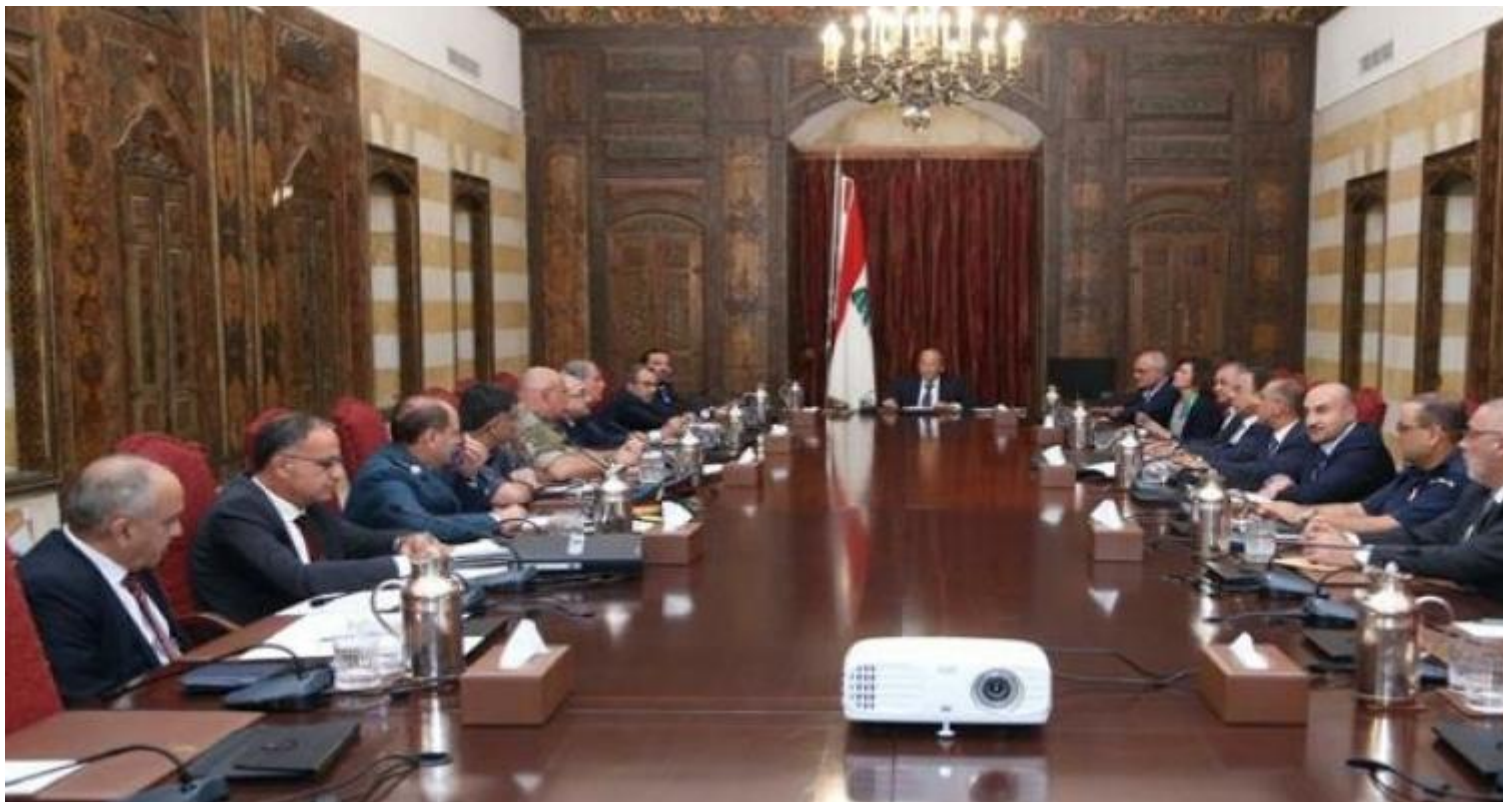


Lebanon says it has right to self-defense after Israeli drone attack



Beirut, August 28 (RHC)-- Lebanon's Higher Defense Council has stated that the Lebanese nation reserves the right to defend the country "by any means necessary" in the wake of an Israeli drone attack on the southern part of the capital Beirut at the weekend.

"This is a right that is enshrined in the UN Charter," the Council, a government body in charge of defense policy, said in a statement on Tuesday, emphasizing that "national unity remains the best weapon in the face of any aggression."

The meeting was chaired by President Michel Aoun and attended by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, the ministers of defense, interior, foreign affairs and finance, and the heads of security agencies.

"The President underlined the need to defend Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity because it is a legitimate right," the statement noted. Hariri said the drone attack – the first of its kind since the summer 2006 war Israeli war on Lebanon – posed a threat to regional stability. Israel used the attack "to change the rules of engagement," he said.

On Monday, Hariri called upon the United Nations Security Council to pressure Israel not to initiate any action of aggression against Lebanon. "If Israel's aggressions escalate, this will have dangerous repercussions on Lebanon and the whole region," a statement by Hariri's office said.

Hariri said that the government wants to prevent any escalations, which requires the support of the international community. His remarks came during a meeting with French, Chinese, the United States, Russian and British ambassadors to Lebanon. Separately, Aoun said Israel's recent drone strikes in Lebanon amounts to "a declaration of war" against the Arab country, vowing that Lebanon will defend its sovereignty against the Israeli aggression.

The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement said on Monday that Israel had sent two drones into Lebanon on a bombing mission on the weekend. According to Hezbollah, the first drone had fallen on a building housing Hezbollah's media office in Dahieh suburb. The second drone, which appeared to have been sent by Israel to search for the first one, had crashed in an empty plot nearby after being detonated in the air, it added.

Following the drone raids, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's secretary general, vowed in a televised speech that fighters of the movement would counter any further violation of the Lebanese airspace by Israeli drones, warning the Tel Aviv regime to immediately halt such breaches.

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