

Lebanese activists worldwide attend Cedars Revolution convention in Washington

By Fady Bark
Special to Lebanonwire

The World Council of the Cedars Revolution WCCR, an NGO representing Lebanese activists worldwide, launched earlier this year to "help the Lebanese people achieve the goals of the revolution and liberation," held its first annual convention in Washington DC on May 18 and 19 with delegates from many countries, including the



Delegation at the State Department: Yacoub, Nissi, Douaihi, Bani, Rahme

United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Latin America and Lebanon. A number of legislators, émigrés leaders and supporters participated in the convention via Internet broadcast and interactive web cast. The convention lasted two days including several sessions held at the US Congress and visits to US Government officials.

Cedars Revolution in Congress

First session: "Terror War against the Cedars Revolution"

The convention held its working sessions on Capitol Hill at the invitation of US legislators, including Congressmen Tom Feeney (R-FL) and Darrell Issa (R-CA).

The first session, cosponsored by the Foundation on Counter Terrorism in Washington, discussed the "Terror War waged against the Cedars Revolution."

WCCR Chairman Joe Bani (Sydney, Australia) introduced the session and the speakers. Among them Ret. Colonel Charbel Barakat (Canada), Terrorism advisor to the Cedars Revolution, Dr Rachid Rahme (Lebanon), Secretary General of the Cedars Revolution Council in Lebanon and Professor Walid Phares, Senior Fellow with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington.

Dr Rahme displayed an exclusive map showing "the areas reconquered by the Syrian forces along the Lebanese-Syrian borders since their alleged withdrawal in April 2005." Dr Rahme showed the 32 areas of contention between the two countries and described the "return of Syrian soldiers through the Anti-Lebanon mountain range and their repositioning within Lebanese territories."

Col Barakat analyzed the military and security consequences of the return of Syrian control over the borders.

"Arms, ammunitions and Terrorists are as we speak, crossing the borders from Syria into Lebanon and taking the control inside the country. Dozens of passages under Syrian control are opened along about 180 kilometers from the north of the Shebaa farms to the Mediterranean Sea along the Akkar district. The channels of communications are wide open between Damascus' security and military forces and the Terror bases inside Lebanon, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Jihadist networks and of course Hizbollah in the Bekaa and the South. Technically, the Syrian army is still deployed inside Lebanon via its allies that it supplies constantly," Col Barakat said.



Tony Yacoub, speaking on behalf of the Cedars Revolution at the Pentagon

Professor Phares, analyzing the impact of the Syrian control of Lebanon's borders and the bridges it rebuilt to the Terror networks inside the country said "practically, there are no borders between Baathist Syria and partially controlled Lebanon today. Syrian security and intelligence are thus connected to pro-Syria militias from Tripoli to Sidon and to the vast networks of Hizbollah. Soldiers and supplies, including all type of weapons can be shipped from Tehran, land in Syria and deployed in Lebanon in a matter of hours."

Discussing the panel's findings, Mr. Brian Zimmer, Counter Terrorism advisor of Committee on the Judiciary, said the "United States is very concerned about the capabilities of Hizbollah to infiltrate this country, including from Canada." Mr. Zimmer said "the US Congress is looking into this matter very seriously."

The comment came as a result of a discussion initiated by Mr. Bains and Col Barakat regarding supporters of Hizbollah operating from the US and using connections within the Lebanese communities.”

Mr. Andrew Cochran, from the Counter Terrorism Foundation said “the Syrian-Hizbollah assault on the Cedars Revolution not only affects Lebanon’s freedom but also impacts American national security.”

Second session: “Lebanese Democracy threatened”

The second session was held in the US Senate under the title “Lebanese Democracy threatened.”

Speakers included Mr Tom Harb, Secretary General of the International Lebanese Committee for the Implementation of UNSCR 1559, Mr. Toni Nissi, Coordinator of the Committee 1559 in Lebanon, and Sami al Khoury, former President of the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU).

Mr Harb stated that "all new UN Security Council resolutions that call for the implementation of 1559 are always welcomed. But all these resolution need teeth. They need a mechanism for implementation. All resolutions subsequent to 1559, including UNSCR 1680, are aimed at moving the process forward, but the Syrian and Iranian regimes are ahead of the UN in rejecting these resolutions and preparing for their next joint offensive against Lebanon and its Cedars Revolution. What the UN needs to do, is to empower the Lebanese people and the Lebanese army to take back their country. The UN and world democracies should help Lebanon control its borders and disarm the militias. Anything else below this ceiling is not going to be productiv."

Mr. Nissi gave an exhaustive report about his committee’s three fact finding missions to the Lebanese Syrian borders. “We drove for hours along side areas fifty times wider than the Shebaa farms, and still occupied by Syria. We have maps showing these areas and videotapes of interviews with citizens who are calling on the UN to intervene and allow them to reclaim their lands. Lebanese from all background, including Shiites wants the Lebanese army on their lands and reject the militias, under any label,” said Nissi. “The Cedars Revolution was about liberating Lebanon from the Syrians and the Terrorists, not about freeing politicians to sell out the country.”

A number of Legislators’ representatives discussed the democracy crisis in Lebanon, including Mrs Barbara Ledeen of the Task Force on “Religious Freedom” in the Senate. Also present at the forum, leaders from Arab and Mideast democracy groups including Mr.Farid Ghadri,

President of the Syrian Reform Party.

Third Session: “The Cedars Revolution: One Year after”

The third session was held in the Capitol Building under the title “The Cedars Revolution: One Year after.”

Calling from Brussels, European MP and chairman of the European Delegation to NATO, Paulo Casaca said “the international community has committed to help the Lebanese free themselves from Syrian occupation and Terror organization. One year after the Cedars Revolution, we are unfortunately watching the assassinations against its leaders resuming, the terrorist networks not yet disarmed and Syria still in control of the borders. We cannot accept the massacre of this revolution as we witnessed the killing of our colleague MP Gebran Tueni last December. He was the brightest young leader of Lebanon’s civil society and he was murdered because he represented the future of the country. The Cedars Revolution, made by ordinary people, must be defended by the international community. We cannot let it down.”

From Sao Paolo, Federal Senator Marcelo Crivela, Leader of the PRB (Republican Party) in the Senate said “We hereby salute your efforts on behalf of Lebanon. You have our support to see your mother country free and UNSCR 1559 fully implemented.”

From Beirut, Lebanese MP Abdallah Hanna told the convention that “the priority should go to support Lebanon’s Army in all what it needs to protect the borders and the population of the country.” Hanna, a member of the Commission on Foreign Affairs and Defense, said “the Lebanese Army is the only legal force capable and legitimate to defend Lebanon. It is made of Sunnis, Druze, Shiites and Christians from all regions. And above all it has the overwhelming support of the Lebanese People, something no other faction can pretend it has. We are looking forward to see the international community support this Army to reclaim all Lebanese territories. It is only through the deployment of the Lebanese armed forces along all borders with Syria and Israel, that the Cedars Revolution could be protected from Terrorism.”

US Congressman Issa, key note speaker at the Convention said “the Cedars Revolution is the true representative of the Lebanese People. When the world saw one million and a half people taking the streets of Beirut on March 14, 2005, it understood what the Lebanese people really wanted: A full withdrawal of all Syrian forces and the disarming of all militias, including Hizbollah.” He said the US Congress stands by the Cedars Revolution and will do all it can to defend it. “But it is upon Lebanese Americans to keep our feet to the fire and make sure every

single member of the US Congress knows about your work and the aspirations of the Lebanese American community, as well as Lebanese émigrés around the world.” Issa thanked the WCCR and the Committee 1559 for their relentless efforts. He praised Tom Harb for his perseverance in his educational activities in the US Congress.

A representative from Congressman Eliot Engle office (D-NY) the co-author of the Syria Accountability Act said Cong Engle has demonstrated in the past that he and his colleagues will continue to stand by the Lebanese people seeking liberation. Mr Khairi Abaza, Senior Fellow with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, in charge of Egypt Project, said “the Beirut demonstrations gave energy and hopes to many in the Arab world, including in Egypt.

Major Robert Jordan, Founder president, Beirut's Vetern of America, delivered a speech in remembrance “of the US Marines who gave their lives for a free nation to regain its freedom.”

Mr. Kamal El-Batal, director of the Human Rights Bureau of the WCCR in Beirut delivered a report on the mass graves discovered around Beirut and Anjar, at locations previously occupied by Syrian forces.

Attorney Joanne Fakhre, Chairwoman of the North American Board of the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) said the “Lebanese émigrés are committed to support the democratic ideals of the Lebanese people and will extend their resources to maintain the pressure worldwide to implement UNSCR 1559.

Cedars Revolution at the State Department



Mark Dubowitz, Vice President of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies speaking to the Cedars

officials of the commitment of the Lebanese Diaspora to see their mother country free from Syrian forces and terrorist organizations. Mr. Harb asked the US Administration to extend its support to Lebanon's civil society and a Lebanese Army enabled to deploy across the land.

Col. Barakat underlined the dangers emanating from the uncontrolled borders allowing the arming and training of international terror networks inside Lebanon.

Mr. Toni Nissi and Mr. Joseph Sokhn showed the US officials a map of the borders with specific locations of "Syrian incursions into Lebanese territories."

Mr McVerry reaffirmed the US Administration commitment to UNSCR 1559 on the one hand and its involvement in a relentless war on terror.

Cedars Revolution at the Pentagon

The delegation was received at the US Defense Department by Ms Mary Beth Long, Deputy assistant Secretary of Defense and Marla Karlin. Discussions covered the areas of security and military concerns. The delegation insisted on the gravity of the passage of weapons and terrorists via the Syrian borders "which is leading to a reverse of the withdrawal," according to Dr. Rahme'. Deputy Assistant Secretary Long said the US Government is certainly concerned with the "movement of arms and terrorists across the borders and is monitoring the situation."

"Forum on Terror War"

The convention included a special forum on the "Terror War against Lebanon" held in Washington under the co-sponsorship of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and the Coalition Against Terrorist Media."

The "First Cedars Revolution Convention" ended its sessions on Friday. A delegation was to be received in New York by the UN Security Council.



From Left to Right: Sami Khoury, Tony Yacoub, Eblan Farris & Michel Doueih



From Left to Right: Michel Doueih, Chahidi & Joe Khattar, Joe Bains & Tony Yacoub



From Left to Right: Dr Walid Phares, Joanne Fakhre & Tony Yacoub

Photos Taken in New York City – 28 May 2006



