

Dima Sadek: Hezbollah 'Worse Than Israel'

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Dima Sadek was until last year an anchor for a popular political program in Lebanon, when she dared to criticize Hezbollah, and was promptly fired. Fortunately she still has her social media outlet, and her latest video tweet has been viewed 715,000 times. The story of her video is [here](#).

A Lebanese blogger's criticism of Hezbollah in the wake of the August 4 blast at the Beirut port went viral amid growing calls by Lebanese for political change in the country.

After the blast in Beirut, the main target of popular fury in Lebanon was the government itself. One cabinet minister resigned, then two others. Then, on August 10, all the rest of the cabinet resigned. Unfortunately, President Aoun himself – the worst of the bunch – has insisted on remaining in office. Aoun is famous for his corruption (he has amassed a personal fortune of \$90 million), his nepotism (his son-in-law Gebran

Bassil was formerly the foreign minister, thanks to Aoun's maneuvering), and his loyalty to Hezbollah, which is no doubt even now urging him to stay on as president. And now that the cabinet has gone, the fury of the Lebanese has turned on the reviled Hezbollah.

Dima Sadek, until last year an anchor on a popular political talk show before being let go for criticizing Hezbollah, remains a popular voice on Lebanese social media.

On Friday, she took to Twitter, where she has over 621,000 followers, with a video lashing Hezbollah as worse for Lebanon than the enemy across the border.

The video addressed the organization's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, after his speech denying claims that Hezbollah was responsible for the port explosion.

"I want to tell you one thing: if you can answer this question for the Lebanese people, then I swear, we will all bow down to you – I will bow down to you if you can answer this question," she said in the clip. "What has Israel done against us that's worse than you? Answer me."

It is one thing to criticize Hezbollah. That is dangerous enough. But it is another thing to describe Hezbollah, or Nasrallah as its embodiment, as "worse" than Israel, the putative "enemy" of Lebanon since the 1948-1949 war.

Sadek asks a necessary question: what has Israel done to Lebanon? It's "not worse" than Hezbollah, but that is faint praise; it's been a good neighbor in a rough neighborhood. The Jewish state has not fought the Lebanese army since a few inconsequential skirmishes in 1948. It makes no claims on, and has no quarrel with, Lebanon. Twice Israeli forces have entered the country. In 1982 they went in to fight the terrorist PLO. In 2006 they again went in, to fight the terror group Hezbollah. In neither case was Israel fighting against

the Lebanese people or government.

Hezbollah, on the other hand, has meant nothing but trouble for the Lebanese. It assassinated the then-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, and a few years later, killed two of his closest associates. Since that display of its murderous abilities, no one has dared to oppose it. It has grown steadily in military and political power. Hezbollah controls Lebanon not only through its own members who are now (or were, before the current cabinet resigned) part of the government, but also through others, such as the Maronite President Michel Aoun, who are sufficiently intimidated, or grasping, to do Hezbollah's bidding.

Hezbollah runs a state within a state. It is not just a terror group, but also a criminal enterprise. Through extortion, it every year helps itself to shares in Lebanese businesses that are worth between \$500 million and \$1 billion. Dima Sadek may not know the size of the sums the group appropriates, but she surely knows that extortion is one way that Hezbollah supports itself.

In another way, too, Hezbollah damages the Lebanese economy. It stores its weapons all over civilian areas. In the 2006 war, that practice meant that Israel had to bomb weapons hidden in civilian areas, causing a great deal of damage. Hezbollah may at any minute, by calculation or miscalculation, drag Lebanon into a war that would again cause great damage to the country's infrastructure. This discourages foreign investment, given the risks involved of war. Further, Hezbollah has driven away the aid and investments for Lebanon that previously arrived from the Gulf Arab states. The Gulf Arabs – with the sole exception of Qatar – have no intention of aiding a state dominated by Hezbollah, the proxy of Iran, which remains the Gulf Arabs' mortal enemy.

Sadek's video was viewed more than 715,000 times by Monday. That's one-seventh of the Lebanese population of 4.7 million

(another two million people in Lebanon are non-citizen Syrians and Palestinians). To grasp the huge impact of her tweet in Lebanon, imagine a video tweet in the U.S. being watched by one-seventh of the population. That would be 47 million viewers.

The video led to media interviews. One interview, published Monday in the Italian daily La Repubblica, was headlined, "Israel is an enemy, but Hezbollah has done worse."

In the interview Sadek insisted, "It's not an exaggeration to say that Hezbollah is worse for Lebanon than Israel. My problem with Israel isn't political, but moral. I don't agree with its treatment of the Palestinians."

Dima Sadek has accepted, apparently, much of the "Palestinian" narrative about the oppressive Israelis "stealing" their land. It's a story which leaves out the 3,500 history of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, ignores Israel's legal claim, according to the Mandate for Palestine, to all of the territory from the Golan Heights in the north to the Red Sea in the south, and from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. She appears not to know the intent of both the terror group Hamas, and of the Palestinian Authority, to eliminate the Jewish State, the former through a Fast Jihad, and the latter by a Slow Jihad, whose first step will be to squeeze Israel back within the armistice lines of 1949, lines which Abba Eban famously described as "the lines of Auschwitz," with Israel's waist then being only nine miles wide, from Qalqilya to the sea.

It is not Israel that treats the Palestinians badly, as Dima Sedak appears to believe, but the Palestinians who have treated Israel badly, having committed endless acts of terror against Israelis. They have hijacked or blown up airplanes, bombed buses, pizza parlors, Passover gatherings. They have murdered helpless Olympic athletes, airline passengers arriving at Ben Gurion, schoolgirls in their classrooms at

Ma'alot, Yeshiva students returning from a day of study, a nature photographer on a beach at Tel Aviv, students at a university canteen. They have murdered Israeli diplomats with letter bombs. They have killed families – a mother and her three little girls shot to death as they were riding in a car, a girl stabbed to death while sleeping in her bed, boys murdered while on a hike. One terrorist killed a four-year-old Israeli girl, first smashing her head against a rock, and then bashing in her tiny head with the butt of his rifle – all in front of her father, before killing him. But that's not the end of the story. The killer, Samir Kuntar, has been lionized by Palestinian society. These terrorists are not condemned but applauded; Palestinian squares and streets are named after them. They, or their families if they are no longer alive, receive lifetime subsidies from the Palestinian Authority. And there are so very many more of these atrocities, thousands of them, committed by Palestinian terrorists against Israelis – you can find them described on-line. But there are no such atrocities, not any, committed by Israelis against the Palestinians. One hopes that Dima Sadek will choose to investigate this horrifying history; if she does, she will find herself reconsidering her current disapproving view of how Israel “treats the Palestinians.”

She accused Nasrallah of flatly lying about Hezbollah's culpability for the blast. “Hezbollah controls everything in this country. They know exactly what was at the port.”

Hezbollah controls “everything” in Lebanon, but most significantly, the terror group has long had an iron grip on the Port of Beirut, and within the Port of Beirut, Hangars 9 and 12 were regarded as especially important to Hezbollah, and off-limits to everyone else. David Wurmser has noted that as to “hangars 9 and 12, Lebanese are universal in their belief that Hezbollah rules the critical areas of the port as a government within a government. As head of the program on studying terrorism in Israel's Herzliya Center, Mordechai

Kedar has noted that there are many videos of Hezbollah officials bragging about their “Fatima Gate,” a nickname for their independent, clandestine port structure in Beirut completely out of the control and visibility of the Lebanese government. In those videos, it is noteworthy that Hezbollah bragged that “the Fatima Gate” in Beirut port is where they can come and go at will, import and export freely, and smuggle unharassed, not only without interference by customs authorities but often without their knowledge. Kedar believes that the hangar 9 and 12 structures are the noted “Fatima Gate.” They are closest to the water – meaning they are the prime warehouses for unloading ships without being detected by satellite or aerial reconnaissance, and are very close to the exit of the port as well. Lebanese port workers themselves regarded Hangar 12 as an off-limits Hezbollah zone.

Hanger 9 was where Hezbollah stored large quantities of arms and ammunition; a fire that started among this arsenal of weapons likely set off the explosion of the ammonium nitrate in Hangar 12.

Dima Sadek knows that Hezbollah controls Lebanon. It has violently suppressed those who went out on the streets last October to protest, nonviolently, the mismanagement and corruption of the government. It extorts large sums from, or takes shares in, legitimate businesses in Lebanon. Its presence, as a proxy for Iran, drives away potential aid and investments from the Gulf Arabs. It discourages domestic investment too, for at any moment the terror group may drag the country into a conflict with Israel that could result in great damage to the country’s infrastructure. And it is the 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that Hezbollah was keeping for future use that, so negligently stored, caused the deadly blast.

Dima Sadek insists, addressing Hezbollah: “I want to tell you one thing: if you can answer this question for the Lebanese people, then I swear, we will all bow down to you – I will bow

down to you if you can answer this question,” she said in the clip. “What has Israel done against us that’s worse than you? Answer me.”

The question is merely rhetorical. What has Israel done against Lebanon “that’s worse than” Hezbollah? Nothing. Or, indeed, to take matters further, what has Israel done to Lebanon “worse than” any other group or country? Since 1949, Israel has never fought the Lebanese people; it entered Lebanon only to fight two terror groups, the PLO in 1982, and Hezbollah in 2006; these groups made the lives of many Lebanese, as well as of many Israelis, miserable.

When the explosion took place in Beirut, Israel was the first state to offer aid. Four of its best hospitals announced they were ready to take in Lebanese wounded. Israel was also prepared to send doctors and nurses, medical equipment, field hospitals directly to the Lebanese. Israelis started a fund-raising campaign on behalf of the stricken Lebanese. The Lebanese flag was projected on the side of a building on Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, as a visible sign of solidarity. The Lebanese government, intimidated by Hezbollah, did not accept any of the proffered aid. It did not even bother to turn it down; it simply remained silent in the face of Israel’s offer. Dima Sadek should remind her very large Lebanese audience about Israel’s attempt to supply medical assistance, and explain why Hezbollah – that has brought Lebanon nothing but misery – insisted that Israeli aid be turned down.

And then, having researched exactly how the Palestinians, whether as terrorists or as celebrators and pay-for-slay subsidizers of terrorism, have treated the Israelis, she could fulfill one other task – to share what one hopes will be her new understanding of, and sympathy for, Israel’s people, with the nearly three-quarters of a million Lebanese who follow her on Twitter.

Final Disappointed Postscript:

When I wrote the article above, I had taken Dima Sadek for a brave truth-teller, willing not just to criticize Hezbollah but also, I assumed, she would eventually come to the realization that Israel is not Lebanon's enemy. I thought that she would ultimately turn out to be sympathetic to the people of Israel who have had to endure the attacks not only of Hezbollah, but of other terror groups as well.

I was wrong. A day after her first tweet denouncing Hezbollah, Dima Sadek tweeted this: "When we criticize nassrallah it is an interior Lebanese debate. But one thing is obvious we lebanese will be united around the resistant against any Israeli attack! Israel is a cancer and the Israeli apartheid system is a shame." So having bitterly criticized Hezbollah the day before, she now has tweeted that should Israel attack Hezbollah ("the resistant") then "we Lebanese will be united" on the side of Hezbollah, which she had accused of being "much worse" for Lebanon than Israel. Consistency is not her strong suit. She must have been made aware that she had better reaffirm her support for Hezbollah against Israel, and denounce the Jewish state, or else. Clearly, she was made an offer by Nasrallah's men that she couldn't refuse.

She trotted out the usual remarks about the Jewish state: Israel is a "cancer" in the Arab world, and just as a "cancer" must be completely removed lest it grow back, implicitly Israel should be completely eliminated from the Arab body. As for the "Israeli apartheid system" she so blithely referred to, there is no such system. Arabs serve in the Knesset (where an Arab Party is the third largest); Arabs sit on the Israeli Supreme Court, Arabs go abroad as Israeli ambassadors. Arab and Jewish Israelis study together in the same universities, work together in the same offices, provide and receive medical care in the same hospitals, play together on the same teams. There is full legal equality for all of Israel's citizens. The only thing that distinguishes Arabs from Jews is that the Arab citizens of Israel are not required to serve in the military,

though they may do so if they wish.

Though there is not, *pace* Dima Sadek, an “apartheid” in Israel, there has been an “apartheid” system in place in Lebanon. She can hardly be unaware that in Lebanon, Palestinians are not allowed to be citizens, no matter how long they or their families have lived in the country. Without citizenship, Palestinians in Lebanon do not have Lebanese identity cards, which also entitles the holder to health, education and other government services. To receive health, education and other social services, Palestinian refugees are obligated to live in the twelve refugee camps in Lebanon set up by UNRWA. Thus they are kept cooped up in those squalid camps if they want access to health, education, and other services. According to Human Rights Watch, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in “appalling social and economic conditions.” Non-citizen Palestinians are also legally barred from owning property and barred from entering a list of desirable occupations.

Employment requires a government-issued work permit, and, according to the *New York Times*, although “Lebanon hands out and renews hundreds of thousands of work permits every year to people from Africa, Asia and other Arab countries... until now, only a handful have been given” to Palestinians.] They labor under legal restrictions that bar them from employment in at least 25 professions, “including law, medicine, and engineering,” a system that relegates them to the black market for labor. And they are still subject to a discriminatory law introduced in 2001 preventing them from registering property. That treatment of the Palestinians in Lebanon constitutes a classic “apartheid” system, worthy of comparison to what once obtained in South Africa.

But for Dima Sadek, who can see the (nonexistent) mote in Israel’s eye, but not the beam in her own eye, it is Israel, not Lebanon, that is guilty of “apartheid.”

My initial assumption – before I read her second tweet denouncing Israel and expressing solidarity with Hezbollah – was that Dima Sadek would decide to investigate exactly how the Palestinians, whether as terrorists or as celebrators and pay-for-slay subsidizers of terrorism, have treated the Israelis, so that she could fulfill one other task, beyond that of having denounced Hezbollah –which would be to share what would be her new understanding of, and sympathy for, Israel's people, with the nearly three-quarters of a million Lebanese who follow her on Twitter.

I regret my burst of naïve enthusiasm. I was very wrong.

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