

## **Address by Prime Minister Hassan Diab to the Lebanese**

**June 13, 2020 - The Grand Serail**

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

When I was assigned to form this Cabinet, and when the government was formed, the Lebanese people's confidence in our ability to make achievements was weak. The Lebanese people had little hope in us.

We acknowledge these facts.

We were surrounded by muffled cunning smiles, betting on our failure to address the deeply rooted aggressions and backlogs that took a toll on the State's entity and on Lebanon's economic and financial structure, labelled for many years as a miracle, while it was merely a colourful mask that covered the enormous distortions they caused without even flinching.

Less than a month after the Cabinet started working, Lebanese people have started to feel the seriousness, methodological work, determination, will and courage of the entire government and of every minister.

The people's mood has changed, and this government started enjoying a high level of citizens' confidence, which seems to have dismayed many of those who have bet on its failure.

Since then, rumours, false news, lies, personal and political targeting have not stopped.

Nevertheless, we have faced all of this silently and with more work, although smear and prejudice campaigns have touched on silly issues.

There are many examples of the orchestrated campaign organized by well-known parties, whose name identity, image, background, and way of thinking are familiar and that are not deterred from

resorting to any means to tarnish the image of others because they could not redeem theirs.

Yes, this government has achieved a lot, but they want to blur the facts.

Isn't it enough that we are trying to remove the rubble they left behind after having destroyed everything and left in haste?

Isn't it enough that we are still searching for Lebanese people's deposits that they have wasted with irresponsibility, so as not to say more?

Isn't it enough that they have drowned the country in huge debts that have caused the current great financial collapse?

Deals, waste, corruption and clientelism have persisted, funded by the people's accrued bank deposits; they have betrayed the confidence of the Lebanese people who trusted them.

For a long time we have kept silent, and we have heard a lot of accusations trying to evade the turpitudes they have committed, to throw it on this government whose head and ministers are seeking to rival their predecessors, neither in politics nor in performance, style, mentality and elections...

No ... I am not one of them ... and will not be ...

We did not want to enter into debates with the past whose results we are grappling with, but we will not remain silent about being held responsible for their policies that have brought the country to the disaster we are facing today.

Whatever the case, we are here today .Amidst the rubble and black smoke they have ignited in the country .A smoke that was about to rescind civil peace, after spreading despair in the hearts of the Lebanese who were witnessing the systematic destruction of public and private properties, and who were gazing with pain and sorrow at tire-burning that have blocked roads, taken their

breath away, increased social and livelihood pressure , and destroyed their livelihoods.

Today we are here, amidst financial and livelihood concerns. Some have tried to exploit the situation again, without any national deterrent .They have thrown lies and rumours, have contributed to deepening the Lebanese pound crisis, have caused a major crisis and have pushed people onto the streets.

They were required to prevent the government from implementing its decision to remove the rubble hiding beneath it the secrets of the corruption structure.

They knew that we have begun to discover many rooms inside this structure, and that we have found the keys to many rooms forming that black structure stinking deals, brokerages and thefts covered under a power shell.

There is much to talk about today, and there is much more to be revealed soon, with documents and facts.

So wait until the process of rubble removal from the top of the corruption structure is finished, for this structure will fall on the heads of those who are hiding in its corners, believing that it was fortified and that it can protect them from the earthquake of popular will, which must triumph for its right to hold accountable those who have kidnapped the State and hypothecated the people's destiny by remaining in their positions that they thought were personal properties, disposing of its capabilities and authority, while forgetting that it thus passes worldly glory and that if it had lasted for their predecessors, it would not have passed to them.

Again, the coup attempt has failed.

All the secret and public meetings, the deals made on and under the table as well as the internal and joint operations orders have failed to overthrow the process of corruption detection. On the contrary, those persons have once again shown that people's lives

do not matter for them, that the people's properties were their enemy and that their aim is to protect themselves, not to express the real pain they themselves caused to people.

We have enough data regarding the facts, and we will disclose appropriate data in due course.

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

Today, we are facing the challenge of either returning to the pre-October 17 uprising period, or completing the task .

Some want to return to the pre- October 17 era, because they believe that the time has come to pounce on the revolutionary uprising, take revenge and turn the clock back.

Some want to restore the corruption structure's keys in order to protect what is inside it, re-fortify its walls and renew its colours, so as to prepare a new trick to dispose of people's monies which they deposited and protected in banks, and which have been transferred, by decision, to the State treasury which was wide open to robbers.

Here lies the truth regarding the plan to manipulate the US dollar/Lebanese pound exchange rate, and here lies the secrets of the night of the coup against the October 17 uprising.

The coup was not against the government .There will come a day when this government will leave; it cannot stay forever.

In fact, we do not want to remain in office without effectiveness and without achieving our plan to get the country out of the stalemate caused by corrupt people.

We are not and won't be like them...

But, I can confidently say that we will not allow people's money to be wasted. Bank deposits are numbers today; however, I can assertively say that we will not allow such deposits to remain just numbers.

Have they impoverished the State? Yes.

Have they impoverished citizens? Yes.

Have they used people's monies? Yes.

But the State is not bankrupt. We are facing a financial distress, but the country draws its wealth from you, from its capabilities, its potential, its resources and the creative minds of its citizens.

I assure you that your rights are preserved, at the banks and at the Central Bank... and the State is the guarantee. Therefore, we must protect and defend the State, so that it can be a guarantee for all its citizens, their properties, their monies and their future.

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

We want to make, with you, the change you want .We want to advance the State's rationale .We want to fulfil, with you, our dream of a homeland for us, for our children and our grandchildren .We want to trust our State.

We seek to achieve too many things ... Sometimes, we achieve what we want, but we face reinforced walls that stand in the way of our dreams .We want to move to the safety zone, but political barriers are standing in the way.

But I assure you that change will inevitably come ... no matter how much they try to derail it. Change is definitely coming, and I believe in our ability to make positive change in people's lives, and in the country's path.

Over the last couple of days, in order to confront the conspiracy of the Lebanese pound's and people's livelihoods' manipulation, we have taken decisions to stop the series of blackmailing targeting the State and the people.

All Lebanese know what we want, but unfortunately, we cannot make change quickly from within the system's mechanisms.

Managing the transition from the inside is too heavy. However, we will not refrain from imposing this change in the path, since we have no other option than saving the country, restoring people's trust in their homeland and confirming the State's reference as an option for all of us, which protects our future and that of our children.

Unfortunately, over the past months, I have found out that the State was oppressing its own citizens. It oppresses its youth .It deprives them of their rights .It undertakes job examinations that ultimately become just a folklore.

Dozens of examinations in the Civil Service Council ... Internal Security Forces, Customs, Forestry Guards and Civil Defense ... However, either no results are announced for unknown reasons, or the results are announced on paper without being implemented under the pretext of sectarian and confessional balances.

Promotion tables in the military and security services are frozen, either because of disputes within the administration, or under the pretext of financial means, or because of sectarian and confessional balances.

That is how trust is built between the State and its citizens?

That is how the State's rationale prevails, or is it the logic of federations disguised under a thin crust of the State's image?

Tens of thousands of Lebanese citizens have been side-lined for years, but the State has turned its back on them.

No ... this approach cannot continue .We are following up on all these files, and we will do justice to the Lebanese youth .This is their right and not a favour granted by the State.

The State must serve all its people, with no distinction on the basis of regions, sects or confessional denominations .We want to build a State that protects the Lebanese people .We want national affiliation to be the only criterion .We want to carry a unified

national identity, chant one anthem, raise one flag, defend one nation, protect one people and shoutout to the country, not to a person, party, or confession.

A weakened State engenders strengthened chauvinism ... When the State retreats, petty states emerge.

When the security grip eases, chaos prevails ... and when stability is shaken, civil peace falls apart.

The absence of accountability leads to corruption ... and a politicized judiciary leads to the law of the jungle.

The judiciary needs no permission, reference, or instruction to act .We insist that the judiciary be independent and impartial.

Therefore, should we seek to build a State, we have to start from these pillars. This is what the government is working on, and it is mounting up pillars that can protect the State's structure from the storms.

Today, we are establishing the concepts of a safe, just and unified State.

Against this backdrop, I call on the Lebanese people to be more patient, because the fight against corruption is very fierce, for the corrupt will not surrender voluntarily and will not give up easily.

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

The confrontation is difficult, but I can say with a clear conscience that we have laid a solid foundation for your victorious fight against corruption, and we will embark together on a joint march to restore social security whose loss threatens your livelihoods taken away by corrupt people to accumulate their wealth and satisfy their greed.

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

Let the self-destructive incitement of those without the national conscience be incurred and practice his deep hatred.

Lebanon is for all of us, and every stone in Bunyan has cost its owner a brow sweat, so no one underestimates what the other has. This is not a bidding yard. We need to stop this massive waste, whose crime is no less important than wasting public money.

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

Let the self-destruction instigated by those who fall out of national conscience and who want to satisfy their deep hatred be stopped.

Lebanon is for all of us, and every stone of its structure was built by the sweat of its people's brow, so let no one underestimate what the other has achieved. This is not a bidding yard. We need to stop this massive waste which is a crime as important as the waste of public money.

Dear Fellow Lebanese,

We are preparing to reopen the airport early next month, and this will give us the opportunity to restore some of our economic cycle that we desperately need. But the current incidents will lead to continued suffering, increased bleeding in the national economy, further closure of institutions and loss of employment opportunities.

I call on the Lebanese people to refrain from distorting the protests, and to contribute to the shift towards the State's rationale, which must only prevail, in order to cross this ordeal, and protect Lebanon and the future of our children.

I am confident that we will overcome the crisis, and that we are stronger than all challenges, because Lebanon was found to remain free, sovereign and independent. Its people's haughtiness is too difficult to break before the winds, no matter how strong.

Long Live Lebanon!