



Statement by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, in Beirut (Lebanon).

Beirut, February 16, 2005

I have come to Beirut today to pay tribute to a man who was my friend, and who was also a great democrat, a statesman.

I have come to express my condolences to his wife, his children, his family, his friends and tell the whole Lebanese people how strongly, more than ever, I share their grief and stand together with them.

The heinous crime, seemingly from another era, of which Rafiq Hariri was the victim, has aroused horror and outrage throughout the international community, which today is demanding, rightly, that full light be shed on this heinous and unspeakable act.

Mr Rafiq Hariri encapsulated an ideal of democracy for Lebanon , an ideal of sovereignty, independence and freedom for this country to which he was passionately committed, and I can testify to that. It is a great loss for Lebanon and for today's world./.