

## Nasrallah: We will not allow arrest of fighters

By Elias Sakr

BEIRUT: Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said Thursday the group would “cut off the hand” of anyone who tries to arrest any of its members charged in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL).

Nasrallah said Hizbullah would defend itself against any STL indictment implicating its members through means to be agreed upon with its local allies.

Lebanon had a “golden opportunity” to resolve the standoff over the anticipated indictment of Hizbullah members by the STL by embracing the joint efforts of Syria and Saudi Arabia, he added.

“Mistaken is the one who thinks that the resistance will accept or agree to any accusation against its leaders and fighters regardless of pressures and intimidation,” Nasrallah said during a speech to mark Hizbullah martyrs’ day.

“Mistaken is the one who thinks that we will allow the arrest or detainment of any of our mujahideen [fighters]. We will cut off the hand that tries to get to them,” he added. In the event charges are brought against individuals in Lebanon, domestic security forces will be tasked with carrying out any arrests.

Nasrallah said the Saudi-Syrian efforts to put an end to the political crisis should materialize soon in Lebanon, despite some Lebanese leaders asking the US and some Arab states to pressure Riyadh and Hizbullah’s allies in a bid to thwart the reconciliation efforts.

“The Lebanese today have a golden opportunity. Some are taking the country to a place that serves Israel. Today we have two choices, either handing over the country to ... [the US] or we

have the courage to cooperate with the Saudis and the Syrians to arrive at a settlement.”

He urged some political leaders to stop depending on US assistance to deal a blow to the resistance.

“Those who again place wagers on the Americans are wrong. When the American power was at its peak, it failed them and today the Americans are lost ... ” Nasrallah said.

He added that intimidation attempts threatening an Israeli war were aimed at forcing Hizbullah to relinquish its stance but would fail.

Hizbullah would welcome rather than fear an Israeli war, Nasrallah said. “We are ready for any Israeli war against Lebanon to make our great big victory.”

Accusing the US and some domestic parties of seeking to foment strife in Lebanon, Nasrallah said some hoped an indictment implicating Hizbullah members would spark a confrontation between the resistance and the Lebanese Army or Sunni-Shiite armed clashes. “But those are delusionary,” he said.

He called on Lebanese leaders to seize the opportunity to break the deadlock through the investigation of “false witnesses.”

“Because he who is not putting false witnesses on trial is protecting them,” he said.

The Hizbullah leader said US and Israeli plots to disarm the resistance had gone through five stages starting with 2004 UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and ending with the current stage which presents itself in the form of the STL.

Nasrallah said Hizbullah has turned down a French suggestion to give up its weapons in return for a greater share of power.

He added that the French suggested the amendment of the Taif Accord to turn parity between Christians and Muslims to a tripartite distribution of prerogatives between Shiites, Sunnis and Christians.

“They took us for [people] hungry for power but they understood us wrong.” After the failure of the alleged French proposal, Nasrallah said Israel launched the July 2006 war against Lebanon.

In one of the first reactions to Nasrallah's speech, Future Politburo member Mustapha Alloush described it as misleading and unworthy of trust in many aspects.

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