



Nils Oskar Nilsson

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REPORT

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LEBANON

- A democracy on dictatorship conditions

-Nils Oskar Nilsson

Member of the parliament (m)

nils.oskar.nilsson@riksdagen.se

nils.oskar.nilsson@moderat.se

0708-86 13 00 08-530 333 18

LEBANON – A DEMOCRACY ON DICTATORSHIP CONDITIONS

Summary

What before was the free and independent Lebanon is today in reality just a Syrian lydrike. The Syrian military presence since 1976 is a de-facto occupation that makes Lebanon's sovereignty and democratic process impossible.

Lebanon was proclaimed 1920 as a sovereign state after the world war one peace negotiations. Lebanon is the Middle East first democracy with a constitution from 1926, which guaranteed a power share between the country's biggest religious groups – Christian Maronites, Sunni and Shia Muslims, witch makes Lebanon the only nation in the region were central government is divided between Christians and Muslims. After Syria's occupation, however, the power is not longer in the hands of the people and the president as well as the government and the parliament and the army are very well controlled from Damascus. We can draw parallel's to the marionette regime in France, Vichy, under the German occupation and with the situation in the Baltic states under the Soviet period. The current president, Emile Lahoud, was assigned 1998 by the parliament on Syria's demand. Corruption and nepotism are widespread occurrence among the representatives in the power.

The current interior minister, Elias Al-Murr, is married to the president's daughter and he is the son of the former interior minister Michel Al-Murr. The authority that approves all building licence is headed by his sister, Mirna El-Murr.

I have during my week in Lebanon met and talked with a large number of representatives for different human rights organisations (MR), student organisations, parties, liberating movements and also with individual jurists, journalists, university teachers, former prisoners in Syrian jails, mothers and relatives to disappeared Lebanese and more. I den mån dessa offentlig och i media framträtt med namn är de citerade i rapporten. Many has requested for anonymity protection of security reasons. Most of the conversations have been recorded. Interpreter and accompany has been Miled Amine from Botkyrka, president of the Free Lebanese Patriotic Movement, Sweden.

My impression of Lebanon is a Beautiful, proud and freedom lengthening country and people that under decades have been “raped” physically, economically and politically by perpetrators outside and inside the countries border.

Despite the surrounding environments Lebanon seems on the surface to be fairly calm, normal and in good shape for the temporary visitor but under the surface there are - prolonged

oppression the fear from outside for violence and persecution, silence and self censure. The consequence of the military methods, arrest and captivity without trial against jurists, journalists and individuals has been described as an "Stockholmssyndrom". The Lebanese have got silenced and adjusted.

The peaceful picture is also disturbed of the many and provocative Syrian military checkpoints on the streets and different roads, were the citizens against their will are been controlled.

The bright spot is the youths and the enthusiast people with their engagement and work for a free, sovereign and democratic Lebanon – free from the Syrian superiority.

Elections

There are local elections in Lebanon now. Elections for parliament were suppose to be held in the summer 2004 but are now removed to the spring of 2005. in November there will be a voting in the parliament for whether the president will stay at his office or if he should be replaced. The reason that the parliament elections is being removed is to make sure that the old parliament appoint the "right" president, one that match with the Syrians demands. The constitution will be shaken here by the Syrian ruled parliament that also manipulate the election results with special laws (1992, 1996, 2000) by changing the conditions as it is shown in page 7.

Lebanon's parliament has 128 members, 50% Christians and 50% Muslims. At least 100 members are being ruled directly of the Syrians through fear and corruption.

Syria accept around 10 "oppositions" to show that there is a free and democratic process. The President shall be Christian Maronite, speaker of the parliament a Shia Muslim and premiere minister a Sunni Muslim.

A large number of Syrians have been given Lebanese citizenships, witch affect the elections. Id-/voting cards are necessary for participating in the voting process and sometimes the interior ministry refuse to give the license to some people. Hundreds of "faithful" voters are being given several voting cards with different names and are being driven around to different voting stations to vote in name of other people.

South Lebanon

South Lebanon was isolated during the war when the South Lebanese Army (SLA) got its support from Israel in the war against Syria and Hizbollah. Israel left South Lebanon in year 2000 but Syria remain in the country with at least 20 000 soldiers. Under 2000 – 2001 many former SLA members were prosecuted in the summary "60-seconds trials", despite of a pronounced amnesty, they were charged for collaboration with the "enemy Israel". Even relatives to SLA-members are being stigmatised and can not get jobs. Everybody that have any bonds or connestions to SLA is charged for collaboration with Israel and are being exposed to different levels of persecutions and other negative treatment.

Economy

Lebanon's economic situation is in a big danger both on the national level and for the individual citizen. The living conditions are very high when the general incomes are low. Many Lebanese who are in exile are supporting their relatives economically. The salaries for large groups in the society are being dumped systematically through Syrian guest workers, same time when there are a high number of unemployment in the country.

Since the beginning of 1990 the state has been taking big loans from the world bank and different countries, for now the state loan is around 43 billion US-dollar. The country have got lot of money in contribution from many friendly countries but most of the money has gone to Syria and to corrupt leaders in Lebanon, according to reliable sources. Lebanon is now economically impoverished.

Program – meetings and interviews

14 may.

Meeting with representatives for Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), among all the lawyer George Haddad, who at different occasions has been taken to prison for his defending position for the FPM students.

In the evening, attending an election campaign meeting in the town of Batroun in north of Lebanon. Ca 400-500 participants, men and women in all ages. speech via telephone and speaker from general Michel Aoun, former premiere minister, now in exile in Paris. The

theme for the meeting was a free, independent and democratic Lebanon for the Lebanese people without any interference from other. There were lots of Lebanese military presence and some Syrian military and security forces posted around the meeting place.

15 may.

Meeting in Safra Marina with representatives for the MR-organisation SOLIDE – president Ghazy Aad, member of the board Claude Hajjar (also member of the Guardians of the Cedars) and two students.

The representatives were sorry that Sweden no longer has an embassy in Beirut. This could be understood that Sweden no longer see any big interest in Lebanon as an sovereign state and are satisfied with the embassy in Damascus to run the Lebanese commissions. Solide went on to talk about the 17.000 Lebanese that are disappeared. Many could be in Syrian jails. The Lebanese government refuse to do something to find those people and they have declared that everyone that has been gone for more than 4 years should be seen as dead.

Solide gave us a good picture on the situation in Lebanon during the Syrian occupation. The Lebanese civil society is paralyzed like the head of Solide, mr Ghazy Aad, mr Aad has a handicap and is sitting in a wheelchair but are working for the freedom of Lebanon more than many others. He has just like Claude Hajjar been help in prison several times, threatened and being beaten. Aad was recently beaten and got his wheelchair broken at a peaceful demonstration outside the UN office in Beirut.

Möte i Beirut med Fatmi Abdallah, shiamuslim och representant för International Federation of Human Rights. Fatmi talade inför Europaparlamentet i Bryssel den 27 april 2001 och har dessutom besökt Vatikanen, Frankrike och Schweiz. Hon ser inga motsättningar mellan muslimer och kristna. Det som förenar är patriotismen och kampen för ett fritt Libanon. Responsen från EU och vid övriga besök var positiv men har inte lett till några åtgärder för att förmå Syrien att lämna Libanon.

Fatmis bror, Ali Mousa Abdallah, född 1959, kidnappades 1981 i Libanon av den syriska säkerhetstjänsten och är sedan dess försvunnen. Fatmi har letat efter sin bror i Syrien, som förnekar all kännedom om honom. Det finns dock vittnesmål från 1983, 1994 och 2000 av frisläppta libanesiska fångar att brodern satt fängslad och levde. Internationella Röda Korset tillåts inte att besöka syriska fängelser.

Meeting in Beirut with Sonia Eid, Christian and head of the organisation for the parents to the imprisoned Children, since the start in 1996. the organisation worked secretly in the beginning is now working in the open and has 176 families tied to it.-More and more are joining from all sectors of the Lebanese society.

The son of the Eid family, Jilad George, born 1970, were imprisoned 1990 by Syrian military together with 17 other young men and taken to Syria. One of them were released later and he could witness that the others were in the same prison. The parents got in 1992 information about the son and where he was but could not get a permit to visit him. In November 2000 Sonia Eid got to meet the new president of Syria Bashar al-Assad ,who were standing with the same question as she had regarding if there are any Lebanese detainees in Syria.

Both Lebanon's and Syria's governments denies consequently that there are any Lebanese prisoners in Syrian jails. None existing inmates are dies all the time in Syrian jails and their bodies are being given back to the parents secretly with an order to the parents to not open the chests before the burial.

-recently three dead has been over handed to parents.

16 may.

Visit in Tabriyé, were 600 cedar trees are planted 25 years ago for the memory to all those who died in the battles or in terror acts, it is called the martyrs wood.

17 may.

Meeting with Alain Aoun, Tony Danielle, George Haddad och Hekmet Dib, all members of the Free Patriotic Movement.

Hekmat Diib were a candidate in a side election in his district in 2003, witch were the first time since 1991 that someone from the FPM candidates. Through manipulations with the district division and some election cheat the spot went to a faithful candidate to the government.

According to the FPM-representatives there are around 20.000 Syrian soldiers in Lebanon. And an unknown number of the security and intelligence forces. Hezbollah's well armed militia is between 10–15.000 and can very fast get mobilised to be up to 100 000 combatants.

The 300 – 350.000 palestinians in the different camps are hosting Hamas and al-Quida members and they are also well armed. Those parties are not under the Lebanese military supervision or jurisdiction.

The problem is not only the armed presence of the Syrians, it is also the control they have in the different ministries, institutions and their hand over the constitution.

The FPM-representatives showed me a concrete and constructive solution to Lebanon's situation:

Lebanon's constitution makes it possible for the current president Lahoud, just before his mandate time runs out in September 2004 to appoint a temporary government and a premiere minister, they will have one main task and it is to prepare for a free and democratic parliament election in spring 2005. Afterward the new elected parliament will choose suitable president. The temporary premiere minister gets the presidents position and power as the head of the state and the temporary government will gather members from all the major sects and parties in the country to guarantee the support of most of the society.

This model were applied in 1958 and 1988.

The condition for this peacefully and constitutional solution is that Syria

– accept a plan for their retreat of all military and security service

according to UN resolution 520/1982

– accept a national Lebanese coalition government with the main task will be to prepare the parliament election in spring 2005

- recognise Lebanon as a free and sovereign state.

The Barcelona process and the partnership around the Mediterranean gives European Union the possibility to push Syria's and Lebanon's presidents, governments and parliaments to accept the mentioned democratic solution for the development in Lebanon.

Meeting with two men, former prisoners in Syria, for security reasons called X and Y.

Y was taken 1985, he was tortured in Syrian jails until he confessed the crime they had stated.

X was 16 years when he got taken in 1986. he was over handed by Lebanese collaborators to the Syrians and was only accused for belonging to a Christian party. He was also tortured in many ways until he confessed what they wanted him to confess. The two men described very well all the methods the Syrians had exposed them to and they had witnessed many of their friends die in the prisons. X and Y were released in 1991 by an amnesty.

18 may.

Meeting with May Murr and her husband Alfred Murr. The couple are about 70 years old. May Murr is the sister to the former interior minister an aunt to the current one. she is a very well known writer, poet and historian with many publications, she was also professor at different universities.

May Murr has broken the relations with her brother and his family and is participating actively in the struggle for free and independent Lebanon.

Meeting with academics and representatives for student organisations at different universities in Beirut. Around 40 persons were attending the meeting. An appeal were signed and over handed. Around 50% of the attended had been taken to jail at several times for questioning. The attitudes of the many young participators in this meeting were like this –"we are young and we don't have so much to loose more that our liberty and our lives".

The ambition and well educated youth has their sight on the future. The goal is a free and independent Lebanon and our jurists are preparing the work for a new and more democratic constitution. –we don't look at peoples religious backgrounds but want a constitution that represents all Lebanese. The students are hoping for an international attention and are awaiting support from USA, UN and EU. They see Sweden as a respected democracy and seek Sweden's support.

The young well educated lebanese want to builld their future in their own country. But in the meantime and before Lebanon is entirely free many lebanese are leaving the country and numbers show that up to 80 % of the young people have left or are going to leave the country in a short time.

19 may.

Meeting with *university teacher Z* that wishes to be anonym in fear of loosing his job. Z feels that it is important as a teacher and a parent to show the young people the importance of living in a free, multi religious and multi cultural Lebanon.

Z feels the self censor by knowing that he and others are being watched and bugged. Those who have a good job and want to come somewhere in their carrier gets passive.

They have too much too loose if they show their opposition to the Syrian presence and the corrupt Lebanese politicians.

Z warn for a large scale of brain-drain among the well educated young people emigrating for better life free from all the bad memories this situation is giving them.

Meeting with Foundation for Human & Humanitarian Rights, Beirut, MR-organisation
Established 1989. FHHR has now 30 – 40 aktive members, among them 4 judges.

Presence at the meeting were the head of the organisation Wa'il Kheir, economist Raffi Donoyan, lawyer George Haddad and several university teachers.

FHHR is member of many international HR (human rights)-organisations and is cooperating for example with med Lund University, the government of Denmark and the Raoul Wallenberg institution.

FHHR is a general HR-organisation for all types of HR-activities geographically in Lebanon. There are a women group working for their rights. There is also an important education group were 76 students are working to spread information about HR in the society in general and among the students at different universities. There is a big awareness among the Lebanese, especially among students in all sects and parties about Human Rights. Still there are lots of works to do in that field.

Most of the old members of FHHR have been at some point arrested and beaten by security forces. The Lebanese regime uses today many kinds of legal methods to suppress its citizens instead of the illegal methods they used in the beginning of the 1990: s.

FHHR regularly publish reports about HR events going on in Lebanon, both the negative and the positive.

20 maj

Meeting with journalist Habib Jounis (mentioned in UD:s MR-rapport, Libanon, 2003).

Jounis talked about his time in prison when the security forces took him for being against the Syrian presence and belonging to the banned “The Guardians of the Cedars”. He was also accused for collaborating with Israel together with Antoine Basel, well known journalist.

The authorities wanted through Habib Jounis scare the free media in the country and they got Jounis in jail for over one year. Jounis is not allowed to write again in a Lebanese newspaper and he is now unemployed. He has got several offers from abroad but he decides to stay in Lebanon in silent protest.

Meeting with an ex. high officer, O, in the Lebanese army.. O sees a big problem with the Syrian security forces that are much more than the military forces. He talked also about the danger from the armed Hizbollah and some of the Palestinians in the camps were many are bonded to bin Laden.

Conclusion

Lebanon seems to be calm and the eyes of the world has under the last years been looking on war places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel and Palestine. The crises in the Middle East have put Lebanon in the background and the world has forgot and abandoned the country that ones were the pearl of the Middle East.

The approaching president and parliament elections can be a crossroad. Eather the Syrian dominants continue, both military and politically and Lebanon incorporates more and more in some greater Syria or the world will take its responsibility and persuade Syria to leave Lebanon according to UN resolution 520/1982. A twelve year old resolution that Syria has not yet cared to implement. We need some actions from the UN and EU for Syria regime to start to respect the resolutions, only talks has yet been meaningless.

EU has Lebanon now in its immediate surroundings through Cyprus membership. EU and Sweden still enjoys a high grade of respect and ability among the Lebanese people. The Mediterranean partnership gives EU politically and economically means to affect and if possible force Lebanon’s and Syria’s governments to a Syrian retreat and a

beginning of a democratic development against a free and sovereign Lebanon. Loan, aid and increasing trade relations should be related to certain conditions.

In this report we have concrete and constructive Lebanese suggestions (page. 8) how this could be done within the constitution frame.

But – it is in a hurry!

- **Nils Oskar Nilsson**, Conservative member of the Swesih parliament travelled on his own initiative to see and study the situation in Lebanon and to wake the attention on how things really are in the reality.