

Pay Attention! Lebanon is in Danger!

Contributed by Tariq Alhomayed, Editor Asharq Al-Awsat
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What is currently taking place in Lebanon from the firing of rockets, to kidnapping and murder, can only be described as an indication of impending danger. The greatest indication [of looming danger] can be seen with the rockets that were fired from southern Lebanon into Israel.

To understand the bigger picture one must remember that there are forthcoming elections in Lebanon, the forecasted results of which are not comforting to the Syrians or the Iranians, and are similarly not comforting to Hezbollah and Michel Aoun. In addition to this, the International Tribunal [that will try suspects] in the Rafik Hariri assassination is scheduled to take place in the same month.

Iran has also begun to feel that the Israeli extremist ring-wing represent a real threat, especially following Netanyahu's speech in which he said that Iran is a priority. In addition to this, the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] released a report which was critical of Tehran, as well as critical of the manner in which the Obama administration is dealing with this.

Iran is also, according to information, beginning to feel that the Arab reconciliation proposed by the Saudi monarch in Kuwait is more than a media maneuver, but represents real opposition to Iranian expansion in the region. It is for this reason that Tehran does not want Damascus to return to the Arab ranks.

This is the picture at large, while the particulars seem to indicate that Lebanon will be the battlefield of this impending conflict. For the Iranians believe that opening the Lebanese front against Israel will greatly benefit them, the most important benefit of which will be to overexert the Israel army before it decides to take action against Iran.

Tehran is counting on the indecision of Netanyahu, and they also want to embarrass Damascus in the Arab world, internally, and especially in front of Obama. And so any regional conflict will result in Syria being placed under the microscope once again, and this clarifies something important for us.

High ranking foreign visitors were surprised when they heard that the Syrian leadership had asked the Lebanese President to not back any candidate in the forthcoming Lebanese elections, as this would weaken [Michel] Aoun, who Damascus would prefer was stronger than Hezbollah!

It is ironic that Hezbollah also need Aoun who represents a fig leaf [of legitimacy] to both Iran and Syria. Aoun allying with Hezbollah would grant the movement the image of non-sectarianism, while Aoun allying himself with Damascus would grant Syria official cover in Lebanon.

Interestingly, Iran and Syria have not noticed that this fig leaf i.e. Aoun, is not sufficient enough to cover them, for the fig leaf is smaller than they think, and this clarifies the rivalry between Tehran and Damascus, as well as the lack of trust [between them].

And so the situation in Lebanon is volatile, and the Iranians are certain the post-Gaza Egypt is not the same as pre-Gaza Egypt, which is what an insider informed me of with regards to what is happening in recent Arab meetings, therefore the Lebanese battlefield is the [strongest] candidate for inflammation.

Similarly the Syrians do not trust their Iranian allies, and the Arab are not convinced of the Syrians intentions towards them. I will now tell a story that will sum this all up. A high-ranking Syrian official during a non-official visit to Saudi Arabia, accepted an invitation to a dinner that was not hosted by Saudis, during which he made comments about Saudi Arabia that even the Iranians would not say, and so the question; Who can trust anyone in Damascus?

What I mean to say is that all indications are pointing that there is an impending danger to Lebanon and the region as a whole that will trouble us again!

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