

CRISIS IN LEBANON

HIZB'ALLAH DEMANDS MORE POWER

TRAGIC ASSASSINATION OF PIERRE GEMAYEL



Lebanon is in turmoil after the assassination of Pierre Gemayel, Lebanon's industry minister, who was a leading anti-Syrian figure. Pierre died in a Christian area of Beirut after several gunmen ambushed and rammed his car with their vehicle, and sprayed it with gunfire from close range.

Pierre Gemayel, 34, was his country's youngest MP, a rising star in the Maronite (Catholic) Christian Phalange party, and a member of the Gemayel political dynasty. He was a strong critic of the Shi'ite Hizb'allah and of the Syrian influence in Lebanon. In the past, Phalangist leaders have called for the expulsion of Palestinian Liberation Organization supporters and have intimated support for peaceful relations with Israel.

Pierre Gemayel was the sixth anti-Syrian figure killed in Lebanon in the past two years, including former PM Rafik Hariri in Feb 2005.

Gemayel's father, former President Amin Gemayel, speaking from behind a panel of bulletproof glass, on the day of the funeral, told a crowd in downtown Beirut: "The second independence uprising was launched today for change and it will not stop. I pledge to you that we will soon take steps so that your efforts will not go in vain."

Amin Gemayel is a leader of the Maronist Christian community. (Maronites are Christians affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church. Between 800,000 and 900,000 live in Lebanon, roughly 25% of the population. Lebanon's constitution requires that the president is Maronite, and the prime minister a Sunni. The current Lebanese "Christian" president, Emile Lahoud, is staunchly pro-Syrian.)

In recent weeks, Hizb'allah, boasting of their assumed victory in the recent war against Israel, demanded to be given one third of the seats in the Lebanese cabinet. This would give them veto power over the decisions of the government. They also threatened to create mass demonstrations in the streets if they were not given an increased role in government affairs.

Hizb'allah chief Hassan Nasrallah attacked the Lebanese government on Nov 18th saying it lacked credibility. "The Lebanese government is in a state of weakness and is still feeling a huge defeat as the result of the last Israeli war in Lebanon," he said in a taped address aired on Hizb'allah's Al-Manar satellite station on Nov 19th.



Nasrallah told thousands of Lebanese supporters to prepare to take to the streets of Beirut in order to force the resignation of the government. He said the current

Lebanese government is a puppet of the Bush administration.
US DEMOCRATS WIN PAVES WAY FOR MIDEAST CHAOS



Lebanon's Druze leader Walid Jumblatt fears the emboldened Hizb'allah will provoke violence, and says that following the political changes in the US, Syrians feel they have the upper hand in the region.

Jumblatt is head of Lebanon's Progressive Socialist Party and is widely considered the most prominent anti-Syrian Lebanese politician.

Speaking on 19th Nov, he said the US Democrats' calls for a withdrawal from Iraq and for changes in US Middle East policy has, in part, emboldened Syrian-backed Hizb'allah militia to quit the Lebanese parliament and to threaten street protests against the government.

"The Syrians play this game where they have been waiting for the Americans to get weaker in Iraq," he said. "Now with the Democrats' win paving the way for an American withdrawal, and with Rumsfeld's resignation making a statement, the Syrians believe they have the upper hand in the region to retake Lebanon. The Syrians are trying to profit from the circumstances by creating havoc and by using Hizb'allah to stage a coup d'etat to get rid of us (the anti-Syrian parliamentary majority)."

A SYRIAN-BACKED COUP FEARED

Walid Jumblatt went on to warn that Lebanon is on the verge of a coup d'etat staged by Hizb'allah and other pro-Syrian elements.

"The opposition groups are on the verge of announcing a coup in the country and we should take the brave decision to confront all options," Jumblatt said in a briefing to his ruling parliamentary faction.

TRIBUNAL TO TRY HARIRI KILLERS

A recent UN report implicated Damascus in the assassination of Rafik Hariri, and just a week before Gemayel's assassination, the Lebanese cabinet endorsed plans to set up a tribunal to try those suspected of killing Hariri.

Six pro-Syrian ministers (5 Shi'ites and 1 Christian) opposed those plans, and resigned from the cabinet in an attempt to bring down the government. (Lebanese law requires the dissolution of the government if one-third of the 24-member cabinet resigns or becomes unavailable.)

With 6 pro-Syrian cabinet members resigned, and now another member, Gemayel, eliminated the government is very shaky. The death or resignation of one more would cause Siniora to lose the quorum required by the constitution to legally govern, while the fall of two ministers would cause the government to collapse.

Hizb'allah is now positioning itself in readiness to attempt a take over after the anticipated collapse.

Pro-Syria President Emile Lahoud has written to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan saying: "The cabinet's approval of the plans (*for a tribunal*) ... is not binding on the Lebanese state. These documents were not approved by the President of the Republic because the decision to endorse them was taken by an authority that defied the constitution."

Lahoud declared, "the government has lost its legitimacy following the (*six*) ministers' resignations, and any decision it makes will be considered unconstitutional." He warned of "dangerous divisions that would threaten internal civilian peace" if a "unity government" was not formed soon. Lahoud's idea of a solution is to give Hizb'allah the extra cabinet seats they demand, in line with their "new status." That would give Hizb'allah veto power over all major government decisions; and it would be a victory to Syria.

On the same day as Pierre Gemayel's killing, the UN Security Council approved the plans for the tribunal on Tuesday, 21st Nov. Both events intensified the acute political crisis in Lebanon.

Gemayel's funeral took place on 23rd Nov, the day on which Hizb'allah had planned a massive protest aimed at toppling the government of prime minister, Fouad Siniora, a Sunni Muslim.

Hizb'allah postponed its rally, as crowds of Lebanese took to the streets in a show of support for the government. An estimated crowd of up to 800,000 people participated in the funeral and/or rally which turned into a massive demonstration of anger against Syria and its allies. Many burned pictures of Syria's president and Lebanon's pro-Syrian leaders.

The rally, which was a major show of Sunni-Christian unity, reinvigorated the supporters of independence in their power struggle with Syrian-backed Hizb'allah, and its allies, which is threatening to split the nation.

Several politicians, speaking at the rally, vowed the next step will be the removal of President Lahoud.

Many Lebanese blame Syria for the killings of Hariri, Gemayel and other anti-Syrian figures. Damascus, like Hizb'allah and Iran, of course, deny any involvement.

Syria dominated Lebanon for 29 years until it was forced to pull its troops out last year by the powerful popular movement, along with international pressure, in the wake of the assassination of Rafik Hariri.

Anti-Syrian politicians were subsequently voted into power and Fouad Siniora become prime minister. But the pro-Syria president, Emile Lahoud, continued in power.

The great fault of the government, however, was their failure or inability to disarm Hizb'allah as was called for in the UN resolutions.

Hizb'allah has re-armed to pre-war levels, according to *TIME* magazine, fulfilling intelligence forecasts and negating the Israeli government claims of a victory that severely weakened the terrorist group.

The magazine confirmed numerous media reports since the UN Security Council ceasefire resolution last August that Iran and Syria have been re-arming Hizb'allah. A recent British newspaper report quoted the UN Interim Force (UNIFIL) troops as saying that the terrorist group can operate freely at night, when the UNIFIL troops do not operate because of the danger. Hizb'allah now has 20,000 missiles, twice the number acknowledged by the Israel Defence Force.

Weapons smugglers have easily circumvented UNIFIL forces by using mountain passes, according to *TIME*, which also said the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is using Damascus as well as Beirut as command centers.

The likelihood that Hizb'allah would re-arm was apparent since the day that Israel agreed to the ceasefire because UNIFIL leaders categorically said they would not enforce the clause in the UN Security Council Resolution 1701, calling for the disarming of non-Lebanese army forces.

The whereabouts and fate of the two Israeli hostages still are unknown, despite Israeli and American vows that there would be no ceasefire agreement without their return.

Israel not only accepted the UN-brokered agreement but also claimed it was part of a victory in the war. "Hizb'allah has been pushed back from the fence, from the border," PM Olmert asserted in an August speech to local authority leaders in Haifa. "Most of the long-range missiles ... were destroyed. ... A strong international force ... is organizing to ... assist in stopping the Hizb'allah." Olmert concluded, "It is clear to the world that Hizb'allah has been beaten."

However, 8 days earlier, the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, issued a report headlined COUNTDOWN TO CONFLICT. It said, "Any end to the war that does not involve Hizb'allah's disarmament will enable the Jihadist movement to rise again like a phoenix." - Arutz /27 Nov

The charged atmosphere that took over Lebanon following last summer's war with Israel continues to be the source of internal conflict between political parties in the country.

An earlier unknown organization named “Lebanon’s Mujahidin” called on Sunnis in the country to prepare to confront the Shi’ites represented by Hizb’allah, who want to take over all of Lebanon and cause revolution and civil war.

“*The Mujahadeen*” (holy fighters) are Sunni extremists affiliated with al-Qaida in Lebanon, and they have accused Hizb’allah of killing Pierre Gemayel.

In an internet message, according to the SITE Institute, a website which monitors Islamist web activity, they maintained that the assassination was directly executed by five individuals from Hizb’allah, and that it is a part of a continued effort by Hizb’allah and its Syrian backers to coerce Shi’ite ministers into withdrawal, ultimately facilitating an overthrow of the Lebanese government. The announcement was launched on an al-Qaida-owned website in Iraq, and was published by the Associated French Press.

“Hizb’allah is a party. In addition to having Iranian tendencies, basis, and support, it doesn’t hide its loyalty to the Syrian regime,” the announcement explained.

“We call on our people in Lebanon to face this bitter truth with courage and to tackle this hatred by preparing for a confrontation. We won’t let them (Shi’ites) implement their evil wishes after they succeeded in allowing an international force enter as a buffer between us and Palestine,” the announcement continued.

The announcement even contained criticism of Hizb’allah’s leaders’ political conduct and emphasized that “today they want to control all of Lebanon through an alliance with the crusaders and to eliminate the Sunni group completely. They should know we are prepared to fight them. It would be a war and we would be stronger than them.”

The Syrians believe the US is weakened, but Syria is now in a position of strength, and that Damascus will be able to set the new rules of the game in the region.

* In **Iraq**, after Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem’s visit to Baghdad on Nov 20, full diplomatic relations between Damascus and Iraq were renewed.

* President Bashar Assad is now considering how to respond to an American overture following reports that the Iraq Study Group will recommend that the US engage Syria and Iran in talks on Iraq in order to enable the US to formulate an exit strategy.

Both Iran and Syria are able to exacerbate (increase) the insurgency in Iraq. For the most part terrorists enter the country from Syria and Iran.

“Syria will not do anything unless it has secured guarantees from Washington and London that every action Damascus takes to help them will be reciprocated. It will be a step by step scenario: these actions for those actions,” a Syrian official said. Bashar al-Assad’s “top demand” is that Israel be pressured to withdraw from the Golan. Syria also demands a staged withdrawal of US troops from the region.

Shaul Bakhash, an expert on the Middle East at George Mason University, Washington, said: “Neither Iran nor Syria will do a favour for the US without wanting something back - and **what both countries want are things that the US is not willing to give them.**”

* In **Lebanon**, Syria is backing Hizb’allah and encouraging them to stage a revolution, for two reasons: to thwart the UN tribunal which will investigate Syrian officials regarding the Hariri assassination last year; and to regain its influence in Lebanon affairs. - Source / The Sunday Times / Nov 19, 06

At the time of going to press, we see Hizb’allah supporters continuing to besiege the Lebanon government in Beirut in an attempt to bring the Siniora government down. Jordan and Saudi Arabia are expressing alarm because of these developments. Egypt’s leader Hosni Mubarak has warned that Lebanon will become a sectarian battlefield if the Hizb’allah protests turn violent.

As reported in our *Millennium Alert* #29 (see The Katyusha War, The Salafists, p8-10), the Sunni Salafists are more than “at odds” with the Shia Muslims of Iran. They are engaged in a war of their own – a war to claim hegemony (dominance) of the whole Islamic world. Here’s more evidence of the Sunni-Shia conflict.



Sunni jihadis warn against the ‘Persian Empire’; call Nasrallah an ‘agent of anti-Christ,’ and declare an ‘Islamic state’ in Iraq. Hizb’allah chief Hassan Nasrallah has been branded a “worshipper of idols, an agent of the anti-Christ,” and a “charlatan,” in a statement by Iraqi al-Qaida leader Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir in a statement made in November.

Al-Muhajir’s statement also contained threats to blow up the White House, and forms another escalation in al-Qaida’s increasingly hostile anti-Iranian rhetoric, that has also targeted Hizb’allah.

Discussing the actions of US President Bush in a statement, released by al-Qaida’s al-Furqan Foundation, translated into English by the Al-Boraq Workshop, and reproduced on the Jihad Unspun website, Muhajir said: “He (Bush) turned to the Sham (Syria and Lebanon) and terrorized its tyrant (**Basher Assad**), who is a Rafidi (Shi’ite) and a Nusayri (one of Shi’ite’s factions). The blockade continued until he (Assad) had to open his country to hundreds and thousands of Persians to acquire citizenship in it, so that they can support the

charlatan agent of the anti-Christ, Nasr Allat (a common nickname for Hizb'allah's Nasrallah, which means "a supporter and worshipper of idols") who is called Nasrallah.

"Hence, the Old Persian Empire has become complete, extending from the countries behind the river, Iran and Iraq ... to the Sham (Syria and Lebanon)."

The al-Qaida leader said the United States had become an agent for Iran. "I wonder whether the wise of the Romans (Americans) realize that they have become slaves and mercenaries for Persia, and that they are fighting Persia's battles for free," he said.

On Nov 17, Sunni al-Qaida followers in Lebanon released a statement on the internet calling on Lebanese Sunnis to prepare for an imminent confrontation.

According to the SITE Institute, a website which monitors Islamist web activity, the statement also said: "Let the Rafidi (Shi'ites) know that we are ready to fight them with Allah's help, and let it be a war. We are more eager for it than they."

Rafida is an Arabic collective noun which means "turncoats, dissenters, deserters", from the Arabic verb root which can mean "to reject." It is an Islamic term, which refers in a derogatory way to those who (in the opinion of the person using the term) reject legitimate Islamic authority and leadership.

In past times, it was used by some Shi'a Muslims to refer to other Shi'a who refused to follow Zayd ibn Ali. It is thought that the usage of the term came from Zayd ibn Ali himself who exclaimed "*You have abandoned me (rafadtumuni)*" to his own followers who retracted their oath of allegiance on hearing Zayd ibn Ali declare his love for Abu Bakr and Umar. It was also used by Sunni Muslims as a term of abuse for Shi'a Muslims. They were considered "Refusers" because they refused to give allegiance to Abu Bakr, or refused to recognize the authority of Sunni caliphs.

The word *rafida* (and also the Arabic non-collective singular form *rafidi*) is currently used as a derogatory term for Shi'a Muslims by Sunni Muslims who refuse to accept Shi'a Islam as being a valid form of Islam. It would seem to be used primarily by Salafists.

Alawites /Alawis. Bashar Assad is an Alawi, a religious group that takes its name from **Ali** ibn Abi Talib, a cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Mohammad. After the death of Mohammed, Islam split between two successors - **Abu Bakr** who was accepted by those who became known as Sunnis; and **Ali ibn Abi Talib** who was received by the other side - the Shi'a or Shi'ite. (**Shi'a** is short for **Shi'at Ali** - "*the party of 'Ali*").

The origin of the Alawites is disputed. Some sources say they were originally *Nusayriya*, a sect that broke ties with Twelver Shi'ites in the 9th century. The Alawites trace their origins to the eleventh Shi'a Imam, Hasan al Askari (d. 873), and his pupil **Ibn Nusayr** (d. 868). Alawites claim to be Shi'a Muslims, but mainstream Shi'as denounce them as heretics.

In the past, most leading Sunni scholars openly considered the Shi'a as "Kafir" (disbelievers). Many Islamic scholars of recent history have become more tolerant towards Shi'a and some have promoted unity; others have not. Today, both Shi'a and Sunni students study and graduate together at Islamic universities. However, some Sunni groups such as Salafists, Taliban or al-Qaida have continued to persecute Shi'a as heretics. Salafists still consider Shi'as as apostates and openly advocate their killing. - Ynet News / 26 Nov 06

This is the new title of al-Qaida in Iraq. The al-Qaida chief in Iraq, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, declared the formation of a Caliphate - a "state of Islam" - in Iraq, in anticipation of the withdrawal of US troops from the region.

"In a long waited step, for which sacrifices were granted and martyrs' bloods were shed to achieve its path; the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq has announced the establishment of the 'Islamic State of Iraq,' the state of Islam that will rule the law of Allah on people and lands, that will protect the core (center) of Islam and acts as a solid shield for the Sunni people on the land of Iraq," Muhajir declared in a statement, published on the newly created Caliphate Voice Channel website. "O monotheist Muslims ... O Mujahideen across the world; today we announce the end of a stage of Jihad and the start of a new one, in which we lay the first cornerstone of the Islamic Caliphate project and revive the glory of religion."

The al-Qaida site also accused Shi'ites of working with the United States to kill former Iraqi al-Qaida leader Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi.

MOST PEOPLE today who watch what is happening, are wondering what will ultimately happen to Iraq.

Iraq is in a state of virtual civil war. We see four groups working in Iraq for various purposes:

- * The Al-Qaida-backed Sunnis
- * The Iran-backed Shi'ites
- * The independent-minded Kurds, and
- * The moderate coalitionists who still believe in a federal democratic Iraq.

The first two groups are radical, anti-Israel and opposed to each other - the Sunni-Shia divide. And as moderates are seldom the winners these days, Iraq is likely to split into three. But ultimately modern Iraq does not have a prosperous future.

I expect the 60% Shias of Iraq will eventually line up with Iran and ultimately with the confederation of Rosh; the prophecy of which we read near the beginning of this article.

There is a major Biblical prophecy concerning Babylon and Chaldea (modern Iraq) and its ultimate horrific destruction in Jeremiah 50 & 51 - two long chapters. On the next two pages I have quoted part of this prophecy. Some of it sounds like current events in Iraq, but the prophecy is to be fully fulfilled in the Great Tribulation.

9-10 'For look! I am going to arouse and bring up against Babylon an alliance of great nations from the land of the north, and they will draw up their battle lines against her; from there she will be taken captive. Their arrows will be like those of a skilled warrior - not returning empty-handed. 'Chaldea will become plunder; all who plunder her will be gratified,' declares YHWH. (*Yahweh, the Name of the Almighty*)

13 'Because of the wrath of YHWH she will not be inhabited, but she will be **completely desolate**. Everyone who passes by Babylon will be horrified and will hiss *and* scoff because of all her plagues *and* disasters.

18 'Therefore thus says YHWH of Hosts, the God of Israel: "Watch! I am going to punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I punished the king of Assyria."

22-23 'The noise of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. How the hammer of the whole earth has been broken and shattered! **How Babylon has become a horrendous ruin among the nations!**

30 'Therefore her young men will fall in her streets, and all her men of war will be silenced in that day.'

32 The arrogant one will stumble and fall with no one to raise him up; and I shall set fire to his cities and it will devour everything around him.”

39-40 ‘Therefore the desert creatures will live *there* along with the jackals. The ostriches also will live in it, and it will never again be inhabited or dwelt in from generation to generation. As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbours,’ declares YHWH, ‘No man will live there, nor will *any* son of man reside in it.

2 ‘And I shall dispatch foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her and may devastate her land; ‘For on every side they will be opposed to her in the day of *her* calamity.

7 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of YHWH, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad.

8 Suddenly **Babylon has fallen** and been broken. Wail over her! Bring balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed.

9 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed. ‘Forsake her and let us each go to his own country, for her judgment has reached to heaven and towers up to the very skies.

11 ‘Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers! YHWH has aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it; for it is the vengeance of YHWH, vengeance for His temple.’

29-30 So the land quakes and writhes, for the purposes of YHWH against Babylon stand, **to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitants. The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting; they stay in the strongholds; their strength is exhausted;** they are becoming *as* women. Their dwelling places are set on fire. The bars of her *gates* are broken.

42-43 The sea has come up over Babylon; she has been engulfed with its many tumultuous waves. ‘Her cities have become ruined *and* desolate, a parched and desert land; a land where no-man lives and through which no son of man passes.