

'Illusion' of Iran's weakened regional standing

Official: Israel posing threat to West Asia's peace, security

INTERVIEW

Since October 7, 2023, when Palestinian resistance groups launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, the West Asia region has gone through markedly different days. The Zionist regime's expansionist ambitions have not been confined to the Gaza Strip or proposals like the forced displacement of Palestinians but have extended to sporadic attacks on Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iran, and, most recently, Qatar. The developments following October 7 have shaken up many regional equations. In light of these changes, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also tried to navigate its regional policies to safeguard its national interests. Following the martyrdom of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the late secretary-general of Lebanon's Hezbollah group, and rising whispers in Lebanon about the necessity to disarm Hezbollah, how has Tehran's relationship with this resistance group shaped up? Has Iran's regional power taken a hit in the past two years? What impact have the Zionist regime's expansionist moves had on relations among regional countries and the Persian Gulf states? These questions were put to Mehdi Shushtari, assistant foreign minister for West Asian and North African Affairs, in an interview, parts of which are translated below:



Mehdi Shushtari



The photo shows an Iranian flag waving in the wind while a rocket is being launched into the sky in the background.

● TASNIM

Lebanon has made a comeback in the headlines. Recently, the discussion around Hezbollah's disarmament has become prominent in both local and regional, as well as international media. Meanwhile, we witnessed Mr. Larjani's trip to Beirut. Firstly, could you kindly lay out the agenda of this trip? What was the purpose behind it?

SHUSHTARI: After his appointment as secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Larjani planned and carried out visits to Iraq and Lebanon. The choice of these two countries as his first destinations stems from Iran's very close ties with both.

After all, our historical relations with Lebanon go back centuries. The Lebanese prime minister recently mentioned in an interview with a Saudi Arabian media outlet the deep-rooted and longstanding nature of Iran-Lebanon relations and Lebanon's desire to maintain and strengthen these ties. The relationship covers various areas: cultural links from the past, religious bonds between Iran and Lebanon, and commercial relations, including the travel of traders, religious pilgrims, and tourists. So, this background is well established.

Developments in Lebanon are a concern for the Islamic Republic of Iran and the entire region since Lebanon is targeted by the Zionist regime's aggression and occupation. Many regional and international players keep a close eye on Lebanon's situation, and Iran's attention to this issue is in line with broader regional and international concern.

At the same time, Iran's fundamental stance, which has always been stressed, is that Lebanon's internal matters, including the question of the Resistance's weapons and how Lebanon utilizes what is, in the end, a tool of power, capability, and deterrence, are purely Lebanese issues.

We absolutely oppose any external parties trying to butt in and impose plans on Lebanon. During Dr. Larjani's trip, he took the opportunity in official meet-



ings with Lebanon's top officials — the president, the parliament speaker, and the prime minister — to clearly spell out Iran's position to clear up any possible misunderstandings that may have existed before the visit. It was a good occasion for frank, close, and friendly talks, which was one of the trip's key goals. At the same time, we emphasized that any issue inside Lebanon is a Lebanese matter, and we encourage our Lebanese friends to bring up the recently raised topics within the framework of national dialogue.

To our Lebanese friends, including political parties and the government, we expressed Iran's viewpoint and hope they take steps forward on this path and be able to resolve their differences and is-

ues through dialogue. We are ready to assist in facilitating talks and achieving a national consensus if Lebanon requests our support.

You mentioned Iran's readiness to help. Do we also bring this up in our talks with Hezbollah? What is the current state of dialogue between Iran and Hezbollah?

Hezbollah is an influential political force on Lebanon's scene, particularly for its role in resisting occupation and freeing Lebanese territories from the 1980s onward and during subsequent wars. All Lebanese political factions acknowledge Hezbollah's prominent role in driving out occupiers and resisting them. As a key po-

litical actor within Lebanon, Hezbollah maintains close ties with many countries, including Iran.

However, our links are not limited to Shia groups or Hezbollah. We have long-standing relations with nearly all political forces in Lebanon — across Shia, Sunni, Christian, and Druze communities — and maintain a meaningful yet close distance with all. We can leverage this capacity if Lebanese parties wish, helping to set the stage for dialogue, consensus, and national agreement. The important point is that the decision must be Lebanese-made and free from foreign interference.

We have witnessed increased Israeli attacks on Yemen. Israel and the US still equate targeting Ansarullah (the Houthis) with countering Iran and what they call "Iran's regional influence". How does ongoing hostility and the need to counter it feature in Iran's diplomatic activities in the region?

Ansarullah is an effective, independent political force in Yemen, making its own decisions. The support for Gaza's people and the Palestinian resistance is a decision Ansarullah took on its own, choosing how to provide it based on its capabilities, limitations, and circumstances.

This equally applies to other resistance forces in the region — including Lebanon's Hezbollah, which promptly jumped into the Gaza support front after October 7, and resistance groups in other countries — all have made fully independent decisions.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic of Iran maintains close ties with Yemen's government, led by Ansarullah. The Zionist regime's attacks or the expansion of conflict into Yemen and the region naturally form a key focus of Iran's consultations with regional countries because we strongly believe — and the region now rightly realizes



During Dr. Larjani's trip, he took the opportunity in official meetings with Lebanon's top officials — the president, the parliament speaker, and the prime minister — to clearly spell out Iran's position to clear up any possible misunderstandings that may have existed before the visit: We emphasized that any issue inside Lebanon is a Lebanese matter, and we encourage our Lebanese friends to bring up the recently raised topics within the framework of national dialogue.



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun (R) shakes hands with Ali Larjani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 13, 2025.

● LEBANESE PRESIDENCY PRESS OFFICE

