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“Lebanon is on verge of abyss” bishop says

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First the trip to Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, then that of Amos Hockstein, White House adviser. Both with a specific mission: to end the conflict between Israelis and Hamas, but more importantly to prevent a new war from breaking out between Israel and Hezbollah. U.S. diplomacy seems to be failing, as the head of foreign policy in the Israeli government, Israel Katz, has stated that Israel

cannot allow the Hezbollah terrorist organisation to attack its territory and that important decisions will be made soon.

In contrast the far-right National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, called on Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to declare war on Lebanon. "Gallant, the army is your responsibility, what are you waiting for? More than a hundred rockets have been fired at the State of Israel, and you are sitting around doing nothing. You have to intervene," Ben-Gvir said through a video he shared on X. The Israeli army, for its part, has already approved the plans, and is ready to attack the Lebanese Islamist movement having put more than fifty thousand reservists on alert who could be called at any moment.

"It will be an absurd war. Pointless. Which will only cause death and destruction. Violence begets violence. The time has come to lay down arms and seriously start negotiations to undertake a long and lasting peace process in this tormented region", Bishop Cesar Essayan, Apostolic Vicar for the Latin Church in Lebanon tells the Daily Compass. We reach him by phone while he is visiting a family who recently abandoned their home village in southern Lebanon to escape the Israeli shelling that is hammering that part of the Cedar Country every day.

He is audibly despondent about what is happening in his country, but also about the dead and wounded in both Gaza and Israel. He is convinced that only when the Palestinians have their own state, the Israelis will be able live without fear in their land, and Lebanon will be a free and peaceful country. That is when there will be true peace. War never benefits the people, it only enriches the powerful of this world.

Your Excellency, is there a risk of an escalation that will widen the conflict?
If there is a war between Israel and Hezbollah it will be something dramatic. No one will stop. There will be death and destruction. There will be devastation in Lebanon, but also in Israel. What is extremely worrying is that other neighbouring countries will not stand by and watch. They will also become major players, using all their weapons of death.

Are you also referring to Yemen?
Not only. Iran is also ready for confrontation. Syria, which enjoys Russia's unconditional support, should not be underestimated.

Do you envisage difficult days then are on the horizon?
At the moment anything even the slightest spark could set off a raging conflict that no one, I repeat no one wants. We are currently living in a war situation in Lebanon. Many villages in the south have been destroyed and also in Israel. The number of refugees is

on the constant increase, on both sides.

Could external forces also provoke war to break out?
Absolutely, yes. There are many players involved, unfortunately, offstage.

Can we expect a conflict similar to that in 2006?
Anything could happen. Maybe even worse.

What is Iran's role?
I believe Iran is negotiating with the United States. Everything depends on the results of these negotiations.

In your opinion, should threats by Hassan Nasrallah, head of the Shiite Hezbollah party, to a NATO country (Cyprus) be cause for concern?
They are indirect messages. They are coded dispatches directed both at the United States and Europe. Both, these powers, shouldn't underestimate them. But the real problem is Iran.

Does a conflict then have no final solution?
Exactly. This eventual war could last for months. Perhaps years. In addition there are the political aspects that should not be underestimated, which also include: the elections in America, Netanyahu's final exit from the political scene as the head of Israel, the survival of Hezbollah, and above all the stability of the region.

And what role does Lebanon play in this scenario?
It's difficult to answer that question. There are too many contradictions. On the one hand, the United States is building an embassy which will be the largest and most important in the whole region, and on the other hand, Hassan Nasrallah and the head of the Lebanese parliament control almost all of Lebanon.

But how will these two forces be able to get along?
The Lebanese people will be the ones to lose out. And it will also be very difficult for Christians to live in this situation. Already many of them are leaving the country. It's a great tragedy. We will be left with a Lebanon deprived of its identity.

St. George's Church in Yaroun was damaged ...

It is a Roman Catholic church which was built in 1923. It could be a very clear message to Christians from the Israelis. A message that says: if Christians do not rebel or distance themselves from Hezbollah the Israelis are ready to use all the means at their disposalto drive them away. It is an invitation: rise up against Hezbollah.

Was the same message, in your opinion, addressed to the Christians in Gaza when the church of St. Porphyry was bombed by the Israelis causing as many as seventeen deaths?

I think so. But Christians want peace, they do not desire war.

The Golan has become another hot spot in the Syrian crisis. Why?

The Golan is bound to be the scene of tensions and military action in the near future as well. But they are always messages to Israel that more fronts can be opened up against the Jewish state.

How are you experiencing this situation?

Very badly. The feeling is that we are close to the abyss.

What about the youth?

They are definitely not going to fight. Nobody is going to go to war. They don't identify with this conflict, which I repeat, is absurd.