



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)**

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Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's deputy, released a video tape portraying the ongoing conflicts in Lebanon and in the Palestinian Authority as a "campaign waged by Crusaders and Zionists against Muslims", and issued a warning to Israel.

1. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's deputy, appeared in a video tape released to the Al-Jazeera TV station (July 27), addressing for the first time the ongoing conflicts in Lebanon and in the Palestinian Authority. The tape shows Al-Zawahiri giving a speech against the backdrop of the burning World Trade Center, a reminder of Al-Qaeda's September 11 terrorist attacks.



Ayman al-Zawahiri (Al-Jazeera, July 27)

2. Al-Zawahiri threatened that his organization will not sit idly by in the face of the situation of the Muslim people in Lebanon and in Gaza, depicting the happenings as proof that Muslims face a "**Zionist-Crusader war**". He stated that the

countries participating in the “**Crusader coalition**” that assists Israel will have to pay the price for that.

3. Al-Zawahiri portrays these events as part of a large-scale Islamic campaign to “liberate” all the lands formerly held by Islam, “from Andalusia [i.e., the Iberian Peninsula, “occupied” by Spain and Portugal] to Iraq”, while also making a reference to Afghanistan. He stressed that **no compromise can be reached with Israel**, and that “**the path of jihad**” (i.e., the Muslim holy war against infidels) is **the only way** to “liberate the entire Palestine”. Al-Zawahiri laid particular emphasis on **Iraq**, noting that an Islamic emirate should be established on its territory “**so that jihad subsequently moves forward from Iraq to Palestine**”.

4. Al-Zawahiri issued a call to establish “an alliance of the world’s weak and oppressed”. Such terminology, explicitly associated with the Islamic **Shi’a**, is used by Al-Zawahiri to tone down the sectarian aspect of the ongoing fighting between Israel and Hezbollah,¹ and to present it in a wider context, as part of a large-scale war between Islam on one hand and the West and Israel on the other. Thus, he attempts—without much success (see below)—**to overcome the apprehension of the Sunni world, which is concerned over Iran’s attempts to achieve regional hegemony and which considers Hezbollah to be Iran’s proxy**.

5. Al-Zawahiri’s appearance follows on the heels of some of his previous statements made on the Palestinian issue in the past several months. In his previous statements, he urged Hamas not to give up the principles of radical Islam; this time, however, **he issued a direct threat to Israel**. This may demonstrate that the Global Jihad intends to take advantage of the turbulent emotional state generated by the ongoing war in Lebanon (mostly the Qana incident on July 30) **as a means to raise the motivation to perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israeli and**

¹ All the while, the Iraqi wing of the Global Jihad wages an open war against the Shi’ites.

Jewish targets by radical Islamic elements (an example of that being the terrorist attack in Seattle).

Reserved responses by Hezbollah and Hamas

The response of Hezbollah's spokesmen

6. **Hassan Khadraj**, a member of Hezbollah's Political Bureau, disapproved of Al-Zawahiri's statement, saying it made no direct and positive reference to Hezbollah and the Shi'ites, and that Al-Zawahiri did not issue a call for Muslims to unite. Khadraj noted that one of the greatest dangers threatening the region is a civil war between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, fanned by the US and Israel, and added that Hezbollah is taking measures to put an end to this civil war (Al-Jazeera, July 27).

7. **Hassan Fadlallah**, a member of Hezbollah's faction in the Lebanese parliament, also renounced Al-Zawahiri's statements. "There are a thousand differences between us and Ayman al-Zawahiri or the Al-Qaeda organization," he said. "We hold no contact with the Al-Qaeda organization, and our ideological positions and goals are different (LBC channel, July 27). When asked to comment on Al-Zawahiri's statements, **Abd al-Halim Fadlallah**, the deputy chairman of Hezbollah's research center, claimed that Hezbollah's military activity is Lebanese in nature (implying that it is not part of a worldwide Islamic campaign) (Al-Arabiyya channel, July 27).

Hamas's response

8. **Hamas member Mahmoud al-Ramhi**, the Chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council, gave a negative response to Al-Zawahiri's statement. "We have no need of Al-Zawahiri and his declarations," he said, "and we are not responsible for his latest declarations. The Palestinian people and the Lebanese people well understand that these declarations are improper and should not be relied upon. Such statements are just Al-Qaeda's propaganda, since [the

organization] finds itself out of touch with the developments...” (Radio Sawa, July 28).

Assessment

9. In our assessment, the disapproval shown by Hezbollah and Hamas spokesmen of Al-Zawahiri’s statement, especially now, when the two organizations are engaged in a military campaign with Israel, is a result of their desire to prevent Al-Qaeda from stealing the show. Furthermore, such disapproval may also be the result of their concern that Al-Qaeda’s involvement in the current confrontation will have a negative impact on international public opinion, which is hostile to Al-Qaeda, even though Hezbollah and Hamas are associated with terrorism and radical Islam.