

Milestones in the Imam Moussa Sadr's Journey



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Members of the Relief Committee for the South, Kfarshouba, following the Israeli aggression, 10/6/1975. Left to right: Pastor Basile Khoury, Maronite bishop of Saida and Deir el-Qamar; Sheikh Najib Qais, Druze cadi of Hasbaya; Imam Moussa Sadr, Chairman of the Committee; Pastor Boulos Khoury, Greek-Orthodox bishop of Saida, Tyre and Marjeyoun; Sheikh Ahmad Zein, Sunni cadi of Saida and Hasbaya; Pastor Georges Haddad, Greek-Catholic bishop of Tyre and Marjeyoun

Born in Qom on 4 June 1928, and disappeared in Libya on 31 August 1978.

1928

Musa As-Sadr was born on 4th June in the city of Qom, Iran, to a family of scholars originating from Jabal Amel (South Lebanon). His great-great-grandfather, Sayyid Salih, was born in Shhur, a village in southern Lebanon, and traces his genealogy to the seventh Imam of the Shi'i tradition, Musa Ibn Ja'far (d.799).



Imam Moussa Sadr during his years of studying at the hawza (Muslim faculty of jurisprudence) in Qom

1934

Enrolled in Qom elementary school, finishing his secondary school studies in 1947.

3

1941

Began his religious studies in the Qom seminary (*hawza*), and continued his scholarly education, reaching the rank of *mujtahid* (scholar authorized to issue rulings independently) at an unusually young age.

1950

Enrolled in the faculty of law, within the department of economics at the University of Tehran. Graduated in 1953. Sadr was the first religious scholar to also receive a modern degree in law while continuing his studies and teaching in the *hawza*.

1954

Travelled to the holy city of Najaf to pursue higher religious studies. Participated in the "Muntada Al-Nashr" group in Najaf and became

Imam Moussa Sadr
with his paternal
cousin, Ayatollah
martyr Sayyid
Mohammad Baqer
Sadr, summer of 1969



- 4 member of its administrative committee. The Muntada organized cultural fora with the leading intellectual figures of the city.

1958

Returned to the *hawza* in Qom, where he participated in the establishment of *Maktab-i Islam* Magazine and became soon its chief editor. *Maktab-i Islam* was the first Islamic cultural magazine published in Qom, and was important in Iran's intellectual renaissance.

1959

Participated with other leaders (including Ayatollahs Beheshti, Azari Qomi, and Makarem Shirazi) in the draft reforming the academic curricula in the *hawza*.

At the end of the year, Sadr arrived in the city of Tyre (Sur) in Lebanon (after two previous visits in 1955 and 1957), where he started working as cleric (*imam* with a small i), succeeding Sayyid Abd Al-Hussein Sharafaddin, the leading Shi'i scholar in the country, with the

blessings and encouragements of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Borujerdi.

1961

Sadr launched his social and institutional work, beginning with the reorganization of Al-Birr wal-Ihsan Association”, a local charity which he overhauled and enlarged. This was followed by the establishment of educational, vocational training, healthcare, social and religious institutions, seeking in particular to empower women in social development work. He ran literacy courses, succeeded in abolishing beggary in Tyre and its environs, and established a charity fund for a vocational school in Jabal Amel. He appointed Dr. Mustafa Shumran to administer the vocational school which eventually graduated the leading figures in the resistance to Israeli repeated aggressions against Lebanese territory.



5

*Dr. Mustafa Shumran
surrounded by
students at the Jabal
Aamel Technical
School*

1963

After a two-month visit to Europe, Sadr announced that the tour's objective was to get acquainted with new cultures and reach a better understanding of their progress. He hoped that this would reflect on the development of work methodologies in charity, social and religious institutions.

30 June Sadr participated in the coronation of Pope Paul VI upon an official invitation. He is the only Muslim cleric to be invited to the ceremony. In his meetings in the Vatican, exposed the suffering of the Iranian people and religious scholars under the rule of the Shah.

*Imam Moussa Sadr
giving a lecture in
Dakar, Senegal, 1967*

1964

Began a cooperation with the members of "Al-Nadwa Al-Lubnaniyya (the Lebanese Cénacle)", which hosted him several times for lectures on Lebanon. This forum, founded and directed Michel Asmar, was an important venue for intellectuals and scholars, and became a celebrated forum for participants from all Lebanese communities.

1966

August Held a press conference at the Press Syndicate for a better organization of Lebanese Shi'is. Based on wide-ranging studies and consultations, his efforts made the Lebanese Parliament approve a law establishing the Supreme Islamic Shia Council in 1967.

1967

Travelled to West Africa to meet with leading members of the Lebanese community and connect them more intensively with the homeland. Met the presidents of Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. President of Senegal and man of letters Léopold Sédar Senghor praised the Imam's efforts to spread kindness and nonviolence among citizens.



1969

May 23 Sadr voted head of the Supreme Islamic Shia Council. Called for the unification of religious rituals between all Muslim sects. Warned about the rising Israeli threats, and emphasized his support for Palestinian resistance.

June In a speech on 2 June, stated that the many sects of Lebanon are windows of culture to the entire world.

1970

Launched a media campaign to defend South Lebanon against Israeli violations. Requested arming citizens and training them for defense and called on people to stand their ground in their villages and not emigrate. Also called for the activation of the conscription laws and the implementation of development projects in the South.

May Formed “the Commission for Assisting the South” with the participation of the heads of the Lebanese sects. Called for a peaceful national strike. On 26 May, some fifty thousand people gathered near the Supreme Islamic Shia Council in Hazmiyya, Beirut. In response, the Lebanese government formed the “Council of the South”, with the aim of developing the south and alleviating its poverty.

7

August Toured several European countries to support the Palestinian cause, and held a press conference in Bonn to condemn the Judaization of the holy city of Jerusalem to the detriment of the other two world religions.

Speech at a press meeting in France: “The catastrophe of Palestine is a black smear on the world’s conscience. The struggle of the Palestinian people is in defense of all religions and the sanctity of Jerusalem. Israel is a racist and expansionist state, and Lebanon’s coexistence of religions is a religious and cultural need for the world.”

March Mentioned again in Cairo that the coexistence of the sects in Lebanon as a unique cultural experience in the world.

1971

Sadr, now widely referred to as Imam (with a capital I), left Lebanon on a tour which included Morocco, where, upon the invitation of King Hassan II, he lectured at the University of Al Qarwiyyin in Fes. Visited Mauritania, Nigeria, and Egypt, where he participated in the sixth conference of the Azhar Islamic Research Academy. Imam Sadr

had been an active member of the Academy since 1968. Presented the Azhar public with several suggestions on national and Islamic issues.

Visited in Egypt the front at Suez, where he spent several weeks and met the military staff, acting as imam for prayer in its mosques. Called for upholding religion and for jihad to free Palestine. Also suggested a project of “jihad bonds” to activate grass root participation in the war against Israel. In a letter to British vicar Herbert Adams, talked about the harsh reality of the human condition in the Middle East. Emphasized the positive role of sects in Lebanon, but denounced the country’s sectarian regime as evil that covers up political feudalism.



Imam Moussa Sadr during the Fifth conference of the Islamic Research Institute (Majma'), Cairo, 6/3/1970; Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Mohammad Fahham, can also be seen in the picture

1972

Issued a call from Jwaya, South Lebanon, on the dangers of Israeli aggression. To support the resilience of the people in the region, he intensified his political and media activities in statements to the national and international media, lectures and preaches in mosques, churches and universities, warning from the consequences of the government’s neglect of its responsibilities in defending the South and in developing Lebanon’s deprived regions. Called for a regime based on religious values to replace both secular and sectarian regimes.

1973

Imam Sadr announced in successive Friday prayers that efforts to seek freedom in Palestine also free Islamic and Christian holy sites, and humankind. Upon the outbreak of the October/Ramadan war between Israel and the Arab countries, called for jihad and led a campaign to collect donations for the families of fighters.

1974

Called in March for a rally in Baalbek, attended by a hundred thousand people, and another in Tyre in May, attended by 150,000 people. Participants took an oath to stay mobilized until no deprived person or area remain in Lebanon. The rallies led to the creation of the Movement of the Disinherited, and the issuance of the “Document of intellectuals” in support of the Movement. The document was signed by more than 190 leading public figures in Lebanon, representing all sects and segments of society.

*Imam Moussa Sadr
at the Tyre rally,
5/5/1974*



Imam Moussa Sadr during a press conference, 1/1/1974; Sheikh Mohammad Yaacoub and Mr. Nabih Berri can also be seen in the picture



10

1975

Imam Sadr spared no effort with all parties to bring an end the Civil War and to restore peace in Lebanon. Urged the Lebanese to maintain their homeland, and Palestinians to preserve their cause at the heart of Lebanon. On his invitation, the “Committee for National Pacification” was formed. He drew the guiding lines for the Committee, defining them as the preservation of coexistence and the use of dialogue and democratic means to achieve reform.

27 June In protest against the continuation of the Civil War, Imam Sadr began on a hunger strike in Al-‘amiliyya mosque in Beirut, spending his time in prayer and fasting. Ended the strike five days later when a national reconciliation government was formed and adopted his demands. Visited the region of Qa’ and Deir Al-Ahmar to lift the siege

and end the sectarian conflict in the two villages.

Announced the birth of the Lebanese Resistance Detachments, 'Amal' in the Arab acronym.

At his request, a spiritual summit for all the heads of the Lebanese religious communities was held. At the summit, Sadr warned of three dangers: the division of Lebanon, forming another Israel inside home; Israeli aggression to be resisted by values and rights provided in religion, history, and nationalism; and the end of Palestinian resistance. Israel is described as danger to Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, and to liberty and dignity.



Imam Moussa Sadr protesting against the civil war in Lebanon at Al-Safa Mosque, summer of 1975

1976

May Imam Sadr participated in the Lebanese Islamic Summit held in the town of 'Aramoun. The summit adopted a constitutional document which he considered a prelude to peace and national harmony in the country.

Worked to reduce the dissensions between the Syrian and Palestinian leaderships. Stated that harmony is the only way forward, and that a clash between them would cause Lebanon to fall, and the resistance to end, and harm Syria and the Arab cause to the sole benefit of Israel. Conducted intense efforts with Arab leaders to end the Civil War, resulting in the Riyadh Conference on 16 October, and the Cairo Summit

*Imam Moussa Sadr and
the Crown Prince of
Saudi Arabia Abdullah
bin Abdul Aziz, Riyadh,
12/12/1976*

12



on 25 October, and leading to a halt in the war with the deployment of the Arab Deterrence Force in Lebanon.

1977

January Emphasized that Lebanon was a cultural need in the world, and that Lebanese coexistence was essential and inevitable for the future of Islam and Christianity.

May At a meeting of the Supreme Islamic Shia Council, Imam Sadr presented a working paper with suggestions for political and social reforms, and called for the reconstruction of Lebanon along the lines of coexistence and resistance to Zionism: "Lebanon is a final homeland to all of its sons and daughters".



*Imam Moussa Sadr
praying at the funeral
of Dr. Ali Shariati at the
Sayyida Zainab (PBUH)
mausoleum, Damascus,
summer of 1977*

13

Expressed his support to the growing Islamic movement in Iran at a rally to mark the passage of forty days after the martyrdom of Dr. Ali Shariati, one of Iran's most prominent Islamic thinkers.

1978

Summer Imam Sadr started an Arab tour to meet several Arab leaders after the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon. On 25 August 1978, Imam Sadr and two companions, Sheikh Muhammad Yaacoub and journalist Abbas Badreddine, departed for Libya to meet with government officials at the invitation of Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi. The three men were last seen on 31 August, and were never heard from again. The Libyan authorities claimed that their guests left Libya to Italy, but both

*Imam Moussa Sadr
at the Beirut Airport*



14

Italian and Lebanese judiciaries rejected the claims after exhaustive investigations proving that Imam Sadr and his companions never entered Italy.