



Hezbollah retaliates for Israel's assassination of Fuad Shukr

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good morning. This is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Beirut, Lebanon on the morning of August 25th, 2024. Well, after three and a half weeks of waiting, Hezbollah has finally launched its retaliatory strikes on Israel. This is in response to Israel's assassination on July 31st of the top Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukr here in Beirut, in the southern suburb known as Dahieh. And the action began this morning with a series of drone strikes and Katyusha rocket strikes on Israel. I'm going to get into the details of that in a moment. And a statement by the Israeli military that it had launched what it described as pre-emptive strikes in the South. So before I get into the details, I just want to deal with a preliminary matter.

Up until now, I have not mentioned in any of my YouTube reports that I have a Rumble channel, and I've been posting my videos on Rumble, every single one of them, at the same time that I post them on YouTube. And the reason why I've done that is as a backup plan. One never knows when for any reason, YouTube might try to deplatform me or suspend me. I don't have any indication at this stage that YouTube is thinking of doing that but in the current repressive environment, for example, the arrest of independent journalist Richard Medhurst by British police at Heathrow Airport a few days ago under the Terrorism Act of 2000 – this was an extraordinary act of repression of the Free Press. And that story continues to unfold. And then this morning, I learned – and this is really what for me was the final straw on why I decided I needed to start making people aware of my Rumble channel – I learned that French police had arrested at an airport in France the Billionaire founder of Telegram, Pavel Durov. Exactly why they did that is not clear to me at all. I can't add much insight into that arrest other than to say that Telegram does allow a number of pro-resistance and pro-Palestinian channels to operate freely. And in fact, upon learning of his arrest the Palestinian human rights organisation Samidoun put out a statement in which it condemned the arrest, expressed solidarity with Pavel Durov and said that it believed that this arrest was motivated by a desire to force Durov to deplatform pro-resistance and pro-Palestinian channels. So after hearing about that I thought, that's it, I need to make people aware that I have this Rumble channel. My handle on Rumble is @DimitriLascaris. No space, no underscoring. And if you like the content, if you value the work that I do, please subscribe

both to this channel and to that channel, just in case I'm for any reason deprived of access to my audience on YouTube.

Now, with that as background, I also want to give you an update on how I ended up in Beirut. Those of you who have been following my reporting over the last few days will know that I've been in the south of Lebanon. And I was down there for about four days with Lebanese journalist Hadi Hoteit, who acted as my guide. And on the final night, which was last night, not last night, the night before, I should say – so that would have been on Friday night, Hadi and I stayed in a private residence atop Mount Safi, which is the southernmost mountain in Lebanon. Or at least major mountain. It's about 1300 metres tall. We were at a height of about 1100 metres overlooking the whole of South Lebanon and significant parts of northern-occupied Palestine. We could also see the Mediterranean coastline from there. This mountain, Mount Safi, is extremely important to the resistance and over the years has been attacked repeatedly by Israel because it is of strategic importance in terms of, you know, being able to provide an overview of northern-occupied Palestine to southern Lebanon. And also to provide, I would imagine, just having been there and seeing it with my own eyes considerable cover for resistance fighters when they are in periods of combat with the Israeli military. In any event we were there for about 24 hours on Mount Safi. We saw what appeared to be one airstrike in the distance. That would have been yesterday, in the early afternoon. And we also heard drones throughout the day yesterday when we were atop Mount Safi. But there was no unusual activity. That was entirely normal – what we saw for the last ten months. And then we left for reasons that were unrelated to, you know, our anticipation of an attack. We didn't know when an attack was going to come and what it would look like. It was just purely by happenstance that we left South Lebanon yesterday at about 7:30 p.m. And then, at dawn this morning, as I say, the retaliatory strikes began.

Now, the first I learned of this was not from Hezbollah or from a newspaper or media outlet reporting on Hezbollah's retaliatory strikes. It was rather from media reports that Israel had launched what it described as pre-emptive strikes on various positions in South Lebanon. And in fact, it launched 40 strikes, approximately. This was unprecedented. I think that is the largest number of airstrikes Israel has launched on South Lebanon in the last ten months, since the genocide in Gaza began. And what later emerged after Hezbollah had had an opportunity to respond to the statements from the Israeli military is that, in fact, these strikes, according to the Islamic Resistance, were not pre-emptive at all. In fact, they were launched by Israel, according to the Islamic resistance, after the Islamic resistance began to attack Israel on a large scale. And according to the Islamic Resistance, there is a false narrative circulating in the Israeli media that these so-called pre-emptive strikes disrupted the attacks by the Islamic Resistance and they had intended to strike Tel Aviv and they were not able to strike Tel Aviv because of the disruption of these attacks. Hezbollah says – and you know, who's telling the truth here, I leave that to you to decide – but Hezbollah says this is all nonsense. Nor was there an intention for them to launch a thousand or more rockets, which apparently is what the Israeli media is also claiming. In any event, what does Hezbollah say about the attacks that it launched? It states that it attacked, I think it's about 11 or 12 military bases in Israel. I believe all of them are in the north of Israel. Or at least most of them are in

the north of Israel and in the Golan Heights, which is occupied Syrian territory. And it also launched, in addition to dozens of attack drones, about 320 Katyusha rockets. As of yet, I have not seen any statement by Hezbollah that it used in this series of strikes any of its heavier rockets and longer range rockets – the Katyusha rockets are kind of the go to rockets that it employs. They're not particularly long range, and they don't pack an enormous explosive punch. Certainly, Hezbollah has more formidable missiles in its arsenal. At least we have every reason to believe that. And for whatever reason, it appears to have refrained at this point from having used them. The interesting thing about this is, as I read the statements of Hezbollah and there's some ambiguity here – although it says that the first stage of its retaliation has been completed, it's not entirely clear whether this is going to continue. It seems that at least for today, based upon its statements, it isn't going to continue to launch. It has completed this phase, what it calls the first phase of its retaliation. But it seems to be suggesting that there is more to come in terms of retaliation. And we're probably going to learn more later today when the secretary general of Hezbollah is going to make a speech. Hassan Nasrallah, it has been announced by Hezbollah, will talk about this retaliatory strike at some point later today and perhaps then we'll get more clarity on whether there is more to come.

But my read at this stage is that there is more to come. And of course, one open question is not only whether there's more to come and what more to come there will be, but there is also a question about whether subsequent phases of this attack, this retaliatory attack, should there be subsequent phases, will be coordinated with attacks from Iran. For the time being I've seen no reports today that Iran has launched any attacks on Israel. Although I can't imagine that it isn't apprised of what Hezbollah is doing and had advance notice of what Hezbollah is doing and is at least coordinating with Hezbollah behind the scenes. So this is a question which remains to be resolved. What is Iran going to do, if anything? My own belief is that Iran will strike and it will strike significantly harder than it struck Israel last time. Because I believe that Iran feels it has no other alternative. And in fact, it has declared that that's precisely what it's going to do. And having declared that it is going to respond severely to the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, apparently by Israel. Having declared that, I think that Iran's military and government would lose a considerable amount of credibility if it didn't carry out that threat. I think the only scenario in which it wouldn't carry out that threat is if the Blinken-Sullivan administration as [inaudible] Nixon calls it puts an end to the genocide in Gaza by forcing using its considerable leverage over Israel finally to stop the slaughter of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza concentration camp. But there's no indication that that's going to happen. In fact, Blinken, as many of you will know, came to Israel in what he described as a last ditch effort, and perhaps the final and only remaining effort to secure a ceasefire deal and the release of the hostages. And he's left with no deal in hand. And the Israeli media has reported that Netanyahu is making demands that Hamas cannot accept, for example, that Israel remain in control of the Philadelphi Corridor in the Gaza concentration camp, which borders upon Egypt. And let's be very clear here that the International Court of Justice has ruled that Israel is occupying Gaza, not just the West Bank, and that the occupation of all Palestinian territories is illegal. So Israel has no entitlement whatsoever to maintain control of any inch of the Gaza concentration camp, which is occupied territory.

And Hamas's demand – the demand of all Palestinian resistance groups, this isn't just Hamas, this is all the Palestinian factions – are demanding that Israel's forces be completely withdrawn from Gaza. That is their right under international law. There's nothing unreasonable about it. Israel seems to have absolutely no interest in satisfying that demand or in ensuring that if it gets the hostages back, it will not resume its attacks on Gaza, which is another very important point. Why would the Palestinians in Gaza give up their hostages when Israel maintains custody over thousands of Palestinian hostages? We don't call them that in the West, but that's precisely what they are. Many of them are not charged with any kind of offence, are held in administrative detention, many of them undergoing torture as numerous human rights organisations have documented. So why would Hamas and the other Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza give up their hostages when Israel continues to have thousands of Palestinians in custody, brutalising them, and will give no assurance that it isn't going to resume the slaughter in Gaza? So it's quite clear, I think, and I've been saying this for months, as have many other observers, that Israel, its government, has absolutely no interest in any kind of a durable ceasefire. And that being the case, it seems to me, highly likely that Iran will launch at some point a heavy retaliatory strike on Israel. In any case, that's what I have to tell you at this time. I may have more to say later today. I'm going to be trying to have a conversation about all of this with geopolitical analyst Laith Marouf, who's been recovering from a health issue. He's doing better. He tells me that he is available now to engage with me in a discussion about all of this. If I can find the time to do that later today, I will certainly do that. But right now, I'm focused on getting out to you my final two or three reports from the south, including a very, I think, compelling account of what has happened in the border village of Ayta ash Shab. This is about a 15 minute report, which I hope to publish shortly. And to give you some insight into the extraordinary destruction that Israel has visited upon that fiercely proud and resistant community on the border of Lebanon and northern-occupied Palestine.

For now, this is Dimitri Lascaris signing off from Beirut, Lebanon, on August 25th, 2024.

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