Hezbollah leader assassinated by Israel

Rescuers stand on the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli air strike in the Haret Hreik neighborhood of Beirut's southern suburbs on September 27, 2024.
AFP

International Desk

The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance group Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was assassinated in an Israeli air strike in Lebanon's capital Beirut on Friday.

The group in a statement on Saturday confirmed his death, saying that Nasrallah "has joined his fellow martyrs." Hezbollah vowed to "continue the holy war against the enemy and in support of Palestine."

The Israeli military said it carried out a precise airstrike on Friday while top Hezbollah officials were meeting at their headquarters in Zahiyeh, south of Beirut.

Lebanon's Health Minister Firass Abiad said at least 11 people were killed and 108 wounded in Israeli attacks. A source close to Hezbollah said Saturday that the group's commander in south, Ali Karake, was killed in the Israeli strike.

A senior general in Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps was also among the victims.

General Abbas Nilforoushan, deputy commander of IRGC operations, "was killed in Israel's attack on Lebanon that assassinated the Hezbollah chief," said the official IRNA news agency, giving no further details.

Leader of the Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in a message of condolences later on Saturday said the foundation the Hezbollah chief laid in Lebanon and directed towards other Resistance groups will not be destroyed by his absence, but will be further strengthened by his blood and that of the other martyrs of this incident.

"The blows of the Resistance Front will become more crushing against the worn-out and crumbling body of the Zionist regime, by the will of God. The Zionist regime's wicked nature has not achieved victory in this incident," the Leader added.

"The Zionist criminals should know that they are too small to cause significant damage to the strong construction of Hezbollah in Lebanon," Ayatollah Khamenei said in an earlier statement on Saturday.

The Leader said resistance forces are the ones to decide the fate of the region despite the criminal Israeli massacres.

"The killing of defenseless people in Lebanon once again revealed to everyone the ferocity of the Zionist rabid dog, and proved the short-sightedness and stupid policy of the leaders of the usurping regime," he said.

"The terrorist gang ruling the Zionist regime did not learn from their one-year criminal war in Gaza and failed to understand that the mass killing of women, children and civilians cannot affect the solid construction of the resistance organization and destroy it.

"Now they are trying the same foolish policy in Lebanon. The Zionist criminals should know that they are too small to cause significant damage to the strong construction of Hezbollah in Lebanon. All the resistance forces of the region are with Hezbollah and support it," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the fate of the region will be decided by the resistance forces, with Hezbollah at the head of them.

"The people of Lebanon have not forgotten that once upon a time when the military of the usurping regime had all the way to Beirut under its boots, it was Hezbollah that cut off their leg and made Lebanon dear and proud," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also declared five days of mourning for the Hezbollah chief.

"The Zionist criminals should know that they are too small to cause significant damage to the strong construction of Hezbollah in Lebanon," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

'Stand with Lebanese'

He said, "It is obligatory for all Muslims to stand with the people of Lebanon and proud Hezbollah with their resources and help them in confronting the usurping, cruel and evil regime."

The Palestinian resistance group Hamas in a statement issued condolences to its ally, Hezbollah. Nasrallah frequently described launching rockets against northern Israel as a "support front" for Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza.

"History has proven that the resistance ... whenever its leaders die as martyrs, will be succeeded on the same path by a generation of leaders who are more valiant, stronger and more determined to continue the confrontation," the Hamas statement said.

It added that, "The assassinations will only increase the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine in determination and resolve."

US complicity

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian issued a statement, saying the assassination of Nasrallah "will only further strengthen the resistance."

He added that the international community will not forget that the order for this "terrorist attack" was issued from New York, likely referring to Israeli Prime Minister's Benjamin Netanyahu's address at the UN General Assembly on Friday.

Pezeshkian also said the US cannot deny complicity in Nasrallah's killing.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Israel used several US "bunker buster" bombs to strike Beirut on Friday.

"Just this morning, the Israeli regime used several 5,000-pound bunker busters that had been gifted to them by the United States to hit residential areas in Beirut," he told a UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.

Israel only notified the US about the major airstrike targeting Hezbollah leader after its planes were already in the air and the operation was in motion, a US official said on Friday.

"Netanyahu's crimes will continue since they are unpunished. The danger is extreme for the region and the world," French MP Jean-Luc Melenchon said.

'Path of Nasrallah will continue'

Iran's Foreign Ministry said Saturday the path of Hezbollah chief will continue despite his assassination.

"The glorious path of the leader of the resistance, Hassan Nasrallah, will continue and his sacred goal will be realized in the liberation of Quds, God willing," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a post on social media X.

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said the killing of Hezbollah chief will bring about Israel's "destruction."

"We warn the leaders of the occupying regime that the unjust bloodshed... especially of Hezbollah's secretary general, martyr Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, will bring about their destruction," Iran's ISNA news agency quoted Aref as saying.

'Cowardly act'

Former Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri said that the assassination of Nasrallah plunged Lebanon and the region into a new phase of violence.

In a statement on Saturday, he said, "It is a cowardly act, condemned in every way by us, who have paid dearly with our loved ones when assassination became a substitute for politics."

"We disagreed greatly with the late Mr. Hassan and his party, and rarely found common ground, but Lebanon was the umbrella for all. During this extremely difficult phase, our unity and solidarity remain essential. Lebanon remains above all."

'Shameful attack'

Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani also condemned the assassination of Hezbollah chief as a "crime" and declared a three-day period of mourning in his country.

The Friday attack on Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold that killed the group's leader was a "shameful attack" and "a crime that shows the Zionist entity has crossed all the red lines," Sudani said in a statement, calling Nasrallah "a martyr on the path of the righteous."

'Genocide' in Lebanon

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also reacted to the Israeli attack on Lebanon, saying that the regime was committing a "genocide" in Lebanon.

"Lebanon and the Lebanese people are the latest target of a policy of genocide, occupation and invasion carried out by Israel since October 7," Erdogan wrote on X.

'Danger is extreme for world'

Jean-Luc Melenchon, a left-wing French politician and former Member of the European Parliament, said the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah "is one more step towards the invasion of Lebanon and general war."

In a post on X, he said, "France no longer counts on the ground. Netanyahu's crimes will continue since they are unpunished. The danger is extreme for the region and the world."

Fanning 'flame of sacrifice'

Yemen's Ansarallah resistance group said the killing of Hassan Nasrallah would strengthen their determination to confront the Israeli enemy.

"The martyrdom of... Hassan Nasrallah will increase the flame of sacrifice, the heat of enthusiasm, the strength of resolve," said a statement, vowing to achieve "victory and the demise of the Israeli enemy."

Since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza in last October, Hezbollah has been exchanging fire with the Israeli occupation army in support of Palestinians in Gaza where more than 41,000 Palestinians – mostly women and children – have been killed in the Israel's strikes.

The cross-border strikes have gradually escalated and displaced tens of thousands of civilians on both sides of the border.

Hostilities escalated dramatically last week when thousands of explosives hidden in pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah detonated, killing dozens of people and leaving thousands, including many civilians, with severe injuries to the eyes, face and limbs. Israel is widely believed to be behind the attack.

Israel has also killed several top Hezbollah commanders in Beirut, especially in the past two weeks.

The UN refugee chief said Saturday that more than 50,000 people had fled to Syria amid escalating Israeli air strikes on Lebanon.

He added that "well over 200,000 people are displaced inside Lebanon."