

لبنان للجميع، وطن للحياة

## Lebanon for all, a nation for life

This is the call from Lebanon that brings and unites us all here today. And I'd like to thank each and every one of you for choosing to partake in this historic day.

The organizing committee of this event has kindly asked me to start by sharing with you an obituary I wrote the night of late PM Hariri's assassination, which I extend today on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lebanon Uncivil War as a tribute in memory of all our martyrs who fell for Lebanon during and since the war.

“A lot has been said on how black a day it has been for Lebanon and for all Lebanese. But how blacker can black get and what palette can lament the death of giants? Even colors fall short of tinting our grief.

This does not mark the assassination of a man, but of a nation's vision and a generation's hope. Rafik El-Hariri was larger-than-life and larger-than-life he died, along with all the martyrs on the path towards a free and prosperous Lebanon. To their families, loved ones, and to us all, we extend our deepest deepest condolences.

A nation in a man, he bore Lebanon in his eyes and projected its horizon in his smile. When Lebanon bled, he was its cleansing hand. When it kneeled, he was its stepping back. When its youth wept, he replaced their rifles with books. When it collapsed unto its streets, he was its resurrection. And now, so that it may live on, Mr. Lebanon departs... leaving us with an expression of gratitude, with a plea, and with a vow:

*We thank you* for teaching us how to wait, how to hope, how to dream, and how to translate vision into reality. Thank you for teaching us the value (and cost) of our independence, sovereignty, and right to self-determination. Thank you for uniting us today – here and all over the world – in one voice and one hand to demand that justice be served and that the cause you lived and died for be held above all else.

*We plead* that as much as we have once fixed our hopes on you that you now set your hopes on us. You did not rebuild Beirut to be swallowed by its mines, nor did you entrust us with your legacy to watch us stand in servility. To fail you is to sin and to gratify whoever is behind your death, a death that has not come in vain. The perpetuation of fear will no longer divide us; change is born in the womb of tragedy.

*We vow* that you will always be as alive as Beirut, the city you held closest to your heart... too close, they killed you in their envy for that. They have gravely wronged us all and know not that we are all Hariri today. Rest assured their destructive path to Beirut's heart passes through each and every one of us.

Our dear martyrs, may your souls rest in peace, and may your eyes watch our solidarity from above... with pride and with anticipation.”

And since then, with all that's happened and is still happening in Lebanon, we've been making them prouder and prouder by the day, yet they anticipate, they deserve, they have died for more... much more.

I hope we haven't come here today just to pray and celebrate, as those alone can never build a nation nor win another its independence. I am personally here to take an oath, a solemn pledge of unity... and I invite you all to join me:

*Let us vow... To know one another, to confess that I only call you 'other' because I do not know you. Trust me, in a world without ignorance, Lebanon would be one of its leading nations.*

*Let us vow... To love one another, to love at a minimum the Lebanese in each and every one of us. The petty difference we may have should stay at home where they belong; it's the wellbeing of Lebanon that we should bring to the forefront.*

*Let us vow... that from this day on, our arms extend in the direction of one another, only to shake hands or to shatter whatever's left of the walls of ignorance, of hatred, and of fear that have long risen amongst us.*

When Pope John Paul II, may God bless his soul, raised Lebanon to the order of a message to the world, he believed in us, the Lebanese, as the rightful carriers of this message. Let us not fail him... let us not fail Rafic El Hariri... let us not fail each and every martyr who fell for a unified Lebanon... and above all, let us not fail ourselves and the generations to come...

Today, right now and right here, let us rise... yes rise... lets us hold each other's hands... and let the whole world now behold a glimpse, just a glimpse, of what Lebanon and the Lebanese are soon to become.

عشتّم و عاش لبنان  
لبنان للجميع، وطن للحياة

Loai Naamani  
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