

Congressman Gary Ackerman Comes Out In Full Support Of Lebanon's Democracy with Demands!

Contributed by NY Congressman Gary Ackerman
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At today's hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Rep. Ackerman made the following statement regarding Lebanon.

(The letter he refers to is attached.)

Madam Secretary, I'd like to call your attention to the presidential succession crisis in Lebanon. Support for the Cedar Revolution may be the President's biggest potential win in the Middle East, and right now, that success is just four dead men away from disappearing.

That's the remaining number of parliamentarians that Syria and Iran and their terrorist proxies need to kill to destroy the current majority and return Lebanon to its status as a fiefdom.

If losing Gaza was a disaster, trying losing Lebanon. Our response here has been, frankly, inadequate and I'd like to suggest the following steps be considered urgently:

First, America's commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and independence needs to be reiterated by the President in a specific major address. Damascus and Tehran and the entire Middle East need to hear explicitly that the United States will not accept the resumption of foreign domination of Lebanon; that we insist, and mean it, that foreign states refrain from interfering in Lebanon's constitutional processes; that we consider the assassinations of Lebanese parliamentarians as acts of international aggression; that we will never sacrifice the Special Tribunal for Lebanon to appease other states; and that we will push for the Special Tribunal to include all assassinations since Rafiq Hariri's in its purview. If a Presidential statement was important for Burma, it's equally important for Lebanon.

Second, the President should immediately impose economic and political sanctions against the Syrian regime, specifically President Assad, his family and his coterie of close associates. Their assets in the United States should be frozen and their travel to this country should be barred. The very same steps should be taken against their proxies in Lebanon. The President has expansive sanctioning powers under U.S. law that are not even close to being exhausted with regard to Syria.

Third, the United States needs to raise the profile of this crisis much higher. Security Council resolutions are not enough. A formal international contact group should be established with the explicit mission of protecting Lebanon's sovereignty and independence. Further, I believe the President should appoint a single figure in the United States government to be responsible for managing this crisis.

Fourth, the House (twice) and the Senate (once) have passed resolutions supporting Lebanon, and pledging our continued readiness to put our money where our mouth is. Currently, we're getting out-bid in Lebanon by two countries whose combined GDP is a third of just our national defense budget. If you believe we need more resources to prevent disaster, you have to ask for them. The support is here.

Madam Secretary, I know you and the President have more than enough to handle, but there's not going to be another chance to save Lebanon. We have to act now. I've summarized these points in a letter which I'd like to give you, but I'd like to hear your initial response.

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<<Letter to Sec Rice re Lebanon.pdf>>

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Howard Diamond
 Majority Professional Staff
 House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia

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Condoleezza Rice Discussing Lebanon Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee On Policy in the ME