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Hezbollah warns Israel of rocket onslaught in any future war

By Dana Khraiche
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Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah warned Israel Sunday against a war with Lebanon to regain momentum after its “defeat” in Gaza, saying his group would rain thousands of rockets on the Jewish state in the event that it did so.

“If the confrontation in the Gaza Strip given its blockade included missiles reaching 40 to 70 kilometers [into Israel], then the radius of a battle with us will reach occupied Palestine [Israel] from the Lebanese border to the Jordanian border and the Red Sea,” Nasrallah said on Ashoura Day.

“From Kiryat Shmona to Eilat,” he added, referring to Israel’s northern and southernmost cities respectively.

The Hezbollah leader has in the past warned the Jewish state of launching missiles against Tel Aviv in a any future war.

In his televised speech to masses of Shiite worshipers Sunday, Nasrallah said Israel would confront an even greater foe in Hezbollah than Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

“How will [Israel] tolerate then thousands of rockets that will hail on Tel Aviv and other areas if it attacked Lebanon?” he asked, noting earlier how Israel had been “confused and shaken” by

Iranian-made Fajr 5 rockets that targeted Tel Aviv in the 8-day conflict between Palestinian groups and the Jewish state.

The Hezbollah chief's remarks came after what he described as "talk" that Israel was contemplating launching an offensive against Lebanon to regain its status in the region "on the basis that if Israel attacks Lebanon then the latter will not receive the same solidarity and sympathy that Gaza received."

Nasrallah, who heads the March 8 coalition in the country, also reiterated his party's willingness to engage in National Dialogue which has been boycotted by the majority of parties in Lebanon's March 14 opposition.

"We are ready to respond to [President Michel Sleiman's] invitation for [National] Dialogue on Nov. 29 but we reject conditions by anyone with regard to Dialogue and those being pompous [toward us on this matter]," he said.

Following the assassination of a top intelligence chief last month, the country was plunged into a crisis after the March 14 coalition accused the government of providing the necessary cover for the crime.

The opposition group has also blamed Hezbollah's main ally, President Bashar Assad, of being behind the Oct. 19 car bomb that killed Brig. Gen. Wissam al-Hasan, who headed the police's Information Branch since its inception in 2006.

March 14 lawmakers have also boycotted all government work, demanding that Prime Minister Najib Mikati and his government resign.

Without naming him, Nasrallah also described as "absurd" remarks by Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea off LF lawmakers not participating in Parliament committees that included Hezbollah politicians.

Responding to Speaker Nabih Berri's call to reactivate legislative work, Geagea asked Wednesday: "Isn't it a crime for parliamentary committees to convene while [some of] its participants are affiliated with suspects directly accused of assassinations?"

In 2011, four members of Hezbollah were indicted by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon over the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The group denies any involvement in the case.

In his speech, Nasrallah also said that accusing his party of being behind assassinations in Lebanon was "delusional, baseless, and only accomplished the objectives of such assassinations."

He also said that his party did not consider the March 14 coalition parties as "enemies but merely as political rivals."

“We do not see any Lebanese party as an enemy but a rival ... our only enemy is Israel,” Nasrallah said, adding that his party was keen on preserving civil peace in the country.

Speaking about the recent Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip that ended with a truce this week, Nasrallah repeated his call for Arab countries to finance and arm Palestinian resistance groups.

“We again invite all governments and countries and say that Gaza and Palestinians need not only your solidarity and support but also your weapons and money,” he said.

He also warned attempts to “portray Israel as the friend and Iran as the enemy,” saying the Islamic Republic was the true friend of Arabs and Muslims.

“Iran is the friend of Arabs and Muslims and it supports weakened people and that is what was seen in Gaza,” Nasrallah said.

He addressed allies of Israel in the region, saying that the Jewish State has embarrassed them in its “aggression” on Gaza.

“All you have done in the past years to transform Israel into a friend and Iran as the enemy has gone to waste,” he said, adding that Israel was “barbaric by its very nature.”

On the 21-month-old conflict in neighboring Syria, Nasrallah said Hezbollah supports all “oppressed people around the world,” and described Syria - its people and army – as oppressed.

“Victory in Syria today requires an end to the fighting, to bloodshed, destruction and everything that is happening there ... Syria as a whole is a target,” Nasrallah, Assad’s strongest supporter in Lebanon, said.