UN Whitewashes Hezbollah

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This week, United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan Kubis wrote that he met with Hezbollah’s Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem. In shocking and concerning comments, Kubis also said that he was grateful to the Hezbollah leader for “substantive” comments and for giving him a copy of his book. The UN coordinator said the book was “necessary reading.”

Hezbollah, a terrorist organization that has fired rockets at Israeli civilians and conducted terrorist attacks around the world, was legitimized in its meeting with the UN. The IDF revealed tunnels built by Hezbollah last year extending into Israel, a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Israel has provided information to the UN and UNIFIL in Lebanon about the tunnels.

Responding to the Kubis-Hezbollah meeting, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon said “We are shocked and disappointed by this meeting.” He noted that one doesn’t need to read Qassem’s book to understand Hezbollah’s threat to Israel and the region. Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon slammed the meeting. “The role of the UN representative is to promote a stable and secure region, and not to meet with leaders of a terrorist organization and to glorify incitement against the State of Israel,” he said.

Qassem told Kubis that Israel and the US were at fault for tensions in the region. “The rhetoric being used by [Israel and the US] is a rhetoric of threats and war and this might push things to the brink.” Hezbollah sought to burnish its credentials by telling the UN it was working with all Lebanese parties to bring political stability to the country. He addressed the US “deal of the century” and the Palestinian cause in his meeting, saying Hezbollah supports the Palestinians. He also claimed Hezbollah is merely defending Lebanon. Hezbollah has a role in Lebanon’s parliament and controls their Health Ministry. It is both an armed terrorist militia and a political party, building on the Iranian model that seeks to plant proxies that combine terror and politics into the same entities across the region.

According to *the Daily Star* in Lebanon, this is not the first time Kubis has met with Hezbollah. He met the group in mid-April as well to brief them on UN discussions. “Glad to continue our dialogue with Ammar Moussawi of Hezbollah. Profound exchanges on the messages from the March Security Council meeting on Resolution 1701 as well as on regional issues,” Kubis wrote at the time. He also discussed returning Syrian refugees from Lebanon to Syria, according to the newspaper.

Hezbollah wants the mostly Sunni refugees to leave Lebanon, and the UN said it was in touch with the Syrian government about the “opportunity for a safe and dignified return.” The Syrian regime has been responsible for widespread torture and murder of its own citizens, calling into question how any refugees might have a safe or dignified return. But the UN appears to be close to the Hezbollah position on this, just as it appeared close to Hezbollah this week, suggesting its propaganda as necessary reading.

Qassem frequently condemns and threatens Israel and the US. In December 2018, he said that all of Israel was within the range of Hezbollah’s missiles. He said last year that Hezbollah was not threatened by Israel’s recent actions, mocking Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

His book, Hezbollah: The Story from Within is available online. In it, he claims that “the Jewish lobby” in the US played an important role in “capitalizing US capabilities” to support “the Zionist entity’s interests.” He complains that US media has restricted terrorists from broadcasting their messages, bemoaning the absence of Osama Bin Laden’s speeches on CNN and complaining that “it is not difficult to observe the apparent bias of Western media in favor of the Zionist course.”

Is this “necessary reading?” Why does the UN representative feel the need to suggest a book by a Hezbollah leader who is sanctioned by the US as a terrorist?

The UN has been systematically derelict in its duties in Lebanon and Kubis’s meeting is just the latest demonstration. The continued violation of Resolution 1701 is also on the UN. We recommend that UN Secretary-General António Guterres take action immediately to ensure that Kubis does his job – stopping Hezbollah, not praising it.