

Nasrallah and the compromise and rehabilitation of Hizbullah's reputation

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Video 1: Nasrallah's Statement at the Press Conference of 8 May 2008¹

Note: text of speech excerpts available on the Arab Media & Society YouTube channel are **highlighted in blue**. Full speech is available online at:

<http://www.almanar.com.lb/newssite/VideoItems.aspx?language=en>

Invocation

In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to Allah the Lord of both worlds. Peace be upon our prophet, the seal of the prophets, Abu I-Qasim Muhammad Ibn Abdallah and upon his family, pure and good, and his companions together, and all of the prophets and messengers. Peace be upon all of you and the blessing and mercy of Allah.

Reason for press conference

Certainly, this press conference of ours, and we have not held one since the July [2006] War, is because of the newest developments of the gravest import that have been happening for the last few days in the Lebanese arena. At the outset I must say that some of the decisions of the ruling clique on that black night have begun a completely new stage in the history of Lebanon. [Switching into vernacular Lebanese Arabic] That is, as far as we are concerned, the date of that cabinet session is like the date 14 February 2005, the tremor that forced Lebanon into a completely new phase: the martyrdom of Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri. We are in a completely new phase. Lebanon, after that dark cabinet session is not the same Lebanon as it was before. The ruling clique must understand that it has brought Lebanon into a completely new situation.

Considering the background and implications of the grave decisions [Lebanon] has taken, I shall address several points. The first is the communications network; we are holding a press conference to talk about things as they are not to sermonize or to talk in slogans. True, this is a difficult phase but it is a logical phase and the decision of a responsible individual. The first point is the communications network, the communications of the resistance, the second issue is the airport of General Shqueir, and the third point is the perilous current political crisis and how to get out of it.

Point 1: Communications network: Background

The first point, I'll begin with a bit of introduction. Maybe if in Lebanon now everyone knows what the story is about — the communications network of the resistance. Outside of Lebanon, some accuse us of setting up some kind of telephone network with which we extort money and taxes and fees, that we have opened up on our dime a ministry of communications so that we can profit from it illegally. Therefore, as an answer to the insinuations of this clique that knows the truth but denies it, the first thing is for you to know that there is something called signaling. In all the armies of the world, even in ancient armies, there was something called signaling. They were relying on pigeons, on voice signals, on other things. In every stage of warfare when there was development of infantry weaponry, or firearms, or the tactics of warfare, there was a development in signaling or communications. In any type of organized army, or resistance movement, militia, or security apparatus, there is a need for communications between the command, the officers, and the ranks. Communications or what is called signaling is the basic part, the essential part, indeed the primary part of the organization of the command, which is the first factor in any victory and the first factor in the management of any battle. So communications has many different forms; this is a technical matter, but it is worthwhile pointing it out. There are wireless communications, either radios or cellars, that is, the voice goes out on the air, in the various forms that current technology has made possible. There is another simpler form, land lines, which is spread out from one set to another, in which the voice does not go out on the air, but stays contained. Generally with wireless communication is easier to manage; one carries the handset with him from place to place, someone carrying a cellular can talk with it from the street or wherever he wants. Landlines, no. That is, they are limited in their flexibility. But the problem with wireless is—there are a lot of problems. One of them is eavesdropping. It is easy to eavesdrop. And I say to you that there are no wireless communications in Lebanon or in the world that cannot be eavesdropped upon. There is no code that cannot be broken. There is no scrambled communication that can't be unscrambled. That's for certain with the technology available today. So there's the problem of eavesdropping. There is also the problem of interference. The enemy gets into the network, creates interference, and cuts off communication between the command and the troops and between the bases, and because of that, all coordination and control is gone. The third problem is targeting. The cellular stations can be hit; the wireless sites can easily be hit by missiles. It happened in the War, and in earlier wars. The landline, especially if it is secret, even if it is hit in the first days of the war, can be used by side-routing.

We as a resistance don't own the resources of a large army or the technology of the United States or Israel. So, naturally, when we are confronted with complicated advanced technology, we go for the simpler technology, because we are not able to match it. The best way to confront complicated technology is to go simple. So the landline network, to be precise, the resistance's landline network, is made up of what? A central with lines connecting to the houses of the leaders, the bases, and the positions of the

resistance. That's the communications network. In a while I'll answer some of the insinuations. So this landline network is a piece of the signaling system belonging to the resistance in Lebanon. This weapon is not an adjunct; it is the most important weapon in any battle. The most important reason for the success of any resistance operation before 2000 was that when two, three, or four hundred fighters would attack an Israeli position along the borders and the Israelis didn't know a thing about it until the moment shots were fired was that we were not depending upon wireless devices but were depending upon landlines. In The July War, the most important point, the most important element of our strength was command and control because the communications between the command and the various bases was secure. The enemy has admitted that. Remember after the battle of Ayn Al Tineh when there was an agreement for a 40-hour ceasefire for the removal of the injured? So how were we able to effect a ceasefire? We are not an organized army. It was because we had the capability of communicating with every one of our points in that position.

As for the statement by the Minister of Communications, and I regret the Minister was once a friend, that it is mistaken to think that this weapon protects Hizbullah, I would like to tell him that many of our cadres were killed because of wireless communication devices. And in a number of positions where we had lost communication by landline and we were forced to use wireless, many of our commanders and cadres were killed in the battlefield. Today, when we read the Winograd Report, we find that the most important recommendation of Winograd is that it is necessary to gain dominance over the capability of the command and control of Hizbullah, for which communication is the most definitive factor. This is a recommendation of Winograd. We should not forget this, and you can consult the text.

Communications network: Well known, well discussed

That is by way of introduction. Let's look at the talks that we have been having with the ruling clique for a while now. You all know that this network was in place before the year 2000 and it remained after 2000; the network is neither new nor reactivated. Sure, it has been upgraded and advanced, that is true, and it is natural and logical. Remember that when they allied with us in the Quadripartite Alliance,² the network was in place and there was no objection made to it as a threat to sovereignty or a violation of the law or a drain on public funds. When we left the government, and they issued their cabinet statement on the weapons of the resistance – and the network is a part of the weapons of the resistance – it was not considered a threat to sovereignty or a violation of the law drain on public funds. Now, that the Quadripartite Alliance has become a pipedream, I say a pipedream and I don't care to see it in this world or the next. We'll leave the next world out of it, but in this world I won't see it again. And after the Winograd recommendations, and after David Welch, and the hot summer, and after the call for internationalizing the Lebanese crisis, and after the [Terje Roed-]Larson report and the claim that it would not hold unless the Lebanese government agreed, and after the blasted report from the American State Department, they opened up the issue anew. Even though we in the previous months had been meeting with them and had reached a limited agreement and had answered all of their questions.

A few months ago there was a contact with the ruling clique and all of the members of the high command of Lebanese security were in touch with us and there was talk about the landline network and certain objections; and we met and we talked and we answered their objections, and they said, "Ok, if it is as you say, then there is no problem; but there is one thing, that is a cable extending from the Dahiya to West Beirut." That cable had been laid in the days of The July War, and days after the attack on the Dahiya, not from the first day, we stretched a cable from the Dahiya to Beirut. They said, "The cable is making so-and-so nervous, and we will guarantee you that if another war starts, we'll put it back for you." We said, "By all means, we'll do it, if that will make you feel better," and we took it up and that was the end of things some weeks ago. Of course, there is a new phase in the region. The issue is not the landline network; there were bets placed on the ruling clique that didn't pay off; bets on developments in the region and in the world that didn't pay off; bets on wars that were lost. So, now what is requested is to open the war on a different front, in Iraq, and in Lebanon, and in Palestine, and even with Iran and Syria. That is the context in which they reopened the subject of the landline network. Ok, let's talk, and offers came and we had a meeting. "What's the problem, friends?" They said, "We have a few problems, we want to solve them with you." We said, "Please do." We believe in dialogue; we solve problems. We want to keep our weapons; we don't want to fight because of them; war is not the goal. They said, "You want to extend the network between Jbeil and Kisirwan." We said, "That's not right." And what came out in a press conference; it was a lie and had been a lie for twenty-five years. They knew that it was a lie. Because we inform the officers, and the officers inform the cabinet, and the cabinet informed the illegitimate government that Hizbullah does not want to extend the network between Jbeil and Kisirwan, we don't need a landline network between Jbeil and Kisirwan. We said that we place a network where we have command posts and positions. They said, "What about the North?" we said, "We don't have any in the North; not Jbeil, not Kisirwan, not the North [all largely Christian areas]. Anywhere else?" They said, "Ok, what about the line between the Dahiya and the South?" We said, "That is natural, necessary, because we want to guarantee the contact between the Dahiya and the South." They said, "We're afraid you want to extend the network into the Chouf [a Druze area]." We said, "We guarantee that we will not extend it into the Chouf." They said, "You might extend it to your allies because you have a plot to undertake an internal coup." We said, "We won't extend it to our allies." This might be the first time I have given out that information. They said, "There is another issue, the network is an alternative network to the state network and represents a loss of state revenue." We said, "It is a limited network for our command centers and our field positions, it is not for general use, it doesn't have the capability for general use. Check it out for yourselves." They said, "A third problem. Maybe this network could be used for state intelligence and international communiqués." We said, "First, that is not possible, and anyway, you show us where there is some international capability, and we will correct it together. Because we think that international calls are illegal and a theft of public funds." They said, "Ok." And the officers went away and wrote a favorable report, and all was good. But, "We have a request: If you want us to ignore the network, could you remove the sit-in from downtown Beirut?" "We could, in the context of a bargain, in which we lift the sit-in and you ignore the network."

I want to ask here, if we agreed to this compromise, would the network then turn out not to be a threat to sovereignty and the rule of law and public funds but instead be legitimate? What kind of state is this? This is a gang, not a state. Not a country of laws and institutions; this is a gang; not even a militia. We said, "Shame on you. It is not right that, in order to get you to agree to ignore the arms of the resistance, that you use internal matters. One is an internal matter, and the other is a national matter with implications for national defense and confrontation with the Zionist enemy." Not only that, the network is my decision, but the tent city is a matter for all of the opposition. The matter ended at that point, and we said "Ok, everything is alright, and we made guarantees, and said have a look, see the dimensions of the network and that there is no international communication and it is not for general use. So it isn't taking anything from the government." For your information, there are telephone networks in many places in Lebanon belonging to religious and political institutions, some licensed and some not licensed; I don't want to get into details, our representatives can bring detailed information later and present them to the general public. But that aside, this is a matter having to do with resistance, and with the struggle with Israel, with defense of the country.

Communications network: Revival of issue

So we got through the issue and then the head of the government Mr Walid Jumblatt revived the issue; I say this because it now appears clear to me that it is wrong to talk about the Siniora government. Fouad Siniora is a hapless man, an employee of Walid Jumblatt. When Walid Jumblatt wants to relieve and officer of command, they relieve the officer of command—and of course he is an employee of Condolizza Rice; it's got to that extent now. The Jumblatt government, then, stirred up the issue again, and began a full-scale attack, starting with the camera at the airport. Maybe he is the one who brought that French conference delegate to look around the Dahiya.³ Do you know where he ended up, this French delegate? I don't know if this relates to the issue or not. Of all places, at the head of my street. The street of the secretary general. Taking pictures. Who brought him right to that spot? Someone from the Progressive Socialist Party [Jumblatt's party]. They brought him there so we would stop him. We confronted him; of course we would confront him. True, this is a different issue, but we are in a new phase. We will not allow the security of any one of our cadres or commanders to be compromised in the smallest degree. They say we kidnapped him they say we killed him. There is no such problem. [He was detained and released after a few hours].

Communications network: Cabinet decision

So, let's stir up the issue again and reopen it. The government met and took the decision that you all know. That's what has happened up to now. Another note about the government decision. How should I describe it? I want to say that after the report of the US State Department, they used the same wording as used in the State Department report. The same wording! So you can see how much they are government employees sticking to the script. After ten hours of communications with the selfsame countries and capitals that had plotted the July War, that blameworthy decision was taken that I

have been discussing with you, considering the landline network of Hizbullah a threat to the sovereignty of the state and the rule of law and public funds, and requesting the command of the security forces to pursue everyone who can be proved to have any involvement in setting up and operating the network.

Let's talk plainly. Here is the new phase: This decision in the first place constitutes a declaration of war and the first shot of a war; the beginning of a war by the government of Walid Jumblatt on the resistance and its weapons in the interests of America and Israel and by proxy to them. There is no other interpretation. It is as clear as the daylight at high noon.

Secondly, the decision has uncovered the truth about this clique, its backers, its commitments, and the truth of its behavior during The July War.

Thirdly, the aim of the decision is to strip the most important element protecting the leadership of the resistance, its cadres and its infrastructure as a first step exposing them in preparation for assassination and destroying its infrastructure. Therefore, they are partners in killing and assassination, if only by setting up the preliminaries and preparing the way.

Fourthly, the goal of this decision is to create a breach between the Lebanese national army, the Lebanese security forces, and the resistance, after the failure of all past conspiracies, which failed precisely because of the patience, wisdom, circumspection, and responsibility of the resistance and the command of the army and the army itself.

Today they want to push the army and security forces into an open confrontation with the resistance by means of the decision to interrupt and uproot the network. That is our interpretation of the decision. Of course its goal also is to give material support to Larson and the Security Council with an eye toward resolution 1559, even if this is not overtly stated by Larson or the government. That is how we see the decision. That is the least of it. If we don't want to bring in regional and international concerns and George Bush's visit to the region and other wide and deep commitments. Let's stay on the ground floor. Let's not go upstairs.

Communications network: Hizbullah reaction

Our response to the decision, naturally, is this: against whomever declares war on us and whomever fires the first shot of a war, were he a father or brother, much less a political faction, it is within our right to defend ourselves, our weapons, our resistance, and our existence. The landline network is not merely a part of the weapons of the resistance; it is the most important part of the weapons of the resistance. When I was in Bint Jbeil and spoke, it was during the time of the elections, but I wasn't vote garnering, and Walid Jumblatt was there, when I said with the greatest of clarity, the hand that reaches for the arms of the resistance, no matter whose it is and no matter where it comes from, we shall cut it off. Today is the day for honoring that decision.

The Israeli hand reached for the arms of the resistance in the July War, and we cut it off. Inside the country, there have been attempts, not serious or effective or amounting to a war. But after these unjust decisions by this tarnished government, no. We consider that a war has begun, and we are obliged to defend our weapons and the resistance and the legitimacy of the resistance. As they say, "Forewarned is forearmed." All of our brothers and friends can see, no matter where they are, if my father, who brought me into the world and raised me, to whom I owe a lot, wanted to reach his hand toward our network—perhaps this is a bit irreverent, and I apologize to my father, because he is not like that—but I want to say, as far as we are concerned, how greatly this crosses all red lines. I won't allow this of anyone, no matter who he is, no matter where he is. Because we also know and our intelligence confirms that the issue of the landline is no more than the first step in a series of others. If we take the issue of the landline lightly, tomorrow the fight will be over the rockets, and the anti-tank weapons, and the explosives, over all of the capabilities of the resistance to defend itself and defend the homeland against any future Israeli aggression.

Communications network: Legal action

The second issue is the legal situation. This is not rumors or idle talk, it is a real issue. You know us and, you have tested us, and I don't advise that you put us to the test. The issue of the legal situation, I want to make this easy for you. Our logic is that of a state, and I will now prove it. This network belongs to Hizbullah, and so Hizbullah is the owner. I am the secretary general; let me say that I am the owner of the network and its editor in chief—as they say in journalism, its financier, and its beneficiary—ok? And all the youths who work in it are sincere *mujahidin*; they are simply following orders. The judiciary is able, even if they first requested the high court, they might make it more modest—yeah, we are people of logic and truth—even though the status of this government is not legitimate; I do not recognize its legitimacy—the Lebanese judiciary may send whichever judge it wishes to a place appropriate to the security level, and listen to me, and I also have allegations against those who have taken this decision, that they have taken the decision in the service of America and Israel and for the sake of sparking a civil war, and I will also press the issue against them in court. I am a Lebanese citizen, and hopefully a good citizen, and I'll sue them and take them to court. Let the court decide between us. As for the others who aided and abetted and who were supporting the resistance, leave them out of it. No matter who they are, an engineer, a company, a municipal governor, an employee, a temporary laborer on a daily wage. Prosecuting them is prosecuting me, or any cadre in the resistance in Lebanon. It is not allowed. Grabbing them is also like grabbing our weapons. **We are now in a new phase; whoever wants to fight us, we will fight him, and whoever reaches his hand for any of them, we will cut it off too. So, there is no cause for all this talk about prosecutions. The issue lies with me, let's look into it and see who is compromising sovereignty, and who is breaking the law, and who is threatening public funds. Who? It is very unfortunate that the man heading the government of ours in Lebanon today is a thief. He admits it. Mr Jumblatt admitted on television that he is a thief; he said, "I have two accounts." He is a liar—for twenty-five years he has been admitting it—and a killer by his own admission.**

Today, the one ruling the country and demanding that the religious and secular leaders of all confessions follow his project is a liar, a thief, and a murderer. That flies in the face of anyone who wants to draw red lines; and the resistance, the fathers and sons of the martyrs, who, were it not for them, Lebanon would still be Israeli territory, will be driven into the courts. No one can drive another to the courts. This is not a country this is a gang lording it over the backs of the people. Let the whole world support it; let Bush grant them aid daily. That is in itself a denunciation of them not of us.

Point 2: Airport surveillance and relief of airport security chief

So much for the issue of the landline. The second issue is that of the airport. The issue is not one of General Wafiq Shqueir; it's called Wafiq Shqueir [but it's not]. After the parliamentary elections, and we were participants in the elections and participants in the government, we came under great pressure for the relieving of General Wafiq Shqueir of his command so some other general could come. I don't want to say his name, so that we aren't bandying names about. We refused and the issue became a problem. Why this determination? I want to tell you something, General Shqueir does not belong to Amal and he does not belong to Hizbullah and he does not belong to any faction in the opposition. General Shqueir is an officer in a national institution that we all agree upon as to its patriotism and on its position. Aren't we all together about the institution of the army? This officer is a son of that institution, just like many patriotic officers, they are sons of the institution. They are raised on preserving the law not on the leadership of any particular headman, not on 'the headman says so.' So the headman is the law, and the law is the headman, his pleasure and his displeasure. He likes it, he makes a law; he doesn't like it, he makes another law. Anyway, from the beginning, this government has wanted to get its hands on the airport. Not to conduct their thievery, they are doing that. Why the airport now? There is a lot of stuff that comes through the airport that falls into their hands and even Wafiq Shqueir doesn't know about it. How many cartons and bags have passed through it and only Allah knows best what is in them. Arms, money, white, green, black. Allah knows best. All that is going on, but that is not the story. The story is that what is wanted is to turn the airport into a base for the FBI and the CIA and for the Israeli Mossad. In all frankness, that is the issue. As if there were some sort of security problem with the airport. Flights coming and going, tourists coming and going; there is no problem with the airport, and not with the approaches to the airport. Not at all. True, there is a patriotic officer committed to the law, who knows his patriotic duty standing in the way of transforming the Beirut airport, the international airport of the martyr Rafiq El Hariri into a base for the FBI, the CIA, the Mossad, Shabak, and Shin Bet and so on. That's the problem. And for that reason they want to get rid of Wafiq Shqueir. In all of their earlier efforts they couldn't do it; even after we pulled out of the government, they tried, but they had a problem then with President Emile Lahoud. This illegitimate government is knocking itself out to usurp the post of president; and what is intended is an officer beholden to one of those headmen as an employee of the FBI and the CIA. That's the whole story of the airport. In all honesty, we are not able to tolerate on our border and right next to us a base for the CIA and the FBI and the Mossad. In

complete clarity. The blood of the people and the honor of the people and the security of the country is greater than any other consideration.

With that, comes the logic of a country and the logic of a gang. [Supreme Shiite Council] Sheikh Qabalan called the vice president Fouad Siniora and said to him, "Prime Minister, this will not do. If Wafiq Shqueir is implicated in the matter of the camera, as clearly trivial and ridiculous as it is, conduct an investigation, press charges. We don't protect officers who are in violation of the law. And if he turns out not to be involved, why remove him?" Let's be clear, Sheikh Qabalan and all who have stood with him in this situation are not defending a Shia officer; they are defending a patriotic officer. Because, if Wafiq Shqueir becomes fair game, so will all patriotic officers in Lebanon. Every officer will feel that his institution will not protect him, and the state will not protect him from attacks of the political headmen. Then what? The last standing institution remaining to us in this country is what? The institution of the armed forces. If it is destroyed, there will not be anything left. In the past period, what has kept us out of a civil war is patriotic will in the country and the existence of the armed forces. If patriotic officers are targeted, that's the end of the matter. The country is at an end. We see the issue even more than the issue of the airport, more important and of further import than the issue of General Wafiq Shqueir, the issue is preserving the only remaining national institution in this country, the army, on the hope that it can restore this country.

The neighborhood council head said "no." He refused to relieve Wafiq Shqueir of his command. Why didn't they hold a press conference and announce the decision? They are employees, they have to carry out the decision. They didn't carry it out, they didn't call him to judgment, they didn't even give him an opportunity to defend himself. Give the man a chance. He is accused of treason; give him a chance to defend himself. This is how the gang operates. We speak the logic of a state; we are not a state within a state. On the day of the Mar Mikhael incident [street fighting between young March 14 (loyalists) supporters and young March 8 (opposition) supporters], seven young men in the flower of youth were killed. Slaughtered. We didn't take revenge on anyone, we didn't talk about anyone, or oppose anyone, and we didn't take anyone to court. We licked our wounds, all of us, and said, "we want an investigation, we want justice, whoever is implicated should be sentenced." Who is the state and who is the gang? Who speaks with the logic of the state and who with the logic of a gang in the country? People butchered and we call for investigations and justice, and they pass a biased judgment on an officer who has served in the army for decades and who is now charged with as ridiculous an accusation as a camera in a container like thousands of cameras like it in Lebanon. Who is the gang and who is the state? So, as far as this issue is concerned, I say, this is a decision issued by an illegitimate government, so it is illegitimate. General Shqueir will remain the head of security at the airport and will hold the responsibility of the security of the airport. Any officer coming to take his place should know that he is judged ahead of time as coming to execute the order to transform the Rafik El Hariri International Airport into a base for the CIA, FBI, and the Mossad. No matter who the officer is, Shiite, Sunni, Druze, Christian, Muslim, all are the same. Treason and collaboration know neither religion nor confession.

Point 3: Solution to the crisis: Hizbullah counter-demands

The third issue is the solution. Who has pushed things to the crisis they are now in? They have. We are patient. We have been picked off and killed but we are patient. We consider two points. These are internal matters, there is justice and the state and the struggle for the state. But when they took these decisions, they engendered this new crisis. As far as we are concerned, we have now entered a new phase. **I want to say to them: Am I declaring war? No, I am not declaring war. I am declaring injustice; I am declaring a decision to defend ourselves. That is what I am declaring. And I declare that after that night, things are different from the way they were before. That is the end of the matter. We will not be killed in the streets after today. We will not accept to be shot at under any circumstances. We will not accept any designs on our weapons. We will not accept any gainsaying of our existence and our legitimacy. Come all of the armies of the world. That is the decision of today. In all clarity and transparency. Whoever wants dialogue, we are ready for dialogue. Whoever wants compromise, the door is open to compromise. What is the way out? Two words. To all of those stirring up trouble, two words: rescind the illegitimate decisions of the illegitimate Walid Jumblatt government, one; two, fulfill the past request of the speaker of parliament Nabih Berri for a national dialogue. There it is. That is the way out. Aside from that, there is no way out. There is no solution. One side has declared war on another. Not us. A group has declared war on another group. Tell me, "Let's solve this." We're solving it. No problem.**

I want to say to the Lebanese people, who know the truth. But I also wish to address the peoples of the Arab and Islamic worlds. They'll say, now he starts speaking to Lebanon. There are voices we have now heard that we did not hear after the 33 days of The July War, we did not see the warmth and empathy and zeal when Israel displaced more than a million people, and destroyed more than one hundred thousand homes and targeted the infrastructure and threatened the entire country together, I wish to say to all, if the struggle were about a unity government or power sharing, we could decide upon demonstrations or a sit-in, and Allah loves the righteous. Everyone knows that we are not competing for power or the government or a ministry or a position of power. And all that you will now hear, O Arabs and Muslims: coup d'état and power grabbing, all of that is idle talk. It has no value whatever. The truth of what is happening in Lebanon now is that there is a clique committed to serving America carrying out an agenda that America and Israel failed to carry out. That is to disarm the resistance. And it has been trying to do that since 2005 but has been unable to keep that commitment. That is all that is happening. For that reason, I do not request assistance or aid from anyone in the world. Like The July War, remember? The Dahiya was being bombed, all of Lebanon was being bombed. And I spoke the same words from the Dahiya. I said, "We do not want help or support from anyone. Whoever wants to help us, bless him. But I am not requesting anything." Today I say I am requesting something, which is understanding. That the Islamic and Arab world not criticize us, because they are always threatening us for the simplest thing that happens: "Look, stop the Shia/Sunni discord." Right away they threaten us with sectarian strife. I say today that we are not worried about Sunni/Shia

discord. That's the end of the matter. No one will use that weapon. It's over. No one will use that weapon. Today the battle is not between Sunnis and Shiites. Today there is a patriotic project, honourable resistance, and there is an American project. They are in a struggle; whoever wishes to be there can be and whoever wishes to be there will be. Let them wear hundreds of turbans or miters or the religious costume of Muslims or Christians. That is the nature of the battle in the country today. No one is intimidating us and we are not afraid. I am the most worried [about sectarian strife], and you all know when they took this decision, they were betting that Hizbullah would not do anything more than make an announcement or stir up its base, because Hizbullah is cautious about the sectarian strife that they are always waving in our faces. I tell you, whoever wishes to put his hands on our weapons, if he were Sunni, he is not Sunni, if he were Shiite, he is not Shiite, and if he were a Muslim, he is not a Muslim, and if he were a Christian, he does not represent the Messiah as far as I am concerned. Sectarian conflict is when two are using weapons inside the country. We will not use weapons inside the country for a coup, or to seize power, or to impose our own reality. But weapons will be used to defend weapons, in any eventuality. [video ends here; essentially at the end of the statement and the start of questions]

¹ Video available online at al-Manar's website:
<http://www.almanar.com.lb/newssite/VideoItems.aspx?language=en>

² An electoral alliance formed in the 2005 parliamentary elections allowing the March 14th alliance to gain a narrow victory, and permitting Hizbullah a place in the cabinet. Hizbullah and its allies withdrew later that year.

³ "French politician says armed men detained him in Beirut." Agence France Presse -- English, April 27, 2008