

Assad killed Bashir Gemayel in 1982 and triggered Sabra and Shatila massacres to trap Israel and its Lebanese allies

by Hameed Ghuriafi



Ba'athist Syrian President Hafez al Assad (left) and his son and successor Bashar

On every September 18, pro-Iranian and pro-Ikhwan Arab and international web-based news agencies rush to unveil the “bloody record” of Lebanese Christians and Israelis in what was to be known allegedly as those “responsible for the massacre of Sabra and Chatila” Palestinian camps in September 1982. While it is hard to dispute the bloody character of these killings of Palestinian civilians, many questions remain

surrounding the responsibility of the party behind the Sabra and Chatila massacres.

Notable Lebanese-American historians who have researched the tragic events that occurred at the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila in 1982, flatly dismissed allegations of Israeli direct involvement in the killings or Lebanese Forces official involvement. Dr. Franck Salameh, Professor of Near Eastern studies at Boston College, revealed in his article titled "Syrian Responsibility for The Sabra and Chatila Massacres" <http://www.teapartytribune.com/2012/01/05/revisiting-sabra-and-chatila-massacres-the-assad-regime-responsibility>, that the troops who conducted the massacres were selected by a Kataeb (Lebanese Forces) military commander Elie Hobeika who had established secret contacts with the Syrian Baathist regime of Hafez al-Assad.

Hobeika's henchmen were reportedly instructed to kill men, women, infants and elderly Palestinians indiscriminately and to place the blame for the horrific massacres on the late Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel and then-Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon. It certainly was not a pure coincidence that the killings took place 48 hours after the Syrian-engineered assassination of Gemayel. Salameh's startling revelation was eerily reminiscent of the allegations made in 1999 by Elie Hobeika's former bodyguard, Robert Hatem.

In his highly controversial book titled, *From Israel to Damascus*, Hatem shed an interesting light on the Sabra and Chatila massacres. He claimed that the former Head of Syria's Security Apparatus in Lebanon General Ghazi Kanaan (who was later murdered by the Syrian regime's security apparatus to hide President Bashar al-Assad's role in the assassination of Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri) gave Elie Hobeika direct orders to dispatch militiamen to the Palestinian camps and commit the massacres. Hatem added that Ariel Sharon and Hobeika had a major altercation at a building overlooking the camps as soon as the Israeli defence minister found out about

the large human atrocities carried out by the Lebanese Christian militiamen ordered by Syria's agent.

Hatem later commented on the 2002 assassination of his former boss, saying that President Bashar al-Assad was notified of Hobeika's intention to testify before a Belgian court about Sharon's role in the Sabra and Chatila massacres and clear his name. The Syrian president was keen not to let the genie out of the bottle. He thus decided to eliminate Hobeika and bury the Assad's family dirty secrets with him.

Hameed Ghuriafi is a senior writer at the Kuwaiti daily As Siyasa and a former editor of several publications in Lebanon, Cyprus and London.