

How the War on Christians in Iraq and Syria is Paving the Way for a Clash of Civilizations

Wiping Out the Christians of Syria and Iraq to Remap the Mid-East: Prerequisite to a Clash of Civilizations? Part II

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#), [SYRIA](#)

The [first part of this article discussed](#) the targeting of Christian Syrians and Iraqis. It detailed how their ancient communities, churches, and clerics have all come under fire and persecution by the US-supported insurgents that are ravaging both Syria and Iraq. The second part will explain the rationale behind this and how it is tied to the strategic goals of the US and Israel to redraw the map of the Middle East and North Africa. [1]

There is an attempt to cordon off the Arabs and create distinctive and sharply delineating lines. These lines of delineation are replacing the seamless lines of transition that exist in places like the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans. Under this scheme, there can no longer be a melding transition between societies and countries. What is being staged is the creation of an exclusively Muslim region in Syria and the Middle East— excluding the citadel of Israel — that will be in turmoil because of fighting within the Sunni majority and between the Sunni Muslims and the Alawites, Twelver (Jaffari) Shiites, Zaidi Shiites, and Ibadis.

Bkerké's Maronite Patriarchate Senses the Danger to the Levant's Christians

Amidst the Arab Spring and the start of the problems in Syria, the Maronite Greek Catholic Syriac Church of Antioch, which is simply called the Maronite Church (after Saint Youhana Maroun, its patron) and the largest of the autonomous Eastern Catholic Churches, appointed a new patriarch on March 15, 2011. The new Maronite patriarch, Mar Beshara Peter (Boutros) Al-Rahi, would shift the underlying politics of the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerké (and Dimane in the summer) towards a new direction from that of his predecessor Cardinal Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, who heavily favoured the bigoted warlord Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces Party and the Hariri-led March 14 Alliance.

Cardinal Nasrallah was at odds with Damascus and he even refused to visit the Maronite communities inside Syria on church missions himself when he headed the Maronite See, because he said that his visit would signal his approval towards the Syrian regime's actions inside Lebanon. Cardinal Nasrallah's supporters would point out, in his support, that he also refused to legitimize Israel by personally visiting it whereas Patriarch Al-Rahi decided to join Pope Francis I and his delegation in 2014 for a meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the figurehead primate of all the Eastern Orthodox Churches, in Jerusalem to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Pope Paul VI's meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I in 1964.

Inside Lebanon, Sfeir either had a tense relationship or was at odds with Hezbollah, Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, Suleiman Frangieh's Marada Movement, and the rest of the March 8 Alliance too. Mar Nasrallah's unyielding positions created divisions among the Maronite Christians and he began to be increasingly opposed by other Maronite bishops, which believed he was endangering the Maronite and Christian positions in Lebanon through his policies. It was even alleged that the Holy See or Vatican intervened and nudged Boutros Sfeir to resign vis-à-vis Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, the Argentine prefect overseeing the congregation of Eastern Catholic Churches for the papacy, and when Cardinal Nasrallah himself went to Rome to visit Pope Benedict XVI and to unveil a statue of Youhana Maroun in Vatican City. These accounts, however, were dismissed by his Maronite supporters as the malicious rumours of his opponents.

Upon his election into the Maronite Patriarchate by the Synod of Maronite Bishops, Cardinal Beshara reversed his predecessor's personal policies by taking a stand in support of Lebanon's Hezbollah and its ally Syria. Hezbollah, which had frozen meetings with the Maronite Patriarchate under Boutros Sfeir's leadership, sent a delegation led by senior Hezbollah parliamentarian Mohammed Raad to Bkerké to open a new chapter by renewing dialogue. [2] He also expressed his renewed fears about a purging of Christians in the Levant and the Middle East. In the past he and other Maronite leaders had fears that the Saudi-supported Hariri family could eventually devastate the Christians in Lebanon through its support of fanatical organizations and militias that openly support Al-Qaeda and have anti-Christian tendencies. In 2011, Beshara was warning against the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. [3] Moreover, Patriarch Al-Rahi, like many other Christian spiritual leaders in Lebanon and Syria, recognized the threat that the insurgence afflicting Syria posed towards all Levantine Christians. Like Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement, Patriarch Al-Rahi also realized that the insurgents would eventually attack Lebanon, if they successfully took over Syria.

Al-Rahi's support for Hezbollah and Syria became clear when he met French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Élysée Palace on September 5, 2011. Sarkozy and he had disagreements about regime change in Syria. Patriarch Al-Rahi argued that the Syrians should be left alone and that Syrian polity should be allowed to reform without foreign interference from France and its allies. [4] Nicolas Sarkozy was also told by Patriarch Al-Rahi that the real threat to Lebanon was Israel and that Tel Aviv needed to be neutralized if France was sincere and legitimately wanted Hezbollah's paramilitary forces to disarm. [5] It was maintained in Lebanon, in the course of the exchange between the two men, that Sarkozy told Beshara that the Christians of Lebanon and Syria could immigrate to the European Union as consolation. This was later denied in a statement released on behalf of the Élysée Palace by the French Embassy in Beirut on September 23, 2011. [6]

Al-Rahi was instantly criticized by the Hariri-led March 14 camp whereas he was thanked by Syria's Christian and Muslim spiritual leaders, which even visited him as part of an interfaith delegation upon his return to Lebanon. [7] Although they were supposed to visit him after he was elected as the spiritual leader of the Maronites, the Syrian interfaith delegation's visit had been postponed due to the crisis in Syria. [8] Nonetheless, the Syrian interfaith delegation, accompanied by Syria's ambassador to Lebanon, took the opportunity to signal its gratefulness by calling on the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerké. [9] Hezbollah, the Free Patriotic Movement, the Amal Movement, and March 8 applauded Beshara upon his arrival to Beirut from Paris and during his visit to South Lebanon. Prime Minister Najib Al-Mikati and President Michel Suleiman also expressed support for Al-Rahi's position in France. [10]



A Christian-Muslim Divorce and the Destruction of the «Levantine Cleft»

The New York Times began to assert in 2012 that «Syria's pluralistic society, which once rose above sectarian identity in a region often characterized by a homicidal assertion of religious belief, is now faced with civil disintegration and ethnic cleansing». [11] The Maronite Patriarchate and the Christian communities of the Levant realized that what was at stake in Syria was much more than the Syrian government. The things that were really at stake were the continuation of the ancient Christian presence and the coexistence of Christians with Muslims, Druze, and Jews, which the Israeli and US governments were trying to demolish with the aim of creating sectarian states that would be line with the so-called «clash of civilizations».

Syria is viewed by advocates of the clash of civilizations paradigm as what is called a «cleft nation». Cleft nations like Lebanon, Syria, and Bosnia (as well as the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union) are merging points between supposedly different civilizations. These nations and their societies help blend the different civilizations together and, hence, these cleft nations can obstruct a clash of civilizations by bridging different civilizational entities. The purging of Christian Syrians and Christian Iraqis, like Israeli and Zionist attempts to make Jewish Iranians leave their Iranian homeland, is aimed at sociologically and politically reconfiguring the Middle East as a crossroad of different civilizations and as a merging point for the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths and their followers and confessions. [12] It also denies the fact that Western Christians, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Jews really belong to one civilization. Moreover, this project's nefarious aims include unknotting or de-blending Syria and the Middle East as pluralistic societies, social mosaics, and historic merging points between Christians and Muslims.

This Christian-Muslim divorce and project to redraw the map is why the corrupt Sarkozy's offer to relocate the Levantine Christian to the European Union was no gracious offer whatsoever. It was dually a slap in the face of all Christendom and all Arabdom by the same

powers that have deliberately created the conditions to assault the ancient Christian communities of Syria. Resettling the Christian communities outside of the region and/or demarcating them into sectarian enclaves is meant to delineate the Arab nations along the lines of exclusively Muslim nations, This falls into accordance with both the Yinon Plan and the geopolitical objectives of Washington to control Eurasia by constructing a clash of supposedly different civilizations.

To read the first part, please [click here](#).

Notes:

[1] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, «Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a ‘New Middle East,» Global Research, November 18, 2006.

[2] «Hizbullah Delegation Visits Bkirki and al-Rahi: We Haven’t Tackled Issue of Arms,» Naharnet, March 18, 2011.

[3] Hussein Dakroub, «Rai defends stance on Syria, weapons,» Daily Star, September 12, 2011; Jean Aziz, «Christians of the Levant Say France Is Plotting to Displace Them,» Al-Monitor, January 7, 2013.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] «France denies Sarkozy said no home for Christians in region,» Daily Star, September 23, 2011.

[7] Bkirki: Syrian Delegation’s Visit Aimed at Bridging Gap between Sects,» Naharanet, September 29, 2011; «Patriarch al-Rahi, Damascus Mufti Discuss Syrian-Lebanese Relations and Bolstering Islamic-Christian Fraternity,» Syrian Arab News Agency, September 29, 2011.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Hussein Dakroub, «Raid defends Syria,» op. cit.

[11] Kapil Komireddi, «Syria’s Crumbling Pluralism,» New York Times, August 3, 2012.

[12] Robert Tait, «Iran’s Jews reject cash offer to move to Israel,» Guardian, July 12, 2007; Yossi Melman, «Iranian Jews blast offer of cash for immigrating to Israel,» Haaretz, July 14, 2007.

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