

Mobilian of Lebanese descent says 3-nation peace force should stay in Lebanon till government stabilizes

Mobile, Saturday, Sept. 25, 1982

By SYLVIA HART
Press Register Reporter

A Lebanese-American said in Mobile this week he hopes a multinational peacekeeping force that has begun arriving in Lebanon will remain until Lebanon is stable enough to govern itself.

EDWARD J. Kahalley Sr., president of the Mobile Area Chapter of the American Lebanese League, based in Washington, D.C., made the comment in an address to participants in the Mobile Area Jewish-Christian Dialogue.

Kahalley, a Mobile businessman and Catholic layman who said his parents immigrated to the United States from their native Lebanon, presented his views in the dialogue session held at Ashland Place United Methodist Church.

The peacekeeping force to which the speaker referred includes 3,000 members of American, Italian and French military troops.

The following are events which the Associated Press news service has reported as bringing about the establishment of the peacekeeping force:

✓ **AN INCURSION** into Lebanon last June by Israel forced the evacuation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) guerrillas from their stronghold in Moslem west Beirut.

✓ **THE U.S.-negotiated** evacuation of about 8,000 PLO guerrillas to eight Arab nations from Lebanon last month was supervised by a force of American, Italian and French troops which left Lebanon after the evacuation.

✓ **BASHIR GEMAYEL**, an Israeli-supported Christian Phalange Party leader in Lebanon, was elected as his country's president Aug. 23 only to be assassinated Sept. 14. No group has publicly asserted responsibility for the murder.

✓ **ISRAELI TROOPS**, which ringed west Beirut, moved into west Beirut after Gemayel's murder. Israel seized west Beirut in what it called a peacekeeping move.

✓ **A MASSACRE** last week within two camps of predominantly Moslem Palestinian and Lebanese refugees in Beirut has been partly blamed on Israel by the United States and other nations of the world because Israel had assumed military control of west Beirut. Subsequently, the

United States, Italy and France have re-deployed their troops in Lebanon.

Kahalley, in his local address, made reference to some of the events that have preceded the deployment this week of the three-nation peacekeeping force in Lebanon.

HE SAID THAT members of the American Lebanese League "several weeks ago were filled with joy. The PLO had been removed from Lebanon. The Syrians were on their way out, and we had elected Bashir Gemayel as president of Lebanon, a man that our people had utmost confidence in and felt was the ideal man."

Gemayel could "bring the various religious elements together and have everybody living in a good democratic, peaceful community."

Kahalley made no reference to U.S. news reports which, in addition to describing Gemayel as a strong leader, called him "a ruthless streetfighter."

IN HIS TALK, however, Kahalley generally was critical of U.S. news reports of events in the Middle East.

"About the media coverage, some wise person said one time, 'I don't believe anything that I read and only half of what I see.'"

Kahalley further asserted that local news media, including The Press Register, have not given adequate coverage to views of the American Lebanese League.

In his comments about events that have taken place since June, Kahalley described Gemayel's assassination as "depressing to all of us" in the American Lebanese League, and he described the massacre of civilians within refugee camps in west Beirut as "a horrible thing."

KAHALLEY SAID leaders of the American Lebanese League in Washington have been in contact with the Lebanese embassy in the United States, and "we have every assurance that the tragedy that struck (the refugee camps) was not the responsibility of the Christian militia forces of Bashir Gemayel.... We're extremely pleased with that."

AP stories in recent days, however, have repeatedly reported that Israel has blamed Christian Phalangist militiamen loyal to Gemayel for the massacre.

Kahalley said that with the election and inauguration this week of Amin Gemayel, brother of Bashir Gemayel, as president of Lebanon, the members of the American

Lebanese League "look forward again with optimism to a resolution of the problem in Lebanon."

OUTLINING THE history of the American Lebanese League, Kahalley said the national organization was formed in 1976, and Mobile's chapter was formed in March this year.

The national organization was formed by Lebanese-Americans who were disturbed about a war in Lebanon in 1975-1976.

"The media characterized the situation as a civil strife" between Lebanese Christians and Moslems "while hordes of mercenaries ransacked Lebanese cities and waged a war of total destruction against the Moslems and Christians," said Kahalley, who did not identify the mercenaries.

AIMS KAHALLEY listed for the American Lebanese League included bringing "opinions of American Lebanese to the attention of public officials and the media through a nationwide program of information and education."

Quoting from a policy statement issued by the American Lebanese League last July, Kahalley said, "We fully support Ronald Reagan's objectives in Lebanon, namely the withdrawal of all foreign armed forces — Israelis, PLO, Syrians from Lebanon."

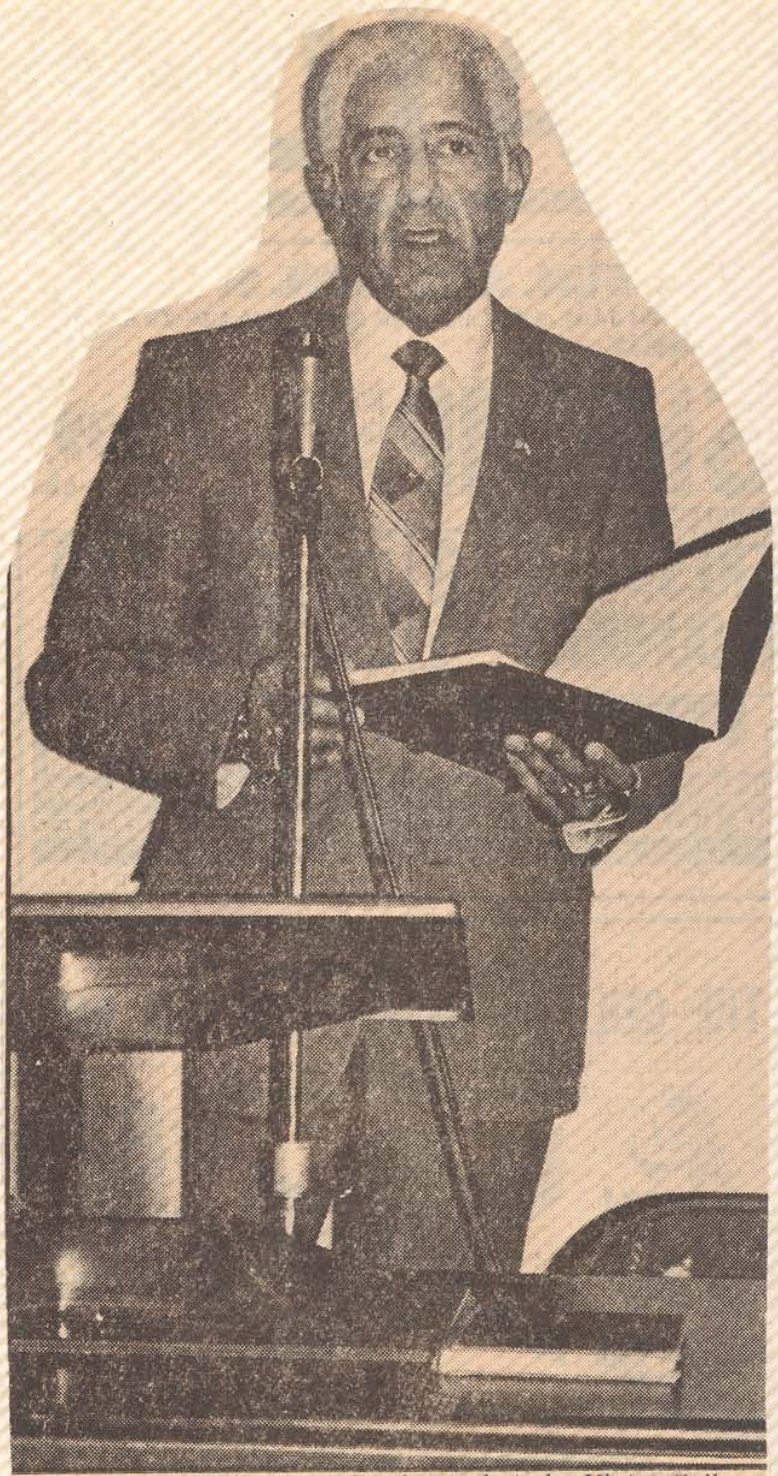
He added, "I always like to turn that around and say PLO, Syrians and eventually Israelis from Lebanon because I think it's important that the Israelis not leave Lebanon until the PLO and Syrians and others are removed from Lebanon."

Kahalley said, "For the last seven years Lebanon and the Lebanese people have been subject to one of the most brutal occupations of recent history involving the presence of armed Syrian and PLO forces."

ACCORDING TO AP, about 25,000 Syrian troops remain in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Under an Arab League mandate, Syrians entered Lebanon to monitor peace after the 1975-1976 war. Lebanese officials have charged the Syrians with fostering strife rather than peace, however.

AP reports have indicated that the PLO members who were evacuated from Lebanon had been based there since they had been expelled from Jordan in 1970. They had gone to Jordan and other Arab states after the United Nations partitioned Palestine into Jewish and Arab states in 1948.

ALSO SPEAKING at the Jewish-Christian dialogue were Mary and Paul Filben, who are among leaders of the local dialogue. The Filbens, who went to Israel and Lebanon last month, have previously presented their views in Press Register stories.



(Mobile Press Register photo by Victor Calhoun)

Edward J. Kahalley Sr.