

Laith Marouf: BEIRUT UNDER FIRE: ISRAEL VS. THE RESISTANCE AXIS

This interview breaks down the escalating Lebanon-Israel war, including deadly strikes on Beirut, Hezbollah's battlefield response, and claims of growing regional coordination involving Iran, Iraq, and other resistance groups. It also explores the possibility of a wider ground war, the role of Syria, shifting military strategy, and how the balance of escalation may be changing across the region. A deep look at the conflict, its human cost, and the risks of a much broader regional confrontation.

#Nima

And our dear friend, our brother Laith Marouf from Beirut, is here with us. Welcome back, Laith.

#Laith

Great to be with you, Nima.

#Nima

Laith, let's start with the war and what's going on between Lebanon and Israel. Israel is bombing Beirut without giving any sort of warning—saying, "We're going to hit this neighborhood, that neighborhood." What is going on in terms of the attacks by the Israelis and the way Hezbollah is responding?

#Laith

Yeah, I mean, last night around 2:33 a.m., the Zionists attacked multiple neighborhoods in the core downtown area of Beirut. They hit residential buildings—there are at least 14 martyrs, mainly families who were sleeping. One of the apartments that was hit belonged to the manager of political programming at Al-Manar television, and he was martyred along with his wife. So it was a direct assassination of a journalist, a media producer. This is now, of course, two and a half years of us watching the Zionists kill journalists and media producers. In fact, after these two and a half years of this war, the Zionists have managed to kill more journalists on this planet than all the wars combined from World War I until now.

This is kind of a staggering number, I think. I can't imagine—you know, this is true, of course, for medical staff as well. The largest combined number of medical staff killed, just since the beginning of this round of war in Lebanon over the last 14 days—they've killed more than 40 medical workers. And that's not to mention the number of children and women. On average, since the beginning of

this round of war here in Lebanon, the Israelis are killing six children a day. So this is infanticide, medicide—all the things we can imagine about genocide. The Zionists seem to be the champions of that in human history.

In terms of the resistance in the south of Lebanon, it's wave after wave of attempted invasions. And even when they announced two days ago that they were launching the big invasion, that was like the sixth or seventh time they'd said that. So people should take it with a grain of salt. But even with the thousands of raids on villages in the south, the Zionists last night had to withdraw from the edges of villages they were trying to occupy. Over the last 24 hours, Hezbollah destroyed at least 10 Merkava tanks. The numbers are just piling up—15 days since the battle started in the south of Lebanon, I think the total is close to 30 tanks destroyed.

So this is a huge number. There are already 45,000 Zionist troops on the border. They're mobilizing more, but it doesn't seem to be helping them, because the more they mobilize close to the border of Lebanon, the easier they become as targets for Hezbollah's artillery, missiles, and drones. Hezbollah keeps hitting gathering points inside occupied Palestine, in the north of occupied Palestine, and continues to fire ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and long-range drones all the way to the Tel Aviv region. And this is combined, of course, with the Iranian waves of missiles that are hitting many of those same targets. So this is kind of the overall picture of what's happening here in Lebanon.

#Nima

It seems there's some sort of coordination between Iran and Hezbollah in attacking, for example, the northern part of Israel. Do you think that's actually coordinated, or is it just happening without any real planning?

#Laith

Definitely there is coordination, and each member of the Axis of Resistance has its own set of targets that they're focusing on. Even when we talk about the Iraqi resistance—what targets is it hitting inside the Zionist colony, or inside Iraq, or in Jordan and Kuwait, as we've seen? So there is an overall plan, and each component of the Axis of Resistance has a list of targets they're prioritizing. As we see, there are bases in the north of Palestine, in the occupied Golan Heights, that the Iranian Aerospace Forces are hitting. Those are the ones with huge bunkers underneath them and so on. And we constantly see these massive ballistic missiles striking them from Iran.

And that's clearly meant to help the resistance in South Lebanon face less surveillance, or to weaken the Zionists' ability to command and control their troops along the border with Lebanon. So yes, there is coordination. There are specific targets for each of the components, and they're going through these lists of targets in a clear, step-by-step manner. We didn't see Hezbollah or Iran target the main bases from the beginning. Clearly, they prioritized taking out air defense and communication hubs for the Zionists. And now, as we see, Hezbollah's missiles and drones are

reaching their targets much more easily, because after two weeks of destroying the air defenses of the Zionist colony and their command, control, and communication linkups, it's becoming easier and easier for Hezbollah and other members of the Axis to hit their targets.

#Nima

Nima, do you see a ground invasion of Lebanon happening anytime soon? Because the Israelis are talking about 450,000 reservists being called up to join the IDF.

#Nima

What's the understanding in Hezbollah, or in Lebanon generally, of the quality of these fighters? Because you have the main army, and now you have the reservists coming to the battlefield. How are they perceived?

#Laith

Well, last night we saw a picture released by Smotrich, showing him standing over his son's bed in the ICU. His son was targeted on the first day of his deployment in the north of Palestine. So if this is the fate of the son of a major minister in the Zionist colony—someone who probably had a lot of protection and wasn't put on the front line—you can imagine what's happening to the elite units of the Zionists who are right on the front lines. Clearly, they're taking a beating. They're unable to enter the villages in the south of Lebanon, even though they've destroyed them completely.

Throwing around numbers like 450,000 reservists being called up—that's a figure the Zionist colony has never, in its entire history, been able to mobilize. I think it's a number that's partially fake; it's impossible for them to reach it. It's just propaganda meant to create some momentum, to make the Zionists feel they have the numbers on their side. The other thing is, the more the Zionists push troops to the border with Lebanon, the fewer they have to control the West Bank and Gaza. And we've seen the Iranian Aerospace Forces hit multiple targets in the West Bank over the last few days, as well as along the borders of occupied Gaza. So this must be worrying for the Zionists.

This is why we see the settler-colonist fascists rampaging wildly in the West Bank—because they've now become the unofficial enforcement forces there. So many Israeli soldiers are being withdrawn from the West Bank and sent to the borders with Lebanon. That's why we're seeing them now also rampaging—like raping a Palestinian man in the Jordan Valley yesterday in front of his children and then killing him, and also raping women, as happened in another village. This is the norm now, because these colonists in the West Bank have assumed authority with the withdrawal of Israeli troops from there. So I don't know if they're actually going to be able to mobilize such a number.

And I would say one more thing about this: the more they're gathered in one place—these Israeli soldiers—the easier they are as a target. You can't just bring hundreds of thousands of soldiers to

the front line and have bunkers for all of them. You're not going to have bunkers for all of them. You're not going to bring thousands of tanks to the border with Lebanon and have shelter for those tanks from incoming ATGMs or missiles, and so forth. So it's a desperate move to do that. Up until now, clearly, the Israelis have been depending on their air power—just as the Americans are depending on their air power in Iran—and that's not going to win them a war. So they'll have to risk the lives of these easy targets, and it will accelerate the collapse of their armed forces if they do so.

#Nima

Laith, the Trump administration is trying to bring, you know, the HTS and Al-Jolani from Syria into the battle to go against Lebanon and help Israel. And it seems they're hesitant to go in that direction. Do you think they're going to join? Are they going to help Israel after all?

#Laith

Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of fog of war right now that's making it hard for people to realize what's happening on the ground. But the truth of the matter is that HTS is already involved. The battle that happened a week ago in Nabi Sheet in the Beqaa Valley, when the Zionist special forces infiltrated and were ambushed, happened under the protection of HTS. The Zionist invading troops drove through Syria, through the northern part of Damascus, under the protection of HTS, and then infiltrated from an illegal post—a smuggling area in the Beqaa and the Qalamoun Mountains—under the protection of HTS. There was a huge battle where the red bandanas, or the special forces of HTS, were slaughtered along with the Israelis, who had to withdraw.

Similarly, over the last four days, the Zionists took these red bandanas—the special forces of HTS—through the occupied Golan Heights and placed them at the entrance of Shebaa village in southern Lebanon. It's the easternmost village in the border area of south Lebanon, right on the foothills of Jabal al-Sheikh, or Mount Hermon. And again, the red bandanas were defeated in this little remote village that isn't even Shia. Shebaa is a Sunni village. There aren't many Hezbollah fighters there, but there are fighters from the Islamic Group, which is a kind of Sunni resistance group here in Lebanon that has been targeted by assassinations and so on over the last year and a half by the Zionists. So you can imagine this extremely remote village, with only one road going into it, being able to repel an invasion from the special forces of HTS. What does this mean?

That means that HTS is really unable to change the balance of the battle, no matter what they do to appease their masters in Tel Aviv. Up until now, they're just using their special forces. One last thing I'd say about this is that HTS as a whole, with the other Wahhabi death squads they've absorbed, has a total fighting force of around 30,000. So if Al-Jolani decides to use anything beyond the red bandanas, he'd have to mobilize practically all of HTS to the Lebanese border, which would leave the borders with Iraq empty, and also leave the major cities—Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and so on—and the whole Syrian coastline without their thugs controlling the population.

And this will open the door either for the Iraqi resistance to invade and liberate parts of Syria, or for an armed rebellion from the populations in the major cities or along the coast to take effect. And that would be the end of HTS. So I think we shouldn't worry too much about the involvement of HTS. If we do see major involvement from them, that's a sign of how desperate the imperialists are, because they'd be risking losing all of Syria just to try to defeat Hezbollah—which is the worst-case scenario for them, and actually the best-case scenario for the Axis of Resistance.

#Nima

The war on Iran is bringing out something we haven't seen before—the acts of resistance coming out the way they are. It was unimaginable, in my opinion, before this war started. And it's not even all the power they possess. It's because we haven't yet seen Yemen being fully involved, the Bab al-Mandab, the Red Sea. But after all, looking at what the Iranian foreign minister said just today or yesterday in his interview with Al Jazeera, he said, "We don't believe in a ceasefire."

We believe in ending the war—and ending the war means exactly that: ending it on all fronts. He's talking about Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, all together. It's not just about, you know, the war between Iran and the United States. And what are the levers here? I think what's happening is the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab—these are new alternatives coming into the calculation, coming into the equation on the part of the Axis of Resistance. How do you see the way the Axis of Resistance is finding its power, its strength from within?

#Laith

Yeah, when we look at the game theory of this war—when you lay out all the components and try to figure out, in game theory, the steps each party will take—obviously you see that right now the Axis of Resistance has control of the escalation ladder. It doesn't mean they have dominance in power or anything like that, but it means the Axis of Resistance is the one choosing the steps. And that's a huge advantage. The United States can bombard anything it wants at any moment, but the Axis of Resistance is choosing the stages of this war—how it's going to play out, how fast or how slow things go. And this is very important, because the United States and the Zionist colony have a high dependency on air power.

Okay, and then after that, naval power, and after that, land power. And the Axis of Resistance is the opposite. It depends on defense on the ground, and it has the cheap alternative to an air force—which is usually the most expensive component of any military—with drones and missiles. So the Axis of Resistance has a much more viable price tag on its military involvement financially, while the West has a much higher financial price tag on its involvement in this war. And therefore, as long as the Axis of Resistance can draw out this war, the West will—you know, the imperial powers will—lose. It's 100% predictable. There's no way around it, except, and only except, if they use a nuclear weapon. And I think this is very doubtful at this moment.

What we'll see over the next week is that the defeat of the empire will become much more obvious to everyone, and the inability of the empire to protect its assets and vassals in the region will become undeniable. We may see the involvement of U.S. ground troops, and the staging grounds for this will most likely be in Saudi Arabia. That's when Yemen will enter the battle. I think this is another example of how the Axis of Resistance controls the escalation ladder. Yemen doesn't need to enter right now—there has to be another price tag on the next stage. The other members of the Axis of Resistance, their involvement right now is enough to draw things out and force the U.S. to bring troops in.