

quent reconnaissance flights and mock bombings, hijacking boats and even intercepting a Lebanese Army plane and forcing it to land in 'Israel'. In line with their plans for increased interference in favor of the Lebanese fascist forces, the Israelis have upped their overt military presence in Jezzine, north of the 'security zone' and centrally located between Sidon on the east and the mountains to the north. For the first time since their partial withdrawal from Lebanon, Israeli Merkava tanks have been spotted in Jezzine. On May 31st, villages around Jezzine were subjected to ten hours of shelling and strafing after a major resistance attack in which six Israelis were wounded and about ten of their SLA proxies killed. Four Lebanese civilians were killed by Israeli fire, including a six-month old baby; twenty were wounded.

The accumulation of aggression sparked speculation about a major new Israeli aggression. Whether or not this materializes, it is certain that the Zionists' purpose is to spread fear. This would create the political climate for the Lebanese state and reactionary forces to move to check the anti-occupation resistance, thus preserving the Israelis' security without their risking the casualties a major aggression would entail. In other words, the escalated terror campaign was the Israeli contribution to having the Cairo agreement cancelled, to encourage the Lebanese fascists and other sectarian forces to step up their war on patriots, Lebanese and Palestinian alike.

DEFYING 'SLOW DEATH'

While the Lebanese parliament bowed to the Zionist logic and cancelled the Cairo agreement, the daily steadfastness of the masses in southernmost Lebanon provides a different picture. In late May, a Reuters reporter visiting villages on the edge of the 'security zone', that are constantly exposed to shelling and harassment, recorded the comments of the residents. In Froun, the mukhtar, Kamal Jaafer, told the reporter why the local people remain in the war zone: «Whoever starts running away will have to keep running all the time... Life has become very difficult, but where can we go? We live from our land and we have to stay near it». Also in Froun, where villagers risk their lives just going to the Litani River to get water, Fatima Mikdad, who works at a sewing factory, said,

«Even if the (resistance) attacks stop, the shelling will continue. We are ready to pay with our lives to help the resistance fighters.» In another village, Tulin, an elderly farmer whose family often shelters resistance fighters, concluded, «If we don't sacrifice our children and grandchildren in the fight against the Israelis, they will never leave. If some of us die, and Israeli leaves, it is better than this daily slow death.»



RASHID KARAMI — MARTYR TO THE ZIONIST PLAN

The June 1st assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami was the ultimate proof that the fascist-Zionist alliance is on the offensive. Karami was not just any politician. Having served as prime minister nine times, he had a long history of working for a balanced solution that would preserve Lebanon's unity and Arab identity. In the words of Mustafa Saad, Sidon's nationalist leader, «This crime was a declaration of war against the nation and the citizens, and targeted not only the late prime minister, but also the idea of a state of justice and national accord, based on equality and Arabism.»

Karami's prominent nationalist role dates back to 1958 when he joined the nationalist movement to oppose President Camille Chamoun's move to turn Lebanon into a *de facto* US protectorate. He was effective in organizing mass protests especially in his home area around Tripoli, North Lebanon, a stronghold of the nationalist movement aligned with Nasser's Egypt. In 1969, he resigned after the Lebanese Army's bloody suppression of pro-Palestinian demonstrations. When the civil war broke out in 1975, he moved to prevent the Lebanese Army from joining the fascist side. He was widely regarded as one of few Lebanese politicians able to

steer Lebanon through a national unity process that would guarantee reforms and Lebanon's relations with Syria.

Lebanese nationalists have accused the fascist Lebanese Forces and their penetration of the Lebanese Army, noting that 'Israel' stands as the ultimate beneficiary and probable mastermind of the crime. All the facts validate these accusations. Karami was killed by a bomb planted in a helicopter where the Lebanese Army had made the security check. The bomb exploded as the helicopter was over fascist-controlled areas, giving the possibility of remote-control detonation. According to *Al Safir*, a Beirut daily, an Israeli officer visited the fascist-controlled areas in May to plan the operation. Soon afterwards, Lebanese Forces commander Samir Geagea visited 'Israel', returning to Lebanon via Jezzine. Cooperation between the Lebanese Forces and sections of the Lebanese Army is a known fact. (Uniformed Lebanese Army officers train Geagea's elite troops at Ghosta monastery-turned fortress, north of Beirut.) Such cooperation allowed for planting the bomb on Karami's helicopter and preventing further security checks.

Karami had resigned in May due to the deadlock in the political and economic crisis, challenging Amin Gemayel whose adherence to the fascists' positions had blocked all reform solutions. Despite the Lebanese Forces' concerted calls for Gemayel to accept Karami's resignation, the president had dallied, not wanting to further antagonize Syria that was firmly backing Karami's leadership. In this deadlock, the fascists acted, assassinating Karami in order to take the pressure off Gemayel and create a power vacuum that would block Syrian and Lebanese nationalist efforts for stability, while giving 'Israel' greater room to interfere in Lebanon.

With the assassination of Karami the situation in Lebanon was once again blown wide open, and the Lebanese democratic forces are faced with a double challenge. One is the sectarian tendency to find a partial solution to the Lebanese crisis that falls short of establishing real unity and democracy. The other challenge, which may prove to be the most powerful, comes from the fascist-Zionist-imperialist alliance that may embark on new aggression to impose their domination in Lebanon. ●