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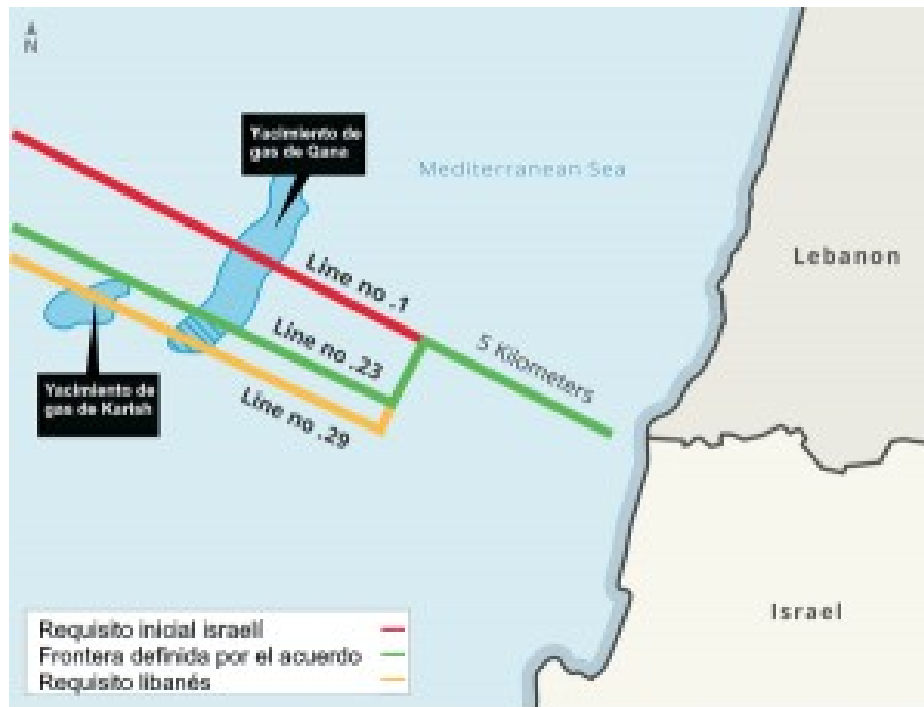
Sergio Rodriguez Gelfenstein
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Something smells wrong in Israel: The implications of the agreement on the maritime border with Lebanon

This diplomatic battle will remain in history as an undoubted triumph of the Lebanese people and of all the forces of the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist resistance.



The complex and convulsive international situation that the planet has been experiencing in recent years, especially since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 and NATO's war against Russia that began in October 2014 but has had a significant escalation this year, has powerfully influenced almost all political events on the planet.



La frontera entre Israel y el Líbano definida por el acuerdo

Much to its regret, the Zionist state has not been able to depart from such a dynamic that it begins to directly influence internal events and the government's decision-making capacity. Thus, the war in Ukraine and the sanctions of the United States and its appendages against Russia has meant a blow to a world gas market subjected to strong swings that make it impossible to maintain stability for consumers.

For this reason, in the face of the border dispute with Lebanon, the occupying entity that usurps Palestinian territory has been forced to consent to the conditions that Hezbollah has established to reach an agreement. Europe has demanded that the United States and Israel "lower their guard" to accept most of the points of view of the Lebanese resistance organization that taking advantage of the situation and the gas needs of the Old Continent, forced a deal that not only resolves the issue linked to the exploitation and production of fuel, it also recognizes Lebanon's sovereign rights over territories belonging to it that were in question.

On the other hand, while the agreement has generated national unity around Hezbollah in Lebanon, in Israel it has aroused all kinds of contradictory assessments and struggle of tendencies as an expression of an internal weakness that grows over time and that manifests itself in a deep social crisis, desertion and flight of young people to avoid military service and breakdown of the unity so publicized in the Zionist state as an

instrument of cohesion to justify the repression against the Palestinian people as well as fulfill its role as a gendarme of US policy in the region.



Written on the container; "Gas-Egypt-Palestine-Lebanon", and on the pipeline: "Towards EU"-Vignettes by Imad Hayyay, Jordan

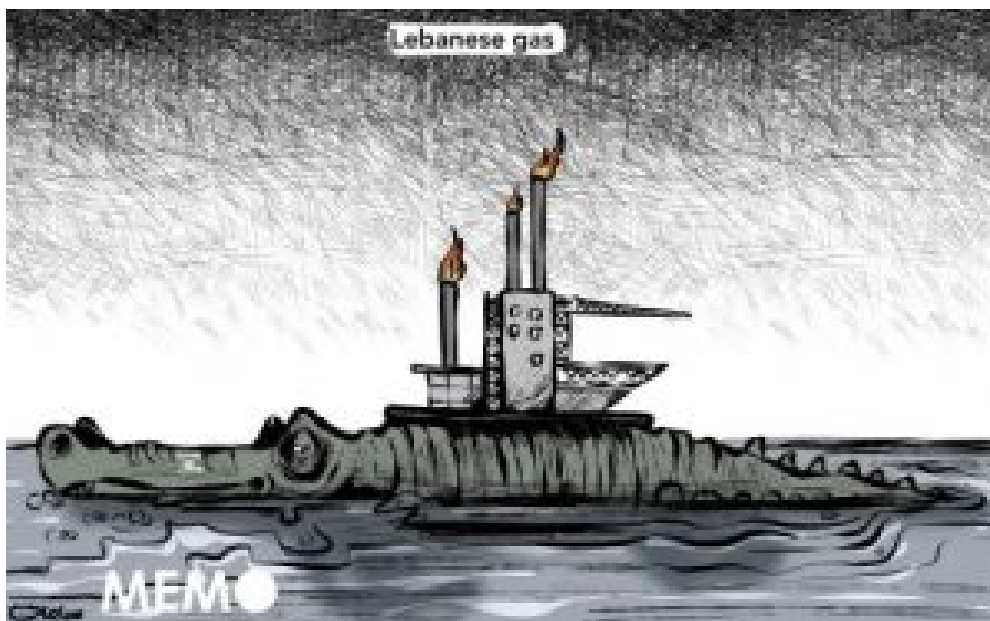


All kinds of public statements account for this situation. When the terms of the agreement were not yet known, the former head of the Israeli army's Military Intelligence Division, Amos Yadlin, opined that although "The criteria for the agreement have not been published, [there is] the assumption [...] that [Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan] Nasrallah got everything he wanted, so he feels satisfied..." He added: "When I heard Nasrallah's speech, he sounded like someone who knows the deal and presents it to the Lebanese public as a hit for them. There are very complicated points that we don't know

yet." Yadlin said the deal was important for both sides. According to him, for Israel it meant getting a much-needed "calm."

A similar assessment was made by the Israeli state channel KAN 11. He estimated that "a country that suffers a conflict and is politically divided like Lebanon, seems more united than Israel with respect to everything related to the issue of the dispute over maritime borders." Likewise, he valued that the result obtained meant a success for Nasrallah in "the battle of conscience in the negotiations to demarcate the maritime borders."

In this context, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launched it against the current Prime Minister Yair Lapid, assuring that he had surrendered to Nasrallah's threats because Hezbollah will receive "sovereign territory from Israel and a gas field valued at billions of dollars, without any parliamentary debate or referendum." Lapid responded by saying that, despite not having reached the desired agreement, that was "no reason to join Nasrallah's propaganda campaign."



Cartoon by Mohamed Sabaaneh/Middle East Monitor

Other criteria point in the same direction. Israeli political analyst Rafif Droker stressed that Israel would have delayed the maritime agreement with Lebanon for 200 years had it not been for Hezbollah's military power. Arab affairs expert Zvi Yehezkeli said: "Israel backed down because of Nasrallah's threats," adding that the Lebanese people thank him for protecting their rights. Coinciding with the general assessment, this specialist believes that the leader of Hezbollah used Israel's local political problems and the international need for gas, assuring that Tel Aviv is in such a situation that "any war with Hezbollah would be destructive for the Israelis."

Israeli Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked said the threats were the catalyst for reaching the maritime border demarcation pact. According to her, it was very shameful that Nasrallah threatened Israel with firing on Israeli platforms at the Karish gas field that is located in the disputed area, if her country started extracting the hydrocarbon before the signing of the agreement. It does not appear serious coming from an official of a State that has twice invaded Lebanon and that has occupied Palestine and part of Syria in the Golan. Shaked said such threats to the deal were "a catalyst to sign" [she was the *only cabinet member not to approve the deal and lashed out at Lapid after announcing she would not put the deal to a vote in the Knesset*].

He was referring to the warnings of Hezbollah which announced that it would not allow the exploitation of the gas unless the views of the Lebanese government were considered. On July 3, three drones sent by Hezbollah flew over Israeli platforms at the Karish gas field sending a powerful message warning Israel against any violations. A few days later, on July 13, Hezbollah's secretary general let the United States and Israel know that if Lebanon was prevented from extracting its maritime resources, neither could Israel. Later, on July 31, Hezbollah released a video showing Israeli platforms, reiterating its warnings to Israel against its attempts to unilaterally exploit oil and gas fields.

After this, Mawaf Fardy, a political analyst quoted by the Lebanese TV channel Al-Manar, said that Israel was forced to make concessions after Hezbollah's warnings "confirming that 'Israel' understands no language other than that of force."

In a broader view of the situation, already on September 8, Major General Uri Gordin, new head of the northern command of the Israeli army, warned that Hezbollah could fire up to 4,000 missiles against Israel in the first days of a potential war that could break out. According to the senior military chief, this means about 10 times more than those used in the 2006 war and assured that the Lebanese organization could increase the figure at a rate of 1,500 to 2,000 per day.

Trying to qualify the information, Gordin said that the number of Hezbollah's high-precision missiles is relatively small, but that they are enough for civilian and military strategic installations, as well as senior leaders of the country to be among the targets to attack. Adding concern to his analysis, he opined that Israel is not prepared to intercept such a number of missiles for which the number of casualties could be very high. And he noted that the cities of Haifa and Tiberias would be among Hezbollah's targets.

Delving into the internal conflict generated, the former energy minister and current member of parliament, Yuval Steinitz, claimed that: "Israel ceded an area of water 17

times the size of Tel Aviv." Likewise, in an interview with the far-right newspaper Israel Hayomel, close to Netanyahu, the former US ambassador appointed by Donald Trump to Israel, David Friedman harshly criticized the pact stating that Hezbollah was in a good position because it was the winner; "... without being a direct party to the negotiations, it was his position that brought Lebanon an additional 40%... This increase, compared to what was in the past, is a product of their action."

As can be seen, the situation created has shocked Israeli society. In this sense, Roi Sharon, military affairs analyst of *KAN 1 I considered* that neither military chiefs nor Israeli or Western intelligence analysts "can enter Nasrallah's head and manage to analyze what he plans." Going further, former minister Tzachi Hanegbi, a member of parliament for the far-right Likud party, said he "believes more in Nasrallah than in Israeli spokesmen."

This situation occurs at the same time that all the political organizations of Palestine gathered in Algiers, signed a 9-point commitment to advance towards national unity and put an end to the division that for fifteen years has kept Fatah and Hamas at odds. Among the points, the call for elections within one year of the signing of the document and the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people stand out. This call is a call for parties and movements such as Hamas that rules Gaza and Islamic Jihad, among others that are not members today, to join the organization.

In this way, the broadest spectrum of Palestinian political forces ever reached established the "firm conviction" that maintaining the current situation "favors the 'status quo' and fuels the failure of the peace process in the Middle East," in addition to benefiting the Israeli occupation.

This weakening of Israel that manifests itself both in Palestinian unity and in the border agreement, considered as the third victory of Hezbollah against the Zionist state after the triumph in the wars of 2000 and 2006, are an expression of the successes of the resistance struggle. In 2000, Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon was achieved, in 2006, the goal was to recover the fighters imprisoned in the prisons of Zionism, which was also obtained. It was now a question of the recognition of Lebanon's maritime boundaries and acceptance of their right to exploit the riches underlying that territory, which should certainly be seen as a new triumph.

Although the agreement has not yet been signed, the acceptance of the parties that will lead to the realization of this will be made at the United Nations [on *October 26 or 27, in*

Naqura, on the border of both countries, NdE], after Lebanon's refusal to sign bilaterally an agreement with a State to which it does not recognize legitimacy.

This diplomatic battle will remain in history as an undoubted triumph of the Lebanese people and of all the forces of the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist resistance.

Sergio Rodríguez Gelfenstein for La Pluma

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