



Political Islam Online

“Sunnis” Saving Face in Lebanon



Sunnis throughout the Arab World reluctantly admitted, and often applauded, what was perceived as a successful role played by the *Hizballah* organization of their *Shi'a* archrivals in fighting Israel last year. At the same time, *Fath Al-Islam*, a Sunni extremist group, was setting up a fundamentalist camp in *Al-Nahr Al-Barid* which ultimately led to a bloody confrontation with the Lebanese forces. After three months of fighting and severe casualties on both sides, *Fath Al-Islam* was eliminated – its members killed or captured. The Sunni hierarchy in Lebanon felt humiliated by the devastating results of its failure to challenge such an extreme group early on.

In order to avoid a repeat of such a tragedy, the Sunnis, under the auspices of their respected religious leader, sheikh *Faysal Al-Mawlawi*, organized a conference this past Sunday (9/23/2007) to lay down the rules of co-existence. “The Islamic Conference Concerning Violence and Extremism,” which was also attended by religious representatives of Hamas and other Palestinian clerics, repudiated violence and extremism, stipulating that the duty of all resistance movements is to operate in harmony with, and under the umbrella of, the state. The final declaration, entitled “The Islamic Act concerning violence, extremism and the events at [*Al-Nahr*] *Al-Barid*,” was signed by as many as 200 members, in order to guarantee its enforcement by the many parties comprising the Sunni community.

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