

Assad speech 20 July 1976 Important Excerpts 16 pages

Short excerpt: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MfpHvn_CH5I: has become unavailable.

(Longer version): https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=bdckwk_bNgY

Why Syria entered Lebanon. (1976)

by [*President Hafez al-Assad*](#)

Delivered to the Syrian provincial councils on 20 July 1976.

The excerpts below (~ 50% of the speech) include important political events, as well as ironic statements. Major events and statements are in bold.

The local administration which we began more than 4 years ago is a pioneer experiment in the field of popular democracy.

Second, I was depending on the confidence that you have given me. [applause]

Believe me, had I felt for one moment that the confidence of this people in me has been shaken, I would not have stayed in power for one minute. [applause]

Those who cry out from afar should know that I have no lust for power. I am only a member of this people. [applause]

We used to say that events in Lebanon are the result of an imperialist plan which aims, first, at covering up for the Sinai agreement; second, at embroiling and striking at the resistance and liquidating its camps and confusing Syria; and third, at partitioning Lebanon. This is what we used to say and this is what they used to say.

Secondly, through history, Syria and Lebanon have been one country and one people. The people in Syria and Lebanon have been one throughout history. (...). Many thousands of families in Syria have relatives in Lebanon. Many thousands of families in Lebanon have relatives in Syria.

Brothers, none of you should think that I am saying these words--or that these words might be said by any citizen in Syria--as grumbling against these brothers who have come to Syria. The country and land is theirs. **This country belongs to all the Arabs.**

The partitioning of Lebanon is an old Zionist aim, as you know.

It is only natural that Israel wishes the establishment of sectarian statelets in this area so that Israel can remain the stronger state.

Israel wants partition to acquit itself of the charge of racism. The United Nations adopted a resolution saying that Zionism is a racist movement, and this is a great victory for the

Palestine issue and the Arab struggle. Why is Zionism a racist movement? Because it gathers people from everywhere, with religion the only link among them, to make a people out of them and to establish a state for these people.

When the Arabs in Lebanon fail to live together in one state, despite the long years they have lived together, it would be the practical and material proof they want to prove that the idea of Arab nationalism is invalid. Furthermore, I want to say that the partitioning of Lebanon is a big blow to Islam, the religion of the sweeping majority of the Arab nation, because they want to present Islam as a rigid religion which prevents its followers from living with others, even if they are the sons of the same people.

This is a plot against Islam and the Moslems.

Naturally, brothers, Arabism and Islam are stronger than these plotters. They will be unable, under the guise of Arabism and Islam, to strike at Arabism and Islam because we are lying in wait for them.

We gave weapons, brothers, in order to stop the fighting. We gave ammunition, brothers, in order to stop the fighting. At one time, the balance of forces was not equal and fighting could not have stopped. This is why we were compelled to give weapons and ammunition. We gave weapons to those who are attacking us and denying our efforts and sacrifices-those who denied and are denying the past and present efforts and sacrifices of this people, although these efforts and stands are clear like the sun and are known, remembered and realized by every child not only in Syria but also in most countries of the Arab homeland. We gave weapons and ammunition to them. At one time we took the arms for our soldiers and our formations and gave these arms to them.

We have offered everything we could.

Despite this, despite our political and military efforts as far as offering arms and ammunition in large quantities and in various types, one day the front of the nationalist parties and the front of the Palestinian resistance collapsed. One day the front of the parties in Lebanon and the front of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon collapsed. They were unable to stand on their own feet. They sent us cries for help so we tried and exerted greater efforts.

One day--in the middle of January, if I remember correctly--the foreign minister contacted me and said that they had contacted him by phone from the 'Aramun summit. I do not know Beirut well but as far as I know, 'Aramun is a place which includes the house of the Mufti, where meetings were held by the Mufti, the Imam, prime ministers, other Islamic personalities, and certain party leaders, including Kamal Junblatt. They contacted the foreign minister and pleaded with him to ask me to contact President Sulayman Franjiyah so that he would stop the fighting because the situation was very bad. I told the foreign minister that I was not going to make contact and they must do so. Less than 15 minutes later, he contacted me for the second time and said that they had contacted him again to say that their situation was very bad and certain quarters had fallen. The Phalangist gunmen were storming the houses

and everything was falling before them. I told him I would not make contact and they must do so.

When I said this, brothers, it was not out of hesitation or lack of desire to exert efforts. But I wondered at such requests because I knew--and naturally we are the ones to know--that the resistance and the nationalist parties--and not only the Phalangists and the national liberals--had arms that did not belong to the Lebanese Army. **The resistance and the parties had a lot more arms and ammunition than the Phalangists, the national liberals and the Lebanese Army put together. The Lebanese Army was not in the battle, it was absolutely not a party in the battle.**

After a short while, he repeated the contact for the third time and said: Matters are very bad and they plead that you accept. Indeed, reports reached us on the fall of Al-Maslakh, Al-Karantina, and other places. They said then: **If you do not make quick contact the Phalangists will outflank western Beirut. The road is open before them.** The western sector is the area which is now under the control of the organizations, the parties, and armed men.

At this point I said "Poor western sector." I realized that I had to make contact. **I contacted President Franjijah** and told him: Brother President, you face a dangerous massacre which will have repercussions everywhere. I wish you would act quickly to stop it and avoid its consequences. Children, women, the unarmed, everybody is being attacked. This matter will have grave results. Please, look into the matter and do your best. We are waiting for the results of your efforts. There was a discussion on the phone between me and President Franjijah. We finally agreed on a cease-fire for a specific hour that night. I think it was at 2000 or 2100 hours.

After this, reports came to say that **fighting was escalating** and that matters were going from bad to worse. We held a meeting here in Damascus. I met with certain brothers in the command and began to think of what we could do to save the situation. We exerted political efforts. We gave arms and ammunition. All this was happening and yet it was not enough to save the situation.

Hence, we had no choice but to intervene directly. Of course, we discussed the issue from various angles. We also discussed the dangers of intervention and the eventualities of war between us and Israel. We had two alternatives then: either we do not intervene and the resistance in Lebanon collapses and is liquidated in light of this military situation and in light of the cries for help, or we do intervene and save the resistance.

We discussed the possibility of a war. It was possible but not inevitable, for reasons I do not want to mention in detail at this point. However, the conspiracy in Lebanon has aims. Had Israel obstructed us and war occurred, this war would have been the opposite of what the conspiracy aims at achieving. Despite this, war was a likely possibility and the lack of war was also a likely possibility.

We thus said we must go in to save the resistance. We decided to go in under the name of the PLA. The PLA began to go into Lebanon and nobody knew of this. Those who are speaking now in the name of Palestine, who live under illusions and deny every effort we exerted for their sake, did not know of the decision to send the PLA. They did not know of the army until it was inside Lebanese territory. We did not consult them nor did we consult the nationalist

parties. As a matter of fact, none of them was prepared to argue with us regarding any measure. They were asking for any measure we could take to save them.

Following the 'Aramun contact and on the same day the leaders of the nationalist parties came to Syria, they spent a long time in the Foreign Ministry building. They were here in the Syrian Foreign Ministry building looking for a solution to the problem and a dignified exit from what they were in, while we were moving the army into Lebanon to defend them and the Palestinian resistance.

On the morning of the next day, I received them in my house. Kamal Junblatt was with them. Kamal Junblatt was in 'Aramun when they contacted the foreign minister by telephone. He came to Syria the next morning. I received him and the leaders of the parties. I remember, and those of them who are now listening to me will remember, how their morale was then. At any rate, their morale was not good. I made them understand and told them: We are with you and with the Lebanese people. We will oppose the massacres. We will oppose liquidations because this is in the interests of all the parties in Lebanon.

We sent in the PLA and other forces, and matters were supposed to return to normal. While I was talking to them, President Sulayman Franjiyah contacted me. I spoke to him over the telephone. The conversation dealt with several issues, but there is no reason to repeat the whole conversation, although I can even recall the whole conversation. **Here I must apologize to Brother President Sulayman Franjiyah for mentioning these matters. I hope that he will excuse me because the matter is important and is related to placing the facts before the people.**

I say before you that he was an honest man in his dealings and upheld his word to us. **He told me that Syrian forces were entering Lebanon.** I reminded him of the conversation that had taken place the day before and told him that the matter was serious and I hope, brother president, that all the Arabs would understand us. **I told him that our stand toward the Palestinians was consistent and that as far as the Palestinians were concerned, there was a red line which we would absolutely not allow anyone to go beyond.** [applause] **This was what I said to President Sulayman Franjiyah while knowing that such talk between two heads of state is more than is necessary and more than what is acceptable. However, it is a fateful issue.**

Again, I apologize to Brother President Sulayman Franjiyah because the matter is related to placing the facts before the people. [applause] **We ended this telephone conversation by agreeing that a committee should go to Lebanon to work for a cease-fire.** This was done. You will recall that a Syrian delegation went to Lebanon and held discussions and numerous meetings. What is important is that a short while after the delegation went to Lebanon, firing ceased, as is known, and we began to work quickly for creating a positive atmosphere and constructive climate which would help everyone embark on fruitful, joint work. Firing ceased and we said that we had to consolidate the cease-fire.

Let us ask what the resistance wants. We sent for the resistance leaders to come to the Foreign Ministry in Damascus--**foremost of whom was Yasir 'Arafat,** and the other leaders. We told them to write down what they wanted from Lebanon. **They wrote down what they wanted.** We took what they wrote down to the authorities in Lebanon. We discussed the matter and the **Lebanese**

authorities agreed to everything that they had written down without omitting one single letter from it. I say and admit that not everything that was written down and demanded was necessary to protect the resistance or to enable it to exercise its role of struggle against the occupying enemy. Nevertheless, the Lebanese authorities approved everything that had been written down without omitting one single letter. The agreement is in front of me now. **I would like to read the agreement to you.** These are words written down by the resistance leaders themselves:

Lebanese-Palestinian relations:

1. The PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people in Lebanon and no other side can be recognized.

What was intended by this was to consolidate the position of the PLO in such a way that no one could challenge it and the state could not recognize any side but the PLO.

2. The PLO is responsible for the affairs of the Palestinians inside the camps.

3. The PLO has the right to take measures inside the camps to safeguard its security against any foreign, external aggression.

4. The PLO has the right to exercise all the rights given to it according to the Cairo agreement and its appendixes.

5. The Palestinian presence in Lebanon shall not be harmed or harassed.

6. The security or presence of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon shall not be harmed or harassed.

What does the resistance want after all this, and what does the PLO want? This is the section related to Lebanese-Palestinian relations. **Is all this necessary for the resistance to carry out its activities against Israel? I say no.** Nevertheless, the Lebanese authorities agreed to everything that I read out. Nonetheless, they seek now--as we hear over the radios, to confuse the Arab public and perhaps the world--to defend and protect the Palestinian resistance, while the truth is that there are forces inside Lebanon and in the international scene which are seeking to exploit the Palestinian resistance for the sake of their tactical or strategic objectives. **The Palestinian resistance is currently fighting for the accomplishment of the objectives of others and against the interest and goals of the Palestinian Arab people.** [applause]

After this agreement, we said that there were several national questions [to be discussed]. Motivated by a spirit of fraternity and because we realized that several things could be averted by the Lebanese authorities in that phase--because of all this, we said we had to make a fraternal effort in the hope of achieving some useful results. Furthermore, **there were numerous discussions and meetings, and agreement was reached** on a number of measures, which were called national reforms, which were documented and written down on a paper.

The paper was later called the constitutional document. This document included at least 95 percent of what was demanded by the nationalist parties. I say here that we in Syria added several points which had not been demanded by these parties. The provision for the Arabism of Lebanon was not demanded by the nationalist parties.

However, Lebanon's Arab affiliation was stated in the constitutional document. [applause] **The Lebanese authorities agreed to that.** Therefore, agreement was reached to regulate Lebanese-Palestinian relations and agreement was reached on the constitutional document, which included the national reforms.

As for us in Syria and through our contacts with these parties, **we regarded the constitutional document as a great national victory and a victory for every Lebanese without any exception. There are thousands in Lebanon who do not have Lebanese nationality.** Most Arab leaders have known this fact about Lebanon for many years. Many interceded, fought and struggled to resolve this problem, but it was not resolved. **This problem was resolved in the constitutional document, and agreement was reached to give Lebanese nationality to everyone.** Job sectarianism, which all Lebanese citizens were suffering from and only one class of leaders was benefiting from--**it was agreed to abolish job sectarianism. It became evident to me later that this move constituted a problem** and a reason for bringing the situation to a head later on, because the end of job sectarianism has canceled privileges.

This cancellation was the reason for the flare-up of the situation later--because the **cancellation of the sectarian structure of government posts canceled the privileges of some people. These people once demanded the cancellation of the sectarian structure of government posts, but when the cancellation was made, or when an agreement was reached on the cancellation, they were shocked to have lost their privileges.**

You realize that I have tried and I will continue to try not to mention names except when necessary. There were provisions on equality for all, the establishment of a constitutional court, economic and social reforms, the Arabism of Lebanon, giving citizenship, canceling religious sectarianism and many other things which, as we know, were part of the problems in the past. But there are people who want to keep these problems because they thrived on them. **Some of the armed people in Lebanon today are against security. If security is achieved, they will be out of work. This is a problem.**

When agreement was reached on these matters, **the president of Lebanon came to Damascus.** Everything was agreed on finally, and he returned to Beirut. All these matters were discussed at a cabinet meeting. **The constitutional document was approved and was broadcast by the president over Beirut radio and television.** As we heard, rifle shots were fired everywhere to rejoice in the announcement of the declaration.

A cease-fire really took effect. I remember the situation continued to be quiet for 50 days. **Then suddenly a military coup d'état took place on 11 March.** I do not want to question the men who carried out the coup. They might have been good people. I do not know any of them. They might have had Lebanon's interests in mind and nothing else. But if this was the aim, they failed to achieve it. Without discussing the coup, we can say without hesitation that it did not consolidate

the cease-fire, the progress of national reforms or the interest of the Palestinian resistance in securing the continuity of the cease-fire so that the Palestinian resistance could devote its efforts to engaging the Israeli enemy. The coup came as a challenge, inviting a return of fighting in Lebanon. The coup came to raise a problem which had not been raised. **It raised the problem of the resignation of the president of the republic, particularly as the term of the president would end in some months, as I recall.**

Yasir 'Arafat came to me a few days after the coup--3 or 4 days after the coup. He appealed to me to make an effort to persuade the president of the republic to resign. I do not conceal the fact that **I found this request strange.** I said then that I would not make any effort and that I believed that what had been raised by the coup was unrelated to the Lebanese national interest and that the resignation or nonresignation of the president of the republic was not a major problem for the Lebanese masses.

Yasir 'Arafat left without any promises from me to make any efforts. On the morning of the next day, we found out that our duty dictated that we not sit back or despair as long as the matter was related to brothers of ours, who were part of our people, and that we had to make efforts to keep things under control, prevent the resumption of combat operations and foil any attempt aimed at resuming combat operations.

We decided to contact the sides concerned. Syrian delegations went to Lebanon and Lebanese delegations came to Syria. I discussed the matter in all its aspects. Again I say that President Sulayman Franjiyah was noble and honorable. **We reached an agreement,** which I spoke about in this place previously, in light of these contacts and in light of preserving the legitimacy which everyone upheld, including the coupists--as was mentioned in their communique number one--and naturally the parties which call themselves the nationalist parties.

In light of all this, the following was agreed on: 1) to amend the constitution or an article of the constitution allowing the election of a new president of the republic 6 months prior to the expiration of the term of the old president; 2) to elect the new president; and 3) to move on then to the resignation of the current president. When we reached this agreement, the situation came to a head violently. The coup came and raised the question of the resignation of the president, and it was adopted by several nationalist parties. They asked us to make efforts, and we did make efforts. When we reached agreement on what was requested by everyone in this respect, the situation came to a head. **Fighting erupted, and they were saying that the president of the republic must resign.**

At the time, Yasir 'Arafat asked that we receive Kamal Junblatt. We told Yasir 'Arafat, "why should we receive Kamal Junblatt while he is insisting on continuing the fighting and while we in Syria feel the same as you do--and still do, as you say--that fighting is the means for achieving the objectives of the plot?" Why should we receive Kamal Junblatt while he was insisting on continuing the fighting and what was the use of such a meeting? Yasir 'Arafat said no, these are statements intended for local consumption, the Lebanese way. Do not pay attention to them. Everything is all right.

We received Kamal Junblatt. I had a lengthy meeting with him, which lasted for many hours. We reviewed Lebanon's incidents from the beginning. We analyzed Lebanon's incidents--the analysis which I am giving now. I told Junblatt that we agreed with you on the analysis of Lebanon's incidents. We all worked for the cessation of fighting and we helped you politically and militarily, and by militarily I mean supplying you with arms and ammunition. Nevertheless, you could not hold out, and we entered Lebanon, taking the risk of a war with Israel. We achieved for the resistance all the guarantees it wanted--guarantees providing for the freedom of action of the resistance. Then we discussed the national reforms, and the constitutional document was agreed upon, and the document included 90 to 95 percent of your demands. Then the coup came to raise the question of the resignation of the president of the republic, although this question had not been under discussion and we did not support it. You supported the coup and its objectives regarding the resignation of the president of the republic. We discussed the matter and we made contacts and efforts and reached an agreement on this question. But when we reached this agreement, you brought the situation to a head. Up to now, we are satisfied with what we have done. We were satisfied because we were walking in the light and knew where we were heading. We thought that we were proceeding together with you on one line and for one objective. However, **now after what has happened, we want you to tell us what you really want.**

The rights of and guarantees for the resistance are no longer a problem. The national reforms, inasmuch as Lebanon's circumstances permit, are no longer a problem. The question of the presidency--the resignation of the president--is no longer a problem. What else do you want?

We discussed the constitutional document. I believe that there were no major objections [by Junblatt]. I can cite some examples to you. Junblatt said that we agreed on 6 points; the constitutional document contains 17 points. I told him in brief that what was important was not the number of points or whether they were 6 or 17. What was important was the contents of these points which were not in harmony with your demands, and your demands which were not included in these points. This was what was important not the number of the points. **He said a committee had been formed which studied the document and concluded that it was ambiguous. I told him that the document was an outline for future action and that every point in the document needed decisions, decrees and laws. At this point, meanings would become very clear and you could include all the details you wanted.** It is impossible to do this now and there is no justification for going into more details or specifics now.

He spoke about secularism. I told him that the Phalangist Party is enthusiastic about secularization. When the leadership of the Phalangist Party, headed by Shaykh Pierre al-Jumayyil, visited us, **I asked him in person about this matter.** He told me: I do not accept a substitute to secularization. I insist on and cling to a secular state in Lebanon. **I raised this matter with the Moslems, with Musa as-Sadr, with certain prime ministers, and with certain speakers of the house. They rejected it because the matter deals with the essence of Islam.**

This is something which you in our country, brothers, must know. It is misleading. **The Moslems in Lebanon are the ones who do not want secularization and not vice versa, because the matter deals with the essence of Islam.** The Phalangists cling to secularization and Kamal Junblatt clings to secularization. I told him: The Moslem ulema are the ones who do not agree to

secularization. **He replied: Do not pay attention them. They do not represent anything.** I told him: The matter is not one of representation. At this point I would like to repeat and say that I would not have said what I am saying had not the matter dealt with the clarification of certain facts. He said: They do not represent anything. **I told him:** The matter is not one of representation but an issue which touches on Islam. **When a matter deals with Islam it must not be taken lightly. This is what I said at the meeting.** The matter is not one of representation--whether they represent or do not represent--but one dealing with Islam. [applause]

He said: Let us discipline them. We must have decisive military action. They have been governing us for 140 years and we want to get rid of them. At this point I realized that all the masks had fallen. Therefore, the matter was not as we used to say it was and not as we were told. The matter was not between the right and left or between a progressive and a reactionary. It was not between a Moslem and Christian. The matter was one of vengeance, a matter of revenge which dated back 140 years. Of course, if I am going to proceed from the fact that I am a Moslem, I must be against this trend, because Islam is love and justice and not hatred and animosity. Islam is for Justice for all and against injustice to anyone. Islam has prohibited vengeance and revenge. If I am a true Moslem--and I am a Moslem, with God's help--I have to be against this trend. [applause]

If I were to proceed from the fact that I am a revolutionary, the matter is the same. A revolution is justice for all. A revolution is against all kinds of injustice. [applause] A revolution is correction and reform. A revolutionary does not remove injustice from one to place it on another. He removes injustice from himself and from others. This is a revolutionary. This is a Moslem. The true Moslem is the true revolutionary. Islam is the greatest revolution in the history of our Arab nation and of humanity. [applause]

Brothers, Kamal Junblatt emerged from this meeting and left me with the impression that he insisted on fighting. I told him: Do not count on any help. We cannot march with you on a path which we both agree upon in advance is the path of the conspiracy. On the next day, rather **on the same day, I invited Yasir 'Arafat. I received him the next day. He was accompanied by some brothers.** I talked with them at length. I repeated to them a lot of what I said during my meeting with Brother Kamal Junblatt. I repeated to them what I just said. I discussed with them the dangers of the decisive military action which he [Junblatt] called for.

At this point, I would like to say something about decisive military action. Decisive military action in a country like Lebanon, decisive military action between two parties in one homeland, is impossible. Decisive military action regarding any problem means the final liquidation of this problem; it means finding a drastic solution to this problem. Decisive military action in this sense in a country like Lebanon is impossible, because the issue does not depend solely upon the factor of might but also upon the availability of other elements which are not present in Lebanon. I am not philosophizing on the subject. In brief, I want to say: this is what decisive military action means and decisive military action in Lebanon is impossible because the factor of might is not the only condition which must be available. There are other factors and conditions which must be available but are not at present.

However, if decisive military action was intended to create a state of repression in the Lebanese arena, then this matter, if achieved, would have extremely grave repercussions. If we strike at the conspiracy from one end, decisive military action, if achieved, would bring about the objectives of the conspiracy from the other end. **Decisive military action in this sense, if achieved, would first result in a new problem in Lebanon and in this area. A problem would arise**, and we now do not know what it might be called--the problem of a people, the problem of a religion, the problem of Lebanon, the problem of part of Lebanon. It is difficult to know now what this problem might come to be called if it ever arose. However, we can unreservedly and without hesitation assert now that if we had decisive military action a big and grave problem would arise which would preoccupy us, the area and the world. This problem would have a special characteristic. It would be the problem of those who are oppressed. The world would sympathize with the problem because the world always sympathizes with the oppressed. This is the first result that would ensue from decisive military action as they want it--if they can achieve it.

The second result is that the world would seek to find a solution to this problem. As you can see, the world tries its best to find solutions to all problems, particularly big problems, the problems of peoples, the problems of the oppressed. The world, the entire world, struggles to find solutions to the problems of the oppressed.

The world will seek to find a solution to this problem. What could this solution be? We can all guess that a solution would not take place without the partitioning of Lebanon. But it will be a partition of violence and oppression.

This partition would result in ever greater additional dangers than the ones which would result if partition takes place without violence. **A state for those who are oppressed will be established--a state filled with rancor, a state whose sons will inherit rancor as a result of the oppression from which they suffered. They will disavow all the Arab values and all the values of Islam since Islam, as I have said, is the religion of the majority in the Arab homeland.**

I say frankly and clearly: **A state more dangerous and more hostile than Israel would be established not because the people who would live in this state would be Israelis or aliens. No, they are an essential part of our people.** It is not because of this that they and their state would be more dangerous and hostile than Israel. They would be so as a result of the series of oppressions they had suffered. As a result of this oppression, this state and those in it would be more dangerous and hostile than Israel. [applause]

The third result: A decisive military action in this way would open doors to every foreign intervention, particularly Israel's intervention. Let us all visualize the magnitude of the tragedy which might ensue if Israel were to intervene and save some Arabs from other Arabs.

The fourth thing: The numerous negative **repercussions** which would be caused by such decisive action **on the Palestinian issue**; both from the Palestinians and from world public opinion and its support for the Palestinian cause and the Arab struggle.

The fifth thing: we can all imagine the many negative repercussions which would take place in the Arab homeland--**repercussions on the Arab conscience** would ensue from such a solution. We

can also visualize an image, consequent on a solution, of the relations which would be formed in this area--an ugly picture detrimental to Arab interests and objectives.

What was important in this meeting was that **I asked Brother Yasir 'Arafat** to appreciate the gravity of these circumstances and **the seriousness of continuing the fighting, particularly the gravity of the participation of Palestinian fighters in this fighting. I told him then and I say now: I cannot imagine what the connection is between the fighting of Palestinians in the highest mountains of Lebanon and the liberation of Palestine.**

I cannot imagine any such a relationship. The Palestinian fighting in Jabal Lubnan is definitely not fighting for Palestine. He wants to liberate Juniyah and Tripoli and does not want to liberate Palestine, even if he so claims. This is what they used to say in 1970. **Brothers, remember what was being said in Jordan in 1970. They raised slogans, such as "all power for the resistance", "all power for the revolution", and "we will liberate Palestine through Amman."** In essence, the matter is being repeated in Lebanon.

At that meeting, Yasir 'Arafat promised to withdraw from the fighting. He went directly to Lebanon to inform the others of this. At this point, I do not want to discuss details but I must say that **the order was not completely implemented.** At any rate, the fighting stopped after a few days, but, if you remember, the fighting stopped after the arrival of Dean Brown in Beirut. Let us go back in memory: **The fighting stopped after Dean Brown's arrival in Beirut. Certainly, as an Arab, I thank any person in the world who can stop the firing in Lebanon.** What is important is for the tragedy and the conspiracy to end. **However, it is surprising that the firing was suspended only after Dean Brown's arrival (23 April 1976).** By these words I would like to say that if the United States wants to stop the firing and seeks to end it, we welcome this. If any foreign or Arab state is seeking to stop the firing and can end it, we welcome this. [applause]

At any rate, cries arose after this. Cries arose saying that Syria has stopped sending aid. We all remember these cries. Syria has stopped sending aid. As if Syria has to extend aid to whoever wishes it, to offer arms, ammunition, and even soldiers to whoever asks for them, irrespective of its national interests and irrespective of our national objectives and aspirations as well as our opinion about national interests. Syria is against the firing yet they expect us to offer them arms so that they will continue the firing. Syria believes that the path being followed is the one of conspiracy; yet they want, expect from Syria, and assume that Syria must offer them arms to continue on this path, which is detrimental to them, to us and to our national interests.

It is obvious that this is not possible. It is obvious that Syria does not move without conviction. It is obvious that nobody can drag Syria into a position it does not want. This must be clear everywhere. We will not move without conviction. We will not compromise our principles and objectives. We will not adopt any decisions without giving due consideration to our national and pan-Arab interests. [applause] Syria is the land of steadfastness. Whoever supports steadfastness must support Syria. Syria is the land of liberation. Whoever supports liberation must support Syria. Syria is the land of nationalism and progress. Whoever supports nationalism and progress must support Syria. Syria is the land of Palestinian struggle. Whoever supports the Palestinian struggle must support Syria. [applause] Any talk about war, any talk about the liberation of Palestine without Syria is ignorance and misleads the masses.

During this period, our contacts with the resistance continued, proceeding from the slogan of "no despair and no surrender" in combating the enemies of the nation and the conspiracies aimed against the issues and aspirations of the nation.

Our contacts with the resistance continued; **about the middle of the fourth month, we held a meeting with the resistance leadership. The meeting continued all night**, as I remember. In the morning of the following day, we announced the points which were agreed on. **This is the statement we announced on 16 April 1976.** The time noted on the statement was 0400.

Those who attended the meeting were PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat, Zuhayr Muhsin [head of the PLO Military Department], Faruq Qaddumi [head of the PLO Political Department], Nayif Hawatimah [leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine], Salah Khalaf [member of the Fatah Central Committee], and Abu Salih. 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam [Syrian foreign minister], Naji Jamil [Syrian deputy defense minister and air force commander], and Hikmat ash-Shihabi [Syrian army chief of staff] also attended. The situation in the area in general and the situation in Lebanon in particular were reviewed. The aspects of the crisis in Lebanon and the perils of its continuation were assessed and analyzed. The viewpoints were in agreement on the various matters; the viewpoints were in agreement on the various matters--that is to say, we were agreed on what I have just said. The two sides asserted their concern for the fraternal Lebanese people, their security, the safety of their territory and their stability. On this occasion, the two sides appealed to the fraternal people to end the fighting and bloodshed. The two sides agreed on the following:

1. To halt the fighting and adopt a unified stand against any side which resumes combat operations.

Therefore, **we agreed to take effective measures against any side that resumes fighting operations. Of course, the same people who agreed with us and made such statements were the ones who resumed the fighting operations.**

2. To reform the Tripartite Syrian-Palestinian-Lebanese Higher Military Committee so as to achieve a halt to the fighting and implement and supervise it until a new president is elected. The new president will decide on the security measures as he deems fit in accordance with his constitutional powers.

3. **To resist partition in all its forms** and any action or measure that harms the unity of Lebanon's territory and people.

4. **To reject the American plans and solutions in Lebanon.**

5. To adhere to the continuation of the Syrian initiative.

6. **To reject internationalization or the entry of any international forces into Lebanon.**

7. **To reject the Arabization of the crisis in Lebanon.**

This agreement did not see the light as far as its implementation is concerned. What happened was that on 6 June--after this agreement--the Fatah organization, some other Palestinian groups and some of the parties which call themselves nationalist parties in Lebanon launched a planned all-out attack on the offices of the union of the People's Working Forces, the offices of As-Sa'iqa, the offices of the Ba'th Party, the positions and offices of the Palestine Liberation Army and the offices of the other groups of the national front in Lebanon--this without any preliminaries. At that time I had in my office Libyan Prime Minister 'Abd as-Salam Jallud--he is still in Damascus as you know. With him was Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelkarim Benmahmoud. We received a report that Fatah and the aforementioned groups were launching a large-scale attack in all parts of Beirut.

We had agreed to take measures against any side which started fighting operations. It was they who started the fighting operations but against Palestinian, national Lebanese groups and the Palestine Liberation Army. We pushed some of our forces in the direction of Beirut in order to restore things to normal. We then halted the advance of these forces before reaching Beirut, as a result of the urging of our brother Algerians and Libyans.

The resistance leaders who staged the operation cried and became angry when they learned that we were advancing toward Beirut. They contacted the brothers, **the Libyan prime minister and the Algerian minister, who asked us to halt the advancing forces, saying that things would return to what they were before and that we should view what had happened as a temporary matter. We welcomed this idea.** We welcomed this idea. **The same night, they (resistance leaders) informed us that they had released the detainees and left the offices they had occupied,** that they would allow Brother Kamal Shatila, secretary general of the Union of the People's Working Forces, to appear on television and deny the statement they had issued in his name, and they said that what had happened was a temporary matter. We were glad about that. We had not wished to reach Beirut. We wanted the solution of that problem and any problem and we still have the same wish--the wish that every problem may be solved without our being compelled to reach Beirut.

However, what happened was, regrettably, the reverse, and it so happened that what they had said was untrue. They had occupied the offices, arrested whomever they did arrest and killed whomever they did kill from all the aforementioned groups. They had also attacked the Syrian soldiers who had earlier gone there to help them. They mercilessly attacked those soldiers and tried to do all they could to harm them. They tried to do all they could to harm the Syrian soldiers who had entered to help them and to contribute to thwarting all the crises to which they were being subjected in more than one place. Despite this, we continued to halt the [Syrian] forces. **We continued to halt the forces and gave orders to the soldiers that they should only defend themselves** and that, in their own defense, their action should be most limited. Bothers, they were infantry soldiers who have no artillery, tanks or any means of support that are usually found in army formations. We did not give them support at all. **Despite the presence of the Syrian Air Force over Beirut, we did not permit the air force to fire** a single shot either in Beirut or in any part of Lebanon.

At this juncture, we remember how much they talked about the air attacks. Up to this time, the Syrian Air Force has not attacked any place in Lebanon, nor hit any target, fired a single shot,

dropped a single bomb or fired a single rocket in any place in Lebanon. Moreover, we could have given support to those soldiers from other positions in which we were present but we did not do so. Of course, we are confident of our soldiers' effectiveness and of the fact that no one can go beyond certain limits in harming them. However, had we dealt with the matter with a purely technical military logic, we would have given them quick support irrespective of the destruction which would have befallen the others. We preferred bearing the harm and our soldiers' tolerating the harm to destroying and killing the others.

It appears sometimes that they misinterpreted our position and did not understand it as it really was. In my estimation, it sometimes appears that they have not understood our position as yet. The offenses they have committed against Syria through their offenses against the Syrian soldiers have not been committed by anyone else. They have offended not just the soldiers who were present in Beirut airport. In the camps, there are brothers. Three years ago, we sent our soldiers to defend the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. We sent materiel with the Syrian soldiers 3 years ago to defend the Palestinian camps in Beirut, in the south and in Tripoli--these soldiers, who have been living in the camps for 3 years now, have been gravely harmed.

We have brothers from Lebanon in our midst, and they are aware how much harm has been done to those soldiers, some of whom have been killed and some have been arrested. Everybody is aware that those soldiers have had nothing to do with all that has happened. The fighting is taking place in Beirut among the factions but the eyes of these soldiers are watching the Israeli Air Force to fight it should it attack the Palestinian camps. Some of them have been detained and others have been killed, even in Tall az-Za'tar, of which they are now talking. **A number of Syrian soldiers are still being detained in the Tall az-Za'tar Camp even now, that is, unless they have already killed them,** unless they have already killed them. In the south, in Sidon also, Syrian soldiers, who were defending the area and the camps, have been detained and some of them have been killed. Earlier we chose those soldiers from the various sectors of the Syrian Army. We deliberately chose them.

We deliberately wanted soldiers of every formation of the Syrian Army to go there for pan-Arab reasons--to defend the camps so that we might strengthen the spirit of defense of the Palestinian cause and the camps in every one of our Syrian formations. We had a small number of individual rockets. We spared whatever possible of this small number of rockets and sent them with our soldiers to defend the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. However, that was how they treated these soldiers. **How remote these actions are from the manners of the Arabs. How far these actions are from the character of the Moslems.**

How does a Palestinian stand up in Lebanon to tell the Syrian: Do not enter Lebanon.

We in Syria accept it if the president of Lebanon should tell us: Get out or do not get out.

Fifty percent of the Syrian warplanes which fell in clashes with the enemy before the 1973 war fell in defense of the positions of the Palestinian resistance. Thirteen planes fell in just one day in Al-'Urqub in defense of the resistance.

We lost 500 Syrian soldiers in one day. We lost them in a fight with the enemy because the enemy had hit a fedayeen base somewhere in Syria.

All of us remember our fighting with our brothers in Jordan, who are our closest brothers. All of us know now the amount of cooperation and confidence between us and fraternal Jordan and what we aspire to do jointly. We entered into violent fighting with these close brothers in 1970 and 1971. **Syrian and Jordanian soldiers were killed and Syrian and Jordanian tanks were destroyed for the sake of the resistance.** Who, other than us in Syria, did such a thing?

In 1969, we adopted a stand in Lebanon by which we saved the resistance. In 1973, we alone adopted a stand in Lebanon by which we saved the resistance. In 1976, we entered Lebanon, as I said a short while ago, for the sake of the resistance and saved it. [applause] Naturally, when Syria adopts such stands, it asks for no rewards or gratitude and does no favor to anybody.

The first communication between us and the Americans took place on 16 October 1975.

Naturally, the minutes are long, as you can see. I will not read them in full. But I will read some of the passages. **The U.S. ambassador** saw me on that date with a message, of course. He **said:** First, I would like to correct the impression among some people in Syria that the United States supports the Christian diehards and extremists in Lebanon. This does not mean that we do not care about the situation of the Christians in Lebanon. But **there is a clear difference between the position of the extremists and the position of the moderate Christians in Lebanon.**

It seems clear to us, and this is a U.S. stand, that a stable solution must be acceptable to the Christian moderates and must not disrupt their security, because this feeling of security is to them a major factor in a stable solution.

We would like to know how Syria views the development of the situation. We would like to know Syria's diagnosis. Our careful view, in short, and I would like to make sure that we are not misunderstood in this, is that Israel will consider the intervention of foreign armed forces a very grave threat so that no matter what we say to it, it might intervene.

This means that the United States supports Syria's intervention in Lebanon, especially the armed intervention.

On our position on Lebanon, we proceed from the fact that we are the sons of a single Arab nation.

All in the area have the impression that the United States does not care for matters of religion in the world. Were this not so, or in other words **if the United States builds its strategy on the basis of defending the Christians in the world, as you say, then it should have first defended Christ himself and fought Israel because it is the Jews who crucified Christ**, as you yourselves say. How can this deep paradox be explained if we were to believe that the United States cares for religious affairs? In one place, you show interest in a problem involving the Christians and in

another place you give every support to those who crucified Christ. Therefore, we cannot give any U.S. opinion on Lebanon a religious interpretation; rather we give it a political interpretation.

Regarding Israel, as I said a while ago--of course this is further to my talk with him--we, as I said a while ago, believe that the problem in **Lebanon is connected with the Arab nation and therefore, is an internal Arab problem. Israel, even in the event of its being a state with an old history in the area--that is if we make such a supposition, which is absurd--Israel has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Arab nation. Israel is a foreign presence as far as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan are concerned. As for Syria, it is not a foreign presence as far as Lebanon is concerned, and Lebanon is not a foreign presence as far as Syria or Jordan or Saudi Arabia and so forth are concerned. The Arabs are one nation and Israel is a stranger to this nation and it has no connection with its aims. (...). We will perform our duties toward Lebanon fully at all times, and we will do everything in our power to halt the fighting because it is a fight among factions of our kinsmen and family.**

Any time Israel seeks to confront us, we will not feel any anxiety because we will be ready to confront Israel not only on the territory of Syria alone but anywhere in the Arab homeland.
[applause]

Fourth, the only consideration which has defined and defines, now and in the future, the dimensions of the Syrian intervention in Lebanon, including the size and the positions of the Syrian forces--including the size of the Syrian forces and the positions of the Syrian forces--is the interest of the people of Lebanon, because **our history is one, our future is one and our destiny is one.**
[applause]

This was my reply to the message we got from the United States, to the ultimatum we received from the United States. The reply is clear.