

Hezbollah's arms expose Lebanon, not protect it: Geagea

Contributed by Daily Star
Monday, 04 April 2011

BEIRUT: Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea has said Lebanese state institutions should hold exclusive authority over the possession of weapons, warning that illegitimate arms exposed rather than protected the country against Israeli aggression.

"Can we speak of a true resistance unsupported by half of the Lebanese people? Can we speak of a resistance [that fails to win the backing] of the majority of the Arab and international community?" Geagea asked supporters gathered in Maarab over the weekend to mark the 17th anniversary of the disbanding of the LF.

"No, absolutely not, this is crap," he said, in reference to Hezbollah.

He added that the Lebanese state should unilaterally defend the country's sovereignty against foreign threats.

"The only possible resistance is one to be handled by the Lebanese state, backed by the Lebanese people and the sweeping majority of the Arab and international community," Geagea said.

"Thus we say: No for weapons outside the state authority and yes to a true resistance led by the state."

With the March 14 alliance recently stepping up its campaign against Hezbollah's weapons, Geagea said the issue of banning the possession of weapons by non-state actors would top the coalition's agenda for the future.

"We will not rest until it is accomplished," Geagea said.

The LF leader said illegitimate weapons exposed Lebanon to Israeli aggression and pushed the Arab world to relinquish its support to the Lebanese state, particularly given recent developments in the Gulf region, a reference to accusations Hezbollah is seeking to destabilize certain Arab regimes.

The Bahraini government accused Hezbollah of training opposition members to destabilize its regime in a bid to serve Iranian interests. The party has denied the accusations.

Geagea said popular uprisings that have swept throughout the Middle East represented a victory of the March 14 "mentality" in support of freedom and democracy and a defeat to "the other mentality that led to the disbanding of the LF party [in 1994]."

He added that the Arab people were demanding freedom without resorting to misleading slogans aimed at imperialism and Zionism.

"The Arab people are aware that confronting imperialism and Zionism … can only be achieved after they gain their freedom," Geagea said, and questioned the motives of parties using slogans against imperialism and Zionism.

Geagea said the LF was disbanded back in the 90s because of the party's opposition to Syrian hegemony.

"Occupation powers disbanded the LF because the LF was right while foreign or internal hegemony was always wrong," Geagea said.

The LF was disbanded in 1994 and Geagea imprisoned as security forces cracked down and repressed the party's activists.

The LF regained its status as a legitimate party after the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Geagea was released from prison after a majority in Parliament voted an amnesty bill.

Geagea said the LF would soon approve the party's by-laws, which was the focus of five-year workshops to transform the party to a truly democratic and modern one. — The Daily Star