

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد      بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپائی

M. Mandl

## Hezbollah Remains Wary amid Israeli Operations in Gaza

November 17, 2012

While Hamas is preparing for an Israeli ground assault into Gaza, Hezbollah's movements on Israel's northern frontier bear close watching. Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi on Nov. 17 called on the Muslim world to retaliate against Israeli actions in Gaza. Naturally, many are looking in the direction of Lebanon, where Hezbollah, Iran's most capable militant proxy, could open a second front against Israel.

Though Iran would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the spectrum of its militant proxy strength, especially after supplying Hamas with the long-range Fajr-5 rockets that have been targeting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Hezbollah will likely be extremely cautious in deciding whether to participate in this war. The group's fate is linked to that of the embattled regime of Syrian President Bashar al Assad; should Syria fracture along sectarian lines, Lebanon is likely to descend into civil war, and Hezbollah will have to conserve its strength and resources for a battle at home against its sectarian rivals. Indeed, Hezbollah has already been preparing for such a scenario by seizing control of villages along the Orontes River Basin in order to maintain connectivity with Syria's Alawite community.

At the same time, if Hamas is able to bog down Israeli ground forces by drawing them into a war of attrition in densely populated Gaza City, Hezbollah may see a political opportunity to burnish its credentials as the region's leading "resistance" movement. In this case, Hezbollah would likely monitor the situation until it could be assured that Israeli forces are sufficiently constrained on the Gaza front before it begins attacks on the northern front. Hezbollah is not looking for a major confrontation with Israel, and the tens of thousands of additional Israeli reservists called

up compared to Operation Cast Lead suggest that Israel is already preparing for a two-front contingency. If Hezbollah does decide to participate in the war, it would be carefully timed to drive an already embattled Israel toward a cease-fire so that Hezbollah could claim a largely symbolic victory at relatively little cost.

With Hezbollah uncertain how the Israeli-Hamas battle will play out, the group appears to be taking a cautious approach. Stratford has received indication that Hezbollah has prevented radical Palestinian groups in southern Lebanese refugee camps from firing rockets into northern Israel. In addition to an increase in the number of patrols by the Lebanese army and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Hezbollah has been deploying numerous operatives in plainclothes along the border to monitor the situation. Hezbollah has also installed cameras around the Ain al Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon to monitor traffic from the camp to its outside environs. Whereas Hezbollah completely controls movement into and out of Palestinian refugee camps in the deep south, Ain al Hilweh lies completely within a Sunni neighborhood. For this reason, Hezbollah has rented a number of apartments around the camp, especially in al Ta'mir area, to keep a close watch there.

For now, Hezbollah appears intent on not allowing the battle in Gaza to spill into southern Lebanon. It remains to be seen whether that calculus would shift should Hamas succeed in wearing down Israeli ground forces.