

*Mourners attend former
Hezbollah leader Nasrallah's
funeral in Lebanon*

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Dressed in black, some waving Hezbollah flags or carrying portraits of Nasrallah, thousands flock to stadium in Beirut. [Mohammed Yassin/Reuters]

Beirut, February 23 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of people packed into a stadium in Beirut to attend the funeral of Hezbollah's former leader, nearly five months after he was killed in an Israeli air attack on a southern suburb of the Lebanese capital.

Hassan Nasrallah, the group's leader for more than 30 years and one of its founders, was killed in September last year when Israel's air force dropped more than 80 bombs on the group's main operations room.

Mourners dressed in black, some waving Hezbollah flags or carrying portraits of Nasrallah, flocked to the mass funeral, delayed because of security concerns. Many men, women and children from Lebanon and beyond walked on foot in the biting cold to reach the site of the ceremony.

Giant portraits of Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine – Nasrallah's chosen successor killed in another Israeli air raid before he could assume the post – were plastered on walls and bridges across south Beirut. The two had temporarily been buried in secret locations.

Senior Hezbollah official Ali Daamouh told reporters about 800 personalities from 65 countries would attend the funeral, in addition to thousands of individuals and activists from around the world.

Nasrallah was laid to rest later on Sunday in Beirut, while Safieddine was laid to rest in his hometown in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah placed giant screens along the airport road and outside the stadium for people who would not get a space inside to watch the funeral. Tight security measures include the closure of main roads in the area of the funeral and the halting of flights to and from Beirut airport for four hours. The Lebanese army and police are on alert, and the use of drones in Beirut and its suburbs during the day has been banned.

Hours before the funeral's start, the Israeli military launched a series of attacks in southern Lebanon.

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