

The dangerous ultimatum hidden in Hezbollah leader's speech

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 26.08.2025

Hezbollah secretary-general Naim Qassem's latest speech on Monday signals the organization's growing willingness to threaten Lebanon with civil war. This comes amid continued pressure from Lebanese authorities to disarm Hezbollah of its weapons. Qassem declared that the Lebanese government's decision to disarm Hezbollah represents acceptance of American dictates, and called on the government to cancel it.

Ahead of the protest rally that Hezbollah and other organizations plan to hold on Wednesday at Riad al-Solh Square, near the parliament building in Beirut, Qassem emphasized in his speech Hezbollah's firm position, with its main points being that the organization refuses to surrender its weapons, and is even prepared to confront Lebanese authorities to preserve the weapons, which are "our spirit, our honor and the future of our children," according to Qassem's words in his speech.

The clear address in Qassem's words is to President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. Hezbollah propagandists are already calling both of them on social media by the dubious title "Yazid" after the Umayyad Caliph Yazid, hated by the Shiites, who was responsible for the murder of Imam Hussein in the Battle of Karbala in 680. Alongside them, other Hezbollah propagandists on social media are calling for violent confrontation during Wednesday's protest rally. In this context, it should be noted that recently security around President Aoun and Prime Minister Salam has been increased, out of fear that their fate will be similar to that of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who was eliminated by Hezbollah in 2005.

Will the country be torn apart again?

Hezbollah is not interested in civil war. Such a war would cause severe image damage to the organization, which seeks to stick to its worn-out slogan, "the army, the people and the resistance," which Qassem repeated in his speech, even though Lebanese state leaders have made it clear that its validity has expired. A civil war would drag Lebanon back to the well-remembered territories from the

not-so-distant past, in which the country was torn apart in a bloody internal war, and would clarify the righteousness of the authorities in Beirut, according to which Hezbollah prefers its weapons over stability in Lebanon.

Hezbollah is pushed into a corner, and therefore seeks to exert counter-pressure on Lebanese state leaders through a series of shows of force, the closest of which will take place on Wednesday. The significant support that the organization still enjoys among its social base, the Shiite community in Lebanon, allows it to express a firm position against the historic decision of the Lebanese government to disarm it of its weapons by the end of 2025.

Alongside this, despite the political revival of the Lebanese state, its army and security mechanisms are still weak and will not be able to force Hezbollah to disarm. The Iranian backing also instills confidence in Naim Qassem's policy and encourages him to resist pressures from the Lebanese government and the Trump administration.

The cards that Israel might lose

However, the fundamental disagreement that is shaking the political arena in Iran these days – around the regime's policy in the post-war era against Israel – also spills over to Tehran's position in light of the crisis in Lebanon. In contrast to the firm support that conservatives in Iran express for Hezbollah's position, in recent days, some of the reformist circles are calling on the regime to change its policy. According to these circles, Tehran should not intervene in the internal Lebanese issue; in their approach, Hezbollah should respect the decision of the Lebanese government, which is the sovereign in the country, since weapons should be held exclusively by it, and the existence of an armed organization in Lebanon is unacceptable. The reformist camp even questioned the usefulness of the visit that the secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security, Ali Larijani, made to Beirut. They even warned that Tehran's intervention in Lebanon could harm the regime, that it could serve as a pretext for the US and Israel to act again against Iran. Therefore, the proposed solution that emerges from them is to integrate Hezbollah into the Lebanese army.

However, the regime's support for Hezbollah's position was well expressed in the statement by the deputy coordinator of the Quds Force, Iraj Masjedi, according to which the Lebanese government's decision to disarm Hezbollah is an "American-

Zionist plan that is not acceptable to the Lebanese people, and will never be realized.”

Qassem called in his speech on the government, of which Hezbollah is still a member, to hold intensive discussions in which it will examine how to restore its sovereignty, which was damaged in the shadow of the continued Israeli presence in the five outposts penetrating southern Lebanon. He also called on parties, elites, and influential figures in the country “to help the government in the way of thinking and implementing plans,” and alongside this, also presented the solution that Hezbollah proposes. Israel should withdraw from southern Lebanon, stop the attacks against Hezbollah, and release its prisoners, and in parallel, the Lebanese state should begin the reconstruction of the south. In return, after completing these moves, which would remove from Israel its strategic cards, Hezbollah would be ready to discuss the “defense strategy” of Lebanon, according to Qassem’s words.

In recent contacts with the American government’s envoy to Lebanon and Syria, Tom Barrack, Israel offered, according to reports in the Lebanese media, to turn the contact villages strip in southern Lebanon into an uninhabited and disarmed economic zone. In return, Israel offers a gradual cessation of attacks and assassinations, gradual withdrawal from several occupied areas, and “completing the issue of Lebanese prisoners.” Such an agreement between Israel and Lebanon could indeed accelerate the return of northern residents to their homes. However, it does not address the need to deliver a severe blow to Hezbollah also in the political sphere, in the shadow of the new reality. Therefore, Israel might give up important cards and leave Hezbollah as a popular force among the Shiites in the country, who make up its power base.

It seems that in the struggle against Iran’s multi-year investment in Lebanon, there are no shortcuts. Israel and the US should strive to undermine Hezbollah among the Shiites, through establishing a competing network to the organization’s propaganda apparatus, and political support for its opponents from within the community. Until then, it is almost certain that Hezbollah will dare to threaten Lebanon’s stability, based on the extensive support from the Shiites in the country.

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