



New England Americans for Lebanon

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Boston, Massachusetts – December 18, 2002

Open letter to the British government regarding Assad's visit to the UK

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During a joint press conference with Prime Minister Blair, Syrian President Assad reiterated the Syrian regime's lie that the offices of radical Palestinian groups in Damascus were nothing but "media offices". Offices from which claims of responsibility for suicide bombings are made and such suicide missions are funded cannot simply be "media offices". Mr. Assad also fails to mention the terrorist training camps in the Lebanese Bekaa Valley and in and around Beirut itself that are protected, financed, and managed by his own regime and intelligence services in occupied Lebanon.

When Mr. Assad claims that Syria has been fighting terrorism for decades not years, he must be alluding to the barbaric destruction by the Syrian army of the entire Syrian city of Hama in 1981 and the killing of 20,000 of its inhabitants. Or perhaps the massacres that the Syrian army carried out against Lebanese villages and cities such as Qbayyat, Endkit, Damour, Zahle, and Tripoli in the 1970s and 1980s. That is not fighting terrorism. These are crimes against humanity for which Mr. Assad's regime is fully responsible and for which it ought to be held accountable instead of receiving the welcome mat in London.

Mr. Assad says that everyone should work on implementing UN resolutions, but fails to mention that Syria is itself in violation of several of them:

- UN resolution 520 that calls for the Syrian army to withdraw from Lebanon. Instead Syria continues its occupation of Lebanon.
- UN resolution 425 that confirms the complete withdrawal of Israel from South Lebanon. Syria not only refuses to reciprocate, but prevents the puppet Lebanese government from deploying the Lebanese Army along the border and grants continued support to the lawless rule of Hezbollah in the region.
- UN resolution 986 which Syria violates by openly smuggling Iraqi oil through its borders.

Mr. Blair, we urge you to face up to Syria and demand from its president to fully comply with UN resolutions and end his country's occupation of Lebanon and sponsoring of terrorism. The masquerade of granting one of the last Stalinist regimes on earth a measure of respectability must end because it violates the spirit of your government's commitment with the US administration to the war on terrorism.

As your meetings with Mr. Assad were underway, the new head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon was hosting a lavish luncheon in Lebanon in honor of his predecessor. The luncheon was attended by half the cabinet members and a third of parliament members, while unions of state employees, teachers from both the private and public sectors, and students were preparing for one of the largest protests against the puppet Lebanese government's corruption and wasting of public funds. Nearly three decades of the "Pax Syriana" in Lebanon have brought nothing but the starvation and bankruptcy of Lebanon and its people.

Long Live Free Lebanon