

Text of the speech by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah, during a rally on Sept. 22 in Beirut celebrating the victory in the latest hostilities with Israel

I seek God's protection against the cursed Satan; in the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate; praise be to almighty God; blessings and peace be upon our master and prophet, the last of the prophets, Muhammad; his good, righteous, infallible family members; his noble companions; and upon all the prophets and messengers;

O beloved and honourable ones; O most honourable, pure, and generous people, may God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you; [applause].

Praise be to God, who fulfilled His promise to us and who granted us, Lebanon, and the people of Lebanon victory over the enemy of Lebanon. Praise be to God who made us proud, enabled us to hold fast, and gave us security. Praise be to God, on whom we relied and to whom we turned repentantly. As He promised, He has always been the best protector. Praise be to God for His victory, assistance, and support.

Brothers and sisters, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On 22 September, you once again surprised the world and truly proved that you are a great, proud, loyal, and courageous people. [Applause]

Rally involves risks

For some days now, many people have been waging a psychological war on this rally, just as they waged a psychological war on the Resistance. [Boos] They said that this square would be bombed and that this podium would be destroyed in order to scare people and keep them from coming. On 22 September, you prove, by crowning the victory rally, that you are more courageous than [you were on] 12 July and 14 August. [Applause]

Standing before you and amongst you involves risk for you and me. There were other choices, up until just half an hour ago, we were discussing [my participation]. However, my heart, mind, and soul did not allow me to address you from afar nor through a screen. [Applause]

The utmost one expects is for the enemy to make a mistake or commit a crime. However, does this enemy not know who we are? We are the sons of that imam, who said: Are you threatening me with death? We are used to death and our dignity is derived from the martyrdom God grants us. [Applause]

You are all welcome - from the fighting and resisting south, to the steadfast Al-Biqa, to the loyal north, to the proud mountain, to the Beirut of Arabism, to the [southern] suburb of loftiness and dignity. You are all welcome - from the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon; you are all welcome - from Syria, Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, and every country that came to us to celebrate and rejoice.

God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you; peace be upon your martyrs and the families of your martyrs; peace be upon your wounded people and their bleeding wounds; peace be upon your prisoners; peace be upon your blood and tears; peace be upon your orphans and widows; peace be upon your demolished houses; peace be upon your burnt property; peace be upon your souls and strong will, which is stronger than the mountains of Lebanon.

"Strategic, historic, divine victory"

Brothers and sisters,

We are today celebrating a big strategic, historic, and divine victory. How can the human mind imagine that a few thousand of your Lebanese resistance sons - if I wanted, I would give the exact number - held out for 33 days in a land exposed to the skies against the strongest air force in the Middle East, which had an air bridge transporting smart bombs from America, through Britain, to Israel; against 40,000 officers and soldiers - four brigades of elite forces, three reserve army divisions; against the strongest tank in the world; and against the strongest army in the region? How could only a few thousand people hold out and fight under such harsh conditions, and [how could] their fighting force the naval warships out of our territorial waters? By the way, the army and the resistance are capable of protecting the territorial waters from being desecrated by any Zionist. [Applause] [And how could their fighting] also lead to the destruction of the Mirkava tanks, which are an object of pride for the Israeli industry; damage Israeli helicopters day and night; and turn the elite brigades - I am not exaggerating, and you can watch and read the Israeli media - into rats frightened by your sons? [How did this happen] while you were relinquished by the Arabs and the world and in light of the political (human solidarity was profound though) division around you?

How could this group of mujahidin defeat this army without the support and assistance of almighty God?

Resistance depends on planning, organization

This resistance experience, which should be conveyed to the world, depends - on the moral and spiritual level - on faith, certainty, reliance [on God], and readiness to make sacrifices. It also depends on reason, planning, organization, armament, and, as is said, on taking all possible protective procedures.

We are neither a disorganized and sophistic resistance, nor a resistance pulled to the ground that sees before it nothing but soil, nor a resistance of chaos. The pious, God-reliant, loving, and knowledgeable resistance is also the conscious, wise, trained, and equipped resistance that has plans. This is the secret of the victory we are today celebrating, brothers and sisters.

This victory requires a courageous stand like your stand today. You are today sending an

extremely important and serious political and moral message to the Lebanese, the Arabs, and the entire world - friends and foes. You amazed the world when you, as a people in Lebanon, held fast from 12 July to 14 August. They wagered on our division. You - the displaced and those who sheltered [the displaced] - remained fast throughout this stage. When 14 August came, their wager was that the presence of the displaced in the areas to which they were displaced would put pressure on the resistance to impose more conditions on it. The resistance did not submit to any conditions.

Once again, you amazed the world when the displaced returned in their cars and trucks, and some on foot. At 0800, the southern suburb of Beirut, the south of Lebanon, and Al-Biqqa were full of their proud and honourable residents, who returned with raised heads.

You are today amazing the world and telling the American, who a few days said, "we received good signs from Lebanon that the popularity of the resistance has receded, and it has started to weaken", that this is the people of resistance. [Applause] These are the masses of the Resistance.

I tell this American: You should address a message of slander to the lying writers of reports, who sends you wrong information on which you build wrong calculations.

Brothers and sisters, we should today stress that this war was an American war in terms of decision, weapons, planning, and desire, and by giving several deadlines for the Zionists; one, two, three, and four weeks. What stopped the war is the failure of the Zionists. If you recall the last days, the largest number of tanks was destroyed on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; the largest number of the occupation soldiers was killed on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; the helicopters crashed on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Therefore, the Zionists realized that if they had continued [the war], it would have been a disaster. The Americans intervened and even accepted the drafts [of resolutions] for the war to stop. They stopped the war not for the sake of Lebanon, not for the sake of the children of Lebanon, not for the sake of the blood of women in Lebanon, and not for the sake of beautiful Lebanon. They stopped the war only for the sake of Israel. They came to peddle it to us in Lebanon; namely, that our American friends stopped the war. [Applause]

In the first two and three days, our American friends did not agree to stop the war, and they refused [to stop it] on the first, second, third, and fourth weeks. Could they not see the beauty of Lebanon for a month? They wagered [changes thought] - this statement was used in some diplomatic channels - the decision was to crush Hezbollah, and after crushing Hezbollah, accounts would be settled with all its friends, allies, and those who follow the nationalist, truly sovereign and independent line in Lebanon. What stopped the war - after the help of Almighty God - were your resisting sons and these loyal, proud, and courageous people, who supported the resistance from the border to the border, and who embraced its spirit in their mosques, churches, monasteries, and schools. This is what stopped the war. If anyone deserves to celebrate the victory, then it is you who are present here. You deserve it because you made the victory.

"We feel that we won"

We sometimes differ and ask: Was what happened in Lebanon a victory or a defeat? I do not want to go into semantics, but I tell you: Whoever feels that his option, plan, line, and vision has triumphed, feels the victory and speaks about it. And, whoever feels that he has been defeated and has fallen, speaks about defeat.

We feel that we won; Lebanon won; Palestine won; the Arab nation won, and every oppressed, aggrieved person in this world also won.

Our victory is not the victory of a party. I repeat what I said in Bint Jubayl on 25 May 2000: It is not the victory of a party or a community; rather it is a victory for true Lebanon, the true Lebanese people, and every free person in the world.

Don't distort this big historic victory. Do not contain it in party, sectarian, communal, or regional cans. This victory is too big to be comprehended by us. The next weeks, months, and years will confirm this.

Resistance dealt a blow to New Middle East plan

It is enough to say, on the basis of the direct results, that your resistance and steadfastness foiled all the aims of the aggression, and that this is a victory. Our resistance and steadfastness dealt a severe blow to the New Middle East plan, which Condoleezza Rice said would be born in the July War [Boos]. But it was stillborn because it was an illegitimate child. Your resistance and steadfastness exposed the deceptive US policies that speak about human rights, freedoms, democracy, and respect. Your steadfastness and resistance exposed the United States and raised the level of awareness before the level of hostility - the main thing is awareness rather than hostility. It raised the level of awareness and hostility not only in the Arab and Islamic world, but in the whole world.

Thanks to your steadfastness and resistance, Chavez, a man about whom I can say that he is a great Arab indeed, made that statement in the United Nations yesterday. [Cheers] The Lebanese resistance today inspires all resistance men, all free men, and all honourable people in the world, as well as all those who reject US subjugation and degradation of the world. This is our victory and this is the result of our battle.

Resistance is model for "steadfastness"

Moreover, your resistance, which offered in the 2000 victory a model for liberation, offered in the year 2006 a model for steadfastness; legendary steadfastness and miraculous steadfastness. It is strong proof for all Arabs and Muslims, and all rulers, armies, and peoples.

Yesterday, a group of Arab states went to the Security Council to beg for peace and a settlement. I tell them: I am not speaking to you about removing Israel, I am speaking to you about the settlement you want. How can you obtain an honourable settlement, while you announce day and night that you will not fight? You do not want to fight for Lebanon,

Gaza, the West Bank, or even Jerusalem. How then can you obtain a reasonable settlement, while you announce every day that you will not use the oil weapon? In fact, even if anyone comes to speak to you about the oil weapon, you deride him, saying: This is backwardness. You do not want to fight, boycott, use the oil weapon, or even allow the people to come out in the street, or the resistance in Palestine to be equipped. You are besieging it and withholding funds from it. In fact, you are starving it and cutting off salaries for the sake of Condoleezza Rice [Boos].

How can these states secure a just and honourable settlement between quotes? Does the Israeli recognize them in the first place? I tell you: The Israelis today view the Resistance and the resistance men in Lebanon with great respect. As to all those lowly ones, they are not worth anything. Even the Arab initiative calls for a stand. It calls for men and power. If you can't use power, you can at least threaten with it. The talk that we are weak will not do.

The people of Lebanon gave strong proof to all the peoples of the world. The Lebanese resistance provided strong proof to all Arab and Islamic armies. Arab armies and peoples are not only able to liberate Gaza and the West Bank and East Jerusalem, they are simply capable of regaining Palestine from sea to river by one small decision and with some determination. The problem is that when one is torn between two choices and is asked to choose between his people and his throne, he chooses his throne. When he is asked to choose between Jerusalem and his throne, he chooses his throne. When he is asked to choose between the dignity of his homeland and his throne, he chooses his throne.

What is distinct about the resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine is that they chose the dignity of their people, holy places, and freedom and offer their leaders, sons, and dear ones as sacrifices to join the throne of God Almighty.

This is the equation. Today, your resistance broke the image of Israel. We have done away with the invincible army. We have also done away with the invincible state. Indeed, we have done away with it. I am not exaggerating or voicing slogans. It is enough for you to read what is going on in occupied Palestine, what the Zionists are saying, and what is going on between the Israeli generals and commanders.

Olmert protested again today because we are holding a victory rally. Yediot Aharanot published the results of an Israeli poll today that asks: Who do you think is suitable to be prime minister in Israel? How much did Olmert get? He got seven per cent. [Boos] As for the heroic War Minister Amir Peretz, he got one per cent. [Boos]

The image of this Israel, which is shaken in its political entity and military establishments and defeated in its intelligence, has changed today. No Arab ruler or regime can make further concessions to it, submit to its humiliating terms, or tell the nation: There is nothing we can do with Israel.

Once, an old man, who knew his time, place, and era, said: If every one of us carried a bucket of water and threw it on occupied Palestine, Israel would disappear from existence;

yes, just a bucket of water. Two or three hundred million people standing up to Israel can defeat it, especially when a few thousand in Lebanon defeated Israel. This argument has fallen. We should enter a new phase and a new time; namely, the time when we dictate our conditions and restore our dignity, freedom, sovereignty, and holy shrines.

Support for Palestinians

Brothers and sisters: On this day, the day of divine victory, there are those who expect an internal talk about Lebanon, and I will certainly do that. But before I switch to internal talk, I would like, as on 12 July, emphasize two points: Our hearts, feelings, grief, and pain are today in Palestine. They are in Gaza, Ramallah, and Nablus. They are in Jenin, Jerusalem, and every Palestinian town, village, and camp that are being bombed daily. The Palestinian people are being killed every day and Palestinian houses are being destroyed every day while the whole world is silent; the Arab world before the world at large.

Until when will this silence continue? Until when will we endure this shame? Nobody is asking you to deploy your armies to defend the Palestinian people. Let us just give support to these people, be it moral, political, financial, or armament. In Palestine, there are leaders, scholars, factions, movements, youths, men, women, and children who can repeat the divine miracle on the land of Palestine.

The second message is, before speaking about Lebanon, we as Lebanese should see Iraq as a model. Had the war in Lebanon succeeded, the Americans would have applied this model in Lebanon. They wanted to apply this model in Lebanon. In the war, we the Lebanese offered martyrs from the Resistance, the army, the security forces, the civil defence, the Red Cross, the news media, the establishments, the different parties, and all our beloved people. But how many were martyrs? Never mind, were they 1,000 or 1,200 martyrs? In Iraq, some 10,000 to 15,000 people are killed every month in a chaotic war that is administered, financed, and incited by the Americans and the Mosad. The resistance in Lebanon protected Lebanon from civil war. [Cheers]

Some say that the resistance in Lebanon pushes for civil war. Never! Had Israel won, Lebanon would have been pushed to civil war, and you would have heard voices calling for federalism, cantons, and division. The Israeli language would have become current anew.

Message to Iraq - patience, calm, unity

Iraq is a model, which we must always ponder. Our message to our people in Iraq must always be: Patience, calm, unity, wisdom, communication, avoid sedition, and don't wager on the enemy.

As to Lebanon, our message in Lebanon today is: Come all. No one should outbid anyone on this subject. We all believe that our salvation and hope is in building a capable, strong, just, proud, and clear state. This is the hope. And this is supposed to be the issue of

unanimity among the Lebanese.

We announce from this place, with the blood of our martyrs; we announce, precede matters, and say, any talk in Lebanon about partition is an Israeli talk, any talk in Lebanon about federalism is Israeli talk, and any talk in Lebanon about cantons is Israeli talk. We the Lebanese, our fate, decision, and wish to God should be to live together in one state. We are against its partition and division. We are against its federalism and division into cantons.

What will protect Lebanese unity is a strong, capable, and just state. What will protect Lebanon's sovereignty from Zionist greed is a strong, capable, and just state.

What will tackle social and livelihood crises for the Lebanese and the residents in Lebanon is a strong, capable, just, clean and proud state. This is what we all aspire to. A strong and capable state means a state that can proudly regain every inch of its occupied territory and protect every drop of water from Al-Wazzani River to Al-Litani River and Al-Hasbani River; that can stop the enemy from encroaching on its sovereignty daily; and that can assure its people that it is truly protecting them with arms, power, reason, unity, organization, planning, and national will. As for tears, they do not protect anyone.

We want a strong, capable, just, clear, and independent state that rejects any foreign trusteeship or hegemony; a noble and proud state that does not succumb to any humiliating terms; and a clean state where there is no room for theft or waste. This is the state that we need.

I tell you, while we are in the resistance festival, that this is the natural key to tackling the issue of the resistance. Here we come to the issue of the weapons and to those who are dying to resolve this issue. I tell them: Don't tackle the results. Come and let us tackle the causes. I am not after slogans, but logic. Argue with us on the basis of logic.

The resistance is the result of several causes - the occupation, the arrest of prisoners, the plunder of waters, the threat to Lebanon, and the attack on Lebanese sovereignty. These are the causes. Tackle the causes and the results will be tackled easily.

"We do not want to keep the weapons forever"

When we build a strong, capable, and just state that protects Lebanon and the Lebanese, it will be easy to find an honourable solution to the question of the resistance and its weapons. I would like the Lebanese to hear clearly. I and my brothers get excited sometimes and say all kinds of things. Let us speak with some responsibility. We do not say that these weapons will remain forever. And, it is not logical for these weapons to remain forever. There is bound to be an end to them. The natural key is to tackle the causes and the results will disappear.

Come and build a strong and just state, protecting the country and the citizens and their livelihoods, waters, and dignity, and you will find that the resolution of the resistance

issue will not need even a negotiation table. It is a great deal easier than that.

But, what is happening now? Instead of the Israeli leaving Shab'a Farms, he is extending the strip northward. Instead of the Israeli resolving the problem of the border points, he moves forward to Al-Khiyam and Marwahin. Instead of our benefiting from our legal right to the Al-Wazzani River, the Israeli builds pipes to steal the water. Is this how to protect the country and its resources?

Therefore, any talk about disarming the Resistance - to some people the word "disarming" is a bit heavy; fine, how about surrendering the resistance weapons? Any talk about surrendering the resistance weapons under this state, this authority, this regime, and the existing situation means keeping Lebanon exposed to Israel so it can kill as it wants, arrest as it wants, bomb as it wants, and plunder our land and waters. We certainly cannot accept that.

We did not fight since 1982 so that ... [change of thought] You know the youth in the Resistance. They spent their entire youthful years in the Resistance. They did not live a life of prosperity, ease, extravagance, or calm. Some of them spent 24 to 25 years in the Resistance. The Resistance will not end while Israel is still occupying our land, violating our honour, undermining our security, and plundering our waters and resources. Never! I swear to God.

This is the only natural, logical, reasonable, responsible, and patriotic option. As for the other options, I want this big rally, which is attended by these good and kind faces, and this public that comes from all of Lebanon's communities and areas and many political trends and parties; I want to tell them: Wagering on ending the resistance through pressure, threats, and siege is a losing wager. Wagering on ending the resistance by dragging the Resistance into sedition with the Lebanese army, as some people think, is a losing wager. The army and the Resistance are two dear, loving brothers that no one can separate. Those who wager - and I am not talking about the inside; it can be the outside or the inside, take it as you like, whoever is behind the wager - on disarming the resistance through a new war, Israeli or otherwise, I refer them to Livni, [addressing the audience] you know Livni, right, and Peretz. I refer them to these two persons; the foreign minister and the war minister, to hear from them, as well as from former Defence Minister Moshe Arens, the strategist, a clear sentence, and I repeat it for them to hear. They say: We wanted to dismantle Hezbollah as a whole, but we have found out that there is no army in the world that can dismantle such an organization. [Cheers]

I tell them: No army in the world can make us lay down our arms. No one can do that, so long as these loyal and brave people believe in this Resistance. I am not threatening with arms. I am wagering on this people who embrace the Resistance. I am wagering on that old, noble woman, who stood among the debris and said: My house in Beirut was destroyed and my house in the south was destroyed, but we are for the Resistance and the Resistance weapons. Several others said: if Al-Sayyid Hasan surrendered the weapons, he would be a traitor. I tell you: I pledge you, O our brave, loyal, and great people, I do not aspire to end my life with treason, but with martyrdom. [Cheers]

Therefore, all these wagers are losers, because there are people in Lebanon and a resistance in Lebanon that reject occupation, humiliation, and despotism and are ready to sacrifice themselves and their beloved sons for the sake of their country. Yes, today, Lebanon, and without exaggeration, is no longer small in the Middle East. It is a great power with your support. The West and Israel take it seriously and the oppressed in the world view it with respect, appreciation, and pride.

Therefore, let me end this point by saying - so that no one will continue to worry - we do not want to keep the weapons forever. I reiterate, as in the past 25 years, these weapons are not for the interior. They were not used in the interior and they will not be used in the interior. This is not a Shi'i weapon... [words indistinct] and the Christians. This weapon is for the Sunni, Druze, and Shi'i. This weapon is for all the Lebanese. It seeks to protect Lebanon, its sovereignty and independence. I pledge you that the identity and endowment of this weapon shall remain as it is. This is a pledge before God, the nation, and the martyrs.

Therefore, the key is, come and let us build a just, strong, resisting, proud, honourable, and clean state. If this objective is too big, and so that we will not remain in theory, let us go straight to the subject. We will not stand today and say: Whoever has failed in the test has failed and whoever has succeeded has succeeded. We will not speak this way. I will say: Come all, no matter how we differed, competed, and matters were difficult between us on the psychological and political level. We are in a real impasse in Lebanon now. No one can say, we are a majority, nothing has changed, the country is proceeding well, and everything is fine. This is not correct.

Impasse in Lebanon - political, not sectarian dispute

There is a real impasse in Lebanon today, especially after the war. There is sharp national division and not sectarian division. What exists now is not a dispute between Shi'is and Sunnis, or between Muslims and Christians, or among Druze, Sunnis, Shi'is, and Christians. There is a national political division. There are major strategic and political options, on which Shi'i, Sunni, Druze, and Christian political forces agree and others, on which Shi'i, Sunni, Druze, and Christian political forces disagree. When some Shi'is said things different from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, they thought that we would grieve. We were happy when others came forth in supporting the other stand, which proved that the dispute here is not sectarian, but political. [Cheers]

Look at the miscalculations. Even when they want to hurt us, they benefit us. Therefore, we are before a national division. And, my appeal today in the rally of the victory, which was created by Lebanese from all communities and areas, I would like to warn and say: Do not allow anyone to transform political divisions into sectarian or communal divisions. It is forbidden to manipulate sects and communities in defence of political options. This is playing with fire. This is sabotaging the country. This is destroying the country. Yes, we are split by political divisions. We compete, discuss, and differ. We attack each other in the news media. We turn to the street and to the elections. All these peaceful and

democratic mechanisms are legitimate and allowable. This is what we would like to emphasize.

National unity government is solution to political division

Therefore, as long as there is a political division and serious challenges - and I will return to these shortly - to confront these challenges, I say that the team currently ruling in Lebanon cannot continue in power, cannot work. It cannot. [Applause] The natural solution is to form a national unity government. When I speak about a national unity government, I do not mean bringing down anyone, cancelling anyone, or dismissing anyone but as I said on 25 May: Come and let us close our ranks and stand side by side to defend Lebanon, to protect Lebanon, to build and construct Lebanon, and to preserve Lebanon and unify it.

With all frankness, the current government is not able to protect Lebanon, reconstruct Lebanon, or unify Lebanon. [Applause] However, when we say the current government we do not mean that we want to cancel, remove, or erase anyone at all. We say: Come, all of you, and let us protect, reconstruct, and defend.

Therefore, building a strong, just, and capable state begins first by a serious national unity government. Here I am not raising a slogan for local consumption. Let them hear me. I am not raising a slogan for local consumption, or to gain time, or to appease allies or friends. This is our serious project and we will work for it with the utmost strength during the next stage. [Applause]

Drafting a fair electoral law

The second measure in building the just, capable, and strong state begins by drafting a fair electoral law in which all communities and all political currents will have a realistic opportunity to have a genuine representation, and in which no community will feel that it has become a follower of another community. That is how we can build the just, strong, and capable state. That is the way to solve all our problems.

Resistance has more than 20,000 rockets

Here I will briefly discuss the remaining issues and challenges. Now, the issue of the Resistance. I said a short while ago that there is something related to the current reality. They have come to blockade the sea. Why? To protect Lebanon? No. The German chancellor, God's peace be upon her [laughter by the crowd], said that the German navy was playing a historic role in protecting Israel's right to exist. I like some of these stands and I will talk about them later. They come from the sea and they want to blockade the airspace and the borders. I tell them: Blockade and close the borders, the sea, and the skies. This will neither weaken the will nor the arms of the Resistance. [Applause] We have engaged in war for 33 days. This is not mere rhetoric. We had been prepared for a long war. What we offered in the war was a very small part of our resources. In Bint Jubayl I said that we had more than 12,000 rockets and the poor ones [Israelis] started

calculating, based on 12,000. Then we explained things and said that 12,000 does not mean 13,000. [As heard] There might be more. Today, I say to those who want to close the seas, the sky, the deserts, and the borders, and I say to the enemy as well, that the resistance today has more - pay attention, underline the word "more" - than 20,000 rockets. [Applause]

Within a very few days and after emerging from a fierce war, the Resistance restored its entire military and organizational structure and its armaments. [Applause] The Resistance today is stronger than it was on the eve of 12 July because during the war it added to its experience fresh experience and acquired new wisdom and new resolve and determination. I tell those who wager on the weakness of the Resistance that they are making a miscalculation.

Today, 22 September 2006, the Resistance is stronger than at any time since 1982. [Applause] Concerning the resistance, its strength, and its weapons, we say: Rest completely assured.

Prisoners only to be released as an exchange

The second issue is the prisoners. Your prisoners and children will return, God willing. All of them will return, God willing. [Applause] In the name of the resistance, I promised you on 12 July and I told you in the name of the men of God and not in my name and the name of my father but in the name of the resistance men that if the entire universe comes it will not be able to save these two prisoners except through indirect negotiations and an exchange process. [Applause] After 12 July, the entire universe came and you remained steadfast and the prisoners remained in our hands and they will not be released except with the return of the prisoners whose release and return we are demanding. [A man among the crowd utters indistinct words and Nasrallah responds] "God willing". So we ask the world to be certain about this.

Shab'a Farms will not be relinquished

Thirdly, there is the issue of Shab'a Farms and Kfar Shuba Hills. Delegations from these good and steadfast towns have been worried of late as a result of the new arrangements in the border region. I assure them that the Shab'a Farms and Kfar Shuba Hills will not be relinquished. Nobody will relinquish a single inch of the occupied Lebanese territories. Never. [Applause] I tell you that during the war and the political negotiations there was a genuine opportunity to liberate the Shab'a Farms, and the Americans were about to agree, and indeed they agreed, but they went back on their promises, as is their wont, and said: We cannot return the Shab'a Farms to Lebanon now. Why, because we do not want to offer a victory to Hezbollah. I tell them: Return them to whomever you want and offer a victory to whomever you want, but return them, return them. [Applause]

We could have regained the Shab'a Farms and the Kfar Shuba hills during the war if there had been a serious political will, a serious political unity, and an integrated political resistance. But I stress to you that these are on their way to liberation. All current

violations will then end. The state is the one currently present there. The Lebanese Army, which is our national army, is present there and the UNIFIL [United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon] has risen to 5,000 in number. In the past when the Resistance was on the borders, any bulldozer advancing even 10 meters would be hit and forced to retreat, and none dared to enter. Now our border is open and they enter here and there every now and then. What happened has happened but what about the future? This issue is not linked to the Lebanese army. The Lebanese army has courage, will, and determination. Its officers and soldiers are the brothers of these resistance men. There is no difference between them. The issue is linked to political decision.

Will the Lebanese government turn the Lebanese army into a unit in charge of counting complaints and recording violations? This will be humiliating to the Lebanese army. Neither the army nor the Lebanese people accept this. Our army's task is not sitting in the border area and counting the Israeli violations as the United Nations did in 1972. The task for which our army went to the south upon a decision from the current government was defending the country and protecting the citizens and their livelihood and security. The country's sovereignty and territory are now violated and the citizens are kidnapped and assaulted every now and then and their farms are attacked. What is the government's political decision? We have thus far been patient because we do not want to commit any violation of Resolution 1701, which is not sacred, of course, because we know that any simple violation by us even if it is done in legitimate defence of ourselves, a hue and cry will be raised. Israel has been committing violations, attacks, and transgressions all the time but the world remains silent. Be assured that we will not be patient for long. Hear me well. If the state and government fail to carry out their responsibility towards protecting the land and citizens, the Lebanese people will assume this responsibility as they have done since 1982. [Applause] I tell the Zionists: If someone gives you security assurances from above or under the table, these will concern him and not the resistance in Lebanon or the people of Lebanon. [Applause]

What we are required to do then is sharpen our national zeal and stand behind and support our national army so that it will be equipped with the best equipment in order to guard the homeland - villages, towns, farms, farmers, churches, and mosques - and not protect anyone else.

UNIFIL to support Lebanese army, not to spy on Hezbollah

To the UNIFIL, which they turned into something that is much larger than a reinforced UNFIL, we say: We welcomed you and I reiterate our welcome of you within the framework of your clear mission, which is supporting the Lebanese army. Your mission is not to spy on Hezbollah or disarm the Resistance. This is what UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and several officials said. Thus far, I have not heard any country participating in the UNIFIL say that it sent its sons and soldiers to defend Lebanon and the Lebanese. They are ashamed of us, brothers and sisters. They are ashamed of saying they came to defend us, but they talk about defending Israel. Well, the UNIFIL forces are welcomed as long as they abide by their mission. I call on the UNIFIL command in Lebanon to be alert because I have received information that there are some who want to

drag these UN forces to collision with the Resistance. I heard that it was said at some meetings that the presence of the UN forces will restore the internal balance of power in Lebanon. This is serious talk. The UN forces came for a specific goal and they should not interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs or be involved in such things.

The point before the last is about political arguments and counterarguments. We did not seek political rivalry with anyone. We heard much harmful talk during the war and we remained silent and were patient. Political and media rivalry and attack on the resistance and on us continued after the war. Things reached an unbearable limit in recent statements. The almighty God wants believers to have broad minds, patience, and great hearts. But He at the same time does not accept humiliation for them. The media and political attacks on the resistance in Lebanon after the war - we put up with this during the war - reached a limit that could be tolerated only by prophets and we are not prophets. My brothers and I are not prophets. [Applause]

Pride in relationship with Iran, Syria

We understand things if one or two persons stand up and say things. If three persons say them, we will continue to comprehend what they say. Entire political forces met at Bristol [Hotel]. They brought their deputies, leaders, and members of political bureaus to show that the rally was big. They then issued a statement in which they said the war which took place in Lebanon was an Iranian war for the sake of the Iranian nuclear file, or a Syrian war to obstruct the international tribunal. Actually, we did not tolerate that although we - and I repeat this on the day of victory - take pride in our relationship and friendship with the Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership of His Eminence Imam leader Al-Sayyid Khamene'i, may God keep his shadow. [Applause] We also take pride in our relationship with Syria - leadership and people. Yes, leadership and people under the leadership of President Bashar al-Asad. [Applause]

We are independent and sovereign and our history testifies to this more than their history. [Applause] But to say that this war - which America and Israel launched and which Condoleezza Rice said was hard labour for the birth of a new Middle East and about which Olmert, Peretz, and others said all sorts of things, and which the Arabs said was the sixth war while the Zionists said was the first in the history of Israel - was fought by us for the sake of the nuclear issue and international tribunal is both shameful and insulting. Our houses were destroyed and our children and women were killed but we continued to fight. I care for all those who care for me and for my turban and beard and those who tell me not to engage in an argument. The party's youth and leadership can engage in such an argument. But there is a limit. Even I and my turban and beard are not more honourable than this resistance and these people. [Applause] If my turban and beard have honour, it is then an honour bestowed by you and this resistance and the blood of martyrs. [Applause] I call for stopping these arguments and avoiding silly, harmful, and harsh phrases. We must remain within the framework of logical and reasonable political competition because we have a common destiny and we must finally build Lebanon together. But I, Hasan Nasrallah, will not remain silent over any insult to the people of the resistance. [Applause]

A few days ago, a big leader in the 14 February forces said - I know some people will ask me why I should say this but I will tell you [changes thought]. None is allowed to stand up and say even calmly that the Resistance masses are thoughtless. Are you thoughtless? [Chants] Who accepts this insult? No, no, no, I respect his masses. I, however, respect their masses and their youth and women. I respect their options if they are national. But we will never accept any insult to the masses of the resistance by anyone. He has to apologize. Yes, he has to apologize. [Applause and chants] We are not a totalitarian party, regime, or faction. Neither my father nor grandfather was a Bek [originally a Turkish title given to rulers of tribal groups; currently used with the name of Lebanese Druze leader Walid Junblatt]. Also my son will not be a Bek. [Chants and applause]

We do not seek political arguments and counterarguments. We are keen to get out of political division in the country through any dialogue formula. We are committed and are advocates of the state, the state project, the building of the state, and the establishment of the state, but we have dignity. Our dignity is above anything else. We cannot allow anyone to squander our dignity in return for building us a house. The house was destroyed for the sake of our dignity. [Applause] None should imagine that he can satisfy our hunger at the expense of our dignity. We sacrificed our blood for the sake of our dignity. This is how we are. What else can we do? This is how things are for us in Lebanon.

Call for return to calm, reason

Within this context, I call for a return to calm and reason. We are on the threshold of the blessed month of Ramadan. May God return the happy occasion to all Lebanese. We pray to the almighty God to grant us success this month so that we can fast and pray for Him. I hope that the blessed month of Ramadan will be an opportunity for meditation and reflection and return to one's self and to seeing facts. Get out and see facts and do not let things become dubious to you. Do not build things on miscalculations.

Brothers and sisters, once again I greet the martyrs, the families of the chaste martyrs among all the Lebanese, the wounded, the detainees, all communities, movements, and regions which embraced and helped the resistance. I greet every Arab and Muslim people in the world. I greet every person, faction, and party. I will not get into names because the list is long and the ones I forget are more than those whom I remember. Therefore, we will be satisfied with this generalization.

Thanks to all. As we said during the war: May God grant you victory and God has granted your victory. We said may God help you and He has done so. I will conclude as I did in Bint Jubayl on 25 May 2000. I told you: O people of Lebanon, O people of Palestine, O peoples of our Arab nation. The era of victories began on 25 May 2000 and the era of defeats came to an end. There will absolutely be no defeat. Happy Ramadan and I wish you well on every historic and strategic victory. You are the most honourable, generous, and pure among people. God's peace and blessings be upon you. [Applause and chants]