

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama Backs Lebanon's Hariri and Tribunal Amid Political Crisis

By Stephen Kaufman, Staff Writer

Washington – President Obama said the decision by the coalition allied to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah to withdraw from the Lebanese government shows both the organization's fear and its determination to block the government's efforts to act on behalf of all of the Lebanese people.

Obama met with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri at the White House January 12 and praised the Lebanese leader's efforts to "reach peace, stability and consensus in Lebanon under difficult circumstance," according to a White House statement on the meeting.

Hariri's visit to Washington coincided with the resignation of 11 Lebanese Cabinet ministers who are allied with the Iranian-backed militia group, which the United States has designated as a terrorist organization. Their resignations, which have forced the collapse of the government, came amid reports that Hezbollah members could be indicted by the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which has been investigating the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

During his meeting with Saad Hariri, who is the son of the slain premier, Obama "stressed the importance of the work" of the tribunal "as a means to help end the era of political assassinations with impunity in Lebanon," according to the White House statement.

Both leaders said they are determined to achieve both stability and justice in Lebanese "during this challenging period of government volatility," and agreed that "all parties should avoid threats or actions that could cause instability," according to the statement.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told BBC News that there are some in Lebanon who do not want the murderers of Hariri and the two dozen other Lebanese who were killed in the February 14, 2005, bombing to face justice.

Speaking in Oman January 12, Clinton said those accused by the tribunal may ultimately be found innocent. "But you cannot run any society where murder is given impunity," she said.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said January 12 that the resignation of the ministers was "a transparent effort by forces who seek to subvert justice and undermine Lebanon's stability and progress." The United States believes the special tribunal should be

allowed to finish its work, evaluate the facts and use them to take appropriate actions or make recommendations, Crowley said.

"The tribunal is independent. It was ... duly constituted through the United Nations at the request of the government of Lebanon. Its work is important, and it should continue free of any interference, free of any ... politicization, free of any intimidation," he said.

The resignation of the ministers is an attempt to force the Lebanese government to stop supporting the special tribunal, Crowley said. "No government has the authority to do that."

The Obama administration is concerned that the collapse of the government "is serving the narrow interests of Hezbollah," which has worked over many months to undermine the tribunal's work, Crowley said.

"We believe they're serving the interests of outsiders and are trying to ... divide Lebanon rather than try to continue to support ... Lebanon's long-term interest," Crowley said.

Through its actions, Hezbollah is presenting Lebanon with a "false choice" between justice and stability. "We think that Lebanon deserves both," he said.

The United States is committed to seeing a Lebanon that is "secure, peaceful, prosperous and is not subject to outside interference, whether that interference comes from Syria, whether that outside influence ... comes from Iran or anywhere else," Crowley said.

A new Lebanese government should be allowed to form peacefully and free from intimidation, according to the country's constitutional process, he said. The United States does not want to see violence or any outside party take advantage of the situation, Crowley said.

## U.S. Encourages Economic Reform in China

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr., Staff Writer

Washington – The state visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to the United States January 19 comes during a significant transition for the global economy, China's economy and the United States, says Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

"The global economy is emerging from the financial crisis, but that crisis has left lasting scars that will take years to repair," Geithner said in a January 12 speech at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

"It has left a growing gap between the growth trajectories of the large developed economies and the rapidly

growing emerging economies," he said.

When President Obama and Hu meet at the White House, confronting these sweeping economic issues will be a significant part of their agenda, Geithner said. The stakes are high, and the changes that are necessary create both opportunities and challenges.

Geithner said that while many of the major economies are still rebuilding after the crisis, many of the emerging economies, like China's, are at the beginning of what should be a long period of rapid economic growth that includes rising incomes, which creates demand for resources and for investment capital.

The United States can expect its economy to continue growing, but at about half the rate of the major emerging economies, and about twice the rate of Europe and Japan, he said.

"These dynamics will fundamentally change the balance in the world economy, forcing changes in the architecture of the trade and financial systems," Geithner said. "In this new global context, China's principal economic challenge is how it will manage the next stage in its transition from a state-dominated developing economy, dependent on external demand and technology, to a more market-oriented economy, with growth powered by domestic demand and innovation."

While the United States and China compete in many areas, Geithner said, together their economic strengths tend to complement each other. As China faces these challenges, as it transitions to a more market-oriented economy, it is in the U.S. interest for the Chinese to manage these challenges successfully, he said.

In this relationship with China — from its currency exchange rate to protecting intellectual property — U.S. priorities reflect changes that will benefit China, Geithner said.

China's growth has been made possible by the access it has enjoyed to the world financial markets, and the investments and technology of the United States and other major economies, Geithner said. China has also benefited from the open, multilateral system of trade and investment built decades before it opened its economy to the world.

"The benefits of this relationship are hard to capture in any one statistic, but remember this: The United States is on track to export more than \$100 billion of goods and services to China this year," Geithner said. "Our exports to China are growing at twice the rate of our exports to the rest of the world."

Geithner said the United States has two objectives in this economic relationship with China.

The first is to expand export opportunities for U.S. businesses to sell to the Chinese market, and that requires a trading system that is equally fair to U.S. companies and to Chinese companies in China, in the United States and globally, he said.

The second objective is to promote reforms that will reduce China's reliance on exports and that encourage a shift to domestic consumption and investment. "As part of this, China's exchange rate needs to strengthen in response to market forces," Geithner said.

"Importantly, China still closely manages the level of its exchange rate and restricts the ability of capital to move in and out of the country," Geithner said. "This is not a tenable policy for China or for the world economy."

### **U.S. Leaders Mark First Anniversary of Haiti Earthquake**

By MacKenzie C. Babb, Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and other U.S. leaders are marking one year since a catastrophic earthquake devastated Haiti, pledging continued partnership and support as the country rebuilds.

"Since the first moments of the disaster, the United States has helped to rally international support for Haiti's recovery and reconstruction and respond to new challenges, such as the outbreak of cholera and Hurricane Tomas. This global effort, led by the Haitian government, continues today," Obama said in a statement ahead of the January 12 anniversary.

"We honor the memory of the quarter of a million Haitians who were lost, along with more than 100 Americans, many United Nations personnel and citizens from dozens of nations," Obama added.

The earthquake, which left 300,000 people injured and more than 1 million homeless, destroyed buildings and infrastructure across the capital city, Port-au-Prince.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said in a January 11 statement that the earthquake's "human and economic cost remains the worst of any natural disaster recorded in the Western Hemisphere." She committed "steadfast support" from the United States for Haitians as they face "a long and difficult road to recovery."

Obama said improvements have been made, noting "many Haitians affected by the earthquake now have better access to food, water and health care than they did before the disaster." But he emphasized that sustainable

progress takes time.

"As we have said all along, helping the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere recover from one of the worst natural disasters ever to strike our hemisphere will take years, if not decades," he said.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton commended the more than 140 nations that came together in the past year to support Haiti.

"That spirit of cooperation must continue if we are to help Haiti overcome this tragedy," she said in a January 11 statement.

Obama also praised global humanitarian efforts and called on the international community to fulfill its pledges for "a strong and sustained long-term effort," but said it will take the Haitian government's leadership to achieve long-lasting stability.

"Haiti can and must lead the way, with a strong vision for its future," the president said, adding that "as they forge ahead with the hard work of rebuilding their proud country, the people of Haiti will continue to have an enduring partner in the United States."

### **U.S. Praises Sudanese Officials for Conduct of Referendum**

By Stephen Kaufman, Staff Writer

Washington — Regardless of the outcome, the referendum on southern Sudanese self-determination can present new opportunities for the people of both northern and southern Sudan, says U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson.

Carson said the conduct of the January 9-15 vote thus far has reflected "very proudly" on officials from both sides.

Speaking via teleconference January 12, Carson said the "extraordinarily high" voter turnout in the south on January 9 and 10 has started to diminish, but there has also been a large turnout in overseas voting centers, including in the United States, and "a steady trickle of voters" in northern Sudan.

"There have been no incidents of pressure or violence or intimidation of southern voters who have gone to the polls in the northern part of Sudan," Carson said. "All of this reflects very proudly on the officiating of this process, north and south."

The United States will respect the outcome of the vote if the South Sudanese Referendum Commission, backed by election observers and monitors, certifies the process as fair, free, valid and representative of the will of the people

of southern Sudan, he said.

Regardless of the outcome, the referendum "can be a win-win proposition for both sides," Carson said. If the southern voters choose to exercise their self-determination, they can "begin to overcome some of the ... legacies of poverty and neglect that they have experienced." The north should not view southern self-determination as a defeat, he added. Khartoum would have "an opportunity to begin to improve its relations with the international community and to focus on development of the northern parts of the country."

If the south chooses self-determination, the United States will work with south Sudan to "create a strong viable state that helps to realize the opportunities that all the people in that part of Sudan desire," Carson said.

"But equally," he added, "it is the intent of the United States to move forward to try to establish a more normal and a productive, positive relationship with the government [in] Khartoum."

Carson said a vote in favor of self-determination would likely lead to the creation of an independent southern Sudanese state on or around July 9.

Between now and then, he said, there would be "enormous challenges for both sides that will require their negotiators to work hard, analyze many issues and facts, make serious concessions ... and come up with compromises."

The assistant secretary said the political status of the Abyei region would need to be resolved, as well as disputed portions of the boundary between north and south; who would qualify as a southern citizen; how to share Sudan's national debt; and the sharing of oil revenues.

These issues would be "difficult, complex and challenging for both sides to resolve over the next six months but they are not insurmountable, and they are in fact capable of reaching interim agreements and solutions that do not in fact result in conflict but in prolonged negotiations that allow the kinds of peaceful compromises that ... can be worked out," Carson said.

He said both sides have shown through their cooperation on the referendum that they "realize that it is in their interests to move forward on the basis of stability and not further conflict."

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