

Laith Marouf: How the US-Iran MoU Changed the War

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The MoU, the memorandum of understanding, and the reaction of Hezbollah. What is the position of Hezbollah, and what can we learn about the situation in Lebanon and the sort of talks or maybe discussions that are happening? Because we know that we have two sides talking to each other — the Iranians and the Americans — and Hezbollah on the part of Iran. And it seems that Israel would be part of the United States' position. And Israel so far has said that they're not going to be part of it, they're not going to abide by any sort of agreement between the United States and Iran. And on the other hand, we have Hezbollah, which is close to the Iranian position.

What can we learn from Hezbollah's position about the MoU?

Laith, can you hear me?

Yeah, it seems that we have some sort of problem with Laith's connection. He's out, as you're hearing, there's a lot of noise because he's in a public place. He's talking to us from outside. Yeah, let me just bring him up. Yeah.

#Laith

Yeah, really sorry about that. We're on the road. We just crossed from Portugal into this small town in Spain. We've been filming about the anti-imperialists and pro-Palestinian movements, and also the history of the connection between people in Iberia and our region in West Asia. About your question, you were asking what's the reaction here in Lebanon to this Memorandum of Understanding, it's clear that Hezbollah sees this as a victory for the Axis of Resistance. Right now, we see even politicians in Lebanon lining up outside the Iranian embassy in Beirut to basically ask for forgiveness for their collaboration with the Americans and the Israelis in the destruction of Lebanon.

It is now a fact that Iran has extended its military power and its protection to the Lebanese people and Lebanon as a whole. And there will be a reckoning for those politicians that did all that, attempting to break off the track of negotiations for a ceasefire in Lebanon from that of Iran. On the

ground, there are still military confrontations happening as we speak, all night long, and there were multiple attempts by the Israelis to advance, but they fell into ambushes. We saw multiple videos yesterday released by Hezbollah of their operations, and because journalists are now pushing further down into the south, they are able to broadcast attacks on Israeli positions.

So the Israeli military is in a really bad situation. And as we heard yesterday from the Iranian officials, if the Israelis don't stop their attacks in Lebanon, their violations of the memorandum of agreement and ceasefire, there will be a punishment for this rogue regime and its military. In fact, we were reading this morning in the American press that American officials believe the Islamic Republic of Iran may attack without warning the Israeli colony if it continues to violate the ceasefire. A lot of people in the south of Lebanon are returning to their villages and unfortunately, of course, finding the massive destruction and the war crimes that the Israelis committed.

But at the same time, they're walking into their villages and they're finding destroyed Israeli machinery, tanks, APCs that have been abandoned. And that shows you how the Israelis are running away. Yes, they are trying to pretend that they are colonizers, able to continue this fight without their masters in the White House giving them the coverage, military cover, but they are not really. So the situation in South Lebanon is very delicate at this moment. The Israelis keep on firing from drones around people that are returning to their homes, but this cannot continue much further because everybody's expecting Iran to punish if they continue with these violations of the memorandum of agreement between the two superpowers, Iran and the United States.

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What do we know about the level of disruptions in some of these cities, for example, Tyre or Nabatieh, Mefadoun, these parts of, you know, the southern part of Lebanon? Are they the same, something like 20%, 50%, 30%? What is the level of disruption in these cities?

#Laith

When we are talking about Tyre or Sur, this is a city that the Israelis over the last 48 hours have purposefully concentrated some attacks on residential buildings. So this beautiful archaeological treasure and its resorts and buildings have been targeted heavily. I would say around 20% of the city has been damaged or destroyed, which is a huge number. In terms of Nabatieh, which is the main commercial hub in the central region of the south of Lebanon, they have, you know, I would say more like 10%, because the attacks in the south of Lebanon around the Nabatieh region have been concentrated on the villages outside Nabatieh in the path between the Crusader fort of Beaufort and Nabatieh city, which the Israelis for almost a month have been trying to push forward and have faced huge resistance, and much of their advancing troops and machinery have been destroyed in these attempts.

You know, we haven't been able to get further than those frontline villages around Nabatieh, so we don't know what's beyond that. But looking at the videos that the Israelis kept on releasing over the last three months of them blowing up whole villages, it is expected that when people go back to the second-line villages in the south of Lebanon, they'll see total destruction. Also, we heard this morning that the Israelis withdrew completely from Al-Khiyam. This is the famous village where there was a torture center for the collaborationist Lahad army in the 1980s and 90s.

That's a symbol, a signal. If they withdrew from Khiam, it means everything north of Khiam they have evacuated, and they are stationing themselves right on the border between the colonies and Khiam. So that's an indication, again, that they're trying to bring their troops into a gathering point before they put them on buses and bring the tanks on, you know, take them on heavy-lift machinery. So I think if in the next 24 hours we don't see a full stop—actually, I think by nighttime coming, if the Israelis don't stop their attacks, there will be a retaliation from Iran.

And anyways, as well as continuing their military operations, they are now firing heavy salvos of missiles, not only those FPVs that we're seeing, on the exposed positions of gathering Israeli soldiers. So the more the Israeli military takes its time withdrawing, the more casualties they'll have and losses. And I think, in a way, everybody still in Lebanon is not thinking of this as a real ceasefire. It's been many times that we saw how the Israelis violate ceasefires, and it seems like the Americans are either playing a game always with their wards or that they can't control this rabid dog. So we'll see what happens in the next 12 to 24 hours, but I think that will determine the actual reality of the ceasefire.

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Is that going to improve the situation in Lebanon between the various factions, different parties, or do you see the same thing happening? Because I'm talking about the MOU and the new sort of pressure on Israel to get out of Lebanon. Because the whole point, the Iranian foreign minister yesterday said, without Lebanon, there would be no deal between Iran and the United States. That's the whole game. And we've learned from the Iranian military, the IRGC, they said, if they attack, we're going to respond. These are new sorts of pressures on Israel. And there is some sort of panic in Israel politically. They're saying, what can we do with the Trump administration? Because they have no—at least from what we've heard—they don't know what is in the MOU so far.

#Laith

Yeah, look, this war and Iran's victory in this war have flipped the whole power dynamics in the region. All those dreams and illusions that the Israelis had about being a chosen people and being a superpower, and somehow seven million colonists can rule all the Arabs and the Muslims, are in tatters. Iran, with this victory, has the right to set the tone of politics in the region. I think we will see, not only as we saw now over the last day and a half, all these Lebanese politicians lining up

outside the embassy to beg for mercy, we will see that happening within the Arab vassals also, as their master withdraws and admits their defeat.

So there will be a new change in the region. And in terms of internally here in Lebanon, there's going to be a reckoning. Hezbollah and the patriotic parties in Lebanon will not allow a return to the Ta'if Agreement, where parties are guaranteed a say that is exaggerated over their actual representation in the country. So I think if this ceasefire actually stays and the memorandum of agreement starts coming into effect, Lebanon will see a change in its electoral system. The president and the prime minister will be ousted. There's no backing from that.

They are going to have to resign. I personally believe that this president and prime minister will pack up and go to France or the United States, because the way they have undermined Lebanese security and caused so much damage to the country with their belligerence against their own people is not going to be forgiven easily. And so there will be a new balance of power in Lebanon, and the winning party will be the one that sets it. And although Hezbollah in the 2000s, when it liberated Lebanon, decided to be magnanimous and give national forgiveness to those who committed crimes and tried to reconcile with the parties that were vassals of the United States.

I don't think this is going to happen again, because the sacrifice that Hezbollah gave and the patriotic parties in Lebanon gave over this war is ten times, a hundred times more than the sacrifice that was given to liberate Lebanon in the year 2000. The blood of martyr Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah and all the martyrs of Lebanon will not be allowed to be passed without a reckoning for those who participated in the mass genocide and ethnic cleansing of the country here. We will see, I think, as I said, the President and the Prime Minister resigning and probably leaving the country with their second passports. And at the same time, the parties that collaborated, that already anyways do not represent except a small faction and fraction of Lebanon, they will be cut down to size.

There will be a rearrangement of the electoral system where it will become representative of the real weight of people. And I think Lebanon has a chance to end the sectarian electoral system. And if people have a chance to vote according to their political belief, not according to their religious or sect belonging, we will see huge swaths of the Sunni and Christian and secular population voting for Hezbollah or a coalition that Hezbollah creates with the other patriotic movements. So the future is bright for Hezbollah and for Lebanon as a whole. But there will be a period where there will be an adjustment and a rearrangement of the political scene in Lebanon for these problems that we faced with emboldened collaborators that outright call for the killing of their own people. That's not going to be allowed to happen again.

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I think that's a serious point that you raised. One of them is the double citizenship of these people — the Prime Minister and President of Lebanon. That should be part of the constitution. I don't know how many countries consider that as part of the constitution or part of the law — you cannot have

some sort of connection with other countries over your own country. And when you have two passports, so you are a citizen of two countries, that's hugely problematic. You can be an ordinary person, and I think that's not going to cause any sort of problem. But when you are the Prime Minister or President of a country, you have to be just connected with that particular country, not any other country. I don't know — is there any sort of discussion considering that?

#Laith

I think that will definitely be one of the top priorities because, as we know, in all Western countries, you cannot run for parliament, you cannot run for president or prime minister positions if you have dual citizenship. I remember a few years ago, one of the candidates for the prime minister position in Canada had an American passport, and he had to revoke his citizenship openly and issue a statement that he had dropped his American citizenship in order to be eligible to run. And that's logical. You cannot have dual loyalties in such a position. Of course, regular citizens should be allowed to have as many passports and citizenships as they want to, but you cannot be in charge of decision-making in a country when there's a question about which country you are more loyal to.

And we've seen this, of course, the issue of loyalty come up now specifically for the West with all those dual-citizen Israelis that are, you know, infiltrated in positions of power in the countries, and /or in positions of control of media, banking, or military industries. So, you know, the questions that will have to be dealt with here in Lebanon in terms of changes in the constitution and electoral regulations is the issue of representation. How do you elect? For now, you're forced to vote for somebody within your religious sect, and there are reserved seats for religious sects in Lebanon that are also not representative of their weight.

You know, Iran has reserved seats for people from different religions, but actually those numbers of seats represent the number of citizens from that sect. In Lebanon, it's not like that. There are reserved seats that are set on the census from 1942, when half of the population was Christian. Today, almost half of the population is Shia, and the Shia have around 20–25% only of the seats reserved for them in parliament. So one way to deal with that is to make sure that people can vote whichever way they feel like voting. And Lebanon, as a multi-faith, multi-ethnic nation, has always been able to protect and be inclusive.

This is why it's loved by everybody around the world, looked at as a place where people can be who they want to. So there will be a change in the electoral process and representation, and of course there have to be guarantees that people don't have dual loyalties through those dual citizenships if they want to run for the parliament and the prime minister or president positions. It's not going to be an easy conversation, but it has to be dealt with, and you know, Lebanon cannot go into another war, let's say, or deal with its neighbors as long as there's not correct representation of the people and their opinions.