

Interview with Former Lebanese President Emil Lahoud: “They don’t have anything to lose in Gaza and so there will be a strong resistance against the occupiers.”

By Afshin Rattansi

TEHRAN, Jan. 6 (Press TV)—Emil Lahoud served as Lebanese President during the second Israel-Lebanon war in summer 2006. In an exclusive interview with Press TV, he comments on the Gaza situation:

Lahoud: First I would like just to remind [you] about what



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happened in the past. As you know, Israel has been defeated twice in Lebanon: once in 2000 and another time in 2006. And as you know according to Winograd report, all was put because the way they led the war, they couldn’t defeat the Resistance in Lebanon. And I think what is happening now is that Israel has chosen, according to their quotes, the right moment to do this attack.

First, as you know, the administration in the US will take over not before the 20th of this month, the election of president in Palestine on 9th, at the same time everybody is busy whether in the US and everywhere there is no, I mean, thinking about taking a US decision now. So they chose that moment to launch their attack on Gaza, and I think their goal is as I said is to wipe up the defeat they had because they don’t want the Arab world to have people like in Lebanon: the national resistance in the face of Israel.

And they thought that it would be easier in Gaza. Why? Because as you know in Lebanon because of our good relations with



Syria the frontier in 2006 was opened between Syria and Lebanon. Whereas now in Gaza, as you now the Rafah [crossing] is closed by Egypt and the surface (area) of the Gaza Strip is what is one-third of the frontier of Lebanon when they had the attacks. So they thought it will be an easier, I mean, victory over one part of a resistance in one of the countries in the Arab world.

Press TV: Do you think Hamas fell into a trap as Israel launched the November 4 missiles that then catalyzed the rockets from Hamas. They were after all talking to the Egyptians?

Lahoud: I think they had been planning that for a long time and they chose the right moment, they thought they chose the right moment. But I think [military-wise] (according to military, I mean if you think from the point of view of military), even if it is a small strip and if it is closed from everywhere and even if you go inside, then the real war will start. We have seen in Iraq what happened.

They said when the US [forces] landed in Baghdad, everything was finished. I remember at that time, we had a visit of Secretary of State [Ziad] Baroud who said everything is over. And I remember I told him that now the resistance will start in Iraq and that is what’s going on now for so many years. So if they think that it will be a victory, that they can go a little bit in Gaza, they are mistaken, because then they don’t

have anything to lose in Gaza and so there will be a strong resistance against the occupiers.

Press TV: There are reports especially in US-based media that they were training for fighting in urban guerrilla warfare in a base in the Negev desert. What you are saying of course goes to what happened to the British in Belfast that kind of urban asymmetric warfare. What about the toll on civilians if they go in that deep and there is that sort of urban fighting that you imply Hamas will succeed in? What sort of toll on the civilians should we be expecting in the next few days?

Lahoud: As you now it is really a massacre that is going on now, if you look, you find on television and videos it is the children and women, I mean people who are not armed, that are being killed. Because the resistance is underground and they cannot know where they are and because of that the resistance has the advantage and I think from the military point of view that it will be a very difficult case for Israel, thinking that it will have an easy victory.

But unfortunate is that the Arab world is looking on without doing anything. And the only people who are saying something as you know are Syria and ... and we have abroad Turkey and Iran that are asking the international [community], I mean, people to make enough pressure in the UN. But unfortunately, as you know, it is the US that

is blocking everything like it happened in 2006.

Press TV: Can I ask you, because you have that experience with your senior positions in Lebanon, the reaction of Arab countries during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. Perhaps some of your experiences will help our viewers understand Arab reactions to Israeli incursions in the past. What was the Arab reaction on the first days of the war, particularly the Egyptian reactions?

Lahoud: In 2006, I was the president of Lebanon at that time and I remember the first day the hostilities started on Lebanon from Israel. I had a talk with the television the first day and I said they will not be able to defeat the Resistance because they are like air, you don't know where they are. You cannot catch it and we will win. But unfortunately most Arab countries that were talking to the media were blaming Lebanon and saying that they should not have abducted these two soldiers. And I remember I said well, it's not the reason they abducted, they have prepared that years before, and later we found out in the Winograd report that they had been preparing this for a long time like what they are doing right now in Gaza.

It is exactly similar, and all the Arab countries, especially the big ones, were blaming Lebanon and blaming the Resistance. And when in months they saw we were winning, then they started changing their mind but it was too late because they had not put enough pressure on the UN and they wouldn't have lost as many lives as they are doing now in Gaza. And unfortunately what is happening, they call themselves Arab moderates, it's wrong.

They are not Arab moderates. They are for I mean private reasons, personal reasons they want to please the US which is pleasing Israel. And who is paying the price is the Arab population.

Press TV: Let's go back a little further to 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon to try to destroy the PLO under Yasser Arafat. The PLO did leave then but of course this movement you have been talking about, Hezbollah, took on a new form and a new power in the region. What do you think this incursion into Gaza will mean as regards resistance movements in Gaza and perhaps even beyond?

Lahoud: Well you see as I said at the beginning, Israel wants to stop this idea about having resistance movements in the Arab world, and they couldn't do it in Lebanon and they thought it would be easier to break the back of one of the resistance [groups] and they thought it would be easier in Gaza.

That's why they launched at the time when now the new president in the US has not taken over and President Bush is leaving. So they thought like this it will be easier. At the same time I'm sure that they wouldn't have done that without the acceptance of many of these Arab countries who are not saying anything, or else they wouldn't have done it. I mean they did it in connivance with these Arab countries. And now they will see that it will be very difficult for them.

Now talking about 82, in Lebanon there was no resistance, there was no Lebanese resistance. It was the PLO, it was the Palestinians in Lebanon, whereas the resistance in now Lebanon is from the Lebanese who had their land occupied. That's why they were fighting for their land and they had a much stronger motive. And they proved to the world, according to the Winograd report, that a few men who were desperate about getting their right could defeat the Israeli army which in fact is not Israeli forces but is more beyond. It is the US that is providing all this weaponry, which means in fact, that they were not only fighting Israel, but they were fighting the US.

Press TV: Do you see a rupture between the peoples of those Arab countries and even peoples of say the West Bank against Fatah to come out of all these incursions and in fact a bigger resistance movement on the destabilization of Arab countries in the Middle East?

Lahoud: Well, you see we want to see what is the cause of what is happening now. The real cause is, as you know, since 48 when the Palestinians were driven out of their home. And it attacked the countries where the Palestinian came to like in Lebanon, and for Israel they believe that might is right whereas we say that right is might: that's what we applied in Lebanon, that I remember at the very beginning that I was still a commander of the army in 1990, and they told me that there were some terrorists trying to go to their land is south Lebanon, because it was occupied by Israel, and they said now that you have a national army you must stop them.

I said "how can I stop Lebanese who want to go to their land?" At the time nobody

believed that we could achieve anything because the Resistance was still starting. But when the state is backing its own resistance and the resistance is ready to die for its land, you cannot defeat it. And the proof is what happened in Lebanon. What is happening in Gaza you have many

Palestinians who are not with Hamas, at the same time the big Arab countries are not with Hamas and at the same time they have closed all its inlets to Gaza and it's a more difficult case but still even with that if they are ready to stand up for their rights, it's very difficult to defeat somebody who is ready to die for his land.

Press TV: Is the Lebanese government not concerned that Israel in this time period you mentioned earlier may choose to fight back against Lebanon?

Lahoud: I'm sure that Israel thinking after Gaza would turn towards Lebanon, and after Lebanon it will take every Arab state one by one, and this is what some of the Lebanese as some Arab leaders are not thinking about, but I think that now they will think twice before attacking Lebanon. Because only two years ago, they were defeated but still even with that now the Resistance is much stronger than in 2006 and because of that, I think that Lebanon should stand firmly by Gaza because after they think they have defeated Gaza the Israelis are going to think about Lebanon. Maybe now it will be difficult for them but by taking every Arab

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country by itself, the Israelis think they can succeed.

Press TV: As well as being a former President, you are an army man and an expert in military affairs. Do you think Hezbollah could show solidarity and cause Israel to be fighting on two flanks if Hezbollah attacked?

Lahoud: I can tell you that people before didn't believe that the strength of the resistance in Lebanon is that nobody knows where they are, what they think, how they react and because they don't know that they cannot defeat it. Its like air you cannot catch it. And because of that I don't know what might happen. But I know that Hezbollah, if Lebanon is attacked, I'm sure that it will react. But now what it will do, really I don't know.

Press TV: And what would you hypothetically ... if you're speaking to the Hamas leadership, what would you suggest to them as a military strategy against the ground assault the air force assault and the naval assault? Would you be saying draw them in the cities?

Lahoud: I say that first the moral of the Hamas is very important now. They must really believe that right is might and they are right. The Israelis are going in their cities and they should not allow that. And Second, Hamas, if they draw them [Israelis] inside the city, they are much stronger, because the Israelis would be in hostile ground and in hostile ground, without knowing where they could be coming from, they will have a lot of casualties, because of that I say for everybody, they should stop now and the UN must take a decision.

It shouldn't do like it did in Lebanon. They went on thinking that because of pressure

from the then US president George W. Bush on the UN and unfortunately at the time President Chirac as well wasn't so anxious about Lebanon. What happened is that the war took 33 days and we lost a lot of lives, but at the end they lost. So why go on like this? Just stop the fire.

Go around the table and talk. This is the best way to solve the problem. Israelis think they will win. We will see about that after a few days. So what if the UN is not going to take a decision then it means that the UN is losing its role in the world. Because believe me, the human rights are being now trod on. They are killing children and women and people who are not fighting.

Press TV: But the UN is calling for a ceasefire but it's constantly being vetoed by Washington. Can you see any future in the United Nations as it currently is? Because certainly there is a new resolution of course that has just gone to the General Assembly from the Arab League. Do you have any hopes that there will be a resolution this time around?

Lahoud: I tell you, we hope that there will be a resolution. Because we don't want to lose the UN. Because if you lose the UN what will there be? The stronger will eat the weaker, we do not want that. But at the same time, the UN must have learned of the mistakes of what happened in Lebanon and a decision must be taken now because of human rights, because of what the UN looks up to and it shouldn't be influenced by the US.

The US is doing what's good for itself. They don't care [and] for them, Israel comes number one in the whole Middle East and this is the trouble with the US. They don't understand that they are losing a lot in the Middle East.

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I was just reading a book about the unmaking of the Middle East and they say how the American in the Middle East is becoming the ugly American. They should revise and I hope with President Obama things will change because he knows about human rights and we hope that things will change in the UN and there will be no more influence of the US on the UN

and at the same time look for human rights and give everyone its rights.

Press TV: It was both Saudi Arabia and Egypt that refused to hold a special summit and of course it is Egypt that is keeping the Rafah crossing closed so that medicine can't go to treat the wounded from these air strikes from the Israeli government.

Lahoud: After what is happening in Gaza will be over, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are going to lose a lot and especially the population of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, I don't think they are happy about what their administration's are doing and because of that, even if they have other agendas, for the good of their country which would be their good, is to now accept, have an Arab summit which I'm sure will solve many of the problems, especially in Gaza.

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