

Message to Lebanese youth from President Michel Aoun

My message today is dedicated to you, youth of Lebanon, because you are the future Lebanon.

We have inherited from our ancestors a beautiful but exhausted country which needs much effort and work at various levels; and we are striving with all our strength to pass it on to you in a better shape, so you can move on in turn, and so that your children and grandchildren receive a more beautiful and finer legacy.

This is the law of nature and life: Every generation bends on the pillars laid down by the previous ones, relying on the expertise of prior generations, developing them and enriching them with its own, with new sciences and knowledge, adding a new course to it ... This is how humanity evolved; this is how knowledge, science and culture piled up; and this is how man reached inventions and innovations as he did.

Yes, you are eligible to acquire a greater knowledge than the one we have, as we have acquired a greater knowledge than the one our fathers had. Indeed, knowledge is in constant development and in a continuous race against Time. Nevertheless, the principles, values and ideals are unwavering, and they are in danger, so beware because they are the “salt” of society and by falling, they bring it down.

All humans are equal in birth and death, but they stand out and become different in leading their lives. Distinction begins in shape and color, in the eye print, fingerprint and voice print. Difference begins in the print of the thought, in the opinion, the feeling and the belonging.

This difference is more than just a right; it's the backbone of life and the lifeblood of evolution, because it represents the uniqueness of humans. Without it, humanity wouldn't have progressed and we wouldn't have known any creativity. Imagine for a moment if all human beings, since the prehistoric man, were intellectually cloned, bearing the same opinion and the same thinking, would humanity have gone out of the caves? Difference is a blessing not a curse; and the important thing is how to manage it and deal with it because adding the differences between us enriches us and pushes us forward in all fields, while if we drift towards disagreement, we will then be deducting our differences and closing up on ourselves, thus experiencing loss, poverty and decline. The good management of the right to be different means first and foremost acknowledging it, in other terms recognizing the right of the other to exist and to be different, in color, in belonging, in thought, in belief and in opinion ... This is the human Society to which we all belong.

The freedom of religious and political belief is sacred. Always remember that a man's relation with His creator is a direct, vertical one, and no one has the right to meddle in it. Also remember that a human's mind is free and soars however it wishes, shouldering alone its responsibility in right and wrong.

After accepting the right to difference, there comes the Freedom of expression which is also sacred but it takes truth as its ceiling and ethics as its boundaries. Every human being has the right to express himself, to express his opinion and his beliefs, and to try to convince the others by argument and logic. Yet, launching rumors and lies and using the literature of insult and vile language do not fall under any freedom because they represent an aggression against the other's rights, against his dignity, his reputation and his credibility.

These are the pillars of the cohesive society and the fence that protects the nation. Remember them well: the right to difference, the freedom of belief and opinion and the freedom of expression. Experience has taught us that these are untouchable constants, and when at some point we tended to undermine them, we almost lost the nation. My hope is that YOU will be able to consolidate them further, so you can succeed where we failed.

