



Internal Lebanese criticism of Hezbollah in the wake of its escalation and the threat of war

August 15, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ Since Hezbollah began attacking Israel on October 8, 2023, there has been internal criticism in Lebanon of the organization's decision to fight against Israel, claiming it was "supporting" the Gaza Strip.² The murder of 12 children and teenagers by a rocket fired by Hezbollah at Majdal Shams on July 27, 2024, and its threats to respond "strongly" to Israel's elimination of Fuad Shukur, its military commander, in Beirut on July 30, 2024, increased the Lebanese public's fear that the situation would deteriorate from border fighting in south Lebanon into an all-out war.³
- ▶ Public criticism comes mainly from a handful of politicians and media figures, most of them Christians known to oppose Hezbollah. They accuse Hezbollah of acting contrary to the national interest and endangering the lives of the Lebanese by fighting an unnecessary war for the sake of Iran.
- ▶ More sharp criticism against Hezbollah appears on social networks, where posts call the organization "terrorist" and express public support for the death of Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah. Some public criticism has also appeared in the form of signs opposing the war, but no one accepted responsibility for them.
- ▶ Criticism of Hezbollah is also reflected in the reception received by the Shi'ites who fled the Hezbollah stronghold in south Beirut in fear of Israeli attacks. According to reports, residents who arrived in the Mount Lebanon area had difficulty finding apartments or were charged high rents, contrary to public solidarity during the Second Lebanon War in 2006.

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

² For further information, see the December 2023 ITIC report, "[The hostilities in south Lebanon have driven tens of thousands of local residents to flee to the northern areas](#);" the March 2024 report, "[Public Criticism in Lebanon of Hezbollah Activity along the Israel-Lebanese Border](#);" and the May 2024 report, "[Criticism of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Objections to the War with Israel](#)."

³ For further information, see the August 2024 ITIC report, "[Reactions to the Deaths of Fuad Shukur and Isma'il Haniyeh](#)."

► Although the criticism is neither organized nor extensive, Hezbollah does not ignore it. Hassan Nasrallah warned it played into Israel's hands and called on those who did not support the organization "not to stab the 'resistance' in the back." Despite the response, apparently so far the criticism has not had a significant impact on the decisions Hezbollah makes.

Criticism from Politicians

► Political criticism of Hezbollah comes mainly from the leaders of the opposition Christian parties. Since the beginning of the fighting on October 8, 2023, they have accused Hezbollah and Iran of dragging Lebanon into a war that would have devastating consequences for the entire country:

◆ Samy al-Gemayel, chairman of the Kataeb Party, addressed Hassan Nasrallah directly and said he had no right to make decisions regarding the lives of the Lebanese or have a double standard for the residents of south Lebanon and those of Beirut. He wondered how Nasrallah traded in the blood of the south Lebanese and ensured immunity for the residents of Beirut. According to al-Gemayel, the strategy of attacking Israel in an attempt to lower Israeli "aggression" in the Gaza Strip had not only failed, it led to the destruction of south Lebanon. He also said that if Nasrallah thought he was allowed to trade in Lebanese lives for the sake of an Iranian agenda, he was wrong and the Lebanese would not allow him to do so without protest. He noted that so far more than 500 Lebanese had been killed in the fighting and wondered if for Nasrallah their lives had no value. He also criticized Nasrallah for thinking Israel would not cross red lines or violate the rules of engagement which had existed so far, and for still calling Prime Minister Netanyahu "an idiot and a madman." According to al-Gemayel, it increased the risk of misjudging the situation and making mistakes for which Lebanon would pay a high price (Kataeb Party website, August 7, 2024).

◆ Samir Geagea, chairman of the Lebanese Forces party, said the current war would end with catastrophic results for Lebanon and that those responsible for starting the military operations in south Lebanon [Hezbollah] would be responsible for its losses (Samir Geagea's X account, August 7, 2024).

◆ Charles Jabbour, head of media and communications for the Lebanese Forces party, said the Lebanese felt powerless because "Hezbollah hijacked the country." He said the war was between Iran and Israel and Lebanese had was nothing to do with it. He added

that the decision to escalate the war rested with Israel, which had a technological advantage (al-Hurra, August 5, 2024).

◆ The Renewal Faction in the Lebanese Parliament said Lebanon was exposed to the danger that the war would escalate, bringing more killing and destruction. The faction expressed opposition to Lebanon's involvement in a war others were waging on its soil. It added that Hassan Nasrallah's position that Iran and Syria were not obligated to participate in the war revealed that only the blood and lives of Lebanese citizens were being used bargaining chips and that only Lebanon bore the burden of paying the highest price. The faction asked how the supporters of the "unity of the arenas"⁴ allowed Lebanon to be the only country where the war was being waged, while all they did was take advantage of the situation to strengthen their regional position. The faction also criticized Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, and other ministers, and accused them of becoming "Hezbollah's official spokesmen," instead of representing the interests of Lebanon and its people (MTV Lebanon, August 8, 2024).

Criticism in the Media

► Khirallah, a reporter for the Lebanese Asas Media website, warned that Lebanon would pay a heavy price for linking its fate to the Gaza Strip. He noted that Lebanon was in fact "threatened with destruction" after Hezbollah's decision to open the southern front without understanding the consequences of its actions (Asas Media, August 2, 2024).

► Lebanese journalist Nancy Lakiss, who opposes Hezbollah (with an X account of 26.5 thousand followers), posted that according to a survey carried out by the American magazine Foreign Affairs, 70% of Lebanese do not trust Hezbollah. She added the hashtag "#Lebanon_doesn't_want_war" (Nancy Nessrine Lakiss' X account, August 4, 2024).

⁴ Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, the "resistance" partners seeking the destruction of the State of Israel.



**Announcement with the survey results on the lack of trust in Hezbollah
(Nancy Lakiss' X account, August 4, 2024)**

►Anti-Hezbollah media person Karen Boustany (with an X account of 10.4 thousand followers), posted a notice reading "You have destroyed our economy" with the hashtag "#Lebanon_doesn't_want_war." She wrote that the tourism sector had immense losses, as stated by the chairman of the Federation of Tourist Associations and the head of the hotel owners, adding, "Thank you, Hassan Nasrallah, for destroying everything that could have stabilized Lebanon's economy, even for a short period of time. You have destroyed our economy and our homeland" (Karen Boustany's X account, August 9, 2024).



"You have destroyed our economy" (Karen Boustany's X account, August 9, 2024)

►The cartoonist Saeer Sabil, who opposes the Iranian regime and its proxies in the region, published a cartoon by the Saudi cartoonist Talal al-Sha'sha, in which the letter A appears in the word "Hezbollah" on the organization's flag, gripping the leg of a man representing Lebanon. He wrote that "the terrorist Satan's party [Hezbollah] is working completely against Lebanon's interests " (Saeer Sabil's X account, August 11, 2024).



Talal al-Shasha's anti-Hezbollah cartoon (Saeer Sabil's X account, August 11, 2024)

Criticism in the Social Media

► Social activists and residents of Lebanon and Lebanese living abroad used the social media for post and slogans criticizing Hezbollah and Iran and opposing a large-scale war with Israel:

◆ Raymond Hakim, an activist for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (with an X account of 99 thousand followers), wrote that Hezbollah's weapons posed a danger to Lebanon before they posed a danger to any other country (Raymond Hakim's X account, August 8, 2024). He also posted a picture of a building which had been destroyed with the caption, "The war is destroying what remains of Lebanon," with the hashtag "Lebanon_does_not_want_war." He also wrote, "The party [Hezbollah] is committed to the destruction of Lebanon. The funds he [Hassan Nasrallah] receives from Iran command him to do so" (Raymond Hakim's X account, August 11, 2024).



"The war is destroying what remains of Lebanon"
(Raymond Hakim's X account, August 11, 2024)

◆ Walid Hanam, a social activist who opposes Hezbollah (with an X account of 15.3 thousand followers), posted a picture of the Hezbollah flag inscribed "terrorism." He

said "resistance axis"⁵ had led to the destruction of south Lebanon, forced families to migrate, killed hundreds of victims and destroyed the tourist season (Walid Hanam's X account, August 10, 2024).



"Terrorism " written across the Hezbollah flag (Walid Hanam's X account, August 10, 2024)

◆ An X account called "No to the Iranian Occupation" (with an X account of 4,000 followers), which posts harsh criticism of Hezbollah, wrote after the attack on Majdal Shams, that " Hamas provoked Israel and the result was the destruction of Gaza. Hezbollah provoked Israel and exposed Lebanon to a destructive war that most Lebanese don't want. Hezbollah hijacked Lebanon's decision-making in favor of Iran." The post included the tag "Hezbollah [is] terrorist" (X account of No to the Iranian Occupation, July 28, 2024). Another post showed the picture of Hassan Nasrallah in the style of the mourning notices Hezbollah issues for its operatives who die fighting Israel, and asked, "How will Nasrallah's life end? Share your opinions with us." Answers included, "In the fire of hell, Amen," "The martyr is on his way to Jerusalem, may Allah never bring him back to the world," "In a trash bag," "Just like the lives of his predecessors ended, I hope he dies in Lebanon so that it will be a lesson to any dictator who tries attack Lebanon like this dictator, the Israeli Nasrallah" (No to the Iranian Occupation X account, August 8, 2024).

⁵ Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.



**A Hezbollah-style mourning notice for Nasrallah
(No to the Iranian Occupation X account , August 8, 2024).**

◆ Shady Fayad, director of an international event production agency and an opponent of Hezbollah (with an X account of 4,110 followers), posted a picture for Lebanese Army Day, which falls on August 1, of a Lebanese soldier with the caption "The only weapons we want in Lebanon belong to the Lebanese army" and a call for the disarmament of all "armed organizations" in Lebanon, including Hezbollah (Shady Fayad's X account, August 1, 2024).



**A call for the Lebanese army to be the only armed body in the country
(Shady Fayad's X account, August 1, 2024)**

◆ Dr. Ahmed Yassin, a Lebanese political and social researcher and activist who lives in Paris (with an X account of 23.8 thousand followers), related to the killing of the children and teenagers in Majdal Shams and asked if it was "an act of resistance or a crime?" He added that "the Iranian party [Hezbollah] signed its own death warrant with the blood of the children of Majdal Shams" (Dr. Ahmed Yassin's X account, July 28, 2024). Yassin also published several notices against Nasrallah, writing in one that "Hassan [Nasrallah] the snitch wants to fight Israel, but is unable to guarantee his people a slice of bread" (Dr. Ahmed Yassin's X account, August 10, 2024). After the death of Fuad Shukr, Yassin

described the jihad Majlis [Lebanese Parliament] meeting which decided to attack Israel, writing that "those crazy ideologues will burn Lebanon and the region, and they have sealed their fate!" (Dr. Ahmed Yassin's X account, August 3, 2024).

◆A Lebanese woman named Pamela Nasri (with an X account of 3,100 followers) published picture of Hassan Nasrallah behind the Hezbollah logo superimposed on a cloud of yellow smoke, caused an explosion of ammonium nitrate explosion in the Port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, attributed to Hezbollah, together with the inscription "terrorist" in red letters dripping blood. She wrote, "Hezbollah, is a terrorist organization and has no right to determine the fate of an entire country without the consent of the people, and it is time for us to take Hezbollah to account for its actions" (Pamela Nasri's X account, August 12, 2024).



**"Terrorist" in red with a picture of Hassan Nasrallah
(Pamela Nasri's X account, August 12, 2024)**

Overt Public Criticism

►There is also overt public criticism against the danger of war. Signs reading, "Enough...we're tired" and "We don't want war" appeared on the streets of Beirut and other locations, mainly in areas identified with the opposition parties. However, no party or organization has claimed responsibility for them. "A leader in the Lebanese opposition" stated that in his opinion the slogans on the signs represent the opinion of the majority of Lebanese, regardless of sectarian affiliation, geographic region or political affiliation. He added that the Lebanese killed in Israeli attacks are victims who were sacrificed "on the altar of the Iranian project" and not on the way to Jerusalem or in defense of "Palestine" (al-Sharq al-Awsat, August 11, 2024). Billboards with similar content began to appear as early as November 2023.



"Enough... we're tired" (Sawt Kol Lebanon, August 12, 2024)

Reception of Displaced Shi'ites from Beirut

► Tony Bowles, a Lebanese Christian journalist known as an opponent of Hezbollah, noted that thousands of residents of the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, the Hezbollah stronghold in the south of Beirut, had fled to Mount Lebanon, where many local residents refused to rent them apartments. He said that unlike the war in 2006, when many saw Hezbollah as a "resistance" force against Israel and opened their homes to the Shi'ite refugees from Beirut, this time the situation was different and they saw the organization as an army affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guards, with wars based on regional rather than national considerations (Independent Arabia, August 10, 2024).

► "Batul," a journalist who lives in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, tried to leave for areas outside Beirut which are considered "safe" because they are not affiliated with Hezbollah, but she was unable to rent an apartment because landlords demanded exorbitant prices. She said that in the 2006 war there was solidarity with the Shi'ite community, regardless of sectarian affiliation, but now society was deeply divided. A pro-Hezbollah teacher who lives in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia said she found an apartment 15 kilometers outside the capital, but rent was \$1000 a month (AFP, August 7, 2024).

Hezbollah's Response

► Although public criticism of Hezbollah is still not extensive and does not pose a threat to the organization's power inside Lebanon, Hezbollah does not ignore it and claims that they are working for Lebanon, warning that the criticism plays into Israel's hands.

► On August 6, 2024, Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech to mark a week since the death of Fuad Shukr, the organization's military commander. He said there were people who did not understand what was happening, were still immersed in the country's sectarian dispute and

afraid of the victory of the "resistance". However, he claimed, they should rather be afraid of the victory of the "enemy." To those who do not support Hezbollah he suggested they "at the very least, not stab the resistance in the back. Do not participate in the enemy's psychological warfare against the 'resistance community' in Lebanon" (al-Manar, August 6, 2024).

► "A source close to Hezbollah," referring to the anti-war signs, accused "known parties" of promoting the "lie" that Hezbollah wanted war and was leading the country to destruction. According to "the source," intentionally or unintentionally, the campaign on the streets and social networks "serves the enemy, who harbors evil in his heart for Lebanon and the Lebanese" (al-Sharq al-Awsat, August 11, 2024).