

Shorty in Lebanon: Day One

Reports from multiple sources on President Ahmadinejad's first day in Lebanon. Beirut Online is [reporting](#) on Ahmadinejad's activities shortly after his arrival.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has arrived in Lebanon for a visit seen as a boost for Tehran's Shia ally Hezbollah, an enemy of Israel. The two-day visit will include a tour of villages along Lebanon's tense border with Israel. The region was devastated during the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel and rebuilt partly with Iranian money. During his visit, Mr Ahmadinejad will meet President Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Saad Hariri. He will also attend a rally in the capital Beirut organized by Hezbollah.

[Huge](#) crowds gathered in the streets of Beirut on Wednesday to welcome Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as he arrives on a controversial visit that will take him to the doorstep of arch-foe Israel. The streets to Beirut's airport were lined from early morning by thousands of people, mostly Hizbullah supporters, many of them carrying or draped in Iranian flags. Huge pictures of the Iranian leader were also on display along with flower baskets placed along the airport road and large balloons in the red, green and white colors of the Iranian flag. Many streets leading to the airport, located near Hizbullah's stronghold in the southern suburbs, were cordoned off amid tight security. The downtown area near the hotel where Ahmadinejad is staying was also off limits to traffic.

At a [press](#) conference with President Suliman of Lebanon:

He emphasized Iran's common stance with Lebanon against the occupation of Lebanese and Palestinian lands, calling for an end to Israel's occupation of Lebanese lands. The Iranian chief executive said both the Islamic Republic and Lebanon are against the atrocities and crimes committed by "the Zionist enemy." "Today the name of Lebanon and all the Lebanese remind you of pride and dignity as Lebanon is considered a symbol of dignity for all regional nations," President Ahmadinejad said. Lebanon has changed the regional equations to the benefit of all regional states and this country is the country of rich culture, knowledge and literature, the Iranian president added. Highlighting Tehran-Beirut amicable relations, the Iranian chief executive called for the expansion of reciprocal ties with the Arab states in various cultural, economic and scientific areas. Sleiman, for his part, expressed gratitude for Iran's unconditional and continued support for Lebanon against Israeli threats. According to the Lebanese president, Iran and Lebanon have enjoyed unique ties throughout history.

However, the reaction from Israeli sites was quite different. Debka is [reporting](#) that almost all of the area militaries went on heightened alert.

Debkafile's military and Iranian sources report: Towards the end of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad first day in Lebanon Wednesday Oct. 13, a high alert was declared in the Israeli, Syrian, Lebanese armies, the Hizballah militia and the UN peacekeeping force. The visitor was expected to further sharpen his tone and fire seriously belligerent rhetoric at Israel from the sites he is touring Thursday along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

A sign of this came in the harsh tone of the speech he delivered Wednesday night from the Al-Raya Stadium in the Shiite district Dahya district of Beirut: Ahmadinejad and Hizballah leader Hassan Nasrallah declared their common goal was Israel's destruction. The IDF, the

Lebanese army and UNIFIL raised their war alert further when it was discovered that Nasrallah was not standing beside the Iranian president but had relayed his speech by videotape. ... The Hizballah leaders physical absence from the platform alongside the Iranian president, as though his life is in greater danger than that of his guest, is interpreted by Western intelligence circles in Beirut as pointing to Nasrallah reserving a piece of high drama up his sleeve, alarming enough to justify a demonstration of strength by Hizballah in Beirut or in South Lebanon. That is why he preferred to keep his head down Wednesday. The maneuver was almost certainly approved or even cooked up with the Iranian president.

The Jerusalem Post [concentrated](#) on the comment that “Lebanon is a university for jihad”. Haaretz is [reporting](#) on comments by the United states State Department

“We continue to work directly with the [Lebanese] government,” Crowley said. “[We] have strong suspicions about the motives of Iran and its – you know, the groups that it supports who do not have Lebanon’s long-term interest at heart.” Crowley expressed concern about the prospect of Iran providing arms to Lebanon. “A challenge for Lebanon is the fact that you have outside players who are providing military capabilities to sub-state groups such as Hezbollah,” he said. “So we would naturally have concern that the provision of any arms into Lebanon would not be for the benefit of the national government, it would be to strengthen groups like Hezbollah, which both undermine the sovereignty of Lebanon itself but also pose a tremendous security risk to the region as a whole.”

Probably the best information we have is from Lebanon Now’s [publishing](#) of the text of Ahmadinejad’s speech on the thirteenth. Excerpts follow.

- Lebanon is the school of Resistance and perseverance against the tyrants of this world. It is the streaming banner of glory and independence, and the brilliant pearl at the edge of this region.

- Dear ones, our world stands today on the threshold of a great change which began to take shape in our very own region.

- You know well and the arrogant dominators have made use of material force, distortion, and violence for dozens – nay, for hundreds – of years in order to establish their control. They made of our region a platform for their subjugation of the entire world.

- These [arrogant ones] did not stop at any limit, and they were not satisfied with anything less than bending the region to their will.

- While they placed others in the position of debtor, they placed themselves in the position of accountant and creditor. Peoples’ souls, resources, capacities, dignity, and cultures – especially with our peoples – did not enjoy any sanctity before these [arrogant ones].

- From the perspective of these [arrogant ones], the Muslim, Christian, and Jew, and every true monotheist calling for justice is considered equally and is looked upon as an enemy.

Lebanese brothers and sisters, your affairs and the affairs of the Iranian people are one. Therefore we are present with you in one front. The glory and development of Lebanon is for us as well. We will always stay together and at each other’s side through thick and thin. During meetings with respected Lebanese officials we together laid down solid bases for

development in brotherly relations in multiple fields.

Analysis. So far it resembles any other head of state's visit to a foreign country. His speech contains the usual Islamic references to monotheism as the way of the World. Perhaps the last paragraph quoted from his speech is the most telling. Lebanon and Iran are one. I suspect that Nasrallah's absence from the evening speech was to protect himself from any attempt to kill them both. We will see what happens on the border tomorrow.