

Report of the Council of Civil Service

Between Yesterday and Today: Lebanon's Election

The Monthly meets with Mr. Hameed A. Opeloyeru, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Lebanon

Numbers for the Lebanese Memory

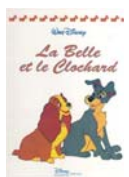


**End of 8th & 14th
of March**

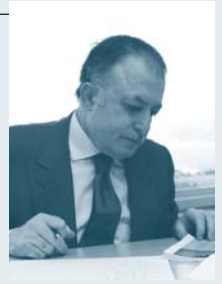
\$ 339 million
**Election Expenditures
Ceiling**

\$ 5 Billion
Debt Increase in 2008

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Barazek, Croissants and Siniora Declare the End of March 8th and 14th



Citizen Zero remembers all the slogans of the participants in the demonstration of March 14th 2005. However, today he is recalling one he did not understand when hearing it for the first time: “we do not want Barazek, we want Croissants.” The crowds had decided at that time that French croissants were better than the Damascus sweet, Barazek.

From all the international sweets he had tasted, citizen Zero still finds some pleasure in eating Barazek. Something that reminds him of his childhood, of the day his father told him that Damascus, Beirut and Jerusalem were one. For him, croissants could not replace Barazek. This is not to say that he has any “ideological” position against croissant lovers, even having enjoyed some croissants himself. At that time, the ‘Sunnis’ rallied their voice as the opponents of Syria, declaring their love for croissants, as if their cousin, the pastry maker in Damascus, was now an enemy.

The March 8th demonstrators did not pay much attention to the importance of sweets in Lebanese politics and focused more on thanking Damascus for its ‘wonderful performance’ since its arrival to Lebanon in 1976 and until its withdrawal in 2005. Then again, Barazek would certainly have been unanimously acclaimed if more attention was given to it. Nothing on earth could convince Barazek and Croissant lovers to dialogue. Moreover Siniora, at that time was not the subject of discussion and preference, yet due to the ‘wonderful performance’ again and again of March 8th and 14th and of ‘the loyalists’ and ‘the opposition,’ Siniora gained importance and supporters.

Even so, citizen Zero announces to the Lebanese people that this dispute over ‘sweets’ has started to fade away, which is reflected in the electoral programs.

For instance, the Future Movement program mentions the following:

- ⊙ “A capable government is a civil government that does not hede to religious conflicts and confessional parties;
- ⊙ A capable government is the one that ensures the largest participation of citizens in managing their affairs through participatory mechanisms.”

The Hezbollah program includes:

- ⊙ “Building a state of laws and institutions and promoting the spirit of patriotism towards nation and land;
- ⊙ Developing the parties and syndicate activities and allowing civil society institutions and associations to play an active and vital role.”

Consequently, Mufti Kabbani will no longer have to pray in the Serail as a place reserved for the Sunnis since the Sunnis’ largest movement will adopt the norms of ‘civil society.’ Even more, the opposition (any opposition) would

be able to unseat the Prime Minister if it considers him illegitimate and the loyalists (any loyalists), or the opposition (any opposition), would be able to call for another Speaker of Parliament or overthrow him when he does not call the Parliament to order. And all this, would no longer lead to civil war.

The important point is that citizen Zero will not participate in the elections, neither as a candidate nor as a voter. He knows that the opposition is not an opposition, and the loyalists are not loyalists; that March 8th and 14th are gone and even their slogans have already started to change. He knows that today and tomorrow’s ‘independents’ and ‘moderates’ have never known in their lives neither moderation nor independence; all they knew was selfishness and obedience to external forces.

Ever since the situation has changed, the Barazek haters have come to rediscover its benefits and started eating it again, declaring not to have ever forgotten the taste. This is what Walid Jumblatt says in his most recent ‘discourses.’ As for the opposition that has always approved Siniora’s budgets since 1993 and trusted him as Minister of Finance, it has discovered today that it in fact does not like Siniora. Even though his budgets were endorsed to rule all over Lebanon, it is Saida, and only Saida that is now endangered by Siniora, according to the opposition.

The croissant lovers suddenly woke up and remembered that thyme has grown on their Mount and that they were the ones who made Kushk, Chanklish and quince jam.

Citizen Zero announces to the Lebanese people; tomorrow you will not hear about March 8th and 14th anymore; instead, you will hear about one demonstration or several harmonious ones praising Barazek, Croissants and Sinioras.

How beautiful Lebanon’s confessions are. To understand them, do not read March 8th and 14th programs; just focus on Barazek, Croissants and Sinioras and be aware of the fat!

Note: The word ‘Siniora’ in this article is a pun, referring to both the person (PM Fouad Siniora) and the Saida sweet. ‘Barazek’ is the Damascus sweet, and ‘Croissant’ is the French viennoiserie.

Jawad N. Adra