

# Israel's message: We will do what it takes

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 24.11.2025

With the dust barely settled from the IDF's precision strike in Beirut, uncertainty hangs over how, or when, Hezbollah will choose to retaliate for the killing of Haytham 'Ali Tabataba'i- the group's military wing chief. What is certain is that Israel has made it explicitly clear to the terrorist organization, and to everyone meddling in the turbulent Middle Eastern affairs, that it is resolved to prevent its military reconstruction, even if it means an increased risk of the fighting flaring up.

Almost a year after the ceasefire agreement with Lebanon took effect, and following clear indications that Israel was unwilling to tolerate Hezbollah's entrenchment efforts or the Lebanese government's inaction, Israel carried out a surgical and focused attack on the organization's most senior military operative, who had been charged with the task of rebuilding its strength.

Israel did not equivocate or apologize but instead took full responsibility for the action. Crucially, Israel maintained a normal routine on the home front, a move calculated to prevent the enemy from interpreting a change in policy as an acknowledgment of a necessary response equation, particularly for eliminations at this senior level.

This operation represents a significant intelligence and operational coup for the IDF, especially considering Hezbollah's adjustments over the past year and the lessons the group drew from the war. Israel is signaling that it retains the capability to track down terror operatives, locate their hideouts, and execute precise strikes deep inside residential areas of the Lebanese capital.

The willingness to conduct this operation, coming just weeks after Naim Qassem warned publicly that "the continuation of the aggression unacceptable and everything has a limit," underscores that Israel is not deterred by the possibility of its actions leading to renewed fighting.

Israel is conveying this message through the elimination of Tabataba'i not only to other Hezbollah operatives but also to Hamas in Gaza, the Iranian leadership in

Tehran, the Lebanese government in Beirut, Ahmad al-Sharaa in Damascus, and the various countries involved in security arrangements in both arenas, from Turkey and Qatar to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. By taking this action, Israel is reaffirming its commitment to independently disarm its enemies should political arrangements prove incapable of doing so.

While Hezbollah leaders will undoubtedly attempt to leverage the strike to unite Lebanese forces against Israel, the operation could conversely bolster the Lebanese government's demands of Hezbollah, most notably its call for a state monopoly on weapons.

Finally, the Beirut strike shows that Israel's operational latitude remains intact under the current Trump administration policy. Although the administration prefers to avoid a renewal of intense fighting, it displays understanding, and possibly even support, for Israel's pinpoint operations after other diplomatic efforts to prevent its enemies' military expansion have been exhausted. It's plausible that the American administration believes such a strike will not impede the political track but may even accelerate progress toward a resolution.

Much like Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon is being forced by Israel's actions into a critical decision point where every available option is detrimental. If the group chooses restraint and de-escalation, Israel will continue to eliminate its operatives and further erode its tattered dignity. If it opts for a forceful response, it will incur a steep cost and bolster the arguments of its opponents within Lebanon. And if it settles for a symbolic counter-strike, it will demonstrate weakness against Israel and cheapen the value of its senior commanders' lives.

Today, neither Hezbollah nor Hamas possesses the leverage to constrain Israel's actions or impose a price that would compel it to hold back.

The enemy's attempts to inflame the Judea and Samaria arena and thereby complicate Israel's operations and extract a cost have persisted since the war began. The security establishment has learned how to manage this threat, and its ongoing operations have largely prevented the enemy from achieving its desired effect.

It is reasonable to assume that Hezbollah is also exploring the option of carrying out attacks abroad, potentially with or without the aid of other Iranian actors. This potential scenario is also a priority on the security establishment's agenda.

The most challenging scenario demanding focused attention from Israeli agencies is a kidnapping attempt. Hamas is acutely aware of the difference between the reality before the release of the living hostages and the current situation, despite existing agreements. The lure of a kidnapping is substantial. While conditions in the Gaza Strip may create opportunities, the threat is not limited to that front.

Now is the time to heighten vigilance and intensify intelligence and preventative efforts across all theaters. IDF forces must be permitted to adopt an aggressive fire policy to protect the areas under their control within the Strip's limits, thereby preventing Gazans from gaining access to those zones. Concurrently, offensive operations against terror operatives with relevant expertise in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem must be stepped up. The message must be unequivocal: Do not permit another kidnapping - at any cost.

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