

Assange Interviews Hezbollah Leader in TV Premiere

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Julian Assange interviewing Hezbollah leader Sayyid Nasrallah on Assange's new program on RT.

LONDON — The opening episode of Julian Assange's new talk show featured an interview with militant leader Hassan Nasrallah, whose Syria-backed Hezbollah militia is considered a terrorist organization in the United States and Europe.

The half-hour segment aired on Kremlin-backed broadcaster RT on Tuesday and featured questions about Israel, Lebanon, Syria, theology and encryption. Nasrallah, who is rarely seen on English-language television, largely stuck to well-established positions.

But he did reveal that his group had been in touch with opponents of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

He said Hezbollah had "contacted elements of the opposition to encourage them to facilitate dialogue with the regime."

Speaking through a translator, Nasrallah claimed that Hezbollah had been rebuffed.

"You have an opposition that is not prepared for dialogue. ... All it wants is to bring down the regime," he said.

Tuesday marks the launch of Assange's unlikely career in television, and a partnership with a state-backed station that many have found uncomfortable.

Assange himself said he anticipated criticism along the lines of: "There's Julian Assange, enemy combatant, traitor, getting into bed with the Kremlin and interviewing terrible radicals from around the world."

But he said RT had a big audience and his guests had told him things they "could not say on a mainstream TV network."

Assange remains under strict bail conditions at an undisclosed location in England while he fights extradition to Sweden on sex crime allegations.

The interview with Nasrallah was carried out via video link and with the help of translators.

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