



The Completion of the First Phase of Hezbollah's Disarmament

January 12, 2026

Overview¹

- On January 8, 2026, the commander of the Lebanese army, Rodolph Haykal, informed the Lebanese government that the first phase of the state's monopoly on weapons had been successfully implemented south of the Litani River except for areas under IDF control.
- The government ministers opposed to Hezbollah demanded a schedule for continuing disarmament, while Hezbollah and Amal ministers conditioned progress on halting Israeli "violations." The government instructed the army to prepare a plan for disarmament north of the Litani River, but no schedule was set.
- Hezbollah did not directly relate to the army's announcement, reiterating its position that Lebanon in general and the organization in particular had fully implemented the ceasefire agreement, and Israel had to honor its commitments.
- Lebanon's president, prime minister and parliament speaker welcomed the announcement, noting that the army had to be provided with the tools required for its missions. Prime Minister Salam said the role of the "resistance" had ended with Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, and that today only the state and the army defended Lebanon.
- Hezbollah's political opponents were dissatisfied with the delay in disarming the organization, noting that made it difficult for the country to rehabilitate itself after the war. The Lebanese foreign minister met in Beirut with the Iranian foreign minister and made it clear to him that Hezbollah had to disarm in accordance with the government decision.
- **Lebanon is apparently taking a time-out in implementing the state's monopoly on weapons. The first phase, south of the Litani River, is being represented as an achievement, but with no decision to move northward and an attempt to buy time with the argument that first Israel has to end its "violations" of the ceasefire agreement. In**

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

ITIC assessment, in the foreseeable future the army will expand its deployment in south Lebanon and make preparations for disarmament north of the Litani River, but without a binding schedule because of Hezbollah's lack of cooperation. In all probability, transitioning to the second phase will remain a declarative goal, dependent mainly on Israeli and international pressure and on an internal political consensus which has yet to ripen.

The Lebanese Army Statement

- In early August 2025, the Lebanese government instructed the army to prepare a plan to disarm and dismantle all "militias,"² including Hezbollah, by the end of 2025, in order to realize the vision of the state's monopoly on weapons, as declared by President Joseph Aoun in his inaugural speech on January 9, 2025, and as set out in the basic guidelines of the Nawaf Salam government in February 2025³
- In early September 2025, the Lebanese government adopted army commander Rodolph Haykal's five-phase plan: first, completion of the army's disarmament work in the area south of the Litani River; second, disarming the area between the Litani River and the Awali River; third, Beirut and its surrounding areas; fourth, the Beqa'a Valley region; and fifth, ensuring the state's monopoly on weapons throughout all of Lebanon.⁴
- Although in theory the government decision related to disarming the entire country, in practice, during the first phase the Lebanese army focused solely on the area south of the Litani River. Each month, the army commander submitted a progress report, with the goal of completing the mission by the end of 2025. The army reported locating and confiscating weapons, sealing tunnels and blocking arms-smuggling routes. UNIFIL also reported that its forces had identified more than 360 weapons depots in south Lebanon, which were transferred to the Lebanese army (*al-Araby al-Jadeed*, November 27, 2025).⁵
- On January 8, 2026, the army commander told the government that the objectives of the first phase had been achieved. He said the army had successfully established control south of

² Terrorist organizations.

³ See the August 2025 ITIC report, [Lebanese Government Decides to Disarm Hezbollah – Positions of Power Actors](#)

⁴ See the August 2025 ITIC report, [Implementation of the Lebanese Army's Plan to Disarm Hezbollah: Status Report](#)

⁵ See the ITIC weekly reports, "Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon."

the Litani River "in an effective and tangible manner," except for areas remaining under "Israeli occupation" (Lebanese army X account, January 8, 2026):

- ◆ The army focused on expanding its operational presence in the specific area and continues with the aim of preventing "armed groups" from fully restoring their military capabilities.
- ◆ The army will continue to deal with tunnels and remaining weapons in the area and in its assessment the disarmament program has reached an advanced stage.
- ◆ The "ongoing Israeli aggression" in Lebanon, including "violations" of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and the continued "occupation" of parts of the country, damages the army's ability to implement the plan, particularly concentrating all weapons in the hands of the state and establishing its control in the south. The army claimed that limits its freedom of action and prevents access to certain areas.
- ◆ The transfer of military aid promised to Lebanon has been delayed, directly impacting the pace of carrying out the required actions.
- ◆ The army is committed to taking full responsibility for security and stability in the country, especially south of the Litani River, and in coordination with the other Lebanese security forces. The army is acting in accordance with the state's decision to restore security to and prevent military action in south Lebanon, as part of consolidating its sovereignty over all its territory.

► "Government sources" said that Haykal presented data on the quantity and types of weapons and ammunition confiscated, including in Palestinian refugee camps, and on facilities now under army control. He also noted that movement to and from Palestinian refugee camps south of the Litani River is under army supervision. He reported that the army had closed more than 70 illegal sites along the border with Syria and created the conditions for implementing government ministries' programs in south Lebanon (*al-Diyar*, January 8, 2026).



**Lebanese army commander Haykal presents the report at the cabinet meeting
(Facebook page of the Lebanese presidency, January 8, 2026)**

- Lebanon's minister of information, Paul Morcos, said ministers had been briefed on the Lebanese army's proposal for disarming Hezbollah and praised the army's efforts in the area south of the Litani River, with emphasis on establishing practical control. He also praised the army's activity north of the Litani River, including efforts to contain and take control of weapons, prevent drug smuggling at the borders, and strengthen the fight against terrorism. He said the government noted the need to continue implementing the plan and to accelerate its execution as far as possible, noting that the government had instructed a plan to be prepared for the area north of the Litani River. He said the plan would be presented part of the army's next monthly report to the government, expected to take place in February 2026 (*al-Nashra*, January 8, 2026).
- "Sources" said that the meeting had been previously coordinated by President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and army commander Haykal, and had ended without unusual confrontation, but also without a decision for expanding the activity. Ministers from Amal and Hezbollah adhered to the position that Lebanon had fulfilled its part of the agreement, adding that UN Security Council Resolution 1701 required disarmament only south of the Litani River, and conditioned progress on Israeli withdrawal and the cessation of strikes. Ministers from the Lebanese Forces and the Phalanges demanded a definite schedule for disarmament throughout the country by the end of March 2026. President Aoun blocked setting target dates, called for a "realistic" approach and instructed the army to prepare a plan for north of the Litani River, but without an immediate operational commitment, while keeping the issue in a state of "cautious postponement" (*al-Akhbar*, January 9, 2026).
- Subsequently, "sources in Lebanon" described the status of the disarmament plan for north of the Litani River as "neither married nor divorced," that is, not full disarmament but rather a "containment" to buy time. The "sources" reported that after the dispute at the meeting between ministers from the Lebanese Forces and ministers from Hezbollah and Amal, the army was instructed to an assessment on the "control of weapons" north of the Litani River, without a timetable and without a decision in principle on disarmament. Thus, the meeting concluded leaving the issue of disarmament north of the Litani River hanging, not a decision but a "calculated postponement" (*al-Diyar*, January 8, 2026).

► According to a critical article on the Janoubia website, the Lebanese army was careful not to expand the boundaries of the discussion beyond south of the Litani River, and north of the Litani River was not mentioned. The term "south of the Litani River" appeared three times, but the army did not speak of full control, instead referring to "completing the handling of unexploded ordnance and tunnels... in order to establish control," reflecting a process not yet completed and no decisive outcome. The statement made do with mentioning a "general and comprehensive assessment" which would serve as the basis for the next steps, without specifying a second phase, schedules or a geographic area. Hezbollah itself was not mentioned, the reference was to "armed groups" in general terms. In practice, the first phase was defined as deployment, the securing and handling of ordnance and tunnels south of the Litani River only, while the next phase remained vague and without a public commitment to expand, but only a promise to act "gradually, in coordination and in accordance with the national interest," emphasizing caution, postponement and avoidance of a clear political decision (Janoubia, January 8, 2026).



Disarmament south of the Litani River: a Lebanese soldier entering a tunnel in south Lebanon, with challenges awaiting (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 9, 2026)

► The Israeli Prime Minister's Office rejected the Lebanese army announcement of success in demilitarizing the south of the country, stating that the efforts by the Lebanese government and army were "an encouraging beginning, but are far from sufficient." It further noted that Hezbollah continued to rearm and reconstruct its military-terrorist facilities with Iranian support (Israeli Prime Minister's Office, January 8, 2026). In the assessment of "political sources in Lebanon," the IDF will continue to exert pressure on the ground, even after the Lebanese army announcement regarding the completion of the first phase of disarmament. The "sources" noted that the United States and Israel were exerting pressure on Lebanon to set a time limit for completing Hezbollah's disarmament (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, January 7, 2026).

Hezbollah

► Hezbollah did not formally respond to the Lebanese army announcement, but organization spokesmen continued to argue that the ceasefire agreement pertained only to disarmament south of the Litani River, and therefore the organization had fulfilled its obligations, while accusing Israel of "violations" of the agreement and emphasizing the continued importance of the "resistance":⁶

- ◆ According to the Hezbollah bloc in the Lebanese Parliament, the State of Lebanon, the people, the army and the "resistance," had fulfilled their obligations south of the Litani River as stated in the November 2024 ceasefire agreement. The statement issued by the bloc said the government now had to force Israel to fulfill its part, first and foremost by halting attacks and fully withdrawing from the territories it "occupied," while avoiding concessions which could encourage the "enemy" to continue exerting pressure. The bloc called on all Lebanese to unite around a single position against the "occupation" and warned against the sowing of internal division. The bloc also criticized the United States, claiming its regional policy undermined international order and brought the region closer to chaos (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 8, 2026). "Lebanese government sources" interpreted the omission of Hezbollah's weapons from the bloc's statement as an attempt to signal to President Aoun a cautious readiness to renew dialogue, ahead of a future discussion on expanding the plan north of the Litani River to the Awali River (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 9, 2026).
- ◆ Ali al-Miqdad, member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, reiterated the position, claiming that the "resistance," with the army and the people, would continue to defend Lebanon's sovereignty (Lebanon Debate, January 10, 2026).
- ◆ Lebanese Health Minister Rakan Nasser al-Din, also a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, opposed the cabinet's final wording. He said priority should be given to the liberation of the "occupied territories" and the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel (Janoubia, January 8, 2026).

► According to a report by al-Manar correspondent Mona Takhini, after the cabinet meeting army commander Haykal attended his mother-in-law's funeral. Among those offering

⁶ Terrorism and violence targeting Israel.

condolences was Hezbollah's head of the Liaison and Coordination Unit, Wafiq Safa, who conveyed condolences on behalf of the organization's leadership. According to Takhini, Safa and Haykal discussed the atmosphere during the cabinet meeting as well as the army's plans ahead of the next cabinet discussion in early February and the implementation of the next phase, taking into account the army's approach that "upholds Lebanon's sovereignty and the demand for achievements in the Lebanese national interest" (Nun News Telegram channel, January 10, 2026).

► Ali Shaib, al-Manar's Hezbollah-affiliated correspondent in south Lebanon, criticized the wording of the Lebanese army statement, claiming it was undignified to refer to the "resistance" as "armed groups." According to Shaib, that was a dangerous distortion of the national discourse, one that disrespected the memory of the martyrs, the wounded and the prisoners, and contradicted the principle of the "right to resist occupation." He argued that the mere use of the term was more serious than Israeli strikes and "violations," and there had to be a return to a unifying narrative that recognized the "resistance" as part of Lebanon's legitimate defense (Ali Shaib Telegram channel, South News, January 8, 2026).

The Lebanese Government

► Lebanese president Joseph Aoun expressed full support for the Lebanese army statement and said the army's deployment was meant to limit the possession of weapons exclusively to the state and to strengthen the principle that decisions regarding war or peace rested solely with the constitutional institutions. He said a full Israeli withdrawal, honoring the ceasefire and the release of Lebanese prisoners were essential conditions for realizing state sovereignty and ensuring the return of displaced residents to south Lebanon. He noted Lebanon's commitment to the agreement to halt hostilities and called on the international community to assist Lebanon in implementing the agreement and preventing weapons from reaching any party in the country other than the official armed forces. He said urgent action was needed to strengthen the capabilities of the Lebanese army to enable it to carry out its missions and to ensure that all parties adhered to ending violations and refrained from any action that could undermine stability (Lebanese presidency X account, January 8, 2026).

► On another occasion, Aoun said the principle of exclusive state control over weapons was an internal Lebanese demand, not an external one, and one of the foundations of state-building. He said "operational control," as declared by the army commander, meant the army was capable of preventing any military activity in the area or could intervene to prevent it, and

even if it did not locate all the tunnels or weapons depots, it could still prevent any "armed group" from entering south Lebanon and turning it into an area for launching military operations. He added that the goal was to continue implementing the decision to have a monopoly on weapons, including among the Palestinians, but added that there had to be a "realistic and rational" approach to the army's ability to carry out such complex missions (X account of the Lebanese Presidency, January 11, 2026).

► Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam praised the completion of the first phase of the plan and noted the need to reinforce the Lebanese army logistically and strengthen its capabilities as soon as possible before implementing the next phase. He said returning residents to their homes was the top priority, and to that end the government would work to accelerate reconstruction in the south in the coming weeks, following parliamentary approval of a loan from the World Bank (*al-Nashra*, January 8, 2026). Reportedly, during the meeting Salam called on ministers to reaffirm previous government decisions, particularly the army's plan to disarm Hezbollah (MTV, January 8, 2026).



Prime Minister Salam (MTV Lebanon X account, January 8, 2026)

► Subsequently, Salam said the role of the "resistance" had ended in 2000 with the IDF's withdrawal from south Lebanon, and today the institutions of the state and the Lebanese army alone defended the country. He said decisions regarding war and peace had to remain in the hands of the state, and the principle of exclusive control over weapons was meant to protect all Lebanese citizens and was not directed against any specific party. He noted that Haykal had stated that for the first time the Lebanese army had full control of the area south of the Litani River, and added that Lebanon was working to hold an international conference in support of the army in Paris in February 2026, to strengthen its capabilities to implement the weapons limitation plan (MTV, January 9, 2026).

- Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, head of the Amal Movement and close to Hezbollah, supported the Lebanese army statement, claiming that the army's achievements could have been more significant were it not for the continued Israeli presence in parts of the country and the obstacles it posed to the army's freedom of action. Berri noted that Israeli strikes in south Lebanon, including attacks on UNIFIL forces, endangered the implementation of Resolution 1701 and undermined the ability to realize it in practice (NBN, January 8, 2026).
- According to "several government sources," the objective of all the senior Lebanese government figures was to inform the international community regarding full adoption of the army's plan and its reinforcement ahead of future stages, particularly toward a possible move north of the Litani River (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 9, 2026).

Hezbollah's Opponents

- According to reports, ministers at the cabinet meeting from the Lebanese Forces party, which opposes Hezbollah, demanded a three-month timeframe for implementing the plan to disarm Hezbollah, but President Aoun said the matter was subject to the army's discretion and "such actions cannot be bound by time tables" (MTV, January 8, 2026).
- Justice Minister Adel Nassar, representing the Christian Phalanges party, said that all stages of the Lebanese army plan had been approved and its implementation had to be accelerated. He said his reservations were the result of his desire to speed up implementation, and the army's initial report on the start of implementation north of the Litani River was expected to be presented in early March 2026. Industry Minister Joe Issa El Khoury of the Lebanese Forces said the existence of illegal weapons continued to delay Lebanon's progress because of "regional developments," claiming the army alone could not complete its mission unless the "armed actors"⁷ were willing to hand over their weapons to the state (Janoubia, January 8, 2026).
- "Sources" said that Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji of the Lebanese Forces told the Iranian foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, that negotiations between a state and an "armed organization" were unacceptable, the decision had been made and Hezbollah had to hand over its weapons. He added that Hezbollah's weapons did not protect Lebanon and noted that other "resistance" movements had handed over their weapons when the state made a sovereign decision on the matter (al-Hadath, January 9, 2026).

⁷ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.



Rajji meets with Araghchi (X account of Youssef Rajji, January 9, 2026)

- ▶ Leader of the Lebanese Forces party Samir Geagea noted the need to disarm illegal "militias"⁸ as a basic condition for establishing a Lebanese state and ensuring the future of the Lebanese people (Sky News Arabic, January 8, 2026).
- ▶ Journalist and politician Charles Jabbour, head of the media department of the Lebanese Forces party, said Hezbollah's weapons were constitutionally and internationally illegitimate, and under the constitution, international resolutions and the ceasefire agreement, they should have been handed over in 1991. He said it was not in dispute that the weapons did not benefit Lebanon, not in the south, not in the north, and not in any other area, and that the only determining principle was that there had to be no weapons outside the framework of the Lebanese army. Jabbour added that the concept of "resistance" had to end, and argued that any "armed actor" operating after 1991 violated the constitution and was "an Iranian proxy as part of a subversive project," not a legitimate "resistance" movement (X account of Charles Jabbour, January 8, 2026).
- ▶ The Free Lebanon Front welcomed the completion of the first phase of the operation and called the activities south of the Litani River "a decisive step in implementing the ceasefire with Israel." It praised the Lebanese army for its efforts "despite limited resources," and called for the immediate start of the second phase north of the Litani River, to enable full deployment of the army along the southern border, strengthen state sovereignty and remove any justification for continued Israeli presence and for the activity of "armed actors" outside the state (Janoubia, January 10, 2026).

International Reactions

- ▶ The UN special coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, said it was good to see the Lebanese army confirm they had achieved control south of the Litani River, calling it "

⁸ Terrorist organizations.

undeniable progress" but adding that there was still "challenging work." She called it a milestone demonstrating commitment and strengthening the role of the committee established following the November 2024 agreement (X account of the UN special coordinator for Lebanon, January 8, 2026).