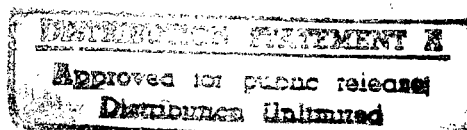




JPRS Report



Near East & South Asia

LEBANON

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Near East & South Asia

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Baqraduni on Internal Situation, U.S. Role in Area

Foresees Secular State

91AE0491A London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 3 Jun 91 p 3

[Interview with Lebanese Christian Politician Karim Baqraduni by Sana' al-Jak: "Al-Harawi's Regime on Firm Foundation; Expects End of Sectarian System to Benefit Secularism;" first four paragraphs AL-HAYAH's introduction; Beirut, date not given]

[Text] Lawyer Karim Baqraduni thinks that President Ilyas al-Harawi's regime is on a "firm foundation," which is the al-Ta'if Agreement, and that the present regime's problem "is not in finding a formula to anchor principles of government, the political agreement, and the National Accord, but rather, it is in translating this agreement into a state that is not characterized by brittleness, as was the 1943 state."

In an interview with AL-HAYAH, after the publication of his book, *La'nah Watan* (*Curse of a Nation*, published in two parts by AL-HAYAH), he said that "the al-Ta'if Agreement will be implemented in its entirety," with the exception of "Resolution 425, which pertains to the south, and has an international aspect."

Baqraduni asserted that "the important thing is to restore Lebanese confidence in Lebanon. This is the role of government." He explained that "the Lebanese will need three years to believe that peace has begun." He expects that the sectarian system in Lebanon will gradually end, to be replaced by a secular system.

With regard to the situation's developments in the Middle East, in light of talk about a new world order, Baqraduni said that the United States "is the new world order, and is clearly running the world singlehandedly." He believes that if Washington recognized freedom, justice, and people's rights in principle, there would soon be a just solution in the Middle East. However, if it continues its biased policies toward Israel... "I believe that the Middle East will explode, as Europe exploded, and will enter into an international anarchical phase in which George Bush will be the loser."

[al-Jak] The world has known several international orders, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. Today, how will the world view its new order?

[Baqraduni] The United States, in President Ronald Reagan's last term, won the cold war by showing the Soviet Union it could not keep pace in the arms race. There was a victory. The Soviet Union had lost World War Three without a shot being fired. Reagan won, and translated this into the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

I make a connection here between the U.S. victory over the Soviet Union in this cold war and the rapid change

that occurred in the last six months of 1989, as world communism collapsed and regimes demanding freedom emerged.

When President George Bush came to power, he was victorious over the Soviet Union. He had to build a new world system that would translate this victory, starting from his victory in Europe. I think that world history still operates in the Mediterranean and, consequently, President Bush had to complete President Reagan's victory by achieving a victory in the Middle East equal to his victory in Europe.

In my view, America will not create a new world order because it is the new world order. It is clearly running the world singlehandedly. Accordingly, there are two Americas: the America of freedom, justice, people's rights to self-determination, and human rights. All of this forms the face of America the beautiful. As for the other face of America, it tries to dominate world resources and hold tightly to the world economy, attempting to create international regimes, no matter what kind. America is no longer the ally of democratic regimes in the world, but rather, it is the ally of American regimes in the world.

In the Middle East, we are embarking on a new phase, in whose light will be determined which America will come to the fore. If the America of freedom, justice, and people's rights is the one that emerges, then the Middle East problem can be resolved, since Israel is its problem, not the Arabs. America can pressure Israel to take seriously the Arabs' right to land and the Palestinians' right to their state. All this can be done if America acts justly. However, we know very well that America is weak when it comes to the Israeli matter. America is strong in front of everyone else, but weak before Israel.

If the first thrust is used, then there will be a just solution in the Middle East soon. If American continues its biased policies toward Israel, which it has used from the days of its previous secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, up until today, then I can conceive of the Middle East exploding as Europe exploded. It will enter an international anarchical stage in which George Bush will be the loser.

[al-Jak] After the long period of social and political conflicts and the breakdown of classifications, what is the character of the world today, and should its main title be an era of freedoms?

[Baqraduni] For a long time, the world was divided between the theory of liberalism, which is concerned with freedom before justice, and the theory of socialism or communism, which is concerned with justice first, at the expense of freedom. The logic of socialism, and specifically Arab socialism, is that Third World countries have no objection to sacrificing a little of their freedom, which was a luxury concept, in exchange for more justice, progress, and growth.

I think that this theory has collapsed, because after the Second World War it became clear that countries that

adhered to their freedom were more successful than countries that adhered to justice. The best evidence of that is East and West Europe. Freedom brings justice, and not the reverse. The characteristic of this century ultimately will be freedom. The Arab world will not be an exception to this rule.

There is new talk in the Arab world that the outlines of democracy have begun to emerge, but true application has not begun. The question that arises now is: How can the Arab mind enter into freedom, and how can freedom enter into his world? Freedom is elusive like a drop of oil. I am optimistic that the new Arab order will be created now. The new world order is America. A period of four years will be sufficient for the outlines of freedom to emerge in the Arab order.

[al-Jak] In times past, you have experienced many ministerial and parliamentary changes. What have you been preparing for now?

[Baqradi] I have been in a state of political withdrawal. I have not engaged in direct political action because I am devoting myself to writing. I wrote my first book, *al-Salam al-Mafqud (The Lost Peace)*, during a previous withdrawal period. Since the last part of 1988, I have been occupied with writing my new book *La'nah Watan*.

Just as in the past, I shall return from my political withdrawal. It is predestined; I began as an amateur and have become a professional. How, and what, and where? This is no problem. The new stage has opened up for a reconsideration of various matters.

[al-Jak] You had been a staunch supporter of General Michel 'Awn. Is this correct?

[Baqradi] Not precisely, but I was against fighting in East Beirut. It should not have happened, but that is now history. Does that mean that I supported Michel 'Awn? Michel 'Awn's ideas included much that was valid, but many of his policies were erroneous. His losing does not mean that he was wrong, but his mismanagement of his ideas caused him to lose.

[al-Jak] You left the Lebanese Forces. Does that mean that you persist in your commitment to dissolve the militias?

[Baqradi] Certainly not. I am a long-time member of the Lebanese Forces, one of the founders. I have not carried out my duties as a deputy to the commander of the Lebanese Forces since August 1988, but my position is still vacant. In any case, there are preparations for a new structure for the future in the Lebanese Forces. Militias have not been compulsory, but rather, they are a true expression, a state of reality, which have been able to rally the people. This is contrary to the belief that they have imposed themselves by force and by arms. Otherwise, how would they have lasted for 15 years? However, this era has ended. They acquired the momentum to become more important than the state. That has ended

now, so that we may return to the age of the state. This is very good. Militia leaders know these facts. The Lebanese Forces has begun to turn to the political stage, as has the Amal Movement. Even Walid Junblatt; he has the fewest problems of anyone. It will be easy for him to change. He has a traditional and progressive political and military leadership. In the next armed stage, there will be political parties.

[al-Jak] What is the characteristic of the structure that has begun with the regime of President Ilyas al-Harawi? Is it provisional and transitional?

[Baqradi] President al-Harawi's regime is on a firm foundation that was lacking in the regimes of both presidents Ilyas Sarkis and Amin al-Jumayyil. It is based on the al-Ta'if Agreement. It is a firm foundation for a government, as I see it. This structure is distinguished by a considerable capacity for continuity. President al-Harawi's problem is not in finding a formula to anchor principles of government, political agreement, and the National Accord, but rather, it is in translating this agreement into a state that is not marked by the brittleness of the 1943 state. This is the great challenge whose outlines are not yet clear. This process needs two or three years. He has succeeded in declaring the state of peace. It remains to be seen if he can succeed in building the state of peace. It is a difficult task, and there are no guidelines for the beginning of the second republic.

[al-Jak] Do you believe that the al-Ta'if Agreement will be implemented in its entirety, and at the dates specified?

[Baqradi] I am confident of that. Of course, there is a part of the al-Ta'if Agreement that has no connection with the Lebanese-Syrian decision. That is Resolution 425, pertaining to South Lebanon. It has an international aspect. With that exception, the entire al-Ta'if Agreement will be implemented.

[al-Jak] How might the Arab disputes, and the possibility of Syrian-American disputes, affect Lebanon's course toward peace?

[Baqradi] We are living in a stage in which, on the Lebanese level and on the Middle East level, there is a real opportunity in Lebanon to employ its positive domestic changes, such as sending the army south, dissolving the militias, and its relationship with Syria, along with foreign changes. Therefore, we must hasten to benefit from these changes, so that they are not incompatible with Lebanese internal initiatives.

al-Ta'if is a settlement. As with all settlements, not everyone was satisfied. Any settlement accedes to the theses of one faction, satisfying it that there is victory on the one hand, and defeat on the other. The importance of al-Ta'if is that it does not infringe on the essence of any of the factions. This means that al-Ta'if does not motivate anyone to die for it, nor does it force anyone to die in order to abort it.

Accordingly, this settlement has the ability to succeed. This is the first time that the Arab decision is in accord with an internal and external will to end the fighting. The internal will here is an objective fact, whether or not it comes from conviction.

For the first time, simultaneity occurred, especially after the Gulf war. The crisis was ended so that Lebanon was not finished as a nation. It is capable of rebuilding what has been destroyed. The important thing is that the Lebanese regain confidence in Lebanon. This is the role of government and internationally, it is the role of the Arab nations.

There is no longer confidence in the Lebanese. This credibility no longer exists. This is the next real test for President al-Harawi's regime, which has begun successfully and, with restored confidence, will end successfully. President al-Harawi has to take utmost advantage of the opportunity, and with the utmost of bravery.

[al-Jak] After this stage, how does Lebanon approach any summer?

[Baqradi] I don't think that any problem can lead to the return of fighting; there is no climate for that. Those who fire the first shot will be condemned. However, returning to a strong state, or continuing to be a weak state, this is the option. This means a choice between our being a state that tries to make progress, or being in the category of the Third World countries, continuing without electricity or public services, etc., but without war.

Most importantly, the government must return confidence to the people, in order to stimulate economic life. The Lebanese did not believe that war broke out in April 1975. We date events in several rounds. The regime of President Sarkis is associated with the two-year war. In 1978, we believed that the country could live in a state of war. I think that the Lebanese will need three years to believe that peace has begun.

[al-Jak] What are the changes in sectarian political reality in Lebanon, and what is the fate of the Maronites?

[Baqradi] I have become convinced that Lebanon in the year 2000 will not be sectarian. As the age of militias has ended, so will the sectarian system gradually end, replaced by secularism.

If we talk expressly about sects, I would say that the Maronites have lost, and the Shi'ites have won. However in fact, this loss and this win do not signify much. The spread of true fundamentalism, which began with the Iranian Revolution, has not been exportable. The most important export of the revolution is not its Islamic republics. There is only Hizballah in Lebanon. Even in Iran, there is new political talk. The fundamentalist idea has existed as an idea only for a long time. However, poverty and repression are what pushes fundamentalist movements toward violence.

The Lebanese climate hinders repression, and the Lebanese nature rules out poverty. We will decide the direction toward secularism; it remains for the Lebanese to get rid of sectarian feelings. We must move, and we shall move, toward a time when we will be aware that sectarianism cannot replace the nation. Nationalism will grow and sectarianism diminish as a reaction to war, especially since the Lebanese have proved their inability to build their nation from within their sect, in isolation from the other sects. The sole choice of the Lebanese is to distance themselves from sectarianism, or else suicide will be their sole destiny.

Book Critical of U.S. Role

91AE0491B Paris AL-DUWALIYAH in Arabic
24 Jun 91 p 25

[Article: "Karim Baqradi: Lebanon, the Arab Poland"]

[Text] Karim Baqradi has held more than one post in the Lebanese Phalange Party and the Lebanese Forces and has played a major political role for the last 20 years. In his new book, he reviews some of the major events in Lebanon and in the region.

La'nah Watan (Curse of Nation) in Arabic, *Le Piegé* (The Trap) in French, are two titles for one book with the same meaning, but in a different language. The writer is lawyer Karim Baqradi, who has held more than one position in the Phalange Party and in the Lebanese Forces' command. He has played a major role in Lebanese political circles for the past 20 years, especially during the long war. He chronicled all this not as a commentator only, but rather as someone who wanted to bear witness to events he saw and participated in.

He spoke to members of the Lebanese Journalists' Association in France on the occasion of his book's publication in Paris in French.

During his speech, Baqradi said that the birth of his second book, which has received widespread acceptance—it sold 30,000 copies in three weeks in Beirut—was in the same circumstances as his first book, *al-Salam al-Mafqud* (The Lost Peace). They were both the result of a stage of "political isolation" in which he found himself. He said that he began *La'nah Watan* in September 1990 and finished it in April 1991. He pointed out that when he finished writing the synopsis, he wanted it to appear at just the right time. He noted that the date coincided with 13 April, the anniversary of the Lebanese War in 1975, i.e., Lebanon's date with the "curse." He felt as if Lebanon today is the same, but 16 years have passed since the date of the curse, and it is over.

Baqradi reviewed the book's six chapters, beginning with the first, entitled "The Trap of Presidents." He summarized it as follows: "During 15 years, the war consumed six presidents, an average of 1 every 2.5 years. The war also consumed four prime ministers, as well as two speakers of parliament." The writer inferred that

political "Maronism" has collapsed considerably, and that its downfall began with the decision not to hold presidential elections as scheduled in the summer of 1988. Then came the war in the Eastern Zone, between the army commanded by General Michel 'Awn and the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Ja'ja', increasing the weakness of political Maronism, "whose decline was confirmed by the al-Ta'if Agreement, which withdrew executive powers from the Maronite president."

In the face of the decline of political Maronism, Baqraduni believes that the Sunnis have established their position in the Lebanese political structure, while the Shi'ites have emerged as the strongest faction. The Shi'ite phase has begun, and "the Shi'ite faction is the Maronites of 1943."

In Chapter Two, "Explosive Peace," Baqraduni believes that the "major blunder" made by former president Shaykh Amin Jamayyil was to accept negotiation with Israel (the 17 May Agreement) and then demand that Syria approve—instead of the reverse. Syria could not accept any Lebanese-Israeli agreement. In Baqraduni's opinion, it was assumed that Syria would negotiate first and then demand approval from Israel. The writer noted that al-Jamayyil erred because he complied with "American booby-trapped advice" and that the 17 May Agreement was "a flawed agreement."

Baqraduni went on to discuss U.S. responsibility in the war of Lebanon which, in his words, "is non-existent for Americans. They see this country as a function, not a nation."

According to the writer, the American mentality thinks that some countries in the region are "necessary," such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, while other countries like Lebanon, for example, "can be dispensed with." Moreover, in terms of this mentality, the Arab world is "a geographic area, not an area of humanity."

Baqraduni discussed the Lebanese experience with the United States, describing the so-called American guarantee in Lebanon as "merely an illusion." He believes that if the United States really and truly wanted to end the Lebanese war, it could have done so within a matter of months, through exerting one-tenth of the effort it put forth to resolve the Gulf crisis. He considers American statements about the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon to have no connection with American policy. This policy, which former American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had the biggest role in formulating, concentrates on the two goals of naturalization and partition. He noted that if there have been developments in the first goal, the second goal has changed from "partition," i.e., the establishment of a Christian state in exchange for "naturalizing" the Palestinians, to "parcels of influence," that is, the south would be "left to Israeli influence," and the remainder of Lebanon "subject to Syrian influence." In Baqraduni's view, this is the American strategic balance, and serves American purposes.

The writer pointed out that the present American administration has decided not to intervene in the Lebanese crisis, but to leave it to Syria to deal with.

The most important point in the third chapter, "Age of Uprisings and the Hawks' Agreement," (Uprisings within the Lebanese Forces and the Tripartite Agreement brokered by Damascus), is Baqraduni's analysis of the Syrian role in Lebanon. Baqraduni recalls an analogy from the past: If Syria is the "Prussia of the Arabs" in Kamal Junblatt's opinion, then President Hafiz al-Asad—in Baqraduni's view—is "the Arabs' Bismarck."

The longtime Phalangist negotiating partner and interlocutor with Damascus adds that he is convinced that al-Asad initially sent his forces into Lebanon expressly as a "preventive operation," and that the matter developed over time. President al-Asad has got to the point now where he wants "the most value" through his demand for favored and dedicated relations in a pact. Baqraduni expands his thesis, pointing out that the Syrian president saw the start of the Lebanese War as "a deliberate process to overturn all the results of the 1973 War, especially since it coincided with the start of the 'Arabs' isolation because of the signing of separate agreements with Israel." Moreover, according to Baqraduni, al-Asad was afraid that "the Lebanese war would lead to the establishment of a Christian or Palestinian state in Lebanon or to two states together. In either case, al-Asad could not stand idly by as an observer. Furthermore, in the event of his intervention, Israel might decide to strike at him. Therefore—carefully guarding against a political or military defeat—al-Asad intervened when he chose, and in his own way." Baqraduni noted that Kissinger wanted "to embroil Syria in explosive Lebanon and weaken it, in addition to dealing a blow to the Palestinians and their allies on the Lebanese left, in the least expensive way."

Marwan Hammadah on Economy, Relations With Syria

91AE0512B London AL-HAWADITH in Arabic
5 Jul 91 pp 22-23

[Interview With Marwan Hamadah, Lebanon's Economy and Commerce Minister, by Halah al-Husayni; "Minister Marwan Hamadah to AL-HAWADITH: Political Reform Starts With Administrative Reform; Treaty Creates Common Market Beneficial to Both Lebanon and Syria;" place and date not given]

[Text] Beirut—It is the opinion of Economy and Commerce Minister Marwan Hamadah that the Lebanese-Syrian treaty is capable of creating a common Lebanese-Syrian market, especially since Lebanon's economic interest is in opening up the vast Syrian market.

Hammadah said that if Israel insists on its occupation, despite the chance the government has given the peaceful solution by adhering to the security plan and to the

al-Ta'if Accord and if peaceful means falter, then resuming an escalated national resistance will be inevitable.

This was stated in the following interview which AL-HAWADITH conducted with Minister Hammadah:

[Husayni] The Lebanese-Syrian fraternity, cooperation, and coordination treaty calls for coordination and cooperation between the two countries in the economic area. How do you see the nature of this cooperation and coordination, keeping in mind that some economic circles express fear that Lebanon may suffer economic harm as a result of this treaty?

[Hammadah] The fact is that the majority of the economic circles have not expressed any fear. Inversely, they are demanding that details for implementing the treaty at the economic level be drafted promptly because the treaty spells out the broad lines for cooperation and coordination, but does not touch on the details. But all provisions of the treaty retain each of the two countries' right to protect whatever comes under or is connected with the constitutional provisions. In our opinion, this protects Lebanon's free economy decisively and inarguably. Within the framework of this free economy, we must develop the economic relationship with Syria to the furthest limits possible, i.e. to limits that do not clash with the fundamental requirements of the Syrian Arab economy or the basic principles of the Lebanese economy. These limits should include all sectors. In trade, as in the exchange of capital and citizens, the restrictions that have been in place since the 1951 estrangement that have continued to shackle the two countries and to obstruct the coordinated development of their economies must be lifted. Moreover, efforts must be started to unify whatever can be unified on the path of a common Lebanese-Syrian market. This includes, first, exempting all Lebanese or Syrian goods from administrative shackles and customs fees; second, begin a study to unify customs laws so that Lebanon and Syria could become a single customs zone gradually. Capital investment and the employment of one country's citizens in the other country must be facilitated.

All this is nothing new to Syria and Lebanon. During the French mandate, Syria and Lebanon constituted a single economic unit, customs unit, and currency unit, and they were united by common interests. The new Lebanese-Syrian treaty has not accomplished all these goals and has not gone this far. However, it has set matters aright and put the train on the track to normalized relations. The relations are not special because Lebanon and Syria want them to be special, but because they are special geographically and historically and special in the joint economic, political, and security interests. Thus, I believe that what is rumored about conflict in the economic interests does not at all apply to the truth. Conversely, it is in Lebanon's economic interest to have the vast Syrian market, with its 15 million consumers, open to the Lebanese, their goods, their industries, their capabilities, and their capital. It is also in Syria's interest

and in the interest of its industry and agriculture to have an open Lebanese market as a natural market for their products.

At a time when countries of the world are uniting economically and when we see blocs sprouting up here and there, from Latin America to North America, the EEC, the African Common Market, the economic blocs in the Far East, to the economic bloc which has been created between the Gulf, Syria, and Egypt as a result of the Damascus declaration—all this motivates us to seek, while we are approaching the new era of the year 2000, comprehensive economic solutions with broader horizons. These begin, of course, with the Lebanese-Syrian common market.

[Husayni] So there is no justification for the apprehensive to fear any economic harm?

[Hammadah] Absolutely not. On the contrary, there is no place for fear. There is place for hope and aspiration, for moving forward, seeking commercial, industrial, and economic business opportunities, for marketing goods, for tourism coordination and transit unification, and for whatever is facilitated by completely open borders. Nowadays, the world is developing economically through freedom and expansion. There can be no economic expansion for Lebanon except through Syria, and there can be no economic expansion for Syria except through Lebanon.

[Husayni] Since you assumed the Ministry of Economy, you have embraced an economic policy that deals with all details of the economic situation, beginning with price control and ending with the quality and suitability of commodities. Can you tell us what accomplishments have been made in this regard?

[Hammadah] The fact is that we have begun to modernize and develop existing laws. A Lebanon that has just emerged from 16 years of war needs to reorganize its political life and to put its security instruments in order. Economy is no less important than security and politics, and it is what gives politics their real meaning, namely to serve man. Man is served by economic and social development and by being given the opportunity to live an honorable life. There can be no political democracy without economic democracy, and there can be no economic democracy unless the market is reorganized and unless purchasing power is restored to the Lebanese pound so that the Lebanese citizen's income would again have significance. Today, the Lebanese citizen is paying, perhaps with the purchasing power of his income, the bill for the war, or rather the bill for peace. Rebuilding Lebanon is a long and difficult process and each of us will shoulder its burdens. These burdens will be divided among all the Lebanese. What is important is that these burdens not be confined to the middle and underprivileged classes, as was the case in the past. They must be divided fairly, and among the well-to-do classes primarily. This is what has required us to reexamine and

rephrase many of the existing laws, especially laws connected with prices and commodities, preventing corruption and monopolies, checking profit rates, and restoring some sort of efficient control over the markets. I am not saying that we have reached the end of the road. The project is a drawn-out project that requires extensive followup, especially since establishing economic control over the market requires civilian, military, and security instruments. This control has begun to prove efficient, thanks to the fact that the security forces and the Ministry of Economy's control agencies have regained their health.

I will not say that full order has been restored to the prices which were "out of control," if we may use the phrase. But it has become evident to every merchant that violating the profit rates, manipulating prices, failing to post these prices openly, offering goods for sale that are no longer fit for consumption, deceitful advertising, and manipulating employment expose the violator to stiff penalties, especially since laws have been amended to increase fines and prison terms. The judiciary is moving anew and interacting. Special price control courts are convened daily and they hold their sessions to punish violators.

All this has created a better climate in the market. I can ascertain that this action will continue. There are now a number of laws before the Chamber of Deputies, including a new law to curb corruption because corruption has, regrettably, become one of the fundamental maladies in the post-war Lebanon and the name of Lebanon and of Beirut have come to be tied to cheating in all economic fields. Corruption ranges from petty corruption to serious corruption, which poses a threat to the Lebanese consumer and Lebanese citizen because it may harm public health. This is why we have submitted new bills that call for stiff prison terms against whoever introduces into the markets goods that may pose a threat to public safety, particularly to public health.

The fact is that this responsibility is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, which continues program which I established as soon as I assumed control of this ministry. The program began by reactivating the Controllers Agency. This agency had been absent from the arena, it lacked all transportation capabilities, and it needed strong support from the domestic security forces and real backing from the Lebanese judiciary. This entire agency has been rehabilitated and reactivated, thanks to the ceaseless daily cooperation and communication between the Ministry of Economy and the public prosecutor. All these matters are really pursued. In the coming weeks, the cabinet is invited to hold continuous retreats connected with reorganizing the Lebanese administration. There is no doubt that true reform is not confined to the constitutional provisions and to the mere appointment of deputies. Primarily, it requires rehabilitating, reactivating, and modernizing the Lebanese administration, because without an effective and honest Lebanese administration, there will be

no real and profound political reform to serve the citizen and there will be no economic rebuilding.

[Husayni] The reckoning day of 30 July, a date connected with spreading state authority over the remaining provinces, is approaching. Do you expect the government to succeed in carrying the day, especially in the south, where Israel's threats continue? Subsequently, how do you view implementation of Resolution 425?

[Hammadah] The government, despite all the obstacles it has faced, has not been stopped by any obstacle. What I mean is that, since this government—to give the previous government which ended General Michel 'Awn's rebellion its due, since that government—was formed, it has been working to implement and apply the provisions of the al-Ta'if Accord article by article and paragraph by paragraph. To date, we have not, God be thanked, failed to accomplish any provision. The major challenge continues to be the challenge of ending the war where it started, i.e., in the south. This can be accomplished with two things: Liberating the south and spreading state sovereignty over it. Because the two are interconnected, the Lebanese Government must first expand its sphere of sovereignty and authority to the south as of 1 July. This may not be fully accomplished on 1 July. The grace period is from the beginning of July to the end of September. But I can assure you that as we have implemented all that we pledged to implement in the cabinet statement according to the schedule we have established, we will certainly be in the entire south, perhaps with the exception of the border strip. But I am not saying that this will deter or delay us from seeking to implement resolution 425. Conversely, as soon as we complete the security plan for the liberated part of the south, we will ask international organizations to respect their commitment on the south. Rather, we will impose on them respect for their commitment. By then, we will have disarmed the Israeli enemy of all its arguments: The argument of the armed presence and the argument of the insecure borders. But I will say very responsibly that secure borders are not the occupation borders. Secure borders are the internationally-recognized Lebanese border, the border behind which Israel will have to withdraw and the border to which resolution 425 applies. But if Israel insists on its occupation despite the chance we are giving the peaceful solution through our adherence to our security plan, to the al-Ta'if Accord, and, finally, to the provisions of resolution 425—if Israel insists on its occupation, then we will have no option but to resume an escalated national resistance to liberate the south with military means if the political and diplomatic means fail.

[Husayni] Don't you see chances for implementing resolution 425?

[Hammadah] Certainly. Israel will try to obstruct implementation of the resolution and we will most certainly continue to seek to implement it, hoping fully that the current onrush toward a comprehensive solution in the region and toward a regional European conference on

the area, despite all the obstacles erected by Israel will inevitably triumph in the end. Even though the Israeli scheme to gain time, to accelerate settlement activity, and to build more settlements—i.e., the scheme to gain time until the date of the U.S. presidential elections approaches, so that the Zionist lobby can again resume active efforts in the United States—is obvious, it is my belief that the united Arab position, especially the Lebanese-Syrian treaty and the complete Lebanese-Syrian coordination it has created, means that nobody can drive a wedge between the positions of Damascus and Beirut any more. Egypt's resumption of its coordination and cooperation with Syria, and Jordan's extremely disciplined position within this cooperation, lead us to believe that Israel will ultimately have to submit to international will, agree to the international conference, and begin the peace process.

[Husayni] Do you think that the difference in the U.S. and Syrian views on holding an international or a regional conference for settlement in the region affects the situation in Lebanon negatively?

[Hammadah] The difference on form is ultimately a reflection of the difference on content. I imagine that the Arab countries would not cling to formalities if they were reassured that Israel would withdraw from the occupied territories and would give the Palestinian people their rights. But nothing of the sort has been displayed to date. On the contrary, it is evident, first, that Israel clings to the major part of the occupied Arab territories and second, that it refuses to give the Palestinian people not only their national rights, but the right to be represented at the regional or international conference. Therefore, we and all the Arab countries have continued to cling to what pertains to the formalities of the international conference because we do not wish to give in to Israel or do not wish to abandon our axiomatic rights at a time when we have not yet seen a sign of the Israeli enemy loosening up.

[Husayni] Let us return to the domestic situation in Lebanon. How do you view the fact that Dr. Samir Ja'ja', the Lebanese Forces commander, has distanced himself from personal participation in the solution process? Do you think that this distancing comes from a certain background and then from wagers on certain regional developments?

[Hammadah] If the background is connected with the regional conditions or if he expects or hopes that the conditions will be upturned regionally, then I don't believe that this wager will be successful. I put the position of the Lebanese Forces commander in a different square. I put it in a special psychological square and, second, in a security square connected with his person. I imagine that shifting from security and military action to political action requires an adaptation phase. I imagine that that Samir Ja'ja' is going through this adaptation phase.

[Husayni] You have spoken of establishing state authority over all of Lebanon's territories as of the beginning of July. Do you believe that a Palestinian obstacle no longer exists in the face of the army's deployment?

[Hammadah] There is no doubt that the PLO has a viewpoint on its position in the south that does not fully agree with the Lebanese Government's viewpoint on this position. But in view of Israeli arrogance and of the enemy's position, I believe that the coordination that was begun and that has assumed a trilateral Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian dimension recently will find the proper solutions that permit state authority to be established in the south without clashes with anybody.

[Husayni] We conclude with the economy which continues to worsen. The cabinet has announced that there will be open sessions to examine this situation. Do you have a vision of the economic cures?

[Hammadah] In the past two months, the Lebanese pound's purchasing power has improved and the prices of a large number of imported commodities have decreased. For example, the prices of all imported essentials have decreased because these prices were calculated in dollars. The dollar exchange rate has dropped versus the Lebanese pound. But this does not mean that inflation has lessened in Lebanon because milk, rice, and sugar are not everything. There are schools, transportation, rents, medical care, and clothing. None of these other sectors are, for example, subject to the direct control of the Ministry of Economy. These sectors are governed by economic considerations other than just prices. If we consider the general tendency, we find that the increase in wages is a reflection of the increase in the teachers' wages. Teachers have gotten an increase of more than 60 percent. This has greatly affected the educational sector. This sector and the health sector are the two most sensitive sectors in the inflation issue today, and they greatly influence the inflation indicator. I only wish we could have a certain degree of control, and I say a certain degree because we cannot deny the teacher [his increase]. An increase in the teacher's salary has its ramifications for the government and the citizen.

Regarding the economic situation, there is no doubt that we will go through hard and difficult periods. We cannot emerge from a long war and demand to promptly return to the 1974 standard of living. We need years to rebuild, reorganize the administration, and build the business center. All this will cost money.

[Husayni] Is there a certain plan for this purpose, especially since it has been announced that the cabinet will hold open retreats to examine the various issues?

[Hammadah] In addition to the retreats, there is a Higher Coordination Committee, headed by the prime minister and including the ministers of finance, transport, foreign affairs, and economy; the governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon; and the chairman of the Development and Reconstruction Board, to see that

efforts are coordinated. This committee has begun to operate effectively. For example, it is now studying the rents law and the new tax system. It is not important that we levy taxes. It is not important to levy taxes on citizen groups who cannot afford them. There is no doubt that coordinating economic activity and drafting a plan that can encompass all sectors is a hard and difficult process. I will again say that we need an effective administration. Even if we lay down the best plans, we must first begin by building the Lebanese administration, if we want them to be beneficial.

[Husayni] We must ask here about the Arab Fund's and IMF's support for Lebanon.

[Hammadah] We are actually awaiting this [Arab] fund, not because we rely on it, considering that it will not build Lebanon. But we depend on the fund to give us the first dose to build the economy. We need initial support, just as a car needs to have the ignition turned so that it can start.

We are all aware of the reasons for the fund's delay, namely the Gulf war. Now that the war has gone away, it seems that the plan is gaining new vigor and new momentum. What the minister of foreign affairs has brought back from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait is encouraging.

Deputy al-Dana: Freedom of Expression Casualty of War

91AE0471B London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
4 Jul 91 p 3

[Interview with Parliamentary Deputy 'Uthman al-Dana, by Shukri Nasrallah in Paris; date not given: "Al-Harawi Works To Implement al-Ta'if Agreement to the Letter, No Group May Vie in Strength With the Lebanese Army"—first three paragraphs are AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT introduction]

[Text] Lebanese Chamber of Deputies Member 'Uthman al-Dana told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, "There is a difference between an appointed parliamentary deputy and one elected by the people, namely the extent to which each represents the people. Nevertheless, we hope that our colleagues, the appointed deputies, will prove that they are at a good level of sound, popular democratic representation." In his interview with AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT the Beirut deputy said, "Freedom of expression, particularly the freedom of parliamentary deputies, was one of the main casualties of the Lebanese war. Many fell because of it and many emigrated, including parliamentary deputies and political and popular figures." 'Uthman al-Dana said, "All who participated in the Lebanese war and those who helped them, armed them, or backed them are responsible for what befell democracy and freedom in Lebanon. Any reward to them seems wrong."

Deputy al-Dana said that what is happening now in Lebanon—national reconciliation and the special relationship with Syria—is the inevitable result of the al-Ta'if agreement that we all approved. Although the current government of thirty does not in its majority represent the Lebanese will, Lebanese now have the duty of adjusting to it and the new reality in order to assure a minimum of secure, free, and dignified life.

The text of the interview with the Lebanese deputy follows.

[Nasrallah] As a deputy elected by the Lebanese people, do you see a difference between an elected deputy and an appointed one?

[Al-Dana] The truth is that the appointed deputies themselves feel an inferiority complex about popular representation. We hope that the new appointed colleagues will prove to the Lebanese people that they are at a good level of popular representation and will realize the people's hopes for sovereignty, freedom, and true democracy.

[Nasrallah] Regarding the course of democracy, do you think that the appointment of over a third of the new Chamber of Deputies will influence the play of democracy in Lebanon?

[Al-Dana] Naturally; but it depends on how the appointed deputies behave, and whether they perform their national duties with complete freedom and according to the true principles of democracy, so that their action and their positions derive from their living national conscience. This will realize the hopes and desires of the Lebanese people after a long, bloody war and the loss of public freedoms in Lebanon, not to mention the destruction to Lebanon's infrastructure, official institutions, economy, and prosperity.

[Nasrallah] What freedoms do you think Lebanon has lost because of the war?

[Al-Dana] The first of them is freedom to express the hopes and aspirations of the people and to take the necessary national positions at the appropriate time. The greatest proof of this is the fact that the Lebanese people's representatives, except a few of them, have lost the freedom to take national positions. Anyone who violates this rule either loses his life or his property or is forced to leave Lebanon. Many deputies have been subjected to this. The people's remaining representatives or the people themselves have been prisoners of this atmosphere, this thwarting of wills, and this wresting away of freedoms at all levels.

[Nasrallah] Who is it who has wrested away the freedoms of these people?

[Al-Dana] All who participated in the Lebanese war and all the militias. The militias, their aides, their supporters, and those who supplied them with arms or money—all of them were responsible for the wresting away of

freedoms in Lebanon, each according to his responsibilities. They should not be rewarded with parliamentary or ministerial positions. Reward is exculpation, but in the eyes of God, the country, and the people those men are not innocent.

[Nasrallah] Where do you think Lebanon is heading now?

[Al-Dana] The country and people of Lebanon are now binding up their wounds. The main concern is for peace to return to the land of Lebanon and for the everyone's fighting, whatever the reason, to stop on its soil. Lebanon the country is more important than anything else. The Lebanese, in effect, have only Lebanon. That is the reality on Lebanon's soil now. What is happening now in Lebanon is of course the inevitable result of the national agreement enshrined in the al-Ta'if document. The rescue that the Lebanese are now experiencing was produced by the deputies at al-Ta'if. The current administration is working to implement the al-Ta'if agreement to the letter. Lebanon's salvation, in my view, lies in the unity of its people and in their backing the administration in everything that will promote a return of peace to the land of Lebanon, a permanent end to rule by militias, and national unity, which includes action to regain complete sovereignty over all Lebanese territory. But I must say that even by implementing the al-Ta'if agreement, we in Lebanon are not practicing democracy in its real scientific sense. Democracy is not being practiced adequately by the Lebanese. Democracy means, first of all, government of the people, by the people, or by the people's real representatives. Unfortunately, the people are being governed by appointed figures, most of whom do not represent the free popular will. The government of thirty ruling Lebanon is the greatest proof of this. In terms of its make-up and composition, the real play of democracy was missing from it, lacking, or violated. It was installed before the people's representatives voiced their opinion about it, and its make-up was mostly known before it was installed. Nevertheless, we boldly say that the Lebanese should adjust to this reality in order to assure a minimum of free, dignified, and secure life.

[Nasrallah] Given this feeling in parliament, why didn't the people's representatives object to the make-up of the government, for example by withdrawing their confidence?

[Al-Dana] If you review what the deputies said during the confidence session, and if you listen to the deputies in their private sessions, you will see that their words support my view. However, the deputies—and I as one of them—in effect had to express their objections and speak the truth on the floor of parliament and in their sessions. They also had to leave the administration room to follow its peace policy in whatever acceptable minimal democratic atmosphere Lebanon and its representatives were allowed to practice.

[Nasrallah] Let us discuss the Lebanese-Syrian treaty. Do you think it will help the course of national reconciliation, or will it be a new opening for conflict between Lebanese?

[Al-Dana] Unlike what some people think, it was very natural for a national understanding to exist between Lebanon and Syria and a guarantee of strong, fraternal relations. (I used the word "fraternal" at al-Ta'if, as the transcript of the al-Ta'if sessions proves.) Had such fraternal relations been established before the war, they would have spared Lebanon the results of this destructive war. I therefore said in the parliamentary sessions that granted the government the right to conclude the treaty with Syria that I understand these relations as true brotherly relations in which Lebanese and Syrians are equal at all levels in rights and duties in an atmosphere of mutual trust and good faith. This will guarantee both countries full sovereignty over all their territory and complete, total independence for each.

[Nasrallah] The question remains whether you think the treaty will help the course of reconciliation or be a source of conflict between the Lebanese.

[Al-Dana] The establishment of this treaty will doubtlessly have a positive effect on security and daily life in Lebanon. It will lead to the end of the rule of the militias and armed men of whatever faction. It will help restore Lebanon's infrastructure and government institutions and unify the Lebanese army, which is the backbone of sovereignty and independence, and whose unity was broken during the criminal war.

[Nasrallah] The Lebanese army is now embarking on what we may term the work of recovering the land. There have been battles between it and the Palestinians in the South. Do you support the forceful deployment of the army over all Lebanese territory?

[Al-Dana] When the fighting began because of disagreement with the armed Palestinian factions in Lebanon because of their armed struggle in and through Lebanon, the government should not have allowed any armed group to gain strength and vie with the Lebanese army. Lebanon's highest interest should have outweighed every feeling about the Palestinian issue and the liberation of Palestine. Unfortunately, this did not take place. The successive stands of the Lebanese government consisted of one indulgence after another. Finally, fighting broke out after the Palestinians entered the Lebanese domestic game, polarized one group against another, and deceived all the parties in Lebanon. This made Lebanon a tasty morsel for all who did not wish it to prosper or remain a beacon of democracy and freedoms in the Middle East. But now, after the al-Ta'if agreement and the dissolution and disarmament of the militias, our Palestinian brothers must realize that what applies to the Lebanese must apply to them. From now on they must not seize Lebanese territory for their cause. Lebanon, as a country and as a people, can no longer bear this struggle and military presence. People have had enough violence. I

am for every government measure aimed at stopping Palestinian military activity in and through Lebanon and at subjecting Palestinians to Lebanese laws. At the same time, I always stress that Lebanon, like all the Arab states, is committed to the cause of liberating Palestinian territory.

[Nasrallah] You indicated that this government does not represent the Lebanese people's aspirations and hopes. What are your criticisms of it?

[Al-Dana] I have already said that its make-up and installation were a blow to the free practice of democracy. Although I respect the majority of the government's members as individuals, I object to the presence in it of the war commanders. Nevertheless, one must say that the government in this form came as a result of the settlement that took place at al-Ta'if. It had to be accepted temporarily, because the regional and international atmosphere was working in that direction. As you know, the matter is not entirely in the hands of the deputies. We back the government on this basis, so that it can finish its job with all due speed and then depart from the scene with or without gratitude. History will judge for or against it and against the war leaders in it.

Deputy Mu'awwad on Role of Women, National Issues

91AE0512A London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
10 Jul 91 p 6

[Interview with Lebanese Deputy Na'ilah Mu'awwad by Zaki Shihab in Washington; "Lebanese Deputy Na'ilah Mu'awwad to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT: Women Are Excluded From Legislative and Executive Authorities; I Support Sale of Public Establishments to Private Sector;" date not given]

[Text] Washington, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT bureau—Na'ilah Mu'awwad, wife of the late Lebanese President Rene Mu'awwad, is the second woman to enter the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies after Myrna al-Bustani, who entered the Chamber after her father's death. Though Mrs. al-Bustani has moved away from political activity to devote herself to cultural activity in Lebanon and abroad, Na'ilah asserts that her mission is to complete the message for which her husband was martyred and to carry on with his political line that calls, in particular, for Lebanon's unity, safeguarding human rights, implementing social justice, equality among the Lebanese and Lebanon's provinces, freedom, and justice.

AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT conducted the following interview with Mrs. Mu'awwad during her stay in Washington to take part in the conference of Americans of Lebanese extraction and to receive a medal in the name of her departed husband.

[Shihab] What is the first issue awaiting the Chamber and the first activity you wish to embark upon as a deputy in the parliament?

[Mu'awwad] When President Mu'awwad was with us, I was deeply interested in the social issue. Today, I hope to contribute to foreign relations, in addition to taking my district's and my constituency's demands to the legislative authority. Foremost among these demands is the demand for administrative development and for development and application of the law to the letter.

[Shihab] Does this mean that you call for amending the laws that Lebanon knows?

[Mu'awwad] Not exactly. Rather, I call for working to implement them properly and to add to them.

Regarding the tax law, for example, 80 percent of the Lebanese people were considered middle class. This class, which protected democracy in Lebanon, has disappeared. Employees, who formed the major part of this class, paid their taxes, whereas businessmen and people with unlimited income found a thousand ways to avoid paying.

[Shihab] Some women in Lebanon have preceded you to the political arena. To what degree can it be said that you will add something new to their experience?

[Mu'awwad] It is true that I did not previously engage in political activity as I am now engaged in it. But my entering the Chamber as a consequence of the circumstances of which everybody in Lebanon is aware is a development that cannot be disregarded. I hope that the door will be opened for general elections in Lebanon and that the opportunity will be given to elect other women to the Chamber. It was truly interesting to see women in Lebanon excluded from both the executive and legislative authorities throughout the past period.

[Shihab] Does this mean that you will carry the banner of women in Lebanon?

[Mu'awwad] There is no doubt that Lebanese women today feel that I represent them. They have expressed their support for me.

[Shihab] Do you expect more women to take part in the coming election battle?

[Mu'awwad] I hope that this will happen and that women will succeed in the political arena. From the experiences of other countries and in my opinion, I do not find that women's presence [in politics] is incompatible with their being mothers, sisters, and housewives.

[Shihab] During the short period of your political activity, you have visited several countries on various missions. What character have your visits taken?

[Mu'awwad] I have taken part in a number of conferences in Atlanta, in the U.S. State of Georgia, and in Washington and Bonn. I plan to take part in conferences in Italy and Switzerland soon. The topics of these conferences range from political debates to the environment and development.

[Shihab] Has the Lebanese male politician reached the phase in which he deals with a woman working in the political field as his equal?

[Mu'awwad] Yes. I have entered the political arena normally, considering that all family members and the friends of President Mu'awwad asked me unanimously to shoulder the responsibility and complete the president's political procession. This is what has happened.

[Shihab] How do you view the manner in which you were appointed a deputy?

[Mu'awwad] I am aware that these appointments do not meet the Lebanese people's aspirations and dreams and that they constitute an unacceptable principle. But in my opinion, they are also a phase dictated by the circumstances that Lebanon has experienced. I believe that the first challenge facing the current Chamber of Deputies is the challenge of exerting efforts to create the right climate for holding free and honest elections. When the al-Ta'if conference decided on appointments a year and a half ago, this decision was part of a contribution to national reconciliation. I believe that it is important to view the appointments from this perspective, because war has created a fait accompli on the ground. To our knowledge, political life in Lebanon is a different reality.

The appointments are also a means to enhance participation in national reconciliation by having the new leaders, who have surfaced during the Lebanese crisis, participate with the old leaders. But I hope that the current phase will be a short one so that a new climate leading to general elections sponsored by the official Lebanese authorities will be created.

The Lebanese need a period of time to acquaint themselves with each other, especially since the young generations who have grown up under the crisis are ignorant of their neighboring towns and villages because of the internecine fighting witnessed by every part of Lebanon.

Freedom must be a responsible freedom. For a voter to be responsible, he is supposed to know more about his country and its people.

As for those who ask why elections have not been held, I say that the voter lists, on whose basis the election process was conducted, are not available now. Actually, most of those lists have been burnt. I stress that these appointments will not be repeated in the future. They must be viewed from a positive angle.

[Shihab] If elections were held in the near future, would you run as a candidate?

[Mu'awwad] Certainly, because this is a duty I owe the people and the principles for which President Mu'awwad paid his life.

[Shihab] Have people supported you as strongly as they supported President Mu'awwad in the past?

[Mu'awwad] Perhaps more, because most people have been aware of the dimensions of the loss and of the responsibilities. This support has reached such a degree that some people who harbored nothing but love for President Mu'awwad but who did not visit us to display their support have been coming to visit us regularly to demonstrate their support for us.

[Shihab] To what degree can it be said that what has been implemented of the al-Ta'if Accord meets the aspirations of the Lebanese?

[Mu'awwad] Primarily, the al-Ta'if Accord opened the door for inter-Lebanese dialogue. If we backtrack to a year and a half ago, we would become more clearly aware of the importance of the accord, which the Lebanese reached under the auspices of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for a country which had been devastated by war and in which people could not see each other. Thanks to this accord, people, parties, and various circles began suddenly to sit around the same table to hold an inter-Lebanese dialogue, during which foundations were laid for a new constitution.

Some people believe that this constitution must not be touched. But in any developed country, the constitution develops with the development of events. Most provisions of the Lebanese constitution, which dates back to the 1920s, were not touched in 1943 for an obvious reason, namely that there was no trust among the Lebanese.

The constitution completed in accordance with the al-Ta'if Accord has taken this matter into account. It is true that we can say that it has not fulfilled all aspirations, but it has played an important role in the inter-Lebanese dialogue and has provided the opportunity for building the new Lebanon to which we have been aspiring. The al-Ta'if Accord, in addition to what I have mentioned, has given rise to the issue of the need for decentralization in Lebanon to develop the provinces and to accomplish other things that contribute to building a state and a homeland.

[Shihab] In this regard, are you an advocate of selling public sector establishments to the private sector and to the citizens?

[Mu'awwad] Yes, I support this strongly. It is my opinion that when there is a strong and capable government, such a sale will proceed well, will serve the public interest, and will not allow these establishments to fall under the control of a small group of investors.

These words should not excuse us from praising the private sector, which has continued to operate in Lebanon under the most difficult and worst conditions. Even though this sector has grown in size and has gained strength at the expense of the state institutions, this does not negate the statement that the state institutions and administrative agencies must be developed so that they could become the leader, planner, and builder.

[Shihab] What are the most important urgent tasks facing the current government?

[Mu'awwad] Before anything else, we must look for administrative reform, which we consider very important, so that the citizen can feel that there is a serious effort to build a modern state and so that the promising capabilities existing in Lebanon can feel that they are involved in building the homeland and that an important role awaits them in building the infrastructure. After 15 years of war, many civil servants and experts have left Lebanon. Some government institutions continue to experience a truancy rate of 65 percent among their employees.

[Shihab] What is your view of the other problems from which the Lebanese society is suffering?

[Mu'awwad] As a result of the war witnessed by their land, the Lebanese have reaped countless problems. I would not be exaggerating if I said that the majority of the Lebanese need psychiatrists to treat the suffering the war has left behind, not to mention the problems of education, health, and so on.

One of the disasters of the war is that respect for teachers and for institutions no longer exists. Those who devote themselves to their studies have no hope of finding proper jobs because of the economic circumstances from which Lebanon suffers and because of the exorbitant inflation that has become unreasonably excessive. Add to this water and power outages in numerous districts. What happened in 'Akkar when a water pipeline was ruptured. Cholera spread among the citizens there because goats started drinking from open sewers. This is the best example of the condition from which we are suffering and which dictates that all Lebanese act in unity to rebuild Lebanon in a manner that ensures the future and safety of the coming generations. The current social condition poses a major challenge, and it is the responsibility of the Chamber of Deputies and the government to confront it, because this situation may cause the big explosion. The salary that an employee gets does not permit him to live with minimum dignity.

The war society and its needs are totally different from the peace society and its needs. There are entire generations which have no proper housing in which to live.

[Shihab] During the Lebanese crisis, Lebanon went through some periods of relaxation. Is the current relaxation different from the periods of relaxation Lebanon experienced in the past?

[Mu'awwad] It is different from past periods of relaxation. The first thing is that throughout the past 16 years, many Lebanese emigrated from the country. Most of these emigrants wish to return for numerous reasons, especially because of the economic crisis experienced by the countries to which they have fled. Consequently, they prefer to return to Lebanon, where they have their homes and families. Moreover, there are many who want their children to grow up among their kinsmen and relatives instead of growing up in the diaspora. As for those who are economically comfortable, they would prefer to return if modern communications could be secured for them from Beirut.

Other Lebanese continue to prefer to take their time before they return to Lebanon, especially those who left in 1975 and returned in 1977, those who left in 1978 and returned in 1979, and those who left in 1980 and returned in 1982, and so on. This is why I do not wish to say that everything will be settled overnight. But it is certain that major, practical steps have been made, be they to establish the legitimate government's authority or to disarm the militias.

[Shihab] In your opinion, have the militia leaders submitted to the new fait accompli and is a return to the past no longer possible?

[Mu'awwad] Most of the leaders have begun to be aware of the people's true sentiments. There is consensus among all the Lebanese on rejecting violence and a desire to see the government and the legitimate authority control all of Lebanon. The Lebanese army has succeeded in imposing its authority as a result of the broad popular support for its deployment. It is certain that the militia leaders have begun to realize that the people reject the militias and violence. This is something that did not exist in any form in the past phases of the Lebanese crisis.

Building Damage, Housing Problems Assessed

91AE0503A Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 3 Jun 91 p 5

[Article by 'Adnan al-Hajj]

[Text] In 1977, the Development and Construction Council estimated Lebanon's housing needs at 20,000 units per year. It should be noted that the damage that year was not as great as the present volume of damage.

Housing and Cooperatives Minister Dr. Muhammad Baydun estimates that 300,000 housing units are now needed to solve the serious housing problem that has accumulated, given that only 11,000 units were built in recent years through the loan agencies.

Minister Baydun states that the loan agencies, which include the Housing Bank, the Independent Fund, and the Housing Ministry (which makes loans for reconstruction and renovation) have had to suspend their operations for long, intermittent periods due to a shortage of funding and the collapse of the Lebanese pound.

Recently, the Housing and Cooperatives Ministry's budget was approved. About 15 billion Lebanese pounds have been allocated for renovation and reconstruction loans. Also, the loan terms have been determined for landlords and tenants. The ceilings for renovation and reconstruction loans were increased to 3 million, 8 million, and 12 million Lebanese pounds, after the ceiling had been set at about 1.5 million Lebanese pounds.

The 15 billion Lebanese pounds will cover about 2,500 to 3,000 damaged housing units, depending on the needs.

These sums are insignificant compared to preliminary statistics on damaged buildings, which show close to 46,600 damaged residential buildings, including 8,025 in Beirut alone. The housing minister has complained of the small budgetary allocation for housing loans, and he still considers the housing budget small compared to the budgets of other services ministries, from telephone to public works.

Nevertheless, Minister Baydun emphasizes that he is attempting to implement the construction of 3,000 housing units during 1991 through existing organizations, although the current need is for about 25,000 units per year.

Baydun also states that the Housing Ministry has established approximate statistics on damaged dwellings in preparation for giving greater attention to housing in negotiations to obtain loans from abroad.

He said that he will attempt to transfer, for use for housing purposes, sums that have been freed up by the elimination of the wheat subsidy. Also, new taxes will be introduced through the tax system amendment, and these taxes will also be allocated to finance housing projects. Minister Baydun has also made efforts to

introduce the subject of housing loans and the reconstruction of damaged buildings in negotiations to obtain foreign financing. For that purpose, he assigned a group of engineering teams to inventory the damage incurred by different buildings in Beirut and the other governorates.

Responding to a question posed by AL-SAFIR regarding these statistics, he emphasized that "these statistics are preliminary, not final. They are intended to provide a clear idea of the damage, in the event that it is decided to raise the financing issue with foreign parties, because statistics are necessary to hold discussions with any Arab or international party."

The statistics on damaged buildings are divided into seven categories: damaged dwellings, factories, hospitals, clinics, tourism organizations, official buildings, businesses, and places of worship.

Residential Buildings

The number of damaged residential buildings in Lebanon is estimated at 46,600 buildings, of which 33,855 require repairs, 5,273 require partial reconstruction, and 7,422 require total reconstruction.

The estimated cost of these buildings is 503.2 billion Lebanese pounds.

Beirut's share of the damaged residential buildings, including houses under construction, is 8,025 buildings costing 127.752 billion Lebanese pounds.

According to the preliminary statistics, residential buildings of the governorate of Jabal Lubnan were the most damaged, with 27,489 buildings damaged buildings costing an estimated 270.789 billion Lebanese pounds.

The governorate of South Lebanon has 4,531 damaged buildings, whose repair and reconstruction costs are set at 38.4 billion Lebanese pounds. The governorate of al-Nabatiyah has 3,413 damaged buildings, which will cost an estimated 20 billion Lebanese pounds to rebuild.

The governorate of al-Biqa' had the fewest damaged buildings, about 1,451, whose repair costs are estimated at about 7 billion Lebanese pounds. The governorate of North Lebanon has 1,691 damaged buildings, costing an estimated 39 billion Lebanese pounds.

Factories and Tourism Organizations

The Housing and Cooperatives Ministry's inventory shows 778 damaged factories in Lebanon, whose repair costs are estimated at about 57.964 billion Lebanese pounds.

The damaged factories are concentrated in the Jabal Lubnan area, which has 729 damaged factories costing about 52 billion Lebanese pounds to repair. South Lebanon has 11 damaged factories costing 137 million Lebanese pounds, and Beirut has 10 factories, which will cost an estimated 5 billion Lebanese pounds to repair.

The least damaged industrial areas are in the governorate of North Lebanon, with only four damaged factories, and the governorate of al-Biqā', with nine.

There are 383 damaged tourism organizations. The cost to rebuild them is estimated at about 39.870 billion Lebanese pounds.

Jabal Lubnan has an estimated 245 damaged tourism organizations, whose estimated cost is 14.32 billion Lebanese pounds, and Beirut has 114 damaged organizations, which will cost about 25 billion Lebanese pounds to rebuild. Among these organizations are 22 organizations in the commercial center, which will cost an estimated 10.238 billion Lebanese pounds to rebuild.

In its preliminary estimates, the Housing Ministry has perhaps overestimated the real costs of the damaged industrial and tourism organizations, given that reconstruction of some of the large institutions in Beirut and Jabal Lubnan will cost tens of millions of dollars.

Educational and Hospital Organizations

The statistics also deal with damaged schools, universities, clinics, and private hospitals. There are 496 damaged schools and universities, which will cost about 62 billion Lebanese pounds to rebuild.

Jabal Lubnan has 377 educational institutions, which will cost 44 billion Lebanese pounds to rebuild. Beirut has 73 such organizations, 11 of which are in the commercial center, whose cost is about 16 billion Lebanese pounds.

In South Lebanon, there are an estimated 33 damaged schools and universities whose repair costs are set at about 466 million Lebanese pounds.

There are an estimated 100 damaged private clinics and hospitals which will cost about 3 billion and 872 million Lebanese pounds to repair.

The damaged hospitals and clinics are concentrated in the Jabal Lubnan area, in which there are 55 damaged hospital organizations, which will cost about 3 billion Lebanese pounds to repair. Beirut has 22 damaged organizations, South Lebanon has 15, and al-Biqā' and North Lebanon each have four damaged hospitals.

Official Buildings

The statistics estimate that 364 buildings official buildings have been damaged and will cost about 14 billion Lebanese pounds to repair.

Jabal Lubnan has 188 damaged official buildings; Beirut has 75, including 13 buildings in the commercial center; southern Lebanon has 78, including 38 in the governorate of al-Nabatiyah; al-Biqā', has 15; and North Lebanon has eight damaged buildings.

Businesses and Centers of Worship

According to the Housing Ministry's statistics, there are an estimated 18,630 damaged businesses, centers of worship, and miscellaneous sites, which will cost an estimated 199 billion Lebanese pounds to repair.

Beirut has 13,596 damaged businesses which will cost more than 152.295 billion Lebanese pounds to repair. Included in this figure are 9,749 businesses in Beirut's commercial center, which cost more than 140 billion Lebanese pounds. The governorate of Jabal Lubnan has about 4,357 damaged businesses costing an estimated 40 billion, followed by the governorate of South Lebanon, including al-Nabatiyah, with about 472 damaged businesses and centers of worship costing about 2.5 billion Lebanese pounds.

On the whole, the number of damaged dwellings, administrations, organizations, businesses, factories, and other buildings is estimated, based on the Housing Ministry's statistics, at about 67,351 buildings which will cost an estimated 762.631 billion Lebanese pounds to repair and rebuild.

The estimated costs are distributed by governorate as follows: 331.858 billion Lebanese pounds in Beirut, 316.422 billion in the governorate of Jabal Lubnan, 63.6 billion in South Lebanon and al-Nabatiyah, 42 billion in the governorate of North Lebanon, and 9.14 billion in the governorate of al-Biqā'.

Overall, residential buildings accounted for 69 percent of all damaged buildings, and estimates of the cost to repair and rebuild these buildings account for 65 percent of the total estimated cost.

On the level of the governorates, the governorate of Jabal Lubnan had the largest number of damaged residential buildings, which accounted for 58 percent of all damaged buildings (see table).

Regarding cost estimates of the damage, Beirut's requirements, which total 331 billion Lebanese pounds, account for 43 percent of the total costs, followed by the governorate of Jabal Lubnan, which needs an estimated 316 billion Lebanese pounds, or almost 41 percent of the total estimated cost (see table).

In this context, we must touch upon the commercial center. A special real estate company has been established to rebuild the commercial center.

The commercial center, according to the Housing Ministry's preliminary statistics, contains the highest percentage of damaged businesses, with 9,749 damaged businesses. According to the statistics, there are an estimated 10,685 damaged buildings used for miscellaneous purposes. The damaged buildings in the commercial center account for 15.8 percent of all damaged buildings.

**Buildings Damaged in Lebanon and Cost Estimates
(in Billions of Lebanese Pounds)**

Governorate	Damaged Dwellings Type of Damage					Factories		Private Schools and Universities	
	Repair	Partial Reconstruction	Total Reconstruction	Total Number of Damaged Units	Approximate Value of Damage	Number	Value of Damage	Number	Value of Damage
Jabal Lubnan	18530	4038	4921	27489	270.78911	729	52.2775536	377	44.04449
South Lebanon	3349	604	578	4531	38.467740525	11	.138345	27	.89923
al-Nabatiyah	2226	458	729	3413	20.0491195	15	.291815	6	.019625
al-Biqā'	1086	56	259	1451	7.058396	9	.058	3	.447
North Lebanon	1185	54	452	1691	39.0841362	4	.0098	10	.388
Beirut	7479	63	483	8025	127.752548	10	5.1004	73	16.2825
Total	33855	5273	7422	46600	503.201050225	778	57.9641136	496	.620845
Commercial Center	527	19	338	884	58.190523	—	—	11	1.139
Total Excluding the Commercial Center	33328	5254	7084	45796	445.010527225	778	57.9641136	485	60.941845

Buildings Damaged In Lebanon and Cost Estimates (continued)

Governorate	Private Clinics and Hospitals		Tourism Organizations		Official Buildings		Businesses, Centers of Worship, and Miscellaneous		Approximate Value of Total Damage
	Number	Value of Damage	Number	Value of Damage	Number	Value of Damage	Number	Value of Damage	
Jabal Lubnan	55	2.93469	435	14.3208655	188	8.19515	4357	40.4591405	316.422138
South Lebanon	12	.0973	6	.0390953	40	.039837	341	1.3537525	41.393760325
al-Nabatiyah	3	.0017	—	—	38	.068785	131	.131731	22.3832695
al-Biqā'	4	.134	17	.47942	15	.3175	45	.51975	9.014036
North Lebanon	4	.088	1	.012	8	.6145	160	2.274924	42.5595602
Beirut	22	.6006	114	2.501896	75	4.14512	13596	152.9587	331.858828
Total	100	3.872,29	383	39.87034	364	14.35849	18630	199.063577	763.631592025
Commercial Center	6	.091	22	10.238	13	.8425	9749	140.257325	210.758348
Total Excluding the Commercial Center	94	3.78129	361	29.6323408	351	13.51599	8881	58.806252	552.873244025

Remark: The total of damaged buildings is 67,351.

Housing Crisis Viewed, Solutions Offered

91AE0503B London AL-HAWADITH in Arabic
5 Jul 91 pp 42-43

[Text] Beirut—If the construction and housing sector in Lebanon has not enjoyed the same media attention as the economic and political sectors, it is because state officials have failed to give it the attention it deserves in the way of establishing projects to improve the housing situation. They have not formulated solutions to the housing problem, which is the most complicated problem the citizen has faced for a long time. Even if housing exists, it is problematic. Rental units are scarce and the purchase of housing is impossible due to the lack of financial resources. Given that these are the only two solutions, what alternatives has the state planned? What laws and projects has it developed to provide housing for workers, soldiers, and employees, whose monthly income, in the best case, does not exceed 150,000 Lebanese pounds? How, on this sum, is it possible to secure food, transportation, health services, and clothing, in addition to basic housing?

Where can one live? Where can one find shelter for his family where they can feel safe and secure? These are insistent questions. Housing is synonymous with food, because food alone is not enough without shelter and vice versa. Hence, treatment of this subject requires shedding light on what officials in charge of housing intend to do following the long period of suffering and the absence of housing solutions that has continued throughout the Lebanese crisis, for 15 years if not more.

The housing file is voluminous and has numerous, conflicting political, financial, and social ramifications. A political decision has yet to emerge, the financial situation is plagued by deficit, and the problem of forced emigrants and the destruction of buildings, villages, and cities is creating a pressing social need to solve the housing crisis.

Governmental sources responsible for dealing with the housing and emigration portfolio are now attempting to glean a solution by turning to studies at home and abroad. In other words, they are seeking the assistance of Lebanese and other economic experts to create solutions that at least guarantee positive results for citizens in need, and to supply society in general with the studies it needs to cope with these problems by enacting laws and establishing general rules that limit construction violations and abuses.

The Development and Construction Council conducted a study in 1977 on reconstruction needs in Lebanon. It states that "Lebanon needs at least 25,000 housing units per year to solve the housing problem." However, because of the breakdown of security and the civil war, the study was not implemented. Since then, the need for housing has been compounded by a steady increase in the number of damaged residential areas. This worsening has led Housing and Cooperatives Minister Dr. Muhammad Baydun to estimate that 300,000 housing

units are needed to stop this intractable crisis from growing. Moreover, according to preliminary statistics, the housing loans provided since 1977 by housing loan agencies have been limited to the equivalent of the loans provided by the Housing Ministry to persons who incurred damages.

If, in this context, it is difficult to speak of solutions, statistics and studies on damaged buildings disclose the existence of 45,716 damaged dwellings in Lebanon's five governorates, whose cost is about 445 billion Lebanese pounds, in addition to about 485 universities and schools, 94 clinics and hospitals, 351 tourism organizations, 351 official buildings, and 8,881 businesses (without taking into account damage to Beirut's commercial center), all of which have been destroyed or damaged. The cost of rebuilding these buildings, dwellings, businesses, and factories is about 552.7 billion Lebanese pounds, in addition to 778 factories costing about 57.9 billion Lebanese pounds.

These preliminary figures indicate how grave the housing crisis has become since the Development and Construction Council estimated housing needs in 1977. This, against the backdrop of a decline in the lending capabilities of organizations concerned with the housing sector, a decline in the amount of loan fees of organizations concerned with the housing sector, and a decline in the ability of low-income working classes to borrow due to the drop in the buying power of their wages and the devaluation of loans that have been provided.

The Housing and Cooperatives Ministry, headed by Minister Muhammad Baydun, has drafted a plan to expand residential quarters and complexes to hundreds of thousands of square meters of the Housing Ministry's available holdings [istimlakat] in the capital's suburbs and regions, with the understanding that the dwellings are to be sold to limited-income persons at cost for a period of 15 and 20 years.

In clarifying the goals of the plan, Minister Baydun states: "The Housing Bank, which is blessed with administrative enterprise and a commercial character, is more capable of taking on this task within the scope of a plan to unify the lending terms of state lending organizations, including the Independent Fund and the Housing Ministry, with emphasis on the state's intention to increase its share in the Housing Bank and the loans which the bank provides in order to stimulate the bank's role in the near future."

Dr. Baydun stressed that there is a plan to unify the value of loans for the construction and purchase of housing and to increase the loan value to 12 million Lebanese pounds. He also emphasized that the cabinet recently decided to increase the value of a repair loan to between 3 and 8 million Lebanese pounds and the value of a reconstruction loan to 12 million Lebanese pounds. He added that a draft law on this has been referred to the Chamber of Deputies. Minister Baydun disclosed that his ministry is engaged in erecting 3,000 new dwellings

this year, and that a plan to conduct a housing survey using questionnaires is being drafted to help determine the number of forced emigrants and persons who incurred damage, and to categorize the housing sector.

Regarding sources to finance these projects, the Housing Ministry disclosed proposals to impose new taxes on property, fuel, and luxury items, which would not affect low-income persons, and to use the estimated wheat subsidy allocations for housing instead.

In addition to creating housing, the Housing Ministry is also drafting a plan to treat landlord-tenant relations. This plan involves the provision of loans to tenants to purchase the dwellings which they occupy in agreement with the landlord. According to the ministry's approximate inventory, about 150,000 units are currently rented.

Another problem is the lack of a law governing rents and landlord-tenant relations. Laws and studies drafted on this have been buried by the events that have stormed Lebanon. This problem has continued to fester over time and is now one of the most complicated problems facing citizens.

The media has published many draft laws regarding rents. However, they have not generated enough interest in remedying this problem, because none of them include a solution that safeguards the rights of landlords and tenants alike, in view of the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, which has led many property and building owners to list new rents in foreign currency, specifically in American dollars.

Hence, landlords are calling for a solution to this problem. The most recent plan regarding rents was submitted by Minister Khatchig Babikian and Deputy August [Bakhus], which is based on the freedom to make contracts as a basic principle. However, this plan has yet to be presented to the cabinet, and those who are submitting the plan and the plan itself have become the target of sharp criticism, the most prominent being the campaign launched by Deputy Farid Jubran, who addressed the justice minister, saying: "State neglect is responsible for the housing crisis, and the state is you and several politicians and leaders who have ruled Lebanon since 1948 as a country estate."

Jubran emphasized that "several members of the government and the Chamber of Deputies will help reject the draft law on rents."

Jubran detailed the drawbacks of this plan, saying: "In the event of [the landlord's] reclamation and evacuation of a rental property, it is impossible [for the evicted tenant] to find a small corner to live in, which is as good as sentencing the tenant and his family to homelessness."

Deputy Jubran has recommended the following solutions:

1. The temporary deletion of every stipulation of the draft law pertaining to reclamation and evacuation of the rental property until supply and demand are balanced.
2. A fair increase in rent fees under old rent contracts, as of the date of the issuance of the law, because any increases prior to this date are tantamount to indemnities for a war imposed on everyone, and the beneficiaries must be those who incurred losses or had their homes, businesses, factories, or possessions stolen.
3. The equitable treatment of landlords based on the draft law which we submitted to the Chamber of Deputies in March 1974, which bears our signature and that of the late Prime Minister Rashid Karami. This draft law stipulates the establishment of a fund in the Finance Ministry to assist Lebanese landlords according to the conditions stated in the draft law.
4. The use of studies and statistics in formulating fair legislation.
5. The government's undertaking of international and domestic negotiations for the construction of hundreds of thousands of new dwellings.
6. Efforts to facilitate housing outside urban areas by expanding the road network and increasing and modernizing communications.

In response to the plan submitted by Deputy Jubran, the Building Owners' Federation in Lebanon cited Deputy Jubran's recognition of the fact that landlords have become an impoverished class in this country, which needs and is begging us to help it by establishing a fund to assist it. In its communique, the federation demanded that "the special fund should be for needy tenants who are actually present, not for the absentee landlord, who has neither power nor health, social, or old-age insurance, and because the money of the largest fund cannot fulfill the needs of even a small number of them."

In its communique, the Building Owners' Federation asks, "How can supply and demand become balanced in the climate of such legislation? How can a landlord be certain that a rent contract will be enforced in the climate of such a law, when he has not forgotten previous legislation in the sixties and seventies. It should be remembered that emergency laws are supposed to be in effect for a temporary, limited period due to specific circumstances, not continuously for more than 50 years. The exception has become the rule, and 'temporary' in this country has become 'permanent.'"

The Building Owners' Federation emphasized that landlords are only pursuing their right in giving tenants a defined, adequate time period, after which the landlords will reclaim their property when supply and demand stabilize in this context, and apartment fees become uniform and even drop due to free speculation. Landlords do not wish to hurt anybody. Nor do they oppose anybody, but they do not wish to be hurt by others.

In its communique, the Building Owners' Federation added that the situation has become completely reversed, inasmuch as the majority of landlords have become absentee landlords; they constitute 75 percent of

Lebanon's population and have suffered greatly because of the previous emergency laws. Recently they have taken matters firmly in hand and have decided to hold officials accountable for the deterioration of their conditions and the state to which they have arrived.

The federation called for the establishment of a just, permanent law that protects and safeguards ownership, rather than sympathy, mercy, and charity for landlords after their property is nationalized, confiscated, and bequeathed to others. The Building Owners' Federation sets three conditions that must be met by any law on rents:

1. Freedom to conclude new contracts without any constraints after the promulgation of the new law.
2. The provision of a defined, adequate time period for [the continuation of] old contracts, during which supply and demand become balanced, with a practical adjustment of fees commensurate with current living conditions until the release [from the old contracts].
3. The establishment of a fund to aid tenants who are in actual need, to be funded by the different sectors.

Despite these contradictory views, there is a desire to solve this problem (taking into account the theory of relativity, of course), because it is unreasonable and unacceptable for it to remain unsolved or, more precisely, for us to say that we have become incapable of solving it. According to experts and legists, a solution can be effected as follows:

We must free ourselves from the difficulties, especially the difficulty of the past, the difficulty of going around in a circle, the difficulty of emergency rent laws, and the difficulty posed by the obligation to extend [a lease and its terms] despite an increase in fees.

If we base ourselves on freeing ourselves from all of these contracts, we return to the pivotal remedy, which is to unleash construction capacities by giving builders the same opportunities given to others active in the economic field in general.

There are two types of builders in Lebanon: Those who build rental units as investments, and those who build sale units. We add a third type of builder: the auxiliary or supporter builder.

The first builder, the landlord, invests in construction to realize earnings from rental fees. The second builder invests in the construction of apartments to realize earnings from their sale. The third type of builder is the state or corporate bodies.

When these three come together and compete with each other, without the landlord holding sway over the tenant, the following remedies would be instituted:

1. The inauguration of freedom to rent as of the date of the issuance of the law pertaining to the subject.
2. The inauguration of freedom to rent units "held captive" pursuant to previous rent laws. A committee of economic experts and legists is to be tasked with

studying these units, so that they are released [from contracts] in batches equal to the number of units expected to be offered in the real estate market (units for rent, units for sale, and units built by auxiliary builders).

In this regard, it would be appropriate to use the tenant categories that were used previously in schemes to increase rental fees or classify tenants:

- I. Rental agreements made before 1 January 1954.
- II. Rental agreements made between 1 January 1954 and 31 December 1961.
- III. Rental agreements made between 1 January 1962 and 31 December 1966.
- IV. Rental agreements made between 1 January 1967 and 31 December 1972.
- V. Rental agreements made after 31 December 1972 (the number of such agreements will not be great, in our estimation).

If two years intervene between the release of each category for the conclusion of contracts, we would thereby undo all rental agreements within ten years.

The tenant has benefitted from low rates for a long time. The time has come to treat the landlord fairly. We must not disregard the fact that instituting freedom to lease both old and new contracts all at once would create confusion that would have uncontrollable social and economic effects. In anticipation of the achievement of full freedom, old rates should be increased by a fair amount.

3. Granting of exemptions and promotional incentives to construction investors.

4. The state's implementation of housing projects to be sold or rented, with the understanding that rental units will be within reach of low-income persons and rented for close to cost.

5. We recommend that the state grant exemptions and promotional incentives to the sects (their religious endowments [awqaf]), associations, clubs, and commercial companies, to take upon themselves the construction and sale or leasing of buildings to their members at a price close to cost (along with what that entails). In this regard, we should indicate that the state, which eliminated the subsidy that it used to provide for several goods at the expense of the state or all of society, is not entitled to maintain a single subsidy at the expense of the landlord alone. Moreover, the opposite must occur, because earnings from rent are no longer sufficient to even buy bread. Also, many who built originally did so as an investment. In other words, they wanted to realize earnings from construction, like others who invest in different fields, because there is nothing in the constitution or in any law, custom, or rule of logic that prevents the landlord from engaging in his activity and entering into contracts with others with full freedom, as do other businessmen. There is nothing that says or permits one to say that only the landlord must be "divested" of his property after ten years, even if he has already recovered his capital.

Hence, it is necessary to aid the weak who are in need of assistance. However, in this case, the assistance is social, and providing it is the duty of all of society, not just a single group, based on the administrative law principle that maintains that the state and the treasury are to bear public burdens, not individuals, even if they comprise groups or classes.

Finally, the establishment of freedom to rent property will not be the only freedom in the economic arena. In addition, amid the competition expected between the three aforementioned real estate sectors, it will be easy for the tenant to obtain a rental contract on terms that are fair to himself as well as to the original owner of the commodity, the landlord, whose freedom is safeguarded by the constitution. The contract thus becomes law to

both parties, solving many problems, as long its consequences are reflected economically and socially.

In addition, the main intent behind unleashing the construction sector is not just to solve a legal problem, but also to stimulate the economy through capital investment and the opening of various production sectors to foreign capital investments. In this way, all methods are exploited.

Until the achievement of a peaceful security situation, economic prosperity, and social justice, the only hope, or more specifically, the crucial factor, is implementation. Regardless of how many plans are put forth, their implementation is subject to the extent of officials' concern and integrity in bearing their responsibilities.

Defense Minister on Army, South, Palestinians

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pp 17-19

[Interview with Defense Minister Michel al-Murr, by Najah Sharaf-al-Din; place and date not given: "If the Army Is Confronted, It Will Do Its Duty; It Has Full Strength"—first four paragraphs are AL-SHIRA' introduction]

[Text] Minister Michel al-Murr applies all the principles of engineering to whatever he does in the government as a whole and in the Defense Ministry specifically. He explores, plans, prescribes, and then implements. Then he goes further and monitors the implementation and those charged with it.

The defense minister, an engineer, has a passion for political action. He was godfather of the 1986 Tripartite Agreement, whose most important provisions were embodied in the al-Ta'if Agreement: stopping the dynamic of war in Lebanon, and beginning the process of peace and reconstruction. When Samir Ja'ja' wrecked the Tripartite Agreement, al-Murr undertook to remove Ili Hubayqah from the War Council.

All the politicians who have had dealings with him testify that he has political ability without a politician's normal deftness at tricks—an ability based on frankness and organization.

The "superminister" or "superpolitician" is deputy premier and minister of defense. AL-SHIRA' met with this deputy and businessman to ask him about the imminent settlement—the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the South—and its meaning in terms of linkage with Lebanese-Palestinian negotiations, Resolution 425, and the increase in the army's size in order to implement the step either by induction or absorption.

[Sharaf-al-Din] As everyone knows, many people are placing bets on the July 1st settlement—some on its failure, others on its success. Do you think it will succeed?

[Al-Murr] I think it will succeed and that on 1 July the army will deploy in the South. The cabinet has made the decision, and there is no retreating from it.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Will the deployment in the Sidon area be serious or merely symbolic, like the one in al-Ashrafiyah or in the suburb?

[Al-Murr] The deployment is serious. When you say, "like the one in al-Ashrafiyah or in the suburb," you seem to mean that the deployment in al-Ashrafiyah and the suburb was not serious. I can assure you that the deployment in al-Ashrafiyah and the suburb was serious. Raids took place, and the army is now in total control on the ground. Everything being said and circulated is groundless rumor aimed at weakening the morale of the legitimate government. The deployment in the South will be serious, like the one in al-Ashrafiyah, which you

don't consider serious. On the contrary, I would begin with al-Ashrafiyah and say that the deployment is serious. That is why you see no armed men on the roads. Raids are taking place, and that is the way it will also happen in the South.

Objections Not Heard

[Sharaf-al-Din] Are reports of objections to certain names as leaders of the army in the South true?

[Al-Murr] The Defense Ministry and army command do not discuss officers' names with any political or party group. No one has anything to do with the names of the officers who will go. We do not listen to any objections, because we see where the interest of the country and the legitimate government lies, and we carry it out. We see where the interest of the Lebanese Army lies, and we carry it out. As for the whims of the political parties, they are not being carried out on the army's back. The unified army will be a model of discipline and order. No one can criticize any officer. If it has become known that a formation for some officer has existed for a month or so and has raised a clamor about this subject, the formation took place before the army prepared to go into the South and before anyone knew which general would go there. This has no relation to the political demands that have been raised.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Some circles have linked withdrawal by the Southern Lebanon Army to a Palestinian withdrawal. What agreement has been reached about this?

[Al-Murr] As for "an agreement's having been reached," we are not negotiating for an agreement; we are preparing to implement the cabinet's deployment decision. There is a difference. An on-site committee composed of Minister Muhsin Dallul and Major General Nabih Farhat is contacting armed Lebanese and Palestinian units in the area to disarm them before the army's arrival. When the army arrives, it will forbid the presence of weapons in the areas of its presence. No linkage of the withdrawal with other matters has been discussed. Since the army now has the ability to deploy, it will do so without regard to any unit now present in the area.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Since you have mentioned the committee for dialogue with the Palestinians, some have called the committee Shi'ite. Your name was proposed to participate in the committee and the contacts. Why didn't you agree?

[Al-Murr] As a matter of fact, I wasn't aware that the committee is Shi'ite. You must be a Shi'ite, to be asking such a question! In fact, when the committee was formed, no one considered the religious and sectarian affiliation of the minister and the officer selected. So the selection of the committee has no connection with the negotiations. Also, I never refused to be on the committee. While the prime minister was away, I was obliged to attend to certain duties in the prime minister's office and the Defense Ministry, and so I had no time to devote to the negotiations. The committee is fully adequate. It

doesn't need another minister to succeed in its tasks. On the contrary, the two men are succeeding and are capable of carrying on the contacts. If I excused myself, it was because of time and no other reason.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Antoine Lahad has expressed readiness to negotiate with the Lebanese government. How ready is the Lebanese government for this?

[Al-Murr] The Lebanese government has decided to deploy over its territory and will deploy a Lebanese army over Lebanese territory. So we need not negotiate with anyone. However, we cannot deny an existing situation on the ground—that there is an occupation in the South. Lahad represents part of this occupation. By our means and through international intermediaries—i.e., through our good relations with some of the great powers who have means to intervene in the matter—we are turning to great power mediation to make efforts to facilitate the army's deployment. But direct negotiations are not taking place with Lahad or with the Israeli occupation.

[Sharaf-al-Din] If the army cannot enter the region peacefully, will it enter by force?

[Al-Murr] The army will deploy on 1 July. When a journalist asked me a few days ago, I said that the army is preparing to go "with force, not by force." That is the slogan. When the army prepares to go with force, the meaning is that it will use it if needed. The army has full strength to be used if needed. All the Lebanese groups have expressed agreement and encouragement, and the Palestinians have not ruptured all links. They have not said, "We reject the army's deployment." Even if they said it, the army would deploy. If they want to resist, the army is not a detachment going on an outing; it is an army. It is implementing the decision of the legitimate government and of the political authority. So it is best that no one confront it. But if it is confronted, it will do its duty, which is to implement the decision of the political authority.

[Sharaf-al-Din] There has been talk of a Palestinian delegation that will arrive in Lebanon to negotiate about Palestinian-Lebanese relations. Where are these relations going? In other words, what will the Lebanese offer the Palestinians?

[Al-Murr] At the next cabinet session, the committee now carrying on the negotiations—Minister Dallul and Maj. Gen. Farhat—will report to the cabinet on the results of contacts with the Palestinians. If there is any reason to hold negotiations other than the ones they are holding, the cabinet will make a decision and will commission one or two ministers to hold negotiations or contacts with specific instructions. I cannot anticipate events. I do not know what the cabinet will decide or what instructions it will give the committee. Lebanon is open to every dialogue that leads to extension of the government's authority and full establishment of the legitimate government in all Lebanese regions. Everyone, Lebanese and non-Lebanese, will accept.

[Sharaf-al-Din] To what extent might it be possible for the PLO to open an office in Beirut?

[Al-Murr] The cabinet is discussing it. Any answer I give will be meaningless, since the cabinet is the authority that will make such a decision. That is why I said that the details of the dialogue will be discussed at the next cabinet session, along with who will negotiate after the session, to what limits the dialogue will extend, and what may and may not be discussed.

[Sharaf-al-Din] In your opinion, will the step of army deployment be the beginning of implementation of Resolution 425?

[Al-Murr] If you review Resolution 425, it is unconditional. The Security Council demands Israel's withdrawal from the South without qualification or condition. There are no conditions incumbent upon Lebanon for implementation of an Israeli withdrawal. The Lebanese Army's deployment in the South in force will doubtlessly give the international parties and the Security Council a weapon with which to discredit in advance Israel's excuse that the legitimate government has no presence in the South. This will make it easier for the Security Council to apply its resolution. However, the resolution will be applied regardless of any consideration or any deployment, because the resolution is clear and unconditional. Nevertheless, I think the deployment will facilitate the application of Resolution 425.

America and Resolution 425

[Sharaf-al-Din] What has come of the American contacts and promises about implementing Resolution 425?

[Al-Murr] The foreign minister is handling the matter. Certainly, the diplomatic negotiations on the subject are advancing, but I do not know how far they have gone. We were preoccupied last week with preparing for the military deployment in the South. I do not know what point the foreign minister has reached with the contacts. They are his prerogative, and he is attending to them.

[Sharaf-al-Din] After implementing Resolution 425, how able will the army be to take over the region, particularly as regards numbers and resources?

[Al-Murr] The question is perhaps unclear and needs correction. It is not the army's ability to apply Resolution 425.

[Sharaf-al-Din] To deploy...

[Al-Murr] The army is not the one to apply the resolution. Resolution 425 was passed by the Security Council and enjoins Israel to withdraw from Lebanese territory.

[Sharaf-al-Din] How able is the army to take over the region after implementation?

[Al-Murr] Thus, the army has no connection with applying the resolution. It will be applied. Then comes your question: Does the army have the resources to

deploy in the territory that will become vacant after Israel withdraws? The army is ready. You know that two months ago the cabinet issued a decree to induct 10,000 additional recruits to serve the flag and that the necessary funds were appropriated for the purpose. We are now in the process of inducting 4,000 through "absorption." Thus we shall have 14,000 additional soldiers. I think the number will be sufficient for deployment in any Lebanese area as soon as the army is called upon to do so. Training and equipping them will require no more than two or three months.

[Sharaf-al-Din] On the subject of "absorption," there is talk about the government's desire to downplay the subject, particularly following the passage of the time limit that had been set. Militia personnel still feel they were somehow misled, especially after Fu'ad Malik's latest statement. They think there are methods [being used] to banish them, or banish the largest possible number.

[Al-Murr] I am normally the one who publishes decisions about this in the information media. Other talk from any other political party source does not concern me. What concerns me is what we are doing as the legitimate government. A decision has been made in the cabinet, the country's highest authority, to absorb 4,000 personnel into the army and 2,000 personnel into the police forces. If you want to have a look at the camps being readied, they exist and are being equipped to receive the 6,000 personnel.

[Sharaf-al-Din] But there has been a delay.

[Al-Murr] No, let's be realistic. In three weeks we are preparing to absorb 6,000 men. Add it up: if you want to buy each of them boots, a uniform, sheets, and so forth, how much time do you need? We are making all the preparations. And then the final lists that must be submitted by the parties have still not reached the absorption committee headed by Minister Sami al-Khatib. Besides, some of the parties that have submitted their lists have not submitted them in proper form—they lack certain requirements. Others sent summary lists without details. The committee will study them. Other parties have submitted nothing. So the government is neither downplaying nor delaying. Preparations are proceeding, and the absorption committee is studying the lists. As soon as it finishes, the camps will be ready to receive. The government's decision involves no downplaying. I heard in one of the media that the highest authority in the Defense Ministry was not facilitating matters. There is a great difference between facilitating matters and taking steps that would harm the interest of the army and the interest of the legitimate government. Soldiers are normally pensioned off when they reach age 45. If the defense minister is being asked to change the age from 25 to 40, because there are personnel who are 36 and 37 years old and who will hardly finish training before they are pensioned off, I certainly will not make such a decision. I am a responsible man. I take care of my

responsibilities. I take care of my army and my legitimate government. I don't care how they treat me in the media. Had you not reminded me, I would have forgotten. What I hear in the evening, I forget in the morning. I have answered the question only to clarify matters. We are being asked to make a change. I accept a change to 30 years. It would facilitate matters. By age 30 a soldier is old—normally [he serves] from 18 to 25. But if what is being demanded is that we facilitate absorption "on the back of the army" or "at the army's expense," I won't do it, even if they call it "downplaying." We do our duty, and they say what they want. Our conscience is satisfied vis-a-vis the nation. That is what matters to us. Whatever you hear from the media about the subject, don't think it will change my patriotic conviction.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Regarding the method of absorption, raising the issue of sectarian balance and insisting on it could form an obstacle. How will it be treated?

[Al-Murr] A decision about numbers and method was made in the cabinet. When they agreed in al-Ta'if, they used the expression, "according to the requirements of national reconciliation," to avoid saying "sectarian balance." In other words, everything will take place according to the requirements of reconciliation. We are still at the beginning of the road of emerging from 16 years of war. I am the first person to call for total abolition of sectarianism. So the government is following the principles that were agreed upon at al-Ta'if.

Mother of All

[Sharaf-al-Din] On the subject of handing over weapons, what quantity of weapons have the militias handed over to the army?

[Al-Murr] Weapons have been handed over. But we expected all the shells that had been taken to be handed over, because in effect this army is Lebanon's army. The militias are not one unit and the militias another unit. We have all become one melting pot. The legitimate government has become the mother of all and embraces everyone. Based on the idea of the government as all-embracing, we thought that the result would be more of a "gift." They called the last things they turned over a "gift." We thank them for it, and we hope there will be a second "gift," so that the army can be "capitalized" with some shells.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Wouldn't it have been better to buy the weapons from the militias at low prices?

[Al-Murr] We buy our weapons? These are weapons that belong to the army! Is it reasonable for the government to pay money for weapons it considers its own? They won't agree—the militias. Their patriotism will not allow them to do it.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Moving to the subject of parliament, have contacts begun on forming a parliamentary bloc? There is now talk about your possibly bossing a large parliamentary bloc.

[Al-Murr] First of all, no one "bosses" anyone in Lebanon. The parliamentary deputies are like the citizens. The word "boss" has a bad taste.

[Sharaf-al-Din] How about "heading"?

[Al-Murr] Not "heading" either. I assure you that I won't serve as head. The word "boss" is simply out of the question. I have absolutely no intention of leading a parliamentary bloc. However, the organization of parliamentary activity, even in democratically advanced countries, sometimes requires the creation of blocs. These blocs must be organized so that they can carry on their parliamentary work without chaos in parliament. We are holding discussions with some colleagues (we can call them colleagues now that the appointment edict has been issued) about certain matters that might lead to the organization of parliamentary activity. These include the creation of blocs, but without the institution of a boss or leader. This would help and facilitate parliamentary activity. These matters are still being discussed. We will speak about them when the time is ripe; but not yet.

[Sharaf-al-Din] At one time you played the role of mediator for General Michel 'Awn and were outside the government. Today you are inside the government, while he is outside. Are you playing a similar role to settle the issue of him?

[Al-Murr] First of all, I don't call it mediation. I was persuading General 'Awn to return to the bosom of the legitimate government. I was not a mediator on his side, so that he might remain in Ba'abda or rebel against the

legitimate government. The proposals were that he would become part of the legitimate government, but he was not convinced. Then a legitimate government emerged. Today his position is different from what it was in the past. Today a solution to his problem requires conditions and requirements that are not simply material, but on a number of levels that are being discussed. We have still not reached the zero hour and a solution to the problem. I am not playing a role in it because it is being worked out at the diplomatic level. I always say that I don't infringe on other people's prerogatives, especially the foreign minister's. He is an energetic friend of ours and is following up the subject directly, because the task is more diplomatic than domestic. So I am not playing a role in the matter.

[Sharaf-al-Din] A final question: An uproar was recently raised about making the Defense Ministry more responsible. There was said to be a disagreement between you and al-Hariri about reforming it. Is there any truth in the report?

[Al-Murr] First of all, I am sorry to read such baseless stories in the newspapers. Second, the new Reconstruction Council does not have to praise government officials. They are all able, honest, and distinguished men. That is why they were chosen to direct the institution called the Reconstruction Council. It is charged with making the actions of the Defense Ministry more responsible. There are absolutely no difficulties about the matter. They are carrying out their duty excellently. The Defense Ministry is not concerned. Al-Hariri is a respected person and our friend. He does not deal with such small matters. It is not my business, as defense minister, to deal with these matters. The Reconstruction Council is dealing with the matter and is carrying out its duties excellently. There is no problem. Everything being reported in the newspapers about the subject is incorrect.

Report on Alawites in Tripoli, 'Akkar Regions**Profile of Alawite Community**

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pp 14-19

[Article by Huda al-Husayni: "The Alawites in Lebanon: Numerous Reasons Why Historians Offer Different Accounts of Their History, Origins; Alawites Rebelled Against Land Owners, Purchased Their Land, and Settled On It; Alawites Started Feeling the Need To Organize Their Social Community in the Thirties; Some Alawites Who Have Land in Syria Reside in 'Akkar; Alawites Have No Religious Courts, but They Have Representatives in Sunni and Ja'fari Courts; Alawites Are Engaged Primarily In Trade Followed by Agriculture; Alawites Are Employed as Workers, Officers, Bankers, Attorneys, and Professors; 35,000 Alawites in al-Tabanah Have Citizenship, but Citizenship Status of Thousands Remains 'Confidential' or Under Review"]

[Text] One article in the National Reconciliation document stipulates the following: "The number of deputies in the Chamber of Deputies is to be increased to 108, one half of whom shall be Christians and the other half shall be Muslims. Deputies shall be appointed to positions which were created on the basis of this document and to positions which became vacant before this document was made public. These appointments, which are to be made on a one-time, emergency basis, shall be made by the prospective national reconciliation government."

Recently, the Council of Ministers amended the wording of Article Three of the emergency bill to amend the parliamentary elections law. That article now reads as follows:

"1. Members of parliament are to be appointed to parliamentary seats that became vacant as of 27 September 1990 and to seats that were created in accordance with this law. These appointments, which are to be made by a two-thirds majority of the Council of Ministers, are to be made en masse on a one time basis."

The number of newly created parliamentary seats was limited to nine: two for Sunnis, three for Shi'ites, two for the Druze, and two for the Alawites: one for Alawites in Tripoli, and the other for those in 'Akkar.

Who are the Alawites, and what is their status in Tripoli and 'Akkar? What is their social life like, and what are their traditions and the circumstances of their social evolution? AL-SHIRA' visited two areas, north Lebanon and 'Akkar, and it came back with the following report.

Who are the Alawites or Nusayrites? Historians offer different accounts about the name and origins of Nusayrism. Some say Nusayrites take their name from Nusayr Ghulam 'Ali or from Muhammad Ibn-Nusayr. Others attributed the name to the fact that Nusayrites lived in the al-Nusayrah mountains. Still others say that Nusayrites, whose name reflects their relationship to Nusayr

Ghulam 'Ali or to Muhammad Ibn-Nusayr, fled political and social pressures and immigrated to the al-Nusayrah mountains where they settled. All historians thus agree that Nusayrites are named after a person to whom they were related and an area where they lived.

In his book on the history of Syria and Palestine the historian Philip Hitti talks about the Druze and has this to say about the Alawite community: "When the Druze tried to strengthen their position and gain a foothold in south Lebanon, they had a dispute with another community in south Lebanon which had deviated from Islam. That community was the community of Nusayrites."

Speaking of the Nusayrites, the Greek historian Gurgi Yanni had this to say in his book, "The History of Syria." Yanni said, "The al-Nusayriyah Mountain, which rises above al-Ladhiqiyah, is inhabited by many people who live in villages and on farms. These people, however, are not civilized and do not observe the social obligations of human society." This statement is defended by Ahmad 'Ali Hasan and Hamid Hasan in their book, "Al-Muslimun al-'Alawiyun fi Lubnan" [Muslim Alawites in Lebanon]. "Although Alawites were denied all the means that would have made them civilized, they were held accountable for their lack of civilization and refinement and for their lack of knowledge about social obligations."

"The Nusayrite faction which was settled in south Lebanon when the Druze message was coming to light," says Philip Hitti in his book, "Tarikh Lubnan" [History of Lebanon], "is now living in Syria's Alawite mountains, north of Lebanon. Like the Druze, the Nusayrites are an order within the Isma'ili sect. It is likely that they got their name from Muhammad Ibn-Nusayr, who was one of the disciples of the eleventh Alawite imam, al-Hasan al-'Askari, a ninth century man from al-Kufah who died in A.D. 874." The oldest reference to the Nusayrite faction can be found in a letter written by Hamzah Ibn-'Ali and also in written records left by others who wrote letters and Druze spiritual lessons. "Nusayrites, whose religious and social system is one that is class conscious, guard the secrets of their religion and withhold them from people. Nusayrites believe that revealed, religious texts have a hidden, secret meaning other than their obvious or literal meaning. There is no doubt that this faction, which strayed far away from the Sunni sect, has been and will continue to be an enigma in the history of Islam."

In his book, "Al-Mukhtasar fi Tarikh al-Bashar" [A Short History of Mankind], 'Imad-al-Din Isma'il Abu-al-Fida' has this to say about the events of the year 705 A.H. "In that year Jamal-al-Din Aqwash al-Afram led soldiers from Damascus and from other parts of Syria to the mountains of the agnostics. They were insubordinate apostates. These impregnable mountains were surrounded by Muslim soldiers who dismounted, climbed the mountains from all sides, and then killed and captured all the Nusayrites, agnostics, and other apostates.

These towering mountains, which stand high between Damascus and Tripoli, were thus purged and cleansed."

"These towering mountains which stand between Damascus and Tripoli and which 'Imad-al-Din referred to," said Ahmad and Hamid Hasan in their book, "al-Muslimun al-'Alawiyyun fi Lubnan" [Alawite Muslims in Lebanon], "are known now as the al-Daniyah Mountains. These mountains are known for their good weather, for the good quality of the fruits which are grown there, and for the abundance of fresh water which may be found there."

Rafiq al-Taymiyah says in his "Tarikh Wilayah Bayrut" [The History of Beirut Province] that Nusayrites, who can be found in approximately 162 villages in 'Akkar Valley, are the third largest group in that area after Muslims and Christians. He also says that they have their own burial grounds and sacred sites in the area.

Alawites confirm that al-Taymiyah's statement is accurate. The tomb of Shaykh Ya'qub, which has stood in the town of 'Ayn Ya'qub since the year A.D. 1000, is located approximately 20 kilometers from Halba. There is also the tomb of Shaykh Junayd, founder of the Junaydiyyah order, and that of Shaykh 'Ayyash in the town of Shaykh 'Ayyash.

"The Alawites continued to be a sub-sect of Shi'ism," said Dr. Mustafa al-Rafi'i, author of the book, "Islamuna" [Our Islam]. "They adopted the principles of Islamic law and enforced the provisions of the law in accordance with the doctrine taught by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth imam from the family of God's messenger, may God bless him and grant him salvation. It has become known that starting with the period of the Umayyads and continuing throughout the Abbasid and Ottoman periods, all Shi'ite sects were subjected to torture, humiliation, slaughter, and murder because of their opposition to Sunnis, who were the sultans and rulers throughout these ages. This group, the so-called Alawites, was subjected to more persecution and had more accusations leveled against it than any other group."

After the uproar that surrounded them subsided, the Alawites, a small group of people in the world, hardly had the chance to take a deep breath. They got a reprieve for a short period of time during the Abbasid age. To be specific, that was during the days of Hamdani Alawites, in the time of al-Mustakfi-Billah, an Abbasid successor. With support and backing from the leaders of Bani Buwayh, the Alawites' leader, Shaykh Abu-'Abdallah al-Husayn Ibn-Hamdan, took it upon himself to promote the Alawite doctrine after he took up residence in the valiant city of Aleppo. The Alawite doctrine was thus promulgated in Iraq, Ahvaz, Persia, and also in Egypt during the days of the Fatimids.

Much has been said about the Alawites. It's been said, "The Alawites are a community of Syrians who date back to Roman times." It has also been said, "Their people are Qarmathians, who get this name after

Hamdan Qarmat. Therefore, the saying which was attributed to the Qarmathians that "There is no heaven, no hell, no resurrection, no Day of Resurrection, no accounting for one's sins, and no torture," was also attributed to the Alawites.

It has also been said that the Alawites are an Isma'ili sub-sect and that they are an Imamate group whose last imam was Isma'il ibn Ja'far al-Sadiq. It was also said that the origin of the Alawites goes back to the Hittites.

"These false allegations which historians made about the Alawites have no basis in fact. They are merely speculative, but speculation is no substitute for the truth."

The book, "Al-Muslimun al-'Alawiyyun fi Lubnan" [Alawite Muslims in Lebanon], states that "Despite the trying conditions they experienced in Lebanon, Nusayri Alawites continued to live in Tripoli, the capital of north Lebanon. In other areas of Lebanon, however, like Bakh'awn, al-Daniyah mountains, and Jird Kisrawan, only a few families remained. These families had direct ties to the Alawites in Lebanon's and in Syria's 'Akkar Valley. Only the large river stream separates the two groups.

These families devoted their attention to business activities, to the crafts, and to other activities. In the mid-thirties of this century Alawites in Tripoli started to feel that they needed to have a social organization like the other factions did. They formed a voluntary committee, and they also formed a charitable society which included an artists' group with their musical instruments. This group was run by young Alawites. That is how the cultural impulse began to stir in this group of people.

Muslim Arabs

Finally, it was said, that "Contrary to allegations made by persons who are guided by their own personal interests, the Alawites are genuine Arabs who are well-known for their lineage. They are Muslims who believe in One God. They believe that Muhammad is His Prophet, and they also believe that the Koran sets the course and lays down the law for their lives. They worship, they give alms, they fast during the month of Ramadan, and they make the pilgrimage to Mecca when they can. They have been worshipping God according to the teachings of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ever since the emergence of the well-known schools of jurisprudence. The terms, Alawite, Shi'ite, or Ja'fari, mean one thing: that all those who use these terms to describe themselves loved 'Ali, may God honor him. They held him in high esteem because of his virtues, which no Muslim denies. 'Ali was the messenger's son-in-law, and he was also his cousin and successor."

About the Alawites' religious observances, it was said that Alawites believe in the five pillars of Islam, and they practice what they believe.

At the present time the neighborhoods in Tripoli where the Alawites live are thought to be subordinate to Jabal

Muhsin. These neighborhoods are nine: Jabal Muhsin; al-Sahah, Sahah al-Amrikan; Harah al-Jadidah; al-Mallahah; al-Musajirin; Masjid al-Imam 'Ali Street; al-Sayyidah neighborhood; and al-Baqar neighborhood, which was recently annexed to the Alawite areas.

Not all the Alawites in Tripoli are Lebanese citizens. Some are Syrian citizens, and there are some Alawites whose citizenship status is under review. There are also others whose citizenship status is confidential. In al-Tabanah Alawites who are Lebanese citizens and whose names are recorded in the state's official records exceed 35,000. These people carry Lebanese identity cards which show that their religion is Alawite. Then there are Alawites whose identity cards show them to be members of other religious denominations. These people are not registered in the Alawites' official records. That is the case in some city neighborhoods, like al-Haddadin, al-Tall, and al-Zahriyah, which have approximately 2,000 families. There are approximately 11,000 Syrian Alawites living in Lebanon; 5,700 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review; and 1,700 whose citizenship status is confidential.

Most of the Alawites in Tripoli are engaged in trade, which they carry out via Syria or via Larnaca, Cyprus. Those who do business in the domestic markets rely mostly on selling fabrics, clothing, and shoes. Alawites in Tripoli have also worked on construction projects. They buy and sell construction materials, and they are also engaged in buying and selling automobiles which are imported from Germany via the port of Tripoli where many Alawites are employed. Alawites work in bakeries in the Alawites' areas in Tripoli, and they also own several of them. Some Alawites are pharmacists, and some are school teachers. Most of the teachers in Tripoli's official schools are Alawites.

Over 5,000 young Alawite men serve in the ranks of the Lebanese army. They serve as officers, soldiers, gendarmes, and public security officers. A number of Alawites are employed in banks; some of them are attorneys; and more than one of them, especially in the area of al-Qubbah, is a professor in the Lebanese University.

There are two Alawite mosques in Tripoli: the mosque of Imam 'Ali and that of Fatimah al-Zahra'. In addition, Tripoli has two elementary schools that were established by the Alawites and by a charitable society that is part of the Charitable Alawite Islamic League which oversees the restoration of mosques and other buildings. Alawites also have a scouting movement, which is called the Scouts of Knowledge, and they also have clubs, such as the soccer club.

Alawites get water from their own private artesian wells because the state's resources are limited and that makes providing water and electricity to all neighborhoods impossible. In addition, there is al-Zahra' Charitable Hospital, and there are other clinics in the city affiliated with the hospital. Although Alawites do not have their own religious court, they do have one representative in

the Sunni court and another in the Ja'fari court. This arrangement was worked out with the administrative offices of the two courts. Marriage contracts are executed in accordance with the wishes of the parties concerned. Moreover, the identity cards of some Alawites show that they are Sunnis, but these Alawites prefer to have an Alawite marriage ceremony.

Politically speaking, the Alawites are divided into two groups: one group belongs to the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party, and the other group belongs to the Democratic Arab Party, which is led by 'Ali 'Id. From a social standpoint, Alawites are like people in all denominations: some are poor, some are middle class, and some are wealthy.

'Akkar

The Alawites of 'Akkar are people who cultivate the soil. In 1969 farmers who were working on the farms of the al-Mir'ibi family, the farms of Sulayman and Malik al-Mir'ibi in particular, got the idea of buying the land. At that time Alawites owned no land. In fact, they were often brought from Syria to work on this land. These people, most of whom were not Lebanese citizens, were called al-Murabbi'un since they received one-fourth of the crop that was produced as a result of their work on the land. After 1969 Alawite farmers rose up against the land owners. They neglected the land and forced the land owners, who knew nothing about agriculture and farming, to put their land up for sale. The Alawites had thus positioned themselves to buy this land: they took advantage of the land owners' situation and of their need to sell the land, and they bought this land from them at very low prices. The Alawites' economic condition started to improve after that. In addition, they continued to be engaged in trade between Lebanon and Syria, and they purchased some real estate from Sulayman al-'Ali. The Alawites also benefited during the Lebanese war from the trade that took place between the coast of Lebanon and that of Syria via al-'Aridah, Hukr al-Dahiri and other border areas between Lebanon and Syria. During that period new areas became Alawite areas in Hukr al-Dahiri: Tall Birah, Tall Hamirah, al-Rayhaniyah, and 'Ayn al-Zayt. In 1969 Alawites purchased most of the land there. Their children, who had immigrated to Australia and America, helped them buy this land. One Alawite says, "Some of us paid full price for the land, some of us paid half price, and some of us paid nothing at all. Alawites refrained from cultivating the land and they prevented others from cultivating it until the feudalist [land owner] was forced to guarantee the land to Alawite farmers who soon became owners of that land. At that time the price of one hectare was between 10,000 and 12,000 Lebanese pounds."

According to the 1932 Census, Lebanese Alawites became Lebanese citizens in 1936, just as members of other Lebanese sects did. And yet, a large number of them did not receive Lebanese identity cards. Furthermore, there are 28,000 Lebanese Alawites, and some of them are registered as Sunnis or Shi'ites.

The Alawites' Villages

Some of the Alawites' villages in the areas of 'Akkar are considered better than others. This is due to the importance of the people who live in those villages. The town of Hukr al-Dahiri, which is located on the banks of the large river, is thought to be one of the most beautiful villages in 'Akkar because it is the town of 'Ali 'Id, president of the Democratic Arab Party. The bridge which spans the river and allows people to go from Lebanon to Syria and back is located in that town. People who live in Hukr al-Dahiri own land in Syria, and they travel on the bridge during the day to go to Syria where they cultivate their land and then return to their homes in the evening. Crossing the large river is all the distance they have to travel between the land [they farm] and the homes [they live in].

In addition, Hukr al-Dahiri has a clinic: it is al-Zahra' Clinic, and it is affiliated with the hospital which is located in the area of Ba'l Muhsin. That hospital, which eventually became al-Zahra' Hospital, used to be called Hotel Dieu Hospital. The shrine of Shaykh 'Abdallah al-Dahiri is also located in Hukr al-Dahiri. Although it is considered to be inside Syrian territory, it belongs to the Alawites of Lebanon from a religious standpoint. In addition, Hukr al-Dahiri has a mosque and a government elementary school, which was built by the state on land donated by the people. Hukr al-Dahiri has approximately 200 homes, and it is inhabited by 2,000 persons who are engaged in agriculture and trade. In addition, the town has a few small shops. The town whose construction standards are quite luxurious, houses one or more mansions owned by 'Ali 'Id. The town has a chief, and a town hall is currently under construction. All the roads in the town as well as those outside the town are paved. And yet, the town lacks a water system. Its electricity and water service depends upon individual initiatives. The town has an office for a women's society where several educational courses are offered, and it has scout troops and a sports team.

If we were to move to another town, the town of Tall Hamirah, we would find its roads unpaved. The town itself is relatively poor, compared to Hukr al-Dahiri. Some of its residents make their living raising poultry, and others farm the land. This town is a new town that was built in 1970. It is known for growing wheat and sweet potatoes.

The town of al-Haysah, however, is one whose history goes back to the days of the Banu-Hilal tribe. It is named after the horse of Abu-Zayd al-Hilali, but its original owners are from the al-Qaddur family. The new al-Haysah, which is inhabited by Alawites, was built in 1970. Only one or two families of al-Haysah's original residents, however, remain in the town. Now, the Alawites who live in the town are land owners and farmers who purchased the land in the late sixties, built homes, and lived in those homes. The number of people living in al-Haysah is 1,500, and all of them are Alawites. In addition, a small number of people who live in the town

are people whose citizenship status is still under review. Al-Haysah is well-known for agriculture. Five percent of its residents are educated, and four percent of its people work in trade. None of al-Haysah's residents holds a government job, and most of them are politically affiliated with the Ba'th Party.

A visit to the Alawite areas will show that all of them are similar. Some villages are inhabited exclusively by Alawites, and some villages are inhabited by people from different denominations. 'Akkar has approximately 25,000 Alawites. The citizenship status of 2,000 of them is either under review or confidential. Tripoli, however, has approximately 60,000 Lebanese citizens. In addition, it has Syrian Alawites, Alawites whose citizenship status is under review, and Alawites whose citizenship status is confidential.

Customs and Traditions

Regarding the Alawites' customs and traditions in marriage: 18 is considered the best marrying age for girls, and 22 is considered the best for boys. Marriage at a later age is not customary.

Most wives are housewives. Furthermore, there are women who help their husbands with agricultural work. Alawites believe in having shrines, and they make many pledges for these shrines. They celebrate 'Id al-Fitr, the feast which follows the month of Ramadan, and they celebrate 'Id al-Adha, the feast of the sacrifice. They also celebrate al-Ghadir Day, the day on which the messenger, may God bless him and grant him salvation, declared Imam 'Ali his successor as Muslim leader. Alawites perform the duties that are performed by Islamic orders, and they follow the practices of the Ja'fari denomination when they perform marriages. They celebrate engagements, and, depending upon their financial resources, they celebrate weddings for several days. They celebrate when a child is born, and they also celebrate birthdays. They pray for their dead according to the practices of the Ja'fari denomination, and they hold funerals during which mourners are fed on the third, seventh, and fortieth days.

Alawites now hold different jobs in the state. Some Alawites in 'Akkar serve as officers in the army's ranks. In addition, many of them teach in elementary and secondary school. Trade between Syria and Lebanon is the foundation of their business relations.

'Akkar has several athletic clubs which are sponsored by Muhammad 'Id, also known as "Signor." Muhammad 'Id is 'Ali 'Id's brother. 'Akkar also has an Alawite League and a Charitable Islamic Alawite League, which is considered the religious arm of the Democratic Arab Party.

Alawite Families

The 'Ids, the Shihadahs, the 'Abd-al-Rahmans, the Mamas, the al-Muhammads, the al-Ra'is, the al-Rashids,

the al-Khatibs, the Dahirs, the Husayns, the al-Sayyid Mustafas, and the Abu-al-'Ablis.

Areas Where Alawites and Other Factions Live

The following are the names of areas where Lebanese Alawites as well as Lebanese citizens from other factions live:

- Hunaydit: 3,850
- al-Bayrah: 300
- Furaydis: 100
- Qushlaq: 500
- Srar: 530
- Sharbila: 250
- Shadra: 255
- al-'Abudiyah: 400
- Mamar al-Baykat: 150
- 'Uyun al-Ghizlan: 1,000
- al-'Uraydah: 330; (193 Syrian Alawites are also there as well as 60 whose status is under review.)
- al-Qulay'at: 200
- Karm al-'Ufur: 270
- Kafr Nun: 255
- Mar Tuma: 20
- Hatila: 825
- Baynu: 30
- Halba: 30
- Bqarzla: 20
- Bayt Ghatas: 125
- Bayt al-Huwaysh: 50
- Shalabiyah: 1,050; (85 Syrian Alawites are also there as well as 300 whose status is under review.)
- Tulayl: 250
- Tall Ma'yan: 660
- Tall 'Abbas al-Sharqi: 1,200
- Hukr al-Hanin: 100
- Khirbah Dawud: 50
- Barbarah: 700
- Darayn: 500
- Bayt al-Haj: 50
- Khuraybah al-Jundi: 50
- al-Ghazili: 200

Villages With Chiefs, Inhabited Exclusively by Alawites

'Ayn al-Zayt: The number of people in that village is 2,000; 150 of them serve in the Lebanese army. A town hall 12 kilometers from Halaba is now under construction.

Al-Daghlah has 1,200 persons, and most of them serve in the Lebanese army. Some of the residents of this village immigrated to America and Australia. This village, which is known for agriculture, is located five kilometers from Halaba.

Al-Mas'udiyah has 2,500 persons: the citizenship status of 200 of those residents is under review, and 45 of them are Syrian Alawites. The village, which is well known for agriculture, has a mosque and an athletic club. Al-Mas'udiyah is eight kilometers from Halaba.

Tall Birah has 2,700 Lebanese Alawites, 60 Syrian Alawites, and 350 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review. Residents of this village rely on growing citrus fruits, and a large number of those residents are now expatriates. The village, which has a clinic, a town hall, and a mosque, is 12 kilometers from Halaba.

Tall Hamayrah has 955 Lebanese Alawites, 17 Syrian Alawites, and 140 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review. This village, which relies on raising horses and agriculture, is 14 kilometers from Halaba.

Hukr al-Dahiri, which is located on the Lebanese-Syrian border, is the town of 'Ali 'Id. It has 325 Lebanese Alawites, 25 Syrian Alawites, and 46 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review. The village has a school, and it is located 15 kilometers from Halaba.

Al-Summaqiyah has 1,400 Lebanese Alawites and 50 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review. Potatoes and grains are grown in this village which is located 16 kilometers from Halaba.

Al-Hisah has 1,500 Lebanese Alawites and 40 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review. This village, which relies on trade and on the citrus fruits it grows, is located on the International Highway between Syria and Lebanon, eight kilometers from Halaba.

Hukr al-Hawshah has 300 Lebanese Alawites, 25 Syrian Alawites, 50 Alawites whose citizenship status is under review, and 30 whose citizenship status is confidential. Hukr al-Hawshah relies on agriculture.

Al-Rayhaniyah has 1,500 Lebanese Alawites, and some of them serve in the Lebanese army. The village, whose agriculture depends on rainfall, is located five kilometers from Halaba.

Al-Ma'li has 350 Lebanese Alawites who are engaged in farming and trade. It is located six kilometers from Halaba.

Alawites Caught Between Shi'ism of Musa al-Sadr and 'Ali 'Id's Independence

In his approach to the Alawites in north Lebanon, Imam Musa al-Sadr was bent on giving them the knowledge they did not have about Shiism and Shiite jurisprudence.

President Hafiz al-Asad was in Syria when he received Imam Musa al-Sadr. He encouraged the imam and called for more attention to the Alawites and more contact with them. He said that those who had turned away from religious knowledge were to be reined in and brought back to their religious heritage. The Syrian president also encouraged Alawites to seek religious knowledge from its source. Islamic groups can thus have the required contact with each other which the machinations of western imperialism and the conduct of a few unjust Ottoman rulers had prevented.

In fact, some of those rulers had isolated some Muslims who lived on the northern coast of Syria and prevented

them from having normal contact with their fellow Muslims, particularly Muslim scholars in cities and academic centers of study.

Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim, the religious authority, tried hard to accommodate those who wanted to study religious subjects. He gave them special consideration and distinction. It was during his tenure that Mr. Muhsin al-Amir in Damascus became instrumental in achieving this contact with and between Islamic groups and in restoring matters to normal. The late Husayn Maki, who succeeded Mr. al-Amir in this pioneering role as a Shi'ite authority in Damascus, was followed in that position by the late Shaykh Habib Al Ibrahim, who played an active, positive part in that regard in maintaining his contacts with Islamic groups in north Syria.

In the context of his efforts to achieve this goal of restoring contact between Islamic groups and giving Alawites in north Lebanon an Islamic frame of reference, Imam Musa al-Sadr played a principal role in the establishment of a religious court in Tripoli. He also visited the area several times. The appointment of the Ja'fari Shaykh 'Ali Mansur mufti [religious authority] for the area was one of the results of these visits. Although Shaykh 'Ali Mansur has not been effective in his role as mufti, he remains an essential member of the Supreme Shi'ite Islamic Council.

The first nonresident judge in Tripoli was Shaykh Khalil Yasin, father of Dr. Muhammad Yasin, who is a member of the Supreme Committee of the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council. The second non-resident judge was Shaykh 'Abdallah Ni'mah, chief judge of the Ja'fari Court in Beirut.

Local obstacles, some political and some personal, prevented the continuation of these efforts, even though another attempt to continue them was made by Sayyid Hasan al-Shirazi, who was assassinated in Beirut in 1980.

Interest in these matters waned and came to a standstill after the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr. They became so inconsequential that efforts were made to present the Alawite community in north Lebanon as an independent community that was not related to the Shiites. Eventually, these efforts resulted in the Alawite community being given two seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The first one would be for the Alawites in Tripoli, and the second one would be for Alawites in 'Akkar. Action protesting these attempts was led by 'Ali 'Id, the founder of the Alawite Youth Movement in north Lebanon. At the present time 'Ali 'Id is the leader of the Democratic Arab Party.

In his independent attempt to form an Alawite sect in Lebanon, 'Ali 'Id relied on the text of Lebanese law, Legislative Decree Number 60 of 30 March 1936. This decree considers Alawites one of the Islamic sects in Lebanon. 'Ali 'Id relied on this decree in his attempt to organize an independent Alawite sect in Lebanon, particularly after obstacles were placed in front of attempts

that were made to incorporate the Alawites into the Shi'ite sect. 'Id's attempt started with a petition that was signed by 10,000 rural and urban residents in Tripoli and 'Akkar and delivered to Sulayman Franjiyah, who was president then, by a delegation of Alawite intellectuals and notables. President Franjiyah forwarded the petition to the Ministry of Interior, which has direct jurisdiction over the matter. Consequently, this sect was allowed to exercise its rights just like other sects do.

The text of Legislative Decree Number 60, which states that the Alawite sect is one of the Lebanese sects, follows. The Personal Status Law mentions the Christian sects and then states the following:

"Islamic sects include the following:

- "1. Sunnis
- "2. Ja'fari Shiites
- "3. Alawite Shiites
- "4. Isma'ilis
- "5. the Druze"

Recommendation for the Election of 'Ali 'Id

"His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Lebanon "His Honor, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies "His Excellency, the Prime Minister:

"Given the success of the quest for security and political stability in Lebanon, which is being carried out under the care and protection of the fraternal country of Syria under our struggler, leader, Hafiz al-Asad, it is our opinion that a solution must be pursued on the basis of the al-Ta'if Accord.

"Regarding the subject of parliamentary appointments, the names of likely candidates for such appointments representing all Lebanese factions are appearing in some daily newspapers.

"Given the rumors in 'Akkar about these appointments, it is our duty to make the opinion of the Alawite sect public. The sect, which is represented by the Charitable Alawite Islamic League, finds that putting out those different names degrades the popular representation of the Alawite sect in 'Akkar.

"After convening a meeting for all its members, the league in 'Akkar finds itself facing a crucial and historic responsibility. Accordingly, it is calling upon the competent authorities, represented by His Excellency, the President; His Honor, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies; and His Excellency, the Prime Minister. The league is asking these officials to take the position that was formulated at that meeting into account. That position calls for Mr. 'Ali 'Id to be named representative of the Alawites in 'Akkar. A historic responsibility lies in your excellencies' hands."

Role of Alawite Mujtahid Praised by Shiite Clerics

91AE 0436B Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic 6 May 91
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[Article: "Two Documents Regarding Effort To Incorporate Alawites in Lebanon into Shiite Sect"]

[Text] Attorney Bushra Khalil was kind enough to send AL-SHIRA' two documents which round out the information that was published in the last issue of the magazine about the status of the Alawite sect in Lebanon under the title, "The Alawites in Lebanon." These two documents have to do with the part played by the great Mujtahid and 'Allameh, [the most erudite legist] Shaykh Yusuf al-Faqih al-Harisi, who served as chief judge of the Supreme Ja'fari Court of Cassation in the forties and fifties. During his tenure as chief judge of the Court of Cassation, Shaykh al-Harisi ruled that Alawites were to be regarded Ja'fari Shiites. His Eminence had devoted much attention to the Alawites, and he had sent them a missionary, Shaykh Habib Al Ibrahim, who played a major and an effective part in that regard.

The two documents sent by that female attorney are two letters addressed to His Eminence Shaykh Yusuf al-Faqih al-Harisi. The first one is from the Supreme Authority, the late Muslim holy man, Sayyed Muhsin al-Hakim Tabataba'i, and the second is from the late Shaykh Habib Al Ibrahim, may God have mercy on his soul. The two letters confirm that Shaykh Yusuf had played a great role in that regard, and they also confirm that Shaykh Yusuf, the highest judicial authority for Ja'fari Shiites in Lebanon, had ruled that Alawites were to be regarded Ja'fari Shiites.

The texts of the two documents follow.

The Text of Sayyed Muhsin al-Hakim's Letter

"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, Praise be to God.

"The Honorable and Most Erudite, Hojjat ol-Eslam Shaykh Yusuf al-Faqih, may his blessings last forever:

"May the peace of God and His Mercy and blessings be upon you.

"I was told by His Excellency al-Kamil al-Sayyed Mohammad Mortaza al-Musavi al-Harmali that you undertook a major religious mission which has to do with our fellow Alawites in Tripoli. I was told that you tried to reestablish their connection with their origins and that you also tried to make them go back to applying the provisions of the law which reflect their proper personal beliefs: those beliefs which have been fading or have almost faded due to the ignorance which has settled over their land. This was a laudable effort, and yet it pales by comparison to the noble battles you fought and the blessed efforts you made. I prayed God that your efforts be supported and rewarded, and I thanked and praised God Almighty for your noble presence. Because

I wish to share with you this credit and this reward, I am hereby declaring my thanks to you and my willingness to assist you and to do what I can to provide you with what you need. That is, if there is a need for my assistance. I hope that you will keep me informed about the results of your noble efforts, and I ask that you pursue this matter with diligence and initiative. May God honor Muslim scholars like you and me by enabling us to serve the family of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him salvation. May He allow us to continue working on their behalf. I wrote a letter to that effect to His Eminence al-Husayni. (This is Sayyed Ahmad al-Husayni, who served as minister at the time.) God Almighty has power over all matters, and He will provide us with a most excellent reward. May the peace of God and His mercy and blessings be upon you."

[Signed] Mohsin Tabataba'i al-Hakim [Dated] 5 Safar 1370

Text of Shaykh Habib Al Ibrahim's Letter

"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: Praise and Glory to God.

"The Magnanimous Great 'Allameh, Hojjat ol-Eslam Shaykh Yusuf al-Faqih, long may he live:

"May the peace of God and His mercy and blessings be upon you and all those who are with you.

"I came to Tripoli at this time to embolden Shiite Alawites and to assist them in performing deeds that would please God Almighty. It was part of my job to call upon them to work together on building a mosque. They complied with my request, and they rushed off to contribute to that effort. After directing them to continue their efforts, I left them and traveled to Tartus and to al-Ladhiqiyah. When I returned, however, I found that they had stopped their work on the mosque because someone had given them this warning: 'If you build your mosque,' they were warned, 'it will be seized by religious trusts.' They believed the warning because of what had happened to them in a recent case which they told me about. They told me that Your Excellency had summoned them because the court had been asked to rule that they were to be regarded Shiites. They answered the summons and got the ruling, but they postponed their work on the mosque because your just ruling was rejected by the director of the Census Bureau. They were disheartened by that, and they felt weak and powerless when neither they nor Your Excellency could change the director's mind. They felt defeated, especially since they had collected hundreds of identity cards from hundreds of families who wanted to register. I felt very sorry about that. Because I think this may affect my work with the Alawites in Syria, I hope that you will use your wisdom to rectify the situation so that they can regain their confidence in our strength and in the fact that we will not delay in coming to their aid and assistance. I ask that God Almighty grant you honor and support for your efforts. He is Most Merciful."

[Signed] The Hopeful, Habib Al Ibrahim [Dated] 5/ 29/1370

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