

Speech of the Armed Forces Commander General Joseph Aoun in the Opening Ceremony of the 7th Regional Conference addressing the “contradictions of the conflict and the transformation in the Arab World” at the Central Military Club – Manara on 15/5/2017.

- **Patron of the Conference - His Excellency the President of the Republic General Michel Aoun represented by His Excellency, the Minister of National Defense, Engineer Yaacoub Sarraf**
- **His Excellency, the Speaker Mr. Nabih Berri represented by Esteemed MP, Mr. Qasem Hashem**
- **His Excellency, the Prime Minister Sheikh Saad el-Hariri represented by His Excellency, the Minister of Communications Mr. Jamal el Jarrah**
- **Esteemed ministers and MPs**
- **Esteemed political, security, diplomatic, intellectual, economic and media figures**
- **Esteemed officials and esteemed audience**

For the seventh year in a row, the Lebanese Army has the honor of hosting a new round of the Regional Conference addressing the issues of the Middle East with the participation of elite local and foreign academics and researchers. This fact clearly shows the success of this conference during the past years in achieving the desired objectives and purposes, mainly in shedding light over the underlying causes of the thorny crises devastating the region with all of their deep ramifications and dimensions in addition to proposing objective solutions to solve these crises in the spirit of responsibility, objectivity and neutralism.

Welcome to the institution of the Lebanese Army.

Esteemed Audience,

It is true that the conflict over the Middle East hasn't ceased during any stage of history due to the distinguished geostrategic and economic location of the region. However, the current conflict that is raging in the region might be the most dangerous since it has begun threatening the basic pillars of the countries' unity and the tenacity of their societies as a result of the aggravated acts of violence, the

intensity of discrepancies and the large scale spread of terrorism, while current conflicts took complicated political and ideological dimensions in addition to the fact that this conflict spread outside the region with implications that affected a number of continents and countries on more than one level.

If the complexity of international interests over the riches and areas of influence in the region constitutes a part of the current conflict, the other part lies in the internal crises that are blowing over a number of the countries in the region in a way that intensified the deep-rooted political and social problems as well as the confessional, ethnic and security problems where terrorism, in its different names and shapes, forms the most powerful factor that possesses the capability to set ablaze the fire of these problems and takes advantage of their contradictions.

Therefore, it is necessary to boost internal and international efforts to face this danger from a military, intellectual and cultural perspective in addition to prioritizing the national and humanitarian dimension over any other dimension in the suggested solutions, basing on providing freedom, justice, equality, respecting diversity and preserving the active presence of minorities as well as believing in the culture of dialogue, openness and accepting one another.

Esteemed audience

Amidst the crises taking the region by storm and the major changes that are taking place on several levels, we have taken upon ourselves in the Lebanese Army to give ultimate priority to preserving national stability. This commitment is embodied through the preparedness of our units whether at the southern borders to face the schemes of the Israeli enemy, at the eastern borders to face terrorist organizations or inside the country to preserve security and prevent any breach. This stability is the cornerstone for building a unified nation, nay, it is the nation's sturdy fortress in the face of all kinds of internal challenges and tumult. It is also the main pillar on which the expectations for the new tenure are built.

Moreover, I confirm to you today from this very platform that we will continue in protecting this stability and facing terrorism with all its organizations, networks and lone wolves. We shall not allow terrorism to find a safe haven in any region in

the country, cost what may. Furthermore, I reassure the Lebanese that the army's preparedness in terms of weapons, equipment and morale is now better than any other previous time and that we are capable of confronting any occurring dangers and challenges with firm will and high competence.

In the end, I would like to extend my ultimate gratitude to His Excellency, the President of the Republic who has honored us with his generous patronage to this conference. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Center of Research and Strategic Studies for its extraordinary efforts. In addition, I would like to salute all participants in this conference and I wish everyone all the success in reaching fruitful results that bring all the wellbeing to Lebanon, the region and Humanity as a whole.

Long Live the Lebanese Army– Long Live Lebanon