

## Nasrallah to place Hezbollah at al-Assad's disposal – Report

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**By Yousef Diab**

Beirut, Asharq Al-Awsat- A report in Lebanon's "al-Joumhouria" newspaper revealed that "following the confirmed assassination of four Syrian officers, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah contacted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, offering his condolences and enquiring about the health of his brother Maher [al-Assad]. He also enquired after al-Assad's personal state and morale. More significantly, according to the information, Nasrallah placed all of Hezbollah's capabilities at al-Assad's disposal, in the event of the Syrian regime requiring urgent assistance".

The newspaper quoted senior political sources confirming that there had been contact between the two leaders, and that "Nasrallah had offered al-Assad two forms of assistance, firstly he offered elements of Hezbollah's special forces any time they are needed, even if they are required to be sent to open fronts to fight the revolutionaries. Secondly, Nasrallah invited the Syrian president to his personal residence, or even to meet inside the Iranian embassy in Beirut...but al-Assad has opted to remain in Syria because he still believes he is able to steer the ship with the help of some Russian political and military experts".

The article reported that Hezbollah, prior to the death of Syrian Defense Minister General Daoud Rajha, "had – with the Defense Minister and the Syrian Chief of Staff – developed a military plan to intervene directly to support the regime, in the event of it facing any form of foreign aggression. This plan included strategies to deploy radars and missiles in the Beqaa Valley and to supply the Syrian army with 2,000 elite Hezbollah troops".

It is likely that "this plan still exists, albeit with slight modifications, providing for the military deployment of Hezbollah troops, passing through the al-Masna border crossing and some mountain areas in strategic location".

Commenting on this report, MP Kamel Rifai, a member of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, told Asharq Al-Awsat that "despite the fact that the resistance holds the Syrian leadership in high regard, it will not interfere in any internal conflict in Syria".

He added "the resistance will not point its weapons at any Arab entity, because these weapons and those men are to fight against the Zionist enemy".

He also stressed that "All Hezbollah wants is a peaceful solution between the opposition and the regime in Syria, and although the party displays sympathy and loyalty to those who stand with the resistance (the Syrian regime), our conflict is primarily with Israel".

The Hezbollah MP also pointed out that "you will not find any member of the resistance standing on the Lebanese Syrian border with one party against the other in Syria".

As for Amin Hoteit, a retired Brigadier General and strategic expert with close to Hezbollah, he pointed out that "Hezbollah's battle is not in Damascus or Syria, it is against the Israeli enemy". He told Asharq al-Awsat: "If Hezbollah wants to provide a defense for the Syrian regime, it has more influence in other areas. It would be

impossible for Hezbollah to send fighters to Syria, where considerations are multiple and complex”, adding that “the Syrian regime does not need Hezbollah troops, and the party is calling for an end to the violence and for a non-militarized uprising, so such talk is ridiculous”.

Hoteit stressed that “Syria is still strong and the Syrian army still holds control of the land because of the supportive environment and the public opposition to armed militias”. He explained that “sending troops from Hezbollah to Syria would mean the entry of foreign troops, and this would impact upon public sympathy for the Syrian army, which in the space of a few weeks has been able to eliminate 2,000 gunmen thanks to this popular support”.