

## Bekul Gur'aa - Presidential Elections - Jumblatt Urges International Help!

Contributed by Naharnet, LBC, Reuters, Dailystar  
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### Jumblatt Urges World to Secure Presidential Election

Druze leader Walid Jumblatt called for the international community's help to counter what he said were Syrian attempts to prevent the election of a new president in Lebanon.

Jumblatt made the appeal in a letter addressed to leaders of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia, France, China, Egypt, Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, the European Union, United Nations and Arab League.

"More than ever before, the Lebanese people are in dire need for the protection of the international community, governments and parties," said the letter.

"We are certain that you will continue to back our efforts to reach freedom by guaranteeing the election of a new president," Jumblatt said.

He again accused Syria of carrying out the September 12 bomb attack that killed anti-Syrian deputy Antoine Ghanem.

Ghanem was the eighth anti-Syrian politician to be assassinated since the February 2005 murder former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Syria has denied involvement in any of the attacks.

"This is another aggression to obstruct Lebanon's road to independence and sovereignty and a failed attempt by the Syrian regime to prevent the election of a new president," Jumblatt said.

On Thursday the 15-member U.N. Security Council called for a free and fair presidential election in Lebanon without foreign interference.

But House Speaker Nabih Berri, a leading figure in the opposition which is supported by Syria and Iran, slammed the U.N. as "meddling", adding that the election was "the business of the Lebanese people."

The opposition accuses the parliamentary majority of attempting to internationalize the Lebanese question.

Last Tuesday, parliament adjourned until October 23 a session to elect a new president for lack of a quorum, amid deadlock between the Prime Minister Fouad Saniora and the opposition.

But fears are running high that the impasse over the presidency could lead to two rival governments, a grim reminder of the final years of the 1975-1990 civil war when two competing administrations battled it out for control.(AFP-Naharnet)

from Naharnet, Beirut, 30 Sep 07, 12:25

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&F79FC79D00A0DB5FC2257369001F4AB2>

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Bekul Gur'aa segment on Presidential Elections  
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Jumblatt cries out for world leaders to 'protect us'  
Open letter lashes out at syria and opposition  
By Hani M. Bathish  
Daily Star staff  
Monday, October 01, 2007

BEIRUT: Democratic Gathering leader MP Walid Jumblatt wrote in an open letter to world leaders on Sunday that the Syrian regime represented a "direct threat" to Lebanon and what he called its democratic system, and that the country was in greater need of international support than ever. In a message seeking assistance from heads of state to preserve Lebanon's independence, Jumblatt accused the Syrian regime of trying to prevent the emergence of a democratic state in Lebanon and crippling its constitutional institutions. Jumblatt sent the letter to several leaders, including Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz, US President George W. Bush and French President Nicolas Sarkozy,

"The Lebanese people, more than ever before, are in urgent need of the international community's support, both government and political parties, to ensure that the people and their leaders can overcome the threat of successive assassinations which aim to destroy Lebanon," Jumblatt said in his missive.

He said the Syrian regime's Lebanese allies were working to obliterate the accomplishments of the 2005 demonstrations and reassert Syrian control over the Lebanese political system. The spring 2005 demonstrations, ignited by the February 14, 2005, bomb blast that killed former Premier Rafik Hariri and 22 others, forced the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon after nearly 30 years. Jumblatt warned that Lebanon's freedom and the "Beirut Spring" were facing the threat of political and physical liquidation.

"Only you, Lebanon's friends, can protect us. We are confident of your continued support for our striving for freedom by ensuring the election of a new president," Jumblatt said.

In the letter, which was also addressed to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Jumblatt said that UN Security Council Resolution 1559 was one of a series of resolutions that have "bolstered Lebanese independence." He said the resolution stipulated holding free and democratic presidential elections without external interference. The Security Council passed 1559 after President Emile Lahoud's term was extended by Syrian fiat in 2004.

Informed sources told the daily Al-Hayat on Saturday that the opposition felt 1559 would have served its purpose with the election of a new president and wanted to see the resolution put aside after the vote, because Resolution 1701 covers the remaining issues in Resolution 1559, such as disarming armed groups in Lebanon.

Referring to a statement by Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, the sources said that the part of Resolution 1559 referring to Hezbollah's weapons is now superseded by Resolution 1701, which ended the summer 2006 war with Israel and stipulates the disarming of all armed groups in Lebanon through implementation of the Taif Accord. Such an interpretation would thus leave a solution to Hezbollah's weapons to internal agreement among the Lebanese.

The opposition has asked that any new government's political program not include the implementation of 1559, because omitting the resolution would allow Hezbollah to keep its weapons pending the liberation of the Shebaa Farms and until agreement is reached on a national defense strategy.

Jumblatt said the election of a president who was not committed to implementing international resolutions would hinder the Special Tribunal for Lebanon to try suspects in the slaying of Hariri. He said this would give a boost to the Syrian regime to thwart the tribunal and resume the series of assassinations and terror attacks. Including Hariri, eight anti-Syrian figures have been assassinated since 2005. Syria has denied any involvement.

In a pointed reference to Syria, parliamentary majority leader MP Saad Hariri said that the era of foreigners imposing a head of state on the country had ended. Hariri made his remarks during an iftar dinner after meeting Berri on Friday. During their meeting, the two briefed each other on the substance of their recent talks with various political leaders.

Berri met with Jumblatt on Friday, while Hariri held meetings with Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Butros Sfeir, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea before meeting Berri.

"I am sure that these rounds of talks will, God willing, produce a new president for Lebanon," Hariri told families from Akkar, for whom the dinner was held. "Gone is the era of imposing presidents on Lebanon. The era of free, independent and national decision shall begin - the era of presidents 'made in Parliament,'" he added.

Hariri met on Sunday with Justice Minister Charles Rizk and MP Antoine Andraous, with whom he discussed recent developments. On Saturday Hariri met Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Reza Shibani, who said after the meeting that the political "atmosphere was very positive," adding that he hoped the Lebanese would cooperate with one another to help end the deep political crisis that has gripped the country for nearly a year.

MP Boutros Harb, a presidential candidate and senior March 14 leader, said that Lebanon was more important than the dreams of individual candidates, parties or sects, pointing out that he was the first to urge political factions, especially March 14, to accept Berri's recent compromise initiative.

"The problem occurred when the other side declared its intention to boycott the electoral session and hinder reaching a quorum if elections were not in their interests," Harb told a news conference. "Days ago we heard a new position from

[Change and Reform Bloc leader MP] Michel Aoun, who expressed his willingness to participate in the democratic process and that he will go to Parliament, for which we thank him."

Harb said that Aoun's comments indicate that the opposition will no longer threaten to hinder elections by not turning up for the electoral session in Parliament and denying the chamber the necessary two-thirds quorum for a first round of voting.

"I hope Parliament meets on October 23 with all its members attending and that it will be the place where democracy is practiced. There is a big possibility this will happen," Harb said.

He reiterated his earlier position that he would withdraw his candidacy if the March 14 Forces endorse MP Nassib Lahoud's candidacy. Harb said he hoped MPs would succeed in electing a president capable of leading Lebanon to a brighter future and not simply reach a deal over a political personality without a clearly defined political program.

Harb said that there was a political understanding over the postponement of last Tuesday's electoral session. He said that the first session did not convene since a quorum was not present and the speaker did not preside over the House. "The next session cannot be considered a second session," Harb said. According to the Constitution, the second round of voting requires only a simple majority of MPs to attend and vote.

Amal MP Ali Hassan Khalil, speaking at a party rally on Sunday, said that agreeing on a president was not impossible but could become a reality if intentions were pure and everyone took advantage of the opportunity provided by the speaker's initiative.

"We do not want a president without taste or color, but we want him strong, able to unite the people and committed to the basic national principles, a president who preserves Lebanon's strength," Khalil said.

[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=85703](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=85703)

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#### Sfeir For President Capable of Uniting Lebanese

Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir expressed hope that the feuding Lebanese leaders would soon reach an agreement over the next president who should be capable of uniting the Lebanese.

In his Sunday sermon, Sfeir called on politicians to work together in the best interest of Lebanon.

"We hope an agreement can be reached over a president who can unite the Lebanese regardless of their religious, sectarian and political backgrounds," Sfeir told worshipers.

He stressed on the need to elect a new president so Lebanon would not "lose a great deal of respect among other nations," adding that such an achievement is "important" for Lebanon in order to "regain its past glow and dignity."

"I hope the Lebanese people realize how critical the situation facing their country is and would unite in a bid to rescue the country and regain its position in the world," Sfeir said.

from Naharnet, Beirut, 01 Oct 07, 07:42

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&F79FC79D00A0DB5FC2257369001F4AB2>

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(Reuters) - Lebanese Minister of Justice Charles Rizk speaks during an interview with Reuters in his house in Beirut, October 3, 2007. An international court to try suspects in the 2005 killing of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri will proceed even if Lebanon fails to elect a new president, the Lebanese justice minister said on Wednesday. REUTERS/Ayman Saidi (LEBANON)

(Reuters) - Lebanese presidential candidate Nassib Lahoud announces his nomination for the presidential elections, in Biel, Beirut September 13, 2007. Lebanon will miss a huge chance to heal its wounds if it fails to elect a new president due to rifts between the anti-Syrian majority and the opposition, a prominent candidate said on October 2, 2007. Picture taken September 13, 2007. REUTERS/Sharif Karim (LEBANON)

