

Time to Bring Justice to Harriri's Assassin

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Commentary

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Rafik Hariri, a Lebanese nationalist who served as that country's prime minister between 1992 and 1998, and again between 2000 and 2004, was assassinated on February 14, 2005, after having stood up to Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's demands that Lebanon extra-constitutionally extend the tenure of pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud. Popular outrage in the wake of the assassination led to the Cedar Revolution, an uprising of the Lebanese people against Syrian domination. Alas, the fickleness of the March 14 coalition combined with the empowerment of Hezbollah that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice [blessed](#) in the short-term pursuit of quiet ended hope that the Cedar Revolution would fundamentally transform Lebanese society. (Michael Young's [The Ghosts of Martyr's Square](#), which I [reviewed](#) for COMMENTARY in May 2010, remains the best account of the period).

In subsequent years, Syria and its fellow-travelers at the United Nations managed to slow-roll the investigation and tribunal process meant to bring Hariri's killers to justice. Now, the *Beirut Observer* has published [photographs](#) of the elusive main suspect, Mustafa Badr al-Din, Hezbollah's second-in-command. The newspaper attributed the photographs to www.stop910.com, a website which purports to hound Hezbollah. Badr al-Din, like the late Hezbollah terrorist mastermind Imad Mughniyeh, has long sought to keep out of sight, and to keep any recent photographs from surfacing.

The new photographs should make it more difficult for the Lebanese government to shirk its responsibility to bring Badr al-Din to justice. The photos also suggest that Hezbollah is not as impermeable as the group pretends. Should Badr al-Din be active in neighboring Syria, let us hope that publication of his photograph will make every checkpoint and every passerby a mortal danger to a man who prefers to kill from afar.