

Stupendous farewell to Nasrallah

'Resistance not over,' Hezbollah chief stresses

Leader: Enduring resistance against oppression, arrogance to continue



A woman holds the picture of Lebanon's former Hezbollah leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, as she attends his funeral procession in Beirut, Lebanon, on Feb. 23, 2025.
● BILAL HUSSEIN/AP

International Desk

Tens of thousands of people bid farewell to Hezbollah's slain leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah at a mass funeral in Beirut on Sunday, nearly five months after he was assassinated in an Israeli airstrike.

Carrying pictures of Nasrallah and Hezbollah flags, supporters from Lebanon and other countries in the region filled the 55,000-seat Camille Chamoun Sports City stadium in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Women wailed as a truck carrying the coffins of Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine - Nasrallah's chosen successor assassinated in another Israeli air strike - slowly moved through the crowd, topped with two black turbans and draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag. Nasrallah was assassinated in Israel's bombardment of southern Beirut on September 27, 2024. Using 85 tons of explosives, Israeli jets leveled six residential buildings in Dahiyeh, following a week-long bombing campaign that hit many areas from southern Lebanon to Beirut.

As a founding member of Hezbollah in 1982, Nasrallah won renown around the Arab world in May 2000 when Israel ended its 22-year occupation of south Lebanon under relentless attacks by the group under his leadership.

'Resistance not over'

In a televised address to the ceremony, Nasrallah's successor Naim Qassem said Hezbollah would keep following his "path"

and rejected any control of "tyrant America" over Lebanon.

"The resistance is not over, the resistance is still present and ready" to face Israel, he said.

"We do not accept the tyrant America to control our country," Naim Qassem.

"You will not gain through politics what you failed to gain in war," he said.

Earlier this month, US Deputy Special Envoy for the Middle East Morgan Ortogus said the group was "defeated by Israel," declaring what she claimed as "the end of Hezbollah's reign of terror."

"Know this Americans, if... you try to pressure officials and Lebanon, you will not be able to achieve your goals", adding "officials in Lebanon know the balance of powers," Sheikh Qassem said. "Do not interpret our patience and wisdom in assessing priorities as weakness," he warned.

Emphasizing Nasrallah's contributions to the Palestinian cause, he affirmed, "Sayyed Nasrallah's contribution was great in reviving the Palestinian cause; we will preserve this trust and will continue to tread this path." He vowed that Hezbollah would remain steadfast, stressing, "We will continue Sayyed Nasrallah's path, even if our houses should be destroyed over our heads, even if we are all killed."

Ayatollah Khamenei's message

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in a message to the ceremony

warned the enemy that the enduring resistance against oppression and arrogance will continue until it achieves its ultimate objective.

The Leader described martyred Nasrallah as the leading commander of the resistance in the region, saying he is now at the "height of honor." Nasrallah's spirit and path will shine more gloriously each day, illuminating the way for his followers, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Nasrallah speeches were blasted as the mourners raised their fists in the air and chanted, "We are at your service, Nasrallah," and "We are loyal to the promise, Nasrallah." Men, women and children walked in the biting cold to reach the site of the ceremony, that was delayed for months over security concerns.

Since Saturday, roads into Beirut have been clogged with carloads of supporters travelling in from south and east Lebanon. Hezbollah's Al-Manar television said the movement deployed 25,000 members for crowd control. A security source said 4,000 troops and security personnel were on duty.

Israeli warplanes

As the funeral began at the Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium, Israeli warplanes flew at a low altitude over Beirut in what minister of military affairs Israel Katz said was a "clear message" against anyone who threatens Israel.

The official National News Agency (NNA) also reported Israeli strikes in Lebanon's south, in-

cluding a location about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the border, but also in the east.

Israel's military claimed it had struck "sites containing rocket launchers and weapons" in those areas.

Israel has carried out multiple strikes in Lebanon since a November 27 cease-fire deal with Hezbollah ended more than a year of hostilities including two months of all-out war.

The funeral comes days after the deadline for Israel to withdraw from Lebanon's south, with Israeli troops pulling out from all but five locations.

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun asked parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally, to represent him at the ceremony, while Prime Minister Nawaf Salam was to be represented by a minister.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were in attendance, with representatives of Iraq's main factions also expected to come.

Araghchi, in a speech from Beirut, described the slain leaders as "two heroes of the resistance" and vowed that "the path of resistance will continue."

Before the funeral, Araghchi and other Iranian officials met Lebanon's President Aoun.

According to a statement from Aoun's office, he told the Iranian delegation that Lebanon was "tired of the war of others," and that it had "paid a heavy price for the Palestinian cause."

Kremlin says will 'never sell' captured Ukrainian territory



Dmitry Peskov
● AFP

The Kremlin ruled out any territorial concessions as part of a truce with Ukraine, saying that Russia would never "sell" territory it has seized in eastern Ukraine as part of any cease-fire deal.

"The people decided to join Russia a long time ago," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV, referring to votes in eastern Ukraine held amid the offensive, AFP reported.

"No one will ever sell off these territories. That's the most important thing." The Kremlin also hailed dialogue between Donald Trump

and Vladimir Putin - two "extraordinary" presidents - as "promising".

Trump broke with Western policy earlier this month by phoning Putin to discuss how to end the Ukraine conflict.

Top Russian and US officials then met in Saudi Arabia last week to discuss a "restoration" of ties and start a discussion on a possible Ukraine cease-fire - all without the involvement of Kiev or Europe.

"This is a dialogue between two extraordinary presidents," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV on Sunday. "It is important that nothing prevents us from realizing the political will of the two heads of state."

Trump's overtures to Moscow have triggered alarm in Kiev and across Europe. But it is unclear whether his moves will be able to bring Moscow and Kiev closer to a truce.

Hamas raps Israel's procrastination in release of Palestinians

Palestinian resistance group Hamas condemned Israel's decision to postpone the release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners, saying its claim that the captives' handover ceremonies are "humiliating" was false and a pretext to evade Israel's obligations under the Gaza cease-fire agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision reflects a deliberate attempt to disrupt the agreement, represents a blatant violation of its terms, and shows the occupation's lack of reliability in implementing its obligations," Ezzat El Rashq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said in a statement on Sunday, Al Jazeera reported.

Israel delayed the release of 620 Palestinian prisoners

scheduled to be released on Saturday after Hamas upheld its side of the cease-fire deal by releasing six Israeli captives from Gaza, the last group of living captives to be freed under the cease-fire's first phase.

Netanyahu earlier on Sunday said freeing Palestinians would be delayed until Hamas ends its "humiliating ceremonies" while releasing Israeli captives, issuing a new demand not spelt out in the cease-fire agreement. Hamas accused Netanyahu of playing "dirty games to sabotage and undermine" the deal.

"The prisoner handover ceremony does not include any insult to them, but rather reflects the noble humane treatment of them", Hamas said, referring to the staging



● AFP

of the captives' release, as it called on mediating nations to ensure Israel sticks to the terms of the deal.

Since the cease-fire came into effect on January 19, Hamas has released 25 Israeli captives in high-profile handovers, with masked fighters parading the captives on stage. The cease-fire deal does not categorically define how Hamas and Israel should release the

Israeli captives and the Palestinian prisoners.

In Gaza and the occupied West Bank, Palestinian families waited for hours on Saturday for their loved ones to be released from Israeli prisons. The Palestinian Prisoner's Society advocacy group said Israel would free 620 inmates, most of them from Gaza who were taken into custody during the war.