



Death of Former Prime Minister of Lebanon

William J. Burns, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs
Statement at Foreign Affairs Ministry
Beirut, Lebanon
February 16, 2005

Good afternoon. In my meeting with the Foreign Minister, on this sad day for Lebanon, I reemphasized America's strong condemnation of the murder of former Prime Minister Hariri. Let me today repeat once again our [condolences](#) to the Hariri family and to the families of all those innocent victims of this brutal act of [terrorism](#).

The United States joins with the entire international community in stressing the urgent importance of a serious and credible investigation to bring those responsible for this act of terrorism to justice.

Prime Minister Hariri was a genuine statesman. He was a man deeply committed to a free, independent and sovereign Lebanon. Mr. Hariri had many admirers and friends in the United States. Today, Americans join the people of Lebanon in a deeply-shared sense of outrage and of loss and of anger.

Mr. Hariri's death should give, in fact it must give, renewed impetus to achieving a free, independent and sovereign Lebanon. What that means is the immediate and complete implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. And what that also means is the complete and immediate withdrawal by Syria of all of its forces from Lebanon.

The international community will be watching very carefully as Lebanon prepares for Parliamentary elections this spring. The Lebanese people must be allowed to make their own political choices and to conduct those elections on their own, free of foreign interference or intimidation.

And let me stress finally the importance of implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1566, which the international community is intent upon pursuing with renewed determination to ensure that there is full cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Thank you.

Questions:

Question: The Security Council asked the Secretary General to put a report about Lebanon, about this (incident), what can we wait for after as a new step?

Assistant Secretary Burns: Let me stress once again as the Security Council made clear yesterday in its public statement the importance, the urgent importance, of a serious, credible investigation into this act of terrorism, using the resources of anyone in the international community who might be able to help in that effort. We believe that's extremely important and we are joined, as I said, by our partners in the Security Council in that view. The UN Secretary General is now moving on an urgent basis to prepare a report and the United States will strongly support that effort.

Question: Mr. Burns, The Lebanese Government refused the formation of an international investigative committee. What do you have to say about this and why do you think this refusal happened?

What is important, as I stressed and as the Security Council stressed yesterday is that this investigation be serious and credible and be conducted with real urgency in the self-interest of the people of Lebanon as well as in the interest of the region and the international community. We in the United States, and other members of the international community, are prepared to help. But what's important is that that investigation moves ahead, that it be thorough, credible and that it achieves a result, which is to bring to justice those responsible for this terrible act.

Thank you very much.

Released on February 16, 2005

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.