



## New England Americans for Lebanon

التيار الوطني الحر - بوسطن

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### The Hypocrisy

"I reiterate my faith in the freedom of the press and the democracy of the word. I am not saying that out of courtesy but because I deeply believe in it. From that belief come mine and the government's readiness to reinforce freedom of expression because it is everyone's outlet and their way to say what they think and what they see as an imperative right of the free". (*Rafic Hariri, Prime Minister of Lebanon, as cited by Melhem Karam, Editors Union President*).

These words came as the students at Saint Joseph University were commemorating the six-months anniversary of the government-ordered closure of the television station MTV.

A look back at the Hariri government relations with the media and handling of freedom of expression brings up some facts:

- The illegal and unconstitutional arrests of students in August 2001
- The illegal and unconstitutional entry of security forces into university campuses
- The illegal and unconstitutional repression of freedom of expression by not granting licenses to opposition demonstrations
- The illegal and unconstitutional use of excessive force by the regime's security apparatus against opposition students
- The illegal and unconstitutional closure of the opposition MTV television station
- The illegal and unconstitutional charges against the LBCI station
- The illegal and unconstitutional annulment of the elections in which opposition candidate Gabriel Murr won a seat in parliament
- The illegal and unconstitutional pressures by Mr. Hariri himself to stop the NTV station from running a documentary on Saudi Arabia

These are but a few examples of Mr. Hariri's and his regime's "deep belief" in civil liberties. A Syrian-style "deep belief" where "freedom" is accorded only to followers of the regime in Damascus, but otherwise translates into a systematic daily repression of all human rights.

On this somber anniversary of the six-months closure of MTV we urge the international community and all human rights organization to work on lifting this stifling shroud of ignorance brought by the Syrian occupation to the land that gave the world the alphabet.

Long Live Free Lebanon  
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