



# COUNCIL OF LEBANESE AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS

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The statement of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Satterfield before the House International Relations Committee' Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia shows the dreadful facet of the State Department's policy toward Lebanon.

Regarding HR 4483, Mr. Satterfield has eloquently mentioned that US policy wants to see an independent Lebanon that is free of all foreign forces, and exercises sovereignty over its territory. Yet, not once did he mention that the state department supports UN Resolution 520, or did he demand its implementation.

Mr. Satterfield also mentioned that "imposing the new sanctions envisioned by the Syria Accountability Act would limit our options and restrict our ability to deal with a difficult and dangerous regional situation at a particularly critical time". The last time the State Department dealt with the Syrian and Lebanese situation, represented by Mr. Satterfield, resulted with the Syrian dictatorship attacking the last free regions of Lebanon, and the replacement of the last Legal government of Lebanon in 1990 with a Syrian puppet regime.

Mr. Satterfield's credibility regarding the Syrian occupation of Lebanon is untrustworthy. In his statement regarding the border region between Lebanon and Israel, Mr. Satterfield said "Of particular importance is our ability to deliver clear messages to the Syrian leadership in order to avert further escalation along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon". If Mr. Satterfield really believes in Lebanon's independence, why not talk to the Lebanese government about the Lebanese border with Israel?

It is time to separate the Lebanese track from the Syrian, and allow Lebanon to effectively participate in the peace process. This can only be achieved when Syria's occupation of Lebanon ends. Lebanon's fragile democracy and free society cannot be entrusted to the dictatorship ruling Syria. The Syrianization of Lebanon has to stop. Only a free and democratic society can be the guarantee of long lasting peace.

The Council of Lebanese American Organizations, CLAO, calls upon our US Administration to lift the decades-long tacit approval of Syria's occupation of Lebanon. Syria's arsonist role in Lebanon has been finally exposed. With the Israeli withdrawal in June 2000, Syria's role in Lebanon should have been ended. The terrorist regime of Syria also maintains and arms terrorist organizations in Lebanon continually endangering the lives and the existence of the people of Lebanon. We raise our voice to demand that Syria be held accountable for its support of terrorism, and our US government must take strong actions to begin the process of liberating Lebanon from the Syrian yoke through the full implementation of UN resolution 520.

The Council of Lebanese American Organizations.

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