

Iran: Israel will be 'eradicated' in next war with Hezbollah

One of Iran's top military commanders has said the Islamic Republic will intervene in any future conflict between Israel and its paramilitary ally in Lebanon, Hezbollah.

Mohammed Ali Jafri, the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), said it was clear Lebanon was Israel's primary focus and as such Iran and its network of proxy forces would unite to intervene against an attack.

"It is a proven claim that today we say any new war will lead to the eradication of the Zionist regime," Jafri said, according to the semi-official Iranian news agency Fars.

Jafri's comments were made against a backdrop of increasing tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia over the rival nation's proxy wars across the Middle East but particularly over internal strains in Lebanon.

A meeting of the Arab League in Cairo called by Saudi Arabia on Sunday condemned the powerful Lebanese militia Hezbollah and Iran, accusing both of supporting terrorism and extremist groups with advanced weapons and ballistic missiles.

In response the Lebanese president Michel Aoun defended Hezbollah, saying his country was subject to Israeli aggression and, as such, had the right to protect itself.

On November 4 Lebanon was thrust to the forefront of Sunni Riyadh and Shiite Tehran's power struggle when the country's leader, Saad Hariri, resigned during a visit to Saudi Arabia. Since returning to Beirut Hariri has agreed to stay on in his role at the request of Hezbollah-backed Aoun, despite having said specifically that he would allow himself to become a pawn in Iran's meddling in Lebanese affairs.

In a Thursday interview with the New York Times Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed Bin Salman, said Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khameni, the Supreme Leader of

Iran, was the “new Hitler of the Middle East.” He went on to further compare the sectarian power struggle in the region between Riyadh and Tehran to Europe in World War II.

On Tuesday, the commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, a lesser force to the battle-hardened Hezbollah militia, called for his troops to prepare to confront Israel amid the escalation.

According to the Times of Israel, General Joseph Aoun warned that Israel had hostile intentions against Lebanon, its people, and army. “I call upon you... to be fully prepared on the southern border to confront the Israeli enemy’s threats and violations,” he said in a speech.

Israel has repeatedly intervened in the war in neighboring Syria to stop Hezbollah from establishing a foothold on the border. On Monday Israel’s Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman requested a \$1 billion over a three year period to boost the country’s defense in light of developments in Syria.

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