

# Hizballah's 'Destructive Ambiguity': A Violent Context for Syria-Israel Negotiations

Dec 15, 1999



Brief Analysis

**A**s Syria and Israel begin negotiations in Washington today, conflict and violence again flared in southern Lebanon, where large-scale raids by Hizballah against twenty Israeli and South Lebanon Army (SLA) posts prompted Israeli retaliatory air strikes. Given that one of Israel's chief goals in the peace talks is the pacification of the Lebanon-Israel border, Hizballah's position vis-à-vis peace and a possible Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon is an important component of the strategic equation. The following is a representative sample of quotations from Hizballah officials on whether to continue fighting Israel after an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

(Unless otherwise indicated, quotations come from [www.moqawama.org](http://www.moqawama.org), Hizballah's quasi-official website.)

## Statements that Suggest Hizballah Will Continue to Fight after an Israeli Withdrawal

"Even if the entire world recognizes Israel, even if they threaten to hang us, we cannot recognize this cancer, this racist and terrorist entity which has hegemonic plans and wants to dominate the Middle East. . . . Even if the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon are returned by Israel there will still be a great national and Islamic problem to solve. . . . The just and global solution to the Palestinian issue is the restitution of all of Palestine to its true owners." -- Hizballah secretary general Shaykh Hassan Nasrallah, as reported in Agence France Presse, July 26, 1999.

"Our struggle with Israel will continue as we see fit for the benefit of Lebanon and the liberation of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights." --Mohammed Raed, chief of Hizballah's Politburo, November 22, 1999.

"Even if the enemy withdrew from the south and western Beqaa, Lebanon will always be targeted. Therefore, it has to be on the alert to fight with all the appropriate weapons on the military, political, intellectual or other levels." -- Nasrallah, November 30, 1999.

"We are determined to cling to the path of jihad and resistance regardless of what awaits us, be it medals or gallows; this will not change our decision or reduce our resolve." --Nasrallah, September 21, 1999.

"The pullback will lead to changes which will create a new situation and call for further pressure on Israel." -- Nasrallah, as reported in Agence France Presse, November 19, 1999.

"The occupiers have to be punished, not granted security arrangements or political agreements providing them with security that they have failed to achieve over the past 50 years of conflict." --Nabil Qawuq, Hizballah commander in South Lebanon, November 24, 1999.

"The minimum conditions' for accepting Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon are 'full restoration of the Golan to Syria and the return of refugees to Palestine.'" --Nasrallah, as reported in Al-Hayat, October 30, 1999.

## Ambiguous Statements Made by Hizballah

"There could be developments in the region in which case we would then define and announce our position in accordance with the circumstances." --Naim Kassem, Hizballah deputy secretary general, as reported in the

Jerusalem Post, July 15, 1999.

"The party's cadres have adopted several alternatives after studying the issue extensively, but unveiling them to the public, to the Israelis, or to others would leave Hezbollah exposed." --Kassem, October 14, 1999.

"Hezbollah will remain after any settlement. Those who think that Hezbollah's survival is threatened by the possibility of a peace settlement are misled, as the future will prove." --Kassem, October 15, 1999.

"Hezbollah knows what to do when the Zionists withdraw; however, we won't tell the friend of the enemy in order to benefit the Zionist enemy." --Kassem, September 28, 1999.

"Frankly speaking, we will not recognize this state [Israel] even if it signs peace agreements with all or some of the Arab states. How do we deal with this state that has been recognized by many? Do we confront it politically or militarily? This is the question we will answer after Israel fully withdraws from southern Lebanon." --Kassem, as reported in the Jerusalem Post, July 16, 1999.

#### Statements that Suggest Hizballah Will Cease to Fight after an Israeli Withdrawal

"We will keep on fighting until the Israeli occupation is out of our land without any conditions or accords." --Nasrallah, October 31, 1999.

"Lebanon is the one that that decides what to do after the [Israeli] pullout. Whether to deploy its army or internal security forces in the occupied zone, just as it did following the withdrawal from Jezzine." --Nasrallah, November 14, 1999.

"Lebanon will act in accordance with what it assesses to be in the interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese, and of the special relationship with Syria . . . [In the event of an IDF withdrawal] Hezbollah will certainly play a greater political role in domestic affairs without abandoning the major national causes, using the means and methods appropriate to the changes and circumstances." --Nasrallah, as reported in Mideast Mirror, July 11, 1999.

This report was prepared by David Honig.

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