

Journalist in Lebanon says he saw shredded bodies scattered on roads and hanging from trees

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By Hiba Morad / PRESS TV

Steve Sweeney, a British journalist who reported on the recent Israeli war on Lebanon, says he saw shredded and charred bodies, including those of children, scattered on the streets and hanging from trees as the Israeli regime bombed the country.

In a conversation with the Press TV website, Sweeney recounted the harrowing scenes he observed during nearly 70 days of relentless Israeli aggression against the Arab country, which resulted in massive death and destruction of civilians.

“Israel killed women and children in Lebanon. How do I know this? I know this because I saw the bodies. I saw people hanging from trees. I saw the remains of children who had been incinerated in these Israeli strikes,” he stated, presenting graphic details of the Zionist atrocities.

Sweeney, who exposed Israeli Hasbara after reporting how regime forces had stacked dollars and weapons in the basements of Sahel General Hospital in the Lebanese capital, called out the blatant lies propagated by the regime to justify preemptive strikes against displaced civilians and residential areas.

“We saw several massacres. It is difficult to put into words exactly what we witnessed. These were precision strikes, these were deliberate attacks. The goal was to kill the Shia community and instill fear, not just among the Shia, but also among the other communities that were sheltering them,” he noted.

“These people thought they were in safety, they were far away from the frontline of the fighting and they posed no threat to Israel whatsoever. This is a war crime. We saw the Shia community haunted down by Israel across Lebanon.”

According to the principle of proportionality in international law, as outlined in Article 51 of the UN Charter, even if there is a legitimate military target, attacking it is prohibited if the expected harm to civilians or civilian property is excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage.

Witness of the horror

The British journalist, who covered the war in the South, Baalbek, and the North, recalled the horrors he witnessed firsthand.

“There was a period when Israel was striking civilian buildings in civilian areas that were housing those who had already fled from the Israeli aggression in the South. Those who were killed were not Hezbollah fighters or military commanders. They were mainly women and children,” he told the Press TV website.

On December 4, Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad told reporters that a total of 316 children and 790 women had been killed in the Israeli assault on Lebanon.

A week after a truce was declared, Abiad reported that the death toll had reached 4,047, with 16,638 others wounded.

“What we saw was horrific, the massacres... We were at sights in Batroun and in Tripoli near the North and we saw scores of people killed, 23 people here, another 27 people there. In Saida we saw the same residential buildings targeted,” Sweeney told the Press TV website.

“I saw photos of a married couple, photos of children, toys and clothes of children among the rubble. It was something like a horror movie. There was massacre after massacre and war crime after war crime, mainly targeting displaced women and children.”

Reflecting on Israeli claims that these attacks were not deliberate, Sweeney dismissed them as blatant falsehoods. He asserted that Israel was losing on the battlefield and failing to achieve any of its military objectives. In response, its strategy shifted toward provoking civil strife and undermining support for the resistance—sending a clear warning to the Lebanese people that those who shelter the displaced would

also be targeted.

“Israel wanted to sow discord among the Lebanese but it rather created a united Lebanon, a united people, who were not prepared to allow a component of the Lebanese people to be singled out. This was a war on all Lebanon, targeting the social fabric of the country,” the journalist said.

Sweeney was among the first journalists to enter southern Lebanese border areas after the ceasefire.

“What we saw in the South was an apocalyptic scene. Village after village, town after town reduced to rubble. As we drove through we saw houses, apartment blocks destroyed, hospitals, schools, churches, mosques, civil defense centers,” he told the Press TV website.

He dismissed the narrative that Israeli forces were targeting only resistance fighters. “A lie goes halfway around the world before the truth puts its shoes on, this is certainly a lie. Israel has told lie after lie. They say they had targeted a Hezbollah commander for example, yet they hit an entire building that is full of civilians,” he noted.

He hastened to add that the people of Lebanon are unshakeable and uncompromising, having made immense sacrifices yet refusing to submit or surrender.

“I was there at the very moment the people were returning to their homes or what was left of their homes for the very first time since the ceasefire. One woman, in particular, struck me when she was standing in front of her apartment block reduced into rubble, she had lost everything. Yet she said to me that she would give everything to Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and that she would give everything over and over again for the resistance. Then she said: we have two choices, either surrender or resistance.”

The journalist also pointed out that Israel was deliberately targeting infrastructure, as well as touristic and religious sites.

“We saw again in Tyr, the historic seafront which was bombed by Israel in the aggression. It is the destruction of a city that is crucial to Lebanon in terms of tourism, industry, and the economy. Israel destroyed everything in the South to make it uninhabited,” he remarked.

“I attended the funerals of 11 martyrs from Hezbollah who died fighting to defend their land and territory from Israeli invaders, and again this was a quite moving experience for me. The entire village came out in support of the martyrs and I spoke to one of the women whose son was killed. Of course, she was very sad, but she said I have two other sons, and I would be happy to give them as well.”

Sweeney reflected on how, as a Westerner, he had come to understand the concept of martyrdom better.

“I spoke to a Sheikh (cleric) who explained the concept of martyrdom. He said martyrdom is a new life; a concept that is difficult for a Westerner like me to understand, but I kind of understand it more now after my experience in the last three months of the Israeli aggression,” he stated.

“Israel will never be able to destroy Hezbollah. What they do not understand is that they can decapitate leaders, but those will be replaced. The commanders in Hezbollah are replaced and its structure remains intact. But the most important point is that Hezbollah is the people, and it cannot be defeated.”

Describing the people of southern Lebanon, with whom he spent considerable time, Sweeney remarked that they come from a unique path, calling them “a very special, beautiful, and resilient people.”

Threats for revealing truth

Sweeney said he faced abuse, a smear campaign, and death threats for his reportage on the war and for exposing uncomfortable truths about the Zionist aggression on Lebanon.

"I was abused and received some threats from Israelis when I did an investigative report from inside al-Sahel hospital, which Israel claimed Hezbollah hid dollars in the basement; an outlandish claim they also used in Gaza to justify pre-emptive strikes on hospitals like al-Shifa hospital. I was not targeted but they put me on their radar," Sweeney told the Press TV website.

"I searched every corner, every room including the basement. And all I found was what you find in any hospital anywhere across the world. I had nobody following me around, there was nothing that I was denied access to and I could open any door I wanted and go anywhere I wanted. I opened boxes, tapped the walls to see if there is anything behind them, I checked every inch. This is Israeli Hasbara."

In one incident, as Sweeney and his colleagues entered Maroun al-Ras, Israel opened fire on them. "I am not entirely sure if they were firing at us or it was a warning shot, but this is what they are doing to the people of the South, the people who are trying to return to their homes and villages, it is preventing them from doing so and booby-trapping houses and bulldozing buildings."

On the killing of three of his colleagues in Lebanon, the British journalist said he previously had been in that area and participating in their funerals affected him deeply as a fellow journalist.

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A forever legacy

The journalist said he also visited the site where Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was assassinated on September 27 in the suburbs of Beirut. "It was a moving experience to stand where this great man was killed. His legacy will never die. What struck me the most was that Hassan Nasrallah died among his people, in a residential area—he was among the people," he told the Press TV website.

"I think that says everything, about who he was, who he is, and his deep connection with the people. He was such an incredible figure. When he spoke to the nation, the whole of Lebanon would stand still and listen, and that was because what he said mattered to everybody. It mattered to the mechanic, the doctor, the student, the worker, it mattered to the United States, and to Israel."

On September 27, amid indiscriminate aerial bombardments, the Israeli occupation forces dropped over 80 tons of U.S.-made bunker-buster bombs on the southern suburb of Dahiyeh in Beirut, resulting in the assassination of Sayyed Nasrallah and his associates.

The attack followed the assassinations of top-ranking Hezbollah commanders such as Fuad Shukr and Ibrahim Aqil in separate strikes and preceded the killing of Sayyed Hashem Safiuddin, the head of Hezbollah's Executive Council.

"He was an intelligent and thoughtful leader. If you listen to his speeches, to the power of his words, you understand that he will never truly die—he lives on in the people and in the resistance. His martyrdom is a huge loss, but it is not the end of Nasrallah. His legacy will endure forever," Sweeney said.

He added that he has spoken to Lebanese people from all communities across the country, and all of them, "without question," support the resistance against the Zionist enemy.

“They have made it clear: We either surrender or resist. Despite the horrors inflicted by Israel on the people of Lebanon—despite the destruction and the immense damage Israel has caused, not just physical but also psychological and economic, which should not be underestimated—the people of Lebanon remain unbreakable,” he asserted.

“I have heard this from so many people who have lost their homes, lost everything—they will continue to support the resistance. And should Israel attempt to encroach again on Lebanese sovereign territory, it will be met with fierce resistance.”

Sweeney concluded that, based on what he witnessed and experienced, this is not merely an Israeli war on Hezbollah but an Israeli war on all of Lebanon. And Lebanon has chosen resistance.

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