

National Remembrance Day to Honor Two Assassinated Lebanese Leaders

LOS ANGELES, CA (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – A national day of remembrance will be observed on February 14 in honor of Rafik Hariri, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, and Parliament member Gibran Tueni. President Bush and other world leaders hold Syria responsible for these killings. Remembrances will be held across the United States by many of the three million Americans of Lebanese descent, who include numerous celebrities. Sanford Holst announced the observances on behalf of the Hariri-Tueni Remembrance Committee (www.cedar-lebanon.com).

Marlo Thomas, Tony Shalhoub, Salma Hayek and John Elway (NFL) are well-known members of the Lebanese-American community. Others include Kathy Najimy, Jamie Farr, Tiffany (singer), Paul Anka, Christa McAuliffe (astronaut), Ray Irani (CEO), Casey Kasem (DJ) and Bobby Rahal (racer).

Up to 90% of Lebanese-Americans are Christian, with the remainder being Muslim or Druze. Sectarian differences in Lebanon were once a major cause for division; but Rafik Hariri was Muslim, Gibran Tueni was Christian, and there are indications that their unfortunate deaths have begun to bring people together.

While observances in Lebanon on February 14 will be concentrated in Beirut, they will be more diffuse in the United States, where the millions of Americans of Lebanese descent are scattered across the country. These remembrances are being arranged by clubs and individuals in each community who are inviting friends to local restaurants on that evening. They will honor those who have fallen, remember their heritage, and show support for an end to the killing. In keeping with a Cedar Revolution tradition, many will wear red-and-white in their clothing that day to show their participation.

Early Lebanese society used religious tolerance and other peaceful means to remain free for more than a thousand years, according to Remembrance chairman Sanford Holst's recent book "Phoenicians: Lebanon's Epic Heritage." Many people of Lebanese descent are hoping to restore that heritage.

The bomb which killed former Prime Minister Hariri in downtown Beirut changed the course of Lebanon's recent history. It triggered the Cedar Revolution and a climactic day of remembrance on March 14, when an estimated one million people marched in the streets of Beirut in an unprecedented show of national unity and purpose. In response, Syria was pressed by President Bush, French President Jacques Chirac and leaders of many other nations to withdraw Syrian troops from Lebanon. Despite an ongoing United Nations investigation, however, no one has been convicted for Hariri's death, and the killings have continued. The most prominent recent slaying was of Gibran Tueni, who was a member of Parliament and publisher of the influential Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar.

Current information on the Remembrance is available at www.cedar-lebanon.com.

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News issued by: Hariri-Tueni Remembrance Committee

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Original Story ID: (1216) :: 2006-01-0123-005

Original Keywords: Sanford Holst, Hariri-Tueni Remembrance Committee, this client is black-listed from using Send2Press services Hariri-Tueni Remembrance Committee