



By: TA | AP Brief

Iran urges regional unity against Israel



A top Iranian security official called on regional countries to put their differences aside and cooperate closely as they face what he called "Israel's conspiracies."

Ali Larijani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, **spoke** in Beirut where he arrived earlier Saturday to attend the anniversary of Israel's **assassination** of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon.

Iran has been the main backer of Hezbollah over the past four decades, supplying it with weapons and money that had turned it into one of the most powerful militant groups in the region.

But Hezbollah suffered heavy losses in a 14-month war with Israel, which ended with a U.S.-brokered ceasefire in November, with much of its political and military commanders killed in Israeli strikes.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah conflict began the day after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on southern Israel **triggered** the ongoing war in Gaza. Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel from Lebanon in support of Hamas and the Palestinians.

In June, Israel launched airstrikes in Iran, **triggering** a 12-day war between the two countries that killed several key Iran's military commanders and targeted its arsenal of ballistic missiles while decimating the country's air defenses.

Earlier this month, Israel struck the headquarters of Hamas' political leadership in Qatar as the group's top figures gathered to consider a U.S. proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Military capabilities

"Today, amid Israel's conspiracies, regional states should closely cooperate and even if there were disagreements between them they should put these disagreements aside," Larijani said after a nearly one-hour meeting with Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Larijani praised the call by Hezbollah leader Naim Kassem for Saudi Arabia to **open** a new page after years of tense relations, calling it "a step in the right direction."

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Asked about reports that Israel might launch new strikes against Iran, Larijani said, "We are ready to face all scenarios but I don't think that the Israelis will behave in this stupid way."

"If they do that, they will receive strong retaliation," Larijani said, without elaborating.

Later on Saturday, thousands of people attended a ceremony that was held next to Nasrallah's grave in a southern Beirut suburb. They included Larijani and other Lebanese and Hezbollah officials.

In a televised speech aired during the ceremony, Kassem said that Hezbollah is restoring its military capabilities, adding that they are ready to confront any "escalation by Israel."

Kassem reiterated that Hezbollah rejects last month's decision by the Lebanese government to **disarm** the group, adding that the group will not hand over its weapons because "we are in the middle of an existential war" with Israel.