

## Communiqué

On Friday 21 July 2006, Their Excellencies the Maronite bishops held at Bkerkeh an extraordinary meeting which was presided over by His Beatitude and Eminence Patriarch Nasrallah Butros Cardinal Sfeir who was just back from his pastoral visit to the USA.

After having reviewed the country situation and exchanged points of view, they issued the following communiqué :

1 – The grievous events which have been, for a few days, happening in Lebanon , crippled the country following the bombing of the runways of its airports, most of bridges and roads, some electric power stations, most public utilities and communication nets. Neither reason nor logic can justify these events or admit them. The kidnapping of two soldiers, whatever they say about it, does not deserve the dismembering of a whole country, killing hundreds of citizens and starving most of the inhabitants.

2 – The tragic situation the Lebanese are living, specially those who were forced to evacuate their homes and villages, compels every body to forget political differences and face united the ordeal . The time is not the time for settling accounts , it is the time to deal with events with all possible solidarity, understanding and courage.

3 – The bombing focused on most roads causing the isolation of the majority of towns and villages, specially in the South and the Bekaa, rendered the arrival of food and medical supplies impossible . That's why, the Fathers call upon humanitarian organizations, specially the International Red Cross and the Lebanese Red Cross, to secure the needs in food, medicines and other life necessities for those people.

4 – The Fathers call upon all to welcome, with love and solidarity, their displaced brothers, to whatever community they belong, who were subjected to a forced evacuation from their houses and towns. It is in the nature of a calamity to unite, not to divide, and to call all to bear their responsibilities and obligations without pelting one another with suspicions and accusations.

5 – The Fathers call upon the members of the Security Council to put an end to the circle of violence in Lebanon by taking an immediate resolution for a ceasefire , out of mercy for innocent civilians, and by treating the roots of the present crisis in finding salutary solutions so as to give everyone one's due .

6 – The Fathers support the efforts deployed by the Government and its Prime Minister to put an end to the Lebanese tragedy and lay down the bases on which a strong and just state would be built. It will extend its authority over all the Lebanese territory, take care of all its citizens and preserve all the constituents of the Lebanese society .

7 – In response to the appeal of the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Benedictus XVI, to consecrate this Sunday to prayer and penance to obtain peace, the Fathers call upon their children to abide by this appeal and upon all to raise their mind to God, whatever their creed is. For He alone is the Master of history and the Judge of people who weighs good and bad deeds. Turning to Him, specially in calamities and difficulties, is the best to strengthen man to withstand and resist what he dislikes with courage and strong will. We pray Him to shorten for the Lebanese the days of calamity and bring about peace in their hearts and land.

8 – While the Fathers thank the leaders of sister churches , the Bishop conferences and the bishops of the dioceses in the world for expressing their solidarity with Lebanon in her tragedy, they present to the victims' relatives their heartfelt condolences, wish a speedy recovery for the wounded and ask God Almighty to put an end to this great tragedy.

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