

Hezbollah leader's message shows the terror group is under pressure

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 13.11.2025

In his speech marking "Martyrs' Day" held last week, Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem, declared: "The continuation of aggression in this manner, of killings and harassment, cannot go on. Everything has its limits, and I will say no more than that. Relevant parties should take heed of the situation because it cannot continue in this way."

This warning comes after Hezbollah, in an open letter published on November 6 to Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, emphasized its right to resist Israeli aggression. However, given the terror group's complex position, it is doubtful whether its ongoing restraint has reached its limit.

Hezbollah appears unable to afford renewed confrontation, or even reciprocal strikes, with Israel. In a scenario of renewed conflict, even if limited, the organization could risk losing the gains it has achieved to date.

Its difficult political situation is reflected in another part of its open letter, where it expressed opposition to negotiations with Israel. This was in response to growing calls from senior Lebanese government officials, including President Joseph Aoun, parliament members, and media circles opposing Hezbollah, who argue that peace with Israel is existentially necessary for Lebanon.

Hezbollah is rearming

Hezbollah is in the midst of a process of rebuilding and strengthening itself, with the assistance of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's Quds Force and through its own production capabilities. Daily Israeli strikes indicate the intensive pace at which the terror group is managing this reconstruction process.

Israel attempts to match this pace, but data provided by the IDF to the Israeli media in recent days clearly point to Israel's challenging position vis-à-vis Hezbollah. In recent weeks, the organization has successfully smuggled hundreds of rockets, including from Syria, repaired and returned damaged rockets and launchers to service, and recruited thousands of new operatives.

Thus, Qassem's declaration seems intended to appease elements within the organization dissatisfied with the containment policy led by Hezbollah's Jihad Council (its central command) under his leadership. As reported in early November, there was simmering frustration among field ranks due to the lack of

response to Israeli attacks.

Furthermore, Qassem's implied threat appears directed at the leadership of the Lebanese state, adding another layer of pressure on them to act against Israel to halt attacks. This aligns with multiple parts of his speech, intended for their attention and aimed at conveying the "seriousness of the threat" from Israel and thereby the importance of Hezbollah's weaponry.

Israel at a crossroads

Israel currently faces a crossroads. The Lebanese army's pattern of activity against Hezbollah is insufficient. On the whole, the army projects weakness against the terror group and cannot stand against it. Meanwhile, Hezbollah threatens to sever the hand of anyone attempting to touch its weapons, as declared by its political council's deputy chief, Mahmoud Komati, in April. As Qassem emphasized in his speech, Hezbollah's weapons remain its source of strength, alongside its faith and determination.

Iran, on the other hand, supports Hezbollah's activities in order to maintain its grip and status among Lebanon's Shi'ite population. In late October, the Office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in cooperation with Hezbollah, released the Arabic edition of the Iranian leader's scholarly book, *Poetry and Music: Research on the Religious Law of Imam Sayyid Ali Khamenei*.

At the Beirut ceremony, Naim Qassem praised Khamenei's scholarly skills, reminding Lebanon's Shi'ite community of the religious sponsorship Iran provides Hezbollah. This sponsorship complements economic sponsorship, with Tehran transferring \$1 billion to the organization since January, as recently revealed by the Trump administration. Religious patronage aims to strengthen the connection between Lebanese Shi'ites and Iran under Khamenei and give them additional reasons to remain loyal to Hezbollah.

Khamenei's office also signals its full personal support for Qassem, despite, and largely because of, the ridicule he faces on Lebanese social media. The office published a portrait of Qassem alongside previous Hezbollah leaders Abbas al-Musawi, Hassan Nasrallah, and Hashem Safieddine, accompanied by Khamenei's statement: "Nasrallah has passed away, but the wealth he created remains. Hezbollah's story in Lebanon is ongoing. It is an asset for Lebanon and beyond."

Iran and Hezbollah

These statements reflect the strategic importance Iran attributes to Hezbollah and its crucial role in Iran's national security. Following naval and missile

operations during the Israel-Hamas War, the Houthis' position in the resistance axis rose significantly, increasing their importance in Tehran's eyes. However, the Houthis cannot fulfill Hezbollah's role as Iran's strategic proxy.

Hezbollah's role has historically included attacks abroad against Israeli targets in cooperation with Iran, such as the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community building in Buenos Aires, supporting the establishment of Shi'ite militias in Iraq in 2003, leading combat against Syrian rebels and ISIS in Syria, and developing its operational expertise vis-à-vis Israel. Hezbollah also maintains a deeper religious connection with Iran and holds a significant geopolitical advantage over the Houthis due to its shared border with Israel.

At this time, Israel holds a clear advantage over Hezbollah. The terror organization's political weakness, its sensitive situation vis-à-vis its social base, and the Trump administration's support for Israel provide fertile ground for Jerusalem to continue its attacks. However, action must also extend to the social and ideological arenas, not just the military (prevention efforts) and economic (sanctions) fronts.

The May 2026 Lebanese parliamentary elections are expected to serve as an important test of Hezbollah's social base. Israel and the US should undermine this base through a long-term strategic project, focusing on establishing a network rivaling Hezbollah's extensive Dawah system of welfare, health, social, and financial services.

Efforts to cut Iran's financial support for Hezbollah, as declared by John Harley, undersecretary of the treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence, who is responsible for sanctions, are a step in the right direction. Yet, Israel and the US should aim to sever the Shi'ites' economic dependence on Hezbollah while offering alternatives that help them develop an independent Lebanese identity. This includes providing a variety of services as alternatives to those offered by Hezbollah.

In the indoctrination sphere, initiatives should be launched against Hezbollah's Imam al-Mahdi Scouts. It's where Shi'ites absorb admiration and loyalty to Khamenei from ages 9-10. The countering initiatives would highlight the importance of loyalty to Lebanon and stress that Lebanon and the Shi'ites could achieve prosperity by abandoning resistance to Israel.

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