

Wars and Rumors of War: Christian Leader Murdered in Political Assassination

JERUSALEM and south LEBANON – Christian-Muslim tensions in Lebanon have erupted after the murder of well-known Christian politician Pascal Sleiman. Given his fierce opposition to Hezbollah, Lebanese Christians are worried for their safety as the terror group's intimidation grows.

A Syrian gang is believed to have kidnapped and murdered Sleiman, a strong believer and senior member of the Christian Lebanese Forces Party.

Experts here see it as a political assassination linked to Hezbollah, meant to frighten the Christian community and whoever else opposes the group's fight against Israel.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah took to the airwaves shortly after the government announced Sleiman's murder, accusing Christians of stirring up chaos.

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"They are not people of truth, nor are they people of justice and they do not care about the national interest, civil peace or anything. They are people of strife and seek civil war," Nasrallah claimed.

Christians feel caught between the Jewish state and the Islamic terror group. The two enemies last fought in 2006.

Here along the valley of Klayaa, a Christian community in south Lebanon, the folks CBN News has spoken to cannot believe that Israel and Hezbollah are once again at war. In fact, this is a region that has seen war for more than 50 years.

AP journalist Lotfalah Daher said, "We are struggling in all aspects, no matter who the players are or their agendas, regardless of which country they are affiliated with, at the end of the day the number one loser in all this are the Christians of Lebanon."

Hezbollah, meaning "The Party of Allah", wields significant power in Lebanese society. They control parts of Beirut, southern Lebanon and the eastern Bekaa Valley region.

Sarit Zehavi of the Alma Research and Education Center said, "The basic goal of Hezbollah is to distribute the Islamic revolution and to take over Lebanon and to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon. War in Israel serves this goal."

A former IDF intelligence officer, Zehavi is a leading expert on Hezbollah. She says even though Lebanon has the Middle East's highest proportion of Christians, at roughly 30%, Muslims dominate the landscape with Shia Muslims wielding the greatest influence.

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Hezbollah is a Shia group and their power runs deep throughout Lebanon's political structure, including the military.

Zehavi said, "Half of the combat soldiers in the Lebanese Army are Muslim Shiites, they are not going to clash with their brothers in Hezbollah. You can have a family that one is serving in the Lebanese Army and the other one is serving with Hezbollah."

It's why many Christians, like a civilian named Joseph, feel vulnerable to their attacks, intimidation, and persecution. We are concealing his identity for his safety.

A few weeks back, Joseph discovered Hezbollah firing rockets

across the border from his farm.

“They keep using our land as a launching pad. They assemble their missiles here then fire them into Israel,” Joseph said.

In this exclusive interview with CBN News, Joseph told us he repeatedly asked the Lebanese Army to intervene with no response.

“We don’t want our land to be a staging ground for war between these two parties. We take no part in this. What’s happening in Gaza is not our war,” Joseph said.{eo}

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