

# Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon

## May 18-25, 2026

### Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ The IDF continued locating and destroying terrorist infrastructure in the forward defense zone (the Yellow Line) in south Lebanon and eliminated terrorist operatives who posed a threat to the forces and squads approaching the border fence with Israel. Terrorist targets were also attacked and terrorists eliminated in other areas of south Lebanon and in the Beqa'a Valley, including weapons production sites and facilities and assets hidden inside civilian structures. Three IDF soldiers were killed and at least 15 soldiers were wounded, including a brigade commander.
- ▶ Hezbollah issued more than 130 claims of responsibility for attacks on IDF forces in south Lebanon and targets in northern Israel, most of them with explosive or standard UAVs. Hezbollah reportedly increased its attacks on the IDF's command, control and defense arrays in south Lebanon and along the northern border using drone swarms, including a new type of explosive suicide UAV.
- ▶ Lebanese president Aoun reiterated that direct negotiations with Israel were the only way to jumpstart the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, and foreign minister Rajji stated that the negotiations were intended to lead to a state free of every "illegal armed organization." The Lebanese army appointed a delegation for the military talks with Israel at the Pentagon on May 29, 2026, but said the representatives would deal only with implementing the ceasefire and the IDF withdrawal.
- ▶ In a speech marking the IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem sharpened his rhetoric against the Lebanese government, accusing it of weakness and of advancing an "Israeli project" to disarm the organization. He said the Lebanese could take to the streets to overthrow the government and warned that the "resistance"<sup>2</sup> would confront anyone who threatened its existence.

---

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

<sup>2</sup> Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

- ▶ The American administration imposed sanctions on four Hezbollah members of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, on Iran's designated ambassador to Lebanon, on two senior Amal Movement figures and for the first time on two senior Lebanese security officials who were alleged to have assisted Hezbollah in maintaining influence within state institutions. Hezbollah and Amal claimed was an attempt to intimidate and pressure Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament.
- ▶ Iran and Hezbollah are reportedly increasing coordination regarding the "day after the war" and working to rebuild the organization's terrorist facilities, assets and arsenal through smuggling. It was also reported that the Revolutionary Guards were managing Hezbollah's activity north of the Zahrani River.
- ▶ Growing criticism of Hezbollah and Iran over the continuation of the war has become apparent in Lebanon's Shi'ite support base. Lebanese who returned to their homes in the Dahiyyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut because of economic constraints said they were concerned about renewed escalation.

## The Fighting in Lebanon

### **The IDF**

▶ The IDF continued extensive ground and aerial activity in the forward defense zone (the Yellow Line) in south Lebanon, attacking and destroying terrorist infrastructure including tunnels, weapons depots, observation posts and Hezbollah rocket and missile launchers, eliminating terrorists who posed a threat to the IDF forces and terrorists who approached the border fence with Israel. Hezbollah terrorist targets were attacked and terrorists were eliminated in other areas in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley, including an underground weapons production site in the Beqa'a Valley, surveillance equipment inside a civilian building and a weapons production site established in a clinic. One IDF soldier was killed by an explosive UAV attack in Israeli territory near the border, another soldier was killed by an explosive UAV attack in south Lebanon and a third soldier was killed in an encounter in south Lebanon. At least 15 soldiers were wounded, including the commander of the 401<sup>st</sup> Brigade and a combat documentation soldier (IDF spokesperson, May 18-25, 2026).

### **Hezbollah**

▶ Between noon on May 18 and noon on May 25, 2026, Hezbollah issued 136 claims of responsibility for attacks using explosive UAVs (48 of the claims), standard UAVs, anti-tank missiles, rockets, mortar shells and anti-aircraft missiles. The majority of the attacks were

directed at IDF forces in south Lebanon, but explosive UAVs, standard UAVs and rockets were used to attack northern border communities and concentrations of IDF forces near the border (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 18-25, 2026):

◆Hezbollah claimed a "prolonged confrontation" took place in the town of Haddatha in the Bint Jbeil district of south Lebanon, and represented it as successfully blocking an Israeli "infiltration attempt." According to the claim, Hezbollah forces exchanged fire with IDF forces using anti-tank weapons, mortars and direct fire, "destroyed four Merkava tanks" and attacked Israeli reinforcement forces. Hezbollah claimed a combination of ambushes, advance surveillance and "precise fire" targeting forces and armored vehicles were part of an ongoing effort to exhaust the IDF's attempts to advance in the sector. The claims are part of Hezbollah's propaganda effort to represent itself as maintaining the tactical initiative and capable of steadfastly blocking Israeli ground activity in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 20, 2026).

◆Hezbollah claimed it was employing a "commander hunting strategy," allegedly tracking the movements of senior Israeli officers to attack the IDF's command, defense and control arrays along the northern front. According to the claims, Hezbollah attacked an Iron Dome aerial defense system, a vehicle claimed to be used by the commander of the 300<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and simultaneous, extensive rocket, artillery and UAV attacks at several locations. Hezbollah announced its first use of Ababil suicide UAVs (more than 20 claims of responsibility since May 19, 2026), including the operation of multidirectional UAV swarms to overload Israel's aerial defense arrays, expand the penetration area and increase the chances of hitting targets. Hezbollah also claimed it was developing capabilities in the fields of electronic disruption and aerial defense to increase the operational pressure on IDF forces along the northern border (*al-Akhabar*, May 19-22, 2026).



**An Ababil explosive UAV (Telegram channel of Hezbollah in the Field, May 21, 2026)**

◆ Hezbollah has reportedly begun using Ababil explosive UAVs equipped with thermal cameras, which allow it to attack IDF forces at night. According to sources, the Israeli attempt to change tactics and rely on movement at night was no longer effective because it had become exposed and the "resistance" would broadcast the footage of the attacks repeatedly, confirmed that the Israeli "occupation" forces were trapped in the swampy ground of south Lebanon (al-Manar, May 24, 2026). However, the thermal footage presented in the al-Manar report, which was allegedly taken from a UAV and documented IDF soldiers, turned out to be footage of an American firefighting unit in Colorado from 2020. The IDF reported that there was no evidence that Hezbollah had installed night-vision cameras on the UAVs (Telegram channel of Itay Blumental, May 25, 2026).

► Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem delivered a speech marking Liberation and Resistance Day (the day IDF withdrew from south Lebanon, May 24, 2000) and praised the "resistance" fighters for shattering the myth of the "Zionist enemy." He said the "resistance" UAVs would continue pursuing the "enemy soldiers" and claimed that Israel admitted the number of casualties only because of the footage arriving from the UAVs. He boasted it was "the beginning of the end for Israel" (al-Manar, May 24, 2026).

► Hezbollah issued an open letter from the "fighters of the Islamic "resistance" to the organization's secretary general, Na'im Qassem, declaring loyalty to the organization's leadership, the continuation of the path of "resistance" and the "struggle" against Israel. The letter was rife with ideology and militancy, glorified jihad, sacrifice and dying as a shaheed, and described the fighting in south Lebanon as a "religious struggle" against the "Zionist occupation." It claimed that Hezbollah's operations "exhausted" the IDF and kept it from

establishing itself in the south, and committed to continue the fighting until Israel withdrew from Lebanese territory (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 20, 2026).

► Ibrahim al-Amin, editor in chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated *al-Akhbar*, said the region was returning to prolonged confrontations after the United States and Israel had failed to defeat Iran and the "resistance" axis."<sup>3</sup> He claimed the war in Lebanon strengthened the idea of "resistance" while Israel prepared for prolonged hostilities in the Gaza Strip, south Syria and Lebanon, part of an effort to exhaust Iran and its proxies. He also claimed the United States and Israel were examining the possibility of further escalation against Iran, and in the Lebanese arena Israel was expected to expand the targeted killings and the damage to Hezbollah infrastructure as part of the broader regional confrontation (*al-Akhbar*, May 20, 2026).



**The security escalation in Lebanon as part of everyday routine by representing the hostilities as a weather forecast to criticize the normalization of the war and the transformation of the security instability into a permanent and ongoing reality (*al-Joumhouria*, May 21, 2026)**

---

<sup>3</sup> Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq, whose collective objective is the destruction and elimination of the State of Israel.

## Direct Negotiations between Lebanon and Israel

### **The Lebanese government**

► Lebanese president Joseph Aoun said any future arrangement with Israel had to be based on a ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal, deployment of the Lebanese army in the south, the return of the displaced persons and economic aid to Lebanon, and denied reports regarding broader political concessions. He promoted a course of action combining efforts to halt the hostile escalation with advancing an economic agenda based on strengthening state institutions and restoring public and regional confidence in Lebanon. According to Aoun, the crisis in Lebanon was not only economic, but a crisis of trust between the state and its citizens and between Lebanon and the international community (X account of the Lebanese presidency, May 18-21, 2026).

► In a statement issued by Aoun marking 26 years since the IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon, he said Liberation Day arrived this year while Lebanon groaned under the weight and pain of the "ongoing Israeli aggression" and the "renewed occupation" of the south, contrary to international resolutions. He said Lebanon would not accept the situation, adding that the state was taking action for a full Israeli withdrawal through negotiations which would be neither concession or surrender. He said the state would expand its authority over all its territory through the army and the security forces, and thanked the Lebanese people for their solidarity in support of the state as it made fateful decisions. He did not explicitly refer to Hezbollah, but said that all those who were involved in "liberating the south, the army and "resistance" fighters," and all Lebanese deserved a strong and inclusive state with legitimacy for its institutions serving everyone (X account of the Lebanese presidency, May 25, 2026).

► Lebanese foreign minister Youssef Rajji called the direct negotiations a "courageous decision" intended to lead to a state free of every "illegal armed organization," with weapons exclusively in the hands of the state (X account of Youssef Rajji, May 20, 2026).

► Reportedly, concerns are growing in Lebanon that the increasing American involvement in the negotiations and security meetings with Israel will become a tool of direct pressure on Beirut regarding Hezbollah's weapons and the security arrangements in the south of the country (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 20, 2026).

## **The Lebanese Army**

► The Lebanese army appointed the military delegation for security talks with Israel, scheduled to take place at the Pentagon on May 29, 2026, stating that its role would be technical only and focus on the mechanisms for implementing the ceasefire, the schedule for the Israeli withdrawal and strengthening the army's deployment in the south. Given the political sensitivity of the contacts and the composition of the delegation, army headquarters noted that the delegation members had been selected solely according to professional considerations and were committed to "national principles and the doctrine of the Lebanese army" (X account of the Lebanese army, May 21, 2026; al-Akhbar, May 22, 2026).

## **Hezbollah's Position**

► Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem gave a speech marking Liberation and Resistance Day in which he hardened his rhetoric against the Lebanese government because of the direct negotiations with Israel and its measures against Hezbollah. He claimed the IDF withdrawal 26 years ago had been achieved because of the unity of the army, the people and the "resistance" and relations between the state and the "resistance" had been harmonious, accusing the current government of being too weak to act against the American-Israeli "project" while acting against the "resistance" and the Lebanese people. He claimed the demand to disarm Hezbollah was an "Israeli project" whose objective was to allow Israel to enter Lebanon to kill Hezbollah members and expel its supporters, and he demanded that the decision regarding the state monopoly over weapons be canceled. He said direct negotiations were a victory for Israel and called to stop them and not give the United States what it demanded. He increased his criticism of the Lebanese government, saying that if it could not defend the sovereignty of the state it should resign. He claimed the Lebanese had the right to "take to the streets and overthrow the government," the "resistance" was under an "existential threat" and was prepared to confront anyone who stood against it, even if it meant dying as a shaheed, and declared that they would not kneel even if the "entire world" turned against them (al-Manar, May 26, 2026). In response to Qassem's threats against the government, government sources said Hezbollah's secretary general was disconnected from reality and presented contradictory positions, and called on him to remove Hezbollah's ministers from the government before he handed out certificates of patriotism. They asked

how he could logically be a partner and representative in a government he accused of treason and conspiracy against its people (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 25, 2026).



**Qassem gives his speech (al-Manar, May 24, 2026)**

► Qassem sent a letter of condolence to the family of the organization's south front commander, Youssef Isma'il al-Hashem, in which he wrote that Hezbollah would continue to adhere to the path of "resistance," jihad and the struggle against Israel and the United States, and would not withdraw from the campaign despite the pressures and "heavy price." He reiterated the values of sacrifice and dying as a shaheed as central to the organization's identity and combat narrative, while declaring that the "struggle" would continue until the "liberation" (website of Hezbollah's secretary general, May 20, 2026).

► Other Hezbollah figures and media outlets represented the direct negotiations with Israel as part of a broad American-Israeli project intended to reshape Lebanon's political landscape and "security," disarm Hezbollah and reduce the influence of the "resistance axis:"<sup>4</sup>

◆ Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, criticized the direct negotiations and claimed the Lebanese government had adopted the "occupation's narrative" against Hezbollah. He claimed that advancing the principle of the exclusivity of weapons in the hands of the state through American and Israeli pressure was an attack on Lebanon's sovereignty and a "crime against the homeland," while alleging that "resistance" was the only force that over the years which had "successfully defended" Lebanon against Israel. Hezbollah members of parliament Hassan Fadlallah and Hassan Ezz al-Din claimed that the continuation of

---

<sup>4</sup> Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq, whose collective objective is the destruction and elimination of the State of Israel.

the direct negotiations under the shadow of the Israeli attacks were "humiliation and surrender," and reliance on American diplomacy did not lead to a ceasefire but rather to further escalation against civilians in the south and the Beqa'a Valley. Fadlallah warned against attempts to establish a "collaborating" armed Lebanese force similar to the South Lebanon Army, and said Hezbollah would oppose such a move, while calling for a return to indirect negotiations only and reliance on "internal strengths," especially the "resistance" (*al-Akhbar*, May 19-21, 2026).

◆ The editorial of the Hezbollah-affiliated daily *al-Akhbar* represented the latest round of negotiations with Israel as dangerous and deepening American involvement in Lebanon, while exerting direct pressure on the state and the Lebanese army regarding Hezbollah's weapons and security arrangements in the south. According to the newspaper, the meeting at the Pentagon on May 29 will mean a transition to a stage in which Washington seeks to separate security-military issues from political issues, including attempts to reshape the role of the Lebanese army and link Israeli measures to advancing Hezbollah's disarmament. It also claimed that fears were increasing within the Lebanese and military establishment regarding American and Israeli "traps" for Lebanon's sovereignty and the internal balance within the army, while Hezbollah's leadership continued opposing direct negotiations, which it viewed as an attempt to exert pressure on the "resistance." The paper also claimed that Lebanon had so far failed to achieve a full ceasefire or Israeli withdrawal, and that instead of exerting pressure on Israel, the United States had turned Lebanon itself into a target for increasing political and security pressure (*al-Akhbar*, May 21, 2026).

◆ Ibrahim al-Amin, editor in chief of *al-Akhbar*, accused Lebanese president Joseph Aoun and prime minister Nawaf Salam of effectively advancing the American-Israeli plan to reshape the political and security system in Lebanon after the war. In various articles he claimed that Aoun saw Hezbollah and the weapons of the "resistance" as a central obstacle to consolidating his rule and strengthening the state's status, and therefore relied on American-Saudi backing and advanced direct negotiations with Israel, even at the price of significant concessions and aggravating internal polarization. He claimed that the United States sought to concentrate the negotiations in its own hands, distance players such as France and Egypt, and advance a declaration of intentions which would later lead to a broader arrangement including

disarming Hezbollah, arrangements in the south and a framework for a future peace agreement. Aoun was represented as fearing an American-Iranian arrangement which would grant Hezbollah political gains or reinforce its internal status, and therefore acted to represent a ceasefire as a direct result of the negotiations with Israel and not of broader regional understandings (*al-Akhbar*, May 22-23, 2026).

◆ In another article, al-Amin claimed that Aoun and Salam's psychological state was similar to that of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, all of them hoping the agreement taking shape between Iran and the United States would not include Lebanon. The Lebanese leadership, he wrote, wanted a ceasefire to be the result of the upcoming talks with Israel in Washington. He added that Aoun's position was that Iran could help end the war in Lebanon, but only on condition that it committed to withdrawing support from Hezbollah and did not interfere with disarming the organization. He also claimed that Aoun had said he would not agree to Iranian transfers of funds to Hezbollah or any other Lebanese entity for the purpose of rehabilitating the state without the authorities' knowledge, and he was prepared to halt the rehabilitation process if it became clear that Iranian money had been transferred to Hezbollah (*al-Akhbar*, May 25, 2026).

► Given the growing tension, there were reports of efforts to renew the Aoun-Hezbollah dialogue, claiming that after a period of cooling in the contacts, quiet coordination and meetings had taken place through the mediation of parliament speaker Nabih Berri in an effort to prevent deterioration in relations and preserve open channels of communication between the sides (*al-Diyar*, May 20, 2026). A crisis of trust was later reported, as Hezbollah felt that Aoun was advancing a certain agenda, while the president's circle accused Hezbollah of trying to influence state decisions. It was also noted that Aoun refused Hezbollah's demands to freeze the direct negotiations with Israel as a condition for a meeting with the organization's representatives (*al-Madan*, May 25, 2026).

### **Hezbollah's Opponents**

► The anti-Hezbollah camp aligned with president Joseph Aoun and supports direct negotiations with Israel, and reiterated the need for the exclusivity of weapons in the hands of the state and Hezbollah's disarmament. Charles Jabbour, responsible for the information unit in the Christian Lebanese Forces party, presented a hardline position according to which ending the war and the Israeli withdrawal were conditioned on disarming Hezbollah and

dismantling its military-security array. He said national unity in Lebanon had to be based on the principles of one state, one weapon and one constitution, while accusing Hezbollah of establishing a "deep state" operating parallel to the state institutions and having a detrimental effect on its sovereignty. He expressed public support for American policy against Hezbollah and Iran, and claimed that the American sanctions against Hezbollah supporters helped Lebanon free itself from Iranian influence and from Hezbollah's control over the state institutions (X account of Charles Jabbour, May 22, 2026). Other members of Lebanese Parliament and anti-Hezbollah figures claimed that the continued existence of the organization's weapons was the central factor behind the destruction in the south, the damage to state sovereignty and of Lebanon's increasing regional and international isolation (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 18-19, 2026).

## Hezbollah

### **American Sanctions against Hezbollah and Its Political Supporters**

► The American Treasury Department imposed sanctions for terrorist activity on four Hezbollah members of parliament, Hassan Fadlallah, Muhammad Fneish, Ibrahim al-Mousawi and Hussein al-Hajj Hassan; on Iran's designated ambassador to Lebanon, Muhammad Reza Sheibani, who has been confined in the embassy since the Lebanese government ordered him to leave the country at the end of March 2026; the head of the security department in the Amal Movement, Ahmad Asaad Baalbaki, and Amal commander in south Lebanon, Ahmad Safawi; and two senior figures in the Lebanese security apparatuses, brigadier general Khattar Nasser al-Din, who heads the national security department in the General Security Directorate, and Samir Hamadi, responsible for the Dahiye al-Janoubia on behalf of military intelligence. The statement noted that the aforementioned individuals acted to preserve Hezbollah's influence over state institutions, and United States treasury secretary Scott Bessent said they would continue taking action against official figures who infiltrated the Lebanese government and enabled Hezbollah to conduct a violent campaign against the Lebanese people (Treasury Department website, May 21, 2026).



**The nine on whom sanctions were imposed (Facebook page Discussions of Zahle, May 22, 2026)**

► Hezbollah and the Amal Movement harshly criticized the new sanctions, representing them as part of an American-Israeli effort to increase internal political pressure surrounding the issue of the direct negotiations with Israel and disarming Hezbollah. Statements from the organizations claimed it was an "attempt at intimidation" to support the Israeli campaign against Lebanon, deter opposition to the negotiations and damage the ties between Hezbollah and Lebanese state institutions. According to the statements, the inclusion of officers from the security forces and figures from the Amal Movement reflected an escalation in American involvement in the internal Lebanese arena, and was intended to warn Lebanese Parliament speaker Nabih Berri and the official security institutions ahead of the military meetings with Israel planned at the Pentagon (*al-Akhbar*, May 21-22, 2026).

► Following the announcement of the American sanctions and claims of the involvement of one of the army officers in leaking intelligence information to Hezbollah, Lebanese army headquarters issued a clarification. It noted that the army had not received official information on the issue through the accepted communication channels, and all officers and army personnel acted according to headquarters' instructions and out of full commitment solely to the military institution and the homeland. Army headquarters warned against political or media exploitation of the accusations in a manner liable to harm public trust in the army given the growing sensitivity of the issue of Hezbollah's penetration into the Lebanese security forces and American pressure (Lebanon Debate, May 22, 2026).

► The Lebanese media linked the sanctions to American attempts to increase pressure on Lebanese Parliament speaker Nabih Berri, whom Washington views as opposing direct negotiations and supporting the continuation of exclusively indirect contacts. According to reports, the inclusion of Berri's associates and senior Amal Movement figures on the sanctions list was a personal and political warning, and a prelude to the possibility of expanding the sanctions in the future. It was also claimed that recently the United States and

Arab states attempted to cultivate direct channels with Berri in an effort to distance him from Hezbollah and undermine the political partnership between Amal and the organization, but so far without success (*al-Liwaa*, May 23, 2026; *al-Modon*, May 22, 2026).

► It was further noted that the American sanctions against Lebanese officers were perceived as part of the effort to increase the pressure on the Lebanese government to prove the state institutions and Hezbollah were separate, and to strengthen the oversight and verification mechanisms surrounding the army's deployment in the south and the future security arrangements (*al-Araby al-Jadeed*, May 22, 2026; *Nidaa al-Watan*, May 23, 2026).

► In the Hezbollah-affiliated daily *al-Akhbar* directed harsh criticism at the Lebanese president, the prime minister and the foreign ministry for not issuing an official position following the American sanctions. The paper claimed their silence effectively reflected the government's acceptance of "American patronage" over Lebanon and increasing external involvement in determining the limits of the country's political action. According to the report, the fact that the sanctions also included officers and members of the security forces was considered a red line regarding the official institutions in Lebanon, and as part of a gradual American policy intended to influence the internal balance of power along with negotiations with Israel (*al-Akhbar*, May 23, 2026).

### **Hezbollah-Iran Relations**

► In his speech for Liberation and Resistance Day, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem praised Iran and said that under the leadership of Mojtaba Khamenei Iran had "humiliated" the United States and Israel when it stood alone against the "greatest tyrannical superpower in the world." He said he was confident Iran would become "an extraordinary superpower with international status and be a paradise for the free world," and hoped that the agreement with the United States would be fully implemented and include the Lebanese arena (*al-Manar*, May 24, 2026).

► Reportedly, Hezbollah and Iran are directly involved and coordinate regarding the regional discussions surrounding the "day after the war" in Lebanon. A Hezbollah delegation recently visited Iran, Russia and Pakistan to discuss possible formulas for ending the fighting and future arrangements in the Lebanese arena. It was further claimed that Iran was integrating Hezbollah into every negotiation concerning Lebanon to prevent its political isolation or the separation of the Lebanese arena from the broader Iranian file. It was also reported that Tehran committed to transfer to Hezbollah approximately 10% of all the funds it successfully

released in future arrangements or sanctions relief. It was further noted that discussions between Iran and Hezbollah also dealt with the issue of the future of the organization's weapons, with both sides agreeing any future arrangement would have to be within the framework of a "defense strategy" or a mechanism of weapons containment, and not within a framework of fully disarming Hezbollah (al-Madan, May 21, 2026).

► Meanwhile, according to reports, Hezbollah and Iran continued Hezbollah's military buildup by smuggling weapons and funds through the coasts of south Lebanon and the Syrian-Lebanese border, relying on networks run by figures of the former Syrian regime. Reportedly, at least one hundred officers from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were operating in Lebanon in the fields of guidance, training, armament and smuggling, and some of them used Lebanese documents to blend into the local population. According to the report, the Revolutionary Guards managed Hezbollah's activity north of the Zahrani River, while the activity in the south was carried out mainly through Lebanese operatives of the organization (al-Hadath, May 22, 2026).

► Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi reportedly told Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem that Iran regarded support for Hezbollah as a "strategic and principled commitment." He said Tehran conditioned any future agreement with the United States on ending the war in Lebanon and including Lebanon in every future regional arrangement, as part of the Iranian effort to link the Lebanese arena to the broader negotiations with Washington (*al-Joumhouria*, May 23, 2026).

### **Tension in the Shi'ite Community**

► Recently, tension and anger increased within the Shi'ite community in Lebanon, including among Hezbollah and Amal's traditional support bases (the "Shi'ite duo") because of the costs of the war, displacement and widespread destruction. According to reports, the gap is widening between the ideological discourse of "steadfastness and sacrifice for the resistance" and the economic and social distress of the displaced Lebanese, a development which for the first time has also led to open criticism of Iran and the Revolutionary Guards. In addition, parts of the "Shi'ite street" have begun viewing the war as a confrontation conducted within the framework of Iran's regional interests at the expense of Lebanon and the Shi'ite community, alongside a growing decrease of confidence in Hezbollah's ability to contain the crisis or lead reconstruction. According to the reports, the continuation of the fighting, the absence of a political horizon and the escalation of the displacement crisis are

liable to further intensify the sense of alienation and internal shock within the "Shi'ite duo" (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 22, 2026).

► Muhammad Raad, head of Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, issued a lengthy appeal to Hezbollah and Amal's public supporters regarding strengthening the "spirit of steadfastness" and continuing adherence to the path of "resistance" in the face of the political, security and economic pressures exerted on the organization and its environment. He said the supporters of the "resistance" were the "pillar of the homeland and the central barrier against Zionist hegemony," and claimed the objective of the current war was to "break their will" through destruction, displacement and political and economic pressures. He said Hezbollah and its supporters would continue the military and political struggle out of a sense of their "national and moral duty to defend Lebanon," while rejecting reliance on American promises or on political arrangements with Israel (website of the Loyalty to the Resistance faction, May 22, 2026).

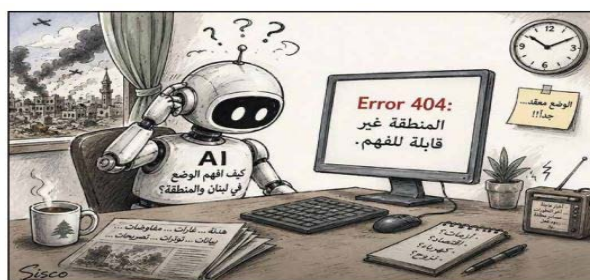
### **Efforts to Combat Hezbollah's Financing**

► In his speech for Liberation and Resistance Day, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem referred to demands from Israel and the United States and ministers in the Lebanese government to close the al-Qard al-Hassan Association, Hezbollah's financial arm, and claimed that the association was a "social initiative" which had been licensed by the ministry of interior and had "no connection to banking or economic activity [*sic*]," but only provided assistance by lending to the needy. He rejected claims that the association belonged to Hezbollah or economically supported the organization (al-Manar, May 24, 2026).

► Reportedly, several Gulf States have begun increasing the financial and security examinations of Lebanese citizens within their territory, while examining sources of funds, bank transfers, business activity and residency visas to expose possible ties to Hezbollah and prevent exploitation of the financial systems for the benefit of financing the organization. It was also reported that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) played a central role in the campaign through a combination of financial oversight, international intelligence cooperation and the fight to combat money laundering, part of a broader regional effort to turn off the faucet of Hezbollah's sources of funding and economic infrastructures, and regional Iranian influence (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 19, 2026).

## Sectarian Tensions in Lebanon

► The Hezbollah-affiliated daily *al-Akhbar* sharply criticized the Lebanese foreign minister, Youssef Rajji, representing him as promoting the positions of the Christian Lebanese Forces party in the international arena, and not the official position of the Lebanese state. The article claimed that during his visit to the Vatican, Rajji discussed issues of a "separatist character" and hinted at the possibility of returning to the idea of "Small Lebanon"<sup>5</sup> as a solution for the Christians in Lebanon, something presented as having dangerous implications for the idea of shared life in the country. In addition, it was claimed that his discourse integrated into an American-Israeli effort to encourage sectarian tensions, especially between Christians and Shi'ites, because of the war and the internal crisis in Lebanon (*al-Akhbar*, May 19, 2026). The Lebanese foreign ministry and the Lebanese Forces party denied the remarks attributed to Rajji, and claimed calling the report in the paper "a campaign of deception and lies" meant to harm his image and Lebanon's official position. The statements noted that Lebanon is committed to the principles of national unity, shared life and sovereignty (X account of Youssef Rajji and Nidaa al-Watan, May 19, 2026).



**The complexity and chaos of Lebanon as a condition that even AI struggles with. Through the combination of war, political crises and countless contradictions, it expresses a deep sense of confusion and inability to identify a stable solution to the situation (al-Joumhouria, May 18, 2026)**

## The Lebanese Army

► General Rodolph Haykal, commander of the Lebanese army, issued an order of the day for Resistance and Liberation Day (Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000) in which he noted the army's commitment to defending Lebanon, preserving internal stability and strengthening national unity in the shadow of the "continuing Israeli aggression" and the continued "occupation" of territories in the south of the country. He said the army operated

<sup>5</sup> *Le Petit Liban*, the 1920 autonomous Mount Lebanon district. It was a predominantly Christian and Druze enclave. Return a Small Lebanon means retreating into a smaller, Christian-dominated independent area with a clear political and cultural majority and without participation in larger regional Islamic conflicts.

under complex conditions to deal with the consequences of the fighting, assist civilians and displaced persons, and at the same time continued missions of internal security, combating terrorism and crime and supervising the borders. He rejected "criticism and defamation" of the military institution, and warned against attempts to undermine internal stability through sectarian and regional discourse. He added that "civil peace and national unity" were central for defending Lebanon, and the army would continue serving as a bulwark against attempts to harm state cohesion (X account of the Lebanese army, May 22, 2026).

## The Civilian Situation in Lebanon

► The Lebanese ministry of health announced that since the beginning of the current hostilities on March 2, 2026, 3,123 people had been killed in Israeli attacks in Lebanon and 9,506 wounded (*al-Nashra*, May 23, 2026).

► In cooperation with the European Union, France and Denmark, the Lebanese government launched an aid program of approximately €32 million for 2026-2029, intended for the rehabilitation of local authorities, renewing the activity of public institutions, promoting sustainable agriculture and creating employment opportunities for vulnerable populations. Prime minister Nawaf Salam said Lebanon needed not only humanitarian assistance but also lasting stability, reforms and the restoration of trust, while the donor states linked the continuation of aid to Beirut's advancing institutional and economic reforms (X account of the Lebanese prime minister's office, May 19, 2026).

► The Lebanese government warned of a worsening economic and social crisis as a result of the continuing war. Finance minister Yassin Jaber estimated that Lebanon's economy was expected to shrink by 7% to 10% during the year, while the accumulated damage was estimated at approximately \$20 billion. Agriculture minister Nizar Hani noted that more than 56 thousand hectares of agricultural land had been damaged, production losses amounted to more than \$530 million, thousands of farmers had been displaced and severe damage done to food security, with estimates that approximately 1.24 million people would suffer from severe food insecurity. In addition, the deterioration of security harmed tourism, investments, infrastructure and the trade, transportation and energy sectors, while increasing poverty and unemployment (*al-Nashra* and Lebanon Debate, May 21, 2026).

► The instability of security damaged Lebanese tourism ahead of the summer season. According to reports, hotel occupancy rates in Beirut ranged around only 5% to 10% along with a sharp decline in the number of visitors and a preference for cheaper and more stable

destinations, such as Turkey. However, part of the tourism sector managed to survive in recent years thanks to the "economy of war and displacement," after hotels and apartments hosted displaced persons during the months of fighting and prevented the total collapse of some tourist institutions (*al-Akhbar*, May 21, 2026).

► According to reports, Lebanese were gradually returning to the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut after months of displacement, but mainly because of economic constraints and not because of a real sense of security. Reportedly, many business owners and local residents returned to the area to renew their sources of livelihood and gradually restore the routine of life, but at the same time said they were concerned about renewed escalation and maintaining alternative housing options outside the area. In addition, some educational institutions have not yet returned to full activity and many businesses continue only limited operations (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 20, 2026).



**A Lebanese has returned home and holds a check, but the money does him no good because everything has gone up in flames (*al-Joumhouria*, May 25, 2026)**