Israel lashes top UN official for praising Hezbollah deputy chief

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-lashes-top-un-official-for-praising-hezbollah-deputy-chief/>

Israel on Tuesday slammed the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan Kubis for meeting with and praising a senior Hezbollah leader.

On Monday, Kubis wrote on Twitter that he had met with Naim Qassem, the deputy head of the Iran-linked terror group. He also recommended Qassem’s book.

Kubis [tweeted](https://twitter.com/UNJanKubis/status/1130484625032265728) that he was “grateful for an open and substantive discussion on a broad range of topics with Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem of Hizbullah. On top I received a copy of his book — a necessary reading.”

“We are shocked and disappointed by this meeting with a designated terror organization’s leader, threatening Israel, Lebanon and the whole region,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon tweeted.

In addition to the tweet from Kubis’s account, his office later retweeted the post and translated it into Arabic.

Kubis was likely referring to “Hizbullah (Hezbollah): The Story from Within,” a 464-page tome first published in English a decade ago. The book, published by the London-based[Saqi Books](http://www.saqibooks.com/about-us/), is available on Amazon.

The Shiite-Lebanese group is widely recognized as a terrorist organization, including by Israel, the US, the UK and parts of the Arab world. But it has also become a powerful force in Lebanese politics in recent years and some, like the EU, only recognize its armed wing as a terror group, while not blacklisting its political operations.

Israel in February launched a drive for the UN to recognize Hezbollah as a terror group but has failed to gain traction.

Qassem, the right-hand man of the group’s longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah, is on the record threatening Israel with annihilation. In 2017, for instance, he spoke of the [need to “liberate” all of the territory](https://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-slams-hamas-for-accepting-palestinian-state-in-67-lines/) between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

Responding to a Times of Israel query, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon said that it “works with the government of Lebanon and with political and social forces and institutions of Lebanon, notably those elected to the Parliament, including Hizbullah encouraging them to work for the well-being of the country and its people, for peace, security and stability of Lebanon and the region.”

The spokesperson added that the office raises “relevant issues” with actors such as Hezbollah leaders “as appropriate,” notably related to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 that ended the 2006 Second Lebanon War, “including its implementation but also instances and areas of violations and/or non- implementation of the said resolution in ‘an open and substantive discussion.’”

Israel recently revealed that Hezbollah has dug a series of cross-border tunnels attack tunnels.

In April, a UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon [confirmed](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-confirms-3rd-hezbollah-tunnel-crossed-border-into-israel-violating-ceasefire/) that a tunnel discovered earlier this year by Israel had crossed the Lebanese-Israeli border, in the third such breach of a ceasefire resolution.

In December, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Hezbollah’s tunnel-digging [an “act of war,”](https://www.timesofisrael.com/ahead-of-un-discussion-netanyahu-calls-hezbollah-tunnel-digging-act-of-war/) and accused the Lebanese Armed Forces of doing nothing to counter those acts.