

Lebanon's Dilemma

The political developments in Lebanon have pushed the conflict to a dangerous level. This issue has created a very complicated political situation, forcing the last Arab summit to take steps towards resolving the Lebanese crisis.

Despite intense efforts by the six-man Arab committee, which was entrusted by the Arab foreign ministers who met on January 12th, in Tunis, to bring about an end to the mad war in Lebanon, the political and military escalation has remained in the same cycle of violence and threatening the country with total destruction. Aoun's practices and deliberate military escalation caused the lack of progress in the efforts of the Arab League committee that was working to resolve the Lebanese crisis or at least to halt the bloodletting which has swept Lebanon since March 8, 1989. In an effort to revive a collapsed truce that was called on April 28, the committee arranged a ceasefire on May 11 after more than two months of relentless duels across Beirut. But the truce has been violated constantly, causing great frustration to all those who are looking toward rebuilding Lebanon on a non-sectarian basis.

The 14-year-old Lebanese civil war moved again to the forefront of the Arab attention when fighting broke out on March 8 between Aoun's troops and the nationalist forces. For the first time in the League's history, Lebanon's seat remained vacant after an Arab summit's meeting of foreign ministers failed to agree on who should represent that country in the summit. Arab leaders believe that inviting both Aoun and Hoss would only accentuate the sectarian split in Lebanon. However, a six-man committee headed by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah had agreed to invite them to Casablanca to present their cases at the summit.

Lebanon's crisis was subject of a heated debate which threatened to wreck the extraordinary Arab summit held in Casablanca, Morocco on May

23-26, 1989, and further fragment the Arab world. Underscoring frustration over the lack of progress in the debate, Kuwait resigned from its chairmanship of the six-man committee on Lebanon. A bitter confrontation between Syria and Iraq caused scenes of chaos over two days of the summit.

As a result, the summit continued for four days, longer than any previous summit in the Arab League's 44-year history. After intense efforts by Arab leaders, the summit named Morocco's King Hassan II, Saudi Arabia's King Fahed and Algerian President Chadli Ben Jедid to work out a settlement to the Lebanese crisis. The committee was given six months to work out a solution after the previous committee failed. The summit also expressed its willingness to convene after that to evaluate the situation and, if necessary, decide on the next steps.

THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE

Hassan's three-man committee was charged with taking the measures it sees fit with all concerned parties to invite the members of the Lebanese parliament to meet, if necessary outside Lebanon, in order to prepare a political reform document. This document would form the basis for national reconciliation. To ratify the political reform document, the Lebanese parliament would meet in Beirut as soon as possible. Following this ratification, the parliament would elect a president who would then form a government of national reconciliation. The committee would support the Lebanese national reconciliation government measures it deemed necessary to exercise full sovereignty over all Lebanese territory.

In its first meeting in Rabat, Morocco on June 4, the committee appealed, in a statement released by the Lebanese daily *Al Safir* on June 6, for a halt to «measures which increase inter-Lebanese divisions and make the daily life of Lebanese citizens even more painful.» The statement said that the

three leaders would aim «to help the Lebanese people restore life to all their constitutional institutions and introduce reforms in the Lebanese society... the necessary political reforms that would permit the Lebanese state to rally its people in a free, democratic and just framework.» They would try to «restore Arab Lebanon in its national unity, its independence, its full territorial integrity and to restore its authority over the whole of its national territory by its own forces» added the statement.

The second meeting in Wahran, Algeria on June 27, was devoted to evaluating the first round of contacts and consultations of the three foreign ministers and the Arab League's envoy who had been dispatched in a tour of Syria, Iraq and Lebanon in addition to the five permanent member states of the UN Security Council to solicit support for efforts aimed at solving the Lebanese crisis. In addition to reaffirming the previous points contained in the statement of their first meeting, they expressed their «deep appreciation to the support and high readiness to help» which they «received on the Arab and international levels.» In light of the «second decisive round» of the foreign ministers, «the members of the Lebanese parliament would be invited to meet outside Lebanon and in any place they would choose to discuss and prepare a document of the national reconciliation. ... cease-fire, lifting all blockades and re-opening the crossings linking East and West Beirut would be necessitated «before the meeting of the MP's outside Lebanon which will be an «introduction for the Lebanese parliament to meet in Lebanon,» said Wahran's statement. (Lebanese daily, *Al Nida*, June 29)

OBSTACLES FACING THE ARAB COMMITTEE

Following the political developments since the emergence of the three-man committee the Lebanese crisis has been provided with intense Arab care, more than any other time. It is noticeable