

Defending Lebanese in Syria is a moral duty: Hezbollah

BEIRUT: A high-ranking Hezbollah official said the party's fighters had every right to defend Lebanese in Syrian border villages and warned the March 14 coalition against tarnishing the accomplishments of the group's "martyrs."

"Hezbollah's martyrs are the nation's martyrs because they were defending their Lebanese families [in Syria]," Sheikh Nabil Qaouk, a high-ranking Hezbollah official, said, adding: "every Lebanese who is martyred while defending his family is a martyr for Lebanon and a martyr for all the nation."

"What Hezbollah is doing regarding this issue is a national and moral duty in protecting Lebanese in border villages," he said.

Hezbollah denies its members are fighting in Syria, instead claiming it is helping Lebanese Shiites living in a cluster of Syrian border towns and villages to defend themselves against rebel assaults.

Qaouk said it was incumbent on the resistance group not to abandon the Lebanese in these border villages.

"Are we supposed to abandon our relatives in the border villages, leaving them to be vulnerable to killing, kidnap, slaughter and displacement?" he asked.

"Are these Lebanese supposed to remain hostages and be left alone," he asked.

He also criticized the Lebanese government over its handling of the situation of the Lebanese in

Syria.

“[There are] dangerous shortcomings in this regard by the state, which has done nothing toward its citizens in these villages, not even asking about them,” he said.

Qaouk, who spoke at the memorial of “martyr” Abbas Rihan in Nabatieh, also urged the Lebanese opposition not to criticize the actions of Hezbollah in Syria.

“[I urge you] to stop causing harm to these martyrs who are the martyrs of the nation and stop betting on changes in Syria, hoping to change the regional equations at the internal level,” he said.

He also urged the March 14 coalition to “know that the crisis in Syria, whatever its results or the results of the parliamentary elections [in Lebanon], the equation of the resistance will not change because it is fixed as the mountain that cannot be shaken by storms or strong winds.”

“We are not changing the direction of the resistance’s rockets or its priorities, regardless of how difficult the internal and regional crises,” he said.

“The main concern for us is the preparation and boosting military capabilities in order to face any possible aggression and this is the logic and strategy of the resistance,” noting that “the equation of the resistance governs its stances on any internal or regional matter and any stance toward what is going on in Syria or Lebanon is linked to safeguarding this equation.”

He also discussed the formation of the next Cabinet and the new electoral law, saying: “On these matters I would like to say that no side should feel they are being targeted in terms of the formation of the government or in terms of the parliamentary elections.”

He expressed keenness on the success of efforts to form the government and on the electoral law “on condition that no side feels it is being targeted.”

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