

Nation-building is a challenge that requires bold judicial appointments

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Today, Lebanon has fallen prey to a financial, economic, and social crisis following a decline in the authority of both the law and the judiciary, as politicians, undeterred, have long indulged in blatant abuse of power which has become the indisputable norm.

The crisis has reached such magnitude that the country can no longer afford the luxury of time in devising solutions. We are rather in dire need for swift and radical widespread reforms, particularly within the judiciary, so it may emerge safe and attempt to anchor the rule of law and ensure a decent living for its citizens.

Along with the rest of the Lebanese men and women, we are following with great interest the developments in judicial appointments. If conducted successfully and in a comprehensive manner, these appointments might be the first step towards building an atmosphere that will ensure competency, independence, transparency, and accountability.

Independent and transparent appointments will restore faith in a robust judiciary, capable of standing by the Lebanese men and women, in their battle to re-claim state institutions and regain their civil and social rights. They will also help promote the necessary reforms to bring the country back on its feet.

In this regard, we welcome the written comments on the draft judicial appointments submitted by the Minister of Justice to the Supreme Judicial Council. The remarks stress on the need to apply competency and integrity as criteria in making appointments within the public prosecution and investigation departments. They also focus on ending the sectarian distribution of certain posts which hinders the application of such objective criteria.

We believe that these comments provide the Supreme Judicial Council with a major guarantee allowing it to conduct fully independent appointments. This is, therefore, a true historic opportunity to promote the judiciary, anchor the principles of competence and independence and escape the grip of sectarian and regional leaders who have longed held the judiciary in captivity.

As we look forward to the final appointments by the Supreme Judicial Council, we hope that they will live up to the expectations and challenges ahead.

In this regard, we reiterate the need to expedite the adoption of the Law proposal on Judicial Independence and Transparency, submitted by the Legal Agenda, in order to provide the Judiciary with the necessary guarantees and uphold the principles of independence, competence, accountability, and transparency.

The law also previews amending the formation of the Supreme Judicial Council so as to guarantee its independence and representation of the different categories and levels of judges therein. This will surely strengthen the performance and independence of the judges, and enhance transparency and objectiveness in conducting the appointments. We urge the Supreme Judicial Council, the Ministry of Justice, the Government and the parliament to assume their responsibilities in this regard.

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