

[UAE](#)[WORLD](#)[BUSINESS](#)[OPINION](#)[ARTS&CULTURE](#)[LIFESTYLE](#)[SPORT](#)

[HOME](#) > [World](#) > [MENA](#)

Hizbollah criticised over tribunal boycott call

Lebanese analysts react angrily to a demand by Shiite party leader to shun the UN panel investigating the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.



Don Duncan

October 30, 2010

Updated: October 30, 2010 04:00 AM

0

shares



BEIRUT // Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizbollah leader, was yesterday accused of "attempting to boycott justice" after he called for Lebanese people not to cooperate with the UN tribunal charged with finding the killers of the former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri.

EDITOR'S PICKS —————

Mr Nasrallah made the plea during a televised speech late on Thursday which has further raised tensions surrounding the tribunal.

Since rumours emerged that high-ranking Hizbollah members might be indicted by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the Shiite party and militia has sought to discredit the panel. Hizbollah now claims that the tribunal has succumb to Israeli and American agenda to weaken Hizbollah's position in Lebanon by indicting it in Hariri's assassination.

"I call on all Lebanese, citizens and politicians alike, to boycott the investigators," Mr Nasrallah said in the speech. "Any further cooperation with these investigations is equal to an attack on the resistance."

Yesterday a spokeswoman for the tribunal said: "Any call to boycott the tribunal is an attempt to obstruct justice".

Thursday's speech represented a dramatic heightening of the political discourse around the issue of the tribunal, which has pitted Hizbollah and its opposition allies against the western-backed, pro-tribunal government lead by the prime minister, Saad Hariri, the son and political heir of Rafiq Hariri.

On Al Arabiya television, Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces, part of the ruling coalition, called Mr Nasrallah's speech "very dangerous" and "a threat to the Lebanese government".

Last night, the United States vowed to support the tribunal and accused Hizbollah of "intimidation".



THE AMERICAS

American Al Qaeda suspect



EUROPE

World's richest woman



LIFESTYLE

Your guide to seafood in the UAE



MONEY

Money & Me: 'I invested my student loans



FASHION



Mr Nasrallah's speech has produced Lebanon's latest with-us-or-against-us moment. The leader made any proponent of the tribunal, a foe of the resistance and therefore aligned the Lebanese government - which is expected to support the tribunal - with this country's sworn enemy, Israel.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon was established in May 2007 to find those responsible for the Rafiq Hariri's death. For a long time, Syria was believed to have been behind the assassination, but this year, in a political about-turn, Mr Hariri retracted Lebanese state accusations against Syria. Many believe the change of tack was imposed by Saudi Arabia - Mr Hariri's primary foreign patron - as a result of a recent improvement in Saudi-Syrian relations.

Analysts say Hizbollah is now pushing for an end to the tribunal, at the behest of its ally, Syria.

"Nasrallah is coming under pressure from Syria," said Dr Hilal Khashan, the head of the political science department at the American University of Beirut. "Syria wants all forms of cooperation to cease, even though the tribunal is [most likely] going to indict Syrian officials and officers."

For the tribunal to be invalidated, Mr Hariri must reject it, a political impossibility, analysts say.

Mr Nasrallah's speech was prefaced by less diplomatic gesture against the tribunal. On Wednesday, a crowd of women attacked a pair of UN tribunal investigators and their translator as they emerged from an investigative meeting at a gynecology clinic in the suburb of Dahiyeh, a Hizbollah stronghold.

"This is a sample of what's to come if the government continues to collaborate with the tribunal,"



**Dubai's
Comptoir 102
launches jewe**



*THE
AMERICAS*

**World in focus
- best photos
for September**

MOST READ

**Confusion over the Iraq
speech at the UN that never**

**Nine-year-long blood feud
between Al Ain and Al**

**She stands
for continuity but Merkel has**

**QE2 in Dubai undergoes
major facelift**

FOLLOW US

Dr Khashan said.

Such public actions could do much in the way of slowing the tribunal's investigative progress, especially its work in Hizbollah-dominated neighbourhoods. But through its political alliances with other Shiite and Christian parties, Hizbollah can also make its influence felt politically.

From November 2006 to May 2008, Hizbollah and its allies paralysed the government in a bid to win veto power in parliament, among other gains.

Anxieties are rising both domestically and internationally regarding Lebanon's stability and the growing risk of conflict. The United Nations has labelled the situation "hyper-dangerous".

"Hizbollah will do all it can, short of taking over the political system," Dr Khashan said. "I don't think Hizbollah will stage a coup. That would be counter-productive, that would transform Lebanon into another Gaza, subject to international isolation and blockade."

Lebanese have been through political endgames of this sort before and they know very well the landscape of political dissolution: roadblocks popping up, security swiftly increased around key infrastructure, heightened political rhetoric, fear-mongering speeches, governmental paralysis, and ultimately - what they all fear - armed conflict.

"You feel like you are living in uncertainty, that nothing is really fixed," says Rita Yapougian, 21. "But we're used to seeing it."

FOLLOW US



READ THE PAPER

[View the paper as it appeared in print](#)

[Download the iPad e-reader](#)