



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
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**A ceremony held on the occasion of Israel's handover of bodies of Hezbollah operatives was accompanied by a belligerent yet apologetic speech given by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah repeatedly referred to his organization as Lebanon's defender, while stressing his intent to continue the confrontation with Israel and his "right" to abduct IDF soldiers to trade them for Lebanese prisoners (i.e., terrorists serving their sentences in Israel)**

**(Update no. 3 to Information Bulletin dated November 22)**



The Hezbollah organization receives the bodies of the three killed operatives in Naqoura (right); one of the terrorists' funeral ceremony (left) (Al-Manar Television, November 25).

### **Israel 's handover of the Hezbollah terrorists' bodies**

- On November 25, Israel returned to Hezbollah in Naqoura three bodies of the organization's terrorists, who were killed during a shooting attack under the cover of which a failed attempt was made to abduct IDF soldiers (November 21). The bodies were delivered to Hezbollah's Islamic Health Organization by the Red Cross, without the involvement of the **Lebanese government**.
- The ceremonies held on the occasion of receiving the bodies as well as the funeral processions were broadcasted on all Hezbollah's media, accompanied by belligerent video clips and images of the IDF outpost (Tulip) in the Ghajar area going up in flames (continuing Hezbollah's attempts to turn its operative failure into a success propaganda-wise). At the end of the ceremony in Naqoura, the massive crowd gathered on the scene started chanting the traditional slogan: "Death to the US and Israel " (Al-Manar Television, Radio Nur, November 25).
- **The main ceremony** of returning the three bodies was held in the southern (Shiite) suburb of Beirut , attended by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and other senior Hezbollah figures. The ceremony was also attended by Hezbollah seniors **servicing in Lebanese official capacities**: Lebanon 's Energy and Water Minister, Muhammad Fneish, and Chairman of the Hezbollah faction in the parliament, Muhammad Raad. Also present in the ceremony were **Lebanese army commander Michel Suleiman** and **the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon** .

- At the heart of the main ceremony was a belligerent yet apologetic speech given by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, in which he attempted to minimize the extent of the damage his organization had taken and respond to the claims made against him by his opponents on the Lebanese internal scene. Following are the main issues relating to the events of November 21, which Hassan Nasrallah addressed in his speech (Al-Manar Television, November 25):



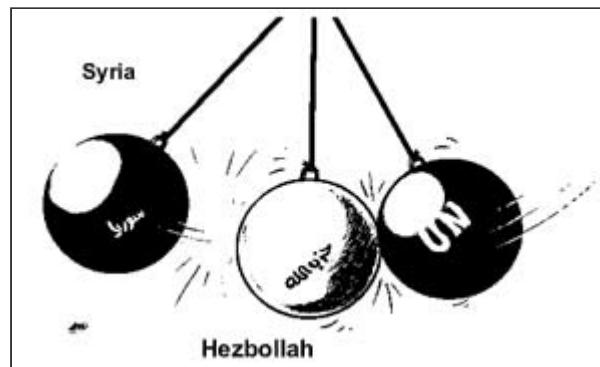
Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah gives a speech during the ceremony (right); the listening crowd (left) (Al-Jazeera Television, November 26)

- Portraying the Hezbollah's attack on November 21 as a response to Israel 's border incursions.** In his speech, Nasrallah repeatedly stressed the message that Hezbollah was Lebanon 's defender against Israeli incursions into Lebanese territory. He reiterated the false claim that the attack of November 21 had been carried out in the wake of Israeli “aggression”. According to Nasrallah's claim, Israeli incursions have recently stepped up in view of Israel 's assessment that Hezbollah has grown weaker due to the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon and in view of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. Nasrallah claimed Hezbollah had chosen not to react for a long period of time to see what the reaction of the world would be, but the international community and the Security Council failed to respond. Israel , said Nasrallah, misinterpreted Hezbollah's lack of response and therefore the conflict between the two became inevitable. Nasrallah also reiterated the claim that the events of November 21 were a “**victory**” for Hezbollah.
- Threatening to persist with the efforts to abduct soldiers, claiming that it was in Hezbollah's right to do so.** Nasrallah repeatedly claimed that his organization had a “natural right” to **abduct Israeli soldiers** in order to obtain information and release Lebanese prisoners (i.e., terrorists who perpetrated terrorist attacks from Lebanon and are serving their sentences in Israel ). According to Nasrallah, when the negotiations (with Israel ) do not yield results, and when Hezbollah wants to return the prisoners and obtain information on those missing, **Israeli soldiers must be abducted (“it is our natural right to capture Israeli soldiers”)**. It should be mentioned that on November 28, Hezbollah's Al-Manar television station aired a story emphasizing the Israeli concern over abducting soldiers following Nasrallah's speech.



Israel is concerned over the abduction of soldiers following Nasrallah's speech: fragment of a video clip broadcasted on Hezbollah's television channel (Al-Manar Television, November 28)

- Portraying Hezbollah as the organization carrying the burden of the confrontation with Israel , while stressing its comradeship with the Palestinians. <sup>1</sup> Nasrallah issued a call to the Lebanese to leave the issue of Israel to Hezbollah to deal with (thereby granting legitimacy to the continued existence of Hezbollah as an armed militia in Lebanon ). According to Nasrallah, it is Hezbollah that prevents Israel from encroaching upon Lebanon 's sovereignty, holding Lebanese prisoners, humiliating Lebanon , and turning it into an "Israeli" (rather than Arab) country. He claimed Israel was not carrying out incursions into Lebanon by sea and land thanks to the deterrence produced by his organization; however, he admitted that his organization could not provide an adequate response to Israel 's aerial incursions. At the end of his speech, Nasrallah stressed that even after the latest incident, there were still many in his organization awaiting their turn (to die martyrs' deaths), and they would not have "even a single clod of Lebanese soil remain under occupation or a single prisoner left in the Israeli prison" (Al-Intiqad, November 25).
- **Rejecting the claims that Hezbollah serves Iran 's and Syria 's interests.** Nasrallah denied that the attack on November 21 was carried out to serve Syria 's and Iran 's interests. He attempted, as usual, to downplay the significance of the close bonds between his organization and Syria and Iran , raising the claim that **Hezbollah was taking orders neither from Damascus nor from Tehran** , but rather "from all the Lebanese opposed to the aggression". In his speech, however, Nasrallah stressed the importance he ascribed to **his organization's standing on the side of Syria** , with the developments in the murder of Rafik Hariri in the backdrop. <sup>2</sup> It should be further mentioned that, speaking at a memorial ceremony held for one of the killed terrorists in Ghajar, **Hashem Safi al-Din**, head of the Hezbollah Executive Council, pointed out that "**the alliances between Syria and Iran and Hezbollah [are] legitimate** since they have played an important role in the region in general and in Lebanon in particular..." (Lebanese News Agency, November 27).



Hezbollah swinging back and forth between the UN and Syria , a cartoon depicting the pressures and constraints facing the organization (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, November 25)



The alliance existing between Syria , Iran , and Hezbollah is legitimate and important:

Hashem Safi al-Din at a memorial ceremony for one of the killed operatives (Al-Manar Television, November 27)

<sup>1</sup> In another speech given by Hassan Nasrallah, he called upon all the Muslims and Christians to act towards the liberation of Jerusalem and not to forsake the Palestinian people, being the "spearhead" of the struggle against Israel , alone on the battlefield (Al-Manar Television, November 29).

<sup>2</sup> In this context, see the Information Bulletin published by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center , titled "[Thirty years of Syrian involvement in the Lebanese crisis: Lebanon 's transformation from a strategic asset in the days of Hafez Assad to a burden and a source of weakness in the days of his son, Bashar Assad](#)" (October 24, 2005).

- **In conclusion**, the speech makes it clear that Hezbollah, along with leader Hassan Nasrallah, has come under Lebanese internal criticism (see below), with some of the statements intended to deflect said criticism. In his speech, Nasrallah stressed over and over again Hezbollah's warlike, jihadi character, **as well as its intention to continue perpetrating further attacks, with an emphasis on abducting Israelis**, under the pretext of “defending Lebanon ” and its interests. In this case, it should be noted, similarly to the previous incident of returning the bodies of Hezbollah terrorists, they were delivered to **Hezbollah** rather than to the Lebanese government. The Lebanese government, on its part, **does not initiate any moves to restrain the organization and impose the government's effective control along the Israeli border, as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolution 1559**.

## **Lebanese criticism at Hezbollah over the attack initiated on November 21**

- Against the backdrop of the attack initiated by Hezbollah on November 21, **Jubran Tuweini**, Lebanese parliament member and editor of the popular daily Al-Nahar, strongly criticized Hezbollah. He stressed that the key issue arising from Nasrallah's speech was **whether there existed a centralized government in Lebanon, and whether the decision to make war or peace was indeed in the hands of the Lebanese government “or in the hands of parties, militias, or the resistance”** (i.e., in Hezbollah's hands). According to Tuweini, there exists an understanding in Lebanon that **the issue of disarming Hezbollah must be discussed within an intra-Lebanese framework of Lebanon 's government discussions** (Al-Jazeera Television, November 25).
- **Mahmoud Qumati**, member of Hezbollah's Political Council, responded to Tuweini's statements by calling them “a message delivered by a collaborator or a foreign agent”. He said that his organization rejected the claims that Hezbollah's weapon was a problem in Lebanon and interfered with the process of building the country and its institutions. According to Qumati, the opposite is true: Hezbollah's weapon was what liberated Lebanon and granted it “all the respect and glory”. Qumati once again raised the claim that Hezbollah's weapon was intended to defend Lebanon , and called UN Security Council Resolution 1559 “an Israeli resolution”. Qumati stressed that “the resistance” (i.e., Hezbollah) was Lebanese, its decisions were independent Lebanese decisions, and it would “**persist with the confrontation with Israel** ” (Al-Jazeera Television, November 25).
- **The editor-in-chief of the Lebanese Al-Safir, Sati' Nur al-Din**, criticized Hezbollah as well. He blamed Hezbollah for single-handedly “blowing up” the issue of its disarmament when the organization admitted of possessing over 14,000 rockets, thus turning itself into a conventional military force “instead of remaining an independent commando unit”. He raised the claim that expanding the scope of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel could lead to European countries' siding with Israel's position as regards the list of priorities of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 (i.e., pressure exerted to implement the ruling that the Lebanese militias must be disarmed, this being the international community's position). Furthermore, Nur al-Din stated that an action on the part of Hezbollah (such as the one carried out on November 21) could step up, rather than alleviate, the pressure exerted on Syria and Iran (Al-Safir, November 24).

## The campaign run by Hezbollah to prevent the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559



The campaign run by Hezbollah to prevent the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559: a 12-foot cardboard cutout of US President George W. Bush, placed by Hezbollah propaganda activists in the vicinity of Fatma Gate (the border crossing to Lebanon near the Israeli city of Metulla ). It features the President with a missile in his pocket (with the words “life danger” written on its case) approaching the UN headquarters in New York . Above the UN headquarters is a missile with the number “ 1559” , which President Bush attempts to launch towards Lebanon . Hezbollah posters can be seen in the background (Lebanese News Agency, December 2, 2005; photo: Al-Intiqad, Hezbollah's mouthpiece, December 2, 2005).