

# Interview with Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah

By [Al-Jazeera](#)

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Al-Jazeera interviews Hezbollah chief - text

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Interview with Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah, by Al-Jazeera Beirut Bureau Chief Ghassan Bin-Jiddu, on 20 July.

Emphasis added by Global Research

[Bin-jiddu] It is sufficient to say that we are in the company of Hezbollah Secretary General His Eminence Al-Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah at this time in particular. The battles are still continuing. We are at a certain time in a certain place of this world, and not only in Lebanon, as I used to say earlier. This is why, without any introductions at all, I will start my questions to His Eminence Al-Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah. Your Eminence Al-Sayyid, first of all, thank you for responding to [the request to hold] this interview at this time in particular. Around 10 days have passed since the outbreak of hostilities. What do you say militarily and politically?

[Nasrallah] In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Politically and militarily all at once, it is difficult. Let us start...

[Bin-jiddu, interrupting] Not in detail. We will go into details with you.

[Nasrallah] Let us start militarily and in the field. The general headline we can speak about clearly on the military level is steadfastness—the great and significant steadfastness first and, secondly, full absorption of the Israeli strike. Over the past few days, the Israelis, in our opinion, did the maximum that they can do, from the air and the sea. Of course, we will discuss the ground option shortly. There is no target—old, new, assumed, expected, based on information or analysis—that they did not hit. Also, when we speak about what was hit, this includes military and civilian targets, but I want to speak now about the military aspect.

I can confirm at this moment—this is not an exaggeration and not part of psychological warfare, but facts—that the command structure of Hezbollah has not been harmed. Yesterday night, they conducted a very violent raid on a building in the southern suburb. They spoke about 22 tonnes of explosives and a large number of aircraft that conducted the raid. They said that they made an achievement and killed some Hezbollah leaders and a large number of members of the resistance. This is not true. At any rate, your correspondent reported that he saw the area and that no ambulances came to the scene and no rescue efforts were made because the building is vacant and is under construction. The entire command structure of Hezbollah, including the political, jihadist, executive, and social—so

far, the Zionists have not managed to kill any Hezbollah cadre or leader at any level.

[Bin-Jiddu] Do you mean the political leaders or the military commanders?

[Nasrallah] All of them. Certainly, I would like to tell you and tell the viewers that when a martyr falls, we inform his family and we then announce this. We do not hide our martyrs until the end of the battle. We have never done this. On the contrary, we always take pride in our martyrs. Until this very moment, praise be to God, anything that could affect the command or administrative structure that is managing the battle or that is not managing the battle—those who are directly linked to the battle or have a relationship to some aspects of the existing situation—this structure has remained intact. This is especially true in the case of the military structure that is present in the field. This is first. The second thing that I can confirm is that all the Israeli talk that they hit 50 per cent of our rocket capability and warehouses—all of this is untrue and nonsense. Until this moment, they have not been able to hit anything in this context. I confirm this to you. The evidence is that the resistance has continued to fire rockets—not the regular Katyusha rockets that are fired on the frontline settlements—the resistance is still striking Haifa, Tiberias, Safad [Zefat] and deep [into Israel] as well. We control even the number of rockets that are fired. Today, the resistance can fire hundreds of rockets in a single day. There is no obstacle in the field despite the intensive air activity of the Zionists.

We control the number [of rockets] because we are managing our battle. I will go back shortly to the management of the battle. There fore, as far as the rocket structure is concerned, things are excellent and this structure or capability has not been impaired at all. We have the ability to go on for a long time. Also, the fighters in the field have not started action so far. The ground confrontations that occurred over the past two days are the beginnings of the confrontation. The fighters on the border have so far not made a strenuous effort over the past few days. We are still at the beginning of action. Therefore, as far as the ground and rocket situation is concerned and on the level of capabilities and cadres, leadership, and organization in general, which is broader than the jihadist aspect or other political, social, and media aspects, the structure is still strong and solid and continuing, praise be to God.

The strike against the battleship off the coast of Beirut has made the Israelis decide to keep all their warships away from the Lebanese coast by tens of kilometres. What is reported sometimes in the media, to the effect that warships are bombarding the suburb or a certain area, is wrong. This is not true. The warships are not bombarding most areas because they are far away from the coast. The Israeli air force is the one that is conducting the bombing. In all events, this air force is a superior force. This is the picture of the field situation. Of course, in the confrontations that occurred, a number of Mirkava tanks have been destroyed so far. Some of these tanks are Mirkava of the fourth generation, which are the most advanced type of the Israeli Mirkava.

The Israelis admit the ferocity, power, and courage of the fighters on the frontlines. Certainly, we are wagering on those fighters. I think that if we take the picture of the military situation in general, I can confirm that Hezbollah has so far remained steadfast; secondly, it has managed to absorb the strike; thirdly, to move to the stage of taking the initiative; and fourthly, to offer some surprises, which it has promised. There is still a number of surprises, which we reserve to ourselves in the next stage. In the field, Hezbollah is still managing the battle calmly, slowly, quietly, and without any emotional reaction. You can see this. There are no unnecessary threats and no random rhetoric. We are following

things closely and calmly and we calculate the time, place, number, capability, combat, point, front, and all details on the military level. This concerns the military aspect.

[Bin-Jiddu] Excuse me your eminence, what guarantees that what you are kindly describing as calm is not confusion, and what guarantees or confirms that you are running the battle calmly, not with emotional reaction to conceal the inflicted enormous military losses as Israel claims?

[Nasrallah] First, you know Lebanon. Today, the Israelis tightened the noose on the mass media in northern occupied Palestine and occupied Palestine. No one can report any news or broadcast any footage. [News reports] are subject to the Israeli censorship which permits and disseminates them. Even you at Al-Jazeera Channel were subjected to arrests, interrogation, restricted activities, and the like. Why do the Israelis resort to concealing the truth on the other side? Why? Do they do that only because they accuse the media outlets of setting the coordinates? This is nonsense. We have the coordinates of these Israeli settlements and military positions in the north, centre, or in any part of occupied Palestine. We do not need anybody to give us information, images, or the like. In that case, they want to conceal the true scene of the war on the other side because it will have definite impact on the Israeli street and media and the morale of the Israelis. This is what Olmert's government and the Israeli Army fear. On the other side, the media outlets in Lebanon today are reporting on everything, including the raids, the civilian martyrs, the combatant martyrs, and the roads. The towns are open even the Southern Suburb. The media outlets entered it. The media outlets entered and videotaped the place, which was bombarded yesterday at dawn, actually today at dawn. So, everything is evident. You know Lebanon more than anybody else that there are no secrets in Lebanon. If we have martyrs, we can only conceal them for an hour or two because their families and the residents of their village will know about it. Those are not fighters from another country; they are from the citizens of this country. If one of the leaders of Hezbollah is martyred, this will be made known within few hours. Therefore, we do not conceal our martyrs and we are proud of them. Secondly, as for the structure [of the resistance], its performance practically assert that things are still ongoing well. Moreover, the Israelis gave a while ago a picture of trucks to the mass media claiming that these trucks are transporting ammunition to Hezbollah. Well, if they videotape every target they strike, let them provide pictures of the rocket launchers, the launching pads, and the military bases that were bombarded. Thus far, they have been bombarding wrong targets. This indicates a technical failure on the one hand and an intelligence failure on the other. The drilling machines in Al-Ashrafiyah are old machines. So, they do not receive intelligence from the ground and I do not agree with the analysis that suggests they pounded Al-Ashrafiyah because they want to instigate the Christians and the residents of Al-Ashrafiyah against the resistance. We should not be hasty [in drawing conclusions]. They came and videotaped the two drilling machines. They might have looked as rocket launchers in the pictures and therefore they bombarded them. This is a failure. If they are depending on the reconnaissance aircraft, this is a technical failure. If they are depending on the agents on the ground, this is an intelligence failure. So, if they have pictures, let them show them to the world. You might wonder and says is it possible that no rocket launcher was hit. Neither me, nor anybody can claim that. There might be, for example, one or two were hit. After nine days, the strongest air force in the Middle East region and one of the strongest air forces in the world that have access to the airspace while we do not have the capabilities to face them at that level - an air force effectively and strongly present in various ways with the reconnaissance aircraft controlling the airspace of Lebanon - could not until this very minute even stop firing rockets or target the missile force. It is very

evident.

[Bin-Jiddu] Can we say that the onset of the ground battle has begun or not?

[Nasrallah] We cannot say that accurately. Until now, what have been taking place are infiltration attempts in certain points on the borders. In this context, the Israelis are seeking to make any achievements. I tell that the only achievement made by the Israelis can be made by any air force in the world. It does not need the grandeur of the Israeli Air Force, namely destroying the bridges, the airport, striking at the ports, factories, the houses. This does not need any [special air force]. Any army that has some aircraft can do that. However, they failed in the face of the military infrastructure of the resistance. They succeeded in killing the children, women, and the elderly. They succeeded in displacing some people. As for the structure of the resistance, I affirm to you that it is present. They know that they are not hiding- as they claim- among the civilians. [The battle] is taking place in the frontlines, the mountains, the valleys, and between the trees in a wide area. They are looking for achievements. They talked at dawn today about the bombing of this building in the Southern Suburb. I heard over the past two or three days that they are talking about great, huge, fortified Hezbollah barracks along the borders that were destroyed. I was discussing the issue with the brothers. We discussed whether we should deny the claims or not. Some said: Let them be happy about it as they are showing their people that they made achievements. Let them be happy about their achievements and this might ease the onslaught. They will be happy in the Israeli Army that they made achievements. Others said: Let our public opinion know because this would have positive and negative psychological impact. So, let our public opinion know. Let me ask: Where are the fortified barracks on the borders of the Islamic Resistance? The border posts are actually surveillance posts consisting of a column on which an antenna is attached and another on which a camera is placed. Beside these columns there is a room where one of our youth stays. This is simply what these posts are consisting of. These posts were evacuated right from the first day. If they come today to say that they destroyed frontline positions. They mean these places. If they say that occupied frontline posts, these posts exist along the barbed wires and we evacuated them since the first day when we captured the soldiers. Now that the Israelis' helplessness has been proved, we affirm to you that they have a problem in receiving intelligence from the air and from the ground. Most of their agents are at large, some were arrested, and some disappeared. The agents are facing difficulties in their movements now on the ground to locate or give some information [to Israel]. At any rate, they need some commandoes groups to enter the Lebanese territories, either to collect intelligence or to correct some of the mistakes they made in their strikes on the frontlines. They also need them to conduct operations to capture or kill some of the mujahidin of the resistance, or even to say that they killed or made field achievement since the Israeli Navy retreated and was hit. I do not believe that the air raids are an achievement. So, they are looking for an achievement on the ground. What is happening until now is within this context. I do not call it the beginning of a ground incursion. However, I would like to affirm that that these points were strongly dealt with. It would have been better to provide pictures of the tanks that were destroyed, but the difficult travel conditions prevented that. Anyway, they are admitting that some of the tanks were destroyed, and that some people were killed and wounded. I promise them more fighting and toughness from the mujahidin of the resistance along the borders. As for the ground attack option, it is possible that they might resort to it. We have been ready for it since the first day. I do not want to raise the ceiling of expectations and I do not use speeches. We are fighting a serious battle. I did not say one day that the Israelis will be unable to enter any post in southern Lebanon. We are not a

classic army extending from the sea to Mount Hermon. We are a popular and serious resistance movement that is present in many areas and axes. They might be able to enter a certain point or a village or conduct a large-scale ground operation. They might enter a mountain or a frontline village and claim a historical victory. In order not to say that Hezbollah made a pledge, I did not promise one day something like that or say that. This is not the case. This can happen at any moment. As for us, our equation and principles are the following: When the Israelis enter, they must pay dearly in terms of their tanks, officers, soldiers. This is what we pledge to do and we will honour our pledge, God willing.

[Bin-Jiddu] Do you expect that the battles will be long? Are you preparing, as one of the generals inside [ Lebanon ] warned, for a war of attrition?

[Nasrallah] The battle here, if we want to answer these questions, we should discuss the background of the battle. We are not convinced at all—perhaps during the first hours we can say that the reaction that took place was a natural reaction to the capturing of Israeli soldiers—but hours after this, the issue has gone far beyond a reaction to the capturing of the soldiers. The Israelis entered [ Lebanon ] with a plan. The officials in charge of this plan, commanders, and news media used to talk about it with varying degrees, which we will analyse later. However, they, for example, spoke about destroying Hezbollah, not the missile force, but destroying Hezbollah. Some sides say the dismantling of the military structure of Hezbollah. Others said the annihilation and destruction of the missile force of the military structure, and others said we cannot destroy the military force of Hezbollah, but we want to pain Hezbollah and weaken this force. Then they said pushing Hezbollah far from the borders. Those who talk about pushing Hezbollah 10 or 20 km know that this does not mean pushing the missile force far from the borders. The one who attacks Haifa, Afula, and farther villages, and has the power to attack farther than this, then the story of 10 or 20 km is considered simple details. Some sides said that the objective of the operation is to free the two prisoners. I assure you that the objective of the operation is not to free the two prisoners. At any rate, the slogans on the one hand, and the objectives that were announced for the operation on the other, means that the operation would take a long time. I cannot say one week, two weeks, three weeks, one month, more, or less. This issue depends on the field developments on the one hand, and the political developments on the other. Now...

[Bin-Jiddu, interrupting] Excuse me. Does it depend on you or on Israel?

[Nasrallah] On us and on them. The course of the battle—I will say how—for example, today, the talk began in Israel, and this is a logical analysis, to the effect that the Israeli military operation has reached its peak. What is more than this? I will answer you. What can the Israelis do more than what they did? What is left is the ground incursion, which is costly at any rate. There is an argument, not among the politicians on the political level, even on the military and security levels there is a real argument on the level of the military and security commands. What is left is the ground incursion. Except the incursion, everything the Israelis could do have done. So, they have reached the peak. Now, they have one of two choices: When they reach the peak they either proceed horizontally, or in other words, continue with the same standard or the dose [preceding word in English] of the peak, or they will begin to decline. So, the military operation will begin to decline and to calm down gradually to pave the way for a political settlement. How much time would this take? This depends on developments. When time drags—the north is brought to a halt, northern Israel, excuse me, I apologize, I mean northern occupied Palestine—there are two million Israelis who are either in shelters or outside the area, displaced outside the area. The entire economy in the north is brought to a halt. The factories, trade, tourism, and economic movement are all brought

to a halt. The number of the killed and injured on their side could be much less than on our side, but this is natural. This is because they have a huge arsenal. Our arsenal is not for destruction, retaliation, and revenge, but a deterrent arsenal. They have a huge destructive power. There is no exaggeration here. They also have shelters. Give me one village in the south that has shelters in it. Up till now a large part of the people of the south are still in the south. Had there been shelters, the people would have remained there and would not have left. No one likes to live in school to be given rations. However, on their side, from the borders to deep in the north, there are shelters in the settlements. So, it is only logical that the number of those killed and wounded on their side is less than on our side. However, what affects the economy and the pressure the people are exposed to as a result of displacement and living in shelters. [Sentence incomplete as heard] They promised them with a quick operation within a few days. The first day and then the second day passed, and every day they say three or four times in the Israeli news media that they have killed me, killed the Hezbollah leaders, and made false achievements. So, what is next? Until when will this continue? The Israeli society is so far rallying round the government. We have seen this experience in 1993, in 1996, and in past wars, but this solidarity will begin to vanish with the passage of time. So, if the military operation took a horizontal direction or began to decline, then the peak that is higher than this is the ground incursion. I am sure that the ground incursion will be a catastrophe to the Israeli army. This is not a threat. You know from day one that I speak calmly and objectively on these issues. The issue now, if it continues...

[Bin-Jiddu, interrupting] Excuse me; you repeated the word disaster on more than one occasion.

[Nasrallah] I mean a disaster for their tanks, officers, and soldiers. There will be a high price for them to pay. Right from the first day, I never claimed, even during negotiations and in my past speeches, that I can shoot down F-16's. We have never claimed that. We did not claim such a thing even during the [confrontation] in the sea, but we managed to surprise them in the sea. As for the land, we have 24-year experience; we have long and real experience in the land. We have high and efficient fighting capabilities, good armed capabilities, and good reserves.

It is a matter of time now. I rule out that the Israelis can make a military achievement. It is a matter of time. On the one hand, there is our military steadfastness, and on the other there is the political and popular steadfastness. They [the Israelis] are wagering on seeing the country's political situation break up and weaken, and on seeing a decline in the popular support for the resistance in order to achieve political results. We, on the other hand, are wagering on our steadfastness and that of our people, and on seeing a decline in the Israeli internal support for the military operation and on the pressures on the enemy's government, the beginning of which we began to see today.

[Bin-Jiddu] We will discuss the political issues. I want to go back to what you said about the popular steadfastness. Your Eminence, it is obvious that there is a real popular support in the areas where members of the resistance and Hezbollah are present. Now, the people who expressed their genuine support for the resistance are displaced and exhausted, and there is destruction as well. Honestly, do you still have faith in this popular support? Do not you think that you might win militarily and lose popularly, even among your own sect, not among other parties?

[Nasrallah] Before I met you, the brothers, who visited all the places where the displaced

people are housed and talked to people, told me that the embassies of western countries are sending opinion-poll teams to the places housing the displaced people. They ask people about their sect and religion. Undoubtedly, they are interested first and foremost in the Shi'is' opinion. Based on the [religious] structure of the country, they believe that if the Shi'is begin to leave and desert the resistance, it would be an indication that the other sects will do the same - this is the [religious] structure of the country. The opinion-poll teams were amazed during their visits and meetings. There is strong support for the resistance; there is readiness to remain steadfast and make sacrifices. They listened to many women who said that they are ready to sacrifice their children, to fight, to remain steadfast and patient, and to endure, and that they will not allow the resistance to lose, be humiliated, or be stricken. Anyway, instead of me going to the people, anyone can go and meet these people and ask them in an objective and honourable manner. However, they should not ask a person who is not actually a displaced person and says that he speaks on behalf of them. We have information about the situation on the ground, and we are in constant contact with our people in the villages and cities. Our impression, which I am sure that it is now shared by the embassies that follow the situation and give information to the Israelis and decision-making centres in the world, is that the answers they got today will affect the course of the battle. Therefore, I thank the people for their position and steadfastness, which will make the war shorter. Why? If the opinion-poll teams see a sign of weakness and fragility, they will tell the Israelis to continue [their operations], that they can achieve their objectives, and that the war will not take a long time. It is not of their interest to fight for a long time. The US Administration, and other administrations, will build on that, and there will be no intervention. Today, yesterday, and the day before - especially today - they heard strong and honourable words. I tell you that they have begun to feel desperate. I want to repeat what I said days ago that we have honourable people - I am talking about the Lebanese people in general, not only the Shi'is. The Lebanese people are honourable, dear, and great; I do not flatter when I say that. You can go to all Lebanese areas where there are Christians, Sunnis, and Druze to see how the rest of the Lebanese people deal with the displaced people.

between sympathy with those displaced persons, since they are Lebanese, and the attitudes towards the actions of Hezbollah and the resistance. It is said that the other parties, factions, and segments are not satisfied with Hezbollah's position, performance, and the way it got Lebanon involved, as they say, in this battle?

[Nasrallah] I am not talking about some political forces. I am talking about the people, the good people, those who in hard times reveal their chivalry, honour, and patriotism. This is especially since the political climate now says what happened has happened, and that there will be time for accountability. We also say that there will be time for accountability. No problem. The political climate says let's be united to handle this battle. This level of political rhetoric, which contains less incitement - I do not say it contains no incitement - but it contains less incitement, gives people a chance to approach matters honestly. Today, neither the masses of the resistance feel alienated at the national and popular levels, nor the resistance feels that its supporters around it have begun to disperse. Never! I stress to you that the masses of the resistance are firmer and more resolved. Even when we go to political negotiations - for certainly there will be political negotiations and political discussions - one of the most important issues that the Hezbollah leadership must keep in mind is that behind it are masses who do not accept to offer concessions that they might be humiliating or something like that. They might demand high positions that are commensurate with people's steadfastness and sacrifices. This is what we are building on.

[Bin-Jiddu] At any rate, your eminence, some say that Hezbollah might be strong militarily on the ground now, at least as you have said, but it seems that it is internationally isolated, excluded, and chased. It is also politically embarrassed at home. Even your former allies, the political forces with whom you used to hold discussions at home, do not conceal their dismay. True, they say there will be time for accountability, but they do not conceal their resentment. Moreover, they say: How could Hezbollah involve the country and take it hostage after a unilateral decision? The government was neither aware of that decision, nor does it bear its consequences or adopt it. Is this reasonable to happen?

[Nasrallah] Well, let us say that we have begun to go into the political part. First, I just want to close the first part, since we have talked about the battlefield, the shelling, and settlements. I would like to address the family that was hit in Nazareth. In my name and on behalf of my brothers, I apologize to this family. Of course, the word apology is not sufficient. I bear full responsibility. That was not intended at all. However, at any rate, we consider those who were killed in Nazareth martyrs for Palestine, Lebanon, the nation, and the resistance. It is a tough and hard confrontation, in which flaws of this kind might happen. I would like to send them my condolences and apologies. I hope that they would accept my condolences and apology.

Now I move on the political part. Politically, the international community, first, has never been with us. So I cannot say that is not with us, isolating, and forsaking us just today. It has never been with us. Moreover, it has mostly been against. For example, we have been listed on the US terrorism list since they created the terrorism list. We are among the first to be listed on that list. Some European countries also list us as terrorists. The position of the international community is clear. Consequently, we are not surprised by the international community. We have never wavered on the international community. The international community adopts international resolutions of which Israel implements nothing. Even Resolution 425 was not implemented by Israel; we imposed it on Israel. It has implemented none of the resolutions concerning the Palestine question. It has implemented none of the resolutions concerning the occupied Arab territories. For us, this is neither a new factor, nor a factor of pressure.

Regarding some Arab positions, this is new. True, this is new. In the past, some Arab regimes abandoned the resistance and resistance men. I am so objective and realistic, so today we deem it acceptable if the Arab regimes are neutral. Just like that. If you view the Hezbollah rhetoric, we accepted such stands from them. Perhaps the brothers in Palestine – and rightfully so – have a different rhetoric. Their circumstances are much harder than ours. So they always attack, accuse, and denounce the regimes and rulers. This is not part of our rhetoric and literature. Why? We have forgotten them. To attack someone, you need to suppose that he exists. But if you feel that he does not exist in the first place, then you would be troubling yourself to no avail if you attack him. Once, we used to ask the international community to condemn the executioner and to ask for mercy for the victim. We reached a stage where we began to say we accept that they condemn both the executioner and the victim. This became one of the natural expectations. So we began to consider it a good thing to see a resolution condemning both the victim and the executioner.

With regards to the Arab regimes, we expect them only to sit on the fence. And, if they do not want to sit on the fence, then they should at least equate between us and Israel. We even agree to have them equate between the victim and the executioner. But we did not expect them to take part in shedding the blood of the victim and cover the crimes of the executioner. Yes, this was a surprise.



[Bin-Jiddu] So?

[Nasrallah] Nothing. This is nothing.

[Bin-Jiddu] But these are principal countries, Your Eminence. They have positions and they can influence the Arab League and other Arab countries?

[Nasrallah] Now, we are in a stage of war. There is a great deal of domestic and Arab discussion, so let us postpone this. If we talk about settling accounts, we also have a long list of things to consider in this settling of accounts. I agree with those who said before me – and these are not my words; they were said before me, and I am only repeating them now – that the Israeli reaction to the capture of soldiers could have been harsh, but limited, if it were not for the international and Arab cover.

Israel did not get a green light from the United States. Instead, Israel was given a decision by the United States to go and finish this issue in Lebanon. What are the elements of the US decision? We will leave this question to the time of settling accounts? The world community did not give a green light to Israel. The world community gave a decision to Israel to destroy the resistance in Lebanon. Some Arabs then came to provide a cover and encourage Israel to continue the battle, and to tell Israel that this is the golden and historic opportunity to destroy the resistance in Lebanon. I can tell you that they do not want to destroy the resistance of Hezbollah in Lebanon. They want to destroy any spirit of resistance in Lebanon, whether inside Hezbollah or any other party. They want to push the country to the point where words such as resistance would become unacceptable, and where words such as martyr, jihad, wounded, steadfastness, confrontation, liberation, freedom, glory, dignity, pride, and honour are unacceptable. All these words should be erased from the Lebanese people's dictionary, from the press, from the political literature, from the political mind, from the people's mind. This is what Israel is doing, and this is what the United States, which wants to re-arrange the entire region anew, needs.

I can decisively say – and we will say this again at the time of settling accounts, especially now that some people say that this or that party said the truth, and so I want to say the truth. I can decisively say that if it were not for certain Arab positions, this war would not have continued; it would have stopped within hours. Then in the discussions [that follow] everybody can say what he has, and we will say what we have.

Today, I do not expect anything from certain Arab rulers. Now if you ask me about what I expect from the nation, I know that if you examine the hearts of all people in the Arab and Muslim nations, they are with us. They may sit in front of television screens, cry, and show emotions. If they hear good news, they may stand up, clap, and show joy; if they hear sad news, they may cry and feel sad; and if they have the chance to show genuine emotions, they would do so. I have no doubt about this. I am even certain that some sons, daughters, and wives of some Arab rulers are with us. But I tell the Arab rulers, I do not want your swords and I do not even want your hearts. To say it in Lebanese slang, the only thing I want from you is leave us alone. Sit on the fence and have nothing to do with us. You have said what you said, thank you, go and rest. Today, there is a war that was imposed on Lebanon whose aim is to liquidate everything called resistance and resistance men in Lebanon and punish Lebanon for the defeat it inflicted on Israel. In fact, the war on Lebanon aims at liquidating the Palestinian cause. Everybody knows that the wide-scale uprising in Palestine erupted following the victory in Lebanon.

What is happening in Palestine is similar to, and is a Palestinian version of the Lebanese model. Now when we destroy the Lebanese model, what are we telling the Palestinians? We are telling them you should lose hope. When all these atrocities are taking place in Lebanon and the Arab world and the international community are not doing anything, then this means that we may see similar, or worse, atrocities in Gaza Strip and no one in the world would make a move. So, inflicting a defeat on Lebanon means ending the resistance movements in the region, which is their intention. It also means ending the Palestinian cause and imposing the Israeli conditions in any political settlement. We heard Amr Musa say that there is no more a peace process. There was a fair mediator, who was not fair from day one, and now the peace process was handed over to Olmert. Before Olmert, George Bush used to tell the Arabs and the Palestinians that they should accept what Sharon offers them and that we should accept the leftovers that they offer us. The objective of the operation in Lebanon is this. It was not a reaction to two prisoners. The issue has gone beyond this, and I can confirm to you that they will fail. We can talk about results later.

Let me go back to your question about not telling them [the Lebanese Government] or asking them. First, the government statement, on the basis of which we participated in the government, talks about the Lebanese Government's endorsement of resistance and its national right to liberate the land and the prisoners. How could a resistance liberate prisoners? Go to George Bush for example? I cannot and will not go to George Bush. When you talk about the resistance's right, you are not talking about the Foreign Ministry's right. You talk about an armed resistance, and you establish in the government statement its right to liberate the land and the prisoners. So, I represent a resistance and I have weapons. This was the government statement according to which the government won the vote of confidence from the Chamber of deputies. That was the first point.

Second, all that was said at table of dialogue is available on tapes, as some have now begun to say Al-Sayyid [Nasrallah] said so and so. Yes, I told them we would maintain the border calm. That was our policy. However, there are two issues that stand no... [Nasrallah changes thought]. I used to say there are four points, two of which can stand delaying, procrastination, and making reminders about them. No problem about that. The first issue was the continued occupation of the Shab'a farms. In this respect we can take our time. This is a limited piece of land. We do not want to go to war because of the farms, not a war like the one taking place now. The second issue is that of the air and maritime violations, and even the land violations. We can put up with these. Yes, violations of our sovereignty are condemned, but we would not raise hell because of them. However, there are two issues that can stand no postponement. The first is the prisoners' issue, for this involves humanitarian suffering. The second is any attack on civilians. I told them on more than one occasion that we are serious about the prisoners issue and that this can only solved through the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers. Of course, I used to make hints in that respect. Of course I would not be expected to tell them on the table I was going to kidnap Israeli soldiers in July. That could not be.

[Bin-Jiddu] You told them that you would kidnap Israeli soldiers?

[Nasrallah] I used to tell them that the prisoners' issue, which we must solve, can only be solved through the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers.

[Bin-Jiddu] Clearly?

[Nasrallah] Clearly. Nobody told me: no, you are not allowed to kidnap Israeli soldiers. I was

not waiting for such a thing. Even if they told me no you are not allowed [nothing would change]. I am not being defensive. I said that we would kidnap Israeli soldiers in meetings with some of the key political leaders in the country. I do not want to mention names. When the time comes for accountability I will mention names. They asked whether this would resolve the prisoners issue if this happens. My answer was that it was logical for such an act to solve the prisoners' issue. I assure you that our assessment was not wrong. I am not being stubborn. In the entire world, tell me about any state, any army, or any war that was waged because some people kidnapped two soldiers, or even took hostages, not military soldiers. Tell me about a war that was waged against a state because of two soldiers. This has never happened in history. Nor has Israel done it anytime before. However, what is happening today is not a reaction to the kidnapping of two soldiers. I repeat that this is an international decision and an Arab cover. It is a decision that has to do with...[changes thought]. I stress to you that had we not captured two soldiers in July, which could have happened in August, September, or some other time, the Israelis would come to this battle and would create for it any pretext and any excuse. The issue of disarming and finishing the resistance could not be achieved domestically, regionally, nor at the negotiating table. The Americans were well aware that this issue cannot be addressed domestically. Therefore, the Lebanese were told to step back and to let Israel terminate and disarm Hezbollah. But a cover was needed. So they provided an international and an Arab cover. This is what the issue is about. Finally, I will tell you how any resistance in the world operates. If I want to kidnap or capture two Israeli soldiers, the political leadership would make the decision and hand it to me, but even my brothers [in the leadership] should not know that this would happen at such a time and such a place. If 60 to 70 people know such details, would a capturing operation be successful? No, no such operation would be successful, let alone when informing a government of 24 ministers, three key leaders, political forces, and political blocs. On the table of dialogue, we hold discussions, and only one hour later the minutes of the sessions become available to [foreign] embassies. So do you expect me to tell the world I am going to capture [soldiers]?

[Bin-Jiddu] But Your Eminence, through your statement now you seem to be accusing the other party of having prepared for this plan, and that it might have used the capture of the two soldiers as a pretext. But some say the opposite. The statement of the 14 March forces was clear. Political statements very clearly stated that what happened was part of a Syrian-Iranian scenario. This way, you have returned the country to the time before 14 March. This serves the nuclear programme of Iran, which is now waging a conflict with the United States at this point. Syria wants to restore its influence. You have thus turned the table upside down.

[Nasrallah] This is a good point to discuss. This is a repeated tone in Lebanon. Whenever something happens, they talk about the Iranian-Syrian dimension. Let me start directly with the capture of the two soldiers. True, I had not informed the Lebanese Government, but neither had I informed my closest allies. Syria and Iran had not been informed. No Syrian or Iranian person had had any prior information. They had not been informed, and I had not consulted anyone of them. We are a resistance group operating on Lebanese soil. We have prisoners in Israeli prisons. It is our natural right to restore them. There is a major government statement that stresses this right, according to which we acted. These are the limits of the subject. Then we began to hear some analysis. Some say Syria told them [Hezbollah] to do so. This is ridiculous and shameful to say. They say Iran told us to do this. Why does Syria want Hezbollah to carry out this operation according to some analyses repeated by some politicians? This is in order to postpone or close the file of the

international tribunal. This is ridiculous. Why ridiculous? Let me tell you why. If the international community is preoccupied with the Lebanon war now, the war will come to an end in one, two, three, or four weeks. July will end, followed by August and September, then the international tribunal issue will be revived. Does anybody believe that a confrontation of this kind will cancel the international tribunal decision if there is an international will to establish an international tribunal? This analysis involves too much simplification and disregard for people's minds. Let me tell you the objective of this. The objective is to empty the resistance in Lebanon of its national, moral, and humanitarian content and to present it as a party or group of Syrian and Iranian tools that work for Syrian-Iranian interests and disregard or bypass the Lebanese interests, if not at the expense of the Lebanese interests. Regarding the Iranian issue, if a war takes place in Lebanon, a war will come to an end in one, two, or three months. How long would a war take? A war will eventually come to an end. What will this change in the Iranian nuclear file? What will it change? On the contrary I tell you that if there is a relationship with the Iranian nuclear file, the current war on Lebanon is not in the interest of the Iranian nuclear file. The Americans and Israelis have always taken into account that if a confrontation takes place with Iran, Hezbollah might interfere in Iran's interest. If Hezbollah is hit now, what does this mean? This means that Iran is weakened in its nuclear file, not strengthened. How do those people read politics?

What is happening now, on our part, is an act of defence that has nothing to do with the international tribunal or with undermining the international tribunal. This is the silliest argument and I hope they would not repeat it. On 10 May, we took to the streets to say no to contractual employment [in the civil service], no to starving people, no to denying the acquired rights, no to submission to the International Monetary Fund conditions. We were told then that we want to sabotage the country and torpedo the international tribunal. Today, we captured prisoners to end the prisoners file. A war was imposed on us and we were told that we are starting a war to torpedo the international tribunal. It is shameful to say this. This issue has nothing to do with Syria or Iran.

I want to add something else. Hezbollah has always given priority to the Lebanese national interest over any other interest. On the table of [national] dialogue, I argued with them and I told them that you have known us for 23 years or 24 years. I was ready to tell them, some of them and not all of them, what battles they fought in the interest of foreign parties and not in the interest of Lebanon. I asked them to bring anything against Hezbollah and say if it did anything in Lebanon or fought any war in Lebanon that was in the interest of another party, and not the interest of Lebanon. They could not give me a single example.

One person said there is the issue of the hostages. I told him that Hezbollah did not take any hostages. Even the groups that took hostages in 1982 and 1983, they took them to exchange them for hundreds of Lebanese prisoners from the Israeli prisons, especially in Atlit. Some witnesses are still alive. Speaker Nabih Birri was one of the people who ran the negotiations and was aware of this issue. So, if hostages were taken, they were taken to exchange them for Lebanese, and not for Syrian or Iranian interests. I have nothing to do with the hostages issues. So, I tell everybody now: Give us one example before this war, which you are accusing us of, to implicate us and prove that we have done anything against the national interest.

On the national level, we have a large political force. Lebanon is small, but relatively speaking, I can claim that Hezbollah is the biggest political party in Lebanon. In military terms, and no one can argue about this issue, it is the resistance today. In terms of popular presence, I can claim that Hezbollah is the biggest popular current in Lebanon. But, tell us

when did we take advantage of this political, military, mass, and popular force in Lebanon for our own interest, for our own party interest, or for the interest of our sect, considering the sectarian structure of the country? Never! We have always offered concessions for the national interest.

I do not have to defend myself here as Hezbollah or the resistance masses with regards the national interest. I say that we are fighting the war of national interest because Israel wants to humiliate Lebanon, subjugate Lebanon, and control Lebanon. If it succeeds in this war, then any future government in Lebanon should have the approval of Olmert and the Israeli Mosad. Not only the US ambassador, the French ambassador, or the British ambassador, but we will have a fourth one to endorse the elections law, the government, the new president; and that is Mr Olmert.

I reject any such accusation and say that the aim of these accusations is to void the resistance of any humanitarian, ethical, national, and jihadist context.

The people know us very well. Let me defend ourselves here a little bit. I normally do not like to talk about our personal matters. Today, before the homes of the people were destroyed, the homes of Hezbollah leaders and cadres were destroyed. Can you mention the name of one of our publicly-known brothers whose home was not destroyed? The families of Hezbollah leaders and cadres are displaced, just like the other people. Therefore, we were the first to pay the price. Today, our sons, families, relatives, and dear ones are in the battlefield. No one is hiding anything. All of Hezbollah is in the battle. Hezbollah masses are in the battle. Are we that crazy, that I and my brothers want to sacrifice our souls, our families, our honourable masses, and our dear ones in order to have Syria return to Lebanon, or to postpone the international tribunal, or for the sake of the Iranian nuclear file. Can you imagine such statements! This is an insult. It is an insult to our patriotism and commitment. Yes, we are friends of Syria and Iran, but for 24 years we benefited from our friendship with Syria and Iran for the sake of Lebanon. There are others who benefited from their friendship with Syria for their own seats in power, houses, wealth, and bank accounts. But, for me, tell me where my bank accounts are? Tell me where is the palace that I built as a result of my connections to the Syrian officials in Lebanon? Never! Hezbollah has never taken advantage of these friendships except for the benefit of Lebanon. Today, Hezbollah is not fighting for the sake of Syria or the sake of Iran. It is fighting for the sake of Lebanon. Yes, the result of this battle in Lebanon will be seen in Palestine. If it ends in victory, it will be victory there too; and if, God forbid, it ends in defeat, then the Palestinian brothers will face difficult and tragic conditions. But, God willing, there will only be victory. [Al-Jazeera Television at 2257 gmt interrupts airing of the interview, and starts interviewing Arab writers and analysts, saying it will air the remainder of the interview after preparing the tapes for air transmission. Al-Jazeera resumes airing the remainder of the interview at 2310 gmt]

[Bin-Jiddu] Here, what does victory mean, and what does defeat mean? When we say that you have achieved victory, then what do you mean? How do you understand that you were defeated? How does the world understand that you were defeated?

[Nasrallah] To succeed in defence is victory. How was victory achieved in 1996? The Israeli military operation did not achieve its objectives. This is it. Hezbollah remained and the resistance of Hezbollah remained. We were not the ones who began the war or the ones who launched a large-scale war. It is not from the first moment after we captured two soldiers that we began to shell Nahariya, Haifa, Tiberias, and Zefat and launched war. No.

Even in advancing, the Israelis were much faster than us. We were patient in the hope that things would stop at this point because we do not want to take our country to war. However, they launched war and we went to war. Victory here does not mean that I will enter and capture northern Palestine and liberate Nahariya, Haifa, and Tiberias. This is not one of our rhetoric or slogans. This is a process that concerns the Palestinians and the nation. This is another issue. The victory we are talking about is that when the resistance survives. When its will is not broken then this is victory. When Lebanon is not humiliated and its dignity and honour are maintained, and when Lebanon stands fast alone in front of the fiercest military power and does not accept any humiliating conditions regarding a settlement of the issue, then this is victory. When we are not defeated militarily then this is victory. As long as there is a missile that is fired from Lebanon and targets the Zionists, as long as there is one fighter who fires his rifle, and as long as there is someone who plants a bomb against the Israelis, then this means that resistance is still there. I tell you now-some people say that this is the eighth day [of the war] and others say it is the ninth day. Now, we believe that we have achieved part of victory. Our steadfastness until today is victory. This is Israel. Even at the dialogue table I used to say that we do not belittle Israel. Are we fighting militias, a party, an organization, or an army in a poor state? No. We know that we are fighting an army that defeated a group of Arab armies at one time. But we fought it and defeated it with God's help, and we are fighting it now. Consequently, our survival and steadfastness until now means victory. Our absorbance of the strike is victory, and our continuation with the confrontation is victory. In addition to this, when the Israelis begin to make concessions [then this means victory]. In the first day, there were no negotiations. Now, the Israelis began to talk about negotiations. In the first day, they said that they want to destroy Hezbollah. A short while ago, I counted them to you and [words indistinct] politics. Now, even the Israeli officials do not use the language of destroying Hezbollah. There is not even the language of dismantling Hezbollah. Today, some sides talk about disarming Hezbollah, and other sides talk about weakening Hezbollah's missile force. Even the destruction of Hezbollah's military force is no longer a military target. The Israelis today know that through military force they cannot dismantle Hezbollah's military power or missile force. They have to deal with this through politics. This is an Israeli failure. Every Israeli failure is success to us. It is victory for us.

[Bin-Jiddu] Your eminence, what are your demands now within this context? You are talking about negotiations now. Are you required to extradite the two captured soldiers without conditions, or is there anything else? We heard the Israeli Foreign Ministry saying that the German mediator should begin to move. What is there? There is a UN delegation, and there is [Javier] Solana...

[Nasrallah, interrupting] Regarding the United Nations, you just see the inappropriate behaviour with the Lebanese Government. The UN delegation arrived and contacted the Lebanese officials. It offered a comprehensive ceasefire, Hezbollah extradites the two prisoners to the Lebanese Government, and the Lebanese Government will then begin negotiations on the exchange of prisoners for a period of one month, and in light of this, a decision will be made on how things go. Our authorized channel-and I announce this-for political contacts in this regard, is [Chamber of Deputies] Speaker Nabih Birri for many reasons. We are present in the government and we are in contact with the prime minister. This is natural. However, for us, Speaker Nabih Birri is the side with which contacts and negotiations are held. We are in a continuous contact with him. Of course, we are in a continuous contact with all our friends and allies in Lebanon. Regarding the basic issues that we might reach, we will certainly hold some consultations. What was conveyed to us and

what we understood was this offer. The offer was sent to me. I am not authorized to reply to it by myself. I have my personal opinion, but I cannot commit Hezbollah to my personal opinion. So, I sent a message to Nabih Birri telling him that I need some time to hold a meeting for the leaders. And you know the security circumstances of my brothers. We must not make any mistake in this regard. Any way, he said that they [the UN delegation] will leave for occupied Palestine at night. I said let them go and come back to know what the Israelis will say and I will discuss this issue with the brothers. My readiness to discuss this does not mean that I accept or do not accept this offer. Eventually, I am committed to a collective leadership and I have to consult it on this issue. The UN delegation left occupied Palestine, but did not return to Lebanon to give an answer. They just said that the [Israelis] did not accept the offer. Practically speaking, the UN offer was foiled. So, it does not need an answer from me because it was foiled. I discuss or answer issues that are seriously put to discussion. I do not want to reject or accept issues that are not put to discussion. When Solana came, he just came to convey the Israeli conditions. He came to Lebanon and told them [the Lebanese officials] you should return the two prisoners and implement Resolution 1559. In fact, the ceiling that Solana offered was higher than what the Israelis are talking about now. This is my information about the contacts that have thus far taken place.

[Bin-Jiddu] What about the German mediator?

[Nasrallah] Under all circumstances, what I heard is that the foreign minister of the enemy asked the German mediator to intervene with us to return the two prisoners without swapping along with some sweet. This cannot take place. At any rate, regarding the negotiations issue, even regarding the two prisoners, I want to relieve myself and Hezbollah from this issue. Anyone who wants to talk about this then let him talk with the state, and the state then talks with us. I will not receive any German, French, English, Russian, Chinese, or any mediators. Hezbollah is now in a position with which it deals seriously. Its priority is the battle. So, let them talk to the officials of the state who will talk to us, and we will then give the required answers.

[Bin-Jiddu] Do you still insist on the principle of swapping?

[Nasrallah] Certainly, this is an issue that we cannot tolerate. In fact, if the civilians who were martyred, the displaced who are suffering now the effects of displacement, and the steadfast people know that it is possible for me to extradite or return these two soldiers without closing this file they will accuse me of treason. I will also accuse myself of treason. This is completely out of question. In the first day, I said that if the entire universe comes, it will not be able to take back the two Israeli soldiers except through indirect negotiation and exchange of prisoners. And Ghassan [Bin-Jiddu] what is left for us to worry about? We were worried about the infrastructure, but they [the Israelis] destroyed it; we were worried about the people, they killed the people; we were worried about displacement, they displaced the people; we were worried about the houses, they destroyed our houses and the people's houses. And after this we tell them here are the two prisoners, pardon us, and then apologize to them. This is out of the question.

[Bin-Jiddu] Regarding the exchange [of prisoners], who will you exchange the two Israeli soldiers with? Are you going to exchange them with Lebanese prisoners or Palestinian prisoners?

[Nasrallah] This is an open process, and I will leave it to negotiations.

[Bin-Jiddu] You still believe that Samir al-Qintar will be in Lebanon?

[Nasrallah] God willing. In this exchange, Samir al-Qintar will be the first one. What is the use of this exchange if Samir al-Qintar is not included in the exchange and if all the Lebanese prisoners are not included in this exchange - of course, I am talking about an open process?

[Bin-Jiddu] Your Eminence, let's put the other parties aside. You have a memorandum of understanding with General Awn. Has what is currently taking place shaken the pillars of the memorandum of understanding and your cooperation with the Free Patriotic Movement?

[Nasrallah] No, not at all. First, the memorandum of understanding talked clearly about first releasing the prisoners and liberating the rest of the [occupied] Lebanese territories, and afterward discussing a strategy for national defence. This is what we began to discuss. Hezbollah has neither taken advantage of Lebanon to liberate Palestine, nor worked towards restoring the seven villages, which are Lebanese territories. It carried out an operation to capture [Israeli soldiers], because the government's policy statement stipulates the release of prisoners and the liberation of Lebanese territories. So, what we did is a national Lebanese action, even in the regional sense of the word. This [operation] was carried out within, not outside, the context of the memorandum of understanding signed between us and the Free Patriotic Movement.

I am following the statements made by Major General Awn and other leaders in the movement. I believe they took a wise, balanced, national, and honourable position. Many political forces - I do not want to name them - adopted a similar position. I hope that you do not ask me to name them. If I name this or that party, it would then mean that the others did not adopt a similar position. I mentioned the Free Patriotic Movement because you asked me about it. Furthermore, the effort made by the Free Patriotic Movement - since your question is about the Free Patriotic Movement - in various areas is a big effort. We receive information about the impact of these good efforts on the displaced people. I do not think that the pillars of this [memorandum of] understanding were shaken. Things will become clearer in the future.

[Bin-Jiddu] Your Eminence, if you are certain of your military capabilities, what then do you fear? Do you fear the internal or the external...

[Nasrallah, interrupting] We only fear God Almighty. Secondly, I want to assure you that we do not fear the internal front. They are trying to play on the sectarian divisions. They know that playing on the sectarian divisions is dangerous. It is true that it threatens the resistance, but it also threatens the state project, the Cedar Revolution, and the great democratic model that George Bush is talking about. It is worth mentioning that democracy in Lebanon is older than the whole Bush family. It is dangerous to the country. If they want to play on the differences between Sunnis and Shi'is, Muslims and Christians, or Druze and Shi'is, it will be dangerous to the country. However, they will not succeed in this at this time. Today, the Americans are playing on the divisions between Sunnis and Shi'is in Iraq - the authority, the presence in power, the intimidation, and the acts of killing here and there. I hold America responsible for what is taking place in Iraq. I know what the Americans tell the Shi'is, the Sunnis, and the Kurds. But today they cannot incite people. Let's take the Sunnis for example; are they going to incite them against us, the Shi'is? Why? What wrong did we do? Are the Shi'is in Lebanon are US agents to tell them to do so? Are the Shi'is in Lebanon Israeli agents? Have the Shi'is in Lebanon abandoned the Palestinian cause? Have the Shi'is,



who have seen Palestinian people being killed in Gaza, cooperated with the Israelis? You cannot believe such things. For example, the last statement made by Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi in which he said Hezbollah members are border guards, collaborators with Israel, traitors, and conspirators - many people were sceptical of the victory achieved in 2000 and said that it was a settlement between Syria, Iran, Hezbollah on the one side and Israel on the other, in addition to the talk about a Shi'i crescent. This is part of the results. We did not want this war, but we are fighting it because it was imposed on us. One of the most important results of this war is that, with regard to the Shi'i-Sunni issue, it fortified the Arab and Islamic world against the attempts to play on this issue. I do not say that it ended the sedition and calamity, but it greatly fortified [the Arab and Islamic world]. Today, we are Shi'is fighting Israel. Our fighting and steadfastness is a victory to our brothers in Palestine, who are Sunnis not Shi'is. So, we, Shi'is and Sunnis, are fighting together against Israel, which is supported, backed, and made powerful by America. Perhaps, if Olmert reached a point where he would say to the Americans that he cannot continue, Bush will tell him to continue, and that if he [Olmert] has a problem, he [Bush] will solve it for him. So, this is what I meant when I said it is the nation's battle, on which you previously commented. I am not fighting on behalf of the nation. No. But I say that the outcome of the battle fought by Hezbollah in Lebanon, positively or negatively, is a result for the nation. Defeat in Lebanon is a defeat for the nation and victory in Lebanon is a victory for the nation, like what happened in the year 2000

How would they incite the Sunnis? By saying they destroyed the country? The southern suburb was destroyed. I want safety and good for all Lebanese areas. Thanks to God, many Lebanese cities have not been harmed, and, God willing, they will not be harmed. We do not say that a war was imposed on us, and that some cities were destroyed, but our cities were unharmed, or that some houses were destroyed, but our houses were unharmed. No, we do not say that. We say that a war was imposed on us, and that in this war our houses, neighbourhoods, villages - unfortunately, according to the sectarian divisions in Lebanon - families, children, and dear ones were harmed. We offered our blood and souls in this battle. This is an unacceptable logic.

Inciting the Christians and Druze [changes thoughts]. Perhaps I talked too much about the Sunni issue, because the atmosphere in the country is an atmosphere of incitement between Shi'is and Sunnis. I assure you that I do not fear any sedition, neither between Muslims and Christians, nor between Shi'is and Sunnis in Lebanon. Until this moment, the people's acts have been wise and rational, despite the severe calamity facing Lebanon, and the acts of the majority of the political leaders have been wise and rational. I support them. We should preserve our unity at this time, something that I called for in the news conference. We all have words to say and things to discuss, and we will come to that later.

[Bin-Jiddu] What does it mean to you when the army says that it will fight if a ground attack is launched against Lebanon, especially when such a statement is made by the defence minister? He, along with the army commander and senior officers, said that they will be in the field to fight the battle of honour. What does that mean to you?

[Nasrallah] This is not something new from this army, this institution, and this cadre. Before the liberation, we offered martyrs together. In the battles of Jabal al-Rafi and Arab Salin, there were martyrs from both the Lebanese Army and the resistance. The Lebanese Army, despite its limited capabilities, has always confronted the warplanes and every attack against the country. The army, as well as the resistance, has limited capabilities. We do not say that the resistance has huge capabilities; it has limited capabilities. However, the army

has the same will and bravery that the resistance has. The difference between the resistance and the army is that the latter is an official classic institution, while the first is a popular resistance that carries out guerilla warfare.

It is expected and it is a natural thing that the army would support the resistance. This position has been proven by this leadership and institution. On this occasion, I would like to extend our condolences for the death of the martyrs- the officers and soldiers- to his excellency the defence minister, the commander of the army, the officers, members, and ranks of the army, chief of whom his excellency the president of the republic and the prime minister of the Lebanese Government, being the political authority of the army. At any rate, the motto of those officers is sacrifice, redemption, and honour. This is what we expect from this institution.

[Bin-Jiddu] Before asking you to say your last word, I noticed that your eminence is living a normal life. I expected to see you wearing a military uniform, but nothing changed. You are watching television and listening to the political comments and statements?

[Nasrallah] This would be a problem and exaggerating if we say that we are living a normal life. We are in a state of war. I and my brothers are a part of this state of war. The first time I spoke was live on air, while the second tape was recorded. Naturally because of the situation, the type of cameras used and the fact that a copy was made of the [original] videotape, there might be a scene which drew some remarks. The Israeli media said that my beard is long and the lights were too strong. I am in a state of war. I am not in a picnic. When I decided to talk to you, I trimmed my beard so that they would not say that my beard is not long. Now, they will say that I am sitting and relaxing while people are being displaced. No, we do not want to exaggerate and deal with things as they normally are. If I do not smile, they would say that I am afraid and horrified, and I am not. If I smile, they would say that my people, including women and children, are being killed and massacres are being committed and here I am laughing and do not care for the blood of those people. At any rate, you want be left alone in a psychological warfare. We are certainly distressed for the destruction that has been inflicted on our country. We are more aggrieved because of our people's situation. I would be surprised to see someone crying because of a bridge. The bridge can be rebuilt. The buildings and everything can be rebuilt. They will be rebuilt, God willing. This is a decisive decision.

[Bin-Jiddu] By whom?

[Nasrallah] By the government and Hezbollah. I tell you why. When we involved in the decision- and we will bring large amount of money to rebuild Lebanon — this will urge America, the West, and the Gulf states to bring their piled money to Lebanon because they would say to the people that if we leave only Hezbollah to rebuild Lebanon, Hezbollah will take over the country. We are also the cause of well-being. Be sure that if we ignore the reconstruction process, we will receive conditional political funds. Our involvement in building and reconstructing Lebanon will bring money to help Lebanon directly. This will force others to offer funds maybe without political conditions when they find that there are people who would spend money without political conditions.

In this regard, yes, we are in pain because of the children, women, and the displaced. But this is a war. They [Israelis] are also in pain. We have half a million, say one million, displaced people. They have two million people in the bunkers or displaced. They would talk about the Lebanese economy. The Lebanese economy has always been exhausted. In fact,

there has been no strong Lebanese economy. When we targeted Haifa, billions of dollars have been lost as the Israeli stock exchange declined from that day until now. These are only the direct losses in north apart from the repercussions affecting the rest of the Israeli economy, not to mention the indirect losses they say that they are amounting to \$100 million per day. There are human and economic losses. Israel is interested in the economic side more than anything else. They are concerned about their lives and the financial and economic sides. Eventually, they know and we know [these facts]. We will continue this confrontation until we achieve victory, as I said, based on our concept of victory. Yes, I do not say that I am living a normal or abnormal life. I and many of my brothers are living the life required by the battle. Nobody believes that we are afraid, concerned, or horrified. For 23 years, we have been speaking and mobilizing the people. We have been siding by them and speaking about the martyrdom, honour of martyrdom, and the stature of martyrs. Do the Zionists or those who encourage them imagine that I or this or that leader of Hezbollah can be afraid of martyrdom? We love martyrdom. If we take precautions, this is because we do not want the Israelis to make achievements. As a personal plan and wish, every one of us hopes and wishes to be martyred at the hands of those murderers of prophets and messengers. They are the most hostile people to the people who believe in Koran. I tell that there are brothers who say that they are concerned that they will not be killed in this battle which might be the last battle, God knows. It might be and it might not. We have no concern or fear of this kind. We, God willing, will continue and hope to achieve victory with God's help.

[Bin-Jiddu] Your last word?

[Nasrallah] In my last word, I would like to thank all those who sympathized with us and those who supported us. May God bless them. If we succeed in achieving the victory we are expecting and the expected results, we will never forget all those who supported us at this stage, God willing, by offering their cooperation and showing us their honour and nobility. This is a decisive battle.

As for those who sinned against us, those who made mistakes, those who let us down, and those who conspired against us – as there are various types [of people who are against us] – this will be left for a day to settle accounts. We might be tolerant with them and we might not. Now, our priority – as Lebanon, homeland, people, government resistance, and army – is to emerge from this battle victorious with our heads high. Being forces that have zeal for Lebanon, its dignity, and pride, I faithfully say that this is Lebanon's true battle of independence. If we win this battle, this means that we, the Lebanese people, will tell the whole world that we will be the decision-makers. We will even be able to tell the embassies that are interfering in our internal affairs not to interfere in our internal affairs. This is a battle of true independence. Hence, we are determined to hold out. I thank all those who cooperated with us, but I will not ask for anything since I did not ask for anything on the first day and I will not do that until the last day. The people shoulder their responsibilities. Governments, rulers, peoples, and everyone who can do something are free to help or not to help. I did not ask for anything from the people or from the governments from the first day. This is the way we were brought up before. We will keep on beseeching God Almighty today and tomorrow. We seek His help as acquire our assurance, strength, high morale, wisdom, hope, and victory from Him, God willing. At any rate, the days will be our judge and we will see how things will unfold.

[Bin-Jiddu] Thank you your eminence for this meeting. Thank you our dear viewers for your attentiveness. Until another encounter, God willing. With my appreciation, Good bye from

Ghassan Bin-Jiddu.

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