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The Anti-Shah Opposition and Lebanon

H. E. Chehabi

Given Lebanon's exceptionally open politics compared with other Middle Eastern states, the country has always attracted a wide variety of intellectuals and political dissidents from elsewhere in the region, including Iran.[1] While Iranian exile politics in Lebanon was at its height in the 1960s and 1970s, the ground for this activity was prepared in the 1920s when, after the failure of a largely Shiᶜi anti-British uprising in Iraq, many Shiᶜi ulema, including some Iranians, went to Lebanon with their families.[2] One of the Shiᶜi ulema to participate in the uprising was Iranian-born Ayatollah Abolqasem Kashani (1882–1962) who became an important figure in Iranian politics after the Second World War. He organized a large demonstration against the founding of the state of Israel in the spring of 1948 and, accused of being a ringleader of an unsuccessful assassination attempt on the Shah in early 1949, he was arrested and exiled to Lebanon. Here he lived in Baalbek, frequently visited by both Iranian and Iraqi admirers, until he was elected to parliament in Iran and the government had to allow him to return in 1950.[3] He went on to become a major ally of Prime Minister Mosaddeq in the struggle to nationalize Iranian oil, but broke with him in 1952,[4] which facilitated the coup against Mosaddeq in 1953.

1. For an evocation of that cosmopolitan milieu see Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), Chapter 12: 'Disinherited Liberals: Ras-Beirut in Jeopardy'.
2. On this revolt, provoked by British policies in both Iraq and Iran, see Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shiᶜis of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 66–72.
3. *Rūḥānī-yi mubāriz, Āyat Allāh Kāshānī, bah rivāyat-i asnād*, vol. 1 (Teheran: Markaz-i barrasī-yi asnād-i tārīkhī-yi vizārat-i Iṭṭilāᶜāt, 1379/2000), pp. 18, 19, 50, 51, 54, 96.
4. Yann Richard, 'Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?', in Nikki R. Keddie, ed., *Religion and Politics in Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983),

Many Middle Eastern regimes maintained support networks of various kinds in Lebanon – sympathetic political parties, factions within the Palestine Liberation Organization, newspapers and secret agents. The existence of various networks allowed enterprising opponents of the Shah to find support for their activities, but it also allowed Lebanese politicians to manoeuvre between groups, trying to play off different outside powers against each other. The experience of Teimur Bakhtiar, founding head of the Shah's secret police (SAVAK), is a case in point. He had studied with his first cousin Shapur Bakhtiar in Beirut in the 1930s. Then, as one of Iran's most powerful men in the late 1950s, he aroused the Shah's suspicion and was retired in March 1961. In January 1962 he left Iran for Europe where he tried to unite the anti-Shah opposition, but his role as founding director of SAVAK made him an implausible champion of freedom and democracy.[5] In the beginning his major foreign supporter was Egypt, but in 1968 he decided to go to Iraq to be closer to Iran. On his way there he stopped in Beirut, where he was arrested in April for illegal possession of weapons. He was tried and condemned to nine months in prison, during which time the Iranian government requested his extradition, setting off a major debate in Lebanon on the advisability of giving in to pressure from the Iranian government. Most Maronite politicians (Camille Chamoun, Raymond Eddé) and most Shi^{c}i personalities (for example the then speaker of parliament Sabri Hemadeh) favoured extradition, while Arab nationalist politicians (Kamal Jumblatt and Rashid Karamé), the Sunni mufti and the Maronite patriarch opposed it.[6] In the end the president of Lebanon, Charles Hélou, decided against extradition, whereupon Iran broke off its diplomatic relations in April 1969 and forbade its citizens to visit Lebanon.[7] Bakhtiar was allowed to leave for Iraq where Iranian agents assassinated him in 1970.

Teimur Bakhtiar had been a former man of the regime. His opposition to the

especially pp. 105–9.

5. *Sipahbud Taymūr Bakhtyār bah rivāyat-i asnād-i Sāvāk*, vol. 1, *Avvalīn ra*$^{\supset}$*īs-i Sāvāk* (Teheran: Markaz-i barrasī-yi asnād-i tārīkhī, 1378/1999–2000), p. 32.
6. In retaliation, the Shah also withdrew his ambassador from the Holy See, because Pope Paul VI had not intervened to stop the patriarch. The Pope sent message that he had no control over the Maronite patriarch, who had helped him get elected. But Vatican diplomacy weathered the crisis. For details see ^{c}Alīnaqī ^{c}Ālīkhānī, ed., *Yāddāshthā-yi* ^{c}*Alam*, vol. 1 (n.p.: New World Ltd, 1992), p. 191.
7. *Sipahbud Taymūr Bakhtyār bah rivāyat-i Sāvāk*, vol. 2 *Bakhtyār dar Lubnān* (Teheran: Markaz-i barrasī-yi asnād-i tārīkhī, 1378/1999–2000), a collection of SAVAK reports from Beirut, contains a wealth of original information about the involvement of Lebanese personalities of all major confessions in the negotiations with the Iranian government. Many reports imply hefty payments by the Iranian governments to its friends in Lebanon.

Shah had not been ideologically motivated and, most importantly, Lebanon had not been his base of operations. His arrest in Beirut had been an accident. Matters were different for those Iranians who flocked to Lebanon after 1963 and who, by and large, did not get involved in Bakhtiar's battle against deportation.

In January 1963 the Shah proclaimed his 'White Revolution' and gaoled most members of the opposition. In June 1963 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was arrested after a fiery anti-Shah speech in Qom, leading to riots that were suppressed amid some bloodshed.[8] Most of the constitutionalist opposition to the Shah abandoned the struggle after this show of force, but younger oppositionists decided to continue the struggle by other means. The successes of the Algerian, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutionaries convinced them that the Shah's regime could only be overthrown by military means. Lebanon's weak state and, later, the presence of many PLO military camps on its territory made it an ideal place for Iranians to organize and seek military training. In due course, activists representing all major Iranian political tendencies, namely Mosaddeqist nationalism, Marxism and Islamism, found their way to the Levant. In Lebanon they forged alliances with local forces, which affected not only Lebanon but also Iranian foreign policy towards Lebanon after the Iranian revolution of 1979.

THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF IRAN AND MOSTAFA CHAMRAN

The LMI, *Nehzat-e Azadi*, founded in 1961 and in effect disbanded in Iran in 1963, was the first political group to send members to Lebanon.[9] Islamic modernism heavily influenced the LMI's ideological make-up and many of its activists had belonged to Islamic Student Associations, clubs founded in the mid-1940s to provide a haven for observant Muslims at a time when Iranian universities were perceived to be dominated by leftists, secularists and Baha'is. Impatient with the dry, otherworldly religion of the ulema they sought a dialogue with younger, more dynamic members of the clergy, including Musa Sadr who, as we saw in the Chapter 6, had studied at the University of Teheran but with whom they lost touch after the 1953 coup.[10] When the LMI ceased all open activity in Iran in the wake of the June 1963 events, some of its younger members went abroad and founded its external wing. The leading members of this more radical external wing of the party

8. Homa Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1990), pp. 218–39.
9. Most English-language publications call the group 'Freedom Movement', but 'Liberation Movement' is its self-designation in English.
10. Ibrahīm Yazdī, 'Naqsh-i Imām Mūsā Ṣadr dar Lubnān va inqilāb-i Īrān', in Hādī Khusrawshāhī, ed., *Imām Musā Ṣadr* (=Vizhahnāmah No. 5, *Tārīkh va Farhang-i muᶜāṣir*) (Qom: Markaz-i Barrasīhā-yi Islāmī, 1375/1997), pp. 405–6.

were Ibrahim Yazdi, Mostafa Chamran and Sadeq Qotbzadeh in the USA, Ali Shariati in France and Sadeq Tabataba'i (a nephew of Musa Sadr) in Germany.

In late 1963 Chamran, Qotbzadeh and Yazdi visited Egypt and negotiated with the Egyptian government to base an anti-Shah organization in that country. The new organization was called SAMA^{c}, the Persian acronym for *Sazeman-e makhsus-e ettehad va ᶜamal* (Special Organization for Unity and Action), and Chamran was chosen to supervise the military training of its members. Between 1964 and 1966 four groups of militants were trained at the al-Khas garrison 90 kilometres from Cairo, but in 1966 SAMA^{c} decided to stop cooperating with the Egyptian government because of Nasser's increasingly anti-Iranian Arab nationalism: the Egyptian government (followed by a few other Arab governments) began to refer to the Persian Gulf as the 'Arabian Gulf' and to Iran's southwestern Khuzistan province as 'Arabistan', going so far as to support a secessionist movement there.[11] SAMA^{c} first protested against these measures, which it saw as directed against Iran as a nation rather than against the Shah's regime, and, having failed to convince their friends, decided to move out of Egypt. In 1966 Yazdi established SAMA^{c}'s headquarters in Beirut, while other members went to Baghdad and Basra; Chamran was left in Cairo to wrap up operations there and joined Yazdi in Beirut a few months later. But in the spring of 1967 relations between Iran and Lebanon deteriorated and the resulting pressure of the Lebanese government forced first Chamran and then Yazdi to return to the United States.[12] After 1967 the group in fact disbanded, having concluded that the time was not ripe for armed struggle against the Shah and that therefore the fight against his regime had to take the form of inculcating students with a revolutionary Islamic consciousness, for which purpose Islamic Student Associations were created in the United States and Europe.[13]

From Egypt Yazdi often travelled to Lebanon where he soon established a rapport with Musa Sadr, whom he knew from their student days in Teheran. On one of these trips Musa Sadr told him that he was looking for a director for the technical school he had established in Tyre and Yazdi suggested Mostafa

11. For dispassionate discussions of the contested nomenclature of these areas see C. Edmund Bosworth, 'The Nomenclature in the Persian Gulf', in Alvin J. Cottrell, ed., *The Persian Gulf: A General Survey* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) and Svat Soucek, 'Arabistan or Khuzistan', *Iranian Studies*, 27:2–3 (Spring–Summer 1984).
12. Interview with Ibrahim Yazdi in Sarhang [Colonel] Ghulāmriḍā Nijātī, *Khāṭirāt-i Bāzargān: Shast sāl khidmat va muqāvamat*, vol. 2 (Teheran: Risā, 1377/1998), pp. 170–1, 180–2.
13. For greater detail see H. E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1990), pp. 186–202.

Chamran.[14] Chamran accepted and moved to Lebanon in 1971.[15] As he put it in his own words:

> As soon as I settled in southern Lebanon in 1971 I started classes in Islamic ideology in the style of the Islamic Student Associations. From each village I chose one or two believing and Muslim teachers, totalling about 150. These would visit the school once a week and conduct sessions at which [Musa] Sadr, Shaykh [Muhammad] Mahdi Shamseddin and Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah gave talks as well. There were discussions and criticism and little by little I joined the discussions and gave a series of ideological lessons. About half of these people left, the other remained and became the first core group of the Movement of the Deprived (*Harakat al-Mahrumin*).
>
> In Beirut we did the same, although there the difficulties were greater. … Thus we trained the best Shiᶜi youth, and it was these young believers who later became the cadres of the Movement of the Deprived and of Amal.[16]

In 1974 Amal, with the help of al-Fateh instructors, began to train Shiᶜi youth near the Syrian border and Yassir Arafat visited the camp a number of times. According to Chamran, hundreds of Iranians were also trained at this camp, causing the Iranian ambassador, Mansur Qader, to launch a complaint to the Lebanese government.[17]

Chamran's attitude to Palestinians was marked by ambiguity. He supported them wholeheartedly in their struggle against Israel, but at the same time witnessed the nefarious effects of their tactics for Shiᶜi villagers living near the Israeli border: the PLO began to make raids into northern Israel in 1968.[18] Chamran writes that Palestinian fighters had to pass through Shiᶜi villages to attack Israel and when the Israelis retaliated it was the villagers who were killed.

14. Yazdī, 'Naqsh-i Imām Mūsā Ṣadr dar Lubnān', pp. 408–9.
15. In addition to his work at the school, Chamran also supervised a carpet weaving workshop where 300 poor Shiᶜi girls wove carpets that were then sold at benefit sales. But this workshop was closed (as was a nursing school) when Musa Sadr disappeared and donations diminished. *Lubnān: Guzīdah-ī az majmūᶜa-yi sukhanrānīhā va dastnivishthā-yi sardār-i pur iftikhār-i Islām, Shahīd Duktur Muṣṭafā Chamrān darbārah-yi Lubnān* (Teheran: Bunyād-i Shahīd Chamrān, 1362/1983), p. 70.
16. Ibid., p. 84.
17. Ibid., p. 92.
18. For a good overview of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon see Jacques Seguin, *Le Liban-Sud: espace périphérique, espace convoité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), pp. 63–82. For a list of major Israeli operations in southern Lebanon during the 1970s see ibid., pp. 118–19.

Worse, if a Palestinian fighter were killed in action, the PLO would compensate his relatives, but no such payments were made to the surviving relatives of Lebanese victims, for the PLO and Lebanese government each deemed the other responsible for such payments.[19]

THE LEFT AND LEBANON

In the 1960s and 1970s two leftist guerrilla movements emerged in Iran. These later became known respectively as the Mojahedin-e Khalq, whose founders were committed Muslims, and the Fadaʾiyan-e Khalq, a Marxist group.[20] Both had connections with Palestinians in Lebanon.

The future Mojahedin-e Khalq were an offshoot of the LMI in the sense that almost all its founders had been members of that party. They planned to make themselves known to the public by a military attack on the regime, so from early on they concentrated their efforts on sending activists abroad to learn guerrilla tactics.[21] In March 1970 the nascent and still nameless organization established contact with the al-Fateh representative in Qatar, who arranged further meetings in Beirut.[22] In the summer of that year a number of members left Iran for Dubai with a view to continuing on to Palestinian camps in Jordan. A few weeks later two members of the group went to Beirut to discuss the training of Iranian militants with al-Fateh officials.[23] As a result of these talks, a first group of activists, including Masʿud Rajavi (who would become leader of the Mojahedin in 1977), went to training camps in Jordan, but had to leave after 'Black September' when the Jordanian army put a bloody end to the Palestinian military presence in Jordan. The remainder of the original Dubai group was arrested before getting to Lebanon and the Dubai police put them on an aeroplane to Iran. Their extradition was thwarted, however, when their comrades hijacked the aircraft and took it to Baghdad, where Iraqi authorities arrested the militants. When Ayatollah Khomeini refused to intervene with the Iraqi government on their behalf, Abu Nidal, then PLO representative in Baghdad, came to the rescue by arranging for them to be taken to Damascus after 40 days in gaol.[24] In late January 1971 they arrived in

19. *Lubnān*, p. 74.
20. Ervand Abrahamian, 'The Guerrilla Movement in Iran, 1963–77', in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 149–74. For a history of the Fadaʾiyan, see Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), pp. 43–6, 51–70.
21. Muḥsin Nijāṭḥusaynī, *Bar farāz-i khalīj* (Teheran: Nashr-i Nay, 1379/2000–2001), p. 291.
22. Ibid., pp. 64–5.
23. Ibid., pp. 90–1.
24. Ibid., pp. 166 and 170, supplemented by a personal communication from the author, 6

Beirut with identity cards provided by al-Fateh that pretended they were Palestinians. They spent about a fortnight at Shaykh Zinad camp near Tripoli before being taken to a camp near Tartus in Syria.[25] In April al-Fateh evacuated that camp, whereupon the Iranian guerrillas in training went to Beirut. They rented a flat in west Beirut and, having been told that they could expect no training in the immediate future, they began to study on their own subjects like ideology, sabotage operations, forging documents and producing explosives. In the afternoons they would go to the beaches near AUB to relax.[26]

Having undergone their training, individual Iranians would return to Iran carrying weapons concealed on their bodies and in their luggage. In Lebanon they posed as Palestinians and, having received identity papers from al-Fateh that gave them new names, they enjoyed a certain amount of immunity on account of the 'Cairo Agreement' the Lebanese government had been constrained to sign with the PLO in 1969.[27] To account for their faulty Arabic and Persian accents, they pretended they had been brought up in Afghanistan.

One of the activists in Beirut, Mohsen Nejathoseini (born 1944) was arrested at Beirut airport when he tried to leave the country for Iran smuggling weapons. He was convicted and spent a year and a half in a variety of Lebanese prisons until Palestinian lawyers, claiming he was a Palestinian covered by the Cairo Agreement, managed to get him out in May 1973, though not until Kamal Jumblatt had written a personal letter on his behalf to a Druze state prosecutor in Zahlé.[28]

In the meantime in Iran, beginning in the summer of 1971, SAVAK managed to arrest the vast majority of the organization's activists before it had had a chance to start its struggle, even choose a name or make its existence known to the public.[29] This made external activity more critical to the survival of what was left of the organization. In the event, with the rump having chosen the name *Mojahedin-e Khalq*, it was three external activists who published the organization's first official statement on 9 February 1972 in Beirut.[30]

After his release from prison, Nejathoseini settled in the Sabra refugee camp

December 2003. On Abu Nidal see Patrick Seale, *Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), especially pp. 71–119.

25. Nijāthusaynī, *Bar farāz-i khalīj*, pp. 175–7.
26. Ibid., pp. 184–6.
27. For the text of the agreement see Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 201–2. For a discussion see pp. 50–6.
28. Nejathoseini's account of prison conditions at the Raml, Hermel and Zahlé gaols are detailed and would provide a useful source for any study of the Lebanese penal system.
29. Nijāthusaynī, *Bar farāz-i khalīj*, pp. 289–321. See Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, pp. 126–36, for a discussion of the subsequent trials.
30. Nijāthusaynī, *Bar farāz-i khalīj*, p. 278.

and became the main organizer of the Beirut outpost, which was crucial to the Mojahedin's international network. He explains:

> The most important task of the external branch was propaganda, establishing contacts with other militant organizations, creating training facilities and procuring the means for armed struggle. The external branch of the [Mojahedin], in addition to Syria and Lebanon, was active in Aden, Baghdad, Paris, London and Tripoli (Libya), and members were constantly travelling between these areas. Lebanon was, because of the relative freedoms it afforded, the most appropriate country for semi-clandestine activity in the Middle East, and so we chose Lebanon to be the centre of our international contacts and communications. Many of our initial contacts with militant and revolutionary organizations in other countries took place in Lebanon. Moreover, our comrades and sympathizers in Iran always came to Lebanon if they wanted to get in touch with the external organization.[31]

One of the main tasks of the Beirut-based militants was acquiring weapons. That was easy:

> In the south of Beirut there were brokers for arms deals. To gain access to the busy world of arms dealers, all one had to do was to gain the confidence of a short fat man who sat on a stool in a tea store and played with his worry beads. … He could deliver any weapons and equipment that were not too bulky at a prearranged place in Beirut. If no deal was possible with this man, there was always the barbershop of Abu ᶜAsim, and if one ran into a problem there one could go to the grocery store of Abu Maytham.

Sending weapons and equipment to Iran was more difficult, but between 1970 and 1975 Mojahedin militants smuggled a considerable amount into the country.[32] Mostafa Chamran was on friendly terms with the group and, while the Mojahedin had no organizational ties with him, they sometimes turned to him for help with practical matters.[33]

Nejathoseini left the Mojahedin after the group underwent a leftward 'ideological transformation' in 1975 and settled in Sweden, but the Mojahedin continued

31. Ibid., pp. 338–9.
32. Ibid., pp. 352–3.
33. Ibid., p. 361, and personal communication, 6 December 2003. It is worth noting that in his later writings on Lebanon Chamran does not mention his early cooperation with the Mojahedin, probably because their ways parted in 1975.

to cooperate with al-Fateh. Militants would typically stay a few months and be followed by others when they returned to Iran. In total, about thirty Mojahedin trained at PLO camps,[34] including, as we saw, Masᶜud Rajavi, who revived the non-Marxist–Leninist part of the group in 1978. The PLO gave advice on how to conduct secret operations and hijack aeroplanes, and members of the organization travelling to Beirut acted as conduits through which to deliver money collected in Iran to the PLO.[35] In the beginning the Mojahedin kept in contact with the LMI members discussed above, but severed relations after 1975 partly because of the 'ideological transformation' and partly because of the Lebanese civil war in which the two sides had different priorities.[36] The Mojahedin's ties were all with al-Fateh and the only Lebanese party that was at times approached for help was Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party.

As early as 1967 two young Iranians, whose group would later join with others to form the Marxist–Leninist Fadaᵓiyan-e Khalq organization, received military instruction at al-Fateh camps in Jordan.[37] In the 1970s the Fadaᵓiyan maintained close ties with George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. Habash even wrote prefaces to a number of theoretical works written by Fadaᵓiyan activists.[38] When Abu Abbas split from Jibril's group during the Lebanese civil war, they sympathized with his group because it opposed Syria.[39] In all, about 30 Fadaᵓiyan were trained at camps in Jordan (until 1970), Lebanon and Syria.

34. Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1989), p. 127.
35. Luṭf Allāh Maythamī, *Az Nihḍat-i Āzādī tā Mujāhidīn: Khaṭirāt-i Luṭf Allāh Maythamī* (Teheran: Nashr-i Ṣamadiyya, n.d.), pp. 364, 372, 375, 379.
36. If Nejathoseini's memoirs can be taken as an indication of the Beirut-based Mojahedin's view, Musa Sadr was somewhat suspect to them on account of his close and friendly ties with Lebanon's Christian establishment and his indifference to the cotton workers' and fishermen's strikes of 1974. Nijāthusaynī, *Bar farāz-i khalīj*, pp. 402–4. On the social movements in the South see Stephan Rosiny, *Islamismus bei den Schiiten im Libanon: Religion im Übergang von Tradition zur Moderne* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1996), pp. 51–3.
37. Ḥamīd Ashraf, *Jamᶜbandī-yi sih sālah* (Teheran: Nigāh, 1357/1978–79), p. 93. The two were named Mohammad Saffari Ashtiyani and Ali-Akbar Safaᵓi Farahani. The latter's engagement with the Palestinian resistance was such that on one occasion he led a Palestinian commando inside Israel, behind the 'Green Line'.
38. For the splits that resulted in these organizations see Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), pp. 188–98.
39. On Abu Abbas's career, which included masterminding the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro*, see *The New York Times*, 3 November 2003, p. A7.

Lebanon was a bridgehead for the international activities of the Fadaʾiyan, but they maintained very few ties with Lebanese groups. The Lebanese Communist party was unacceptable to them as an interlocutor because of its ties to the Iranian Tudeh party and to the Soviets, and other leftist parties seemed too beholden to foreign countries such as Libya, Syria or Iraq. The only Lebanese groups with which ties were established were the Sultat al-Majalis and the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon,[40] two small secular and internationalist parties that opposed the Syrian presence in Lebanon.[41]

Finally, the Mosaddeqist National Front, which had reconstituted itself in 1961, ceased all activity in Iran after the June 1963 riots. In Europe Mosadeqqists founded the 'National Front in Europe' in 1961 and, in 1963, some of its members who believed in armed struggle established contact with the Algerian government and later with Palestinian groups. In the late 1960s these radical Mosaddeqists decided to move their operations to the Middle East to be closer to Iran. They chose Beirut as their centre of operations and approached the governments of Egypt, Libya, Syria and Iraq for logistical support, such as permission to establish a secret radio transmitter. Half a dozen or so members moved to Beirut permanently, where they established their headquarters near the Lebanese University and the Shatila refugee camp and announced the formation of *Sazemanha-ye Jebhe-ye melli-ye Iran dar khavar-e miyaneh* (Organizations of the National Front of Iran in the Middle East). From 1971 they published a Persian newspaper called *Bakhtar-e Emruz*[42] and, to publicize their struggle in the Arab world, they brought out an Arabic publication called *Iran al-Thawra*. They also translated works on armed struggle by Latin American revolutionaries (Uruguay's Tupamaros, Chile's MIR and Che Guevara) into Persian. These newspapers and pamphlets were printed in Palestinian printing houses and a few issues were then sent to Europe and the United States where more copies were made. The Mosaddeqists were active among Iranians in Kuwait and Iraq, where they maintained a secret radio station and had sporadic contact with Khomeini and his circle,[43] but they had little success with Iranians in Lebanon, who were more likely to cooperate with Chamran and Musa Sadr. These Mosadeqqists shunned Musa Sadr, whom they mistrusted because of his contacts with the Iranian government and his tensions with the Palestinians.

40. *Munaẓẓamāt al-ʿAmal al-Shuyūʿī*, on which see Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Arab Left* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976), pp. 69 and 178–95.
41. Telephone interview with Hemad Sheybani (*nom de guerre*), a former Fadaʾi in Lebanon and Syria, 3 November 2003.
42. This had been the name of the newspaper published by Hosein Fatemi, Mosaddeq's foreign minister who was executed after the 1953 coup.
43. Sayyid ʿAlī-Akbar Muḥtashamī, *Khāṭirāt-i siyāsī* (Teheran: Khānah-yi andīshah-yi javān, 1378/2000), vol. 2, pp. 73 and 146.

In Beirut a majority of the National Front activists secretly formed a Marxist *Goruh-e Ettehad-e Komunisti* (Communist Unity Group). This group made contact with the nascent Fadaʾiyan and facilitated their external activities, but given their differences on tactics, the two never merged. The communist Mosaddeqists maintained friendly relations with nine different Palestinian groups, principally al-Fateh, and between 15 and 20 of them were trained in guerrilla warfare at Palestinian camps in Syria and Lebanon. One activist, Abu Shahin, took part in the Lebanese civil war when he participated in the defence of Shatila against Kataeb forces.[44] Their presence in Lebanon ended when the Shah improved his relations with radical Arab states in the aftermath of the 1975 OPEC meeting in Algiers, and the Beirut-based activists returned to Europe.[45]

Radical Islamists and Lebanon

Given how much sympathy the Palestinian cause elicited among most Muslim Iranians, and the close ties between the Shah and Israel that Khomeini had been denouncing in 1963, Iranian Islamists in Lebanon were torn between supporting Musa Sadr or the Palestinian cause. As we saw above, Chamran brought the LMI closer to the Shiᶜis, but Khomeini's more radical followers sided with the PLO.[46]

After the Baᶜthist coup in 1968, increased anti-Shiᶜi repression in Iraq led to an exodus of Shiᶜi ulema from Iraq to Lebanon; a few ulema who preferred to leave Iran, where relations between the Shah's regime and the clergy were deteriorating, joined them. Even Khomeini, who had been living in Najaf since 1965, toyed with the idea of moving to Lebanon: when the Iraqi government expelled a number of Iranians and Iraqis of Iranian origin from the country,[47] he announced in a sermon in Najaf on 27 November 1971 that he would ask to be allowed to go to Lebanon.[48] Khomeini did not go, but one of his students, Seyyed Ali-Akbar Mohtashami,[49] decided to leave Najaf for Beirut in the summer of 1972. Mohtashami would play a

44. Abu Shāhīn, born in Khorasan and a longtime resident of Iraq, returned to Iran after the revolution and was killed in Kurdistan when, allied with the Komala party, he unsuccessfully defended Sanandaj against government forces.
45. Information on the National Front's activities in Beirut is from Ḥasan Māsālī, *Sayr-i taḥavvul-i junbish-i chap-i Īrān* (2nd edn, Saarbrücken: n.p., 2002), pp. 124–32, supplemented by two telephone interviews with Hasan Masali, 15 December 2003 and 25 January 2004. Masali was a leading National Front activist in Beirut.
46. The long-standing tensions between the house of Khomeini and the house of Sadr may have played a role here as well.
47. See Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shiᶜite Movement of Iraq* (London: Saqi, 2003), pp. 201–8.
48. *Ṣaḥīfa-yi nūr*, vol. 1 (Teheran: Vizārat-i irshād-i islāmī, 1361/1983), p. 181.
49. His official name is Mohtashamipur, but he usually leaves out the 'pur'.

major role in the founding of Hizballah in 1982, so his early experience in Lebanon is worth noting.[50]

Born in 1946 in Teheran, Mohtashami studied as a cleric with Khomeini in Najaf for a few years before moving to Lebanon. After a month of military training at the Burj Hammud camp near Beirut, he moved to the seminary Musa Sadr had established in Tyre to learn about the position of Lebanon's Shiᶜis. This brought him into contact with Musa Sadr, who had already disappointed him when, on Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim's death in 1970 he had the Supreme Islamic Shiᶜi Council of Lebanon declare Ayatollah Abulqasim Khuᵓi the new *marjaᶜ* rather than Khomeini.[51] Students from various countries, including many African ones, were being educated at the seminary. Life was comfortable and meals were good, but 'due to the many occupations of Mr Sadr', the quality of the education was low. 'There was neither good management nor were there adequate teachers. The seminarians did not study and the Africans … would swim in the sea in the afternoon, then dress up and go out to enjoy themselves in town. The seminary was more like a sanatorium than a centre of knowledge and learning.'[52]

In July 1972 Mohtashami witnessed an Israeli attack on Tyre. In the wake of this attack he began to notice that in their speeches and sermons the local clergy increasingly held the Palestinians responsible for the plight of the people of southern Lebanon. This worried him and he feared that an atmosphere might be created in which Palestinians would have to cease their attacks on Israel. Having become disillusioned with Musa Sadr's 'non-revolutionary' politics, he decided to return to Iraq and apprise Khomeini of the situation. When he met Khomeini, he told him that the southern Lebanese ulema's murmurings would gradually turn people against the Palestinians, which would be in the interests of neither Shiᶜis, Muslims nor Palestinians and would only benefit Israel. Given that the people of southern Lebanon were Shiᶜis and that the Shah of the Shiᶜi country of Iran supported Israel, conflict between Shiᶜis and Palestinians would reflect badly on Shiᶜism in world public opinion. Khomeini was saddened and Mohtashami reports him as saying: 'All the catastrophes that have befallen Islam from the beginning are due to these old men. The main problem for Islam and Muslims are not foreign enemies; these would be easy to deal with.'[53] A few days later, on 11 October 1972, Khomeini used the onset of Ramadan to issue a declaration in which he called on all Muslims, especially those who lived in areas in which the Palestinians were active, to support the struggle against Israel: 'Today we observe what the

50. His first impressions of Beirut and Lebanon are given in Chapter 1, pp. 30–1.
51. Muḥtashamī, *Khāṭirāt-i siyāsī*, vol. 2, p. 95.
52. Ibid., pp. 135 and 141.
53. Ibid., pp. 143–50.

agents of colonialism have done to the [Palestinian fighters], first in Jordan and then in Lebanon. We observe the propaganda and conspiracies directed at them by the agents of colonialism, all with the aim of separating Muslim groups from the Palestinian fighters and expelling them from strategically important locations.[54]

Back in Najaf, in early 1973 Mohtashami and a few others began to publish a monthly by the name of *15 Khordad* (the day of the 1963 uprising). After 1975, when relations had improved between Iraq and Iran, Mohtashami would secretly travel to Beirut once a month to get an issue printed. Copies would then be sent to Muslim student associations in the United States for distribution among Islamist students.[55]

Another Iranian Islamist who went to Lebanon was Jalaleddin Farsi. Originally a high school teacher, follower of Mosaddeq and member of the LMI, he established contact with clerical Islamists in the 1960s and, after being arrested a number of times, decided to leave the country. On 6 August 1970 he left Teheran and, after a few months in Najaf, went to Beirut. There he met Musa Sadr, Sayyid Muhammad Jawad Mughniyya and others and established contact with the al-Fateh organization. Hashemi Rafsanjani was the main fund-raiser for his activities in Iran and another activist, Mohammad Ali Rajaʾi, conveyed the money to Lebanon. But, by his own admission, his activities were very limited.[56] In his memoirs Farsi gives an illustration of his progressive estrangement from Sadr and Chamran. According to Farsi, Chamran's predecessor as director of the technical school at Burj al-Shimali was a 'Maronite Freemason', while the school's principal (*nāẓim*) was an Iraqi Shiʿi of Persian origin by the name of Salih Husayni. Husayni had fled to Lebanon after the Baʿthist takeover in Iraq (1968) and Musa Sadr had asked him to teach classes on Marxism for Shiʿi clerics and educationists at the Supreme Islamic Shiʿi Council in Beirut, presumably to refute it at a time when many Shiʿis were attracted to leftist ideologies. At the technical school he gave young Shiʿi boys military training with the help of Palestinian fighters from the nearby camp. It so happened that the Lebanese army had set up a watchtower on the grounds of the school, from which heavy guns were pointed at the nearby Palestinian camp. The Palestinians had repeatedly pleaded with Musa Sadr to use his influence with the 'Maronite' army to remove the watchtower, while the army put pressure on him to stop the military training. Husayni had rejected as inappropriate a film on Algeria that the French had planned to screen at the school and, shortly afterwards, was

54. *Ṣaḥīfa-yi nūr*, vol. 1, p. 193.
55. Muḥtashamī, *Khāṭirāt-i siyāsī*, vol. 2, p. 231.
56. Jalāl al-Dīn Fārsī, *Zavāyā-yi tārīk* (Teheran: Ḥadīth, 1373/1994), pp. 216 and 242. Rajaʾi became Iranian prime minister in 1980 and its second president in July 1981, but was killed, together with the prime minister, Mohammad Javad Bahonar, on 30 August of that year.

sacked from the school to avoid jeopardizing relations with France, which had two *coopérant*s teaching French there, whereas the Maronite director was kept.[57] This happened in early 1971 and it angered Farsi. Then, in the spring of 1972, Farsi was arrested and expelled from Lebanon and Musa Sadr apparently did not lift a finger to help him.[58] In fact, Farsi reproduces a SAVAK document that shows Musa Sadr a few weeks earlier to have warned the authorities not to grant Farsi an extension of his visa because he was engaged in anti-Iranian activities.[59] Farsi, who soon returned to Lebanon, became one of Musa Sadr's staunchest enemies and at one point published a tract against him in Persian entitled *Az Shah ta Shamᶜun* (From the Shah to Chamoun), on the cover of which was a photograph of Musa Sadr and President Franjieh.[60] He returned to Lebanon in the mid-1970s and went back to Iran around the time of the revolution.

A third Islamist activist who spent time in Lebanon was Mohammad Montazeri (1944–81), a young cleric whose father, Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri, was one of Khomeini's most prominent disciples.[61] The younger Montazeri began his anti-regime activism after the June 1963 events. In March 1966 he was arrested, imprisoned, tortured and then freed in 1968.[62] In 1971 he left Iran and, until 1975 when he left Najaf in the wake of improved Iranian–Iraqi relations, he lived in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. Having made contact with the PLO while still in Pakistan, he went to Lebanon for military training at al-Fateh camps, but spent most of his time travelling, both in Europe and the Middle East.[63] In the course of his revolutionary peregrinations he became a master in the art of forging passports and provided false identity papers for Iranians in Europe to go to Lebanon and be trained at PLO camps.[64] Montazeri aimed at more than just overthrowing the Shah: he used his travels to radical Arab states such as Iraq and Libya to make contacts with Muslim liberation movements as far away as the Philippines and Western Sahara, and even dreamt of setting up an Islamist international. He was particularly

57. Fārsī, *Zavāyā-yi tārīk*, pp. 251–3.
58. Muḥtashamī, *Khāṭirāt-i siyāsī*, vol. 2, p. 132. According to a different source, Sadr did intervene, but discreetly: Āyat Allāh Duktur Muḥammad Ṣādiqī, 'Jāmiᶜ-i ᶜilm va siyāsat', in Khusrawshāhī, ed., *Imām Musā Ṣadr*, p. 336.
59. Ibid., p. 261.
60. Ibid., p. 191.
61. He was appointed Khomeini's deputy in 1985 but dismissed in March 1989 because of his opposition to some of the regime's more egregious human rights violations.
62. Aḥmad Ṣādiqī Ardastānī, *Zindagīnāmah-yi Ḥujjat al-Islām shahīd Muḥammad Muntaẓirī* (Qom: Daftar-i Nashr-i Muḥammad, 1361/1982), pp. 32–8.
63. *Farzand-i Islām va Qurᵓān*, vol. 1 (Teheran: Vāhid-i farhangī-yi Bunyād-i Shahīd, 1362/1983), pp. 69–79.
64. Ibid., p. 107.

close to Colonel Muammar Qadhdhafi, who supported the PLO and the Lebanese left in general, and did not get along particularly well with Musa Sadr.[65]

IRANIANS AND THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

Yazdi kept in touch with Chamran and Musa Sadr throughout the 1970s and visited Lebanon regularly. Shiᶜis suffered tremendously in the first months of the civil war, which broke out in 1975, when the residential areas around Beirut were devastated.[66] Soon after the start of the hostilities Yazdi visited Beirut at the request of Musa Sadr, who wanted his views on two issues: how to publicize the plight of the Shiᶜis in the West and how to improve medical care for the victims of the war. Yazdi approached a number of Iranian physicians in America and one of them, Dr Jalil Zarrabi, who had been a member of the LMI and the Muslim Student Associations, agreed to settle in Beirut with his family, calling himself Hasan Vafa to conceal his true identity.[67]

The technical school was the focus of Mostafa Chamran's activities in south Lebanon. Education at the school entailed imparting technical skills and military preparations: 'As soon as students entered the school, they were taught fighting skills and guerrilla warfare. … Fifteen of the students and teachers of this school were martyred in fighting with Israel and the Kataeb. … In addition, mercenaries for Iraq attacked the school on many occasions, … as did leftists and communists.'[68]

As Chamran tells the story, Yassir Arafat was favourably disposed to Amal but the communists who infiltrated the PLO and its member organizations begrudged Musa Sadr his support among the poor and did their best to harm Amal in the field. They did so by deserting their Amal allies at crucial moments, exposing them to enemy fire or provoking the Kataeb to attack Amal positions.[69] As an example Chamran cites the fall of the Shiᶜi enclave of Nabᶜa, which was adjacent to the much less populous Palestinian camp of Tal Zaᶜtar and close to an Armenian area (Burj Hammud) that remained neutral in the beginning. There was not much of an Amal presence in Nabᶜa when Musa Sadr sent Chamran to organize the resistance there, but Palestinian fighters deliberately shot at rightist forces from within Nabᶜa to deflect fire from Tal Zaᶜtar. Amal forces were rushed into Nabᶜa, but they would get no help from the Palestinians. When hungry Shiᶜis turned to the better-off Palestinians for assistance, they were told to ask Musa Sadr to help them. When the

65. Ibid., p. 190.
66. See André Bourgey, 'La guerre et ses conséquences géographiques au Liban', *Annales de Géographie*, 94 (January–February 1985): 24–5.
67. Yazdī, 'Naqsh-i Imām Mūsā Ṣadr dar Lubnān', p. 411.
68. *Lubnān*, pp. 65–6.
69. Ibid., p. 121.

fall of Tal Zaᶜtar to the Kataeb, who had promised the Syrians not to attack Nabᶜa, became imminent, the Palestinians fired on the rightists' positions from within Nabᶜa so as to provoke its fall, which would then overshadow the subsequent fall of Tal Zaᶜtar. Musa Sadr then negotiated the departure of most of the population, a fact that Chamran leaves out of his account, but a few thousand remained and Amal fighters resisted. According to Chamran the leftists fired at them from the back and then elements of Nayef Hawatmeh's Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine organized an attack on the Armenian enclave, raping Armenian women. This drove the Armenians into the arms of the Kataeb, who entered Nabᶜa with the help of Armenians. The latter avenged the attack on their women by raping some Shiᶜi women. A truce the leftists had signed with Bashir Gemayel 24 hours earlier allowed them to leave Tal Zaᶜtar, while all the remaining Amal fighters died during the capture of Nabᶜa on 6 August 1976.[70] Chamran's version of the fall of Nabᶜa, written shortly after it happened, is contradicted by other accounts that allege collusion between Musa Sadr and the Kataeb.[71] Amal had to face the hostility of the left as well as of the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front, which, he wrote, attacked Shiᶜi institutions on a number of occasions, killing and maiming many.[72] Libya also consistently backed leftist parties and the pro-Libyan press in Lebanon constantly vituperated against Musa Sadr.[73]

One man who tried to reconcile Amal and the PLO was Sadeq Qotbzadeh, who would stay with Nabih Berri, the future head of Amal, on his frequent visits to Lebanon.[74] Qotbzadeh was of course close to Musa Sadr and Chamran, but he also maintained close ties with the PLO; in fact he briefly manned its Paris office after the assassination of the PLO representative in Paris, Mahmud Hamshari, until a replacement was sent.[75] His efforts came to naught, for Arafat had a low opinion of the LMI's tactics for overthrowing the Shah and worked more closely with Jalaleddin Farsi and the Mojahedin.[76] Nonetheless, when LMI activists organized a

70. Muṣṭafā Chamrān, *Guzārishī az Lubnān* (Teheran: Qalam, 1363/1985), pp. 11–18
71. For a discussion of the other versions see Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shiᶜa: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), pp. 48 and 197.
72. *Lubnān*, p. 118.
73. Ibid., p. 338.
74. Carole Jerome, *The Man in the Mirror* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1987), pp. 81–2 and 264. This book is a political biography of Sadeq Qotbzadeh, written by his longtime Canadian companion.
75. Ibid., pp. 79–80. Hamshari was killed in retaliation for the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich, which had been masterminded by Abu Nidal.
76. Ibid., pp. 83 and 266.

memorial service for Ali Shariati in the summer of 1977, Yassir Arafat attended and gave a speech. One might mention, *en passant*, that Arafat's close relations with various Iranian opposition groups did not prevent him from periodically approaching the Shah through intermediaries to ask for money.[77]

Meanwhile, in his Iraqi exile Khomeini continued to pay attention to Lebanon. On 22 January 1977 he called on Muslims to mobilize to help victims of the civil war, and authorized his followers (*muqallid*s) to spend part of the tithes due to him on relief work.[78] Later that year Khomeini's older son Mostafa visited Beirut on his way to Mecca and met Farsi who wrote, 'we agreed on Lebanese and Palestinian problems'. Farsi was the only major Iranian oppositionist not to attend Shariati's memorial service in Beirut, implying that by organizing it under the auspices of the LMI and Amal, Yazdi and Qotbzadeh wanted to profit from Shariati's popularity.[79] Mostafa may have carried an anti-Amal turn of mind back to Najaf, for after he died in the autumn of 1977, Khomeini wrote in response to Arafat's message of condolence that he followed Lebanese affairs closely and that he feared that, just as Iran had turned into an American colony, Lebanon might be dealt a similar fate through the agency of the Iranian embassy. He then asked Arafat to keep the Iranian embassy under close scrutiny so as to foil official Iranian deceptions.[80] However, a semblance of unity was re-established when in November 1977, a few days after Mostafa Khomeini's funeral, his younger brother Ahmad visited Lebanon. On that occasion, to counter rumours that Shiᶜis were collaborating with the Israelis, Ahmad Khomeini was taken to the South and shown the extent of Shiᶜi resistance to Israeli incursions: Amal even produced a promotional photograph of Chamran and Ahmad Khomeini looking menacing and each carrying a machine gun. After his return to Najaf, Ahmad Khomeini apparently managed to dissipate the malaise in his father's relations with Musa Sadr.[81]

In 1978 the situation was bleak for Lebanon's Shiᶜis. They had borne the brunt of the early battles in the civil war; Syria occupied the Bekaa Valley; and the PLO controlled much of south Lebanon. In March Israel launched 'Operation Litani' in retaliation for a Palestinian terror act inside Israel: the south of Lebanon up to the river Litani was occupied, and in the course of this invasion over a thousand civilians were killed and close to 300,000 were made homeless. Amid this crisis Musa Sadr disappeared in August 1978 and left a leadership void.[82]

77. ᶜAlīnaqī ᶜĀlīkhānī, ed., *Yāddāshthā-yi ᶜAlam*, vol. 5 (Bethesda, Md: IBEX, n.d.), p. 137.
78. *Ṣaḥīfa-yi nūr*, vol. 1, pp. 225–6.
79. Fārsī, *Zavāyā-yi tārīk*, p. 392.
80. *Ṣaḥīfa-yi nūr*, vol. 1, p. 248.
81. Yazdī, 'Naqsh-i Imām Mūsā Ṣadr dar Lubnān', pp. 417–18.
82. It was Sadeq Qotbzadeh who went to Italy to push for an official Italian inquiry, independently of Amal. See Jerome, *The Man in the Mirror*, pp. 261 and 267.

The year 1978 was also one in which the revolutionary movement in Iran gathered momentum under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. In October the Iraqi government expelled Khomeini. Yassir Arafat reportedly invited him to seek refuge in Lebanon,[83] but he moved to a village near Paris where Ibrahim Yazdi became his *de facto* spokesman. Musa Sadr's son Sadreddin went to see Khomeini and asked him to do something about his father's disappearance, and Khomeini promised to pursue the matter.[84] In an interview with the Lebanese newspaper *al-Safir* on 23 November he was asked whether there was any news of Musa Sadr. Khomeini answered: 'Some action has been taken. I hope it will be useful so that he, for whom I and Lebanon's Shiᶜis ... have affection, can return home soon and pursue his work.'[85] Two weeks later, in an interview with *Amal*, the organ of the youth movement of the Harakat al-Mahrumin, he revealed what he meant by 'work': in response to a question asking what he had done about Musa Sadr's disappearance, he said that while still in Najaf he had sent telegrams to Yassir Arafat and the Syrian leadership. He added: 'I hope that he returns soon so that he can continue his struggle against Israel.'[86] This shows that for Khomeini the struggle against Israel took precedence over efforts to ameliorate the situation for Lebanon's Shiᶜis.

Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, a wide spectrum of Iranian oppositional groups used the territory of Lebanon to wage their struggle against the Shah. For these Iranians, their activities were part of a wider struggle of the 'oppressed' against the 'oppressors', with Iranians, Palestinians and Muslim Lebanese being in the former category and the United States, Israel and the Lebanese government embodying the latter. What all Iranian oppositionists had in common was a blithe disregard for the legality of the Lebanese state – an attitude they shared not only with other foreign groups established on Lebanese soil, primarily the Palestinians, but also with many Lebanese who were happy to make common cause with outsiders against their own government. As Ibrahim Yazdi explained:

> When we moved our Cairo activities to Lebanon, we knew that we would have problems with the Lebanese. In those days they used to say that 75 per

83. Andreas Rieck, *Die Schiiten und der Kampf um den Libanon: Politische Chronik 1958–1988* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1989), p. 341.
84. *Matn-i kāmil-i khāṭirāt-i Āyat Allāh Ḥusayn ᶜAlī Muntaẓirī* (Spanga: Baran; Vincennes: Khavaran; Essen: Nima [=Ittiḥād-i nāshirīn-i īrānī dar Urūpā], 2001), p. 243.
85. *Majmūᶜa-yi muṣāhibahā-yi Imām Khumaynī*, vol. 1 (n.p., n.p., n.d.), p. 82.
86. For the Persian text see *Ṣaḥīfa-yi nūr*, vol. 4, p. 31.

> cent of the Lebanese police work for foreigners, and the remaining 25 per cent do not work for Lebanon either! ... It was obvious that if a group wanted to accomplish anything in Lebanon, this would not be possible without the support of influential individuals. It was Imam Musa Sadr who made it possible for Iranian groups to be present and active in the south of Lebanon. He supported [them] in numerous ways. There were cases where the Lebanese police would arrest someone and take him to the airport to be deported to Iran, but the personal intervention of Musa Sadr would save these people.[87]

Secular Iranian groups by and large stayed out of Lebanese politics and dealt exclusively with Palestinians. In fact, in the parlance of the Iranian left, 'going to Palestine' meant going to PLO camps in Lebanon and Syria. Matters were different in the case of the Islamists who started visiting Lebanon in the early 1970s. These interacted also with Lebanon's Shi^{c}is, and if they were ulema they had a common educational background based on years spent in the *madrasa*s of Najaf. Some were drawn to Musa Sadr, most prominently Mostafa Chamran, while others tended to be closer to the Palestinians. Geography may have played a role here: the Palestinian camps at which Iranians received their military training tended not to be in the Jabal ^{c}Amil, and this may have prevented them from developing empathy for the plight of the people in the south of Lebanon who were caught in the war between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Be this as it may, the tensions between Iranians who were close to Musa Sadr and those who were more sympathetic to the Palestinians had a deep impact on Iranian policy towards Lebanon after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, in which men who had spent time in Lebanon would occupy many powerful positions.

87. Yazdī, 'Naqsh-i Imām Mūsā Ṣadr dar Lubnān', p. 416.