

Nasrallah: Military intervention in Syria now off the table

By Dana Khraiche

BEIRUT: Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah said Friday regional and international efforts to end the crisis in Syria had swung away from the option of military intervention toward a political settlement.

“The options of military intervention, arming the opposition or sending in Arab troops are off the table,” Nasrallah, who spoke on the occasion of the reopening of the Sayyeda Zainab Complex and Land Day, said.

Nasrallah used the recent involvement of U.N.-Arab envoy Kofi Anan as evidence that the international community sought a political solution in Syria.

“Ever since Kofi Anan’s arrival in Syria, he has not relied on the Arab League initiative which means that [the Arab bid] is over,” Nasrallah said.

Annan, who was tasked to mediate the Syria crisis, said Tuesday through a spokesman that President Bashar Assad had accepted the basic terms of a U.N-sponsored peace plan which calls for national dialogue but does not hinge on him leaving office.

Nasrallah said recent regional and international meetings all failed to mention arming the opposition and the establishment of a joint Arab force, which he said further indicated a political settlement was sought after.

“What is needed in Syria is a political solution for the interests of Syria, the Syrian people and Syria’s strategic position,” he said, adding that many lives could have been spared had this been

adopted early in the crisis.

The Hezbollah chief also reiterated that only dialogue under the leadership of Assad could bring about an end to the crisis in Lebanon's neighbor.

"Talk today is on the need for dialogue between the opposition and the government under the leadership of President Bashar Assad," he said.

Nasrallah also said that dialogue should coincide with reforms as the main pillars for a resolution to the year-long unrest in the Arab state.

Violence in Syria has claimed the lives of more than 9,000 people, mostly civilians, according to the U.N. It has also forced thousands to take refuge in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

Turning to domestic issues, the Hezbollah chief urged ministers in Prime Minister Najib Mikati's to work harder, adding that a clash between the components of the government over political issues would lead to the collapse of the government and not non-political ones.

"The government stays via politics and ends via politics," he said.

"I call on the government's components to be enthusiastic, be serious and work because we have a responsibility," he said.

Nasrallah, who is Assad's strongest supporter in Lebanon, said differences among Lebanese on the Syria crisis were acceptable but that these should not imperil the country.

"Everyone is entitled to support what they think is appropriate but with preserving Lebanon as much as possible," Nasrallah said.

On the occasion of Friday's Land Day, which commemorates a violent crackdown in 1976 by Israeli forces against Palestinians who were protesting land confiscations, Nasrallah said Arab countries had the capabilities to liberate Palestine if they joined forces but said the will was absent.

"The [Arab and Muslim] nation is responsible for this and can be victorious given its capabilities which would enable the regaining of Jerusalem and Palestine," he said.

“It has the capability to lift injustice and liberate religious sites but it hasn’t until now and it won’t,” he added.

He also said that Israel and its allies wanted the issue of Palestine to be forgotten and for Palestinians to accept what was left of their land.

“What do the occupiers and whoever is behind them want? They want the Palestinian people to forget about Palestine, for it not to be a priority anymore, to draw attention away from it, for its people to despair and accept the reality of what is left,” Nasrallah said.

He added that the Palestinian issue was still alive because of the resistance against Israel and the people’s sacrifices and perseverance.

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