

The allure of treason

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A few days ago, Secretary General of the March 14 Coalition Fares Soueid held a press conference dedicated to the issue of Lasa in the Jbeil region. During this conference, he mentioned an aggression that targeted - or almost succeeded in so doing - the deacon of the Lasa church. The perpetrators, Soueid said, were members of Hezbollah.

The deacon of the Lasa church surely deserves to be defended. The March 14 coalition, as a framework and project that is presented to all the Lebanese people, should rise up against injustice caused to any citizen, let alone a deacon.

The March 14 coalition is for all the Lebanese, save the Shia community. During the same week that witnessed "the Lasa church deacon incident," a judicial ruling cleared Mohammad Ali Hussein, a Shia cleric opposed to Hezbollah, who had been imprisoned on charges of collaboration with Israel. The March 14 coalition did not feel that it was its mission to defend him, nor did it feel that his case could have justified a political showdown with Hezbollah. It is as though this coalition's self-awareness is not sensitive to injustice against a Shia cleric.

Furthermore, another Shia cleric, Sheikh Hassan Mcheimech, is imprisoned in Syria. This man, who was visited by his family in his Syrian prison, is being detained on the sole charge of opposition to Hezbollah. In turn, he did not spark a feeling of sovereignty in the March 14 coalition, and his case remained a Shia one that his family cannot bring forth to the Lebanese public.

Many within the March 14 coalition and around it have always wondered about the secret behind the Shia "embrace" of Hezbollah. They thus cited the party's financial capacities and their role in this respect, its security and military apparatus controlling any attempt to divert from the party's options and the penetration of state institutions by Hezbollah and its allies, and their monopoly over Shia representation in them. All this is true and may even amount to an understatement.

Yet the question remains: Does the March 14 coalition wish to break this cohesion? Hence, has it made any plan, be it a stumbling one, in this respect?

Of course, it has not; rather, it developed a rhetoric, whereby Shia are zealots. Hezbollah contributed to shaping the March 14 rhetoric vis-à-vis the Shia by cornering them into being rivals. Yet the "pro-independence group" did not show any resistance to this endeavor; rather, due to its sectarian position, it was lured into the stance Hezbollah wanted it to take. For instance and regardless of the details, the Lasa case seems, from afar, like a civil confrontation in addition to being a confrontation between Hezbollah and Christians, or one between people who have rights and those who are attacking those rights. The inhabitants of Lasa are Shia and the opposite party is the Christian community. The March 14 coalition did not make any effort to dissociate the civil content of the confrontation from its party-related, security and legal aspect.

The latest March 14 statement, which condemned Hezbollah's attempt to link the Shia community to those accused of assassinating former PM Rafik Hariri, comes within the framework of "defending the Shia" by picturing them as zealots. Hezbollah has thus succeeded in luring the March 14 coalition into a discussion of this issue with the Shia community rather than with the party. It is self-evident that the Shia are innocent from such claims... The denial of such charges may be well-intentioned, but it may also spring from a sectarian awareness that embodies a feeling, whereby partnership with "the others" calls for a devious clearance rhetoric.

This leads to dangerous potential implications. Many Shia-born individuals are today at the heart of March

14 elites and will find themselves exposed in case they are ever subjected to situations like clerics Hussein and Mcheimech. The March 14 coalition will not defend their cause as this is an internal Shia matter. As for the Shia community itself, it has been confiscated and they have betrayed it.

Despite all these risks, the fact remains that treason by one community, regardless of its identity, is attractive and alluring. This allure of treason carries implications that are stronger than the allure of one community on account of the fact that young men and women acquire the full meaning of their youth by falling prey to the enticement of such treason.

This article is a translation of the original, which appeared on the NOW Arabic site on Friday August 26, 2011

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