

Free Patriotic Movement

Statement of Policies

Rabieh, March 10, 2009

1. On the Issue of the Palestinian Refugees

“The Right of Return of the Palestinians is a fundamental and permanent right, and the rejection of the settling of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is an issue that has the consensus of the Lebanese people and cannot be conceded under any circumstances”. MOU

The main concern we have is the settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and we have voiced our concern over the matter several times and called on the US and the international community to take up their responsibilities and find an adequate solution that is accepted by the Palestinians themselves to this crisis.

Apart from being a social burden poised to create a demographic imbalance likely to have significant drawbacks on the social fabric of the country, thus exacerbating sectarian and political strife, settling Palestinian refugees in Lebanon will also be a burden on the already ailing Lebanese economy, knowing that Lebanon is a country with a high density of population- nearly 400 per square kilometer- and has the least resources in the Arab world.

These refugees live in less-than-human conditions in their host countries such as Lebanon. Their camps dwelling and drowning in misery and poverty offer a fertile ground for the rise of radical Sunni extremist groups, and the events of the Nahr el Bared camp in northern Lebanon in May 2007 are a proof of the danger these camps pose.

Any solution involving their settlement in Lebanon will provoke a public outcry and will be resisted at all costs because it will upset the delicate balance among the Lebanese religious communities and usher in a period of instability. So we reiterate that the international community who agreed on the UN partition plan that led to the forced exodus of the Palestinian people is legally and morally bound to find a solution to this crisis.

Although we know that the strategic alliance between the US and Israel is a constant principle in the US Foreign Policy, and that the US will always hold the interests of Israel as a top priority, we do believe that any solution involving the settlement of the Palestinians is nothing but a recipe for conflict in Lebanon and will reverberate throughout the whole Middle East.

2. On the Relationship with Hizbullah

*“In the goals, the FPM aspires to:
Propagate the culture of peace, dialogue and democracy”. FPM Charter*

In a bid to implement a conflict resolution approach based on dialogue, the FPM engaged in negotiations with Hizbullah that resulted in signing the Memorandum of Understanding on February 6, 2006. The MOU, tackling 10 points of national interest including the weapons of Hizbullah, which was dealt with for the first time, the relations with Syria, fighting corruption, the building of the State, proved a successful landmark in Lebanon’s modern history.

The document succeeded in bringing down psychological barriers that subsided from the war and in building trust among two significant Lebanese political groups. Hizbullah and the FPM defined common positions regarding ten thorny issues plaguing national entente and stability, and invited all the Lebanese parties to engage in the process. Yet, this understanding was met with dismay and criticism.

The MOU defined a clear framework for the issue of the weapons, a solution according to which the weapons of Hizbullah would be included in a national defense strategy after Israel frees all the Lebanese detainees and withdraws from the Shebaa farms.

In this context, the MOU bore its fruits. In the latest Israeli campaign against Gaza, and while speculations about the involvement of Hizbullah were mounting, Hizbullah did not launch any attack, for it is committed to protecting Lebanon and the Lebanese territories. And this is exactly what it did in July 2006 when Israel waged an all-out war against Lebanon.

In turn, it was our national duty to host our fellow countrymen who fled southern Lebanon seeking shelter from the weapons Israel used to flatten our towns and villages. As such, the sense of trust and nationalism grew stronger. The MOU also played a major role in containing the bloody events of January 2008 thus averting a civil strife in the area that used to be known in the war as the green line.

3. On the Relations with Syria

“We hope that the Syrian regime will take the opportunity to act positively and withdraw its forces from Lebanon as we seek to build with the Syrian people genuine and strong friendly relations based on mutual respect and common interests among the two people.” General Aoun before the US Congress in September 2003

“In the goals, the FPM aspires to:

Guaranty the sovereignty of the Lebanese state and its independence and to safeguard its existence.

In principles, the FPM declares:

Its adherence to the openness of Lebanon to and its interaction with its Arab surroundings and the world, in such a way as not to conflict with the national belonging and provided that the Lebanese will be a dimension of Lebanon in foreign countries and not a foreign dimension within Lebanon”. FPM Charter

The establishment of balanced and sound Lebanese-Syrian relations requires a review of the past experience while drawing the necessary conclusions and lessons in order to avoid the accumulated mistakes, blemishes, and breaches. This is in order to pave the way to build these relations on clear bases on parity and the full and mutual respect for the sovereignty and independence of both states, on the grounds of rejecting the return to any form of foreign tutelage. MOU

We have proudly fought Syria when its troops were occupying Lebanon, and we have pushed for the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act with the US Congress in December 2003. Yet we have always stated that once Syria’s troops are out of Lebanon, we seek to have good relations with it and with the Syrian people since it’s a neighboring country, and as such we share a great number of common interests.

The Hariri assassination was not the main trigger for the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon but it certainly hastened the process. We knew that the international community’s will to push us for a conflict with Syria would jeopardize our internal stability so we refused to commit to such policies, thus acting in line with our previous statements.

In the MOU, along with Hizbullah, we vowed to protect Lebanon’s sovereignty, independence and freedom as we have always done. And General Aoun’s visit to Syria, as a special guest of the Syrian president, was a proof of that. Furthermore, the establishment of diplomatic ties and exchanging embassies is a confirmation that relations between the two countries would never go back to how they used to be prior to the Syrian withdrawal.

4. On the Relations with the US

"In the goals, the FPM aspires to:

Guaranty the sovereignty of the Lebanese state and its independence and to safeguard its existence". FPM Charter

Lebanon and especially Lebanon's Christians have long paid the price of US policies in Lebanon and the region. Lebanon paid a price for the agreement between the US, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Israel in 1990 and it was meant to pay the price of the disagreement among them in 2005.

The Bush administration, while adopting double standards in its foreign policy, has made a series of flawed decisions jeopardizing the very existence of our country. As such we have every right to oppose such policies. As much as we respect the American people with whom we share values of freedom and independence, we have the right to stand against any policy that we deem inappropriate.

And instead of nurturing the culture of dialogue and conflict resolution among the Lebanese people, the Bush Administration took sides, emboldening groups at the expense of others and alienating those who refuse to comply with its policies. This policy has led the whole region to instability and has left behind a legacy of bloodshed and suffering, as these mistaken policies and choices wreaked havoc in countries struggling to survive against their own demons.

The US Administration has in the last few years affected many aspects of the ongoing crisis, and has inevitably led to gruesome consequences in the area that, in turn, greatly affected the US. Consequently, the US has lost both its image and its credibility, and has partly fuelled an unprecedented and soaring anti-American sentiment not only in the Middle East but throughout the world as well.

So these mishaps between Lebanon and the United States need to be reversed and the course needs to be corrected to guarantee the good relations that we seek between the two countries.

In this context, the US needs to refrain from taking sides in internal Lebanese politics, it should have a deeper and wider understanding of our complicated political dynamics, and it should encourage building the rule of law and strengthening state institutions, rather than supporting groups responsible for a huge national debt that accumulated over the last 16 years in the shadow of state-protected corruption.

Finally, the key to redress is listening to all groups and taking into consideration all concerns. As such, the US would not only regain the friendship and admiration of the all the Lebanese people, but also play an active role in safeguarding the oldest democracy in the Middle East.

5. On Fighting Corruption

"In the goals, the FPM aspires to:

Promote institutional functions on the basis of competence and the implementation of the principle of liability and accountability." FPM Charter

"Eradicate corruption from its roots, because temporary and partial solutions are no longer sufficient. They have in fact become an exercise in bluff that the beneficiaries of corruption at all levels carry out to perpetuate their theft of the resources of the state and its citizens." MOU

We hold the issue of corruption that has crippled the functioning of State institutions as a top priority in our political platform. In the 15 years when we were marginalized and left out of the power, ruling parties took pleasure in squandering public money, increasing their personal wealth and have thus led to a public debt amounting to over 200% of the GNP, or some 50 billion dollars, in an ailing economy with no resources.

Yet the Hariri group and its subordinates have fought every move we have made to implement a national audit into the State finances in a bid to establish responsibilities. But this government was supported by the US and the international community, which emboldened it into not making any move in correcting the course.

In this context, we have stressed the need to revive control institutions provided for by the law and that are supposed to monitor State finances, control expenditures and implement the principle of accountability.

This corruption plaguing both our political system and our society has led into the gradual extinction of the middle class, thus making poor people poorer and rich people richer. Therefore, addressing this issue has become both a political and social necessity.

6. On the Electoral Law

“In the goals, the FPM aspires to:

Enable the Lebanese Diaspora to exercise their political rights in Lebanon from their countries of expansion and strengthen the bond among them and between them and their motherland”.

FPM Charter

In 2005, we pleaded with internal groups and the international community to hold the elections according to a new law that provides an accurate representation of the Lebanese people. Yet our demands have fallen on deaf ears. So we engaged in the electoral process without being convinced of its legitimacy.

In 2008, we signed along with the other Lebanese groups a new electoral law as part of the Doha accord. This law included a series of reforms, the most important of which being granting the Lebanese Diaspora the right to vote from overseas. Yet, back to Lebanon, our MPs were the only one to vote for the reforms in including the Diaspora vote in parliament while all the others defaulted on their promise only to have leeway in “offering” Lebanese émigrés tickets and accommodation for the election season in exchange for their votes.

Throughout the last four years, local and international media made all attempts to tarnish our image, distort our past, and twist events to the benefits of the wealthy and the media moguls. The above-mentioned policy directives are a basis upon which we have built our actions and deeds. As the elections approach, the need to highlight these points to the uninformed people is a must, for many have been unfortunately lured by distorted facts, rumors, and deceit. Building awareness remains our most powerful tool as we do it with all transparency and credibility.

General Michel Aoun



Member of Parliament

Head of Change and Reform Parliamentary Bloc

Head of the Free Patriotic Movement