



The Sabra Report

Israel Sets New War Goal of Returning Residents to The North

Jaroslav Lukiv, BBC, September 17th, 2024

Recap:

Within days of the government making the safe return of Israeli residents to the north an official war goal, thousands of Hezbollah operatives were wounded in a coordinated attack on the terrorist group's communication infrastructure.

The Context:

- ✧ Hezbollah's near daily attacks on Israel escalated on October 8th - a day after Hamas' attack on Southern Israel. As a result, tens of thousands of Israelis living in the North were evacuated from their homes and put up in hotels across the country for over 11 months [1]. Israel's previously stated war goals were eliminating Hamas and returning hostages taken by Hamas on October 7th.
- ✧ So far, skirmishes with Hezbollah have resulted in 26 civilian deaths on the Israeli side, as well as the deaths of 20 IDF soldiers and reservists. Hezbollah named 441 members who have been killed by Israel [2]. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the only way to return Israel's northern residents to their homes was through "military action." US Envoy Amos Hochstein has worked for months to de-escalate the situation, but Israel said it will ultimately "do what is necessary to safeguard its security and return the residents of the north securely to their homes [3]." The last war between Hezbollah and Israel was fought in 2006 and ended with a UN brokered deal requiring Hezbollah to move north of the Litani river - an agreement Hezbollah has not honored.
- ✧ This week, pagers belonging to Hezbollah fighters exploded in a coordinated attack widely attributed to Israel, with reports saying Israel infiltrated Hezbollah's supply chain as far back as 2022 [4]. The following day, hand-held radios used by Hezbollah fighters detonated across Lebanon [5]. Lebanon's health minister said the death toll from the attacks was at least 37 people, with 2,900 wounded [6]. The actual numbers are believed to be much higher.
- ✧ Hezbollah started using pagers after its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, warned the group's members not to carry cellphones, saying they could be used by Israel to track the group's movements [7]. Nasrallah accused Israel of breaking "all conventions and laws" and vowed that "retribution will come" after the "severe and cruel blow [8]."

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Why did it take so long for the return of residents to the North to become an official war goal?
- ✧ Why is Hezbollah interested in downplaying the number of wounded and killed in this week's attacks?
- ✧ How will the psychological impacts of this week's attacks influence how Iran and its proxies choose to proceed moving forward?

Notes:

1. [Return of displaced northern residents to their homes becomes an official war goal](#), Times of Israel, September 17th, 2024
2. Ibid.
3. [Israel expands war aims to include halting Hezbollah attacks](#), Mizzy Clifton, Yahoo, September 16th, 2024
4. [Hezbollah blames Israel after several killed, thousands wounded by pagers exploding across Lebanon](#), France 24, September 17th, 2024
5. [Hezbollah hand-held radios detonate across Lebanon in second day of explosions](#), Laila Bassam and Maya Gebeily, Reuters, September 18th, 2024
6. [Hezbollah Leader Vows 'Retribution Will Come' After 2 Days of Attacks](#), New York Times September 19th 2024
7. [What to know about the two waves of deadly explosions that hit Lebanon and Syria](#) WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS, MICHAEL BIESECKER, SARAH EL DEEB and SARAH PARVINI, AP News, September 18, 2024
8. [Hezbollah Leader Vows 'Retribution Will Come' After 2 Days of Attacks](#), New York Times September 19th 2024

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