

Special Report: The Lebanese Shi'ites are Under Represented - Call on Election - LEBANESE PRESIDENT

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Free Shia Movement leader Sheik Mohammed al-Hajj Hassan, regularly disagreeing with Hezbollah and their alliances with foreign powers - calls on election of a "Lebanese President"

Free Shia Movement leader Sheik Mohammed al-Hajj Hassan speech on 8/29/07
{google}7221058827526188343{/google}

Free Shia Movement Website
<http://www.chi3a.org/index.htm>

Articles from the Archive in reference to Free Shia Movement

Free Shia Movement calls on Gemayel to run for presidential elections
Monday, August 6th

Free Shia Movement leader Sheik Mohammed al-Hajj Hassan said that President Amin Gemayel's determination saved Christians from "falling in the Syrian trap".

"The Metn by-elections confirmed that Aoun does not represent 70 percent of the Christians," said Hassan.

According to Free Shia Movement leader, the Free Patriotic Movement was financially supported by Hezbollah during the Metn by-elections.

"Hezbollah's representatives paid voters at Burj Hammud and Nabaa regions to elect Aoun's candidate," he added.

Hassan reiterated the determination to elect a new president and called on Phalange leader Amin Gemayel to announce his candidacy for presidential elections.

-NOW Staff

<http://nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=9156>

Lebanese petition calling for the deployment of international forces on the borders
Friday, July 13th

"Free Shia Movement" leader Sheikh Mohammed al Hajj Hassan urged all Lebanese to sign a petition calling upon the Lebanese government to seek international support from the UN.

"We call for placing Lebanon under chapter seven of the UN Charter, and for the deployment of international forces across the Lebanese-Syrian borders," said Sheikh Hassan after his visit to the Maronite Patriarch.

-NOW Staff

<http://nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=6664>

Shiite cleric attacks Lebanon's al Manar TV
Tuesday, 3 July, 2007 @ 5:57 AM

Beirut — Sheikh Youssef Kanj, an authority in the Shiite religion attacked what he described as al — Manar TV lies about the father of Free Shiite movement Sheikh Mohammad el Hajj Hassan.

He said this station does not represent the Shiites of Lebanon , it only represents Hezbollah .

Sheikh Kanj said "how dare the station accuse Sheikh Hassan 's father of being an Israeli agent ? These are baseless fabrications and lies ."

He added "People of this station have lost their dignity and honor … what a shame , since at one time this station was the voice of resistance and martyrdom .

Sheikh Kanj continued: "I can understand them (meaning the station) attacking Sheikh Mohammad el Hajj Hassan, since he is a politician, but to attack his father should be off limits "

Free Shiite Movement Leader on Cedars Revolution Radio

March 25, 2007 - Sheikh Mohammed Al Hajj Hassan - Lebanese Leader of the Free Shiite Movement Reveals on Cedars Revolution Radio Show that "We are being threatened and intimidated by the Syrians - revealed in this weeks show. Sheikh Mohammed reveals a list of 26 named personnel in Lebanon that the State of Syria is targeting.

Sheikh Mohammed Al-Hajj Hassan:

"We are being Threatened" reveals a Syrian list of 26 Lebanese Targeted...

To the Americans "Don't Leave Lebanon - Don't Leave the Region"...

To the World - Lebanon's Democracy is being threatened by Syria...

We are being threatened and intimidated by the Syrians - revealed in this weeks show by Sheikh Mohammed Al-Hajj Hassan, President of the Free Shiaa Movement in Lebanon. Sheikh Mohammed reveals a list of 26 that the State of Syria is targeting in Lebanon.

Click to Listen (.mp3)

Symposium: Confronting Hezbollah
By Jamie Glazov
FrontPageMagazine.com | March 30, 2007

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID={FC46BD89-5290-4682-BA58-83F53B09711C}>

Hezbollah, the Iranian-controlled terrorist organization operating inside Lebanon, continues to grow in strength and to endanger the U.N.-brokered "cease-fire" in southern Lebanon. The U.N. arms embargo has not been enforced and the terrorist organization continues to rearm, receiving arms shipments from Syria. The threat to Israel and to Lebanese sovereignty looms greater than ever.

What can be done to weaken the Hezbollah operation? To discuss this issue with us today, Frontpage has assembled a distinguished panel. Our guests are:

Sheikh Mohammad Al Hajj Hassan Ali, the President of the Free Shia Union in Beirut.

John Hajjar, the American director of the World Council for the Cedars Revolution.

Paulo Casaca, the Chairman of the European Parliament delegation at NATO. He has visited Lebanon and led a fact finding mission to the Syrian-Lebanese borders last Winter.

and

Walid Phares, Professor of Middle East Studies and Religious Conflict at the LLS Program of Florida Atlantic University and a Senior Fellow with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies as well as a director for its Future Terrorism Project. He has served as a Terrorism analyst with MSNBC till 2006. He is now a Fox News contributor.

FP: Walid Phares, Paulo Casaca, Al Hajj Hassan Ali and John Hajjar, welcome to Frontpage Symposium.

Mohammad Al Hajj Hassan, let's begin with you.

Could you kindly build a foundation for this discussion please by giving us a background on what exactly Hezbollah is and where the organization comes from?

Mohammad: Hezbollah was established in Lebanon in 1982 as an extension of the Islamic Revolution which was launched in Iran in 1979.

It began its political activities inside Lebanon and throughout all the territories of the Shiaa religion, stating its primary objective as that of liberating Jerusalem from Israeli control. Simultaneously, considering the occupation or presence by Israel in Southern Lebanon, Hezbollah effectively became a primary activist in carrying out military operations against Israel on Lebanese soil and subsequently from the Lebanese borders. Hezbollah has been accused of several terrorist activities especially the killing of 240 US marines.

These operations have continued until the recent past on the basis of fundamental differences in beliefs given that Hezbollah is an extension of the Imam Al-Khomeiny revolution in Iran. Hezbollah operates in support of the directions of this revolution on the basis of religious belief, political, military and other objectives.

FP: You mention that Hezbollah operates within the territories of the Shiaa religion. Can you illuminate for us a picture of the Shiaa community and culture in Lebanon?

Mohammad: The Shiaa community in Lebanon is comparatively poor and is quickly influenced by the religious declaration emanating from Islamic Law, as such the Imam Al-Khomeiny, as the leader of the revolution and Master in divine law, issued an absolute commandment which forced the faithful to be committed without question or condition in its execution.

This commandment does not stop short on religious matters only, but is designed to extend to several other areas in order to ensure that commitment is total and comprehensive. As such it engaged into political, commercial and economical matters. That ensured that all matters of community and politics are controlled by the Fatwa or command issued by the absolute leader of the State; naturally it must rest first and foremost in the service of the Iranian Objectives before anything else. This is something that is very strange and distant from the Shiaa faith and its religious history.

This form of governmental control and rule has continued after the death of Al-Khomeiny and the subsequent passing of

the power to Al-Khame-iny as absolute ruler of all Muslims.

During the eighties and the nineties, Hezbollah had confronted Israel until its withdrawal in the year 2000 in accordance with the military Fatwa/command which was issued by Imam Al-Khumeiny and committed to the death of Israel until it is wiped from existence.

FP: Ok, so what overall is Hezbollah's purpose?

Mohammad: No doubt, from all indications, Hezbollah was developed based on two primary Fatwas/commands. The first being the political Fatwa, that being that the Lebanese Administration was corrupt and criminal and it is impossible to work with it and there is no choice but to change it to the objective of an Islamic Republic in Lebanon. The second was a military Fatwa in support of the original Fatwa, that being the death of Israel until it is wiped from existence; and this is what Ahmadinejad is reviving today. This is the Fatwa which the Iranian revolutionary guards are enforcing in Lebanon today. They have occupied the Bekaa region where they have established a military base for their operations.

Throughout the past years, Iran has been heavily financing Hezbollah operations, taking advantage of the poverty among the Shiaa community and their marginalization.

Furthermore, Hezbollah has aggressively worked to disable all the Lebanese institutions to ensure the continuation of Shiaa dissatisfaction and anger as well as control of the street in order to compensate for their regular work, social and health benefits.

After the year 2000 and what was called the liberation from Israeli occupation, there were those among the Lebanese and the Arab communities who claimed that it was Hezbollah who forced Israel to withdraw as a result of heavy attacks. After that event, the Iranian activities in the politics of the Middle East increased dramatically, particularly after the arrival of Ahmadinejad to the presidency, which was a basis for these involvements in Lebanon; and directly on the southern front with Israel, for Iran used the existence of Hezbollah as a card to put pressure on the International community especially with regards to the United Nation's refusal to allow Iran to continue to produce Nuclear Power.

In order to maintain its confrontational position with the International Community, Iran began to increase its assistance to Hezbollah with weapons, money, military intelligence and operations. Their social services helped to sink those of the Shiaa community who were supportive of Hezbollah with unlimited assistance. But not all the Shiaa are supportive of Hezbollah.

If the forces of Hezbollah are relying on what may come from the reign of the "Master in divine law" (absolute ruler), this leads to the acceptance of whatever the absolute ruler may deem suitable. Hezbollah's possession of the arsenal of weapons is additional to the expansive supply of security and its equipment, the media and information, the military, the intelligence and logistical support as well as the presence of huge amounts of money available for whatever they want and need.

Hezbollah advocates the services of terrorism and the disturbances in the Shiaa Street in order to maintain control in the service of the plans and objectives which are attached and intertwined with Iran. Hezbollah in Lebanon does not possess the ability to read the politics outside of this mentality and understanding.

FP: So Hezbollah is a Lebanese operation?

Mohammad: At this time it is a Lebanese operation but on the basis of the politics and the military, they are attached to enterprises outside the borders of the Lebanese Nation, namely Syria and Iran; and this is destroying the project of the development of the Nation of Lebanon. But we as Lebanese Shiaa, prefer that what Hezbollah is doing, is not portrayed against the rest of the Shiaa who are the majority in Lebanon.

We as Liberal Shiaa believe in a Lebanon that is Sovereign, Independent and Free; and we call on all who are our people, sons and daughters and all our supporters to become an integral part of the objective and project of the Nation of Lebanon, capable, just and which believes in its citizens who believe in justice and truth; and that the financial and military strength of Hezbollah will today be extinguished from the Shiaa Confession/Faith. For we as liberal Shiaa are continuing in our efforts and activities of removing the arrogance, domination and tyranny practiced by Hezbollah, off the Shiaa Confession/Faith. We extend our hands to all the free Lebanese who were previously with us, to join us in the building a Lebanese Nation that is Sovereign, Independent and Free.

FP: Thank you Sheikh Mohammad Al-Hajj Hassan.

So Dr. Phares, what hope is there that Sheikh Mohammad's dream that the financial and military strength of Hezbollah will be extinguished from the Shiaa Confession/Faith? What has to be done? Hezbollah has a lot of popular support in Lebanon, no?

Phares: In my view, Hezbollah is an Iranian-controlled organization operating inside Lebanon with Lebanese citizens as members. It is not a Lebanese group "allied" to Iran; it is a Khomeinist-controlled operation in Lebanon. As Sheikh Mohammad mentioned, the group emerged only after the success of the 1979 revolution in Tehran. With tens of millions sent annually to Hezbollah, its main cadres trained in Iran, and revolutionary guards, Pasdarans, present in Lebanon and manning several military and intelligence networks, the organization is linked organically to the Iranian regime. I even described it strategically as the most western deployed Iranian division, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. That's how one can read Hezbollah's strategic presence in Lebanon.

Now obviously, with 300 million dollars a year, from Iran's oil revenues; with the past Syrian domination of the country and protection of Hezbollah, and with the endorsement of the pre-Cedars Revolution regime headed by pro-Syrian politicians, the organization-turned a state inside the state has developed an almost full control of the Shia community.

For decades, it had military control over all Shia areas, and managed almost all socio-economic and cultural institutions of the community. Hence, there is no surprise that Hezbollah controls most of the Shias. Naturally it has as much support within its constituencies as much as the National Socialists of Germany, the fascists of Italy and the Communists of the Soviet Union had among their controlled national communities.

Many in the Western press talk about "popular support for Hezbollah." I'd say this is the actual populist basis of the party. Another Western argument says Hezbollah has managed to get a dozen members in the Lebanese party. My answer is that the Nazis were able to get a very large portion of the parliament in 1933. If you control the "areas" of the community via a militia, money and its lifeline, you will logically control its representation in the parliament.

My challenge is: remove the Iranian dollars and weapons from Hezbollah and allow the Lebanese Government to take back the public services within the Shia areas, Hezbollah will be reduced to a small size group in Shia politics. Hezbollah is blocking the Lebanese Government from coming back to the south, the Bekaa and southern Beirut, is opposing the implementation of UNSCR 1559 that demands the disarming of the militia, for a simple reason: Hezbollah will lose its grip over the community. It is not that difficult to understand. The question is how? How to free the Lebanese Shiites from Hezbollah's fascist control? There is easy answer, especially among Lebanon's traditional politicians.

FP: But how do you remove Iranian dollars and weapons from Hezbollah? And is there really an easy answer on how to free the Lebanese Shiites from Hezbollah's fascist control?

Paulo Casaca, what is your angle?

Casaca: I think that first we have to acknowledge that the Hezbollah situation and its role in the Greater Middle East is not unique. Recently, the Sunday Telegraph newspaper published a large article with precious information provided by Adel Assadinia, the former Iranian Consul General to Dubai and former ambassador to Portugal that revealed a large spying and terrorist network mounted in the whole of the Persian Gulf states based exactly on the very same Khomeini reading of what Shiia religion is about that Hezbollah is following.

More to the point, we should keep in mind that Hezbollah was founded according to a fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini that was contemporaneous to the fatwa that created the "Superior Council for the Islamic Republic of Iraq" (SCIRI) and its associated military body, the Badr brigades. The first leader assigned to rule the SCIRI is at present the head of the Iranian judiciary, showing to what extent this organisation makes part of the Iranian fanatic network.

According to Ahwazi witnesses, the training camps of Hezbollah and the Badr brigades, located in Ahwaz, Southwest of Iran, were one next to the other and the Pasdaran (Iranian revolutionary guards) in charge of the ideological and military training of both the organisations were the same.

In brief, the Hezbollah is the advanced guard of a large network of "Khomeinist" organizations in the whole of the Greater Middle East. Hezbollah is now present in Iraqi soil, working in tandem with the Badr brigades in order to improve their military capacities.

SCIRI got control of most of Iraq directly after the allied military operation in 2003. At that time, the leader of SCIRI, Bakr Al-Hakim, was direct cousin of the leader of Hezbollah through their mothers. Although his half brother Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim that is now ruling SCIRI is not cousin of Hosseini Nazrallah, both are part of the same Iranian network.

My impression is that most of the Shiia in Iraq hate SCIRI and its leadership much more than Shiia feel distant from Hezbollah in Lebanon. This is in part the reason why the Iranian regime had to support other Shiia Iran-aligned groups such as those managed by Al-Sadr.

The problem is that, reading the Western press - largely absent from Iraq and relying on the official reports largely influenced by the Iranian stooges - no one can have a clue of what is going on in Iraq. For instance, when the US authorities arrested for eight hours Ammar Al-Hakim, that is the oldest son of Abdel Aziz, the Western press reported that there were huge demonstrations of protest.

What my friends from Najaf - the heartland of Shiia in Iraq - tell me is just the opposite. The demonstrations staged by the Iraqi authorities were a fiasco and the people got spontaneously to the streets celebrating (the Iraqi way, shooting towards the air) for the arrest of "Udey" Al-Hakim (Udey, as we might recall, was the name of the eldest son of Saddam Huussein, and the son of Al-Hakim, Ammar, is nicknamed after him since the number one representative of the Iranian regime in Iraq, Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim is viewed as no better than Saddam).

So, I do think that the democratic and patriotic Shiia leadership in Lebanon has to look at Iraq as the main stage of the dispute between the Arab World and the new fanatic Safavid Empire that wants to colonize it.

Hajjar: I agree with all the comments made by all of the panelists. The phenomenon of Hezbollah and Iran on the Shi'a side of Islamic Fundamentalism is clearly on the upswing and must be dealt with in some fashion before more innocent lives are lost and the country of Lebanon is taken by the Khomeinists.

I'd like to make my comments from an American and an American Lebanese perspective. In the US, Hezbollah has little or no support from the Lebanese Diaspora numbering in excess of 2 million persons. However, their followers are working diligently on funding their operations and awaiting orders to strike according to the Department of Homeland Security. These cells, from all accounts, are well disciplined and very familiar with US law and weaknesses in our borders and intelligence.

The US government should be doing more to strengthen ties among leaders in the Lebanese-American community, especially, (although this is self serving) members of the Cedars Revolution, who are working for a free, democratic and sovereign Lebanon. We are ready to grasp the extended hands from liberal minded Shia as offered so graciously by Sheikh Ali but neither our government nor that of the Lebanese have given the liberal, free thinking reformists the platform to garner the support of the larger communities here and in Lebanon. In Lebanon, Hassan Nassrallah intimidates, coerces and resorts to violence to buy the silence of his people and other Lebanese. Here, our government has been unable to discern friend from foe. When pro Jihadist organizations like CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations) are still treated with dignity and as the official spokesmen of the Muslim community it frustrates the reformists who know that CAIR's ideology will only lead to more conflict.

When Iran, Syria and Hezbollah see the highest levels of the US government engaging more of the reformists at events like the Islamic Reformers Summit in St. Petersburg and at events sponsored by the World Council of the Cedars Revolution and other like minded groups only then will the tide begin to turn.

Mohammad: It has been exposed that the objectives of Hezbollah's arsenal are many and varied. After the July war of last summer, we used to consider that their arsenal is purely for the resistance in the face of Israel. Israel withdrew in the year 2000. That forced some to ask the question: what is the objective of Hezbollah's arsenal after Israel's withdrawal? The reply came: it is there to help gain the release of our prisoners and Shebaa Farms.

Given that Syria was in Lebanon, the status remained unchanged, until the withdrawal of the Syrians in accordance with UNSCR 1559 in 1005. After that, the questions were increased and became louder about the objectives of that arsenal until last year when we arrived at the dialogue table, a move initiated by Speaker Nabih Berri.

What was very disappointing for us was that the Hezbollah's team at the dialogue meetings would present one image and story to the Lebanese people whilst at the same time planning for a completely different outcome. So when Hezbollah carried out the capture of two Israeli soldiers on the blue line of the southern region, an area from which Israel had totally and permanently withdrawn, that had caused Israel's aggression and destruction of Lebanon last July.

At that time we the Lebanese questioned as to why Hezbollah did not capture soldiers from the occupied Shebaa Farms? For taking hostages from there would not have given Israel sufficient excuse to attack. As such, after careful study and consideration of the total situation, we found that the order to capture those two soldiers and giving Israel the reason and excuse to destroy Lebanon and its ports, came from outside Lebanon's borders in order to protect benefits for those other than Lebanese, Syrian or Iranian. Here, our major disappointment was that this arsenal which has lost its sacred objective as a tool of the resistance became a tool in the hands of Lebanese for the provision of foreign objectives and benefits which would harm the wellbeing of the Lebanese.

This arsenal was used on behalf of the Syrian-Iranian propaganda as a method of improving the position in their verbal conflict with the United Nations. They used it in the South until the end of the July war and the arrival of the International Forces in accordance with UNSCR 1701 which created an abandoned/vacated area south of the Litani River, separating Hezbollah from Israel where this caused the employment of this arsenal along the southern border against Israel. This is what caused them to retreat with their arsenal within Lebanon. Today it is purely a bargaining chip in the hands of the Syrian-Iranian coalition.

The forces of the 8th of March and at the helm is Hezbollah, carry out military, financial and organizational measures disruptive to the government, to weaken the Lebanese government and render it subject to the Syrian - Iranian

pressures. What we regret and fear is the possibility that this arsenal will be used against the economy, the people and the Nation of Lebanon. However, the support for military operations, it appears that they will not stop; for Hezbollah has a continuous supply of arms through the Syrian/Lebanese borders which are vast and are not under observation. The smuggling of arms is facilitated through those borders to the Lebanese Bekaa where there is a Hezbollah military installation and subsequently to the rest of all the regions in Lebanon.

From this position, we call for the tight controls of the Lebanese/Syrian borders, either by the Lebanese army or the UNIFIL. For as long as the borders are not tightly controlled and protected, the military support for Hezbollah and other Syrian controlled terrorist groups will not cease. The Syrians are totally committed to disrupting stability in Lebanon. Unfortunately, there are some Lebanese who are aiding them. Nevertheless, we are calling for tighter control of the borders as a beginning measure and after that we shall progressively work on the restoration of our internal institutions.

That Hezbollah, by virtue of the financial and logistic support from Iran through the agency of Syria was able to take control of the Shii'a Street and a portion of the Lebanese Street. Also, the commitment of the people of Hezbollah to honor the State of the Divine Ruler caused these people to become obedient at the hands of the Hezbollah Leadership.

The continuing crisis in Lebanon is a result of the UNSCR 1559 and 1701. They were both against the objectives of Syria and Iran, particularly Iran's nuclear objectives and Syria's domination of internal Lebanese politics. These two resolutions were seen as danger against the Hezbollah arsenal which was and is being used against Israel. They saw Former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri as an instigator against them and both decided to assassinate him.

This afforded Hassan Nasrallah the opportunity to lead his people without any difficulties, particularly in view of the many financial and community services which Hezbollah has provided for them. This enabled him to bring all his people to the streets for protests against UNSCR; and protests to disrupt the lives of the people of Lebanon and render the nation vulnerable to the pressures of Syria and Iran.

FP: Thank you Sheikh Mohammad Al-Hajj Hassan.

Let's now explore the strategic options we face.

Dr. Phares?

Phares: In terms of strategic options, we have three firm realities to address:

[1] Hezbollah won't give up its weapons, won't disarm its militia, won't surrender its huge military and security apparatus, won't dismantle the terrorist training camps, won't declare the monies received from Iran, just for the pleasure of the Lebanese Government, or in accordance with UN resolutions, or even as the majority of the Lebanese People wish.

Hence, it is important that the Seniora Government, the March 14 coalition and even the diplomats and political architects in Washington, Brussels and the moderate Arab capitals, refrain from fantasizing on a Hezbollah unilateral offer for disarming. It is simply not going to happen for many reasons, some related to the Iranian regime's strategic orders and other reasons are related to the nature of Hezbollah itself. It is a machine aimed at power, and short of that, it would crumble to a marginal ideological group.

Thus, the Lebanese-Arab-International coalition must devise plans to achieve the goals of UNSCR 1559 and 1701 without the consent of Hezbollah, or at least by denying the Khomeinist militia the capacity of obstructing the implementation of these resolutions.

Yes, this would request a commitment by the Lebanese Government, courage and also a consultation among and between all allies in this equation. Lebanese politicians cannot continue to play the regular daily politics in a country at war with terror. They have to show as much courage as the one displayed by the Lebanese masses during the Cedars Revolution. The most important step is for the Lebanese Government to tell the world that it wants Hezbollah disarmed and that these weapons (mostly from Iran) should be removed by the international community; then the Lebanese people can aggregate around its democratically elected Government and the United Nations can begin the process of disarming. The latter process doesn't have to be abrupt and immediate as many people imagine. It can be in stages and comprehensive. This needs obviously a Lebanese leadership with a high level of sophistication and strategic behavior.

[2] The Syrian regime won't let go of its alliance with Iran's regime, with Hezbollah, and with the pro-Syrian forces and Terror networks in Lebanon. The Bashar regime's priorities are to crumble the Hariri investigation and the Seniora Government. So it will relentlessly continue to feed the terror war on Lebanon till someone stops it. This is a hard reality that should be understood in Washington, Brussels and Beirut. Sitting with US diplomats and singing about Syrian "realism" at this point is just a tactic to gain time for Damascus' regime. The Seniora Government has to ask for an international support to defend Lebanon from Syrian interference, and that means an official request not just general literary statements made here and there. And here again, the Lebanese masses would -as they've done in the past- rally such as move.

[3] The Iranian regime obviously will not accept to disarm Hezbollah in Lebanon (especially with all the investment already inserted and in view of the confrontation with the West.) Many analyses circulating in the media say Ahmedinijad wants to avoid the crisis, and thus there would be an area of understanding over Hizbollah. These analyses are injected in the debate by Tehran's propagandists to mollify the international support to Lebanon.

Therefore, based on the above three realities, what can be done to disarm the Jihadi militias in Lebanon?

Lebanese-Syrian Borders:

As it was often requested by the international Lebanese NGOs including the "Committee 1559" and the "Council of the Cedars Revolution," and as I argued in many articles since May 2005, the very first act of Government Lebanon's cabinet has to do is to order the Lebanese Army to deploy along the Lebanese Syrian borders. And in parallel, to request (formally and in implementation of 1559 and 1701) a UNIFIL deployment along the same borders asking that these areas would be under the direct control of the UN. The feasibility of the deployment can only be measured once the Lebanese Government and its parliamentary majority would be very clear as to their stand. Once the borders are under control, then Hezbollah and the other militias would be isolated from the two major regimes: Syria and Iran. That alone will change the balance of power inside Lebanon.

Main ports:

In parallel, the Lebanese Government must ask the international community to assist in controlling Lebanon's ports of entry: The ports of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, Tyr; and Beirut international airport should fall under direct UN control until the resolutions are implemented.

NGO campaign:

The US, Europe, the Arab moderates and the UN must extend a significant and fast support to Lebanon's NGOs in general and the Lebanese Shiia (anti-Terrorist) NGOs and independent leaders. One cannot leave the embattled Shia opposition to Hezbollah alone facing the Iranian oil dollars. In very short, you want less influence for Hezbollah, you have to support those who are against it, until the grip over the community is loosened.

I am surprised that the policy planners in Washington and Europe haven't yet began the implementation of any of the above made points. This is really basic logic. But again, no one can scratch the back of Lebanon better than its own representatives: The Lebanese Government and its legislative majority. Unfortunately, we haven't seen yet a significant and serious effort in that direction. It may come late, but with a price.

Casaca: People normally prefer to believe the nicest, rather than the ugliest things, and specially they like to hear politicians say what they prefer to hear, that's why instead of a person like Professor Walid Phares in command of our politics, we have people that are trying to convince us that, given the right atmosphere, Hezbollah or the Syrian and Iranian regimes will behave. It takes a clear shock for people to believe in reality instead of in wishful thinking.

As yet, I am not convinced that Hezbollah planned last year's war the way it developed. It was their luck that Israel did not respond the best of the ways, and so, Hezbollah could claim a victory by provoking a massive destruction of Lebanese territory. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that Hezbollah could not achieve its goals of getting a blocking position in the Lebanese government, which tells a lot about its weakness and the wisdom of the Lebanese people.

So, I think Professor Walid Phares is absolutely right on stressing the three dark realities, but I think that the Lebanese people may count on more than their own heroism to face this "axis of evil". Contrarily to what propaganda says, the Iranian people are more fed up by the day of the ruling theocracy, and especially of the financial drain on public resources caused by supporting terrorism abroad (Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq).

The level of popular resistance showed recently across the country is one of the highest ever. The Syrian people are as fed up with the presence of the Iranian clerical establishment and are more and more conscious that the disaster in Iraq has been caused by the Iranian theocracy. So, I think Lebanese have powerful allies and should start working closer with them to challenge the axis.

Mohammad highlighted a very important point: Hezbollah did not even pretend to follow the fiction of being a resistance force because of the Sheba farms and decided to attack Israel on the well-established border to the South. Anyway, I think we should make our best to call-off Hezbollah bluff and to invite the parties for the following steps:

[1] Syria is recognised as the sovereign state on the Sheba farms by the United Nations. If the parties are sincere on the Sheba farms being Lebanese territory and on the occupation of it by Israel being the root of the armament of Hezbollah, Syria should inform the UN, officially, that it has no claim on the Sheba farms;

[2] Hezbollah should clearly state that it will accept disarmament if the Sheba farms are returned to Lebanon;

[3] The European Union could guarantee the agreement, by occupying the zone and keeping it till the moment Hezbollah disarms.

If neither Syria nor the Hezbollah can agree to this, than it is clear that the Sheba Farms are nothing but a pretext for an armed force pursuing foreign powers agenda to occupy and threat Lebanon.

As I think Hajjar meant, moderate Muslims are to be fully engaged with. Islamic fanatics target them in Iraq and elsewhere in the Muslim World, and rightly so, because they are the main immediate threat to their aims. The twin towers attack was to a large chunk of the fanatic establishment an error because at first it was necessary to sort out the things in the Muslim World with as little intervention as possible from the West and only in the end should jihadists wage war on the "infidels".

As to the US (and this applies to the UK as well), I think people are in a very special moment where they are confused. People know that things are not going well in Iraq, but they are very divided on the reasons why of the failures and, consequently, on the remedies to be used.

The US will have to get to terms with a reality: the very same people that convinced the public opinion of the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq and the organic links between Saddam Hussein and Al-Kaeda also convinced the US that it was a good idea to bring the "Superior Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq" (SCIRI) to govern Iraq. It really puzzles me how can this people still be surprised that SCIRI made an Islamic Revolution instead of democracy in Iraq. They did not even hide that this was their goal.

Therefore, I think people will have to put things right on their mind before they can be a full force on behalf of democracy and against jihadism in the Greater Middle East. We should not confuse the autocratic regimes of the Muslim world that thought they could use fanatics to their advantage (sometimes till the moment that they realised it was too late) and the fully fledged theocratic states from which Iran was the first example and remains the most dangerous of all. This does not mean these regimes are good, or that we have to support them, it just means this is a capital difference.

I really insist that understanding Iraq is essential to be able to face jihadism efficiently.

Hajjar: The responses of Sheikh Mohammad, Dr. Phares and MP Casaca comprehensively analyze the current situation. I agree in large part with their commentary.

Hezbollah is not now, never was and never will be an organic Lebanese group. It is the brainchild of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and acts according to their wishes, not those of the Lebanese nor of the Lebanese Shia in particular. Sheikh Mohammad makes this point clearly. If it did act on behalf of the Lebanese it would "resist" Syrian and Iranian meddling in Lebanon. The World Council of the Cedars Revolution has documented 36 points of incursion by the Syrians into Lebanese territory. Lebanese farmers have lost their land and have been deprived of income. Syrians, Iranians, and their agents, have smuggled, tortured, murdered, imprisoned and assassinated scores of Lebanese. Why is there no "resistance" to these heinous acts from Hezbollah?

The intractable situation in Lebanon must be addressed by a stronger willed Lebanese government that is in clear danger of falling and by the international community that has been naive, to say the least, regarding the situation on the ground. I fully endorse Dr. Phares's recommendations in this regard. If the US government and policy makers want the dissidents, free thinkers and democracy advocates to stand up and be counted then they must think long term, strategically and get to work right away. Financial support to these allies is a must and must start immediately; they are the ones putting their lives on the line. This is exactly what the enemy has done since at least 1979.

Also, it is disappointing to see the US Congress negotiate our defeat in Iraq while our soldiers are still on the battlefield doing more than we could have ever expected of them. All the while, our public diplomacy has been an utter failure; for example, our tax dollar funded radio Sawa and Satellite TV Al Hurra have been infiltrated by the radicals and those in charge were completely unaware. The World Council of the Cedars Revolution alerted the government of this fact last year and it was made public in an editorial by Joel Mowbray in the Wall Street Journal this month. For the US and its allies, a stronger image and better diplomacy are needed to prevent a Nuclear Iran and to shore up support from our natural allies who will eventually work to topple the autocrats in the region.

It is gut check time for the Lebanese Government; either they seek assistance from the UN to do the job they have been incapable of doing or, once again, the Lebanese people will pay the price and loose their sovereignty. Dr. Phares's tactical recommendations are what must be done to save the nation. Once these steps are taken, new electoral laws must be passed to allow for better representation of the various communities within Lebanon and to allow the 12-15 million Lebanese in the Diaspora to vote. Above all, a new generation of leaders with no ties to the corruption and crimes of the past must come to power.

FP: Walid Phares, Paulo Casaca, Al Hajj Hassan Ali and John Hajjar, thank you for joining Frontpage Symposium.

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID={FC46BD89-5290-4682-BA58-83F53B09711C}>

Jamie Glazov is Frontpage Magazine's managing editor. He holds a Ph.D. in History with a specialty in U.S. and Canadian foreign policy. He edited and wrote the introduction to David Horowitz's Left Illusions. He is also the co-editor (with David Horowitz) of The Hate America Left and the author of Canadian Policy Toward Khrushchev's Soviet Union (McGill-Queens University Press, 2002) and 15 Tips on How to be a Good Leftist. Email him at jglazov@rogers.com.

The Free Shi'ite Movement: The Only Legitimate Weapons are Those of the Armed Forces

An announcement issued by the Free Shi'ite Movement, headed by Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hajj Hassan, said: "...Hassan Nasrallah did not attempt to hide his pride over [the fact] that Hizbullah could drag Lebanon into another round of destruction and death. He [also] openly admits that Hizbullah is violating the international resolutions that brought about the end of the recent war and that ended the 'divine destruction' brought by Hizbullah and its men over the entire Lebanese [people]..."

"By [deploying] its air force to repel the Zionist fighter jets that tried to invade Lebanese air space, by seizing the Hizbullah munitions truck, and by thwarting the attempts of the Zionist enemy to cross [Lebanon's] southern border, the Lebanese army has proved that it is the only force defending the sovereignty, security and stability of Lebanon. Hizbullah and Nasrallah, on the other hand, aim to undermine Lebanese sovereignty and stability, and to openly transport arms [for their own use].

"We call upon the legal Lebanese government, and upon all the political groups which care about Lebanon's sovereignty, unity and stability, to do everything in their power to prevent civil war... and to continue pressuring Hizbullah to hand over its war arsenal to the only force that is authorized to possess weapons in Lebanon, namely the Lebanese army, the army of the Lebanese people..." [1]

[1] Al-Siyassa (Kuwait), February 22, 2007.

Shiites Against Hezbollah
The other struggle in Lebanon.
by David Schenker, The Weekly Standard
11/13/2006, Volume 012, Issue 09

HEZBOLLAH ROCKETS stopped raining on Israel nearly two months ago, but the Shiite organization's onslaught continues. Today, instead of directly attacking Israel, the Party of God is targeting Lebanese intellectuals and politicians who have the temerity to question Hezbollah's hegemony over local Shiite politics.

There's no debating that Hezbollah is a popular organization in Lebanon and particularly among Shiites. Not only does the organization provide health, welfare, and education services to its constituents, its military prowess is a source of honor and pride for the community.

But not all Shiites support Hezbollah. Some have been voicing their opposition to the "resistance" agenda, and not surprisingly, Hezbollah is attempting to strong-arm these dissidents into line. The intimidation has not yet degenerated into violence, but, given Hezbollah's track record (the terrorist organization is, with Syria, a leading suspect in several political assassinations in Lebanon since 2005), it is certainly wont to.

Hezbollah's quest for hegemony--and its efforts to enforce party-line discipline over all the Shiites in Lebanon--predates the summer war with Israel. Eleven months ago, in December 2005, Hezbollah and Amal ministers bolted from the government cabinet to protest consideration of an international tribunal to prosecute the murder of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. Closely allied with Syria, the lead murder suspect, Hezbollah opposed the notion of an impartial tribunal.

The ministers' departure brought government business to a standstill, but set in motion even more Hezbollah mischief. Worried that the government might appoint non-Hezbollahis to the apportioned Shiite cabinet seats, cleric Afif Nabulsi issued a fatwa "forbidding any Shia to enter into the cabinet." This ominous "warning" set off a tempest among the Lebanese intelligentsia. Adonis, aka Ali Ahmed Said, Lebanon's most prominent man of letters (who happens to be a Sunni), described the fatwa as an "act of aggression." The most aggrieved party, however, were clearly the Shiites themselves. So incensed was one Shiite lawyer, Mohammed Mattar, that he brought a class action lawsuit against Sheikh Nabulsi.

Mattar's lawsuit, filed in January 2006, was joined by five prominent Shiites--some of whom had the legitimacy of being direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad--and three Christians. Over fifty intellectuals, including Sunnis, joined a follow-up case. For the plaintiffs, the action was a clear case of church-state separation: Hezbollah, via Sheikh Nabulsi's threatening fatwa, had deprived Shiite Lebanese of their constitutional right to participate in public life. Mattar et al were not looking for damages or jail time, but rather, for a well-reasoned and widely promulgated court ruling preventing further Hezbollah encroachment on Shiite political expression.

It is open to question whether the judge--a young Sunni hailing from the Hezbollah stronghold of Bekaa--can be counted on for an impartial ruling. Reaction to the case, which has been well covered in the media, has been fierce. Hezbollah has launched a countersuit. Meanwhile, pro-Hezbollah weblogs in Lebanon have savaged Mattar, alternately describing him as a CIA agent, a Mossad agent, and an employee of the U.S. embassy in Beirut.

More recently, in the aftermath of fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, perhaps the highest profile Shiite refusenik in Hezbollah's sights is Mona Fayyad, a professor of philosophy at The Lebanese University. On August 8, Fayyad penned an acerbic op-ed in Lebanon's paper of record, An-Nahar, assailing Hezbollah's political and intellectual dominance over her confession. In her widely translated article, "To Be a Shiite Now," Fayyad questioned the imposition of Hezbollah's ideology--and the consequences of Hezbollah's authority--over Shiites and Lebanon.

For Fayyad, to be a Shiite means that "you do not question the meaning of resistance." Instead, you defer to the leader of the resistance, General Hassan Nasrallah, in "his role as a loyal hero to the cause of the Arab nation." As a Shiite, "you can only thank Hezbollah for its heroism and sacrifice--it is not your role to contribute to 'weakening' it. . . . That means never to question whether pride takes precedence over the lives of others." You are simply obligated, she quips, to "incapacitate your mind and leave it to [Iranian Supreme Leader] Sayyid Khamenei to guide you." Finally, "if you are a Shiite and you dare write such writings and think such thinking, then you must be a foreign agent and a traitor. . . . You must be with the Zionist and Israeli projects."

Following her controversial op-ed, Fayyad gave a lengthy and courageous interview in September to the Kuwaiti political daily As Siyasa, where she criticized Hezbollah's alliance and allegiance to Syria and Iran. She was also critical of Hezbollah's continued possession of weapons, saying "Hezbollah's arms provide it with a type of hegemony . . . inspiring fear for security among all the Lebanese." Fayyad was also one of the signatories to the lawsuit against Sheikh Nabulsi.

While they do not represent majority sentiment in Lebanon's Shiite community, Mohammed Mattar and Mona Fayyad do represent an important and apparently growing segment of the population--Shiites who have no use for Hezbollah, Amal, or Iranian or Syrian suzerainty over Lebanon.

Lokman Slim, a Shiite who runs a Beirut-based, European-funded NGO focused on diversifying political representation of the Shiite community, is another outspoken critic of Hezbollah. Slim, who speaks critically about the "monopoly on representation," claims Hezbollah has "undermined" the level playing field among Shiites by preventing moderates from emerging. Slim's point, of course, is that such moderates could play a role in Lebanese politics if the intimidation stopped. This raises an interesting point: Hezbollah was indeed elected to the Lebanese parliament, but the organization is not constrained by the precepts of democratic government. Rather, it demonstrates nothing but contempt for democracy, operating instead within a theocratic-autocratic context. Nasrallah himself feels no compunction to abide by even the bylaws of his own party. He is now serving his fifth three-year term, exceeding Hezbollah's two-term limit on secretary generals. And if Hezbollah's leader won't even respect his own party's rules, how is the party going to be persuaded to observe all the niceties of multiparty democratic government?

Achieving pluralism within Lebanese Shiite politics is a long way off. In addition to being the leader of the "resistance," Hezbollah represents the culmination of years of Shiite effort to have a significant role in Lebanon's political system. Convincing the long-suffering Shiites in Lebanon that they can remain influential without Hezbollah is going to be a tough sell.

Lebanon's Shiite community is not monolithic: There are alternative voices, articulating moderate agendas. And if Hezbollah is ever going to be stripped of its dominant power over the Shiites in Lebanon, these voices will have to be promoted and encouraged. But in the current environment of intimidation, the hope that moderates like Mona Fayyad, Mohammed Mattar, and Lokman Slim will emerge to seriously challenge Hezbollah dictates sadly remains a distant dream.

David Schenker is a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. From 2002 to 2006, he was the Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestinian affairs adviser in the office of the secretary of defense.

Shiites increasingly critical of Hezbollah, its so-called 'victory'; and its ties to Iran

The mufti of Tyre accuses Hezbollah and its militia of having thoughtlessly taken the country into war. Most Lebanese want to see Hezbollah disarmed.

Beirut (AsiaNews) – Hezbollah is increasingly coming in for criticism for taking the country into war and causing untold suffering for the residents of southern Lebanon and the southern neighbourhoods of Beirut. The Shiite mufti of Tyre has gone so far as to disagree with the radical militia's claim of "victory" over Israel "given the losses we endured."

In villages in the south destroyed by Israeli air strikes, many survivors are timidly talking about how their homes were used to hide weapons and rockets. In some places, up to 90 per cent of the residents, even those with Shia majorities, are expressing their opposition to Hezbollah.

Sayed Ali el-Amin, the mufti of Tyre and Jabal Amel, is voicing this growing restlessness. Speaking to various TV stations and newspapers (like An Nahar), he rebuked Hezbollah for dragging the country into a war with the population unprepared. He pointed out that "the fact that Shiites fled goes to show that they were not in favour of the war."

The mufti, who is one of the leading religious figures in the Shia community, has also rejected Hezbollah's claims of "victory". In an interview with LBC, he said: "We cannot speak of victory. [. . .] Our losses are far greater than those of the enemy."

The Shia leader also slammed Hezbollah for its position and ties with Iran, insisting that "all non-Hezbollah political groups and institutions within the Shia community do not believe in Iran's wilayat al-fakih (rule by political-religious authorities) system" and its political orientation.

Although, according to the Mufti, Hezbollah is not likely to be totally free from Tehran's influence, he did say that he hopes that at least its ties of subordination might lessen.

"Let us hope," he stressed, "that Iran will come to realise that in their own countries, Shiites have their national traits and that relations with Iran must be state-to-state and not through a party or an individual."

And most Lebanese seem to agree. Results from a survey published in today's "Orient Le-Jour, Beirut's French daily, show that 88 per cent of Lebanese (89 per cent among Shiites) do not want to see Lebanon involved in regional conflicts, and 51 per cent want to see Hezbollah lay down its weapons. 28 Aug 2006

New Shiite Party in Lebanon to Represent the Majority Shiites that feel Under Represented Lebanese Option Gathering (LOG)'s Ahmad Al-Assad

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 12 July 2007

New Lebanese Option Gathering (LOG) believes as much as 50 percent of the Shiite vote in Lebanon is up for grabs. Insists they have big objections to March 8, especially its intimate links with Syria.

Lebanese Option Gathering (LOG)'s Ahmad Al-Assad

BEIRUT: The founder of a new political party with the stated aim of giving Shiite voters a third option, apart from Hizbullah and the Amal Movement, believes that as much as 50 percent of the Shiite vote in Lebanon is up for grabs. Ahmad al-Assad says that his new Lebanese Option Gathering (LOG) will attract voters whose interests do not fall strictly in line with either of the two main Shiite electoral blocs.

While the gathering politically supports what Assad refers to as the ideas espoused by the March 14 Forces, he insists the LOG is politically independent, but at the same time says they have big objections to the March 8 movement, especially its intimate links with Syria.

Assad, who also heads the Lebanese Kafa'at Party, said statistics show that 50 percent of the Shiite community in Lebanon has no political preference. "With time and hard work we can bring them under the Lebanese Option Gathering's umbrella," Assad said in a recent interview with The Daily Star.

He said the Shiite community has a vested interest in building a strong and united Lebanon as the path to ensuring security, stability, economic growth and development and to put a stop to the migration of youth abroad.

"We want the Shiite sect to be part of state-building efforts," Assad said. "Hizbullah feels that its military, ideological and political links with Iran are more important than its commitment to Lebanon."

The use of fear tactics by Hizbullah, he asserted, has silenced many dissenting voices within the sect. LOG would allow Shiites to express their true political convictions, he said.

"We have a big problem with the March 8 movement, its name marks the date for a political demonstration to express loyalty to Syria," Assad said.

He added that among the LOG's objections to the March 14 Forces is their performance in power to date, in particular the security file, which he said has not been treated with the seriousness it deserves.

Asaad hails from a wealthy Shiite family in Southern Lebanon. His father, Kamel al-Assad, was Parliament speaker four times, from May to October 1964, from May to October 1968, and from 1970 to 1984. He presided over the elections of three presidents: Elias Sarkis, Bashir Gemayel (a close friend and ally) and Amin Gemayel.

After the collapse of the May 17, 1983, agreement for the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces from Lebanon, Kamel al-Assad resigned as speaker. He boycotted the elections in 1992 and 2005 and failed to win election in 1996 and 2000.

LOG's secretary general, Ahmad Mattar, said the gathering groups together the Kafa'at Lebanese Movement headed by Assad, Shiite political activists, former Baathists and communists. He said that while membership in the gathering is currently confined to the Shiite sect, in time that would change to encompass members of other sects.

"The Lebanese Option Gathering is a political movement working toward a state of security and law, a sense of national belonging, and resisting outside influences and obligations to foreign interests," Mattar said. He said the gathering is also opposed to confining any sect to a single political direction.

Mattar said the gathering supports instituting an electoral law that ensures just and fair representation based on a proportional system. The gathering has also launched the Web site www.intimaa.org

By Hani M. Bathish, Daily Star staff, Thursday, July 12, 2007

http://www.cedarsrevolution.net/jtphp/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=175&Itemid=29