

Syro-Iranian Massacre of Politicians in Lebanon

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Terrorism Dr. Walid Phares
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With the assassination of Lebanese MP Jebran Tueni in December 2006, months after the murder of political leaders George Hawi and Samir Qassir during the summer, the Syro-Iranian terror war room had opened a bloody hunt against the democratically elected Lebanese Parliament.

After the withdrawal of regular Syrian forces from Lebanon in April 2005, Bashar Assad and his allies in Tehran designed a counter offensive (which we described then and later) aiming at crumbling the Cedars Revolution. One of the main components of this strategy was (and remain) to use all intelligence and security assets of Syria and Iran in Lebanon in order to "reduce" the number of deputies who form the anti-Syrian majority in the Parliament. As simple as that: assassinate as many members as needed to flip the quantitative majority in the Legislative Assembly. And when that is done, the Seniors Government collapses and a Hezbollah-led cabinet forms. In addition, if the Terror war kills about 8 legislators, the remnant of the Parliament can elect a new President of the Republic who will move the country under the tutelage of the Assad regime.

As incredibly barbaric as it seems in the West, the genocide of the legislators in Lebanon at the hands of the Syrian regime and its allies is very "normal" by Baathist (and certainly by Jihadist) political culture. During the 1980s, Saddam Hussein executed a large segment of his own Party's national assembly to maintain his regime intact. In the same decade, Hafez Assad eliminated systematically his political adversaries both inside Syria and across Syrian occupied Lebanon to secure his control over the two "sister" countries. So for Bashar to order the assassination of his opponents in Lebanon as of the fall of 2004 to perpetuate his domination of the little Baathist "empire" is not a stunning development: it is the standing procedure in Damascus since 1970.

And to "achieve" these goals, the junta in Syria has a plethora of tools and assets left in Lebanon. First, the vast Syrian intelligence networks still deeply rooted in the small country; second, the powerful Iranian-financed Hezbollah with its lethal security apparatus; third, the Syrian-controlled groups within the Palestinian camps from various ideological backgrounds including Baathists, Marxists, or even Islamist such as Fatah al Islam; fourth the pro-Syrian and Hezbollah sympathizers "inside" the Lebanese Army as well as the units and security services still under the control of General Emile Lahoud; fifth, the client militias and organizations remote-controlled by Syrian intelligence such as the Syrian National-Social Party; and sixth, operatives inserted within political groups gravitating around Damascus such as those of Sleiman Frangieh, Michel Aoun and Talal Arslan. In short, the Syro-Iranian axis has a wide array of security and intelligence assets from which it can select the most appropriate perpetrators for each "take down." The Assad regime has its "own" Sunni operatives to kill Sunnis, Christians to murder Christians and Druze to eliminate Druze and has the full resources of Hezbollah terror to obstruct the Government of Lebanon and ultimately crumble it.

The "reduction" –both physical and political- of the Lebanese Parliamentary majority began as soon as the assembly was elected in the spring of 2005. The Lebanese opposition to Assad and Hezbollah got originally 72 seats out of the 128 members, a comfortable majority to resume the "liberation" of the country from occupation and Terrorism. In December of 2006 a car bomb kills MP Jebran Tueni bringing the majority to 71. Though he is quickly replaced by his father Ghassan, the latter's old age and unwillingness to pursue the same anti-Terrorist activism is a negative in the big battle. In January 2006 a majority-MP Edmond Naim, dies of old age. The anti-Cedars revolution pressure brings in Pierre Daccache, "neutral" in principle, but essentially close to now Hezbollah ally Michel Aoun. Since, the majority has 71 seats. In December of 2006, majority-MP Pierre Gemayel is assassinated by Syrian operatives. The number of dedicated MPs falls to 70. Few weeks ago, Syrian threats compel the Alawi MP from the north to quit the majority, bringing the number to 69. Today's assassination of Sunni Walid Eido, a fierce opponent to the Syrian regime brings the number of MPs to 68. Four more assassinations and the Parliamentary majority in Lebanon would collapse, bringing back Ahmedinijad and Assad's Terror power to the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean.

What can be done to stop the legislators's massacre in Lebanon and its dramatic consequences?

The UN Security Council, under resolutions 1559 and 1701 should intervene massively by ordering and overseeing the following steps:

- a) Put all remaining 68 MPs under direct international protection. A special international security force should be dispatched to Lebanon, gather the endangered legislators in one or several protected locations and escort them later to perform their constitutional duties.
- b) Ask the Lebanese Government of Mr Seniora to organize the appropriate legislative elections in the districts of Matn and Beirut to replace the assassinated MPs Gemayel and Eido. Dispatch UN observers to oversee these elections.
- c) Ask the Lebanese Parliament to elect a new President during the constitutional period beginning in August and escort the 68 endangered MPs (plus the two newly elected ones) to the location of the Presidential elections and provide security during the voting process.

By doing so, the UNSC would be implementing its own resolutions, fulfilling the democratic process in Lebanon and fighting back against Terrorism with the power of the people of Lebanon. For when a new democratically elected President is elected in Lebanon, the road –still very difficult and dangerous- to democracy will be paved.

Dr Walid Phares is the Director of Future Terrorism Project at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington, a visiting scholar at the European Foundation for Democracy and the author of the War of Ideas. Dr Phares was one of the architects of UNSCR 1559. He is also a Professor of Middle East Studies at Florida Atlantic University and a contributing expert to FOX News. The international version of Professor Walid Phares’ Future Jihad is now released. The new title is “Future Jihad: Terrorist Strategies against the West” Published by Palgrave/St Martin; New York and London (December 2006).