

**Justice for Lebanon Rally I**  
**Peaceful Demonstration & Candlelight Vigil**  
Copley Square, Boston, Massachusetts, USA  
Wednesday, July 28, 2006 at 6:00pm

***Silence After TECHLEB***

speech by Loai Naamani  
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Two months ago, we held at MIT what we called **TECHLEB | 06**. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Technology Development in Lebanon, which many of you may have had the chance to attend and participate in.

We wanted to figure out what it would take to put Lebanon on the high-tech map of this world, how to transform it into a knowledge-based economy, how to become the Singapore of the Middle East, how to leverage our great Diaspora like the Irish did over the past few decades. We just felt we had all that it would take to get there.

And after 8 months of hard work and planning, guess what? We succeeded. We pulled off a quarter million dollar budget event that attracted registrants from 14 different countries, from 20 different states, from 160 companies, who all came together to MIT to think about how this can be done and how they can help Lebanon.

The Lebanese Government was swept off its feet! It had been so busy with reconstruction efforts after the Lebanese Uncivil War, with trying to reclaim a long lost sovereignty, with struggling to contain a colossal national debt, and for the first time genuinely understood and touched the value of what could become a very promising knowledge-based economy.

This same Prime Minister you see all over the news nowadays, shuttling pale-faced between the capitals of the world, good old Mr. Siniora, was considerate enough to invite us right after the conference to Beirut, to his Grand Serail,

where he called for a press conference and summoned all media outlets, dignitaries, ambassadors, high-profile business leaders in Lebanon... and announced to the world his government's endorsement of **TECHLEB**'s outcomes and recommendations. He created a new coordination unit to oversee Lebanon's transformation. He kept this same **TECHLEB** brand and made it a national initiative.

We spoke that day of nanotechnology, we had plans of becoming the biotech center of the MENA region, we spoke of a semiconductor industry, of venture capital, of innovation... Yes, believe it or not. We talked about those things. A very grand vision. Many many ambitions. Dreams that were sweeter than sweet. We built sandcastles and cities of sand. We forgot – or perhaps pretended to forget – the ticking clock of the rising tide and, as we had witnessed first hand and many a time before, the shattering capacity of Israel's waves of aggression.

Today, exactly today, July 28, was when the Planet Lebanon conference was scheduled to take place in Beirut. We had executives from Fortune 500 companies scheduled to visit Beirut, some for the first time ever, and spearhead an aggressive global market access initiative. We were trying to build for the first time a firm bridge between Lebanon and influential Lebanese in the Diaspora.

We built no bridge of course... and guess where we stand today instead?

We have 70 or so bridges less.

We have no airport.

We have less ports, less roads, less gas stations, less hospitals, ...

We have 600 citizens less, another few thousand injured, close to a million or a fourth of our population displaced from their homes and cities, and now with all foreigners and tourists evacuated by their governments, the rest of the Lebanese population waits inside, besieged like dogs.

Mention of hi-tech and **TECHLEB** is a mockery now. Survival is all we talk about. And when and if this madness is over, of course the Lebanese should

get their hands dirty again, and again, and again, in rebuilding their heaven of a country. Technology can wait. Who knows? Perhaps technology is only the destiny of some people, while the Lebanese are expected to only excel in and perfect... the art of survival.

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We ask “Why?” – And they tell us Israel has the “right to defend itself”.

- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **kill 600 Lebanese**, 90% of which are innocent civilians, a third of which are children, and call it self-defense?

Is it!? Answer me loud and clear...

*[audience chants: NO]*

- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **displace around a million civilians** or fourth of the Lebanese population, sending them to the streets of other cities, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **systematically annihilate our civil infrastructure** (bridges, roads, ports, power plants, gas depots, grain silos, hospitals, media stations, telecom infrastructure, civil service centers, dairy factories) and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **destroy our only airport and besiege** the whole country by air and sea almost blocking all incoming humanitarian aid, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **cause multiple billion dollars worth of immediate damage** to an economy that has already endured a 15-year long war and suffers the highest GDP to national debt ratio in the world, and call it self defense?

- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to use **cluster bombs and phosphorus**-enriched bombs on civilian areas, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to carry out **“surgical” destruction and “pinpoint” annihilation** turning Lebanon into one big stenchful refugee camp, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **bomb ever single moving truck** or van, even those with aid, even those with children, because they maybe transporting weapons or fighters, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to **hit clearly marked Red Cross ambulances** in separate attacks and leave three generations of the same Fawaz family fighting for their lives, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to hear the Israeli Military’s Chief of Staff **order his forces to destroy 10 buildings** in Beirut for every missile that falls on Haifa, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to invade, occupy, bomb, and destroy a sovereign nation, while **disregarding more United Nations Resolutions** than any other country on the planet, and while opposing the right of the people of Lebanon to resist, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to shred out and **pulverize the dignity** of a life-loving, freedom-loving people boasting one of the oldest civilizations on Earth and the first democracy in the Middle East, and call it self defense?
- Is it justifiable, ladies and gentlemen, to burn and **tear into peaces the nation that Pope John Paul II**, God bless his soul, labeled and entrusted to be a “message of liberty and coexistence to the world”, and call it self defense?

They tell you this is part of the **global war on terror**...

No. We tell them this is a war *of* terror, *by* terror, *in* terror, *with* terror, *through* terror. It *is* terror, just with a much bigger budget.

They tell you, and I am referring here to the honorable US Ambassador John Bolton, there is **no moral equivalence** between the Israeli civilian casualties dying in terrorist attacks and the Lebanese civilian casualties dying in *attacks of self-defense* (what an oxymoron!)

No. We tell him, and with all due respect, that we denounce the killing of Israeli civilians exactly as we denounce the killing of Lebanese civilians.

They tell you they need to **give Israel more jet fuel** because according to the pentagon "it will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a friendly country which has been, and continues to be, an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East,"

No. The numbers show that a third of the death toll this fuel has brought so far is the lives of children, while I can count on my fingers the number of Hezbollah fighters who have died. This is in flagrant violation of your Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act. You are hence sustaining, with your tax money and deafening indifference, a war between the F-16s of Israel and the children of Lebanon.

They tell you it is not the time for a ceasefire because they are looking for a **"sustainable" peace, an "enduring" peace...**

What noble notions; and who said the Lebanese want anything less?

But we also tell them, and with all due respect again, that without the “sustainability” of life, without the “endurance” of life, there will be no counterpart for Israel to wage peace with. If this peace is to take place between two sovereign countries, and not between an aggressor and the rubbles of a decimated nation... then a ceasefire is needed, and it is needed immediately.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The people of Lebanon are not afraid.

They are not in despair.

They have been through this before and will survive it again.

But they are angry.

The vacuum of your silence echoes much louder in their ears, hearts, and minds than the thunderous bombs that have pounded Beirut over the past 16 days and still do so as I speak.

Let us break this silence for once, even if with the relative noise of a pin drop from the heart of Boston, from the heart of the United States of America, the land of liberty and freedom.

Please repeat after me...

*[audience repeats in three-word phrase breaks]*

In solidarity with the people of Lebanon:

- We denounce Israel’s destruction of Lebanon’s infrastructure and Israel’s killing of innocent civilians, just like we condemn the killing of Israeli civilians

- We demand an immediate, unconditional, unrestricted, reciprocal ceasefire to end all hostilities in Lebanon and a halt to the blockade terrorizing the entire population
  - We implore the world, including this government, to help put an end to the destruction of Lebanon and aid in its full recovery
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Do you know what is worse than being blind?  
It is not wanting to see.

Do you know what is worse than being deaf?  
It is not wanting hear.

I hope the world, and especially this government, hears and heeds our whisper of a plea here today.

For we are here to tell them that the “national resistance” in Lebanon today is not in the missiles of Hezbollah, but in the unity of the people of Lebanon.

And there is nothing worse, ladies and gentlemen, than watching a nation sink with its people, its united people, while we stand here silently divided.

I forgot who said: “If you turn your face to the sun, all the shadows will fall behind.”

The people of Lebanon are enshrouded with shadows all around and have no one to turn their faces to today but you.

Please...

– and it makes me feel lame I ever used the word “please” before for anything else, with anyone else –

Please, do not let them down.

Do not let Lebanon down.

*- Loai Naamani*