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Consequences of Nasrallah

To kill Hassan Nasrallah, one of the most popular leaders of the resistance (and not just among Shias), the IDF had to destroy several buildings, launch terrorist attacks via messaging devices and once again kill hundreds of innocents, dropping at least fifteen 2,000lb US-made bombs. Netanyahu gave the order to immolate the buildings in southern Beirut while he was in the States to address the UN General Assembly. Just to rub it in. The real ‘special relationship’ is sacred and eternal. Nasrallah will not rest in peace.

As we now know, neither Genocide Joe and his gang leaders in the West nor the pointmen in the Arab world who support him care a damn about how many Arabs are killed or in which country. Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen: the US and its proxies have irrigated them with blood. The attitude was summed up by the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton after Gaddafi was lynched and the nation was de facto handed over to jihadi factions: ‘We came, we saw, he died’. The post-9/11 wars acclimatized many Western citizens and the politicians they elected to such routine torture and killings. The Israeli genocide in Gaza did the rest. Exultant Israeli cabinet ministers cheered at every atrocity and called for more. Israeli TV networks broadcast footage of ordinary Zionist women screaming that their children were superior to their ‘filthy Arab’ equivalents, who deserved only death. The political and cultural establishments who tolerate the killing fields in Palestine will now regard the assassination of Nasrallah as a triumph and the ‘collateral damage’ – 700 dead from airstrikes and more than 50 from the pager and walkie-talkie attacks, plus thousands injured – as necessary.

That Nasrallah was an extremely shrewd tactician and strategist is acknowledged by both his supporters and his enemies. Speaking with Noam Chomsky once in Santa Fe, he confessed that the two most intelligent political leaders he had ever met were Hugo Chavez and Hassan Nasrallah but he couldn’t say it in public. Both are now dead, so I can say it for him. I never

met Nasrallah myself, but Chomsky was struck by how knowledgeable he was on Israel, the US and their panders in the Arab world.

Mainstream commentators are asking whether he is ‘irreplaceable’. The exact model – a self-taught working-class militant, radicalized as a teenager by the Iranian revolution, the leader of the militias that drove Israel out of Lebanon to the delight of the Arab world – is difficult to recreate. His broadcasts were a spell-binding combination of classical Arabic, incisive analysis and earthy, psychologically acute coinings from the Lebanese street. Few could match them. However there are a number of replacements available. Nasrallah was only too aware of his fate. The IDF/Mossad had been trying to bump him off for decades. He personally supervised the political, educational and military training of several hundred cadres. Israel’s regular hits on Hamas leaders did not eliminate the organization as a military force as October 7th demonstrated in deadly fashion. Despite the loss of their leader, Hezbollah will find a new one. Nobody is irreplaceable.

Will Iran make war on Israel? Difficult to predict. The Iranian leaders are only too aware that this is what Israel is trying to provoke, but Iran–US relations have a different logic. The clerics in Tehran supported the Iraq war and the US intervention in Afghanistan, hoping these acts of goodwill would receive a friendly response. Perhaps Obama would fly to Tehran like Nixon once did to Beijing to make peace and sign a treaty. The Israel Lobby in the US put paid to that notion. And the Iranian leaders, nationalists above all else, who had tried so hard were left out to dry. It seems unlikely that they will launch an all-out attack. Israel, however, knows the Islamic Republic is on the defensive and will almost certainly take the opportunity to inflict further blows.

Will Hezbollah go in for revenge killings? Very possible, but they will choose their own time and place. Netanyahu remains hugely popular in his own country, and killing him would not be appreciated by too many Israelis. But the mask is off. Gaza has seen the collapse of international law, of human rights norms, of courts established by the ‘international community’ in yesteryear. If the US leaders refuse to call the Israelis to heel, who can? Nasrallah understood Israel better than most. His successor will have to learn fast. The nineteenth-century German philosopher Bruno Bauer once wrote that ‘only he who knows its prey better than it knows itself can defeat it.’ To that one can add a warning. An eye for an eye can make the world blind, the elixir of revenge can poison the mind. The resistance must reflect carefully before they next strike.

Read on: Tariq Ali & Rashid Khalidi, [‘The Neck and The Sword’](#), NLR 147.

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