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LEBANON – TIME TO REBUILD

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah spoke on Al-Manar television on 14 August 2006, the first day of the cease-fire following Israel's recent invasion of Lebanon. These excerpts are taken from his broadcast.

'Peace be upon you. Today is a great day when our people are going back to their homes, back to their villages. I come to you today with a message, and I would like in this message to focus on some of the issues. First, what we are facing today. I don't want to evaluate, and I don't want to talk in details. But I will summarise it in a few words. We are witnessing a strategic and historic victory. This is no exaggeration. This is a victory for Lebanon – all of Lebanon – for the resistance, and for the entire nation.

What is the meaning of this? What is the evidence? This is what I will leave to talk about in the next few days. Because talking about this issue is mainly about the martyrs, the sacrifices of the martyrs, the resistance martyrs, the martyrs from all the parties, all the honourable resistance, from the army, the security forces, the civil defence martyrs, the media martyrs, men, women, civilians who were killed, specially in the massacres, from the first days until yesterday in the southern part of Beirut. Because talking about victory is talking about the resistors, the sacrifice, steadfastness, strength, people, family, beloved ones, friends, patience, confidence, strong will, and the loyal ones who stood with us in Lebanon, and outside of Lebanon during all this war ...

I would like to talk about the displaced refugees and the return to their homes, and what's after the return. Of course, in the first place, I would like to greet those who stood strong, confronting the enemy. It was an unbearable burden because the bombardment from the air, the sea, and the land was not paralleled before in the history of Lebanon. The amount of destruction by the Israeli enemy is unsurpassed. Not just the infrastructure, but also the homes. It's unsurpassed in any war between Israel and Lebanon. There is huge destruction left by this enemy to show us his savagery.

During the last few days they destroyed thousands of homes in the south, in south Beirut, in the Beka Valley, and all over Lebanon. But there was a specific focus on the area in the south of Lebanon, and Beirut's southern suburb. Of course, the goal is to hurt the people, punish the people for their position, their

honour, their discipline, their faith, their humanity, and their pride.

Thanks should also be given to those who suffered during the displacement and became refugees, and today they are coming back to their homes, even though they are demolished. I would like to thank the people in the areas, the religious sects, and the country and the government, and all the humanitarian organisations. Everybody who embraced those displaced ones during this difficult war period. I would like to talk to those who are coming back to their homes and to those who never left their homes, about the homes that were destroyed.

There are two types of destruction. I would like to talk about the residential units and homes. Any other destruction such as infrastructure, the economy, and other things that were destroyed, I will postpone talking about until later. Now, the urgent issue is the homes and residential units, because this is where these families live.

For those homes that were hit but are still inhabitable, starting tomorrow morning, the brothers in the cities, villages, and towns will walk around, evaluate, talk to the owners to give immediate financial support to start rebuilding these homes and units as soon as possible.

As for the homes that were completely demolished, and this is the more difficult issue, I would like to tell these families not to worry. What I said at the beginning of the war was not simply meant to boost your steadfastness. Today is the day when I fulfil my promise to you. You don't need to ask anybody for money. You don't need to stand in any line. You don't need to go anywhere for help. My brothers, who are your brothers, are in all villages and cities, and they will come to help you, starting tomorrow morning.

We will co-operate with you. We will help you. We cannot wait for the government, and the government red tape, because it might need some time. What the government can do, we can follow up, co-ordinate with, and be parallel to. We can co-operate together on two lines at the same time, starting tomorrow. The first line is to secure a specific amount of money, a reasonable amount to each family, to help them to rent a home for a full year, and to buy reasonable, suitable furniture for that house. Because rebuilding the homes that were completely destroyed will certainly take several months, and the natural replacement is for these people to rent a home to live in and to buy furniture for this house. That can start tomorrow.

Within a few days, we will be able to cover these cases, even though it is a large number. Until now, the initial statistics regarding destruction of homes and units completely demolished is more than 15,000. I know this is a large number, but we have the will and capability to carry out this rebuilding.

The second parallel line is to remove the debris and start rebuilding, hoping that you together with us, within a few months, that we can rebuild these homes that were destroyed. It's will power, not just money. It's patience, seriousness, hard work, accuracy. These are the values that enabled us to face the attack and achieve victory. With the same values, these feelings and emotions, we can go through the rebuilding phase and also achieve victory in it.

In this regard, I call on all the engineers in our areas, not just the money. It's not

enough. We need solidarity, initiative and co-operation on the part of engineers and from the retailers who are selling building supplies and furniture. In other words, you cannot increase your prices because of high demand. They need to be more responsible, more humanitarian, more in a nationalistic way. Don't increase prices.

We also need labour, simple labour, to be able to rebuild on that scale. We might not have enough physical labour because of the situation the country lived through in the last few months. So we all have to volunteer and help those owners to rebuild their homes. I call all the Lebanese youth to volunteer in the same nationalistic spirit that we saw during the war, hosting the displaced ones, civil defence, and zeal for your own country. But specifically I talk to the youth of Hezbollah, all over the country, to the *mujahideen*, to the students, to the union people, to the freelancers. Everybody, we need to converge and start rebuilding in every village, in every city, in every district.

Let's set aside our personal feelings and give as much as we can to rebuild. Even the simple labour we need to help with. We need to be available, and I think that with the large numbers we represent, that we express on their behalf, if every brother would take one or two days, or several days, or a few hours every day, we will be able to make great efforts and help.

This is a great effort and great undertaking. I also call on those who can donate, especially the Lebanese overseas, that we rely on them all the time. Now the door is open. Please help and support us financially because completing the victory only happens after rebuilding, especially homes, even better than before they were demolished. So those honourable families can go back and live in them.

The last topic in this message of mine has to do with the controversy that began a few days ago about disarming Hezbollah and the weapons of Hezbollah. I don't like to go into this part of the argument, but I want this discussion to be responsible and careful.

Dear Brothers, when the war was going on, and the beloved ones of the resistance were writing the books in sacrifice and conducting miracles, there was discussion behind closed doors about the nature of things after the war south of the Litani, about the deployment of the Lebanese army, and the borders, and the international forces, and if this deployment took place, what is the place of the resistance, how will the resistance act about their arms. All these were very responsible discussions. It was always conducted through President Nabih Berri, who represents in reality great Lebanese credibility, and I urge those engaged in this discussion, in the media, to listen to him, and to listen to his voice and to his wisdom in treating this very sensitive issue. All these discussions were taking place before the resolution of the United Nations and after the resolution. Till the last session of the government, this issue was given for discussion. We were surprised that some ministers in the government leaked the discussion and the disagreement to the media, to some of the local Arabic TV channels, and thus the discussion began to grow more and more and went out of control. What was supposed to have been a discussion behind closed doors became a public debate throughout the whole nation, and this, in my opinion, does not serve the best

interest of Lebanon, and is not suitable at this time. In any event, I reiterate my call to restore this debate to its official channels ... I would like to say that during this serious discussion and dialogue, and through the wise personalities in this country, and away from the media and the exaggerations, I'm confident that we can reach a suitable solution that takes care of the national interest ...'

RETURN OF 'SON OF STAR WARS'

Tom Baldwin reports in The Times that the Pentagon is once again actively considering the possibility that Britain might be drawn into the American missile defence system, which became widely known as 'Son of Star Wars'.

Apparently, British officials have reported that discreet questions are being asked by military planners in the United States: will the Brits accept the ten interceptor units, designed to 'knock out a ballistic missile fired by terrorists or states such as Iran before it reaches the United States'? But the interceptors are not designed to offer such protection to their British hosts, and they are only being offered to London because the Pentagon has now been rejected by Poland and the Czech Republic, which were the preferred sites.

The Americans have ruled out a sideways shift in Central Europe, because the Hungarians are 'too close to Russia'. The Russians are understandably unenthusiastic about an American military presence in Central Europe, although until recently this lack of enthusiasm would be seen by right-wing leaders in Poland or the Czech Republic as a modest plus. Today, the downside of this commitment is evidently more apparent, as the post-Cold War thaw between East and West is being heated up by engagements in the Middle East.

The justification of the Son of Star Wars by reference to Iran is itself a case in point. There is not a very live prospect of Iranian missile attacks on the United States, and the only power which might consider such attacks for the foreseeable future remains Russia. But the mock *détente* forbids the unfriendly reference to Russia, and requires the nomination of an alternative bogey. That the alternative has no nuclear missiles, and is unlikely to have any for a very long time, if at all, is no impediment to the spin machines of the American military. How malleable will the British prove to be in this respect?

'The US State Department is investigating whether Israel's use of American-made cluster bombs in southern Lebanon violated secret agreements with the United States that restrict when it can employ such weapons, two officials said ... The investigation by the department's Office of Defense Trade Controls began this week after reports that three types of American cluster munitions, anti-personnel weapons that spray bomblets over a wide area, have been found in many areas of southern Lebanon and were responsible for civilian casualties.' (*New York Times*, 24 August 2006)