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Lebanese Professor: 'To Be a Shi'ite Now...'

In an article published on August 7, 2006 in the Lebanese daily Al-Nahar, Mona Fayyad, a professor at the Lebanese University, attacked the uniform pro-Hizbullah, pro-Iran thinking expected of and imposed upon Shi'ites in Lebanon. [1] In the days following its publication, several reactions to Fayyad's article were published in Al-Nahar and on the Internet.

(Mona Fayad's original article, in Arabic : http://www.mettransparent.com/texts/mona_fayad_to_be_a_shiite_now.htm)

The following are excerpts from an English translation of Fayyad's article that was posted on the Internet, [2] and excerpts from the reactions.

"To Be a Shi'ite Means That You Do Not Question the Meaning of Resistance and Pride"

"We are going through a catastrophic and existential period that will have long-lasting impacts on our country and region for the next century; and since we are facing such a dangerous juncture, I saw fit to pose some questions that one might pose to one's self, or in secret, and wouldn't dare publicize, in fear of being accused of being a foreign agent or a traitor, or even a blasphemer. Confronting difficult questions and putting them out in public could help prevent us from falling to the precipice from which there is no return, and could help leaders take the appropriate decisions in order to stop this hellish war, whatever the cost may be.

"What is the meaning of being Shi'ite for the majority of Shi'ites at this point and at this critical juncture?

"To be a Shi'ite means that you entrust your fate to the wise and infallible leadership without daring to ask any question, even if just as a point of understanding.

"To be a Shi'ite means watching the Al-Manar channel, or New TV or NBN, exclusively, and that you enjoy their inspirational songs and their exclusive news, and that you look with enmity on all other channels because they are either 'American' or 'Zionist,' as long as they refer to Israeli forces by their name, and do not call them the 'forces of the enemy,' and do not have enough eulogies and only broadcast information.

"To be a Shi'ite means that you do not question the meaning of victory. Is it the victory of armies while keeping soldiers - flush with weapons - alive, while destroying all of what is built, and the killing of the human beings that worked hard to build it up, and constitute the true protection for the fighter himself?

"To be a Shi'ite means that you do not question the meaning of resistance and pride. Is it fleeing from bombing and being heaped together on the tile floors of schools...?

"To be a Shi'ite is to contribute to the creation of a Lebanese 'Karbala 2,' as the Iraqi 'Karbala 1' did not perform its role as needed in building up the Arabs and carrying them on to victory over the enemy."

"Didn't We See... That Syria is the Cornerstone of This Region?"

"To be a Shi'ite is to be a hero that does not feel hurt nor complain, and does not have psychological crises, and accepts sacrificing himself and his country and everything that was accomplished so that he can teach Israel a lesson, and expose its craziness and ensure its defeat, as was indicated to us by the Syrian Minister on the BBC, that Israel is the loser... You see it is now hated more than ever before, and it is indicted by most of the nations of the world... now that they see for sure - and the lesson is still proceeding - the extent of its savagery and folly.

"When you are Shi'ite, you have to accept this logic, and even praise it, admiring its eloquence, its wisdom, and its global role in spreading the legal education and the enactment of international treaties and its role on a popular level, in resistance and liberation. Didn't we see, through this war on us, that 'Syria is the cornerstone of this region?' These are the very words of the [Syrian] minister himself.

"Of course all this destruction was necessary in order to ensure with concrete evidence the validity of this reasoning; because of the level of our objective thinking, we only work with evidence and empirical experimentation.

"To be a Shi'ite is to accept that your country be destroyed before your very eyes... and that it comes tumbling down on your head, and that your family be displaced and dispersed and becomes a 'refugee' at the four corners of the nation and the world, and that you accept standing up to the enemy with no complaints as long as there is a fighter out there with a rocket that he can launch at northern Israel - and maybe even at

its south - without asking about the 'why' or about the timing or about the usefulness of the end result.

"To be a Shi'ite is to accept that you sacrifice all, as long as you have someone who will compensate you with money, and that someone will look over you as you rebuild what he destroyed. What is your problem with that?"

"You see, we are a people of heroes that knows nothing but sacrifice, and we can absorb mental shocks and the death of loved ones and the humiliation of displacement and the destruction of the infrastructure of the state - since it is a weak, corrupt and follower state. Is it not enough to have on our side a strong country [i.e. Syria] whose foundations we work to support in confronting the unjust American might and the Israeli war machine from hell? - that machine whose weakness we have to prove, as well as its inability to inflict any harm on the fighters of Hizbullah, or on its ability to limit their military capabilities, and to prove that at any price?"

"What is the Purpose of Liberating a Country? Is it to Destroy it All Over Again and to Make it Possible for it to Be Occupied Once More?"

"To be a Shi'ite is to keep silent and not to ask what is the purpose of liberating a country. Is it to destroy it all over again and to make it possible for it to be occupied once more? And not to ask about the role of the leadership: Is it to preserve its military power and keep its men flush with arms without any care or concern for the normal human being? Being a Shi'ite means that you can only thank Hizbullah for its heroism and sacrifice. It is not your role to contribute to 'weakening' it or to 'breaking its word' or to making it know when to back down or compromise to preserve its victory on the one hand and to preserve the Lebanese nation and its people, as well as its development, on the other hand!! That means never to question whether pride takes precedence over the lives of others and whether stones take precedence over arms."

"To Be a Shi'ite Means to Incapacitate Your Mind and to Leave it to Khamenei to Guide You... and He Imposes on You a Notion of Victory That is No Different Than Suicide"

"To be a Shi'ite means to confer on the leader of the resistance his role as a loyal hero to the cause of the Arab nation in its entirety, not only whether you like it or not, but whether that nation likes it or not. You only have to hear the popular praise of the masses, that was preceded by the praise the masses heaped on their loyal hero 'Abd Al-Nasser, and is still shedding tears for its other hero, Saddam Hussein. And the masses are still able to heap praise on any hero that tickles its dreams and its feelings so that it can sleep tight at night... or to recover its lost dignity under the boots of rulers like Saddam, as long as we, and only we, pay

the price until your real awakening.

"But the question is, to what degree can we rely on these incapable masses, who are enslaved by their rulers, to liberate themselves without even thinking about reconsidering this Jihadist and revolutionary plan!! Are they empowered? Are they wise enough? Have they prepared the ground for that? Do they have tools for fighting and remaining steadfast other than the arms of zeal and emotion and oratory?"

"If you are a Shi'ite you are not to ask this leadership how the groundwork was prepared to absorb this indiscriminate war and its 'potential' consequences. Where are the hospitals, the ambulances, not to speak of the shelters? These are the responsibilities of the state - which was never consulted in declaring war - so that it can be blamed for its weakness and lack of wit. You see, the state is only needed when it is called upon to heal wounds, but the wise and existential decisions are not within its realm.

"To be a Shi'ite means to incapacitate your mind and to leave it to [Iranian Supreme Leader] Khamenei to guide you and to decide for you what he wants concerning arms for Hizbullah, and he imposes on you a notion of victory that is no different than suicide."

**"Isn't it a Priority to Make Iran a Regional Shi'ite Superpower?
What is the Problem With Sacrificing a Country Called Lebanon?"**

"To be a Shi'ite means to defend the meddling of the Iranian [Foreign] Minister Mottaki in Lebanese state affairs without even trying to care for appearances. Maybe he came to 'point out' to the ministers of Hizbullah that they [the Hizbullah ministers] 'did not agree' to the seven-point plan, especially the point about the multinational force, so that the door of the resistance would not be shut, and so that we can remain a country exploited and abused, after it was proven that the Shab'a Farms are Syrian and would be dealt with in accordance with Resolution 242... And in that he is warning them about putting their Lebanese identity before their following Iran.

"They have to, against their own will, put the Iranian nuclear program and the interest of the state of Iran ahead of the interest of their state, and ahead of the preservation of the lives of the Lebanese or their possessions, whether these Lebanese are Shi'ite or otherwise, but especially if they are Shi'ites. Isn't it a priority to make Iran a regional Shi'ite superpower? What is the problem with sacrificing a country called Lebanon? Or the Shi'ites of this 'Lebanon'?"

"If You are a Shi'ite and You Dare Write Such Writings and Think Such Thinking, Then You Must Be a Foreign Agent and a Traitor"

"And in this tense mood, if you are a Shi'ite you have to listen to your

Shi'ite speaker, who is disturbed and angry, and who wants to turn the world on top of the [Lebanese reform movement] 14th of March, and who wants to forbid the deployment of multinational forces. And you hear him distribute labels of foreign servitude, treason, Americanism and Zionism left and right, without raising your lip. You have to absorb his anger and agree with all his opinions, of which we have mentioned but a small sample. This is what takes you as far as possible from thinking: who the heck you are? Are you a Lebanese citizen? Does your being a Shi'ite mean that you have to give priority to Iran over Lebanon? Do you have the freedom to have your own opinions? Freedom of expression? Is it possible to think calmly and to ask where are we going with this nation, the institutions of this state, with pluralism, with the coexistence that we have to defend now?

"If you are a Shi'ite and you dare write such writings and think such thinking, then you must be a foreign agent and a traitor, in favor of partition and naturalization of Palestinians [in Arab states]. You must be with the Zionist and Israeli projects, and you defend the state, with its corruption and favoritism, and you support the biased American policies, and you accept its short-sightedness, and its support for the terrorism of the Zionist state, and its failure to give the Palestinians their state like all other creatures of God, under the pretext of not supporting the terrorism of Hamas. And that means you support Israel itself and its satanic war machine and its extreme savagery, and you justify its killing, its occupation, and its folly, and you are lucky if you are not accused of being the one destroying houses on people's heads and the dismemberment of children's corpses and scattering them on the heaps of debris - [all this] by raising your voice.

"Did I forget any of the symphony? If I did, please excuse me, because I cannot miss any of the news shows any more. I have to go see who is being displaced and whose house is being destroyed at the moment - that is, if he manages to survive."

Reactions to Mona Fayyad's Article

Two articles in the Lebanese daily Al-Nahar - one from August 10, 2006, by Naif Karim and another from August 12, 2006, by Sanaa Haj - accused Mona Fayyad of superficiality and of distorting the facts, and mimicked the style of her article.

Karim wrote: "The hypothetical Shi'ite is supposed to give up his weapons and sleep in the arms of the wolf, relying on the protection of the international community and not troubling himself or his country with [issues of] liberating territories... [or] liberating Lebanese prisoners... The hypothetical Shi'ite is supposed to accept it as inevitable fate that there are networks of Israeli agents who plant bombs and kill activists from Sidon to Ba'albek... A Shi'ite who counts as a pure Lebanese is one who condemns [Syrian Foreign Minister] Walid Al-Muallem and [Iranian Foreign Minister] Manuchehr Mottaki for their open interference in

Lebanon's affairs, [but] throws flowers to Condoleezza Rice and approves of the New Middle East that she is weaving from the blood of our children." [3]

Sanaa Haj, a university lecturer, wrote: "To be a Shi'ite means having to justify [the activity of] the resistance [i.e. Hizbullah] - to foreign [parties] and unfortunately also to domestic [ones]... [It means having] to convince others every day that you are loyal to your country, which you nourish with your blood and your determined stand, and to constantly prove that you are an Arab and not an Iranian... to endure the sight of your family members in South Lebanon being killed and uprooted from their homes... to keep silent and not dare to express your enthusiasm and your joy at the victories of the resistance, so as to not offend the sensibilities of certain people in Lebanon..." [4]

In an August 12, 2006 article in Al-Nahar, Isma'il Sharaf Al-Din responded to Naif Karim's claims, saying that Karim had not answered the legitimate questions raised by Mona Fayyad. Sharaf Al-Din, who sees himself as a displaced Shi'ite, wrote that he agreed with Fayyad's statements and wished to add one of his own: "As a Shi'ite, you must first of all demand an accounting from those who started this adventure, which, as an initial result, caused more than one million Lebanese, most of them Shi'ites, to be displaced from their homes, with [entire] cities and villages being emptied of their inhabitants." [5]

Reformist columnist 'Aziz Al-Haj posted a reaction on the reformist website Elaph, stating that Mona Fayyad "is not the only one who writes with such candor out of love for Lebanon and its people." He listed many others who had written in the same vein, in the London Arabic-language daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat and in the Kuwaiti press, and who had incurred a torrent of curses, insults, and accusations of being communists. [6]

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<http://memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD125806>

[1] Al-Nahar (Lebanon), August 7, 2006.

[2] The translation was posted on the website "New England Americans for Lebanon" and has been lightly edited for style.
<http://www.10452lccc.com/hizbollah/fayad10.8.06english.htm>
, August 11, 2006.

[3] Al-Nahar (Lebanon), August 10, 2006.

[4] Al-Nahar (Lebanon), August 12, 2006.

[5] Al-Nahar (Lebanon), August 12, 2006.

[6] <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/ElaphWriter/2006/8/168599.htm>
, August 10, 2006.