



**Council on American-Islamic Relations**  
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October 12, 2011

Honorable Mitt Romney  
Mitt Romney for President  
Attn: Alex Peterson, Campaign Operations  
Boston, MA 02114-9756

**Re: Working Group on Middle East and North Africa Co-Chair Walid Phares**

Dear Mr. Romney:

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) would like to bring to your attention concerns over the selection of Walid Phares to co-chair your Foreign Policy and National Security Advisory Team - Working Group on Middle East and North Africa.

For reasons that will be outlined in this letter, CAIR respectfully requests that Phares be removed from the co-chair position, and that you select a more balanced replacement.

In June, CAIR was encouraged by your responses to other candidates' fear mongering about Sharia, or Islamic principles, replacing the U.S. Constitution. You dismissed that scenario, reaffirming that "people of all faiths are welcome in this country." We ask that you once again refute such claims, by reevaluating the selection of Phares, who does not share your firm commitment to American pluralism.

**An Associate to War Crimes**

Phares is a "former official [militiaman and foreign affairs spokesman] with the Lebanese Forces, a Christian militia."<sup>i</sup>

This militia was implicated, by Israel's official Kahan inquiry and other sources, in the 1982 massacre of civilian men, women and children at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. Regarding the massacre, the French news agency Agence France Presse (AFP) reported that, "Lebanese militias, notably the Lebanese Forces, went on a killing spree."<sup>ii</sup>

In 1999, Phares' World Lebanese Organization included among its "leading members" both "Col. Sharbel Baraket, former deputy commander of the [South Lebanese Army], and Etienne Sakr, head of the radical Guardians of the Cedars group."<sup>iii</sup>

Until its closure in 1999, the South Lebanese Army (SLA) controlled the notorious Khiam Prison. Human Rights Watch has stated, "It is indisputable that systematic torture occurred in Khiam."<sup>iv</sup> The SLA also perpetrated atrocities such as the 1984 massacre in which its members "fired guns and hurled hand grenades at men rounded up for questioning."<sup>v</sup>

Similarly, Sakr's group earned "a reputation for atrocities"<sup>vii</sup> during the Lebanese civil war. Responding to questions about his group's role in the Sabra and Shatila massacres, Sakr said, "We have the full right to deal with our enemies in Lebanon in the manner we find suitable."<sup>vii</sup>

When Phares was interviewed about the past atrocities attributed to Sakr, he replied, "Everybody did silly stuff, on both hands...but amazingly enough, the Guardians of the Cedars have been the most moral fighters."<sup>viii</sup>

## **A Conspiracy Theorist**

Phares is a leading figure in the nation's Islamophobia network, propagating misinformation and conspiracy theories about American Muslims in the United States.<sup>ix</sup> Phares is a proponent of the "Sharia Conspiracy," in which he accuses American Muslims of being complicit in a "sinister plan [that] involves a steady decades-long infiltration of key institutions in the United States, including academia, the defense sector, and community organizations, in preparation for a future overthrow to impose Sharia law."<sup>x</sup>

Since September 11, 2001, Phares has published three books, "describing a long-term, global conspiracy by various Islamic movements to subvert the U.S. government and establish an Islamic state."<sup>xi</sup> One of these books, *Future Jihad: Terrorist Strategies Against the West*, claims that, "jihadists within the West pose as civil rights advocates' and patiently recruit until '[a]lmost all mosques, educational centers, and socioeconomic institutions fall into their hands.' These 'jihadists' put off militant action, Phares claims ominously, 'until the 'holy moment' comes."<sup>xii</sup>

According to the report, *Manufacturing the Muslim Menace*, "Muslims in nearly every community, academic, cultural, and governmental institution could conceivably be subjected to McCarthyistic interrogations about their belief systems, associations, and loyalties," if policy makers were to act on Phares' accusations.

## **An Unfit Advisor**

In March 2011, Phares was originally scheduled to testify before the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee's controversial hearing on the alleged radicalization of the Muslim American community. However, he was dropped from the hearing after his ties to the Lebanese Forces network were publicly revealed.

Just as Phares proved to be an unreliable witness before the House Homeland Security Committee, CAIR believes that he will prove to be an unreliable advisor to your Foreign Policy and National Security Advisory Team. His past militant ties and demonstrated intolerance only serve to undermine your Presidential campaign's goals and damage its impartiality and credibility.

Once again, CAIR respectfully requests that you drop Walid Phares from your Foreign Policy and National Security Advisory Team, and that you select a more balanced replacement. CAIR also invites you to meet with the national leaders of the American Muslim community to discuss the issues and concerns of American Muslims.

CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

We look forward to your response regarding the selection of Walid Phares. I can be reached at 202-488-8787 or email [ed@cair.com](mailto:ed@cair.com).

Sincerely,

Nihad Awad  
National Executive Director

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<sup>i</sup> Beiser, Vince. "New Bedfellows Unite Against Syria," The Jerusalem Report, January 12, 1995, <http://www.cair.com/bedfellows.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Schattner, Marius. "Sabra and Shatila: The Horror Israel Wants Forgotten," Agence France Presse - English, September 14, 2007 <http://www.cair.com/sabra-and-shatila.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Rudge, David. "Christians propose autonomy for security zone," Jerusalem Post, June 10, 1999.

<sup>iv</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Torture in Khiam Prison: Responsibility and Accountability," Human Rights Watch, October 27, 1999 Pippert, Wesley. "Untitled," United Press International, September 21, 1984.

<sup>v</sup> Pippert, Wesley. "Untitled," United Press International, September 21, 1984. Marlow, Lara. "Deal is short of full Syrian Troop Withdrawal," The Irish Times, March 8, 2005.

<sup>vi</sup> Marlow, Lara. "Deal is short of full Syrian Troop Withdrawal," The Irish Times, March 8, 2005.

<sup>vii</sup> Farrell, William. "We had a right, Phalangist says of massacre," New York Times, December 2, 1982.

<sup>viii</sup> Ismail Royer, "iviews.com reveals ties between Lebanese terrorist and American Jewish organizations," iviews.com, September 15, 1999. <http://www.iviews.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=1V9909-635>.

<sup>ix</sup> Ali, Wajahat; Clifton, Eli; Duss, Matthew; Fang, Lee; Keyes, Scott; and, Shakir, Faiz. "Fear Inc. The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America," Center for American Progress, August 2011.

<sup>x</sup> Cincotta, Thomas. "Manufacturing the Muslim Menace: Private Firms, Public Servants, and the Threat to Rights and Security," Political Research Associates, 2011

<sup>xi</sup> Idib. 9

<sup>xii</sup> Idib. 9