

Did Politico smear Phares in 2016 to protect the Iran Deal?

by Tom Harb



Back in November, and after President Trump won the election and formed his transition team, a few opposition media, notably including *al Jazeera* and *Politico*, launched acerbic attacks against then Trump foreign policy advisor Dr. Walid Phares without reason. The attacks were most likely triggered to smear Phares in order to intercept what the Iranian regime (and the Muslim Brotherhood) thought would be an imminent appointment of Phares to a position in the Trump administration. The smear material, imported from a similar wave of slander launched by the same forces in 2011 after Romney appointed Phares to his team, regurgitated the infamous libel by a *Mother Jones* hit piece, authored by Adam Serwer that year. The attack itself was crippled by the sources Serwer used. Nothing in the piece was founded in reality, only allegations and quotes by political enemies. The *Mother*

Jones smear piece was demolished by *National Review* in 2011 and by investigative reports in 2016, when *The Washington Post* delivered another smear piece against Phares based on the far-left website's original article. The completely discredited *Mother Jones* narrative was used multiple times regardless of its untenable foundation. It is evident that those behind the campaign against Phares care only about how they can trash the scholar – and those propagating the attack apparently care nothing for true credibility – disregarding the incredulity of the sources used.

However, one piece posted by *Politico*'s Yousef Saba on November 16, 2016, after Phares returned to the private sector, went even farther. Saba imputed words to Phares as translated from an Arabic interview. claiming Phares told Elaph, a liberal Arab media, that: "Reports that President-elect Donald Trump may deport Muslims 'can be described as bulls–,' and are perpetuated by 'the Muslim Brotherhood or the Iranian regime,' according to Walid Phares, a Trump adviser on national security issues." Saba pretended that Phares used the term "Bulls–", which according to our research in Arabic was never uttered. Reviewing decades of archives on Walid Phares, he never used this word (nor any similar ones) in any language. But Saba aimed at smearing Phares from the onset and use the term in a sensational title. Phares could sue *Politico* if he wanted.

Beyond the concocted word attributed to Phares, *Politico* was trying to ridicule the advisor for daring to stipulate that Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood actually have "lobbies" in the United States. The ridicule is on Saba and *Politico* as indeed these two powers have significant pressure groups and networks within the US, as affirmed by many members of Congress and several Arab countries. The political goal of the publication and its blogger was to strike at a possible candidate who may have been asked to join the administration. This was a preemptive hit—just in case the scholar was called upon to

enter the White House. Apparently, the opposition did not know that Phares was not to join the Trump administration in 2017. Perhaps another goal was to pile up attacks on the “potential candidate” so that he would not be called upon and thus assist the President and Congress in their handling of the Iran Deal. It is well known that the Iran Deal was backed by Politico and the wider opposition. A Walid Phares inside the administration would be problematic for the backers of Iran’s policies in the region and the agenda of the Ikhwan. Hence the <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/trump-campaign-muslim-iran-231529>