



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah March 16-23, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces in Lebanon continued from the air and eliminated terrorist commanders and operatives, including the commander of the Radwan special forces, and operatives linked to Iran and to Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon. IDF ground forces in south Lebanon continued locating and destroying weapons and terrorist infrastructure and assets attacking Hezbollah targets.
- ▶ Hezbollah issued **more than 280 claims of responsibility** for attacks on civilian, military and security targets in Israel and on IDF forces in south Lebanon using rockets, missiles and UAVs. The IDF reported that Hezbollah launched a ballistic missile which fell in the northern Gaza Strip, but no claim of responsibility was made.
- ▶ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem said he was confident the organization would stop the "aggression," force Israel to withdraw and release the Lebanese prisoners, and return the displaced persons to their homes. Hezbollah official admitted they had exercised restraint in the face of Israeli strikes for 15 months in order to rebuild Hezbollah's military capabilities.
- ▶ Hezbollah sharpened its rhetoric toward the Lebanese government following the ban on the organization's military activity, with implicit threats to take action against it after the war.
- ▶ Hezbollah terrorist cells were exposed in the UAE and Kuwait; the organization denied involvement.
- ▶ Lebanese president Joseph Aoun continued efforts to advance his initiative for direct talks with Israel, however, Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, opposed appointing a Shi'ite representative to the delegation before a ceasefire and demanded the talks be conducted under the supervision mechanism for implementing the ceasefire agreement.
- ▶ Lebanese prime minister Nawaf Salam accused Hezbollah of dragging the country back into war to assist Iran and avenge the killing of Khamenei. He said he did not want a confrontation with Hezbollah, but was not prepared to submit to extortion.

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

► The Lebanese Ministry of Health reported that more than 1,000 people had been killed since the beginning of the fighting.

The Fighting in Lebanon

The IDF

► This past week the IDF conducted extensive aerial attacks and ground activity, targeting Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon. One Israeli civilian was killed and nine IDF soldiers were wounded (IDF spokesperson, March 16-23, 2026):

- ◆ **Strikes on Hezbollah infrastructure and elimination of commanders and operatives:** The IDF carried out hundreds of aerial strikes on Hezbollah targets, primarily in south Lebanon, the Beqa'a Valley and the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut. Since the beginning of the hostilities more than 2000 targets have been struck and more than 570 terrorists eliminated. The IDF eliminated the commander of the Radwan Forces and attacked launch sites and squads which fired rockets or were preparing to fire rockets at Israeli territory, as well as headquarters and weapons depots. They also attacked bridges and Litani River crossings to prevent Hezbollah from transferring forces and weapons to south Lebanon. To damage Hezbollah's financial sources, they attacked assets of its financial wing, the al-Qard al-Hassan Association, and fuel stations of Hezbollah's al-Amana company.² A significant portion of the targets operated near civilian sites and the IDF issued extensive evacuation warnings, mainly in south Lebanon, including the city of Tyre, and in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, to minimize harm to the civilian population.
- ◆ **Ground activity:** IDF ground forces continued extensive activity in south Lebanon to establish a forward defense area to distance Hezbollah's ground activity from the border with Israel and its firing capabilities from communities in northern Israel. They eliminated dozens of Hezbollah terrorist operatives, some in close-range combat, located weapons, including rockets and firearms, and destroyed terrorist infrastructure.

² Al-Amana is part of Hezbollah's Shaheed Foundation, one of the organization's central social institutions intended to strengthen its control over its supporters in the Shi'ite community in Lebanon. See the March 2019 ITIC report, [Hezbollah's Martyrs Foundation: purpose, mode of operation and funding methods](#), and the May 2020 report, [Funding terrorism: US sanctions imposed on an extensive network of Hezbollah companies supporting its military activity](#).



Weapons discovered in south Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, March 22, 2026)

◆ **Other terrorists eliminated:** In addition to Hezbollah, the IDF continued to act against other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon. The new commander of the Imam Hussein Division, which is operated by the Qods Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, was eliminated days after he was appointed following the elimination of the previous commander.³ Two senior operatives in the Hamas branch in Lebanon were eliminated, including an operative in the financial network and an operative involved in directing terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria.

Hezbollah

► This past week Hezbollah continued attacking targets in Israeli territory and IDF forces in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 16-23, 2026):

◆ Between March 16 (12:00 noon) and March 23, 2026 (12:00 noon), Hezbollah issued **285 claims of responsibility** for attacks on military, security and civilian targets in Israel and on IDF forces in south Lebanon, nearly 100 more than the previous week. Hezbollah attacked with UAVs, missiles, rockets, anti-tank missiles, artillery and anti-aircraft fire, and exchanged fire with IDF forces in south Lebanon, while some of the attacks were carried out simultaneously with missile and drone launches from Iran. On March 22, 2026, Hezbollah issued a record number of 63 claims of responsibility, two days after the previous record of 55 claims. According to Hezbollah, most of the attacks targeted IDF forces in south Lebanon and border communities as far south as Hadera (about 50 km from the border); not all the claims were formally verified by the IDF. On March 18, 2026, Hezbollah launched a missile at the communities near the Gaza Strip, about 200 km from the Lebanese border; it fell in the northern Gaza Strip. IDF sources said it was a surface-

³ The Imam Hussein Division, established by Iran's Qods Force and Hezbollah, is composed of thousands of operatives from various Middle Eastern countries. It was involved in the Syrian civil war and operated alongside Hezbollah in the fighting in south Lebanon and attacking Israel from Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

to-surface Scud-D ballistic missile; Hezbollah did not claim responsibility for the attack (Israeli media, March 19, 2026).



**Map of 63 claims of responsibility on March 22, 2026
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 23, 2026)**

- ◆ Hezbollah did not formally announce the names of its senior figures and operatives who were killed in IDF strikes. However, on the social media, including unofficial accounts affiliated with Hezbollah, pictures appeared of hundreds of Hezbollah and Radwan Force operatives who were killed in the Israeli strikes, some of whom were called "commanders" (X account of QalaatM and Telegram channels South Lebanon – Watching the Enemy and Hezbollah in the Field, March 16-23, 2026).
- ◆ Hezbollah also continued waging psychological warfare against residents of northern Israel, issuing "evacuation notices" for Kiryat Shmona and Nahariya, and for residents of all the communities near the border.



The "evacuation notice" for residents of the north (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 18, 2026)

- Additional information was issued regarding Hezbollah's preparations for the hostilities and the conduct of the fighting:⁴

⁴ See the March 2026 ITIC report, [Hezbollah's Use of Force During the Current Fighting Against Israel](#)

- ◆ Six sources stated that for months Hezbollah had been stockpiling rockets and UAVs with assistance from Iran and from independent production facilities in preparation for hostilities. According to the sources (three Lebanese, two foreigners operating in Lebanon and an Israeli military official), after the ceasefire in November 2024, Hezbollah concluded that another round of fighting was inevitable and it might face an existential threat. The report stated that Hezbollah allocated a monthly sum of \$50 million from Iran and from operatives' salaries to reconstruct and reorganize, and operated local production facilities for developing weapons to complement smuggling (Reuters, March 6, 2026).
- ◆ Reportedly, Hezbollah manages decentralized fighting, relying on mobile operations rooms to manage the ongoing battles in south Lebanon. The governing concept is that each military unit attacks and maneuvers according to its own operational possibilities and decides on appropriate steps based on developments. Such dynamic operational plans allow Hezbollah to prolong the fighting and hold out for a longer period (Lebanon24, March 16, 2026).
- ◆ Two sources stated that Iran's Revolutionary Guards rebuilt Hezbollah's military command after the defeats it sustained in the previous war against Israel. According to the sources, immediately after the ceasefire in November 2024, the Revolutionary Guards sent dozens of officers to train Hezbollah fighters and oversee the renewed armament, and redesigned Hezbollah's command and control systems after Israel's intelligence penetration. The organization's hierarchical structure was decentralized and now includes small units with limited knowledge of the activity of other units. In addition, plans were made for coordinated launches from Lebanon and Iran. According to one of the sources, Iran assumed de facto control of Hezbollah's military wing (Reuters, March 21, 2026).

Hezbollah

► Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem issued a letter of encouragement to the organization's operatives, stating that the objective of the fighting was to liberate the land and preserve the independence of the homeland, with no surrender. He said a possible solution was stopping the "aggression," withdrawal from the occupied lands, release of the prisoners and the return of residents of the villages and towns to their homes with the beginning of

reconstruction, and said he was confident the objectives could be achieved (website of the Hezbollah secretary general, March 17, 2026).

► Wafiq Safa, a member of Hezbollah's political council, claimed the organization had launched the new war against Israel after its patience had run out because of Israeli strikes, and to exact revenge for the elimination of Iran's leader, Ali Khamenei. Safa told an interviewer that for 15 months Hezbollah had not responded to the Israeli strikes and had given diplomacy a chance, but Lebanon had made concessions and received nothing in return. He admitted that Hezbollah used the time to rebuild its rocket, UAV and ground force capabilities. He said Hezbollah had begun attacking from north of the Litani River, and only afterward did the fighters move to the area south of the river, and that now they were "surprising everyone and had more surprises ahead." He claimed they were fighting "to defend Lebanese sovereignty" and that their "victory" protected certain Arab countries from the project of Greater Israel. He claimed the objective was to impose a new "equation" which would force Israel to stop attacking. He accused the Lebanese government of fomenting internal division and called the decision to ban Hezbollah's military and security activity a "grave sin." He said one of the organization's demands after the war would be that one way or another, the government would revoke the decision. He also mentioned that in the clashes in May 2008 they had not confronted the army, but had confronted other state institutions⁵ (Podium Plus YouTube channel, March 22, 2026).



Wafiq Safa in the interview (Janoubia, March 22, 2026)

⁵ On May 7, 2008, armed clashes broke out between Hezbollah and its supporters and Sunni government supporters following the government's decision to dismantle Hezbollah's communications network. During the clashes, Hezbollah gunmen took control of Sunni neighborhoods in west Beirut and the confrontations spread to other areas of the country. Only after the army threatened to intervene did the fighting gradually subside. The crisis ended on May 21, 2008, with the signing of the Doha Agreement, which effectively granted Hezbollah the ability to veto government decisions through increasing the number of its government ministers.

- ▶ Other Hezbollah figures escalated their rhetoric against the Lebanese government:
 - ◆ The deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, Mahmoud Qamati, warned that Hezbollah was capable of overthrowing the state and toppling the government, and its patience had limits. He compared the conduct of the Lebanese government and its lack of support for Hezbollah's activity to the actions of the Vichy government under the Nazi occupation of France, which arrested members of the French Resistance, and who were executed after the war. "Hopefully it will not come to that," he said. However, he said a confrontation with the government was inevitable after the war, regardless of the results, while accusing the government of serving only the Israeli enemy. Therefore, he said the confrontation was near, and the traitors would "pay the price for their betrayal" (al-Joumhouria, March 16, 2026).



Qamati interviewed by journalist Nancy al-Sabaa on the Tafasil website (X account of Dr. Mohammed Shamas, March 16, 2026)

- ◆ Qamati was harshly criticized by the Lebanese public. The head of the information unit in the Christian Lebanese Forces party, Charles Jabbour, wrote that the government's response to the remarks had to be the immediate convening of the government, the dismissal of the organization's two ministers and the issuance of an arrest warrant by the judicial system (X account of Charles Jabbour, March 16, 2026). Following the uproar, Qamati's office issued a statement claiming that the remarks were "inaccurate and taken out of context," claiming that any official position or statement on his behalf was issued only through Hezbollah's official media channels (Lebanon Debate, March 16, 2026).
- ◆ Hassan Ezz al-Din, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, called the government's banning of Hezbollah's military and security activities "void, illegitimate and contradicting the national pact," especially in light of the state's inability

to fulfill its duty to defend the land. He implicitly threatened the government, saying no one sought an adventure with civil peace or to create a civil war wanted by Israel (Sputnik Arabic, March 16, 2026).

Hezbollah Cells Exposed in the Gulf States

► The Kuwaiti ministry of the interior stated that security services had uncovered a Hezbollah terrorist network which operated to undermine security and recruit individuals to the terrorist organization. According to reports, the network was exposed after "meticulous, intensive security monitoring and surveillance operations," and its members included 14 local citizens and two operatives holding Lebanese citizenship. During the dismantling of the network, weapons and ammunition, encrypted communication devices and drones were found (X account of the Kuwaiti ministry of the interior, March 16, 2026).⁶



Weapons and equipment seized from the Hezbollah cell in Kuwait (Okaz newspaper, March 16, 2026)

► Authorities in the UAE also announced that local security forces had uncovered a terrorist network funded and operated by Hezbollah and Iran. According to a report, the network operated with a fictitious commercial cover and sought to penetrate the national economy and sabotage the state's financial stability, in accordance with a strategic plan with external elements linked to Hezbollah and Iran, while undermining economic and legal systems (UAE News Agency, March 20, 2026).



Members of the Hezbollah network (UAE News Agency, March 20, 2026)

⁶ Kuwait put Hezbollah on its list of designated terrorist organizations in July 2025.

► Following the exposures, Lebanese president Joseph Aoun spoke with the emir of Kuwait and the president of the UAE and condemned the attacks on the two states carried out by "partisan elements," calling the attacks "a blatant violation of sovereignty, international law and the UN Charter" (X account of the Lebanese Presidency, March 20, 2026). The Lebanese foreign ministry condemned Hezbollah's involvement in the terrorist activity exposed in the Gulf states, noting the Lebanese government's decision of March 2, 2026, banning Hezbollah's military and security activities (website of the Lebanese foreign ministry, March 20, 2026).

► Hezbollah categorically denied the claims and accusations by Kuwait and the UAE. The organization stated that the claims had no basis in fact and were entirely unfounded, unacceptable fabrications. Hezbollah said it was "revolted" by the "irresponsible haste" with which the Lebanese foreign ministry had accepted the accusations of Kuwait and the UAE and criticized the ministry's condemnation, issued before examining and verifying the claims (al-'Ahed, March 19-20, 2026).

The Struggle against Hezbollah Financing

► The United States Treasury imposed sanctions on ten persons and six companies involved in a network laundering money for Hezbollah. At the center of the network was Alaa Hassan Hamiya, former vice president of the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon, who according to the Treasury directly or indirectly, through family members and associates, owned companies linked to Hezbollah which operated in Lebanon, Slovenia, Poland, Qatar and Canada. According to estimates, the companies had helped launder more than \$100 million for Hezbollah since 2000 by diverting funds from a trade agreement between Lebanon and Iraq (United States Treasury, March 20, 2026).

The Lebanese Government

Diplomatic Efforts to End the War

► The Lebanese political system continued to deal with the diplomatic initiative being promoted by President Joseph Aoun to open direct talks with Israel in an attempt to stop the attacks on Hezbollah:

◆ President Aoun told a delegation from the National Salvation Forum that he hoped there would be a breakthrough in promoting the diplomatic initiative to make it possible to stop "the daily loss which harms all Lebanese in their land, their livelihood and their children. The initiative we launched is intended to save the country" (Nidaa al-Watan, March 16, 2026).

- ◆ Sources stated that Aoun continued contacts in the international arena to advance his initiative and would appoint a delegation to participate when it came time to begin the talks. According to the sources, he continued despite political harassment and accusations of treason raised by senior Hezbollah figures and its affiliated media outlets. According to the sources, unlike the steps that led to the ceasefire agreement in November 2024, when negotiations were conducted in the absence of a sitting president and were led by Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, President Aoun now insisted on leading the negotiations and would not allow anyone to circumvent him (Nidaa al-Watan, March 18, 2026).
- ◆ Lebanese prime minister Nawaf Salam said no response had yet been received from Israel regarding President Aoun's initiative, the location of the talks or the agenda. However, he said they remained committed to the initiative and that once responses had been received, a "national, unified" delegation would be formed. He said he wanted the return of the ceasefire, to restore state sovereignty and to achieve a full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territories, as Israel committed to in the November 2024 agreement (al-Hadath, March 22, 2026).
- ◆ Sources close to the Shi'ite duo (Hezbollah and Amal) criticized the state institutions which represented themselves as going "above and beyond" to conduct negotiations with Israel. They said that while the Shi'ite duo was trying to negotiate from a position of strength, there were elements in Lebanon insisting on negotiating from a position of weakness. They added that speaker of Parliament Berri had clearly presented the duo's position that a ceasefire and the return of displaced persons to their villages should precede negotiations, and in any case all negotiations had to remain limited to the committee supervising the ceasefire agreement (al-Diyar, March 16, 2026).
- ◆ According to a report, Berri's meetings with the American ambassador to Lebanon, Michel Issa, and the French ambassador, Hervé Magro, were tense. Reportedly, the meeting with Issa became tense after Berri rejected any new framework for negotiations unless the condition of the return of displaced persons to their villages and a ceasefire were met (al-Diyar, March 16, 2026). Meeting with the French foreign minister, Jean-Noël Barrot, Berri said that only the implementation of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and Israel's commitment to it would end the "aggression" and the return of the displaced. He added that the key was activating the "mechanism committee" as a

framework for supervision, implementation and negotiations (Lebanon Files, March 19, 2026).



Berri meets with the United States ambassador (al-Nahar, March 16, 2026)

- ◆ Hassan Ezz al-Din, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said Lebanon would not recognize Israel before the implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative by the Arab League and the establishment of a Palestinian state, adding that following any other path would be "a national disaster." He said "negotiations under fire" were unacceptable, warned against a shift from understandings to recognition of Israel, and called for the preservation of national cohesion and for the country not to be dragged onto paths that could threaten internal unity (Sputnik Arabic, March 16, 2026).
- ◆ Local political elements were pessimistic regarding the chances of President Aoun's diplomatic initiative, claiming that Israel was setting impossible conditions, refused a ceasefire or to withdraw from "occupied" positions in south Lebanon and was imposing negotiations under fire, which Lebanon categorically rejected. They said the various conditions, including a demand that the Lebanese army assume responsibility for disarming Hezbollah, dismantling its infrastructure and entering its positions by force and formal recognition of Israel meant a prior refusal to conduct negotiations. That was accompanied by the internal Lebanese difficulty to agree on the composition of the delegation, especially regarding the appointment of a Shi'ite representative, in light of Nabih Berri's opposition to negotiations conducted outside the framework of the "mechanism committee" (al-Diyar, March 17, 2026).

Criticism of Hezbollah

- ▶ Meeting with a delegation from the National Salvation Forum, Aoun said the state was restoring its status but nearly half a century of collapse changed gradually. He added that whoever was worried about the restoration of the state's status and role feared losing the role

he had assumed at the expense of the state and its institutions (Nidaa al-Watan, March 16, 2026).

► Lebanese prime minister Nawaf Salam accused Hezbollah of dragging the country back into war to assist Iran and avenge the killing of Khamenei, saying Lebanon had no interest in the war. He said he did not want a confrontation with Hezbollah, but was not willing to be extorted by the organization or by threats of civil war. He added that not only had Hezbollah attacked Israel, but the Revolutionary Guards had as well, which he said managed the military activity in Lebanon, as shown by a statement published by the official Iranian agency about a joint operation between the Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah (al-Hadath, March 22, 2026).

► Lebanese foreign minister Youssef Rajji gave a speech during the Arab foreign ministers' meeting held in Saudi Arabia accusing Iran of trying, by attacking against Arab and Muslim states, to hijack their security and peace and trade in them for its opportunistic goals. He said the Lebanese government was determined to extricate Lebanon from the grip of Iranian control, after it had ordered Hezbollah to drag Lebanon into a war it did not choose (Nidaa al-Watan, March 19, 2026).

► A member of parliament from the Red Line party, Waddah Sadek, warned of the deterioration of security in Beirut, accusing "senior elements" of using Beirut residents as human shields. He said he had raised the issue with the president, the prime minister and the speaker of parliament and urged them to prepare an immediate security plan for Beirut to protect both the displaced and the residents. He added that if security forces were not deployed immediately, it was only a matter of time before the situation worsened (X account of Waddah Sadek, March 22, 2026).

The Lebanese Army

► According to the Lebanese army, three of its soldiers were killed and five others wounded in Israeli strikes in Zebdine, Qaaqqaayet al-Jisr and al-Doueir. The army command condemned the Israeli strikes, calling them a "blatant violation" of Lebanon's sovereignty, the security of its citizens and the relevant international decisions (X account of the Lebanese Army, March 17, 2026). Lebanese president of Lebanon Joseph Aoun, spoke with the minister of defense, Michel Menassa, and with the army commander, General Rodolph Haykal, and offered his condolences for the three killed, while condemning harm to army personnel (X account of the Lebanese Presidency, March 17, 2026).

► Sources stated that religious figures in the Christian community in Lebanon had received initial assurances that the Lebanese army would defend the border villages by reinforcing its presence inside Christian towns and at their main entrances, to help calm the residents and reduce the possibility of their exposure to attacks. According to the report, the arrangements were taking place alongside diplomatic contacts conducted by the Vatican with the Americans to obtain guarantees (al-Diyar, March 16, 2026).

Opponents of Hezbollah

► The leader of the Christian Lebanese Forces party, Samir Geagea, condemned Hezbollah's actions and accused them of dragging Lebanon into a renewed confrontation with Israel in the service of Iranian interests. Geagea said the government had to exercise its sovereignty, particularly regarding decisions of war and peace. He added that they had to demand compensation from Iran for the damage caused to Lebanon by Hezbollah's actions, since Tehran was responsible for the current situation (Lebanon Files, March 21, 2026).

► The chairman of the National Dialogue party, Fouad Makhzoumi, called on the government to ban Hezbollah activity following the exposure of the organization's networks in the UAE and Kuwait. He said the arrests further illustrated Hezbollah's negative role, which extended beyond Lebanon's borders and endangered all Arab states (X account of Fouad Makhzoumi, March 20, 2026).

The Situation in Lebanon

► The Lebanese ministry of health reported that at least 1,029 people had been killed since the beginning of the fighting on March 2, 2026, and 2,786 wounded (al-Nashra, March 22, 2026).

► The municipalities of al-Mari and al-Majidiye in south Lebanon said they were unable to accept displaced persons after receiving a call from the Israeli army with instructions that residents of the villages al-Mari, Halta and Kafrchouba had to remain in their homes and not receive the displaced. The municipalities noted with regret that they were required to comply with the forced instructions and expressed sincere apology and deep sorrow for their inability to assist (Nidaa al-Watan, March 16, 2026).

► An article in Hezbollah-affiliated daily newspaper al-Akhbar criticized the helplessness of the Beirut municipality in absorbing and caring for displaced Shi'ites who fled from south Lebanon. The newspaper accused the mayor of Beirut, Ibrahim Zidan, and several council members, of holding meetings which "created a false impression" that they were dealing with the issue of the displacement to the capital of thousands of citizens, however their public

positions indicated that the issue did not go beyond empty statements and it the last thing occupying the capital's municipality. A council member, Hussein al-Batal, was quoted as saying, "We have no connection to the people of the south and to the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, and Hezbollah must bear responsibility for them!" (al-Akhbar, March 17, 2026).