

Lebanese Politicians Want Their Government to Act Against Hezbollah (Part 2)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Sunnis are, unsurprisingly, determined to curb Hezbollah's power by joining with all the other Lebanese groups that have had enough of Hassan Nasrallah and his bezonians goose-stepping through south Beirut.

The Future Movement [predominantly Sunni], led by former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, has demanded that the state and military take responsibility, "in light of the incomprehensible absence of the government and the competent ministries which decided to distance itself from challenges at this level of seriousness and importance, and hand over the full control of the affairs to partisan entities," NNA reported.

"The partisan entities" to which "full control of the affairs [of state] have been handed over is, in reality, only one entity – Hezbollah. There was no need for Hariri to spell it out.

"Defending Lebanon is not a military and political jurisdiction of a group of Lebanese," added the movement, pointing to the government's "suspicious absence" from the southern border with only a condemnation made 24 hours after the actual incident occurred.

The incident the government failed to condemn was the attempt by Hezbollah fighters to infiltrate into Israel, which, had it

succeeded in killing a sufficient number of Israelis, might have set off a war between Israel and Hezbollah that would necessarily damage Lebanon. What the Prime Minister Hassan Diab finally did condemn was not Hezbollah, but Israel, for managing to thwart the attack. When that attack by Hezbollah occurred, the Lebanese government was “absent,” leaving it up to Hezbollah to produce its own version of events, which was to deny the attack altogether. A Lebanese government sure of itself would have promptly condemned Hezbollah for “launching attacks from Lebanese soil, at the directive of a foreign power, that can only damage the nation.” But right now there is no such government.

Lebanese Forces Party [a Christian group] leader Samir Geagea told the Associated Press that “Monday’s military activity along the border with Israel was a clear indication the current Hezbollah-backed Lebanese government doesn’t have sovereignty in the south, along Israel’s border, where thousands of UN peacekeepers are based.”

The Hezbollah-backed Lebanese government doesn’t have sovereignty, but Hezbollah itself does throughout southern Lebanon. The U.N. peacekeepers are ineffectual and without the ability to disarm – as they are supposed to – Hezbollah forces. They are in Lebanon to enforce U.N. Resolution 1701, “that requires the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that, pursuant to the Lebanese cabinet decision of July 27, 2006, there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese state.” In the fourteen years since, there has been not a single example of the U.N. Peacekeepers permanently disarming Hezbollah fighters.

“Which Arab and foreign countries want to deal with a government that considers itself nonexistent at a time when there is a security danger along its border?” added Geagea, stressing that as soon as Hezbollah “withdraws its fighters from Yemen, Syria and Iraq, and stops implementing Iran’s

policy, the Arab countries will rethink restoring their relations with Lebanon."

Another pointed attack on Hezbollah by Geagea, who notes that if the group pulls back from Yemen, Syria, and Iraq – and also, he obliquely suggests ("stops implementing Iran's policy") from making war on Israel from Lebanon, and ceases to dominate Lebanon, then the rich Gulf Arabs would be willing to restore relations with Lebanon and reconsider their present hostility, They could again supply Lebanon with aid, as well as with investments and loans, all of which the impoverished country desperately needs.

Lebanese politicians and protesters have begun speaking out more and more against Hezbollah's power in the country since protests began last year amid an economic crisis in the country.

In June, protests demanding that Hezbollah relinquish its weapons were organized by the Sabaa party, which is associated with anti-Hezbollah parties such as the Christian Kataeb and Lebanese Forces parties and Sunni politicians Bahaa Hariri and Ashraf Rifi who both oppose Hezbollah having weapons, according to Al-Arabiya.

During the October protests, officials from the Kataeb and Lebanese Forces parties spoke out multiple times against Hezbollah and other government officials. MPs from the Lebanese Forces party were some of the first to step down during the October protests. Clashes have broken out between protesters and Hezbollah supporters multiple times since the anti-government protests began...

Israel has done what it could to de-escalate tensions. It explained publicly that the death of a Hezbollah fighter in an airstrike in Syria was unintended. It deliberately refrained from shooting to kill or wound the Hezbollah fighters who

tried to infiltrate into northern Israel, and only scared them back over the border. If a major war breaks out with Hezbollah, it certainly won't be Israel's doing.

Hezbollah has simply gotten too powerful for most Lebanese to stomach, and in conducting its own foreign policy, subservient to the will not of the Lebanese, but of Iran, it damages the nation. Hezbollah constantly endangers the safety of the state by threatening, and even launching, attacks on Israel. Protests that were first made against mismanagement and corruption in the government have grown to include demands that Hezbollah disarm, as it was supposed to do under UN Resolution 1701. Many parties – Sabaa, Kataeb, Lebanese Forces, the Future Movement, and others – have joined in making that demand. It's now a war of wills. It's quite a change from the previous passivity exhibited by most Lebanese. Now they are truly alarmed, and angered, by Hezbollah's very dangerous moves in the south. They do not want any part of Hezbollah's war against Israel. They want a Lebanese National Army made sufficiently strong – with Western and Gulf Arab arms – to face down, and enforce the disarmament of, Hezbollah. And then they want Lebanon to declare its neutrality in the wars that wrack the region.

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