

# The United States, France, and Their Allies Cannot Allow Terror Group Hezbollah to Deny Justice

Contributed by Walid Phares FoxNews.com  
 Saturday, 15 January 2011  
 Last Updated Saturday, 15 January 2011

The United States, France, and Their Allies Cannot Allow Terror Group Hezbollah to Deny Justice to the Lebanese

On Wednesday , Hezbollah brought down Lebanon's democratic government. The group withdrew its ministers from the cabinet, crumbling the unity government in an impeccably-timed constitutional coup only a few hours before prime minister Saad Hariri was to meet President Obama in Washington.

The message came directly from Hassan Nasrallah, the head of the Iran-backed militia, to Hariri, son of slain prime minister Rafiq Hariri: We won't allow you to request international support for the United Nations tribunal investigating your father's assassination.

Hezbollah's political preemptive strike stymies the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon's ability to arrest the alleged perpetrators of the killing, who -- all signs suggest -- are members of the organization.

But the play sends another more ominous message, as well: It's Tehran's way of telling Washington that Lebanon is now a satellite of the Islamic Republic of Iran, not an ally of the United States.

After 15 years of civil war between a camp backed by Syria and Hezbollah and its moderate, pro-American opponents, most of Lebanon fell under Baathist occupation in 1990. The Israelis maintained a security zone south of the Litani river, but the rest of the country was beholden to Syria and Iran.

Ten years later, Israel withdrew, and dismantled its local proxy force on the Lebanese side of the border after Beirut's Syrian-controlled government pledged to send in the regular Lebanese army and allow the U.N. monitoring forces to protect the demarcation lines. But Syrian intelligence ruled the country with an iron fist, and Hezbollah advanced south to Israel's border anyway.

After a few years, the Lebanese rose up against Syrian occupation and the yoke of Hezbollah. In September 2004, the United States and France introduced what became U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, calling on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon and all militias -- meaning principally Hezbollah -- to disarm. Syrian president Bashar Assad responded by ordering a series of assassinations, culminating in the killing of Sunni prime minister Rafiq Hariri and his aides on February 14, 2005.

The Hariri assassination backfired in a way that Assad could only have imagined in his nightmares, triggering demonstrations that drew an unprecedented 1.5 million (out of a population of just four million residents) into the streets of downtown Beirut. The Cedar Revolution prompted the international community, led by the U.S. and France, to ask Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon. Assad complied with the request, but left behind its other army, Hezbollah.

The first legislative elections after the Syrian withdrawal gave the Cedar Revolution, also known as the March 14 Coalition, a majority in parliament. The government chose to include Hezbollah in the cabinet it formed in July 2005, in hopes that the group would moderate its influence in Lebanon. The government's magnanimity was repaid with an ever-escalating terror campaign that killed members of parliament, journalists, and Lebanese army officers who opposed Hezbollah.

In the summer of 2006, Hezbollah triggered a devastating war with Israel, using Lebanese opposition to the Israeli strikes to galvanize local support. In May 2008, Hezbollah invaded West Beirut and other districts, crumbling the pro-Western cabinet of prime minister Fuad Siniora and enabling it to install General Michel Suleiman, the commander appointed head of the armed forces during the Syrian occupation in 1998, as president. Having strengthened its position -- and with Washington increasingly inattentive -- Hezbollah secured a third of the Lebanese cabinet, and veto power over the government's decisions.

But the Special Tribunal the U.N. had established to investigate and prosecute the terrorists responsible for the Hariri assassination had reached findings that implicated members of Hezbollah, and possibly Syrian intelligence. Tehran and Damascus recognize that the incrimination of their primary force in Lebanon constitutes a serious threat to their interests in the Levant.

Hezbollah has built a very powerful arsenal in Lebanon, and developed cells from Iraq, to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, northern Africa and even Latin America. Some believe Hezbollah already has terror operatives at work on U.S. soil. -- Indicting Hezbollah will jeopardize Iran's ability to project force by unconventional means around the world.

Hezbollah's latest move makes perfect sense: it aims to protect itself from the forthcoming judicial indictments, and deprive Lebanon of an independent government. The United States, France, and their allies cannot allow Hezbollah to deny justice to the Lebanese people.

Dr. Walid Phares is a Fox News Terrorism and Middle East Expert and a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He is the author of the newly released book, "The Coming Revolution: Struggle for Freedom in the Middle East." <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2011/01/14/united-states-france-allies-allow-terror-group-hezbollah-deny-justice-people/>