

FBIS-NES-88-158
16 August 1988

2

ANNEX

When we questioned the Al-Sayyid about Western hostages, he replied: "I have no knowledge of these hostages or who holds them—but Islamic law is against the holding of people in this way—maybe there is a hope of releasing the hostages."

Nor was there any doubt that Samahah Fadlallah saw Lebanon's politics as anything but international. "The situation in Lebanon is affected and controlled by outside powers," he said. "But we have our aims and will win in the end."

"Richard Murphy (the US Under-Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs) says that the Lebanese presidential election will be in the Mansur Palace (the Lebanese Parliament) but the Lebanese themselves were not aware of this. They were all surprised. Is this not proof of what the big powers can do?"

The Al-Sayyid had no time for questions about America, even though he clearly knew that the Americans and the Iranians would soon publicly talk together. The United States had given weapons to Israel, he said.

And the Israelis had fired a rocket at his home, a missile which had killed his wife. United Nations officers have confirmed that this indeed is true.

Samahah Fadlallah pointed to a jagged hole in the wall of the room where his wife died. "The West has democratic law", he said slowly. "This is what democracy has done to this house."

Syria

New Opposition Party Leader Interviewed

JN0508124688 Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic
5 Aug 88 pp 26-33—FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

[Interview with opposition figure Ahmad Sulayman al-Ahmad by Tammam al-Barazi; date, place not given]

[Excerpts] [Passage omitted] [Al-Barazi] Let us now move to the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria [NALS] and your joining the Alliance's General Secretariat in its second session. Do you represent yourself or your party, the National Democratic Party [NDP] [Al-Hizb al-Watani al-Dimuqrati]?

[Al-Ahmad] I joined the NALS as an independent member. I am proud that my party, the NDP, is broadly represented in Syria. I am also proud that the brothers in Syria informed me at that time that the leadership had met secretly and elected me leader of the party and its official spokesman. Had I joined the NALS as the NDP's representative I would have been dutybound to ask for more than one seat in the Constituent Assembly or in the General Secretariat. [passage omitted]

[Al-Barazi] How many members does the NDP comprise and who are the most prominent among them?

[Al-Ahmad] The party comprises large masses from all walks of life, from the cities and the countryside. I can also confirm from reports I received that the party is the major organized popular force in Syria. The most prominent of its members are struggling in Syria. The party also enjoys wide support in the Army. [passage omitted]

[Al-Barazi] When was this party established?

[Al-Ahmad] We were discussing it before I left Syria in 1980. We have spent much time in preparations and in trying to find the best methods to express the people's will and aspirations on one hand, and on the other, in looking for vanguard men who will assume the responsibility of the struggle for the attainment of our objectives. Following my departure from the homeland, I remained in constant contact with the brothers there. I was informed on 17 April 1988 that I was elected as the party's leader.

This date also coincides with the date of its proclamation. We have chosen this date for the proclamation of the party in view of the noble and important meaning of this date, particularly considering Syria's present situation. There is no doubt that the establishment of this party has come in response to a dire need among the people, particularly since many sham parties have been established, none of which really represents the people. [passage omitted]

Iran

Velayati Meets With Hizballah in Damascus

PM1508103688 London THE TIMES in English
15 Aug 88 pp 1, 18

[Robert Fisk and Nicholas Beeston report: "Iran in Talks With Hizballah on Release of British Hostages"]

[Text] The Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr 'Ali Akbar Velayati, met a senior representative of the Lebanese Hizballah movement in Damascus yesterday in an initiative that emphasized Tehran's determination to secure the freedom of the Western hostages.

Dr Velayati, on a 24-hour visit to the Syrian capital, also delivered a letter to President al-Asad of Syria from President Khamene'i of Iran which is believed to have touched on the fate of the captives.

There is considerable speculation that the Syrians may be more eager than ever to play a role in freeing Western hostages. The growing antipathy between Syria and Hizballah may be connected with President al-Asad's desire to ensure that the U.S. accepts a non-Phalangist and pro-Syrian president in Lebanon. Presidential elections are due to be held on Thursday.

The Iranian Foreign Minister met Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli, who headed a delegation from the pro-Iranian Hizballah movement, which is suspected of holding

FBIS-NES-88-158
16 August 1988

3

ANNEX

most of the missing Westerners in Lebanon. The meeting is believed to be the first by an Iranian at ministerial level with a Hizballah leader since Tehran agreed to a ceasefire in the Gulf War.

Shaykh al-Tufayli said the discussions dealt with important Lebanese questions, but did not elaborate.

In London, a source close to the hostage negotiations described the Damascus talks as "encouraging".

Dr Velayati also met other Lebanese Shi'a Muslim leaders, including the Amal head, Dr Nabih Birri, and vice-president of the Higher Shi'a Council, Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din.

In London, the Archbishop of Canterbury's top aide, Mr John Lyttle, said it was now up to Iran "to use all its undoubted influence in Lebanon to help to bring about the release of Brian Keenan, John McCarthy and Terry Waite."

Mr Lyttle ended his fourth and final round of negotiations with Mr Reza Seyyed Mohammadi, a senior Iranian envoy has now returned to Iran.

The English language newspaper TEHRAN TIMES, which reflects the mainstream beliefs of the Iranian regime, said Iran would "spare no effort to press ahead with the release of the British hostages, particularly Terry Waite, who is a British Christian clergyman". But the newspaper also hinted that progress could hinge on London's support for Tehran over a Gulf War peace settlement.

In Tehran the Foreign Office's special envoy, Mr David Reddaway, yesterday embarked on his second day of talks with Iranian officials. Although the substance of his

discussions was not released, it is believed he too was pressing the hostage issue, as well as seeking guarantees for the safety of British diplomats if they return to Tehran.

After two sessions with Foreign Ministry officials, Mr Reddaway said the Iranians had agreed to let him visit two Britons held at the Evin maximum security prison in northern Tehran. "There is agreement I should see both (Roger) Cooper and (Nicholas) Nicola some time this week," he said. If the visits go ahead, it will be the first consular access the Iranians have allowed Mr Cooper.

"All the developments so far augur well for the restoration of London-Tehran relations at a cordial level," THE TEHRAN TIMES said. The paper added in its commentary that Tehran would expect British support in negotiations with Iraq on border demarcation and reparations once the UN brokered ceasefire comes into effect on Saturday.

Observers believe the article provided one of the clearest indications to date that Iran still expects to receive a political pay-off if it manages to secure the release of British hostages.

Meanwhile, the Hizballah militia suffered a further humiliating blow at the weekend when one of its principal spiritual leaders in southern Lebanon was shot dead.

UN sources confirmed that more than 10 gunmen stopped the Hizballah leader, 'Ali Karim, as he was driving through the village of Bir al-Salasil, shot him dead and wounded his daughter, brother and sister, who were with him.

The killing apparently took place only 700 yards from a checkpoint of the Ghanaian UN contingent, and the gunmen were identified by the Ghanaians as members of the Shi'a Muslim Amal militia. The shooting, according to Hizballah, took place on Saturday afternoon.

Near East & South Asia
ANNEX

FBIS-NES-88-158

CONTENTS

16 August 1988

Lebanon

Hizballah Leader Interviewed on Cease-Fire [*London THE TIMES 9 Aug*] 1

Syria

New Opposition Party Leader Interviewed [*Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI 5 Aug*] 2

Iran

Velayati Meets With Hizballah in Damascus [*London THE TIMES 15 Aug*] 2

FBIS-NES-88-158
16 August 1988

ANNEX

1

Lebanon

Hizballah Leader Interviewed on Cease-Fire
PM0908112888 London THE TIMES in English
9 Aug 88 p 6—FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

[Report on interview with Hizballah leader Al-Sayyid Samahah 'Abd al-Muhsin Fadlallah by Robert Fisk entitled: "Iran Peace Bid Stuns Lebanon's Hizballah Faithful"; date not given]

[Text] Khirbat Silm, southern Lebanon—The Al-Sayyid Samahah 'Abd al-Muhsin Fadlallah used to be one of the more self-confident men in southern Lebanon.

Turbaned, chain-smoking English cigarettes and wearing a fine brown cloak with "Made in London" on the collar, he is perhaps the most important of the Hizballah leaders in this part of the country. His hatred of Israel and America, his loyalty to Iran, ran as untidily through his conversation as the narrow street which winds past his Islamic college in the grubby little village of Khirbat Silm.

But his world has been broken apart by Iran's decision to accept the UN ceasefire resolution in the Gulf War. He admits openly that most Shi'a Muslims in Lebanon have been stunned by Iran's sudden decision to talk directly to the Iraqi regime which they had vowed to destroy.

"There is going to be a great change," he told THE TIMES. "There is hope of releasing the hostages soon." The Al-Sayyid still chain-smokes but his hand shakes as he does so and he prefers to distance himself from the young Hizballah fighters who hung upon his words.

Have the Shi'a people of Lebanon understood why Iran has sued for peace, we asked him? The Al-Sayyid puffed on his cigarette and thought. Indeed, he considered the question for all of 15 seconds before replying, which in itself was a form of comment.

"The people are of two kinds," he said. "There are those who have a very good knowledge of the situation in the Gulf who see why Iran accepted the UN resolution (for the ceasefire).

"But there are others who are suspicious, who do not understand what is going on. In Islamic law, all Muslims must agree. This has been said by Ayatollah Kho'inha.

Just 18 months ago, the Al-Sayyid had sat in the same chair and promised the imminent victory of Iran in the Gulf War. Allah was on Iran's side, he had told us then. He had refused to discuss the Western hostages in Lebanon.

He was possessed of immense self-confidence and faith in the victory of Shi'a Islam. Students sat around the Al-Sayyid again when we questioned him yesterday

alongside the prelate's bearded son, 'Abd al-Sa'ib. There was a large architect's model of an Islamic hospital which Al-Sayyid Fadlallah plans to build in a neighbouring village.

The miniature hospital exists only in a glass case covered in finger-prints. It will include, said the Al-Sayyid, a medical wing, training department and a maternity ward. Tiny model cars could be seen in the process of driving up the main highway outside the hospital.

Where will he find the funds to build it? "Allah will help us get the money from the richest Muslims in the area," he said. It was the only ghost of his former confidence to emerge during our conversation.

Samahah 'Abd al-Muhsin Fadlallah is the first cousin of Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the man regarded as the spiritual leader of all the pro-Iranian Hizballah in Lebanon. Members of the Hizballah hold most of the Western hostages in the country. Like his cousin, the Al-Sayyid repeatedly disclaims any knowledge of the Hizballah's or of the Western captives. But he uses the title of "Ayatollah" and is widely believed to be one of the most influential Hizballah figures in southern Lebanon.

There were two Mercedes cars parked outside his home. Serious young men observed our approach and departure from the Al-Sayyid's Islamic college.

He spoke in an almost metaphorical way, watching our reactions to each of his comments to see if we had understood its contents. "Iran is taking the war religiously," he said. "and it is conducting its affairs in an Islamic way. It has not sought land or tried to change the geographic map of the area (by capturing parts of Iraq).

"And the Iraqis were just a machine used by the West. The Islamic Republic was fighting because it wanted to defend Muslims—but then the Iraqis used gas bombs and started killing innocent people. From this point, Iran wanted to stop the war and to show the world that it was not interested in being a warlike nation."

The Al-Sayyid paused here for another 10 seconds and stared at his latest cigarette. "The future is in Allah's hands," he concluded.

When we asked about the Lebanese Shi'a Muslims held in the Khiyan prison in the area of southern Lebanon occupied by the Israelis, he suggested a parallel with the Western hostages held in Lebanon.

Amnesty International has publicly expressed its disgust at the reports of torture going on in the jail but the Al-Sayyid was restrained.

"Everything there (at Khiyam) is related to the political situation and whether these people who hold the Muslims there (in Khiyam) decide to release them," he said.