Mahdi Scouts Correspondence

- **23 December 2008, World Scout Bureau, Switzerland, letter to Lebanese Scout Federation** (English and French)
- **16 January 2009, Mahdi Scouts, reply letter to Lebanese Scout Federation**
- **16 January 2009, Lebanese Scout Federation, reply letter to World Scout Bureau**
- **20 January 2009, Lebanese Minister of Youth & Sports, reply to World Scout Bureau**


[Image]

[Link]

*Version 1, published 20 October 2008. The original online version included neither hyperlinks nor photographs.*

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*Version 2, published 20/21 November 2008 (online plus print). The revised online version included numerous hyperlinks, in-text photographs and an additional slide show.*)

23 December 2008, World Scout Bureau, Switzerland, letter to Lebanese Scout Federation:
Luc Panissod
Acting Secretary General - Secrétaire Général ad interim - World Scout Bureau
Rue du Pré-Jérôme 5
P.O. Box 91 Mr Mustafa Abdel Rassoul
1211 Geneva 4 Plainpalais
Chairman - SWITZERLAND

“Fédération du Scoutisme Libanais” - Phone (+41 22) 705 10 10 - Fax (+41 22) 705 10 20
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Imm. Hajjar (Gal. Kabbaz) 2nd floor - P.O. Box 116-5416 - BEYRUTH - Lebanon

cc: Members World Scout Committee
Chairman Arab Regional Committee Geneva, 23 December 2008
Chairman Constitutions Committee
Regional Director, WSB-Arab Regional Office
Re: Mahdi Scouts

Dear Mr Chairman, Dear Brother Scout,

1. I am writing to express strong concerns about news reported by the “The New York Time” in its 21st November issue.
According to this news, the Mahdi Scouts, a component association of the Lebanese Scouting Federation, appears to run a youth programme dominated by political, militaristic and indoctrination characteristics which are in direct contradiction with the culture of respect, tolerance, peace and brotherhood which are fundamental to our Movement. According to the news, this association has become the vanguard of the youth movement of Hezbollah.

2. As early as in 1937, the 9th World Scout Conference adopted a Resolution No. 15, in which it stated: “...that the International Committee be requested to do all that it can to ensure that Scouting and Rovering in all countries, while fostering true patriotism, are genuinely kept within the limits of international cooperation and friendship, irrespective of creed and race, as has always been outlined by the Chief Scout. Thus, any steps to the militarization of Scouting or the introduction of political aims, which might cause misunderstanding and thus handicap our work for peace and goodwill among nations and individuals should be entirely avoided in our programmes.”

3. As you are well aware, in the case of a Scout Federation at national level, the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) constitutionally does not recognise or deal directly with individual associations members of that Federation. It is therefore the responsibility and accountability of that Federation – which in the present case is the Lebanese Scouting Federation – to ensure that its individual component associations comply with the requirements of the WOSM Constitution at all times.

4. Consequently, I am asking the Lebanese Scouting Federation to make further enquiries into the acts and doings of the Mahdi Scouts, to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation and to send us as soon as possible, but no later than 31st January, a comprehensive report detailing its findings and the results of the measures taken. That report should be accompanied by a statement emanating from the Federation and from the Mahdi Scouts themselves clearly demonstrating that the Mahdi Scouts fully conform to WOSM’s principles.

5. WOSM will then consider what further action is appropriate.

I am looking forward to hearing from you and count on your understanding of the importance of standing up for the values and principles enshrined in The Scout Promise and The Scout Law which are fundamental to our Movement.

Yours in Scouting,

Luc Panissod        Acting Secretary General WOSM

Letter in French attached
Objet: Mahdi Scouts

Monsieur Le Président, Cher Frère Scout,

1. Je vous écris pour vous exprimer mes vives inquiétudes au sujet de nouvelles rapportées dans un article de presse paru dans l'édition du 21 novembre du quotidien "The New York Times". Selon ces nouvelles, l'une des associations composant la Fédération du Scoutisme Libanais, les Mahdi Scouts, apparaît comme une organisation de jeunes dominée par des caractéristiques politiques, militaristes et d'endoctrinement, qui sont en contradiction directe avec la culture de respect, de tolérance, de paix et de fraternité qui sont des fondamentaux de notre Mouvement. Toujours selon ces nouvelles, cette association est devenue l'avant-garde du mouvement de jeunesse du Hezbollah.

2. Dès 1937, la Conférence Mondiale du Scoutisme adopta la Résolution N° 15 dans laquelle elle "démunie au Comité International de faire tous ses efforts pour que le scoutisme et la route dans tous les pays, tout en développant le vrai patriotisme, restent véritablement sur le terrain de la coopération et de l'amitié internationale, sans exception de race ou de croyance, tel que l'a toujours défini le Chef Scout. Aussi, toute mesure tendant à militariser le Scoutisme ou à y introduire des visées politiques, susceptibles de créer des malentendus et d'entraver ainsi nos efforts pour maintenir la paix et la bonne volonté entre les nations et les individus, doivent être entièrement exclues de nos programmes."

3. Comme vous le savez certainement, dans le cas d'une fédération scout au niveau national, l'Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout (OMMS) constitutionnellement ne reconnaît pas ou ne traite pas directement avec les associations individuelles membres de cette Fédération. Il est donc de la responsabilité et de l'obligation de cette fédération - dans le cas présent la Fédération du Scoutisme Libanais - de s'assurer que ses associations individuelles la composant respectent et se conforment à tout moment aux exigences de la Constitution de l'OMMS.

4. En conséquence, je demande à la Fédération du Scoutisme Libanais de procéder à des investigations supplémentaires sur les actes et les agissements des Mahdi Scouts, de prendre les mesures appropriées pour remédier à cette situation et de nous faire parvenir dès que possible, mais au plus tard au 31 janvier 2008, un rapport détaillé présentant ses conclusions. Ce rapport devrait être accompagné d'une déclaration de la Fédération et des Mahdi Scouts eux-mêmes, démontrant clairement que les Mahdi Scouts se conforment pleinement aux principes de l'OMMS.

5. L'OMMS examinera alors la suite appropriée qu'il conviendra de donner.

J'attends de vos nouvelles et je compte sur votre compréhension de l'importance qu'il y a à défendre les valeurs et les principes consacrés dans La Promesse Scoute et dans La Loi Scoute qui sont fondamentaux à notre Mouvement.

Fraternellement dans le Scoutisme.

Luc Panissod
Secrétaire Général ad interim OMMS
16 January 2009, Mahdi Scouts, reply letter to Lebanese Scout Federation:

In his name

ALMAHDI SCOUTS
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Web: www.almahdiscouts.net

Lawyer Mr. Mustafa Abdul rasoul, president of Lebanon's Scout Federation
Beirut forn elshobak, main road, hajjar building( khabaz stores) 2nd floor
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Beirut: January 16th 2009

Subject:
Clarifications in response to the aforementioned information in a letter from the deputy secretary general of the world scout organization.

From:
The President of Al-Mahdi Scouts

Dear President and members of the administrative council of Lebanon's scout federation,

Scouts' Salutations,

We have been informed of the contents of the letter sent to the federation from the Deputy Secretary General of the World Scout Organization Mr. Luck Pasnold, which is about the latest publications including false accusations published about the organization.

The office of the secretary general has asked both the Lebanese federation and our organization to provide some clarifications on the matter; this reflects the obvious worry of the world scout organization.

We sincerely send you this letter and highly respect your role as the official head of the scout movements in Lebanon.

We hereby clarify the following:

1. Our Organization has long believed and continues to believe in the principles of scouting and is committed to its value and program, and considers itself a luminous part in it. And ever since the time our organization was established and later acquired its license and was accepted in Lebanon's scout federation, it sticks to all the duties of this membership.

2. As you may well know, the curriculum, the programs, the camps and executive offices of our organization are open for everyone and do not contradict any of the principles
In his name

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and values of the scout method. We are very often present at the activities of Lebanon's scouts' federation.

3. Educating scouts in the organization and nurturing their patriotism come side by side with the educational and nationalistic ideals we find in Lebanon. The culture of resistance against occupation and aggression and protesting the killing of children is an integral part of Lebanese patriotism. It also meets with the messages of global and human rights organizations and the Islamic culture which our organization is a part of. And that is what all scouts organizations which are members of the federation have in common.

4. This renewed campaign against our organization, which accuses it of having a military program comes from a source that is known to you and everyone. This is not new; it is rather part of the continuous Israeli aggression on our country, people and culture. They are false accusations which aim at destroying the culture and upbringing of patriotism in Lebanon which helped us defeat the occupier and drive it out of our land. The Israeli state uses the accusations to cover up its crimes against the children and civilians of Lebanon and Palestine for the many years passed.

5. In light of the baseless accusations against us and on the scouts' movement in Lebanon, we ask of you to do what you deem appropriate to clarify the situation and in order for these accusations against us to be brought to an end, whether they come from some scout organizations or from some media.

As we have mentioned before, we declare our readiness to go along with any procedure or action (from behalf of the federation) which aim to clarify the situation and present the necessary facts.

*Attached to this letter a copy in English*

Yours sincerely...

The President

Dr. Bilal Neim
Unit 3: The Scout Objectives:

1. Spread the teachings and principles of scouting
2. Train scouts to be disciplined to cooperate and to serve the public interest
3. Train scouts to be self-reliant
4. Merge the scouts in national education to be part of a unified living
5. Take part in educating the youth and guiding them in social, cultural and artistic aspects
6. Motivate scouts to be educated and to work hard to achieve higher educational goals
7. Discover the talents and potentials of scouts and encourage athletics
8. Educate scouts to care for the environment and protect it, and to serve society.

Unit 7: The Scout Law

The Association complies with the exact scout law that subscribed by the Lebanon's Scouts Federation and it is obligatory for the association and its members to fulfill this law.

Unit 8: The Scout Promise

The Association complies with the exact scout promise that the Lebanon's Scouts Federation subscribed it

Yours sincerely...
The President
Dr. Bilal Neim
16 January 2009, Lebanese Scout Federation, reply letter to World Scout Bureau:

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Beirut, 16/1/2009

cc:  
Members of the word scout organization  
President of the legal scout committee in the world scout organization  
President of the Arab scout organization  
Secretary General of the Arab world organization

Dear Deputy Secretary General of the World Scout Organization Mr. Luc Panissod,

We have, with great respect, received your letter which is related to what was published in the New York Times on the 21st of November 2008. It refers to Al-Mahdi scouts' organization which is a member of Lebanon's scouts' federation. We have been informed of the content of the mentioned article, and based on your demand for a clarification the administrative council of the federation has formed a commission which has taken on the duty of looking into the issue. This commission includes: The International Commissioner/ the General Executive Secretary/ General Inspector/ General Commissioner. As a result of the probe we clarify the following:

1- The Lebanese scouts' federation, with all its members, is committed to the values, principles of the scouts' movement, and abides by the Lebanese law which organizes and takes care of the federation and all organizations beneath it through the ministry of youth and sports.

2- What was mentioned in the article, does not rely on any facts or evidences, it is rather part of a propaganda launched two years ago with a certain political purpose. Back then, the federation looked closely into the facts to make certain that they were erroneous and that the source of these rumors was Israel. We state that this organization has no political or military program; this is actually a mere illusion.

3- Because of the uniqueness of the Lebanese situation, you find that most of the scouts' organizations in the Lebanese scout federation are backed by and sustained in some cases even headed by certain political or religious groups. Almost every sect has its own scouts', but these organizations have never been in a state of religious or political dispute, but have always been a source of cooperation, communication, and unity.
4. Resolution 15 adopted by the world scouts' conference year 1937, is highly respected and followed. This resolution gives all countries the right of nationalistic education, and therefore it gives scouts' organizations the right to educate their youth the importance of defending freedom and their land against any occupying force no matter what its race or religion was. The Lebanese government bases its curriculum of national education in schools and universities on this very right.

5. The culture of resistance and refusal of occupation and aggression especially those committed against children, women and scouts is a culture based on a right guaranteed by international laws. This does not contradict the principle of forgiving, peace and brotherhood. Furthermore, Lebanon is a clear example of tolerance and mutual acceptance, far from any discrimination whether racial or religious. This is something that all in Lebanon abide by including Al-Mahdi scouts.

6. The pride that we take in our martyrs and the respect that we portray through the various activities and memorials is a culture that unifies the Lebanese people in their various organizations. This is an integral part of nationalistic teachings which do not disagree with the principles of the scout movement.

7. Based on the preceding and as a result of the meeting of the administrative council of the Lebanese scouts' federation in which we discussed the letter that was sent, and after having heard the results of the designated commission; the federation declares the following: Al-Mahdi Scouts is one of the prominent scout organizations in the federation which is renowned for its scouting, its ethical, social and artistic performance. An Al-Mahdi scout has constantly been an exemplar of a scout body which abides by all scout principles ever since it was licensed in 1997. It has furthermore been a model of tolerance and cooperation with the federation, and its camps and activities are open for all to see.

8. The Lebanese scouts' federation hopes that the world Scout Organization considers the federation as a truthful source of information and a reference to clarify any detail which is linked in any way with one of its members.

Sincerely

Lebanese Scout Federation, Chief

NB: Attached to this letter:
2. Copies of the Minister of Youth and Sports letter in Arabic and English.
3. Copies of this letter in Arabic and French.
20 January 2009, Lebanese Minister of Youth & Sports, reply to World Scout Bureau:

Subject: AlMahdi Scouts – Lebanon

To Deputy Secretary General of the World Scout Organization Mr. Luc Panissod

Referring to the subject above, it is our concern to inform you that

We have been informed by head of the Lebanese scout federation of the contents of your letter which addressed the issue of Al-Mahdi scouts and the information surrounding it of which was read in some media, we have also been informed of the federation.

Since you may well know, the ministry of Youth and Sports is the official side which bears the responsibility of overseeing the scout organizations in Lebanon and the Lebanese Scout Federation. We hereby back of the report which was prepared by the Federation and we agree to the entire content.

Furthermore, we inform you of the following:
- Al-Mahdi scouts organization licensed in 1992 no# 563 by the Ministry of Youth and Sports; joined the federation year 1997
- It is an organization that fulfills the conditions of the Ministry and address to its guidance.
- Its activities and programs meet the duties of the license and the membership in the Federation.

As a result of the Ministry's inspection, there has been no sign of a political or military program run by Al-Mahdi scouts.

Therefore, we consider the information found in the media to be part of a propaganda run by the state of Israel which occupies Lebanon's territories and has for long assaulted our people especially our children.

The ministry of youth and sports in Lebanon thanks the WSO for its patronage of the organizations under its wing. And we hope that this issue is followed with utmost accuracy and objectivity.

Sincerely

The Minister of Youth and Sports

Talal Majeed Arslan

cc:
1. Members of the world scout organization
2. President of the legal scout committee in the world scout organizations
3. President of the Arab scout organization
4. Secretary General of the Arab world organization

* Attached to this letter Arabic copy.