

## MP Wael Abu Faour: Hizbullah Trying to Marginalize the Christians' Political Role

Contributed by By Dalia Nehme  
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Naharnet (By Dalia Nehme): MP Wael Abu Faour accused Hizbullah of seeking to marginalize the role of Lebanon's Christians in the nation's political system by calling for the election of a president through direct popular vote, thus eliminating the factional balance of power guaranteed by parliament.

Abu Faour, a prominent member of the March 14 coalition and representative of the Progressive Socialist Party in the legislature, made the remark in an interview with Naharnet at the heavily guarded block of Beirut's seaside Phoenicia Hotel, where majority law makers are bastioned to avoid the ongoing death threat targeting Lebanese politicians opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime.

"If the presidential election was toppled this time, it would be a major blow to the Christians in the political system," he said.

"The referendum, direct election (by the people) and opinion polls proposed by Hizbullah put the Christian role in narrowest frame," Abu Faour stressed.

He ridiculed Nasrallah's opinion poll proposal to elect a new head of state saying "as if we are choosing man of the year &hellip; a beauty queen or a celebrity. We are electing the president here and the nation has constitutional institutions" that can elect a head of state.

"It is the majority's right and duty to safeguard democracy and prevent vacuum in the presidential office," Abu Faour said.

Abu Faour pointed out, "Collision is not our option, we want a democratic constitutional election &hellip; competition is a political tradition in Lebanon, why don't they want competition in parliament?"

He said Hizbullah leader Sayed Hassan Nasrallah has "placed Lebanon in the core in regional divisions and conflicts &hellip; and changed Lebanon into the boxing sac of a regional conflict."

Nasrallah, according to the PSP representative, "is protecting the Syrian regime by toppling the international tribunal and labeling it an international-Israeli-American tool &hellip; He also accused Saudi Arabia of heading towards normalization of relations with Israel &hellip; This places Lebanon on a regional collision course."

Nasrallah's policy turns Lebanon into "an arena for the Syrian and Iranian regimes," Abu Faour charged.

The current debate, he said, is not restricted to choosing a presidential candidate "Hizbullah also wants to gain political concessions related to U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701."

"Such topics have been discussed by Berri and (Saad) Hariri. Most of the discussions focused on 1559 and 1701."

He warned against repeating the Gaza example in Lebanon, in reference to the take over by force of the Hamas militant faction of the sector from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah.

"I think someone is considering repeating the Gaza example in Lebanon. The decisive element in repeating this example is Iran's decision. Would Iran support such an example in Lebanon?"

"If Iran felt threatened, it would use all its regional cards, including the Lebanon card," he added.

The young Druze MP who represents the Hasbaya constituency in the nation's unicameral house said Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri's initiative "reflects a will (to facilitate presidential elections" but lacks capability. He's got the will, but unfortunately he is not capable" of carrying it out.

Berri's Maneuverability "margin was narrowed by Nasrallah's speech. The real decision is in Hizbullah's hands &hellip; the spinal cord of the so-called March 8 forces is Hizbullah," according to Au Faour.

He said Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun "managed recently to assess the dimension of the dilemma in which he placed himself &hellip; He made a move towards us and we responded cordially, but the effort stumbled, I think

due to political considerations related to his relationship with his allies."

Abu Faour rejected charges by Assad and the Hizbullah-led March 8 that the majority was allied with the United States, stressing that "any relation between the government and a foreign power would not be at the expense of Lebanon's Arab belonging."

"It is true that the United States has provided the army with assistance, but other powers have sent missiles to local factions" he said in obvious reference to Iran and Hizbullah.

In answering a question as to whether the nation is heading to civil war, Abu Faour said: "We don't want past nightmares awakened. We wouldn't be dragged into war."

Asked to comment on meetings between Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir and Maronite Politicians, he said: "I believe the Patriarch is determined on facilitating presidential elections and he wants Christian MPs to shoulder their responsibilities in this regard."

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