

**President Amine Gemayel's Speech from Forum de Beyrouth,
23rd of November 2008**

How did we start the ceremony and the speeches and Pierre hasn't arrived yet?
Did he change his habit or did we shut out the incident of his martyrdom?
In which heavenly kingdom are you my beloved son, with whom I was blessed but now I mourn?
Two years have passed since his martyrdom and 72 years since the establishment of the Kataeb; neither has the first gone nor has the second grown old.
Pierre lives on in our hearts and the Kataeb reside in the nation.
I added the past two years to his life as if he survived the assassination.
I believed that he was alive for I am a Christian. And I believed that he had died for he is human.
Death is not a stranger to our home, for the old and the young have always answered to the call of their country.
Even if death is often associated with the elderly, in our family, it seized the young and the children.
Lord we have had enough; keep this harsh reality away from us and from others. We do not have a pact with death but with life.
What you see here today: these crowds, these people, these cheers, this eagerness, this leap, this uprising, these new affiliations, the restored Kataeb ... these are Pierre's resurrection, his victory over death.
Pierre only became destined for martyrdom because he was destined to cause a party revolution, to become a national leader.
Pierre carried out many achievements in his short life; some were completed and the remainder he left to us to complete. He reunited the young, led the opposition of the Kataeb, triumphed at the Metn elections singlehandedly, united the party and lighted up the Cedar Revolution.
As a minister, he revived the Ministry of Industry, and his five-year plan became a reference for industrial development.
Pierre was close to the people. He dedicated his youth to this difficult and harsh struggle and put aside his life for his country.
He started his work in favor of the nation, alone, and climbed mountains and walked on thorns. And when he passed away, he left behind many achievements. When he started out, he looked for the assets and found out that they were confiscated, and after his martyrdom, he left behind assets that were liberated. Pierre was a lightning, a volcano. He feared failure but not death, and succeeded; then ... he left.
He showed courage in every step he made and took responsibility for his deeds. When he succeeds, he would tell the young people: you made this happen, and when he fails, he would tell them: it was because of me.
All he did, he did with joy. Politics for him was not only a patriotic act but also an act of love. He did not know hatred or malice. He was an entity of love that revolved like a planet around other planets.
This is how you are remembered my son! This celebration is for you, a display of your achievements. We miss you, Pierre. We miss Samir Shartouni, your companion in martyrdom. We miss Antoine Ghanem, who was dear to our hearts, and all the other martyrs.
The Party of Martyrs opens its high gates and its arms to welcome the new generations and allow them to grow in a purely patriotic environment and an ethical milieu that respects the scale of spiritual and civil values. I hereby welcome you, dear comrades, to the party.

Your Excellency, President of the Republic, General Michel Sleiman, represented by HE Minister Ibrahim Shamseddine,

Dear friends and comrades,
Families of our dear martyrs,

In 1936, sixteen years after the declaration of the State of Lebanon, the Lebanese Kataeb Party was born. It came out as a phenomenon of quality, far from the local differences and disputes. At the birth of the Independence and the Pact, it reinforced its journey with two convictions and two projects.

The convictions are: belonging to an Arab milieu by supporting the affiliation of Lebanon, as a founder State, to the Arab League, and promoting Lebanon's cultural and civil relations with the free world and adhering to the principles and resolutions set forth by the United Nations.

The two projects are: keeping Lebanon away from all conflicts and giving top priority to the issues of social justice and human rights.

In addition to its well-established belief in these principles - fixed principles, the Kataeb Party adopted this patriotic and social approach, hoping to strengthen the Lebanese people's sense of belonging to their country, State and community. The Kataeb Party adopted this approach, hoping to prove to the world that Christians and Muslims can live together as equals under one State and one political regime. The Kataeb Party adopted this approach, hoping to prove to the world that the East, as well, is a fertile land for democracy. The Kataeb Party adopted this approach, hoping to confirm to the world that the multiplicity of civilizations is a phenomenon of integrality and perfection, a source of pride. Its foundation is built on the citizen, the State and the Pact.

When we display before you, dear friends, and before our new comrades, the journey of the party since its establishment, we remember its founder.

There are names in the history of peoples and nations that overcome time and live on for generations and ages. One of these names is the founder of the Lebanese Kataeb, Pierre Gemayel. No one will be able, today or tomorrow, and tomorrow even more than today, to put Pierre Gemayel aside. His name, his image, his values, his struggle, his reverence ... are all associated with the party, with Lebanon, with the Pact, with the Christian essence, with the independence, with the revolution, with openness and dialogue. What Pierre Gemayel built can be destroyed by no one. He was a leader of the Lebanese resistance, the godfather of national pacts.

Not long ago, we pledged to rise again after every ordeal. We accepted to be stung not twice but many times. We believed the saying of no winner or loser. We refused the theory of civil war. We attributed the causes of war only to others. We wanted our love of our identity to be stronger than killing. At the time, we turned our backs to the murderers of our sons, brothers, children, elderly and all our martyrs to keep the 10452 km² one country. Now, we find that some of us are seeking to make each of these five digits a State on its own, a State that is not even theirs but a State for strangers.

Theories in Lebanon used to reflect division but the reality represented unity. Now, we find unity in theories and division in reality.

Dear Lebanese, my fellow citizens,

In light of these bitter experiences and facts, on the morning of Independence Day, the system seems to be out of order and the pact violated. No one is reciting the act of confession or the act of contrition. This cannot go on; we should decide together what we want. There are a thousand ways that can lead to division but unity has only one way: loyalty to Lebanon. Loyalty to Lebanon does not only mean to show affection but also to take a position. Translating the position into action requires untying the knot with foreign countries, respecting the authority of the State, putting an end to the conditions of separation, giving up illegal weapons, saying no to implantation, rejecting extremism and radicalism, establishing civilized harmony and respecting one another. If we are ready for these necessary sacrifices, let us unite, and if we do not care, which is what it seems like up till now, let us agree on a future vision for Lebanon that would preserve its entity and its people before and after the by-elections.

In this context, the next Lebanese elections assume a fateful dimension. If the forces of sovereignty, independence, stability and progress do not find their way to victory – and they will – the change will transform into a nightmare and the effect of the election of the President of the Republic will vanish. Completing the establishment of a free State requires a parliamentary majority that continues to take the right and difficult decisions and prevents Lebanon's return to the prevailing conditions before 2005.

If the forces set against the movement of sovereignty win, the essence of the Lebanese existence will no longer exist, because the victory of these forces will indicate the establishment of a Lebanon for others and not the establishment of a renewed State for the Lebanese. These forces are trying today to reassure the Lebanese, but don't you believe them, for their reasonability is temporary and tactical while ours is fixed and strategic. The translation of true intentions consists in reinforcing the united State and not in the appropriation

of more lands and State institutions and not in attacking the Lebanese army and security forces using a thousand excuses and not in the justification of the logic of multiple States at the expense of a united State. It is noticeable that this party insists on prolonging the crises in view of continuing to control the country through the streets at times and through the institutions at other times; all for the purpose of keeping Lebanon a provisional outlet for Arab and regional projects of predominance.

Distinguishing between the Lebanese and the non-Lebanese, the State cannot allow any illegal military presence on any part of its territories. Not the weapons of the Palestinian organizations, which time has come to be gathered from inside and outside the camps. Not the weapons of Hezbollah in the South, in the Bekaa, in the capital, in the Southern Suburb and others, which time has come to be handed over to the State. Not the weapons of the radical organizations present in some urban neighborhoods, which time has come to be extracted and stand up to their holders. The Lebanese people refuse the recurrence of the naturalization phenomenon, and refuse any multiple States or project for multiple States of religious nature, and only want the State of Lebanon, for the Lebanese alone.

Amidst these circumstances standing in the way of actual solutions, what is the use of looking for a defense strategy that will not lead to a radical treatment for these three dangers? We want a strategy to defend the country and others want a strategy to defend their weapons. We want a State that can protect the land and people of Lebanon, with its army and security forces. Then, the Lebanese would not have to ask for foreign protection, which would bring misery upon them sooner or later. We do not want the Ottoman to save us from the Mamluk, the European from the Ottoman, the British from the French, the American from the Nasserite expansion, the Syrian from the Palestinian, the Israeli from the Palestinian or the American again from the Syrian. We want a unifying Lebanese State that would prevent any external force from entering its territories. We can either be a unified people able to defend ourselves, or else we do not deserve to live ... and we do deserve to live.

The real defense strategy is practically a strategy of peace and not a strategy of war. Countries arm themselves to preserve their peace, their economy and their development and not to launch random wars and go back to the times of conquests. Lebanon's peace is its real defense.

A country cannot have two States, the State two armies, the army two weaponries and the weaponry two decisions. The weapons in the hands of Lebanese and non-Lebanese parties that confiscate the decision of war and peace, put Lebanon at risk of a potential Israeli aggression at any moment, not differentiating between the causers of the aggression, the State and the people.

With all patriotic sincerity, we call upon others to confront these fateful facts. However, reconsidering the construction of the Lebanese State cannot contravene three fixed principles, which are the Lebanese national entity that was acknowledged in 1920, the Lebanese Pact of Coexistence that was agreed upon among the Lebanese in 1943 and the leading political role of the Christians in Lebanon for any diminution in this role, under any excuse, will put the united entity at risk. Then, the Christians should be aware of their responsibilities and unite. The unity of the Christians is an obsession of the Kataeb Party because it guarantees the unity of the Lebanese.

Any violation of these three fixed principles will affect the unity of the entity, and we will confront it, will destroy the concept frame of coexistence, and we are its preservers, and will weaken the role of the Christians, and we are its protectors along with other allies. Within the context of these three principles, the doors of change will be open, provided that the change is carried out in a pacific and democratic manner and is reached by the Lebanese through responsible and serious negotiations. All the Lebanese agree that the current central state formula is not successful, most of them know the proper solution but only a few announce it.

The Kataeb, we who have never feared military challenges, will not fear the anticipated political events. By holding on to the Lebanese entity and the spirit of the National Pact, we believe that confronting the growing inclination towards division requires the development of the system by assuming positive neutrality, reinforcing the civil conditions in the State, progressing relentlessly towards expanded decentralism and straightening and developing the course of the Taef Agreement. Which is better? To live under the supervision of non-united and non-Lebanese republics or under the supervision of a single, united Lebanese republic?

Today, rather since the Taef Agreement, some have been practicing federalism in a separatist manner while others have been contemplating it in silence. Why all this cowardice and hypocrisy? Let each one of us present his project to the Lebanese. I, myself, do not present these ideas as a fixed project but as a subject for national discussion. I do not love a certain system or regime, I love a country. A country is the only thing worth striving for. However, eventually, a country needs a system that suits its structure, meets the ambitions and diversity of its people and guarantees its security, freedoms and stability. The sincerity of the relations between the constitutional institutions is a must, but their sincerity among the groups of the Lebanese people is a higher must.

Here, I address all the Lebanese parties, all the allies as well as the political opponents. I simply say to them: if we did not find a military, security and political solution to our relations, or an internal, Arab, regional and international solution, let us try to find together, assuming a spirit of consensus, a solution through the constitutional means. I am confident that he who underwent the same suffering and experience that I have been through, and who thinks with impartiality and responsibility will reach a new and developed project that will release Lebanon from the grip of regional and international circles that do not care for its welfare.

These ideas will preserve what remains of our unity and will prevent further division. Union does not take Lebanon from unity to division; it rather saves it from division and puts it on the track of new unity founded on balance between the central and regional authorities and on giving vital space for each civilized Lebanese group. Who can deny that we are a people of multiple qualities, cultures, religions, confessions, rites and lifestyles?

We do not want, as a party, to determine the details of these ideas – solutions – alone, as Lebanon is for everyone and the future is for everyone. Thus, the new rule is called upon to be transformed in to a national workshop to be discussed. We consider that the President of the Republic, whom we strongly support, is qualified, under the sponsorship and guarantee of the United Nations, to take charge of this national workshop, which will be the foundation of a new Lebanese future, seeing that he is the regulator of the institutions, the symbol of the State's unity and the taker of the constitutional oath.

We would not have explicitly displayed these fateful issues had the conditions in Lebanon and the region of the Middle East been progressing to the better, where the entire movement of negotiations in the region and the movement of discussions in Lebanon aim at preventing explosion and not at reaching actual solutions.

Dear friends and comrades,

It is great to talk about politics, security and the constitution, but we cannot neglect the affairs of the people under the excuse of sovereignty, liberation and defense. The hungry cannot wait and revolution is born from hunger.

We have many suggestions to improve the living conditions, such as establishing a fund to help needy families, constituting an official employment establishment, developing the law on old age security and updating the social and health security law and reducing taxes and fees; but handling the economic and livelihood files will be useless as long as the security condition remains in the hands of authorities that contradict with the authority and reverence of the Lebanese State, and as long as the political stability is not found, and some keep establishing alliances at the expense of the State authority.

Which Lebanese establishment dares to expand its activity, increase its productivity and create new job opportunities before verifying actual expansion of the State authority on all its territories? Which foreign investor dares to invest its money in Lebanon before peace is restored and the State authority is actually expanded on all its territories?

What is said for investment and employment can also be said for aids and donations. In light of the dual weaponry phenomenon, the Arab and fellow countries will not fulfill their obligations towards Lebanon, for the resolutions of Paris I, Paris II and Paris III cannot coexist with the missiles of Zelzal 1, Zelzal 2 and Zelzal 3.

In this context, these illegal weapons are not just used internally at the military level, as in the events of May 7 in Beirut, Tripoli, Bekaa and the mountains, but they are also used internally at the economic level, by transferring production projects to other countries and allowing the escape of capitals and major companies that revive the economic movement, create job opportunities and prevent the immigration of our children.

The owners of these weapons and their allies do not care about the situation of the Lebanese people because they are far from the economic, social and livelihood crisis, because they have – in addition to what they take from the Lebanese State – their own budgets, their own funds, their own donations and their own securities, and in one word, because they practically live under the supervision of a State that enjoys all its characteristics and that is separate from the Lebanese State. This divisional situation contradicts with the text and spirit of all the agreements and the pacts on the basis of which Lebanon was built.

Dear friends and comrades,

The Kataeb will not change its fixed principles and move from the project of a State to the project of multiple states. We will not change our politics and move from moderation to extremism. We will not change our alliances and move from the Cedar Revolution to a revolution against the cedars. The Kataeb did not wait for the year 2005 to become March 14. We have been March 14 since 1936; we are rather the children of 21 November.

The quality that has marked the Kataeb throughout history is that as much as it is loyal to its alliances, it still preserves its independency. We remained Kataeb during the peak of the Constitutional – Bloc conflict. We remained Kataeb when we were with Shehab. We remained Kataeb while we were in the Tripartite Alliance. We remained Kataeb while we were at the Lebanese front. And today, we remain Kataeb in the March 14 gathering. We are not fans of custodianship. We do not like to be followers. We are not made to dissolve. We have learned to assume loyalty in our alliances, equality in representation and partnership in the decision. This is how we were raised, this how we lived and this how we shall remain.

It is to this party, colored with the different colors of the Lebanese unity, that you are coming my new comrades. It is to this party, which dedicated itself to the unity of the Christians as a foundation for Lebanon, that you are coming my new comrades.

You have been given today, not the merit of belonging to the party, but the blessing of struggling for the sake of Lebanon. You did well. Let us make of our party a place for dialogue among generations as Lebanon was suggested to be a place for dialogue among religions.

The Kataeb is a party of deeds and not slogans. Slogans alone do not allow people to live and people are not led by popular headlines. Our party has confidence in itself so do not fear any weapons, the Kataeb is your weapon ... The weapon of the Kataeb is its faith in God that can move mountains ... and in Lebanon that can implant mountains.

Pierre lives in us
The Kataeb is back for real
Long live Lebanon
Amine Gemayel

Beirut, 23rd of November, 2008



kataeb.org
Lebanese Kataeb party official website