



Press Statement
Office of the Spokesman
London, England
March 1, 2005

Joint Statement by the United States and France on Lebanon

As President Chirac and President Bush made clear when they met on February 21, France and the United States stand with the people of Lebanon in their grief following the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri. We fully support the Lebanese people in their pursuit of an independent, democratic and sovereign Lebanon, free of outside interference and intimidation. Our presidents have instructed us to work urgently together and with the international community to help realize that fundamental goal.

Today, we strongly reaffirm the international community's call for a full, credible and transparent investigation into the terrorist murder of Prime Minister Hariri. We welcome the dispatch of the UN Secretary General's team of inquiry and will continue to press for the complete cooperation of the government of Lebanon and all parties to ensure that those responsible are brought swiftly to justice.

The United States and France also reiterate our call for the full and immediate implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. That means that full and immediate withdrawal of all Syrian military and intelligence forces from Lebanon. And it means the consolidation of security responsibilities under the authority of a Lebanese government free from foreign domination.

We strongly believe that the people of Lebanon must have the opportunity to make their own political choices, without threats of violence and intimidation. They must have the opportunity to chart their own course through free and fair parliamentary elections this spring, bolstered by an international observer presence prior to and during the elections.

France and the United States will continue to coordinate our efforts closely, including in follow-up discussions later today at the political directors level. We also welcomed the opportunity today to consult with many of our regional and international partners, and look forward to building on what is already a strong foundation of international support for the people of Lebanon and the freedom that they deserve.

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