

The era of Nasrallah is over: The era of his legacy has begun

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 24.02.2025

The funeral of Nasrallah and his successor Hashem Safieddine – who managed to serve in his position for less than a month before being eliminated – was attended by masses in Lebanon (especially from the Shiite community) as well as delegations from Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, and other countries. It was Hezbollah's show of force, a way to project messages to its rivals and enemies in the shadow of the unprecedented blow it suffered from Israel.

At home in Lebanon, it seeks to convey to its Shi'ite support, which is its source of security and political power, that it is still the beloved organization despite criticism from its social base, due to the hardships of war. The massive funeral also signaled to Hezbollah's political rivals that, irrespective of its political weakening, as reflected in the appointment of Lebanese Army commander Joseph Aoun to the presidency, the group remains a significant factor in politics.

To its enemies outside Lebanon, mainly Israel and the United States, Hezbollah needs to demonstrate that it is still strong, regardless of its extensive loss of leaders and commanders and serious damage to its missile and rocket systems.

In its media and social network campaign entitled "I remain loyal to my covenant," Hezbollah highlights the importance of the adherence of its social base. The organization needs masses of recruits from the Shi'ite community to fill the ranks left by thousands of commanders and activists eliminated during the war, whether by beeper attack, targeted assassination, or in the ongoing IDF attacks over 13 months of fighting.

The widespread use of Nasrallah's figure since his assassination, especially in the funeral, symbolizes a transition from the Nasrallah era to an era of his legacy. In the absence of a figure with his abilities, as Tehran itself admitted, Hezbollah needs Nasrallah's legacy to advance its aspiration to offset the military, economic, and intelligence blows it suffered. Nasrallah's figure will now be used by the organization's leadership to instill motivation in the Shi'ite youth and in the ranks of Hezbollah's various arrays, to continue the fight despite unprecedented challenges and difficulties.

The fulcrum of Iranian action

One cannot undervalue Nasrallah's importance in promoting Hezbollah and relations with Iran.

Nasrallah knew Persian and was educated for two years in religious seminaries in Iran's Qom in the late 1980s, consequently developing intimate working relations with the Iranian regime's leadership. While Qasem Soleimani commanded the Quds Force (1998-2020), he worked jointly and closely with Nasrallah in planning severe attacks against Israel and the US.

Their respective successors, Naim Qassem in the Hezbollah leadership and Esmail Qaani in the Quds Force do not come close to the abilities of their predecessors. The assassinations of Nasrallah and Soleimani served as a severe blow to the Khamenei resistance axis and accentuated the critical importance of targeted assassinations in the fight against terrorism.

With the weakening of its proxies, Iran's first line of defense, the Iranian regime recognized that it must immediately strengthen and rebuild Hezbollah. Accordingly, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei emphasized that the participation of the high-ranking Iranian delegation (headed by Islamic Republic Guard Corps deputy commander Ali Fadavi and others) symbolizes Tehran's commitment to continue its assistance to Hezbollah.

Adding this statement to Khamenei's declaration that Hezbollah had won the war shows that both Hezbollah and Iran realize that the organization must not be perceived as weak and battered for fear of a slippery slope that could endanger its existence.

Israel's operational and conscious activities during the funeral were important, [with its Air Force flying over the procession in Beirut]. They conveyed to the terrorist organization that Israel is determined not to allow it to be resurrected.

Having managed to force a ceasefire on Hezbollah, Israel is signaling that it does not intend to allow the organization to rearm, reactivate its money-smuggling operations from Iran, or reestablish itself in the area south of the Litani River.

Of course, alongside activity directed against Hezbollah, Israel must also act against the head of the snake, its Iranian patron.

Published in The Jerusalem Post, February 26, 2025.