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Salafist groups 'freeze' agreement with Hezbollah
Sheikh Hassan Chahhal conveys Salafist founder's consent to talks with Hezbollah
August 21, 2008

After the decision to freeze the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Salafist groups and Hezbollah, Sheikh Hassan al-Chahhal reiterated his belief that the aim of the MOU was to prevent Sunni-Shia strife.

In an interview with Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat daily on Thursday, Chahhal, who signed the MOU with a Hezbollah leader earlier this week, attributed the decision to freeze the document to the surprisingly strong objection his Salafist predecessors had against the MOU.

The sheikh stressed that his meeting with Salafist groups were "calm" and that the founder of Salafism in Lebanon, Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Chahhal, did not object to any items in the MOU despite his categorical rejection of the agreement the day it was issued.

The Salafist founder also conceded to dialogue with Hezbollah representatives in northern Lebanon, Chahhal added.

-NOW Staff
<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55644>

Hizbullah 'botched' bid to win over Sunnis
August 21, 2008

The brief life of a memorandum of understanding between Hizbullah and some Salafist groups from North Lebanon showed parliamentary majority leader MP Saad Hariri and his Future Movement foiling a badly executed effort by Hizbullah to encroach on Hariri's electoral base around Tripoli, a number of analysts told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

"It's a botched way to try to gain some influential political ground in the North," Oussama Safa, executive director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. "It didn't go very well."

The eight-point memorandum, signed on Monday between the Hizbullah party and several Salafist groups, ostensibly endeavored to halt Shiite-Sunni violence that has besieged Tripoli since the May 21 Doha agreement that on paper ended two weeks of sectarian clashes. To the extent that the powerful Shiite party and various Salafist groups committed themselves in writing to renouncing violence, the memorandum did signify a positive step, said Ahmad Moussalli, who teaches international relations and Islamic studies at the American University of Beirut.

"It was a very good beginning for some sort of defusing the sectarian problems," he said.

However, tensions remain high, with much of the Sunni population still smarting from Hizbullah's lightning takeover of large swathes of western Beirut, and a move on the order of a memorandum does little to assuage Sunni unease, Safa said. The Salafists announced on Tuesday that they would "temporarily freeze" the memorandum.

"It's one of the attempts to do too little, too late. None of that is really working," he said, adding that reconciliation would require a bigger move, on the level of the coming national dialogue or an embrace between Hariri and Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

With the national dialogue looming, choosing instead to sign a deal with Salafists from North Lebanon reflects Hizbullah's designs to chip away at Hariri's core constituency around Tripoli ahead of general elections slated for next May, Safa said.

"A deal like this will help [calm sectarian strife], but this is not the primary motivation," he said, adding that Hizbullah's main goal was to "gather and bring into the fold some of those Sunnis who are already against the Future Movement.

"Election fever has started quite some time ago."

Hizbullah's ploy makes sense from an electoral perspective, because the regional alliance of Hariri and his March 14

cohorts with the US, France and other Western countries pits him against many Sunni Islamist movements, Moussalli said.

In Tripoli, long home to conservative strains of Islam, support for Hariri "is strong, but I think it's weakening," Moussalli said. Salafist groups "started to have some distance from him."

The venture into the North also signals that Hizbullah, atop Lebanon's political heap after the events of May, wants to pry away enough Sunni and Christian voters for itself and its March 8 allies to secure a majority in the legislature, said retired General Elias Hanna, who teaches political science at Notre Dame University.

"They want to divide and rule," Hanna said. "Hizbullah is not thinking about the South, about Baabda and Aley. It's thinking about all Lebanon. It's trying to work in Tripoli, as well as in Kesrouan."

With the memorandum, however, Hizbullah erred by not offering a substantial compromise, Hanna added. "You cannot sell it after what Hizbullah has done in Beirut," he said. "As a Sunni, what did you get? [Hizbullah] is trying to institutionalize its victory, but it will not give up anything it has gained."

Hizbullah also hooked up with some of the weakest of the North's myriad Salafist groups, Hanna said. "How many people do they represent?" he asked. "They are nothing."

The memorandum crumbled when Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal, considered by some the founder of the Salafist movement in Lebanon and the cousin of the sheikh who signed the memorandum, came out against the agreement. The abrupt Salafist turnaround also exposed the utter absence of unity among the various Salafist entities, some of whom still stand firmly with Hariri, Hanna added.

"There are some rifts and divisions within the Salafist group," he said. "Don't lump all of the Salafists together. If you listen to what Shahhal is saying, he believes in the Constitution, in the institutions, etc."

"Maybe [Hizbullah] miscalculated," Hanna added. "When you go to Akkar and Tripoli, the [people] are 90 percent with the Future Movement. [Hizbullah] cannot bypass the Future Movement. It wasn't good."

Hariri parried Hizbullah's advance by using his allies to exploit the Salafists' disunity, which stems from their conflicting political allegiances to foreign Salafist umbrella groups, Safa said. "The Future Movement has countered by playing with the Salafist movement and their contradictions," he said. "They're definitely not united. It's not the Salafi agenda that unites them."

The memorandum "was too hastily cooked," Safa added. "It did look like a big surprise."

Some of those external Salafi currents may have accelerated the memorandum's demise, Moussalli said. Strict Salafists regard the Shiites of Hizbullah as apostates from Islam, so foreign patrons of Salafist groups here might well have put their Lebanese brethren under pressure to annul the memorandum, he added.

"The Salafists do not view the Shiites as Muslims," he said. To sign such an agreement "has ideological and religious connotations that go beyond the Lebanese context."

Within the Lebanese context, the abortive memorandum might have some consequences on the elections it sought to sway, the analysts said. For example, Hariri might have to repay the Salafists for sabotaging the memorandum by letting them run on his party's list of candidates in the parliamentary poll, Safa said.

"Future might have a Salafi or two on their ticket," he said.

The frozen memorandum might also drive undecided Christian voters away from Hizbullah ally and Reform and Change bloc head MP Michel Aoun. Aoun also has a memorandum of understanding with Hizbullah, and Christian voters might be put off by the dalliance of Aoun's main partner with groups that many Christians consider extremist, Hanna said.

Memorandum fallout will "for sure" damage Aoun, Hanna said. "By an indirect calculation, he is a friend of the Salafists."

If the association between Hizbullah and the Salafists persists, Aoun's deal with Hizbullah might turn into an electoral albatross for him, Safa said.

"His memorandum of understanding remains the thing he is most proud to show off," Safa said. "It's an unequal memorandum of understanding. It looks like a Lebanese-Syrian kind of accord."

For now, the election ploy represented by the memorandum appears to have backfired, Safa said. "It's a shrewd move to pull the rug from under the Future Movement, but this time the Future Movement was there waiting for them."

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Hizbullah 'understands' Salafists' froze pact under pressure

By Hussein Abdallah

Daily Star staff

Thursday, August 21, 2008

BEIRUT: Hizbullah said on Wednesday that the Salafist groups which signed a memorandum of understanding with the resistance earlier this week opted to freeze the agreement "under pressure."

"Hizbullah appreciates Sheikh Hassan al-Shahhal's courage and is aware of the special circumstances that forced him to decide to freeze the memorandum of understanding," a Hizbullah statement said.

Shahhal, the head of the Belief and Justice Salafist group, signed earlier this week on behalf of a number of Salafist groups a memorandum of understanding with Hizbullah.

"We respect this decision and assure the Salafist groups which signed the memorandum of understanding that Hizbullah will support whatever decision they find appropriate," the statement added.

The eight-item memorandum between Hizbullah and representatives of Sunni Salafist groups banned internal strife between Muslims as well as all forms of sectarian incitement.

However, Shahhal, in a joint news conference with his cousin Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal (the alleged founder of Salafist movements in Lebanon), decided on Tuesday to "temporarily freeze" the memorandum of understanding, which created rifts among Lebanon's Salafists.

Meanwhile, Hassan al-Shahhal said Wednesday that there were two reasons behind his decision to freeze the agreement with Hizbullah.

"When we visited former Minister Samir al-Jisr [Future MP] one day ahead of signing the memorandum, we understood that our brothers in the Future Movement were not against such step ... had we realized they were against it, we would not have done it," he said.

"The second reason is related to the fact that most of the Sunni community turned out to be dissatisfied with our move, unlike the case with our fellow Shiites," he added.

Before signing the memorandum Monday, a Salafist delegation, headed by Shahhal, visited MP Jisr to brief him on the content of the memorandum.

Jisr told reporters after meeting the delegation that the Future Movement was aware of the meeting taking place between Hizbullah and the Salafists and encouraged "understandings which help in avoiding sectarian violence."

After the signing ceremony on Monday, Jisr issued a statement, denying that Future Movement leader MP Saad Hariri had prior knowledge of the memorandum.

Jisr added that his party preferred comprehensive understandings between all parties over bilateral ones.

During the signing ceremony, Shahhal said that the Salafist groups which signed the memorandum enjoyed Hariri's backing.

Meanwhile, Jamaa Islamiya secretary general Sheikh Faisal al-Mawlawi said on Tuesday that Hizbullah was at odds with most of the Lebanese, especially the Sunnis.

Commenting on the memorandum, Mawlawi said that Hizbullah "should speak to the real representatives of the Sunni community.

"Confronting sedition can only be achieved through entering homes from their gates," he said.

"Hizbullah should go into serious and objective dialogue with representative factions so that mistakes committed by both sides would not be repeated again," he added.

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=95243

Salafist groups 'freeze' agreement with Hizbullah

By The Daily Star

Wednesday, August 20, 2008

BEIRUT: Salafist groups announced on Tuesday their decision to "temporarily freeze" a memorandum of understanding they signed with Shiite group Hizbullah one day earlier.

"The agreement will be temporarily frozen pending appropriate circumstances that allow for its implementation," Sheikh Hassan al-Shahhal, who signed the memorandum with Hizbullah's Sheikh Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyed told a news conference in Tripoli Tuesday evening.

He added that the Sunni community "needed more than ever to stand united and shun divisions."

Shahhal said the memo "needs to be carefully studied."

Shahhal held a joint conference with his cousin, alleged founder of the Salafist movements in Lebanon Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal, who said on Monday that the memorandum was "insignificant."

The eight-item memorandum between Hizbullah and representatives of Sunni Salafist groups banned internal strife between Muslims as well as all forms of sectarian incitement.

"The memorandum is in favor of Hizbullah and the Shiite community," Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal said during the news conference.

Hizbullah did not immediately comment on the freezing of the memorandum of understanding.

However, on Tuesday, Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah defended the memorandum, saying he was "surprised at hostility created following rapprochement between any two Lebanese groups."

Speaking at a Hizbullah religious gathering, Nasrallah said all controversial issues should be tackled within constitutional institutions.

"All efforts should concentrate on facilitating the launch of dialogue mechanism to tackle all pending issues," Nasrallah added.

He said safeguarding Lebanon against threats targeting it could only be achieved through a "calm atmosphere." - The Daily Star

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=95209

Sunni groups freeze deal with Hezbollah

By Duraid Al Baik, Associate Editor

Published: August 20, 2008, 23:44

Dubai: The two Muslim leaders who announced the freezing of the reconciliation agreement with Hezbollah on Tuesday told Gulf News on Wednesday that the Salafi movement in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, is working together in preparation for a better Sunni-Shiite settlement in Lebanon.

Dr Hassan Al Shahhal, Chief of Faith, Justice and Philanthropy Society in Tripoli told Gulf News that he has frozen the eight-point agreement with Hezbollah, which he signed on behalf of his group and other 18 Salafi groups bowing to pressure from other Salafi factions in the city.

Al Shahhal signed the agreement with representatives from Hezbollah at Al Safir Heliopolitan Hotel in Beirut on Monday, but decided to freeze the deal a day later.

Appearing in a press conference alongside his brother-in-law and cousin Da'ie Al Islam Al Shahhal, Chief of Guidance and Philanthropy Society, Dr Hassan said that the agreement which was meant to ease tension between Shiite and Sunnis was misunderstood by some Sunni factions in the city and he would need more time to explain it.

Bitter taste

Many Sunnis still have a bitter taste in their mouths after Hezbollah fighters stormed Beirut in May and occupied the downtown area.

Dr Hassan's move was criticised by Da'ie Al Islam Al Shahhal, who represents a major Salafi faction in the city. Da'ie Al Islam told Gulf News that he was not against the agreement in principle but would like to see more preparation with

Hezbollah.

"I am against using religion in political differences, but what happened in Beirut was not acceptable and hurt every Sunni citizen in Lebanon. We need the agreement to unite Lebanese; not to aggravate their differences," he said.

He expects more contacts and transparent talks with Hezbollah before signing such an agreement.

Gulf News also learned that Hezbollah sent a message to the signatory of the agreement in which it thanked them for their brave move and accepted their reasons to freeze the agreement.

<http://www.gulfnews.com/region/Lebanon/10238769.html>

Sheikhs Hassan al-Chahhal and Dai al-Islam al-Chahhal
August 20, 2008

On August 19, the Lebanese News Agency reported on the press conference held by Sheikh and charitable foundation leader Dr. Hassan al-Chahhal and founder of the Salafist movements in Lebanon Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Chahhal announcing their decision to temporarily freeze the memorandum of understanding signed with Hezbollah one day earlier.

Dr. Hassan al-Chahhal, who signed the memorandum, said:

After discussions and consultations held with senior brothers in the Salafist Movement, we agreed on the following:

First, all media campaigns and disagreements between those who signed the memorandum and those who oppose [them] should cease instantly in order to unite the ranks and maintain the cohesion of the Sunni sect in general.

Second, the memorandum is frozen until it is carefully studied by knowledgeable Salafist leaders.

Third, if we decide to engage in a dialogue and negotiations with the Hezbollah organization, the circle of consultation should be expanded to encompass the concerned Islamic sides, namely the official [religious] institution.

Fourth, the items pertaining to political and security issues which might be addressed in the future during consultations will be discussed by those in charge from among the Sunni political leaders…

Our concern with this understanding is to restore clarity to our Sunni Islamic arena, and when we signed it with them [Hezbollah], we wanted to calm the Lebanese arena. But when it was negatively reflected on our arena, we went back to our arena in order to unite its ranks and shun divisions. Our arena is a priority; they should excuse us and understand this issue, and we will inform them officially about that…

[An official religious institution] will be a dialogue that we think will be under the patronage of Dar al-Fatwa. In any case, we should not rule out the official institution from this dialogue, especially if it was nation-wide. If a dialogue is to be held between Dar al-Fatwa and Dar al-Iftaa al-Jaafari [an official Shia institution], it is okay, and they might hold dialogue without us…

Freezing the memorandum does not mean canceling it. However, it means that we are agreeing over one position as a Sunni rank, especially as a Salafist rank, before we hold dialogue with other sects…

I was the one who signed the memorandum on behalf of everyone, and I freeze it on behalf of everyone.

Dai al-Islam al-Chahhal said:

We said we are with dialogue, and this is our religion and ethics and course and real path. Thus, we are ready to open the door of dialogue with any side…

We are with dialogue, but we objected the lack of introductions and necessary arrangements and conditions and disciplines, which we need under these circumstances to engage in a dialogue with Hezbollah that possesses enough power to allow it to apply pressures on the state itself.

Hence, we are with the principle of dialogue, and we are ready for dialogue if circumstances and appropriate customs were present… When I was called by Hezbollah to negotiate with them, I said there was no problem in principle, but there should be arrangements and consultations first, and we should prepare a draft before we engage in a dialogue with you. I also said that we can engage in a dialogue with you at the first opportunity, God willing, but without setting a date…

Two days ago, Hezbollah's representative in the North, Hajj Mohammad Saleh called me, and we talked for 15 minutes and agreed over what I have just mentioned…

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55517&MID=91&PID=3>

Lebanon Sunnis freeze Hizbullah deal

Aug. 20, 2008

brenda gazzar , THE JERUSALEM POST

Several Sunni factions in Lebanon announced Tuesday night that they are freezing a truce they had signed with Hizbullah a day earlier. The agreement, intended to defuse sectarian tension, prohibited any Muslim group from attacking fellow Muslims.

"The agreement will be temporarily frozen pending appropriate circumstances that allow for its implementation," Sheikh Hassan al-Shahhal, who signed the memorandum with a Hizbullah official, told reporters Tuesday, according to The Lebanese Daily Star. The Sunni community, he said, needed to stand "more than ever" united and to shun divisions, while the memorandum needed further study.

Hizbullah officials said Wednesday that they respect the groups' choice of freezing the memorandum of understanding for more discussions and revisions.

"They will find Hizbullah is always by their side in any decision they find appropriate," the press release said, according to the NOW Lebanon news site.

Hizbullah signed the agreement on Monday with some Salafist groups, followers of a radical form of Sunni Islam. Many Salafists consider Shi'ites to be heretics.

This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1219218602199&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

Hizbullah Tries to Absorb Salafi Hit Back

Hizbullah on Wednesday tried to absorb a hit back by the Salafi movement, saying the abrogated understanding between the two sides was aimed at achieving inter-Muslim unity.

A Hizbullah statement said "context of the short-lived understanding was not doubted by any honest Muslim."

Hizbullah, the statement said, "highly values the courage of Sheikh Hassan Shahhal," the Salafi cleric who had signed the understanding on Monday and aborted it the next day.

"Hizbullah understands the circumstances and huge pressures exerted on the brethren who had signed the understanding," the statement concluded.

Beirut, 20 Aug 08, 17:23

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&13A93312203E0B5FC22574AB004E77AF>

- Salafists freeze understanding with Hezbollah

On August 19, the Lebanese News Agency reported on the press conference held by Dr. Hassan al-Shahhal and founder of the Salafist movements in Lebanon Sheikh Dai al-Islam [Preacher] al-Shahhal, announcing their decision to temporarily freeze a memorandum of understanding signed with Hezbollah one day earlier. Dr. Hassan al-Shahhal, who signed the memorandum said: "After discussions and consultations held with senior brothers in the Salafist Movement, we agreed on the following:

"First, all media campaigns and disagreements between those who signed the memorandum and those who oppose [them] should cease instantly in order to unite the ranks and maintain the cohesion of the Sunni sect in general.

"Second, the memorandum is frozen until it is carefully studied by knowledgeable Salafist leaders.

"Third, if we decide to engage in a dialogue and negotiations with the Hezbollah organization, the circle of consultation should be expanded to encompass the concerned Islamic sides, namely the official [religious] institution.

"Fourth, the items pertaining to political and security issues which might be addressed in future during consultations will be discussed by those in charge from among the Sunni political leaders."

“In response to a question about the repercussions of freezing this memorandum, Dr Shahhal said: Our concern with this understanding to restore clarity to our Sunni Islamic arena, and when we signed it with them [Hezbollah], we wanted to calm the Lebanese arena. But when it was negatively reflected on our arena, we went back to our arena in order to unite its ranks and shun divisions. Our arena is a priority; they should excuse us and understand this issue, and we will inform them officially about that.”

“Asked what he meant by ‘official religious institution’, he said: ‘It will be a dialogue that we think will be under the patronage of Dar al-Fatwa. In any case, we should not rule out the official institution from this dialogue, especially if it was nation-wide. If a dialogue is to be held between Dar al-Fatwa and Dar al-Iftaa al-Jaafari [official Shi’i institution], it is okay, and they might hold dialogue without us.’

“On whether the memorandum is regarded as cancelled, he said: ‘Freezing the memorandum does not mean canceling it. However, it means that we are agreeing over one position as a Sunni rank, especially as a Salafist rank, before we hold dialogue with other sects.’

“Al-Shahhal added: ‘I was the one who signed the memorandum on behalf of everyone, and I freeze it on behalf of everyone.’

“Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal:

“After that, Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal talked and said in response to a question about his preparedness to sign the memorandum if it goes in line with the principles he pitches: ‘We said we are with dialogue, and this is our religion and ethics and course and real path. Thus, we are ready to open the door of dialogue with any side.’

“Asked whether there are certain conditions and if the memorandum will be signed again, he said: ‘We are with dialogue, but we objected the lack of introductions and necessary arrangements and conditions and disciplines, which we need under these circumstances to engage in a dialogue with Hezbollah that possesses enough power to allow it to apply pressures on the state itself.’

“Hence, we are with the principle of dialogue and we are ready for dialogue if circumstances and appropriate customs were present... When I was called by Hezbollah to negotiate with them, I said there was no problem in principle but there should be arrangements and consultations first and we should prepare a draft before we engage in a dialogue with you. I also said that we can engage in a dialogue with you at the first opportunity, God willing, but without setting a date.’

“Asked whether there are channels of communication with Hezbollah over the memorandum, he said: ‘Two days ago, Hezbollah’s representative in the north, Hajj Moahmmad Saleh called me, and we talked for 15 minutes and agreed over what I have just mentioned...’ - Lebanese News Agency, LebanonClick here for source - ‘Temporary freezing of Hezbollah-Salafist understanding’

On August 20, the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar news website carried the following exclusive report by Hussein Nureddin: ‘Dr. Hassan al-Shahhal and Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal held a joint press conference in which Dr. Hassan al-Shahhal stated that following consultations and discussions between the senior brothers in the Salafist movement, they agreed to the immediate cessation of the campaigns and media debates between those who signed the document and those opposing them to reunify the ranks and the Sunni sect in general. He also announced the freezing of the document until it is discussed by the scholars and the knowledgeable among the followers of the Salafist calling.’

“He added that if they were to decide to engage in a dialogue or negotiations with Hezbollah, the circle of consultations with the concerned Islamic sides, at the head of which is the official institution, will be expanded. The understanding memorandum between Hezbollah and Salafist forces in Lebanon had prompted an attack led by the Future Movement media, which stated that these forces did not represent much on the Sunni scene, knowing that MP Samir al-Jisr had welcomed the understanding before it was signed and later on stated that the document might help give the impression there were divisions on the northern arena...

“Even though those who attended the signing of the understanding among the Salafists recognized they were politically affiliated to the Future Movement, the latter movement attacked them and considered they did not represent anything worth mentioning on the Sunni street, while accusing some of them of being affiliated to what it referred to as being the Syrian tutelage regime... Whoever looks into the articles of the understanding, would be surprised by the attack to which it was subjected, for it was carefully drafted, did not attack any domestic or foreign side and banned the shedding of Muslim blood, the instigation of the street and Takfiri ideology..., unless the talk about the confrontation of the American-Israeli project angered some in Lebanon.

“For his part, Dr. Ahmad Mussalli, an expert on Islamic movements affairs, he stated: ‘Today, the Salafist movement is accepting others, if we can call them others since they are Muslims... This development, even though it is a

first step, it a step in the right direction to build strong relations between Sunni forces and Shi'ite forces because the majority of the Sunnis are not against the resistance. Al-Hariri's movement is a secular one but also sectarian, which is worse than being a Salafist movement. At least the Salafist movement enjoys a minimum level of religious beliefs and morals.

[He added]: "As for the Future movement, it is a secular movement linked to foreign countries and a regional project targeting the interests of the region, Arab nationalism and political Islam. Today, it is rejecting the understanding because it legitimizes the Islamic identity of the Shi'ites for the Sunnis. The problem is that a Salafist side exited the context of the Future Movement". According to information, massive pressures were exerted by security bodies on the Salafist forces which signed the agreement and contacts were made by regional sides to create a front to confront this understanding. - Al-Manar, Lebanon [Click here for source](#)

Daher says MOU has no value before Hezbollah apologizes to Beirut
August 20, 2008

Former MP Khaled Daher on Wednesday said that the memorandum of understanding signed between Hezbollah and some Salafist groups on Monday, which the Salafists later froze, had no value before Hezbollah apologizes to Beirut for the May violence and withdraws its weapons.

Daher told As-Safir newspaper that all Salafist groups supported the state's role, civil peace and coexistence, and rejected violence.

"Hezbollah used its weapons and occupied Beirut, and what is happening in Tripoli is an example of its continuous threat," he told the paper.

He added that the August 13 explosion in Tripoli, which targeted the army, was a reaction targeting all citizens after the mufti of North Lebanon and Tripoli called on the army to be firm and stop the ongoing fighting in the area.

He concluded that the desperate attempts to link the explosion to the Fatah al-Islam terrorist group will not cover the truth, because, he said, this group was formed by well-known intelligence agencies.

-NOW Staff
<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55538>

Mourabitoun warns that some parties have bad intentions toward Tripoli
August 19, 2008

The independent Nasserite movement of the Mourabitoun released a statement on Tuesday saying that Hezbollah's aim to enter Tripoli through a non-popular ideologist party was a tactic to bring around a dialogue and was propaganda to improve its image in the Arab and Islamic World after the events of May.

The statement added that Monday's memorandum of understanding between Hezbollah and an "illegitimate" Salafist group was just a cover for Hezbollah's objectives in Tripoli.

"One of the MOU's items was common defense, which will lead to more security problems. Were Hassan Al-Chahhal and Safwan Al-Zoghbi a Trojan horse for Hezbollah?" the statement read, referring to Salafist leaders who accepted the memorandum.

The Mourabitoun warned the citizens of North Lebanon that some parties have bad intentions toward Tripoli and called on them to unite to protect the city against any interference, even if it's the media.

-NOW Staff
<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55282>

Allouch says Future Movement will not obstruct Hezbollah-Salafist memorandum
August 19, 2008

In an interview with New TV, Future Movement MP Mustafa Allouch said on Tuesday that the real problem with Hezbollah was political, not ideological.

He added that the Future Movement will not participate in the memorandum of understanding signed between Hezbollah and some Salafist groups on Monday, but it will not obstruct it either.

He also said that Hezbollah's aim was to create propaganda because it knows that the memorandum is weak.

-NOW Staff

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55301>

 Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood says Hezbollah does not need to improve its image
 August 19, 2008

The general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Mohammed Mahdi Akif, denied on Tuesday that his group had interfered in the Hezbollah-Salafist Memorandum of Understanding signed on Monday.

He told Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper that the Muslim Brotherhood supported and blessed the memorandum, adding that Hezbollah did not need to improve its image outside Lebanon, as some have claimed.

-NOW Staff

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55286>

 Hizbullah's accord with Salafist groups is unlikely to have a long-term impact
 By The Daily Star
 Tuesday, August 19, 2008

Editorial

The agreement signed on Monday between Hizbullah and Salafist factions in Lebanon is a welcome attempt to defuse sectarian tensions in the country, especially since far too few efforts of the kind have been undertaken. But because the accord only aims at addressing the symptoms, and not the actual illness of a weak state, it is doubtful that it will have a long-term impact on Lebanon's stability.

The problem of communal strife is not unique to Lebanon, and there are reasons that sectarian tensions have repeatedly boiled over into violence here, just as they have in places like Iraq and tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In each of these situations, the state and its institutions are either completely absent, badly lacking in legitimacy or severely undermined by institutionalized forms of discrimination such as arbitrary confessional power-sharing formulas. In the absence of a strong state that regards all of its citizens as equals, societies are prone to division along ethnic, religious, racial or other lines. This is what happened in the United States during the civil unrest of the 1960s and this is what has been happening in Lebanon for the last few decades - and will continue to occur until a strong state is created.

The Sunni-Shiite rift in Lebanon is only the most recent symptom of a weak state that has in the past been just as incapable of preventing the pitting of other sects against one another. Inking accords among the country's various religious communities is a great way of demonstrating an accommodating stance, but it is about as effective in the long term as applying a band aid to a mortal wound.

A better approach would be one that aims to strengthen the role of the state and its constitutional institutions, rather than continue to bypass those entirely. The parliamentary majority has repeatedly criticized the fact that the Lebanese state lacks authority in various parts of the country. And Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has added his voice to the chorus of calls for a strong and capable state. All that remains is for the country's two political camps to join forces and do something before the symptom of Lebanon's illness rears its head again in another bout of deadly violence.

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=17&article_id=95164

 Salafis Abandon Understanding With Hizbullah

The Salafi groups in Lebanon on Tuesday announced indefinite freezing of an understanding with Hizbullah, 24 hours after it was announced at a press conference in Beirut.

Sheikh Hassan Shahhal, who signed the understanding on Monday with Hizbullah's Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyed, declared freezing the agreement pending "appropriate circumstances that allow its implementation."

Sheikh Hassan made the announcement after a meeting with leaders of Salafi factions presided over by their highest authority Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal who had rushed to denounce and criticize the deal with Hizbullah, minutes after it was announced on Monday.

The Dai, or Preacher, on Monday termed the agreement "media crackling in favor of Hizbullah and the Shiite community" and called for abolishing it.

The freeze was announced in the northern town of Tripoli, power base of the Salafi movement.

"The Salafi movement totally rejects this document … and who signed it has no right to claim belonging to the Salafi movement or representing it," the ageing Dai al-Islam Shahhal said on Monday.

"This document is … harmful to the Sunni community and would end up in vain, God willing," he added.

"Those who signed it have no influence, and whoever wants to defuse tension should talk to forces that do exist," he stressed.

Hizbullah and its allies welcomed the understanding that was sharply rejected by almost all Sunni factions and members of the March 14 majority alliance.

Mustaqbal Movement leader Saad Hariri, who heads the largest Sunni bloc, had avoided direct comment on the understanding. But his aides and members of his parliamentary bloc said he opposed it.

Beirut, 19 Aug 08, 19:43

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&13A93312203E0B5FC22574AB004E77AF>

Sheikh Mawlawi: Hizbullah in Real Sediton with Most of Lebanon

The Jamaa Islamiya, Lebanon's chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood, on Tuesday said Hizbullah is in a state of "real sediton with most of the Lebanese, especially the Sunni Muslims."

Secretary-General of the Jamaa, Sheikh Faisal Mawlawi, declared the stand while commenting on a document of understanding between Hizbullah and some Salafi factions that was declared on Monday and aborted the next day.

"Confronting sediton can only be achieved through entering homes from their gates," Mawlawi added.

"Hizbullah should go into serious and objective dialogue with authorities and effective factions so that mistakes committed by both sides would be clearly stated and defined to avoid committing them anew," Mawlawi stressed.

Any other attempts, he concluded, "would be mere media crackling."

Beirut, 19 Aug 08, 22:08

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&13A93312203E0B5FC22574AB004E77AF>

Nasrallah Amazed by Opposition to Understanding with Salafis

Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on Tuesday criticized factions that had rejected an agreement of understanding with a Salafi faction.

Nasrallah, addressing a Hizbullah rally, said he was "amazed by tension resulting from rapprochement between the Lebanese."

He said all controversial issues should be tackled "within institutions."

All efforts should concentrate on "facilitating the launching of the dialogue mechanism to tackle all standing issues," according to Nasrallah.

He said safeguarding Lebanon against threats targeting it could only be achieved through "calm atmosphere."

Beirut, 19 Aug 08, 20:52

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&13A93312203E0B5FC22574AB004E77AF>

Salafism: a small movement making big waves in Lebanon

Various Islamist groups claim to adhere to what they call 'the true face of Islam'

By Dalila Mahdawi

Daily Star staff

Tuesday, August 19, 2008

BEIRUT: Hizbullah's signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on Monday with Salafist groups raised questions about the origin, the doctrine and the spread of the Sunni ideological movement, whose influence is more and more tangible on the Lebanese political scene.

Salafism, which follows a radical school of Sunni Islamic thought, was established in Lebanon in the 1960s by Sheikh Salem al-Shahhal. It came into being at Egypt's prominent Islamic school Al-Azhar University in the 19th century, where it was initially propagated as an intellectual movement by Jamal al-Deen al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Today, the Salafist movement in Lebanon enjoys strongest support in the North, particularly in Tripoli's Abu Samra area.

Salafists are thought to comprise less than five percent of the world's Muslim population and have splintered into about 50 different branches. Each of these groups claims to represent true Salafism, leading to much confusion over the use of the term.

Even though all branches espouse charitable and social work, some of these movements aspire to change society through scholastic activity and daa'wa, or preaching, while others employ violence. After Shahhal's death, his two sons, especially the elder Dai al-Islam, have continued to lead the more mainstream of Salafist organizations in Lebanon.

According to the report, "Lebanon's Sunni Islamists-A Growing Force" by Omayma Abdel-Latif of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Today one of the leading Salafist figures in the North, Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal identifies the Salafist movement as 'the true face of Islam.'"

"Our goal is a call to go back to the basics of Islam," the report quoted him as saying.

Salafists are strictly monotheistic and largely hostile to other forms of Islam, such as Shiism or Sufism. The word Salafi is derived from the Arabic term salaf, given to the third generation of the Prophet Muhammad's followers whose religious ideals Salafists try to emulate.

According to Fidaa Itani, a journalist at the Beirut newspaper Al-Akhbar and an expert in Islamist movements, "Salafists are characterized by their tendencies towards jihad," or holy war. Many jihadist movements, like Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, are indeed ideologically rooted in Salafism, which for many years remained politically aloof. A number of the Salafist groups operating in Lebanon have used or continue to employ violence, such as the Jund al-Sham, Osbat al-Ansar, and Fatah al-Islam groups.

Although they had been active for decades, Lebanon's Salafist groups gained international prominence in 2007 following the outbreak of bloody clashes between the Salafi group Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces at the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr al-Bared, near Tripoli.

Osbat al-Ansar and breakaway group Jund al-Sham both operate out of the Palestinian refugee camp Ain al-Hilweh in Sidon, and have used violence, often against each other, to further their goal of overthrowing the government and establishing Islamic rule.

Many Salafist groups are particularly hostile to the Shiite group Hezbollah, whose political and military strength Salafists fear is aimed at undermining Sunnis. Following Hezbollah's armed takeover of West Beirut and Mount Lebanon in May, hundreds of armed Salafists declared jihad on the group.

Salafists are politically linked, claimed Itani, to "Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait."

According to the Carnegie report, Lebanese Salafist movements have also been associated, since 2005, with the Future Movement.

However, according to Abdel-Latif, "Salafist leaders deny categorically that they get funding from Hariri, insisting that the funds mainly come from sympathetic individuals and associations in the Gulf."

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=1&article_id=95145

The Hezbollah-Salafist memorandum of understanding
August 18, 2008

On August 18, the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar website carried the following report:

This morning, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Hezbollah and the Salafist movements in Lebanon in the As-Safir Hotel on the Beirut Corniche. From Hezbollah's side, the paper was signed by the head of the political council, Sayyed Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyed, and from the Salafist movement by the representative of the Salafist forces in Lebanon, Sheikh Dr. Hassan al-Chahhal, in the presence of leaders from both sides and a media crowd.

The Hezbollah-Salafist Memorandum of Understanding stated:

In light of the major challenges faced by our Arab and Islamic nation, the most angry of which being the instigation of sectarian and religious strife to attack the region and pillage its wealth and serve the interests of Israel and America, and in light of what is happening on the Lebanese scene in terms of the dangerous repercussions serving the Israeli enemy, since Israel wants to take from the Lebanese what it could not take by use of arms – especially after the July War

– and with respect to our Islamic duty, we have tried to eliminate strife and contain the dispute between the Sunnis and the Shia within the intellectual and scientific context that is handled by scholars from both sects and the exploitation of which is prohibited to the public.

Among the most prominent factors in the management of this dispute are the protection of the specifics of each sect and the respect of their principles... while bearing in mind that the acute political disputes between the different sides bear negative repercussions affecting the people, the Lebanese arena in general and the Islamic arena in particular. It is based on the aforementioned that the Salafist forces and Hezbollah's leaders met and agreed on the following points:

Firstly, based on the sacredness of Muslim blood, we ban and condemn any attack carried out by any Muslim group against another Muslim group. In case a group is attacked, it has the right to resort to the legitimate means to defend itself.

Secondly, we abstain from instigating the public, since that contributes to fueling strife and takes the decision out of the hands of the wise and places it into the hands of the enemies of the Islamic nation.

Thirdly, we will stand in the face of the American-Zionist project, the most prominent tools of which being strife and division.

Fourthly, we will exert all possible efforts to eliminate the Takfiri ideology of the Sunnis and the Shia, since accusing all Shia of being infidels is rejected by the Salafists, and accusing all Sunnis of being infidels is rejected by Hezbollah.

Fifthly, if Hezbollah or the Salafists are ill-treated by domestic or foreign sides, the other party should stand by it with force and determination as much as possible.

Sixthly, a committee of senior Salafist and Hezbollah scholars is formed to look into the points of dispute between the Shia and the Sunnis, in what would contain the disputes within the context of the committee and prevent them from reaching the street.

Seventhly, each side enjoys the freedom of belief, and no side has the right to impose its ideology on the other.

Eighthly, both sides believe that the understanding will deter strife between Muslims and enhance peaceful living and coexistence between all the Lebanese.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55170>

Hezbollah-Salafist press conference
August 18, 2008

Head of the Hezbollah Political Council Sheikh Ibrahim Amin Al-Sayyed reads a statement on the party's memorandum of understanding with Salafist groups:

- Signing the memorandum is important because it will pave the way to solving controversial problems.
- The memorandum will relieve the people who call for unity, especially within the same confession, and it will bother our enemies who wanted to segregate us.
- There is a lot of work to be done, and meetings and discussions will help [both sides] reach an understanding.
- The misunderstandings were the result of incitement and blasphemy.
- The enemies of the nation will face this memorandum, which is a courageous step in Lebanon and the Arab and Islamic World.

- The people need to be backed up in resisting the occupiers and the people who are working toward our sedition.
 - We cannot wait until all Lebanese parties reach agreement, which might be impossible.
 - We are looking forward to reaching the stage when all Lebanese parties reach an understanding.
 - I would like to remind you that the first understanding was signed with the Future Movement in 2005.
- Salafist Sheikh Hassan al-Chahhal reads a statement on the movement's memorandum of understanding with Hezbollah:

- All Salafists believe in dialogue, which has legitimate procedures.
- We made this courageous step in order to support civil peace.
- This step will lead to positive initiatives.
- We signed this memorandum because the Future Movement approved it.
- This coordination with the Future movement is a reference point.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55174&MID=91&PID=3>

MP Ahdab to NOW Lebanon: Hezbollah has to talk to more than just Salafists

August 18, 2008

In an interview with NOW Lebanon on Monday, Tripoli MP Misbah Ahdab said that while he had certain reservations, he welcomed the Hezbollah-Salafist Memorandum of Understanding.

“If Hezbollah wants to sign an MOU with the Sunni sect, there are specific representatives with whom it must communicate, such as leader of the Future bloc MP Saad Hariri,” Ahdab said. He also said that “Hariri is not ready for such an MOU unless a constructive review of the incidents in Beirut is conducted and other incidents occurring in different regions are properly dealt with.”

“No doubt that Hezbollah could have erred by regarding the Salafists and probably other factions too as terrorists,” Ahdab said. “However, what happened in May was not directed against the Salafists alone but rather the whole Sunni community. Does Hezbollah consider the Salafists to be the only representatives of that community?”

Ahdab said that violence in North Lebanon had to be quickly addressed. “We clearly declare that there are armed militias in North Lebanon protected by Hezbollah such as the Islamic Unification Movement, the Arab Democratic Party, and the militants of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party,” he said.

“As a citizen in Tripoli,” Ahdab said, “I see factions from Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen that are fighting with each other but also protected by Hezbollah.”

“I do not think that this could be resolved through an MOU with a faction of the Salafists movement but it must be dealt with through a national agreement.”

Ahdab said he was optimistic such an agreement could arise out of a national dialogue under the direction of President Michel Sleiman.

-NOW Staff

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=55248>

- “Paper of understanding signed between Hezbollah and Salafi movt.”

On August 18, the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar website carried the following report: “This morning, a paper of understanding was signed between Hezbollah and the Salafi movements in Lebanon in As-Safir Hotel on the Beirut corniche. From Hezbollah’s side, the paper was signed by the head of the political council, Sayyed Ibrahim al-Amin al-Sayyed, and from the Salafi movement by the representative of the Salafi forces in Lebanon, Sheikh Dr. Hassan al-Shahhal, in the presence of leaders from both sides and a media crowd... The paper of understanding stated:

“In light of the major challenges faced by our Arab and Islamic nation, the most dangerous of which being the instigation of sectarian and religious strife to attack the region and pillage its wealth and to serve the interests of Israel and America, and in light of what is happening on the Lebanese scene in terms of the dangerous repercussions serving the Israeli enemy, since Israel wants to take from the Lebanese what it could not take by use of arms especially after the July war, and with respect to our Islamic duty, we have tried to eliminate strife and contain the dispute between the Sunnis and the Shi’is within the intellectual and scientific context that is handled by scholars from both sects and the exploitation of which is prohibited to the public.

“Among the most prominent factors in the management of this dispute are the protection of the specifics of each sect and the respect of their principles..., while bearing in mind that the acute political disputes between the different sides bear negative repercussions affecting the people, the Lebanese arena in general and the Islamic arena in particular. It is based on the aforementioned that the Salafi forces and Hezbollah’s leaders met and agreed on the following points:

“Firstly, based on the sacredness of Muslim blood, we ban and condemn any attack carried out by any Muslim group against another Muslim group. In case a group is attacked, it has the right to resort to the legitimate means to defend itself.

“Secondly, we abstain from instigating the public, since that contributes to fueling strife and takes the decision out of the hands of the wise and places it into the hands of the enemies of the Islamic nation.

“Thirdly, we will stand in the face of the American-Zionist project, the most prominent tools of which being strife

and division.

“Fourthly, we will exert all possible efforts to eliminate the Takfiri ideology of the Sunnis and the Shi’is, since accusing all Shi’is of being infidels is rejected by the Salafis and accusing all Sunnis of being infidels is rejected by Hezbollah.

“Fifthly, if Hezbollah or the Salafis are ill-treated by domestic or foreign sides, the other party should stand by it with force and determination as much as possible.

“Sixthly, a committee of senior Salafi and Hezbollah scholars is formed to look into the points of dispute between the Shi’is and the Sunnis, in what would contain the disputes within the context of the committee and prevent them from reaching the street.

“Seventhly, each side enjoys the freedom of belief and no side has the right to impose its ideology on the other.

“Eighthly, both sides believe that the understanding will deter strife between Muslims and enhance peaceful living and coexistence between all the Lebanese.” - Al-Manar, Lebanon [Click here for source](#)

- “Hezbollah and Salafi mov. in Lebanon: from collision to cooperation...”

On August 18, the independent Al-Rai al-Aam daily carried the following report by Ali Mughniyeh: “Since the American troops entered Iraq, Al-Qa’idah has waged an open war against them and against all those who supported or assisted their presence in the Land of the Two Rivers. However, Al-Qa’idah (the main Sunni Takfiri movement) focused on fighting ‘Al-Rawafed’, i.e. the Shi’is. In Lebanon, a clear difference emerged between the Salafi movement and the Takfiri movement at the level of dealing with the Shi’is in the country and especially with Hezbollah... In this context, a source close to Hezbollah and directly concerned by this dossier, indicated that there was a clear agreement and a pact between the Salafi movement and the party.

“He added that its main headlines were ratified through continuous meetings held on the Lebanese territories. He continued that Hezbollah and this movement had things in common which were more important than the few religious differences, namely ones aiming at deterring the threats targeting the nation, as well as strife between Muslims based on the events in Iraq where blood was shed and where the first beneficiaries were the enemies of the nation. The source continued to Al-Rai al-Aam that at a time when the signing of the ‘understanding paper’ between the Committee for the Revival of Islamic Tradition - which includes around 14 Salafi associations - and Hezbollah was postponed for a few days, efforts are being exerted to prevent strife or sectarian infighting between the two sects, due to a series of events which are worthy of attention. They are:

“1- At the beginning of 2005, Hezbollah’s security and military efforts on the domestic scene were focusing on the adoption of preemptive measures to prevent suicide operations during Shi’i gatherings and celebrations being held in the southern suburb among other regions. These measures were adopted in light of the suicide operations which used to be carried out against the Shi’is of Iraq without any differentiation between fighters and civilians. However, this threat became non-existent following the July war, after these organizations sensed that the performance and goals of Lebanon’s Shi’is were different from those of the Shi’is in Iraq.

“Moreover, [following the war] Hezbollah earned the sympathy of the majority of Islamic and Arab countries, most of which are Sunnis, due to the victory over their common enemy. Therefore, if Lebanon’s Shi’is are targeted, this could have negative repercussions on the Takfiri organizations, which would thus be accused of collaboration with the Americans and the Israelis. This immunized the Shi’is of Lebanon.

“2- Until 2005, Hezbollah had no interest in the domestic situation or domestic policy because these were the responsibilities of the Syrian forces which were present in Lebanon. Following the martyrdom of Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops, the party had to become part of the domestic political structure to protect the resistance and its arms... It is not shameful to say that Hezbollah trusted its political allies in the Quartet Alliance during the 2005 parliamentary elections, and that these allies backstabbed it after they earned a parliamentary majority. The latter played the main role, following the July 2006 war and Hezbollah’s victory, in attempting to deplete the resistance on the political and security levels.

“Therefore, these former allies believed that the best way to divest the resistance of its victory would be by taking back the dispute to 1,400 years ago and showing that the conflict was one between the Sunnis and the Shi’is and not between the side which is resisting the Israeli enemy and the American project in the region, and the moderate side that is supporting this project. This instigated the action of the Takfiri groups on the political scene from the gate of sectarian dispute.

3- The Nahr al-Barid war erupted and the government of Prime Minister Fu'ad al-Sanyurah supported by the Future movement headed by Deputy Sa'ad al-Hariri who represents the majority of the Sunnis, decided to attack the Palestinian camp and particularly the Fatah al-Islam organization, which is close to Al-Qa'idah. As for Hezbollah, he completely rejected the attack against and the destruction of the camp... The party did not reject the necessity to handle the outlaws on the judicial and security levels, but believed that Fatah al-Islam should not be attacked to serve the American project, for the Lebanese people will pay the price.

Today, it was proven that the issue of Fatah al-Islam was not and will not be closed and that it is possible that its battle with the Lebanese army is still at the beginning... On the other hand, Hezbollah's position marked the beginning of a strong rapprochement between it and the Salafis in north and south Lebanon, based on the fact that Hezbollah did not partake in any battle in which the blood of its Sunni Muslim brothers was shed. However, this rapprochement between the Shi'is and the Salafi movement is bound to entail the emergence of a more extremist Salafi movement that will try to undermine this rapprochement and give the impression that it does not represent all the Salafi sides.

4- The relationship between the Salafi movement in Lebanon and Hezbollah did not emerge yesterday. It is deeply rooted especially in Sidon, in what was clearly revealed during the recent events in May when Mufti Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Qabbani issued a call to support the Sunnis against what he considered the Shi'i attack against Beirut and its inhabitants. At the time, Sheikh Maher Hamoud, the Imam of Al-Quds Mosque in Sidon and the leader of the Salafi movement, clarified his vision by rejecting Sunni-Shi'i strife. He thus succeeded in showing that the actual conflict was between a movement supporting the US and its Middle Eastern policy and a movement opposing it. Back then, these statements distanced the ghost of sectarian strife.

5- The visit of Al-Hariri to the Holy Najaf reflected negatively on him in the ranks of the Lebanese Salafi movement that opposes American policies. These circles thus spread a theory according to which Al-Hariri could not infiltrate the ranks of the Shi'is opposing the American hegemony policy in Lebanon, and was thus trying to open channels with the Shi'is of Iraq who did not oppose the presence of the American occupation forces... This visit contributed to showing that the struggle in Lebanon was a political and not a sectarian one.

The source concluded by stating to Al-Rai al-Aam: "There is no doubt that the sectarian conflict is there and it cannot be concealed. Efforts are being continuously exerted to secure a solution to it in a mature and responsible way, without pretending it does not exist or is taboo... Let no one think that this will be easy because extremist sides will strongly emerge throughout the process to prevent the emergence of any common factors that will remove the threat of sectarian strife between the Sunnis and the Shi'is." - Al-Rai al-Aam, Kuwait [Click here for source](#)

Why are Saudis feeling anxious about accord between Hezbollah & Salafis?
08-21-08

Ibrahime Al-Amine, chairman of the board of directors of Lebanon's independent pro-opposition newspaper Al-Akhbar, wrote an opinion piece on August 21 about the agreement signed by Hezbollah with a number of Sunni Salafi groups, which later froze the pact.

The agreement could have preserved coexistence between sects, he wrote, but it sounded alarm bells in Saudi Arabia, which backs the March 14 parliamentary majority and its most dominant force, the Sunni Future Movement.

The Saudis are dealing with this issue on the basis that it is a blow below the belt because the princes of security and money in the kingdom believed that Salafi circles were their sole purview, to which they could resort in times of need," Al-Amine wrote.

This "disaster" comes only months after the infamous May incidents in Lebanon, which witnessed the collapse of the infrastructure of the Future Movement, he wrote.

The Saudis are working hard to re-establish communications with all the Sunni factions and leaders, especially in northern Lebanon, in order to work on a new equation calling for "uniting the Sunnis to confront the Persian tide".

Why did the Hezbollah-Salafist understanding fail?

On August 21, Saudi Arabia's pro-government Al-Watan daily ran a lead editorial about the memorandum between Hezbollah and some Salafists in Lebanon. In principle, the document would have been a good idea, had there been no "political exploitation" on Hezbollah's part, it wrote.

“There is no doubt that the tensions on the Lebanese Sunni street are still ablaze as a result of the Beirut invasion, which was carried out by Hezbollah earlier this year and targeted the Sunnis of the Lebanese capital,” Al-Watan wrote.

“What is required to bridge the gap between Hezbollah, the Sunnis of Lebanon, and those in the entire region, is for the party to place Lebanon’s interests at the top of its list of priorities, to turn its back on foreign interests and be the first to defend justice that should punish the perpetrators of the terrorist explosions in Lebanon.”

This could set the foundation for healthy relations between the party and all the factions of the Lebanese people, the paper concluded.