

# Future Movement, Hezbollah dialogue reducing Sunni-Shiite tension in Lebanon

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Posters like this one of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah ( R) and Future Movement leader Saad Hariri will be removed from the streets of Beirut and highways linking south to north Lebanon as part of an agreement reached between the rival groups in order to reduce the Sunni Shiite tension in Lebanon

The Future Movement and Hezbollah dialogue meeting was held Tuesday against the backdrop of renewed tension between the two sides caused by the celebratory gunfire and Hezbollah's chief fiery speech on new rules of engagement with Israel. The speech drew fire from Future and March 14 politicians who warned that Hassan Nasrallah's remarks jeopardized U.N. Resolution 1701, which ended the 34-day Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006.

On the other hand they both welcomed the practical steps taken to defuse sectarian tensions in the country by removing political slogans and posters belonging to them from the streets of Beirut and other areas.

The two rivals also rejected the heavy celebratory gunfire that rattled parts of Beirut and the southern suburbs last week before, during and after Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's speech and also on all occasions.

"On the other hand, the participants affirmed their rejection of gunfire on all occasions and on all Lebanese territories, whatever the justification might be," a joint statement said.

They also followed up preparations to implement a government security plan in the northern Bekaa region to crack down on kidnappings for ransom, vendettas, drug smuggling and car thefts, according to a statement issued after a fifth round of talks between senior officials from the Future Movement and Hezbollah held at Speaker Nabih Berri's residence in Ain al-Tineh.

"The participants continued discussion over a number of points in a frank and responsible manner. They welcomed executive steps to eliminate [political] pictures and posters in Beirut and other areas," the statement said.

It added that the two sides followed up preparations relating to the completion of the security plan in the northern Bekaa region.

Earlier on Tuesday the parliamentary Future bloc condemned Nasrallah's speech in which he announced that his group from now on would not recognize the rules of engagement with Israel.

Nasrallah's speech is "unilateral and hasty and it eliminates the will of the Lebanese people who are committed to Resolution 1701," the bloc said in a statement issued after its weekly meeting chaired by former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

Following a security meeting chaired by Interior Minister Nouhad Machnouk Monday, it was agreed to begin the campaign to remove political slogans, portraits, signage and banners for Hezbollah, the Future Movement and Berri's Amal Movement from the streets of Beirut and along the coastal highway from the southern city of Sidon to Tripoli in the north starting Thursday.

Defusing Sunni-Shiite tensions is the main item on the dialogue agenda, which also includes finding a mechanism to allow the election of a president, boosting efforts to combat terrorism, promoting a new electoral law and energizing stagnant state institutions.

The dialogue between Hezbollah and the Future Movement has won support from rival politicians, as well as from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, the U.S. and the European Union.



A poster of Iran’s late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (L) and current supreme leader Ali Khamenei (6th L) are included in a row of posters of Hezbollah martyrs lining a street in the southern Lebanese village of Yaater, southeast of Tyre .The portraits of politicians and killed combatants fill the streets of Lebanon. As part of an agreement reached between Hezbollah and Future in order to reduce the Sunni Shiite tension in Lebanon such posters will be removed

### **Berri praises talks**

Speaker Nabih Berri who has been hosting the dialogue talks stressed on Tuesday that the road to the dialogue between Hezbollah and Future Movement is “safe” despite concerns following Nasrallah’s latest speech.

Berri told his visitors on Tuesday that the dialogue has not stopped and will go ahead in implementing the decisions reached between the two parties.

“The path to dialogue is safe,” Berri stressed to his visitors

“Nasrallah’s latest stance safeguarded Lebanon,” he stressed in reference to the decision not to escalate the war with Israel

Berri confirmed to his visitors that all decisions reached at the dialogue table will be implemented, including the removal of party banners and flags in Beirut and several other cities.

“I gave my instructions to officials in Amal Movement to immediately start with the removal of flags, banners and photos belonging to Amal,” he said.

The speaker added that his followers began implementing his decision although the date for the removal of the political slogans has been set for Thursday.