

Denial will not save the Shiites

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Relatives of abducted Lebanese Shiite Muslim pilgrims kidnapped in northern Syria react after hearing the news of their release on May 25, 2012 (AFP photo).

For the first time since its initiation, Hezbollah is reacting instead of acting. While trying to absorb the shockwaves resulting from the Syrian uprising, the Party of God has little space to strategize. That's why we are seeing more and more irrational behavior and ill-advised decisions by its leaders.

Hezbollah has put the Shiite community on the front line against the rebels in Syria by claiming the support of the vast majority of the Shiites in Lebanon, something that still needs to be established. They have thereby exposed Lebanon to many dangers, one of which is pushing the Lebanese into a potentially bloody Sunni-Shiite conflict.

Sending fighters to Syria to assist the Syrian regime in killing its own people is a bad idea, even by Hezbollah's standards. Lebanese Shiite mothers have held back their pain when their sons were declared martyrs after fighting "the Israeli enemy," but they cannot and will not accept such a loss for political alliances or regional power games. The rules of the game have changed, and people have been through too much agony.

It doesn't matter if Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah denies it or not; people are not foolish, and the Shiites of Lebanon know more than anyone else of the secret funerals happening in their villages and towns, of "martyrs dying while performing his jihadist duties."

Now the Syrian rebels have warned Hezbollah that they would move the ongoing battle in Syria to "the heart" of Beirut's southern suburb of Dahiyeh—a Hezbollah stronghold—if the group failed to halt its support for the Syrian regime.

Whether to distract attention from the first scandal or not, Hezbollah decided a couple of days later to send a drone over Israel, calling it an achievement. Of course the drone was immediately destroyed by the Israelis, reminding us of the great achievements and "divine victory" of the 2006 war. Nevertheless, Hezbollah decided to take a military risk, at a moment when the whole country is on the verge of a breakdown.

This means one of two things: they are either stupid or irresponsible. But of course these decisions are exactly like the drone itself: made in Iran and executed in Lebanon.

After placing itself, and the Lebanese Shiites behind it, in direct confrontation with the Syrian rebels, Hezbollah has removed itself from its main mission—the Resistance—leaving its supporters at loss to understand what is the real reason why they stand behind this group.

These supporters are confused, alarmed and concerned. Hezbollah is not the Resistance they have backed for 30 years. Hezbollah is not as pure and honest as they have always thought. But the question for them still is: Who else is going to protect them, from Israel, from the Salafists, and from the monsters Hezbollah has imagined for them recently?

It is a vicious circle that can only be broken by two endeavors:

- Hezbollah making compromises to protect Lebanon and the Lebanese, such as stop sending its fighters to Syria,
- Or, the Lebanese, Shiite and not, should focus their efforts on developing a serious political rhetoric that would constitute a Lebanese alternative for the Shiite community, one that is not threatening or intimidating.

Both of these options are unlikely to happen in the near future because Hezbollah is not in the mind to make any compromise. After all, Iran decides how Hezbollah acts or reacts, and Hezbollah executes. Lebanon and the Lebanese, who have the exclusive right to decide on issues of war and peace, were not and will never be consulted by the Iranian regime. Lebanon has been given to Hezbollah as their battlefield to carry out Iranian orders.

The Lebanese are also preoccupied with which electoral law would guarantee more seats to this or that party in the 2013 polls. Therefore, we should be prepared for the worst.

With this gloomy situation, the only solution left is for the Shiites to start detaching themselves from Hezbollah, at least from certain actions by the party. One can support the resistance against Israeli aggression and still stand against the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime against its own people. On the other hand, the Lebanese who have been outspoken against the Party of God and have repeatedly isolated the Shiites in Lebanon, intentionally or not, should also start to genuinely reach out to the Shiites, despite the immense obstacles.

The solution can only be Lebanese, and if we are immune to the sectarian rhetoric pushed by Iran, the Jihadists in Syria and their funders in the Gulf States, then no one can turn Lebanon into their battlefield, not even Hezbollah. Hezbollah is today strong because we allowed it to be. All the regional interference in Lebanon happened because we did not stop it.

The Syrian regime will be gone, and all Lebanese know it is only a matter of time. Whether they like it or not, Hezbollah and its supporters need to seriously start thinking of what comes after that, because the day-after is not going to be all sunshine for Hezbollah.