

Lebanon Is Still an Occupied Country

Contributed by Elias Bejjani
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Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak on Tuesday 24/11/09 warned that Lebanon, not Hezbollah, would be the target of retaliatory attacks should the militant group escalate tension along Israel's northern border. "Lebanon grants Hezbollah permission to operate on its soil," said Barak. "We must clarify for the international community that we do not accept that a militia like Hezbollah exists in Lebanon, a sovereign country, and even sits in its parliament." Barak added that it holds Lebanon responsible for any conflict with Hezbollah. "Hezbollah is not our target," in such a case, said Barak. "Our target will be the state of Lebanon."

Mr. Barak made his comments at a meeting with regional leaders in the north, where he stressed that he holds the Lebanese government responsible for any conflict along the border with Lebanon. The Israeli defense minister added that Israel's deterrence power will last for some time. Earlier this month, Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi said that Hezbollah guerrillas now possess tens of thousands of rockets, some capable of reaching up to 300 kilometers within Israel. These capabilities would put Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as cities much further south, into rocket range. "There is a war in the Middle East between two camps, the extremists and the moderates, which is pushing Iran to take radical steps. Without Iran's support to finance weapons and terrorist groups they would be lacking the means available to them today," said Ashkenazi. Israel, the United Nations and Hezbollah itself have all said that the militia is stronger today than it was during the Second Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006.

It is so sad and extremely disappointing that the Israeli government, the moderate Arab countries as well as all the Western free world, including the USA and France are ignoring the essence and the core of the actual Lebanese peoples' ongoing agony and dilemma with Hezbollah.

All these countries are well informed that Hezbollah, the Iranian militant terrorist organization, has erected its powerful mini Iranian state inside Lebanon during the Syrian occupation era of the country that lasted from 1976 until 2005.

This mini state with its scattered cantons all over Lebanon is much stronger in all domains than the Lebanese central government. The Lebanese people in general and the Lebanese Shiite community in particular had no saying in this matter. The mini state was imposed on all of them by Syria and Iran.

All the free world countries, Arab states, and especially Israel are, with no shed of doubt, fully aware that Hezbollah's mini state controls and dominates directly and through proxies all the affairs of the Lebanese central government via cancerous infiltration, intimidation, oppression, corruption, drug trafficking, religious decrees (fatwas), murder, crime, bribing and multifold tactics of terrorism. Not even one decision could be made by the Lebanese government or any of its institutions without Hezbollah's approval.

It has become clear even to the blind that the Lebanese state is massively dominated by the Hezbollah mullah's leadership. This terrorist militant organization boldly dictates its Iranian decrees on all the Lebanese officials and institutions, manipulates their activities and greatly influences the whole country's decision making process in all fields and on all levels.

The Israeli and the western satellites that carry out round-the-clock very close surveillance over Lebanon, Syria and other Middle East countries have their own solid data that shows the ABC's of how Hezbollah receives its weapon openly from Iran through Syria under the eyes of the Lebanese army and with its blessings.

Hezbollah does not smuggle its weapons to Lebanon from Syria through the joint borders as the UN and many countries keep on parroting in their official statements and reports. All of them know for a fact that Hezbollah has its own free military routes via the Syrian-Lebanese border through which hundreds of its arms-loaded trucks travel on a regular basis from Syria to Lebanon.

The question is why when all these plain facts are cut and clear to these countries and especially to Israel that they still act as if there is actually an independent Lebanese government that controls the country's decision making process?

One wonders, when Iran and Syria have erected the Hezbollah mini state against the will of the Lebanese people, and when these two axis of evil countries keep on arming, financing, harboring, training and fully control Hezbollah's militia, why Mr. Barak is threatening Lebanon and not Syria, Iran and Hezbollah?

Mr. Barak as well as the whole world knows that the Lebanese people earlier this year and against all the odds did not give Hezbollah and its allies a majority in the parliamentary elections. They voted courageously against Hezbollah's mini state and its weapons.

BUT, unfortunately the elected majority up until this day is unable to effectively face Hezbollah and stop its gradual devouring of the state's authority, and as we all know, Syria and Saudi Arabia have recently cut a deal to give Hezbollah a right to veto in the new Lebanese government, and to keep in its ministerial statement with the same clause that the previous " Saniora" government used to legitimize Hezbollah's weapons and to give this organization control over the country's war-peace decision making.

Israel and all other countries are loudly and strongly addressing only the symptoms of Hezbollah's hegemony over the whole of Lebanon, while deliberately overlooking the main disease that Iran and Syria have inflicted on the Lebanese people and on all the country's institutions.

In summary, Lebanon is still an occupied country and the occupier is Hezbollah. Mr. Barak should not threaten to punish the Lebanese people who in the majority are against Hezbollah, having bravely proved this stance in the last parliamentary elections.

The Lebanese people and their country must not be dealt with as scapegoats. The disease is Syria and Iran and their proxy, Hezbollah. If Israel really wants to deal with the problem that threatens its security and existence, the actual and long lasting solution is not by inflicting devastation on the Lebanese people and their country as was the situation during the 2006 war, but through addressing its serious problem directly with Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.

*Elias Bejjani

Canadian-Lebanese Human Rights activist, journalist and political commentator

Email phoenicia@hotmail.com

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