

CAIR's Jihad Jane Savages Walid Phares

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Savvy political propagandists normally adhere to the "believability rule"; when spinning agitprop, but some newcomers to the art of "spincraft" abandon even the appearance of credibility.

Such is the case with Brooke Anderson of Beirut's The Daily Star. Her hatchet piece, "The right-wing Lebanese Christian advising Romney on the Middle East," attempts to sully one of Lebanon's most celebrated and accomplished sons, Lebanese-American professor, Dr. Walid Phares.

The venom of Anderson's diatribe is unrivaled in Lebanese media and beneath The Daily Star. She besmirches the entire Republican Presidential field, but her primary target is Walid Phares, Mitt Romney's senior policy advisor on the Middle East. As I endured Anderson's piece, I found myself asking, "Why would a prominent newspaper like the Star publish a canard entered by an inexperienced political hack who gerrymandered fossilized Lebanese news into current US political goings-on to try and assassinate the reputation of a man whose credibility dwarfs her own?" Granted, Anderson lives in Beirut and writes stories for the Star's local entertainment section, but she brings no personal experience or knowledge of Lebanese history to the country's enduring civil debate.

Anderson's motive for the piece is transparent. She and her jihadist collaborators in cyberspace hope that demonizing Republican frontrunner Mitt Romney will shame the former Governor into reversing Phares's appointment. Their vilification of Dr. Phares's role in Lebanon's policy debate during the Pearl of the Mediterranean's fifteen-year civil war is contrived and unconvincing. She and her fellow conspirators may hoodwink one or two unwitting American readers by regurgitating old myths crafted by Iranian and jihadist lobby groups in the US, but they will not sway the loyal citizens of Lebanon.

It is obvious that the Council on Islamic American Relations (CAIR) is the inspirer of Anderson's rant. She demotes her sophomoric journalism further by repeating the Washington, DC-based pro-Jihadist lobby group's propaganda. CAIR was named an unindicted co-conspirator of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) in *United States v. Holy Land Foundation et al*, the largest terrorism financing case in US history. Evidence introduced during the trial demonstrated a relationship between CAIR, individual CAIR founders, and Hamas, a US-designated terrorist organization.

If Phares' tenure with the Lebanese Front and the Lebanese Forces (LF) is to be condemned, many prominent past members of the LF will be condemned with him; judges, diplomats, members of parliament, cabinet ministers, scholars, and intellectuals; all will be guilty by association—the late Fouad Efram Boustani, first President of the Lebanese University; George Freiha, Dean of the American University in East Beirut; Law Professor and Cabinet Minister, Ibrahim Najjar; and Dr. Charles Malek, thirteenth President of the UN General Assembly and co-author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—all will be condemned with the LF's youngest political party representative between 1986 and 1988, Dr. Walid Phares. Indeed, the entire global Lebanese Christian community, which numbers in the millions, will need to be condemned. On the contrary, the United States and France, many Arab and Muslim countries, the entire Free World embraced the LF as a loyal ally. For ten years, the LF even maintained an official diplomatic presence in Washington, DC and many other national capitals in the international community. US diplomats were immensely supportive of the Lebanese Christian community out of respect for millions of Lebanese-Americans and their representatives in Congress and in various Cabinets.

The U.S. Islamist lobby fabricated an absurd accusation against Dr. Phares and, in an attempt to give the story traction, inserted it through their stooge at The Daily Star. They contend that Phares's membership in the LF between 1986 and 1988 makes him culpable for shootings committed in Sabra and Shatila in 1982. This is tantamount to blaming Hilary Clinton for atrocities committed at Abu Ghraib several years before she became US Secretary of State. Deceased Lebanese Phalangist and LF militia commander Elie Hobeika, an ally of the Assad regime who was granted asylum in Syria in 1985, is the war criminal who ordered Palestinians shot in 1982. The jihad lobby in Washington pulled this same stunt last winter and again this past fall, to tarnish Professor Phares' impeccable reputation. Facts are stubborn things, so the story has never gotten legs. It is unfortunate that a radicalized young American woman living in Beirut was so easily manipulated into repeating this fallacy. It is worth repeating that Anderson, who mingles with uber-radical elements internationally, was recruited into the Islamist lobby's online assassination squad just as the US political primary season kicked-off, and in the process, torpedoed her career.

Anderson's mimicry of her CAIR mentors is almost word-for-word:

"When it comes to the Middle East, alarms have been raised in some corners over his [Romney's] decision to appoint as his top adviser on the region Walid Phares, a leading figure in right-wing Christian militias during Lebanon's 1975-1990 Civil War and a former adviser to Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea."

She portrays Phares as a "leading figure" in Lebanon's "right wing militias" and an "advisor to (Samir) Geagea;" roles he never had. With zero consideration of the facts or consequences of her actions, the cut-and-paste journalist writes,

"Critics have also focused on Phares' subsequent roles in the United States, where he has served as a 'terrorism expert' for Fox News and the Christian Broadcasting Network. During these shows, he has warned that jihadists are the enemy, and that the U.S. must act preemptively to defeat them."

This describes the essence of US national security doctrine after 9/11, a topic for which Dr. Phares is considered the world's leading expert, not only by FOX News but also the US Defense and Intelligence complex. Where does the beef in Anderson's butchery of journalism come from? It comes from the US Islamist lobby's propaganda war room. They are ones fronting for the jihadists and Iranians who are gnashing their teeth over Phares' success advising the Government of the United States.

Anderson quotes Warren David, president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), who claims that he is Lebanese-American:

"An adviser on the Middle East should be more sensitive and neutral. Walid Phares is very extreme. He leans toward being an Islamophobe … I would think that most Lebanese Christians don't agree with his viewpoints."

It is ironic that an overwhelming majority of the two-million Lebanese-Americans support America's confrontation with the jihadists and a US Foreign Policy that opposes the Syrian and Iranian regimes. According to attorney John Hajjar, US Director for the World Council for the Cedars Revolution and a prominent leader in the Lebanese-American community, Phares

"was a key personality and scholar who helped pushing for UNSCR 1559 in 2004, allowing the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon … “

We never heard of Mr. Warren David in Washington and New York when the community was pushing for Lebanon to be freed from Syria and Terror … Mr. David was on the side of the Arab regimes, not the Arab Spring, and evidently the friends of Arab authoritarian regimes in the US are no friends of the prominent Lebanese Americans who are spreading awareness about oppression in the Middle East." About attacks by the Arab-American lobby on Lebanese-Americans, Magdi Khalil, a leading Christian Copt living in the US said,

"It is awkward how some in the Arab American lobby remember that they are Lebanese Christians when it is about attacking one of theirs who is exposing the regimes and extremist militants they defend. But you never hear from them when Lebanese Christians are attacked by Hezbollah."

Anderson also wrote that

"David, who himself is a Lebanese-American Christian, adds, 'Fortunately, he's in the minority. But when you see it from one of your own it's discouraging.'"

Evidently, Mr. David is nowhere close to representing mainstream Lebanese Christian groups in the US such as the American Lebanese Alliance and the American Maronite Union; he is a pariah to them. "He defends the Arabist and Jihadist lobby, not his own community," said Hajjar.

Anderson revisits another argument and sinks deeper in ignorance. She writes that Phares "reportedly declared that Lebanese Christians were ethnically distinct from Arabs, and during the Civil War he 'lectured militiamen, telling them they were part of a civilizational holy war,' according to an October investigative report by the U.S. magazine Mother Jones." Blasting the blogger-turned-propagandist, Boston College Professor Franck Salameh, himself an expert in Arab and Middle East Studies reacted with,

"Had her article not been silly sophomoric agitprop, it would have perhaps qualified as hack journalism; but it's not even good enough to earn that label."

Brooke Anderson seems to think she scored a point by writing "Phares has reportedly declared that Lebanese Christians were ethnically distinct from Arabs..." Hmm? And that confirms that he's "Right-wing" does it? Where is the problem with

"Phares... declar[ing] that Lebanese Christians were ethnically distinct from Arabs"? Aren't they? Can Anderson tell us why she thinks they are not, if indeed she does think that?

Incidentally, Phares did not merely "declare" that Lebanese Christians were Aramaic; he wrote extensively on this topic, in Arabic, English, and French if Anderson cared to do modestly decent journalistic work (i.e. "checking sources".) Still, where is the problem with that outrageous "declaration" that Lebanon's Christians aren't Arab ethnically? Isn't Phares, and Lebanese Christians, free to decide and define who they are for themselves? Or is Sati' al-Husri's and Michel Aflaq's compulsory Arabism Anderson's preferred brand of identity in the Middle East?

Indeed Anderson, who isn't qualified to blaviate on Lebanese history and sociological identity, errs by drawing conclusions on issues that haven't yet been resolved by the Lebanese debate. Even worse, the radical blogger dives into additional sordid accusations taken from the American-based militant lobby's jargon.

Since his arrival in the U.S. in 1990, he has reportedly been featured as a Middle East expert by the David Project, Israel's college campus coalition; and the Israeli-linked groups Jihad Watch and Middle East Forum; he is also an associate with Israel's Ariel Center for Policy Research and a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, an organization established after 9/11, which advocates U.S. military intervention in Muslim-majority countries.

With unchecked claims fed to her by her militant benefactors in the US, Anderson embarrasses herself. Lecturing and publishing in Jewish Centers in America is neither illegal nor prohibited. Accusing Americans of being in the tank for American Jews is anti-Semitism, an attitude that has been roundly rejected by American society. Despite assertions of the US-designated terrorist group Hezbollah, Phares has never been affiliated with the Ariel Center for Policy Research, even if the Center did publish one of his articles. His papers and articles are published by dozens of Jewish Centers in publications that reach around the world, Arab and Islamic media centers, including the Tehran Times. Regarding Dr. Phares' Senior Fellowship at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies for many years, FDD enjoys bipartisan support and played a key role in the passage of legislation that opposed the Iranian terrorist regime. This is probably as good a reason as any why Phares is being targeted by Anderson and her Islamist friends.

Corey Saylor.

Anderson relies on content provided by her unindicted, terrorism-financing, co-conspirator friends in CAIR, quoting Corey Saylor, the group's operative for Congressional affairs, "anyone comfortable with those associations should not be advising the President." She asserts that the operative Saylor

"has been researching Phares' background for about a year, ever since his appointment last February as a witness at hearings by the House Committee on Homeland Security entitled, The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response."

Anderson, who never covered the King hearings, published anything about them, or, for that matter, on anything related to the radicalization of Americans, references a letter sent to Chairman Rep. Peter King by CAIR alleging that "Mr. Phares' prior position in, and association with, organizations and militia groups known for carrying out massacres and systematic torture raise reasonable concerns regarding his relevance to any sober and objective hearing." CAIR was blasted by Rep. King and many other prominent US lawmakers, one of whom is North Carolina Rep. Sue Myrick, Chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Intelligence. The letter uses the same specious claim mentioned earlier, that Phares held

"a position during the Lebanese Civil War in the Lebanese Forces, the Christian militia which was implicated by Israel's official Kahan inquiry in the 1982 massacre of civilians at the Sabra and Shatila in Beirut."

With no factual legs to stand on, the US jihadist lobby repeats the same claim to smear Phares, who led efforts to get Syria out of Lebanon while the perpetrators of the shootings of Palestinians were the allies of the Assad regime. CAIR's baseless accusations failed to sway Congress, as Phares has been publicly retained by the Homeland Security Committee as a senior advisor, a slap in the face to Hamas and Hezbollah's ally, CAIR.

Anderson borrows from inside-the-Beltway Islamists, quoting CAIR's claim that

"in 1999 the World Lebanese Organization, founded by Phares, included among its "leading members" both Col. Charbel Baraket, former deputy commander of the [South Lebanese Army], and Etienne Saqr, head of the radical Guardians of the Cedars group."

Mr. Saqr was never a member of the World Lebanese Organization. Baraket was an officer in the Lebanese Army who, surrounded by the PLO in his home in south Lebanon, defended his village. He later joined in the defense his area from

Hezbollah, a badge of honor, unless Brooke Anderson is a Hezbollah supporter.

Anderson attacked the Guardians of the Cedars citing its

"mission statement that includes restoring Lebanon's alphabet to its Phoenician origins after liberating it from the defacement that was caused by the Arabic language; and "cutting down the number of foreigners in Lebanon ..."

Anderson treats as criminal what most Lebanese agree was ending foreign occupation. Whatever her view of this group is, Phares was never part of it, so her points are irrelevant.

Returning to US politics in her diatribe, Anderson quotes Saylor again, stating

"Romney's selection of Phares shows the Republican candidate's growing conservative leaning, possibly in an attempt to court evangelical Christian voters. He noted that when he was running in the 2008 election Romney said that he would be open to appointing a Muslim to his cabinet if elected president, the New York Times reported in November 2007."

Saylor's maneuver doesn't fool Lebanese or American readers. He implies that Romney will appoint Muslims to his cabinet, while Phares wouldn't, a ridiculous propagandist ploy that links Muslims to jihadists. Dr. Phares warns against Iranian and jihadist penetration and in his three most recent books, calls specifically for partnerships with, and support for, moderate secular and liberal Muslims. CAIR operatives rightly fear that Phares will enlighten any new administration distinguish between groups like themselves, and Muslim Americans like Syrian dissident and medical doctor Zuhdi Jasser who leads the American Islamic Forum for Democracy.

Jasser, who is a leading figure in the anti-jihadist Muslim community in the US, considers CAIR to be a threat to the Muslim American community. "They are covering up for extremists like Hamas and Hezbollah and trying to take the community as hostage, claiming they speak on its behalf while in fact silencing its free and moderate voices," says Jasser. Ali al Yami, another leading Muslim American of Saudi descent called CAIR "a tool of Jihadi propaganda in America." Al Yami also said that

"trying to fool readers in the US is one thing, but using American social bloggers out of Beirut won't fool neither the Lebanese nor the Arabs, who know all too well the Jihadist propaganda and its tactics."

Anderson blasts Republican Presidential hopefuls Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum to balance her smear of Phares against other US political smear targets. She launches into another attack on Walid Phares by quoting a former politician known for his support to extremist lobbies:

"Jim Abourezk, a former Democratic senator from South Dakota, whose family hails from south Lebanon, told The Daily Star that although he believes Romney is unlikely to reach the presidency, "A right-wing Lebanese would be a disaster for Romney and a disaster for the country."

Abourezk, who is close to CAIR, catered to the Ba'athist Assad regime in Syria and the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein of Iraq, so he is not the ideal public figure to comment on the Lebanese American scholar who designed the UN's strategy in UN Security Council resolution UNSCR 1559. The latter resolution led to Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. Sheikh Sami Houry, Lebanese President of the World Maronite Union, an INGO representing millions of Maronites in thirty different countries, including one and a half million American citizens, said:

"Jim Abourezk's family may have originated from Lebanon but he was a politician who supported the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and the oppressive regimes in the Arab world. He has no credit among the two million Lebanese Americans. He is a supporter of CAIR, which is an ally of Hamas and Hezbollah. Abourezk is ill informed about Lebanon and those who originated from that country. Professor Walid Phares is no right wing or left wing, he is a respected scholar who published and spoke with courage in his mother country against terrorism and served his adopted country the United States with dignity and courage, while the apologist lobbies served the interests of regimes for decades."

Anderson's article leads readers and observers to raise two important questions. One is the capacity of US-based jihadist lobbies, in this case CAIR, to plant distortions in Lebanese media in a manner that seems balanced and professional. Why didn't The Daily Star editorial board vet Anderson's ties to the jihad lobby in the US? Professor Walid Phares was gratuitously attacked months ago in Salon.com in a coordinated attack involving pro-Iranian propagandists and pro-Hamas front CAIR. He has been internationally attacked by pro-Syrian operatives in cyberspace for years because of his role in opposing Syria's occupation of Lebanon. Why was Brooke Anderson allowed to publish an unprofessional smear piece against the scholar?

We learned that the social blogger never contacted Professor Phares personally, or his staff, to request an interview before writing the attack-piece. A professional publication like the Star should be embarrassed for accommodating a

journalistic assault like Anderson's. She is attempting to foment hatred among Lebanese and Lebanese Americans by wrongly tarnishing the name of a well-known author who is recognized and read on both sides of the Atlantic, using shadows of events in Lebanon that he had no historical ties to.

Dr. Phares is the author of a dozen books and hundreds of articles. During the 1980s his articles were published and debated in the Lebanese press by critics and supporters alike, as was the case with the writings of more senior intellectuals at the time, such as Fuad Efram Boustani, Charles Malek and Jawad Boulos. Phares' writings courageously exposed Syria's occupation of Lebanon and Hezbollah terror atrocities. He was under constant threat as were all intellectuals. One of them, Shia liberal Mustafa Geha, was brutally assassinated by Syrian operatives. Brooke Anderson's alignment with twenty-first century jihadists is an attempt to finish off, in print and in cyberspace, what others have tried to do in the real world; assassinate the character of a prominent intellectual.

Anderson and her allies in the U.S. Islamist lobby must understand that playing with Lebanon's history will backfire. Professor Walid Phares offered his time and service in the defense of his mother country and community in the 1980s. Representing his party's ideas in the coalition that defended his community and country is a badge of honor. Those who committed atrocities are to be condemned from all views and that is what most Lebanese agreed to do at the end of the conflict. Today Christians and Muslims work hand in hand for the liberation of Lebanon; many of them continued to praise Professor Phares after he immigrated to the US and offered his services to his adoptive country. One may disagree with his ideas, but to smear the professor as part of a terrorist propaganda campaign is not acceptable, at least not here in his motherland. Any unjustified attack against his achievements represents an attack against his community and native country as well as millions of Lebanese around the world, including many who are vote in the United States.

Brooke Anderson wants to be "Jihad Jane" from Beirut in cyberspace, but she failed and will continue to fail as long as she serves the interests of terrorist-enabling lobbies in the United States.

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