expressed concerns about violence breaking out when the U.N.-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon (S.T.L.), as is widely expected, issues an indictment against members of Hizbullah over the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Some even wished for a breakout of violence in a bid to settle the political dispute through force, in any direction.

In the neighborhoods of Tariq al-Jadideh, Burj Abi Haidar and Achrafieh, some fear the Cabinet void paves the way for instability that might escalate into Sunni-Shiite strife. Army patrols and checkpoints were seen throughout the capital Wednesday night in a pre-emptive move against potential incidents.

While Tariq al-Jadideh's mostly Sunni residents blamed the failure to reach a compromise on Hizbullah and its regional backers, Shiites in Burj Abi Haidar accused Hariri of surrendering to the will of Washington in an attempt to corner the resistance by falsely implicating Hizbullah in the assassination of his father.

Youssef Rmeidi, a Burj Abi Haidar, resident said both camps were guilty in the failure of Syrian-Saudi talks and called on the resistance "to attempt a coup to counter groups seeking a victory that serves Israel."

Rmeidi felt the renomination of Hariri as prime minister was unlikely, and predicted Hizbullah and its allies would declare civil disobedience.

Echoing Rmeidi, Ibrahim Jawad said he expected the situation to deteriorate as he accused the Hariri-led March 14 coalition of plotting "against the resistance and the country";

Though he said a breakout of violence would serve the interests of the U.S., Jawad said he wished it would take place, "so that everyone becomes aware of his true [political weight]," in reference to Hizbullah's military supremacy over the March 14 coalition.

On the other side of the political divide, Abed, a 40 year old from Tariq al-Jadideh, said Hizbullah and its allies sought to destroy Lebanon.

He added that while he did not expect Hariri to head the new Cabinet, the formation of one as matters stand today faces major difficulties, despite the realignment of Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt with the March 8 coalition. "Jumblatt is counted as a member of the opposition, and despite his compassion toward Hariri, he will comply with Hizbullah's position when it comes to parliamentary consultations";

President Michel Sleiman is expected to call for binding parliamentary consultations to nominate the new premier, with the possibility Hariri's March 14 led coalition may lose the Parliamentary majority if all of Jumblatt's Democratic bloc lawmakers realign with March 8.

Nevertheless, other supporters from both camps said the collapse of the Cabinet was simply a case of political theater, mapped out by foreign superpowers, although opinions differed on the motives behind such a plot.

Some said the Cabinet vacuum was planned by domestic parties with the approval of foreign powers as a compromise, to allow the Lebanese to avoid assuming the responsibility of cooperating with the S.T.L., which might involve arresting Hizbullah members named in the court's indictment. "This is a game to say that no government is present

to implement the indictment," Ali, 30, from Burj Abi Haidar said.

Others said rival parties have agreed that Hariri step aside to avoid embarrassment; allowing another prime minister to assume the responsibility of halting cooperation with the tribunal.

In Achrafieh, a majority of mostly Christian residents held all parties responsible for the failure to break the deadlock, accusing both the March 14 and 8 camps of surrendering to the will of foreign parties.

Elie, 38, dismissed the likelihood of a new Cabinet being formed soon "without foreign intervention." Asked whether he feared security instability, Elie said he had "no concerns," even though he could not rule out such a scenario.

Michel, another Achrafieh resident, said the Cabinet "should have been brought down a long time ago after its failure to make any achievements."

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Eyes Turned to March 8's Choice of PM as Suleiman Asks Cabinet to Act as Caretaker
Raad: March 8 to Name Personality with History of National Resistance as PME
U: Political Actors Should Work Constructively to Seek Negotiated Solution
Berri: I Discussed Everything Related to STL and Investigation with the French President
Eight More Killed in Tunisian Protest, Raising Death Toll to 66
Zahra: No Substitute for Hariri
Jordan Urges All Lebanese Parties to Avoid 'Escalation'
Sfeir Hopes Situation Won't Spill over into Street Violence
Thousands of Israeli Troops on Alert after Lebanon Government Collapsed
Clinton: When Israel Pulled Out of Lebanon it Got Hizbullah and 40,000 Rockets
Italy Urges Lebanese not to be Dragged to Violence
Iran: US, Israel Responsible for Lebanon Government Collapse
U.S. Diplomatic Source to Naharnet: Hizbullah Practicing Blackmail, No Other Party is Threatening Violence
Hariri to Paris after talks with Obama Who Voiced Support for PM
Moussa to Hizbullah: Stop Believing that You Are Targeted by STL
Qahwaji Rules Out Sectarian Strife: Army Fully Prepared to Curb Tension
US, French Naval Buildup near Lebanon, Debkafile
Analyst Predicts Prolonged Crisis for Lebanon that is Likely to Spiral into Violence
Report: Adnan Sayyed Hussein Resigned over Nasrallah Request
British Dailies Warn of Renewed War, Say Cabinet Collapse Worrying for Entire Mideast
Israel Releases Lebanese Shepherd
Lebanon Press Predicts Protracted Crisis, Downplays Chance of Renewed Violence
Abboud: Opposition Has No Candidate for Premiership
Israel: We are Carefully Monitoring Events in Lebanon
Egypt Calls on Lebanese Parties to Exercise 'Restraint', Keep Dialogue Door Open
Crowley: Too Early to See if Hariri Could Form New Government
Syria, Saudi Halt Mediation Attempts for Lebanon, Diplomats
Obama Official: US to Tell Syria that Ties with US will Suffer if It Harms Lebanon
Harb on Behalf of March 14: Opposition Ministers' Resignation Has Complicated Matters
Further
Republican Lawmaker Calls for 'Robust' Support for STL
U.S. Insistence on STL Backfired on Lebanon, Expert
Sarkozy Calls Assad, Voices Support for 'Lebanese Authorities, Institutions'
Qatari PM: We're Not Thinking of 'Doha 2', But of Activating 'Doha 1', Taef Accord
Britain Says Hizbullah Withdrawal 'Extremely Serious'
Ban Urges Lebanese to Maintain Dialogue, Reiterates Support for STL
March 8 Ministers, Sayyed Hussein Resign from Cabinet, Ask Suleiman to Form New One
Clinton Says Hizbullah Move 'Will Not Work'
Israeli Patrol Crosses Technical Fence, Abducts Lebanese Man
Geagea: No Cabinet Meeting Under Pressure, March 8 Gave Itself Powers More than President, PM
Jumblat from Bkirki: Dark Forces Torpedoed S-S Initiative
March 14: No Settlement on STL's Expense, No Obstruction of Cabinet, No Manipulation of Stability
Riyadh, Ankara Urge Lebanese to Preserve Unity
Govt
Berri: S-S Agreement was Mainly Based on Completion of Taef Accord
Khalife: Opposition Meets at 4pm Wednesday to Determine Next Steps
Obama Discusses Lebanon in Phone Conversation with Saudi King
Hizbullah Official: It All Depends on Hariri's Response
Williams and Sfeir Concerned at Possibility of Prolonged Crisis
Report: Indictment within Hours or Days
Jumblat Advises Politicians to Lebanonize Solution, Not Fall in Trap of Game of Nations
Syria's al-Watan: Saudi Apologized for Failure to Reach Agreement, Said All Hariri's Fault
Assiri: There was No Saudi-Syrian Initiative in the 1st Place
Report: Paris Informs Damascus it will Hold it Accountable for Lebanon Instability
Clinton Hopes Justice Won't Lead to Instability in Lebanon
Hariri Phones Suleiman: We Will Keep All Channels Open
Opposition Gives Suleiman, Hariri till Morning to Decide on Convening Cabinet
Israeli Army Commander: Hizbullah Capable of Firing Dozens of Missiles at Tel Aviv

Live Coverage

2:41pm A meeting is underway between Suleiman and Berri at Baabda palace to set a date for the start of consultations with MPs.

2:15pm Berri before meeting Suleiman: The atmosphere is good.

1:48pm The Jordanian FM: We urge the Lebanese to avoid escalation.

1:15pm Suleiman is holding a lunch banquet in honor of Prince Albert.

12:17pm MP Mohammed Raad: The opposition will name a personality with a history of national resistance to head the new government.

12:15pm The Italian foreign ministry expressed its deep concern over the resignation of opposition ministers and said it fully supported the state institutions.

12:05pm Israeli warplanes overflew Baalbek, Nabatiyeh and Marjayoun.

11:57am Military Judge Saqr Saqr charged 3 suspects, including a woman, with collaborating with the Israeli enemy.

11:15am Syrian President Bashar Assad telephoned his Lebanese counterpart to discuss the political situation.

11:04am Patriarch Sfeir said commitment to the Constitution is a duty and Lebanon's stability is most important.

10:55am Prince Albert II of Monaco arrived at Baabda Palace for talks with President Michel Suleiman.

10:00am European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton called for a negotiated solution to Lebanon's political crisis after the collapse of the government.

9:28am The presidency accepted the resignation of the government and asked it to stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new cabinet is formed.

9:05am NNA: Israeli forces released Lebanese shepherd Charbel Khouri a day after he was kidnapped in the southern Lebanese town of Rmeish.

8:34am Labor Minister Butros Harb to VDL (93.3): We prefer to be part of the Opposition than false witnesses in a Government that operates under the slogan "obstruction.

8:21am Tourism Minister Fadi Abboud to VDL (100.5): The Opposition has no candidate for the Premiership. Talk about March 8 turning the tables is exaggerated. We have exercised our Constitutional right of resignation.

7:26am Change and Reform MP Salim Salhab to VDL (93.3): We are waiting for the President to implement the Constitution. We will meet to decide and give our opinion.

7:25am Fatfat: President Suleiman will hold talks with Hariri upon his arrival in Lebanon to set a date for mandatory consultations with MPs to form a new government.

7:24am Lebanon First MP Ahmed Fatfat to VDL (100.5): I believe that Mr. Hariri enjoys full majority in Parliament.