

The Fate of Sanioura's Cabinet Decrees: Legitimate or not?

Consumer Price Index: February 2009

The Monthly meets with Mr. Robert Zeldenrust, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon

# Removal of confession from civil registry records

## What are your views?

The Maronite Patriarch Cardinal Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir

Grand Mufti of the Lebanese Republic, Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabbani

Sheikh Abdel-Amir Qabalan, Vice President of the Higher Islamic Shia'a Council

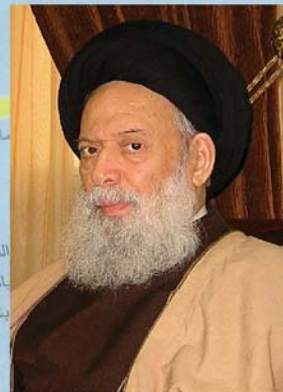
HE Walid Jumblat, Head of the Progressive Socialist Party

HE Asaad Hardan, President of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party

Dr. Khaled Hadadeh, Secretary-General of the Lebanese Communist Party

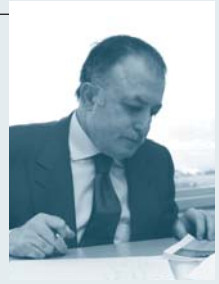
## No Response... Only He Responded

AI - Sayed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah



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# Citizen Zero (0) is Now Citizen “Slash” (/)



Citizen Zero was pleased for a while when he first heard that Minister Baroud had released the positive response of the Department of Legislation and Consultations to the right of Lebanese citizens to strike-off their religious affiliations and register a newborn accordingly. Baroud had set the directive free after being held in the drawer of former Minister Sabeh. Citizen zero was even happier to hear of the more than 100 citizens who have applied that purpose. Citizen Zero was happy ...but not for long.

It didn't him take long to remember the treacherous, devious and unscrupulous ways of the schizophrenic Lebanese political system. As his hopes faded, Citizen Zero's mind wandered off and for no clear reason he recalled the day Patriarch Houwayek received General Gouraud, the man who killed Youssef Azem, the Syrian Commander-in-chief of the “Arab Army”, leaving his daughter, Leyla, alone where she died in Turkey, destitute. She would have been happy too, to know that there is a statue of Youssef, as well as schools and roads named after him in Damascus and all over Syria. Yes, he thought, but would she have not felt better had someone took care of her or just visited her?

Back to General Gouraud's visit to Lebanon, where he said to the Patriarch that France would come to Lebanon's defense for as long as “you want Lebanon as a homeland”, and of course as long as you hold mass for France annually! In fact, Emile Edde was the only one (among the Maronite Leaders) to be true to this “dream” (whether or not he wanted to send the muslims to Mecca or not) he did not want to annex districts inhabited by Moslems (Sunni or Shia) to the Mount Lebanon. The same words were repeated by President Chamoun to Begin, in the house of the latter in Jerusalem about Ghaza and the West Bank for “the Jewish land” to remain “pure”. . . But an agreement between both Maronite and Sunni leaders gave the new entity a different color and for a while a nice allure and perhaps a spirit. It was an agreement between the owners of the land (the Maronites or the Landlord), and Tenants (Sunni, Druze and Orthodox) but not the Shia'a who were not seen as “citizens” yet.

Of course the Maronite Leaders and their Church had neither the vision, soul nor heart to build a nation with a tinge of democracy, citizenship and secularism. You are branded at birth, in politics as in marriage, in death as in inheritance, for the bequeathal and bequeathed. As for the “Zaim” in his community, he is the community and all its interests, temptations and threats; he kills and is killed; he employs and expels; he instigates change but never changes. The faces of “Zu'ama” stay the same and the flock remains the same, they were born that way and they will remain so...

Did Patriarch Houwayek know that a day will come, not too far away, when the number of Christians in Lebanon would not exceed a few hundred thousand or less than 10% of the population? Or that the Mufti of the Republic would take the place of the Maronite Patriarch in out-bidding all others in “Lebanese patriotism”? Did Riad Solh know that the “enemy” of his Sunni “community” is going to be his sons-in-law's “community”, the Shia'a?

Lebanon is today, and as we have always known it, an arena for external forces to settle their differences. They have followers we call “Zu'ama”; who, with their backed-up strength, walk haughtily amongst their “people”, but shamelessly bow to their “Kings and Presidents”.

Isn't this an opportunity for all the seculars to write-off their religious affiliation in spite of the difficulties they will face? Where is the Syrian Social Nationalist Party? All busy these days (as usual) in the up-coming elections, choosing its candidates and accepting votes on religious basis? Where is the Lebanese Communist Party? Busy making speeches full of resistance zeal, fighting Israel and backing “rejectionist” regimes? Why not start here, by “rejecting” being religiously categorized in birth certificates.

It seems that the Lebanese System renews itself either by blood or by making “freedom choices”, but the most flagrant deception are the seculars: the callers for de-confessionalism yesterday are today, the ardent advocates of elections governed by a system of religiously divided districts. They have become the very pillar of the system they have opposed for so long.

Without “them”, Citizen Zero and with a “Slash” wrote-off his confessional affiliation. It took the step between “Zero” and “Slash” to make him a happy man, under no obligation to call on a “zaim” or a religious leader. Of course he lost any chance of ever becoming a deputy or a minister or even getting any government employment, and he definitely has no idea where he will be buried.

Citizen Zero is happy. He was happy as he walked to church and mosque for the first time in his life, to pray.

*Jawad N. Adra*