



Renewal of Hostilities and Negotiations with Israel Increase Tension between Hezbollah and the Lebanese Government

April 13, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ On March 2, 2026, Hezbollah's renewal of the hostilities against Israel hardened the position of the Lebanese leadership, which accused Hezbollah of dragging the country into unwanted confrontations. The government took measures against Hezbollah and Iran, declaring Hezbollah's military wing illegal, expelling the Iranian ambassador and all representatives of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps present in Lebanon, and implementing the state's monopoly on weapons throughout Beirut.
- ▶ In an attempt to end the hostilities, Lebanese President Aoun presented an initiative for direct talks with Israel. Prime Minister Netanyahu signaled his approval and the talks are expected to be conducted by Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors under American mediation.
- ▶ Hezbollah accused the government of acting against the "resistance"² instead of joining it to fight Israel and strongly opposed talks with Israel, which were described as "surrender." The organization warned of a "popular tsunami" against the government and demanded it apologize to the "resistance" and rescind the "negative orders." Hezbollah-affiliated media outlets accused the president and the prime minister of betrayal and conspiracy against the Lebanese people and the "resistance."
- ▶ Hezbollah and Amal jointly called on their supporters not to hold mass demonstrations in order to preserve civil peace, and Arab and European countries reportedly warned Parliament Speaker and Amal leader Nabih Berri that any attempt to storm the government or carry out a coup would be met with a harsh response.
- ▶ Opponents of Hezbollah supported negotiations with Israel and called for the rapid implementation of the government's decisions to disarm Hezbollah and its allies in Beirut and other areas of the country.

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

² Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

► In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah's status in Lebanon is challenged by continued military pressure from Israel despite the ceasefire in the war in Iran and by the measures taken by the Lebanese regime to establish its governance throughout the country, including disarming the organization. The opening of direct negotiations between Israel and Lebanon is a severe blow to Hezbollah's status, possibly leading the organization to undermine the government's stability by having its ministers resign and shifting to protests in the streets. However, attacking political figures or attempting to take over state institutions could further isolate Hezbollah within Lebanon and drag the country into an internal conflict.

Lebanese Government Measures against Hezbollah and Iran

► At the end of November 2024 a ceasefire halted the ongoing fighting between Israel and Hezbollah which began on October 8, 2023, and the IDF enforced the ceasefire and attacked Hezbollah terrorist operatives who violated it as well as the organization's military infrastructure and assets. Once the ceasefire agreement went into effect, Hezbollah placed responsibility on Lebanese state institutions to stop Israel's "aggression," withdraw from the positions it held in south Lebanon and release the detained Lebanese. It also criticized the plan to implement a state monopoly on weapons.³ However, toward the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026, Hezbollah hardened its criticism of the regime because of the continuation of Israeli strikes, the army's announcement it had achieved "genuine effective control" in the first phase of the plan to ensure the state's monopoly on weapons, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's appointment of former ambassador Simon Karam to head the civilian delegation for talks with Israel within the committee overseeing ceasefire agreement and the Israeli-American effort to promote direct talks between Israel and Lebanon.⁴

► On March 2, 2026, Hezbollah launched new hostilities against Israel as part of the American-Israeli war against Iran and the elimination of Iranian leader Ali Khamenei.⁵ Senior figures in the Lebanese leadership condemned Hezbollah for causing Israel to attack Lebanon. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said the rocket fire from Lebanese territory damaged all the state's

³ See the May 2025 ITIC report, [Challenges Faced by Hezbollah after the November 27, 2024 ceasefire](#) and the December 2025 report, [Hezbollah: One Year After the Ceasefire](#)

⁴ See the February 2026 ITIC report, [Rising Tensions between Hezbollah and the Lebanese Government](#)

⁵ See the March 2026 ITIC report, [Hezbollah's Use of Force During the Current Fighting Against Israel](#)

efforts to keep the country away from regional military confrontations and their predictable consequences, and he called for rational and responsible behavior which put the national interest above all else (Nidaa al-Watan, March 2, 2026). Prime Minister Nawaf Salam accused Hezbollah of a "strategic mistake" which had devastating consequences for Lebanon, which it claims to protect (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 8, 2026).⁶

► The escalation led to increased government measures against Hezbollah and Iran:

- ◆ Immediately after Hezbollah's first attack on Israel, the government prohibited all Hezbollah's "military and security" activity and allowed only its political activity to ensure the state's exclusive prerogative to decide matters of war and peace (*al-Nashra*, March 2, 2026).
- ◆ The government instructed the relevant ministries, the army and the security forces to ensure the removal of all representatives of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps from the country and to prevent them from undertaking any security or military activity from Lebanese territory, regardless of their affiliation or the cover under which they operated, and to arrest them in preparation for their expulsion. It also ordered that all Iranian citizens had obtain a visa to enter the country, to prevent activity that could damage security (*al-Nashra*, March 5, 2026).
- ◆ On March 24, 2026, the Lebanese foreign ministry revoked the accreditation of the designated Iranian ambassador, Mohammad-Reza Sheibani, and declared him persona non grata, requiring him to leave Lebanon no later than March 29, 2026 (X account of Youssef Rajji, March 24, 2026). The Lebanese foreign ministry said the Iranian ambassador had violated diplomat norms by making statements which constituted interference in Lebanon's internal politics and by meeting with "unofficial parties" without briefing the foreign ministry (X account of the Lebanese foreign ministry, March 24, 2026). However, in Iran the directive was ignored and Sheibani remained in the embassy building in Beirut (al-Manar, March 30, 2026).
- ◆ On April 9, 2026, the government instructed the Lebanese army and security forces to deploy reinforcements to impose full state sovereignty over the Beirut district and limit weapons to legitimate forces. Reportedly, all the "necessary measures" would be taken against those who violated the directive and they would be referred for legal proceedings (X account of the Lebanese presidency, April 9, 2026).

⁶ See the ITIC weekly reports, "Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon."



Right: Lebanese government meeting headed by Aoun and Salam (X account of the Lebanese presidency, April 9, 2026). Left: The Lebanese government's difficulty in acting against Hezbollah (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 3, 2026)

- ◆ To halt Israeli attacks in Lebanon and prevent further escalation, President Aoun proposed a plan of full ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal, reinforcement and deployment of the Lebanese army near the border and direct talks between Lebanon and Israel under international oversight (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 13, 2026). Even after no response was received from Israel, Prime Minister Salam said they were still committed to the initiative and that after responses had been received, the delegation would be formed, which would be "national and unified" (*al-Hadath*, March 22, 2026).
- ◆ On April 9, 2026, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had instructed opening direct negotiations with Lebanon as soon as possible. He said they would focus on disarming Hezbollah and regulating peaceful bilateral relations (X account of Benjamin Netanyahu, April 9, 2026). The following day, the first phone call was held by the Lebanese ambassador to the United States, Nada Hamadeh Maouad, and Israeli ambassador Yechiel Leiter, with the participation of the United States ambassador to Lebanon, Michel Issa. They agreed to meet at the State Department in Washington on March 14, 2026, to discuss the declaration of a ceasefire and the timing of the start of negotiations between Lebanon and Israel under American auspices (X account of the Lebanese presidency, April 10, 2026).

Positions of Hezbollah and Its Supporters

► The moves of the Lebanese leadership resulted in an escalation of the Hezbollah leadership rhetoric, which accused the government of acting against the "resistance" instead of fighting alongside it against Israel and strongly opposed talks with Israel. The organization warned it was prepared for a direct confrontation with state institutions:

- ◆ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem told the "steadfast and sacrificing Lebanese" that the organization would not agree to return to the status quo ante [before the outbreak of the new hostilities] and called on senior Lebanese leadership figures to stop making concessions while getting nothing in return. He linked the "resistance" to "the state, the army and the people," claiming they "defended the land, restored its sovereignty and expelled the occupier" (website of Hezbollah secretary general, April 10, 2026).
- ◆ Hezbollah condemned the decision to expel the Iranian ambassador, calling it "irresponsible and condemnable, not serving Lebanon's national interests and a surrender to external pressures, " a "national and strategic sin opening the door to internal division, deepening the national rift, and leading the state along a dangerous path of dependence, weakness and vulnerability" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 24, 2026).
- ◆ Head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, Muhammad Raad, rejected the accusations that those "resisting the enemy's plan and its objectives" had made mistakes and called on the Lebanese not to "spread rumors, create an atmosphere of incitement" and for the government not to "take measures that worsened national division." In an op-ed piece in Hezbollah's daily al-Akhbar, he attacked the "complaints about losses, victims and destruction during the 'resistance' to the enemy" and spoke out against inexperienced or limited individuals who imagined that the "patrons" wanted the good of the state and its welfare more than the honorable "resistance" fighters⁷ who "sacrificed their blood and their lives for the homeland" (al-Akhbar, April 10, 2026).
- ◆ According to deputy chairman of Hezbollah's political council, Mahmoud Qamati, after the end of the current war, a "popular tsunami" would sweep away the government, its political "sins" and its "approach." He claimed the government had to apologize to the Lebanese people and to the "resistance," rescind all the negative actions taken against the "resistance," and move to a path of understanding with the "resistance" regarding the strategy for defending Lebanon's security. He warned that if the government persisted in its "negative choices," its opposition to Hezbollah and

⁷ Terrorist operatives.

surrender to American, Israeli, European and Arab dictates, it would lead the country to civil war and chaos (al-Manar, April 10, 2026).



Qamati (al-Manar, April 10, 2026)

◆ Hezbollah member of parliament Hassan Fadlallah claimed that holding direct negotiations with the "Israeli enemy" and the beginning of practical steps to achieve them were a blatant violation of the National Pact, the constitution and Lebanese law. He claimed it meant "playing with the fate of the state and its future," and increasing internal division at a time when Lebanon needed internal solidarity and unity more than ever. He added that what the enemy had not succeed in achieving on the battlefield and at the border villages, thanks to the heroism of the "resistance" fighters, it would not receive in negotiations with a regime which did not have sovereignty over its decisions, had abandoned its most basic duties, had failed to defend its people and was not loyal to national sovereignty. He accused the Lebanese regime of rejecting the Iranian demand for a ceasefire in Lebanon as a condition for negotiations with the United States, its calculations did not favor the Lebanese and were made at the expense of Lebanese blood. Fadlallah said the "resistance" would remain as long as its people existed, while every regime was temporary (al-Akhbar, April 11, 2026).

◆ Hezbollah member of parliament Hussein al-Hajj Hassan claimed that the government had lost its authority and "had no expertise in politics, but rather in surrendering to the United States." He accused the Lebanese regime acting against its people and Iran since it "did nothing to achieve a ceasefire." He added that the regime's position had made it easy for Israel to attack a large number of Hezbollah targets on April 8, 2026. He also claimed that the Lebanese ambassador to the United States, who would lead the direct talks with the Israeli ambassador, represented only part of Lebanon, and described her smiles toward the Israeli ambassador as "embarrassing," at a time when "her countrymen were casualties of enemy fire" (al-Mayadeen, April 11, 2026).

- ◆ Hezbollah member of parliament Ali Fayyad claimed that the organization did not in principle oppose diplomacy, but opposed what he called "concessions," adding that any political approach had to preserve national interests and not come at their expense. He said Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territories was the "natural key" to restoring stability in the south (al-Diyar, April 5, 2026). He called on the Lebanese government to adhere to a ceasefire as a precondition before taking any future step and recalled Hezbollah's position rejecting any direct negotiations between Lebanon and the "Israeli enemy" (al-Akhbar, April 9, 2026).
- According to a report, Prime Minister Salam's decision to discuss disarming Beirut of non-state weapons led to a heated exchange between him and the ministers representing Hezbollah and Amal. Amal's finance minister, Yassine Jaber, said he opposed the timing, after the Israeli strikes. Hezbollah's health minister, Rakan Nasser al-Din, said the decision "gave the enemy justification to bomb the capital, since the government was allegedly hinting at the presence of heavy weapons in neighborhoods." Sources also stated that Parliament Speaker and Amal leader Nabih Berri had informed Salam of his opposition to the timing and advised him to distance himself from anything that could inflame the domestic atmosphere, but Salam justified it by saying that he wanted to protect the capital (al-Diyar, April 10, 2026). Lebanese information minister Paul Morcos said the two Hezbollah ministers, health minister Rakan Nasser al-Din and labor minister Muhammad Haidar, opposed the proposal. Haidar said they supported maintaining security and the presence of the security forces wherever required, and also monitoring any illegal or unlicensed weapon found among the public, but without adopting rhetoric implying "anything other than maintaining security in Beirut." He said they did not intend to resign and had told the government of their position (al-Sharq al-Awsat, April 9, 2026).
- Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar also enlisted in the campaign in several harsh critical articles threatening the positions of the state institutions toward the "resistance:"
 - ◆ *Al-Akhbar* editor-in-chief, Ibrahim al-Amin, who is close to Hezbollah's leadership, represented limiting the organization's activity as serving external pressures and claimed its objective was to appease the United States and its regional allies while attacking the "resistance." He warned it could lead to an internal Lebanese confrontation and possibly to civil war, and accused the state leadership of trying to push the army and the security forces into confronting the organization, a move he claimed would serve the interests of

Israel and Western elements seeking to disarm Hezbollah. He accused President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam of political weakness and dependence on external elements (*al-Akhbar*, March 3, 2026).

- ✦ An op-ed piece entitled "The Vichy Government in Lebanon: Between Loss of Legitimacy and a Trial for Treason" claimed that the decision to limit Hezbollah's "military activity" had been made in the midst of military escalation and was an attempt to persecute the "resistance" instead of confronting Israel. It argued that the decision lacked constitutional basis, since issues concerning the weapons of the "resistance" and national security should be discussed in Parliament and not only in the government. The piece equated the government's policy with collaboration with the enemy during wartime. It also claimed that the current confrontation could affect Lebanon's political system and exacerbate the internal dispute regarding Hezbollah's weapons and its role in the "struggle" against Israel (*al-Akhbar*, March 6, 2026).

- ✦ Another article accused the Lebanese regime, which it called the "regime of foreign patronage," of adopting an American-Israeli narrative and leading a "provocative conspiracy" which would inevitably push the country toward an "explosion." It was further claimed that the coordination between official Lebanon and the "enemy entity" through Washington was no longer secret and included Israeli military pressure as well as internal political pressure. The article claimed the regime gave cover for the April 8 Israeli attack and helped the enemy achieve what it had failed to achieve by military force. The article described disarming Beirut as "another gift to the occupation" and added that Prime Minister Salam did not hide his full alignment with the hostile position toward the "resistance," the capital and its people, and had adopted positions that not even Avichay Adraee [IDF spokesperson in Arabic] or the enemy government dared to adopt (*al-Akhbar*, April 10, 2026).



A cartoon by "resistance axis"⁸ cartoonist Kamal Sharaf from Yemen, about Aoun and Salam's "surrender" to Israel (Kamal Sharaf's X account, April 11, 2026)

► The campaign defying the state institutions reached the streets and the social networks. On April 11, 2026, hundreds of Hezbollah and Amal supporters gathered in Riad al-Solh Square in Beirut, opposite the government building, for a demonstration in support of the "resistance" and rejection of "surrender to the Zionist enemy." Demonstrators carried Lebanese, Hezbollah and Amal flags and demanded that all negotiations with the enemy under fire be stopped and that Lebanon's elements of strength not be relinquished (al-Manar, April 11, 2026). Nevertheless, Hezbollah and Amal issued a joint statement against demonstrations "at this sensitive stage" in order to preserve stability and civil peace and not be dragged into "division desired by the Israeli enemy" (al-Diyar, April 11, 2026). Sources indicated that the statement came after Arab countries, headed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, exerted heavy pressure on Parliament Speaker and Amal leader Nabih Berri and warned that "playing in the street was a red line," and any attempt to storm the government or try to carry out a coup would not pass quietly. European countries also warned that they would not remain silent. A statement from the Lebanese army command pledging to act against any suspicious movement endangering

⁸ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq.

civil peace also led to only hundreds of demonstrators arriving in the square (Nidaa al-Watan, April 11, 2026).



Right: Hezbollah and Amal supporters. Left: The sign reads, "The Zionism Loyalty Bloc" with pictures of President Aoun, Prime Minister Salam and Foreign Minister Rajji (al-'Ahed, April 11, 2026)



Right: Prime Minister Salam in silhouette with an Israeli flag in the background (Hezbollah in the Field Telegram channel, April 9, 2026). Left: A trash can with a picture of Prime Minister Salam captioned, "Our government made our destruction legal" (Hezbollah in the Field Telegram channel, April 10, 2026)

► The events caused Prime Minister Salam to announce he would postpone his planned trip to the United States, where he had been supposed to hold meetings in Washington and at UN headquarters in New York, in order to be able to follow the government's work from Beirut in light of the current internal circumstances, and to "carry out his duty to safeguard the security of the Lebanese and their unity" (Nawaf Salam's X account, April 11, 2026). Sources close to the Lebanese government stated that Salam remained in Lebanon to follow the implementation of the security plan to prevent civil war (al-Hadath, April 12, 2026). However, other sources claimed the visit had been cancelled to prevent an ambush, in which a rumor would be spread that he met with an Israeli envoy, which would lead to his being physically attacked in Lebanon. Salam could have been faced with an American demand to meet with an official Israeli

representative, when a refusal would have led to an Israeli response while agreement would have endangered his life in Beirut (MTV Lebanon, April 12, 2026).

Opponents of Hezbollah

► Hezbollah's political opponents welcomed the government's moves against the organization and its implementation of the state's monopoly on weapons, and said they supported opening direct negotiations with Israel:

- ◆ Chairman of the Christian Lebanese Forces party, Samir Geagea, said collecting weapons in the Beirut district was "the first step on a journey of a thousand miles" and enjoyed the support of most Lebanese. He added that the army and the security forces could no longer use the excuse of the absence of a political decision not to impose the authority of the state in practice, even if it currently concerned only the Beirut district. He called on the state institutions to act quickly to restore the citizens' trust in the state (Nidaa al-Watan, April 9, 2026).

- ◆ Chairman of the Christian Phalange party, Sami Gemayel, said they supported negotiations between Lebanon and Israel and stood behind the president and the prime minister because in that way Lebanon was regaining control over its future and returning decisions to its legitimate institutions. He said the goals were ending the war, disarming Hezbollah and an Israeli withdrawal as a first step towards establishing sovereignty, building peace and restoring the state (Sami Gemayel's X account, April 9, 2026). He said he hoped the government would expand the disarmament to additional areas as soon as possible in order to calm the Lebanese (Sami a-Gemayel's X account, April 10, 2026).

- ◆ The Lebanese Forces media official, Charles Jabbour, said Hezbollah had achieved nothing in the current hostilities and those which began on October 8, 2023 besides the loss of human life, property, image and reputation. He said disarmament was an existential need for the state, the people and the nation, and the government's decisions to disarm Hezbollah and prohibit the activity of its "military and security" organization had to be implemented immediately to prevent more wars, death and destruction (Nidaa al-Watan, April 10, 2026).

- ◆ Strong Republic bloc member of parliament Ghada Ayoub said that Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem was still living in an earlier era, in which the state, the army and the people stood alongside the "resistance," and the government's decisions, especially banning the possession of weapons and negotiations with Israel, were the

best response to Qassem. She also called on the government to completely ban Hezbollah's activity and dismiss its ministers from the government. She said "the era of rebellion against the decisions of the state and the government had passed" (al-Arabiya, April 10, 2026).