

**The speech of the Armed Forces Commander General Joseph Aoun in the opening ceremony of the 8<sup>th</sup> regional Convention for stability and development in the Arab countries and the Middle East, held in the Central Military Club-Manara on 19/02/2018**

- **Esteemed Patron of the Convention, Your Excellency the President of the Republic General Michel Aoun represented by Minister Pierre Raffoul.**
- **Esteemed Speaker, Mr. Nabih Berri represented by MP Qassem Hashem**
- **Esteemed Head of Cabinet, Cheikh Saadeddine el Hariri represented by Minister Jamal el Jarrah**
- **Esteemed Ministers, Deputies and Ambassadors**
- **Esteemed political, security, diplomatic, intellectual, media and economic figures**
- **Esteemed officials of the convention – Esteemed audience**

For the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the Lebanese Armed Forces have the honor to host the most recent of several regional conventions intended for the Middle East. These conventions come together with the presence of the brightest intellectuals and researchers in Lebanon, the region and the world and are held with the aim of shedding light on the stability and development in the Middle East at a time where crises and commotions take the region by storm and no clear political solutions loom in the horizon.

**Beloved participants**

Fate has ruled that this region shall be a geographic crossway and a place where ideologies and intellectual divergence clash to the extent where the concept of “stability and development” seems like an inaccessible goal.

Despite the war’s traces that still cloak our region, we should explore ways for stability and development along with our constant will to confront devastating dangers around us. It is essential for the hand that fights and defeats terrorism and the hand that builds and plants to come together. Sustainable development, with its principles that aim for the elimination of poverty, ignorance and unemployment, might be even more effective than traditional counter-terrorism weapons.

## **Esteemed audience**

The military institution has vowed to the citizens that it will preserve stability, which is a valuable accomplishment that could only persist thanks to the pure blood and souls offered by the soldiers of this institution. Therefore, we as Lebanese citizens, particularly as soldiers, are aware of the importance of stability in the nation's structure: it is the sturdy pillar with which societies and civilizations are built. We shall aim to accomplish this noble goal and cooperate in reaching solutions and finding ways to accomplish them.

As you are aware, the Israeli enemy has addressed several dangerous threats that affect Lebanon's right in its Oil resources, mainly in Block number "9", and attempted to establish an isolating wall at the southern border which might pass through Lebanese territories. From this platform, I confirm to you once again that we strictly reject any attempt by the Israeli enemy to target Lebanon's sovereignty and sacred right to exploit all its economic resources. The Lebanese Armed Forces will spare no way to confront any Israeli assault, regardless of the costs and sacrifices.

In parallel, the LAF will be firm in thwarting any internal attempt to shake national peace and stir tumult. We shall not allow the clock to turn back just as we shall not allow political diversity, which is a pillar of our democratic regime, to turn into chaos as a result of schemes planned by some parties to destroy major national accomplishments that were achieved by Lebanese citizens, our hero martyrs and soldiers, in several critical fields and battles.

## **Beloved participants**

Lebanon's message is the message of intercultural coexistence, openness and dialogue. It is a message that we aim to generalize through this convention just as we did with the previous ones. May it be beam of light in a darkness that envelops several countries of the region. Furthermore, may it contribute to relieving the suffering of several nearby countries that are still burdened with consecutive crises and events.

In the end, I extend my ultimate appreciation to His Excellency, the President of the Republic who honored us with his patronage of the convention as well as to the Centre of Research and Strategic Studies which took over the organization of the convention. Furthermore, I would like to salute the esteemed participants as I wish everyone of you further luck in reaching fruitful results that serve the wellbeing of Lebanon and the region.

**Long Live the Lebanese Armed Forces – Long Live Lebanon**