

THE LEBANON WE WANT TO BUILD UP

A WRITING BY
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The following is text from a document issued by the Lebanese Front at Deir Aoukar in December 1980, which was written by Dr. Charles Malik.

At this moment of decision in the history of Lebanon and the Middle East, the Lebanese Front wishes to make clear, before the people of Lebanon, before world public opinion, and for history, its fundamental positions and objectives.



IN THE NAME OF OUR HERITAGE, OUR VALUES AND OUR PEOPLE

The Lebanese Front is fully conscious that it speaks in the name of a cumulative Lebanese heritage relatively uninterrupted for 6,000 years. Although the continuity of this heritage has been somewhat checkered, its discontinuity cannot be compared with other discontinuities in the Middle East. There is no continuity in the Eastern Mediterranean comparable to that of the Lebanese heritage.

The Lebanese Front is also fully conscious of the value of this heritage at once to Lebanon, to the Middle East and to the world. Only in the light of this value in which the Front believes and to which it firmly clings can its fundamental positions be understood. The Front is most anxious to preserve the customs, values and freedoms of Lebanon's way of life, and to serve as a bulwark against all perils besetting it today. Its faith in Lebanon and its unique values, and its absolute determination to defend them, explain all the positions of the Front. The Front is fully aware of the fact that Lebanon is entrusted with a treasure than which nothing is more precious or holy, and it refuses to permit any particle of this trust to fritter away.

The Lebanese Front also knows that it speaks in the name of an overwhelming majority of the people of Lebanon, although it recognizes that part of this majority is not in a position to express its opinion freely. Therefore the Lebanese Front is honored by the feeling that it represents not only those who can express their opinion freely, but also the others who do not at present enjoy this freedom.



THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The Lebanon we want to build up is what has been unique and constant about Lebanon down the ages; a Lebanon that refuses to be absorbed by any other entity or to be qualified by anything other than itself: a state, therefore, independent, sovereign and free.

We oppose any attempt at dissolving Lebanon in its environment or in something other than itself, a dissolution that will cause its distinctive characteristics to disappear.

The borders of the Lebanon we want to build up are its present borders as determined by its Constitution and as internationally recognized.

The political system of the Lebanon we want to build up is republican, democratic, parliamentary, pluralist, free and open, in the technical senses of these terms as universally recognized.

While preserving its total sovereignty and independence, Lebanon establishes relations with other states on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect.

The rule governing these relations shall be the common interests, culturally, economically and politically, between Lebanon and the other states, be they Arab, Middle Eastern or other.

We shall not build up the free, sovereign and independent Lebanon we want alone, but all its children, both here in Lebanon and abroad all over the world, will also participate with us in this process; together we shall all be responsible for its defense, the orientation of its policy and the organization of its administration.

The Lebanese Front believes in the necessity of reconsidering the structural formula which has determined the politics of Lebanon since 1943, with a view to modifying it in such a way as to prevent any friction or clash between the members of the same Lebanese family.

This reconsideration might issue in an alteration of the structural formula into some kind of decentralization or federation or confederation within a comprehensive framework of a single unified Lebanon. Such has been the trend of the modern constitutional systems throughout the world. The aim of the alteration is to ensure that no disaster like the many disasters which befell Lebanon since 1840 will recur in the future. The new formula will be agreed upon among the Lebanese themselves in a climate devoid of compulsion or intimidation, whether arising from within or without.

In the determination of the principles of its existence, Lebanon will be guided by the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially with respect to the fundamental rights and freedoms of man.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

Lebanon's principal concern is to ensure individual and group freedoms for all its children and institutions.

Owing to the fact that the first fundamental problem of the Middle East, as indeed of all Asia and Africa, nay even of more than Asia and Africa, is the problem of minorities; and owing to the fact that the fundamental minorities in the Middle East are religious minorities; for these two reasons Lebanon is compelled, having regard to its composition and history, to pay special attention to its religious communities with a view to ensuring their freedoms.

Our aim is that Lebanon enjoy the clear distinction of being the only country in the Middle East in which the problem of minorities has received its complete resolution.

There shall not be in the Lebanon we propose to build up any discrimination or inequity against any one of its communities.

The Lebanon which has revolted against the perennial problem of minorities in the Middle East shall not permit this problem to life up its head in it.

The Christian society in Lebanon occupies a special position owing to the fact that it has been free and has enjoyed a continuous history down the centuries. For this reason the Lebanon we want to build up is anxious that the Christians in it remain in fact free, secure and masters of themselves and of their own values and destiny, exactly as Christians are in any country in the world where they are in fact free, secure and masters of themselves and of their own values and destiny. Lebanon considers this charge as one of its most sacred trusts.

The Christians of Lebanon do not want more for themselves than they want for others, but at the same time, they do not accept less for themselves than others want for themselves.

The freedom of the Christians in Lebanon is not to be confined to a particular section of Lebanon only, but it must extend to every Christian and every Christian society in all Lebanon.

The freedom and security of the Christians in Lebanon, and their mastery over themselves, their values and their destiny, do not depend on any demographic consideration or any political orientation.

Most certainly the Lebanon Front does not understand by the Christians of Lebanon the Maronites only, but all other Christian communities which, by reason of their rooted

traditions and their free development, since the days of Christ and since some of them took refuge in this hospitable mountain, have contributed so much to the flourishing of this special, distinctive civilization.

As to the lacerative winds blowing upon the Maronite community today, the Lebanon Front, while anxiously preoccupied with them, does not consider them a concern that can possibly last.

For in the face of the grim dangers now threatening us, the Front believes that when every one of us rises above his own wound, we will then turn, all of us, to the healing of Lebanon's wound. And we shall succeed in healing it.

Moreover, the Lebanese Front believes that the Christians, all of them, cannot part from their brethren of the other minorities who have, for hundreds of years, contributed with them to the formation of this homeland, so unique and brave and with such a distinctive personality of its own in the Middle East.

The Lebanese Front believes that Lebanon is not a meeting place of two great religions huddled together against their will, and therefore forced to resort to all sorts of ruses and stratagems in order to maintain a precarious mode of coexistence always subject to collapse as each of them sharpens its own craving to dominate and rule. It views Lebanon rather as a federation of communities comprising sixteen minorities, all bent in a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation on preserving them in the Middle East, the freedom, dignity and equality they all enjoy in Lebanon, regardless of demographic and social inequalities that may exist among them.

The maxim of the Lebanese Front in its impartial and just view of all Lebanese is: no Lebanese is superior to another except on the basis of his loyalty to Lebanon and to its freedoms and values.

For it holds the firm conviction that the guarantee of the survival of Lebanon is not mere loyalty to Lebanon, but a loyalty infused with love for Lebanon.

IV

THE PEACE OF THE MIDDLE EAST IS DETERMINED BY THE PEACE OF LEBANON, AND THE PEACE OF LEBANON IS DETERMINED BY THE PEACE OF THE CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON

The peace of Lebanon is one of the keys to the peace of the Middle East. Peace and stability cannot prevail in the Middle East so long as Lebanon is shattered, politically and spiritually, and its peace shaken, troubled and precarious. The instability in Lebanon means precisely the instability of the Middle East.

If the peace of Lebanon is one of the keys to the peace of the Middle East, the fundamental key to the peace of Lebanon is for all the religious societies of Lebanon to be free, happy, secure, at ease in their own minds, and masters of themselves, their values and their destinies.

Whoever imagines that free Christianity in Lebanon can be oppressed without producing a tremendous world reaction and tremors of a fundamental revolutionary character all over the Middle East, is misled and mistaken. Such a person does not know either the power of freedom, or the truth of Christianity, or the actual state of affairs and the histories of the peoples of the region, or the inevitable development of their relations among themselves in the future.

The future does not belong to oppression but to liberation. The future will not bring about a contraction of existing freedom but a widening of its scope. The future will not conduce to the enlargement and grounding of slavery but to diminishing its scope and getting rid of it altogether. The future does not belong to discriminating against the religious minorities but to these minorities themselves winning complete equality in their responsibilities, rights and obligations. The future does not belong to the realm of darkness but to the realm of the light which shone and continues to shine in Lebanon.

If Christianity has been present and active in the Eastern Mediterranean for 2,000 years without interruption; if it is living and active, and shall remain living and active, in the West; and if the Mediterranean has been throughout history a living space for the West or the West for the Mediterranean; then it is not reasonable for active Christianity to disappear today from the Eastern Mediterranean. On the contrary, what is reasonable, nay what is inevitable, is that Christianity shall deepen itself and become more authentic in its action and freedom in the Eastern Mediterranean.

V

TOTAL LIBERATION FROM THE TWO OCCUPATIONS

The Syrian occupation must be lifted. Every agreement of whatever kind arrived at under the shadow of the bayonet cannot be a free agreement, and therefore we consider it null and void.

Certainly No to settling the Palestinians in Lebanon. This absolute rejection has been embodied in all the previous statements of the Lebanese front, and in particular in the statement it issued on Tuesday, May 20, 1980, in which it declared:

“The Front hastens to declare its total rejection of any settlement of foreigners, particularly of Palestinians, on any Lebanese territory, no matter how small in size and wherever the settlement should take place. It intends to resort to all means, no matter how onerous, to prevent this act of aggression from taking place, an act that will have the effect of sealing the fate of Lebanon from now.”

The Lebanese Front has been pleased to note that the position expressed by the Foreign Minister in the Government’s statement before the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 2, 1980 conformed to its views; we quote the following passage from this statement:

“We wish to emphasize here what the President of Lebanon said on more than one occasion: We absolutely reject any project for the settlement of foreigners on Lebanese territory, as well as every measure that may lead to such settlement, whether directly or indirectly. We shall oppose any disguised project of settlement in all its phases with every means at our disposal. This opposition springs from our faith in our sacred right to our homeland, a right which nobody shares with us. The land of Lebanon is not free-for-all, neither is it a commodity offered for sale in auctions held in some international bazaar.”

It is precisely this absolute rejection which every Lebanese shouts from the housetops with his deepest, firmest and most strenuous voice.

From the outset we were determined to nullify at any cost every project aiming at settling the Palestinians in Lebanon.

All the sales or transfers of real estate which occurred here and there with a view to enabling Palestinians, whether directly or in some roundabout way, to own Lebanese property, shall be abrogated.

For the land of Lebanon belongs to the Lebanese only and there is no land in Lebanon for non-Lebanese.

Likewise every illegal acquisition of Lebanese nationality, regardless of who has acquired it, shall be abrogated.

Certainly No also to partition.

But with the same strength and certainty, No to every measure that conduces, or that might conduce, to the weakening of personal, existential, human, responsible freedom.

The reconciling of these two Noes, No to partition and No to the erosion of responsible freedom, is the fateful desideratum at this critical moment in the history of Lebanon.

VI

THE EXISTENCE OF LEBANON AN IMPERATIVE NECESSITY

Lebanon is a necessity for itself, an Arab necessity, a Middle Eastern necessity, and a world necessity.

In all the sectors of its society, Lebanon fought, is now fighting, and shall continue fighting; Lebanon stood firm, is now standing firm, and shall continue standing firm; all in defense of its existence and freedoms, and all for the protection of its own values. Lebanon will not accept any encroachment upon its freedoms and values, even if the whole world stood in its face. And when the world wakes up from its slumber, it will appreciate the greatness of Lebanon's dogged attachment to its values even to the point of death, not only for itself, but indeed for the entire world.

And because Lebanon is an Arab necessity, owing to the fact that its climate is the climate of freedom, it devolves upon the Arab world to appreciate its situation and do everything in its power, not to enfeeble it, or oppress it, or curtail its vitality, or absorb it, but to vouchsafe for it the assurance, in truth, that it is totally secure from any Arab or Islamic peril, and to leave it to itself to develop in its own way according to the pleasure and will of its own peoples.

The thought that the good of the Arabs and Islam consists in assimilating and absorbing Lebanon, and that "Lebanon is a thorn in the side of the Arab world" which must disappear, is a false thought, let alone the fact that the realization of this thought is impossible.

Again, because Lebanon is a Middle Eastern necessity, owing to the fact, first, that the emergence of an order of peaceful interaction among the peoples of the Middle East is an

inevitable development, and, second, that Lebanon is destined to play an effective role in the midst of this order, it behooves all the countries of the Middle East, including Turkey, Israel and Iran, to reassure free, sovereign, independent, secure and healthy Lebanon that, in truth, it is not in danger of extinction.

Finally, because Lebanon is a world necessity, owing to the fact, first, that Lebanon in the essence of its being is human and universal, as it has made, and continues to make today, many contributions of a universal and human character, principally in the domain of thought and of material and human intercourse; second, that Lebanon serves as an authentic window at once of the Middle East to the world and of the world to the Middle East; and third, that Lebanon is a moderating and reconciling factor among the peoples and civilizations of a region, the Middle East, which has always displayed , and all the more displays today, a universal world character, in relation to world religions, the economy of the world, world strategy, and world history.

For all these reasons the whole world must concern itself with Lebanon; it must even protect it; it must realize that should Lebanon lose its freedom and its distinctive identity with its universal character, its contribution would dry up and the world itself as a result would lose a value unique and irretrievable.

Consequently the Lebanese Front holds that the interest of the whole world requires the world to rise to the duty of providing this small-great country. Lebanon, with formal, actual and effective guarantees, to the end that Lebanon be assured a firm existence in which it will be at once free and master of itself, and therefore able to continue to carry out the message with which it has been charged since the dawn of history.

If Lebanon is given these guarantees, its mind will be set at ease, and it will then be free to act and create; and if it is not given them, it will still act to be free in order to create; and in any event, Lebanon will remain a distinctive civilization by itself.

VII

LEBANON UNIVERSAL AND HUMAN

In the essence of its being, Lebanon is authentically rooted in the one universal human civilization. It therefore rejects and resists every attempt at tearing up its deep roots in this civilization. Indeed its continuous historical existence is itself the expression of a firm will to this rejection and resistance.

We likewise reject every attempt at attenuating Lebanon's traditional-existential relations with Europe and the Western world in general. For down the centuries and generations Lebanon has always acted on this world and interacted with it, and we shall not accept in

these last days cutting Lebanon off from this world. Every attempt at this act of cutting Lebanon off from the West we shall categorically reject.

The Lebanon we want to build up will not admit that any summit of thought or spirit in history and in the world be not accessible to its children. Therefore Lebanon will design its system of education on the basis of complete responsible openness to all sources of reason and truth and spirit in history and the world.

We also reject every attempt at weakening Lebanon's traditional free and creative interaction in all fields with its Arab and Middle Eastern environments.

Finally, we reject every attempt at severing the Lebanese overseas, whether sentimentally or culturally or economically or politically or administratively, from Lebanon, their fatherland. We aim, on the contrary, at making the relations between Lebanon and the Lebanese overseas as intimate, solid and firm as possible.

On the occasion of the convening of the recent annual conference of the American Lebanese League in Washington between October 18 and 20, 1980, we commend the felicitous endeavors undertaken by the League with the United States Government and the public opinion of America. We also laud the constancy of its sound view of everything that pertains to the essence and destiny of Lebanon.

We wish also to express on this occasion our pleasure in the Second World Maronite Congress which was held in New York between October 8 and 12, 1980, and to welcome the decisions it took and the recommendations it formulated, notably:

the affirmation of world Maronitism of its attachment to free, sovereign and independent Lebanon;

the affirmation of its rejection of every settlement of the Palestinians on Lebanese territory; and

the affirmation of His Holiness the Pope of the supreme human-world value of free Lebanon.

Four factors appearing on the horizon threaten, whether or not by design, to rupture one or another of Lebanon's essential features:

rupturing Lebanon from its deep and relatively unbroken roots throughout history;

rupturing Lebanon's intimate ties to the one human-world civilization;

rupturing Lebanon's creative interaction, or curtailing this interaction, with its Arab and Middle Eastern environments; and

rupturing Lebanon's organic and living ties with its children abroad throughout the world.

The Lebanon we want to build up rejects categorically all these four rupturings.

VIII

THE NEW LEBANESE SOCIETY

The new society of the Lebanon we want to build up shall be characterized by the following features:

- lofty morals;
- responsible freedom;
- truthfulness;
- respect for others;
- placing the common good above the individual good;
- curbing material greed;
- the supremacy of law;
- promoting community spirit and cohesiveness;
- social justice;
- enlarging the scope of social security; and
- the example of the leaders.

We shall endeavor to implant these virtues, and all that goes with them, through the family, the school, popular literature and art, the public media of information, social intercourse, and the law.

IX

ADDRESSING THE WORLD

In the past the West used to understand the reality of Lebanon and to take it seriously, but the West of today either does not understand it or, if it does, turns its gaze away from it.

Owing, however, to the splendid steadfastness manifested by all sectors of Lebanese society, the West lately appears to have renewed its readiness to understand it.

It is this indifferent, if not unfriendly, West whom we wish now to address.

We address the states and peoples of the West, both West and East.

We address France and the French people.

We address West Germany and the West German people.

We address Britain and the British people.

We address Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg and their peoples.

We address Italy, Spain, Greece and Ireland and their peoples.

We address the Scandinavian states and their peoples.

Then we address the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Latin American world, all of which include great Lebanese communities – we address them all, governments and peoples.

We address these states and peoples in a spirit of confidence and hope, because the systems, outlooks and values of all them are the same as our system, outlook and values here in Lebanon. Their systems are democratic and free; our system, too, is democratic and free. Their values are the values of freedom and man; ours, too, are precisely the same.

We say to them all:

“We are persuaded that part of the responsibility for the havoc that has afflicted Lebanon falls on your shoulders. You were for the most part spectators and unconcerned, while it was within your power, if you mustered the will, to contribute effectively to sparing us this ordeal, or at least to reducing it to one-tenth of its magnitude.

“We believe in the same values in which you believe.

“These values are integrated into our being as they are into yours.

“We fought and are fighting and we died and are dying for the same outlook on life for which you fought and are fighting and died and are dying.

“Our war is your war and if we are overcome in it, we shall not be overcome alone: you too will be overcome.

“Our survival is your survival, and if we survive with our values in these parts, you and your values will survive with us.

“We presume to feel that we love the peoples of this region more than you do, for we resolutely cling to the values we have been tending, values which were ours before they became yours, and because the peoples hereabout are in the most dire need for our unwavering living witness to them.

“The narrow and grudging eye appears to have succeeded, in one of your uncritical moments, in impressing upon you, falsely, the thought that your interests cannot be safeguarded except by sacrificing our life of dignity and mastery over our own destiny.

“The liberating of yourselves from the sway of this grudging and sickly eye is indeed your problem.

“Who painted to you that our continuing to enjoy the life of freedom in which, far from inflicting any harm on anybody, we live, as we have been living all along, at peace with everybody, conflicts with your interests?

“Where is your freedom, where is your ancient and venerable tradition, where are your authentic values, where is your foresight, where is the lofty discrimination between spirit and matter which adorned the thinking of your forefathers for centuries and centuries?

“We are certain that the capabilities of your diplomacy can, provided the will were forthcoming, felicitously and quite easily reconcile between preserving all your vital interests in the Middle East and our continuing to live a life of freedom, dignity and mastery over our own values and destiny.

“Nay our continuing to enjoy such a life serves to bolster up at once the interests of the Middle East and your interests in the Middle East.

“We do not believe that your diplomacy which succeeded in the past by its resourcefulness and skill in overcoming a thousand and one conflicts, cannot now, quite easily, discern and cancel out the spurious conflict between your interests and our living a life of dignity and freedom.

“Indeed, we may have more confidence in you than you have in yourselves, for we believe that someday you will wake up and appreciate the heroism of our eternal tragic struggle in the defense of values which are exactly your values as they are ours.”

Then we turn, again with confidence and hope, to the Soviet Union and the states which revolve in its orbit, and address them as follows:

“Our system is different from your system and our outlook is different from your outlook.

“But this difference need not inhibit our interest in and understanding of one another.

“How can you be harmed if we preserve our system and values and do not threaten in the slightest your systems and values?

“How can you be harmed if we conduct transaction with you on the basis of mutual respect, taking into account your and our interests, despite the differences that may subsist between your and our systems and values?

“You conduct transactions with systems other than your own precisely on this basis.

“Some of your values coincide with some of ours, and it is on the basis of this common fund of values that we can meet.

“We are confident we can understand your situations, and we trust it will be possible for you to understand ours. On the basis of this mutual and tolerant comprehension we should be able, together, to build up free, creative and sound relations with one another.”

We shall never forget all those who stood by our side in the tribulation that has befallen us.

And as we belong to the group of states and peoples that labor in the vineyard of man for the good of man – and we are permanently committed to this task –, we shall persevere in cooperating intimately and energetically with any state belonging to this group, until we pay every man our debt to him, and every state the obligations we owe it, and until we earn and justify our rightful place in the world.

X

A CALL TO THE LEBANESE PEOPLE: TOTAL CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE

The Lebanese Front wishes to stress its total confidence that the Lebanese people will overcome all adversities and obstacles, no matter how complicated or tortuous or obscure the path still before them may be. It bases this confidence on the sturdiness manifested by our people throughout history, and on the remarkable steadfastness which has characterized the Lebanese Resistance, in all its sectors, in the ongoing events. This resistance has offered, and shall continue to offer, almost superhuman sacrifices. The Lebanese Front reaffirms its faith that Lebanon will emerge from the fiery furnace in which it is being tried an oasis of freedom, humanism, prosperity, openness, concord, joy and peace, as it has always been in the past.

We now address the Lebanese people of all persuasions:

“Doubtless you recognize the voice addressing you. You are accustomed to hearing it. The same voice is now calling you.

“The Lebanon we want to build up belongs both to you and to us.

“It is equally your home and our home, regardless of who builds more in it, you or we.

“We have willed it, both to you and to us, a sanctuary of pride, honor and dignity, and a pasture in which freedom and well-being can bask.

“You and we are sick and tired of a foreigner who intrudes on our privacy, helps himself to our livelihood, and violates our sacred honor.

“a foreigner who destroys our institutions, our property and the sources of our welfare and happiness, and who darkens what looms ahead of our days;

“a foreigner who tries to topple our traditions and do away with our history;

“a refugee who wants to reduce us, under his aegis, to refugees in our own country, strangers in it and enemies unto himself.

“Finally, you and we are sick and tired of a usurper who tries to add his name to ours on the billboard of accomplishments which our efforts and sacrifices and suffering have pinned on the brow of Lebanon.

“The Lebanese cause, which is your cause and ours, is a world cause. Its events unfold themselves on Lebanese soil. While its solution can only be a world solution, yet, whatever the solution might be, it can only be effected through Lebanese hands.

“These hands are your hands. They can convulse the entire world if they determine to organize the vast Lebanese potential here and abroad methodically, meticulously and responsibly, without allowing a single particles of it to be dissipated.

“History is our witness that every time we set our heart on something we attain it.

“We reap according to the abundance of our heart, and our heart is full of matter and determination.

“No man full in his heart as we are can be excused if he is overcome with fear or irresolution or even the frustration consequent upon failure.

“Unite, and you shall overcome.

“And, with God’s help, we shall overcome.”

Camille Chamoun

Pierre Gemayel

Abbot Boulos Naaman

Charles Malik

Fouad Afram Boustany

Edouard Honein