



Chibli Mallat interviewed by Samer Marchi

"Our generation, though better, failed to change the current leadership"

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Samer Marchi, 18, a twelfth grader at the American Community School in Beirut, conducted this interview with Chibli Mallat, former candidate to the Lebanese Presidency.

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Samer Marchi- Some suggest that democracy doesn't work in the Middle East/Lebanon. That it cannot and perhaps should not be exported. How would you answer this?

Chibli Mallat- It cannot be exported, this is true, but it's the only working system for long-term stability and decency.

Samer Marchi- How would you describe the political system in Lebanon to someone who isn't familiar with the country or region?

Chibli Mallat- Sectarian constitutionalism or communitarian federalism. The citizen participates in political life exclusively through his/her sect or community.

Samer Marchi- If you must reduce democracy to three main ideas, or ‘hallmarks’, what would they be?

Chibli Mallat- Alternation at the top, free recurrent elections, independent judiciary.

Samer Marchi- If you could make one dramatic change to the ‘democratic’/political system in Lebanon, what would it be?

Chibli Mallat- Elect the President/Prime Minister directly by the people.

Samer Marchi- Speaking of the elections, on a democratic scale of one to twenty, where would you place the upcoming parliamentary elections in Lebanon?

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Samer Marchi- In Lebanon, is there one area of the government that has too much control and/or power over the other?

Samer Marchi- a. In the constitution?

Chibli Mallat- The executive.

Samer Marchi- b. In Practice?

Chibli Mallat- Foreign powers.

Samer Marchi- c. In actual power or ‘wasta’?

Chibli Mallat- The rich in government.

Samer Marchi- Where does your optimism lie? That is, where would you advise the next generation to place most of their efforts of that now colossal word “change”?

Chibli Mallat- Our generation has proven better than the current leadership, but was unable to change it. The new generation must learn this lesson and produce the leadership that resembles it. Change in leadership is key.

Samer Marchi- Finally, where were you on March 14, 2005? Why?

Chibli Mallat- On the street, with half the people of Lebanon. We made the Cedar Revolution, the best thing that ever happened to the country and the region, which showed that non-violence and justice could be more effective than violence.