

## **The Future's Future**

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Some Lebanese consider that the current debate regarding the memorandum of understanding signed between Hezbollah and some Salafist groups in Tripoli is avoiding the background that led to the announcement of such a step. Furthermore, some believe that the speculation has limited its scope to Hezbollah's role in attempting to generate alliances with the Sunni organizations and groups in the hope of transforming Tripoli's electoral landscape and thereby undermining the majority's standing in the coming elections. This was surprising to many, who assumed this startling development would evolve in to an appraisal of the Future Movement's role and its relationship with Islamic Sunni organizations and the Sunni milieu in general, to say nothing of the "Future" deputies who had prior knowledge of the document (and possibly blessed it), then later denounced it and denied any involvement in the matter – all of which points to a curious state of affairs within the Future Movement.

Perhaps upon its inception, The Future Movement relied on its in tunnes of the Sunni mainstream sentiment to manage the sectarian balance. However, the means that it employed actually weakened the Sunni community of Lebanon, and did nothing to weaken the sectarian mood in the Lebanese political arena. Overnight, the Sunnis' representation was reduced to the Hariri family, and the Sunnis as larger force were pushed aside. The slogan "The Future is not a closed factional movement; rather it is a populace movement whose activities cover the whole of Lebanon" tried to (soften/gloss over) this marginalization of the Sunni leaders; still the irony was that this non-sectarian party had developed into a platform of all the various sects save the Sunnis.

The situation deteriorated further still. While the late Rafiq Al-Hariri silenced the leadership of a whole community in its entirety, reduced its representation within his persona and used this to safeguard the premiership, Saad Al-Hariri transformed the movement into a platform for others' fights at the expense of the Sunnis, inclining to overstate the Movement's secularism and creating alliances that discouraged the Sunnis in pursuing their role as a confessional body. Compounding these moves was Future's abandonment of its previous strategy of providing assistance and developing projects to impoverished areas. It's to be expected that the coming phase will witness the emergence or resurfacing of other Sunni powers which will be compelled to form alliances with Future adversaries; in other words, the Sunni representation will be divided among other confessions. The course of action needed to curb this deterioration is a meaningful Sunni-Sunni dialogue evaluating the Future Movement's role, and broadening its base and leadership, and doing away with the hereditary/inheritance system. The Sunnites are a nation (Oumma), not a family.

*This article is a translation of the original Arabic version.*