

The Assassination Plot targeted Syria

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Between 1989, when the Taif Accords were signed, and 2005, armed militias that once were in control, have largely disappeared from Lebanon's cities, towns and villages.

Yet the phenomenon of political assassination shows no sign of ending.

Rashid Karami, Bashir al-Jumail, Dani Shamun, Rene Muawad, Kamal Jumblatt, Hasan Khalid, Abbas al-Musawi and Rafiq al-Hariri are some of the Lebanese politicians and officials who have fallen prey to the assassin's bullet or bomb in the last three decades.

The same strategy that was used to kill president Muawad in October 1988 was used in last Monday's attack, which killed present-day Lebanon's most prominent political figure al-Hariri, the man regarded as the leader of Lebanon's reconstruction drive after the civil war.

Blow against Syria

As in all the previous cases, al-Hariri's death is seen by many Lebanese politicians as a bid to destabilise their country.

Bushra al-Khalil, a Lebanese lawyer and political activist, told Aljazeera.net the plot against al-Hariri's life also targeted Syria.

"If we look at the way the assassination has been conducted, it is very sophisticated, I knew al-Hariri's security measures - no local system could have breached them.

"The question is, who stands to benefit from his death? Syria's enemies. I think al-Hariri's death is part of the plan to divide the region into tiny helpless sectarian states. This plan has started in Iraq and it will continue to hit all other Arab countries."

Al-Khalil said the killing was an attempt to force Syria to leave Lebanon before striking it and

commencing the region's carve-up.

"If we look at who all have been adding fuel to the fire in the recent past, we will find sectarian leaders and promoters of sectarian division such as Walid Jumblatt and Amin al-Jumail, who had killed a lot of Lebanese people during the war just because they were not from their sects."

Al-Khalil considers the killing of al-Hariri as the most dangerous and destabilising incident since the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat in 1981.

"Al-Hariri was the guardian of stable Arab-Western relations. His success in this area had pulled the rug from under the feet of the traditional godfathers of such relationships.

Pan-Arab figure

According to al-Khalil, opposition leaders who claimed al-Hariri was killed because he supported them and opposed Syria, are dissembling.

"Al-Hariri did not agree with them. He was grateful to Syria. He was a real pan-Arab figure who would not tolerate harm to come to any Arab country," she said.

Al-Hariri had said before his death that he knew there were people working to discredit his Arabist and nationalist points of view.

Striking a similar note, Imad Fawzi al-Shuaibi, head of the Strategic Studies Centre in Damascus, told Aljazeera the former Lebanese prime minister was not an enemy of Syria.

"Obviously al-Hariri's assassination was a blow against Syria and Lebanon. He was not an enemy of Syria. He was a historic and traditional friend and ally of Syria.

"He did have disagreements with Syria lately, but he did not call for the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, or stir up hostility towards Syria or demand an end to Syria's role in Lebanon. He only had a different point of view" al-Shuaibi said.

In his opinion, the huge crowds that bid farewell to al-Hariri on Wednesday were not demonstrating their support for the Lebanese opposition, but rather were expressing their gratitude to, and admiration for, al-Hariri."

People's emotions

Al-Shuaibi's views seem to be diametrically opposed to those of former Lebanese president Amin al-Jumail, who said the thousands of Lebanese citizens who attended al-Hariri's funeral wanted to express their desire for "independence".

"This is a Lebanese plea to the whole world, an attempt to get all countries to take note of Lebanon's misfortune – the violations of freedom and democracy going on in the country.

"This is a very important expression of people's emotions. They are disgusted with the current [political] dispensation and the Syrian presence in Lebanon. They want to deliver a message to the whole world that the Lebanese authorities do not represent them and do not share their emotions.

"Now they are all together in calling for Lebanon's liberty and independence", al-Jumail said.

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