

# Under Israeli fire, Lebanese seek return to S. Lebanon

After news emerged that the US and Iran had finally reached an agreement to cease hostilities, thousands of civilians raced to return to their homes in Southern Lebanon. Days later, Israel responded to the elimination of its occupying soldiers by carrying out some of the worst massacres in its war on Lebanon, forcing civilians back to an uncertain future in the north — and forcing Iran to close the Strait of Hormuz again. In an exclusive report for The Grayzone, Wyatt Reed traveled to Southern Lebanon to speak to the families in the line of fire, and see the destruction wrought by Israel firsthand. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

## #Speaker 1

We've just come across Hezbollah's secret weapon: fiber optic cable.

## #Speaker 2

All of these houses and homes behind me are currently being occupied by Israel. Today I want to tell you why I wanted to come to the village. There are two reasons. The first reason is because the village is our village.

## #Wyatt Reed

And it is also a settlement.

## #Wyatt Reed

It was the morning of June 16th, and the city of Tyre in southern Lebanon was suddenly bustling with life again. After three and a half months of Israeli strikes, the news had finally emerged that Iran had negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the United States, which drew a clear red line around Lebanon. Under its terms, Iran would reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping, and Israel would no longer be allowed to attack Lebanon with impunity. If they did so, Iran said it would reimpose its naval blockade of the crucial waterway, leaving the Americans to pay the

price for Israeli intransigence. Less than a week later, that's exactly what happened. Now, the same question is being asked by ordinary Lebanese and Americans alike: does the U.S. control Israel, or does Israel control the U.S.?

Driving through the south, there was a palpable sense of victory, as cars laden with mattresses, supplies, and in many cases pro-resistance flags came to see what remained of their villages. For the first time, the Lebanese army was allowing locals to access areas that had been previously considered active military zones. As we watched residents cleaning up and taking stock of their homes and stores, everyone seemed to be in a good mood, and the energy was infectious. Even the usually stony-faced soldiers were suddenly far more relaxed about appearing on camera. In the town of Shehabiya, we spoke to several vendors who were cautiously optimistic the ceasefire would hold, given that many regional powers and local political leaders had signaled their approval.

### **#Speaker 3**

I came back yesterday at 6 a.m. I was here. I came back yesterday and I came back today. They left yesterday and today. My family left today and I left yesterday. No, get ready and look at the situation.

### **#Speaker 3**

I don't know how.

### **#Speaker 3**

Now, it took me two days to talk to my grandmother about this issue. There are official sources that confirm this issue. And as long as there are agreements, for example, on many media, including media that I trust, and the agreement with the support of three important countries—Saudi Arabia, France, and Qatar—and the memorandums that they signed publicly in front of the whole world. We even have a few officials here who witnessed this issue, so they encouraged us. And I basically love Qula. I've been to Qula five times during the war, so I was waiting for this opportunity.

### **#Speaker 1**

Do you feel that the war will continue, or will it end?

### **#Speaker 3**

To be honest, I don't have confidence in America because I don't think the decision is always in its hands at this time. But we have the people here, they confirmed it in a serious way, I felt them, and

they guaranteed it in a certain way to the world. They left the freedom of choice, and they remained from some of these struggles and revolutions that happened. In the end, they want to be in peace. It's going to be the end of the war, not peace with anyone, you know?

**#Speaker 1**

Are there people in the village?

**#Speaker 4**

Everyone's in the village.

**#Speaker 1**

Everyone came back, huh?

**#Speaker 4**

Everyone came back to their homes. Potatoes, bread. You've been in the village for a long time, right?

**#Speaker 1**

Of course. How long have you been here, in this place?

**#Speaker 4**

We are the owners of the land, and we are the ones who sacrifice.

**#Speaker 1**

We have direct negotiations with them. Direct negotiations, peace be upon him, he is from their community, he is one of them.

**#Speaker 4**

The first time I saw him, I said to my sister, "Israel, we are used to fighting."

**#Speaker 4**

Thank you. Thank you.

**#Wyatt Reed**

Down the street, we met a butcher who hadn't been so lucky. His shop, which he'd sold his land to rebuild after it was destroyed by Israel in 2024, had suffered the same fate again.

### **#Speaker 3**

I came back today. I was fixing this mill, and I worked on it for two months. After 2024, this whole building was destroyed. I sold a piece of land and built this building. It was damaged, and now it's destroyed.

### **#Speaker 3**

Of course, I want to go back, I want to go back, I want to go back, open my soul, and go back and continue. And they claim that there is a weapon, that there is something for Hezbollah. There is nothing. There is my soul, I live from it, and this shows me how it was destroyed. There was a health department here to remove injuries or help people or something like that. But there was nothing for armed people or for armed groups or parties.

### **#Wyatt Reed**

As we made our way across the south, we finally encountered our first evidence of Hezbollah's presence in the area — a thin strand of fiber optic cable used by their virtually unjammable FPV drones. We've just come across Hezbollah's secret weapon: fiber optic cable, something so dangerous that the Lebanese government has officially banned it from being imported into Lebanon. But, as always, Hezbollah seems to find a way. We had just arrived in the town of Toulaine when we witnessed the first sign that Israel was planning to disregard the ceasefire. From a vantage point overlooking the road below, we could observe an Israeli D9 military bulldozer — a highly armored engineering vehicle Israel uses to demolish homes in the land it occupies — as it slowly advanced to less than 500 yards from our position. A Lebanese army soldier told me it was the closest he'd seen the Israeli military come to the town during his time in Toulaine.

### **#Speaker 5**

I'm the king of the village of Toulaine. I'm the king of the village of Toulaine. We're not afraid of anyone because we have rights, and our word is right. If we have something, they come and take it. And the one who has the right is the sultan — he gives you a thousand lives.

### **#Speaker 1**

We're not afraid of anyone.

### **#Speaker 5**

Yesterday I came.

## **#Speaker 1**

Yesterday you came. Yes, sir, what do you think about the airstrike?

## **#Speaker 5**

Look, this airstrike, I consider it a sacred strike, because it is the Islamic Republic that established this airstrike. No one can tell me that there is any policy in the country from here that is behind the airstrike. Never. Respect for the Islamic Republic.

## **#Speaker 1**

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## **#Speaker 5**

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## **#Wyatt Reed**

Here in Majdal Selem, you get a view of exactly what Israel is occupying. This landscape behind me shows you exactly how far the occupying forces have come. The hilltop closest to you in the background demarcates what Israel refers to as the quote-unquote "yellow line." That is to say, where they believe their jurisdiction over this land begins and ends. Now, the top of this mountain range behind me is where international law says that Israel begins and ends. That is the internationally recognized border. All of these houses and homes behind me are currently being occupied by Israel.

## **#Speaker 5**

It's the turn of history. All the empires throughout history, from the beginning, I want to tell you, brothers, from what I've learned, if I want to talk before the Mamluks and the Ottomans and the European colonization, and now the Americans or the Soviet Union, it's gone. But the Americans are near the end. Look, take a seat, uncle. Any power, any power in the world, no matter how big it was, let's not forget the British Empire. It was called the empire that the sun cannot set on. It was one of the largest in India and the West. Where are we now? Where were the Ottomans? And take a general position. Any power in the world, as soon as it used weapons, the power fell. The Americans are now in a state of collapse because they are starting to use weapons.

Certainly, believe me, certainly. Now, this time is not far. This time is near, and it will be separated from the inside of the Americans before it comes out. We, as southerners, as resisters, we didn't say

anything bad about the American people. The American people are a people who are oppressed, oppressed. We are against the American policy that is controlled by the Zionist lobby. That's all, nothing more than that. The American people, we are friends with them, friends and family with them. And we believe that if we go there, they will welcome us. Do you think the Israelis will abide by the ceasefire agreement? Are you concerned at all that they might strike again? His words would turn out to be prophetic.

## **#Wyatt Reed**

In the early morning of June 19th, resistance forces successfully targeted an occupying Israeli tank as it attempted to seize the Ali al-Tahrir Ridge, where there's a sprawling underground complex that was originally constructed by Israel when it last occupied the area in the '90s. Since then, it's come under the control of Hezbollah. Three Israeli soldiers were eliminated, along with the commander of the 52nd Battalion of the 401st Armored Brigade. The next night was nearly as disastrous for Israel, which suffered around 15 casualties at the same location. Once again, Israel responded in the only way it seems to know how — with indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas. Eighty-three people were killed, many of whom were women and children, amid one of the deadliest Israeli assaults of the war so far. And once again, the population in the south was forced to pack up all their belongings and head back to an uncertain future in the north.

## **#Speaker 2**

It's clear that Israel, as usual, has no credibility, has no responsibility, has no respect for the laws or the Arabs. It's a little bit of Texas, a little bit of Kuwait, as it should be. And we have hope, all hope, that we will return to our country, to our land, and to our homes. We cannot leave this land. You know that this land is our roots, our ancestors lived in it, our fathers lived in it, and we cannot leave it.

## **#Speaker 2**

So you know, how can we leave this land? Behind every rock there is a martyr, behind every tree there is soil covered with the blood of the pious martyrs. So we will live in it, and we will live in it, and we will live in it until eternity. And Israel, God willing, will perish. It is not possible for the resistance to continue with this aggression and these crimes. You know, we have been forced into a war between two of the world's biggest crime states, America and Israel. That's why you see so many martyrs — you see the martyrs, the martyrs, the martyrs — on the mountains, in the valleys, on the rivers, behind the rocks, under the trees. There is always a need to be prepared for this hostile enemy, and it is impossible for him to reach his goal. So we face these enemies with patience, faith, and sacrifice.

So we sacrificed a lot, and we offered martyrs, we offered blood, we offered all our money, we offered everything we had, in the name of God, in the name of our honor and dignity. And we can't

leave this land untouched. The house is still empty, it's still standing, we can still sleep in it. But the last thing is to ask us about the house and about the sheikh. This is all being built. Israel, we've been used to it for 70 years. It's getting smaller and smaller. We're struggling to build it. This is a sacrifice for Israel. There were peoples who fought and fled, but the Lebanese, especially the son of the south, fought, and the next day they found that he was killing someone. I mean, Ibn Jnoob, Habib al-Alb, Mabikan, this is Ibn Jnoob, you know, he's a teacher, and he's a student, and he's a teacher at Imam al-Husayn's school. A people who doesn't like the profession, and doesn't like the medal.

### **#Speaker 1**

Come on, come on, come on, did you come to the village?

### **#Speaker 6**

Yes. Come on, I came to the village. And hello to the camera.

### **#Speaker 5**

No.

### **#Speaker 6**

I want to go back to the village. I want to go back to the village. I want to go back to the village.

### **#Speaker 6**

Salam, my name is Noukaya. I'm from the south of Lebanon. And today, I love... between us, Palestine. Today, I want to tell you why I love to come to the village. There are two reasons. The first reason is because the village is our village, and it's also a city, and it's my memories. And the second reason is that there's a war. That there's a war. So, that's your reason?

### **#Speaker 1**

Yeah, that there's a war.

### **#Speaker 1**

Because I miss my friend and my cousin. We play together.

### **#Speaker 6**

And I miss the animals at home. I also know that I created new little things.

## **#Speaker 6**

I hope the war ends soon. What? I'm longing for the war to end. Because there are memories in the village. That's it, I don't want to talk.