

**The Lebanese American Renaissance Partnership**

In collaboration with

**The American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce**



*"Solidarity with Lebanon – Neutrality brings Prosperity"*

Environment in Lebanon: Responsibility and Improvement

**Antoine Z. Sfeir**

**PhD, International law**

**Attorney at law at the Paris & Beirut Bar associations**

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**Excellencies,  
Ladies & Gentlemen**

It is my honor to be among your reputable speakers at this third conference held in Beirut although the actual circumstances in the whole region are very critical and dangerous and Lebanon is and will certainly be affected by the geopolitical, political, economical and social developments taking place. I would like to thank the distinguished diplomat, the Honorable Walid Maalouf, the President of LARP and Mr. Salim Zeeni, the Chairman of the American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce.

The conference is entitled *Solidarity with Lebanon...Neutrality brings prosperity*.

Actually the scoop of this conference is extremely wide and requires a great deal of interdisciplinary for tackling it.

Before starting my talk, I would like to highlight two major ideas or hopes:

I. Lebanon needs the solidarity of the free world and specifically that of the United States of America, where the criteria of Human and Humanitarian rights and the real mechanism of democracy are well established and implemented through the laws, decrees, regulations and jurisdiction acts.

II. Lebanon does need the support of its people abroad, especially those in the United States of America, where the first major immigration movement took place in the Nineteenth century, and was and is still flourishing by thousands and thousands of American-Lebanese brilliant, scientists, jurists politicians, physicians and others. We need the support of the United States decision makers to defend the enriching diversity in this part of the world and to defend our country's rights to live, prosper and evade the actual crisis.

The first thing that comes up to one's mind when the word "environment" is mentioned is the physical environment. My talk today focuses on the legal and political aspects that have major direct or indirect implications on the health of our physical environment.

**1. Does any legal framework exist to defend the environment of Lebanon?**

**1.1. Incapability of the Official authorities**

In fact, we do have appropriate rules to protect and improve our environment, but unfortunately the rules of law in general, and those related to the environment in particular, are experiencing huge political interferences resulting into paralysis. This relates to the complexity of the procedures on one hand, and to the power allocated to *local forces* on the other hand, at a time where the official authorities lack the ability to fully control the situation and stop the acts mentioned below, among others:

- A. Illegal trades of Hazardous waste and biodiversity.
- B. Illegal trade of stones and sea sand,
- C. Uncontrolled hunting ,

- D. Fresh and salt water pollution ,
- E. Mismanagement of the coastal zone....etc.

For more than 25 years, we have been hearing political speeches asking for the right of the Lebanese authorities to control the coastal zones used illegally by individuals and private companies.... but in vain no real actions were taken. Many promised penalties for illegal utilizations of the coastal zone that can enrich the Lebanese treasury, but again, no real actions were seen.

## **1.2. Legal regulations**

we do have some appropriate laws, decrees and regulations, they are useful in general, but the problem was and is still political and caused mainly by conflict of interests.

Concerning the laws and decrees, below is a brief overview:

### **1.2.1. Varied Laws**

- Law n'216/1993: Creation of the Ministry of Environment.
- Law n'690: Organization of the Ministry of Environment
- Law n'387/1994; Authorization of the government to ratify the Basel Convention relating to the trade of *Hazardous waste*.
- Law n' 580: Related to the status of *Rural hunting*.
- Law n'251/2014
- Nomination of General Public Attorneys and Judges of instruction specialized in environment.
- Law n'9: Creation of *Tannourine cedars Natural reserve*.
- Law n' 257: Creation of *Jaj Natural reserve*.

### **1.2.2. As for Decrees, we have two major ones**

- Decree n' 8157: Creation and organization of the National Council for environment.
- Decree n' 1735: Organization of Quarries.

So in conclusion, we have the legal text; but this text requires modernization and clear procedures of implementation that take into consideration equality and social justice.

## **2. Can Political Neutrality serve the Lebanese environment?**

This is a big question. In fact, you may know better than me that our instable political situation is not a result of actual or factual events taking place within the Lebanese territories or in the neighborhood only; but rather a result of many events that took place since 1948, and the sixteenth and the seventeenth decades of the Twentieth century.

The complexity of the Lebanese national scene and scheme is caused by two major elements:

## **2.1. The External elements**

These major elements are represented by various local forces, more or less organically linked to regional states and regimes. As a result of that, the politics plans, and interests of these regional forces were and are still prevailing. They are overwhelming the Lebanese scene and institutions and always trying to influence the day to day politics.

### **2.1.1. The Syrian enigma**

A late Lebanese jurist and politician said: *The independence of Lebanon is achieved when the stability of Syria is threatened*. Current events prove the very opposite; Because despite the fact that currently Syria is facing real threats, where its security is dramatic and its future, as a united nation, is very critical and doubtful, the independence of Lebanon is neither fully achieved nor stable.

The stability of Lebanon and its real democracy can only be met when Syrian or the Syrians political regime(s) is established based on democratic values and International law texts and mechanisms, and when the diversity in this part of the world is sacred and secured through the implementation of clear laws and regulations.

Furthermore, the enigma of the Syrian refugees is very dangerous at all levels including the environmental level. It can result into terrorism, stress on the different governmental organizations, stress on the local infrastructures and degradation of the natural resources and ecosystems among others. Therefore, the international community should act immediately to save Lebanon the drastic consequences. So the refugees are the responsibility of the international community and at all level: Financially, politically, etc.....

### **2.1.2. Palestinian presence**

Lebanon as you know has paid a huge price when it comes to the Palestinian tragedy and military presence; this major problem caused the dislocation of the Lebanese state as an entity by itself and resulted in an atrocity war in which many major regional and international forces were well present.

We paid the prices of the Cold War and Camp David and the fighting between Arab conflicting Axes, and the Israeli –Arab conflict as well. I can say as a jurist and observer in public affairs that our general and global environment won't be safe and on the right track, if the Palestinian issue is not looked at seriously by the international Community which has to execute the UN resolutions 194, 242, 338, .etc.

## **2.2. The Internal elements: Crisis of regime and mismanagement.**

It is evident that the crisis inside our political and constitutional regime has very negative impacts on the environment and the natural resources of Lebanon. Because of the paralysis of the parliament and the executive body caused by its political and security priorities as well as by its federal structure, where every minister has the veto right on the cabinet decisions and decrees; this constitutional anomaly is

stopping all types of plans namely plans related to the improvement of the environment and the protection of the natural resources including the water resources. Lebanon is considered to be a country rich in water but unfortunately, water scarcity is increasing because of the mismanagement of the available water resources as a result of corruption and governmental paralysis.

**Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,**

Finally, we can conclude that Neutrality is not only an option for political problems but it is vital for our environment and natural wealth as well. When political and security problems vanish as a result of Neutral national position, our politics and environment will be on the right track and assure more prosperity and stability, vitally required at these critical moment.

I can say we don't need new regulations, we need implementation.

**Thank you for your attention**