



Address by
His Excellency President of the Lebanese Republic General Michel Aoun
to the judges of Lebanon

On June 9, under Article 13 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the competent judicial authority initiated public proceedings against the defendant, the Governor of Banque du Liban, Riad Toufic Salameh, his accomplices and accessories, for serious financial crimes, including embezzlement, forgery, use of fraudulent documents, money laundering, illicit enrichment and tax evasion. The said crimes are compounded by the fact that the first of those suspected of committing them is a central bank governor. The proceedings have been initiated after the conclusion of the entire investigation findings that revealed the perpetrators and those responsible for these crimes, and the submission of an official written request for the referral of the defendants by the Appellate Attorney General of Beirut before the first investigating judge in Beirut. Ever since, the judges involved in the case have shied away from their responsibility to duly prosecute the defendants, which makes me, from my position and role as Head of the State, and under my constitutional oath, call on the judiciary to fully liberate itself from any inducement or intimidation, which constitute two offences punishable by law and unworthy of the judicial power.

I know that a compelled or captive judiciary somehow means that it is restricted by someone who might be harmed by its justice and who is inevitably influential in order to find a way to disrupt a constitutional authority such as the judiciary, and who is definitely lent a listening ear.

Thus, I call on the judiciary to confront anyone restraining its justice with regard to the central bank as well as to the deadly and destructive Beirut port blast, whose second anniversary we marked on the fourth of this month, as the souls of the victims, the wounded, their families, and the persons affected are still troubled, just like the oppressed detainees and their families.

Judges are messengers of justice, and it was once said, as is well known, that when the judiciary is fine, the country will be fine, even if it faces human and material devastation. It was also said that tyrants become emperors when we succumb and bow to them.

My call to the judges today: Rise up for your dignity and authority, and do not fear the oppression of those in power, for they realize their weakness in front of you when you carry out the mission of serving earthly justice pending fulfillment of heavenly justice.