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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

President Ford

Metropolitan Philip Saliba, Chairman, Standing Conference of American Middle Eastern Christian and Moslem Leaders Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri, Director, Islamic Center of Detroit (Vice Chairman) Bishop Francis M. Zayek, General Secretary Archbishop Joseph Tawil, Treasurer Dr. Muhammad abdul-Rauf, Director, The Islamic Center, Washington, D. C. Very Rev. Anthony Gabriel, Archbishop of St. George's Church (Orthodox), Washington, D.C. Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs William J. Baroody, Jr., Assistant to the President for Public Liaison DATE & TIME: Thursday - April 15, 1976 2:30 - 3:00 p.m. PLACE: The Cabinet Room

<u>President:</u> I am delighted to welcome you here. I want to say a few words and then I would be interested in your own comments.

I am sure you know how hard we have worked to resolve the problem in Lebanon. As you know, we sent Dean Brown there and we think he has been helpful in pushing the ceasefire and the work toward a political settlement. As you know, it won't be easy. We have also been helping in relief and rehabilitation activities and we will help as best we can on immigration matters.

Saliba: I want to thank you for taking the time to see us. We pledge to you our undivided support in your campaign. We are impressed because you are President but mostly because of your honesty and sincerity. We hope you will govern for many years.

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By Let NARA, Date 10/14/93	

It is appropriate that we meet during Holy Week to discuss the agony in Lebanon. We appreciate your sending Dean Brown, but the only one who can save Lebanon is you. We really believe that. We do not believe a military solution is possible. We support President Asad's effort. A limited intervention like now may be okay, but not a military solution. We think the political principles of February may work and through these efforts a new Lebanon may be born.

<u>President:</u> We think a political solution but not a military solution is mandatory. We oppose intervention whether it's by Syria or Israel. The political steps are under way and we hope they will continue. Once the new government is able to take over, the outside forces must go. With all the factions and all the outside forces, it is very difficult to sort it through.

Zayek: The most important thing is to stop the bloodshed. Over 200,000 people have died. The root of the problem is the Palestinians. By themselves, the Lebanese would solve their own problems.

<u>Chirri:</u> We want to thank you. I am really more impressed seeing you face to face. Your popularity is growing daily because of your honesty. The Syrian troop presence now belies the argument that the dispute is between Christians and Moslems because Syria is aiding the Christians. What we need now is the reintegration of Lebanon. I hope we are near the end of the tragedy but now we need to rebuild. Noone can help more than you in that. God has given you great power. Thank God he has given you the wisdom to do this great job. In 1956 there was an Israeli invasion and Eisenhower was great in stopping it. This problem is the thorniest problem a President ever faced and your solution of it will result in your election by a landslide.

<u>President:</u> We are doing everything we possibly can. We want Lebanon to succeed, not only for its own sake but because of the danger of a wider conflict.

<u>Tawil:</u> We are worried about the numbers of refugees. We don't know what will happen. We have to get to the root of the real problem which is that of the Palestinians. Right now we are working for a political solution, but in the long term only solving the Palestinian problem will do it.



<u>Chirri:</u> We hear that Israel can't do anything with the PLO until it is recognized. But how can the PLO do that until Israel recognizes the Palestinians or so?

<u>Rauf:</u> I endorse what the others have said and pray for your reelection and your success here.

Gabriel: We are counting on you Mr. President. God bless you.



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