

Criticism of Hezbollah Increases among the Shi'ites in Lebanon

June 14, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ Since Hezbollah launched the renewed hostilities in support of Iran on March 2, 2026, more than 3,700 people have been killed in Lebanon and more than one million have been displaced, along with enormous property damage, primarily in the Shi'ite strongholds of south Lebanon, the Beqa'a Valley and the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut.
- ▶ The heavy human and economic costs, which come while the Shi'ite community is still recovering from the consequences of Hezbollah's previous hostilities in "support of the Gaza Strip" (October 8, 2023 - November 27, 2024), have intensified signs of dissatisfaction in Hezbollah's centers of power and support, with a shift from a discourse of "resistance, return and reconstruction" to one of economic and social survival.
- ▶ That has been reflected by criticism of the continued fighting and a loss of confidence in Hezbollah's ability to provide an adequate response to the cumulative cost of the war. Support also appears to be growing for political solutions and for strengthening the role and status of the state.
- ▶ For the first time in years, there has been public Shi'ite criticism of Iran and of the concept of the "resistance axis," with claims that the objective of the two most recent rounds of hostilities was to serve regional Iranian interests while the Shi'ite community has paid most of the price in destruction, displacement and economic crisis.
- ▶ The growing frustration has led to the emergence of a Shi'ite search for an ideological alternative to Hezbollah, based on loyalty to the Lebanese state, strengthening its institutions and prioritizing reconstruction and development over the continued involvement of the community in military confrontations.
- ▶ The public Shi'ite criticism and evaporation of support for Hezbollah are forcing Hezbollah to increase its efforts to preserve its internal legitimacy by reinforcing the "resistance"

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

narrative, supporting displaced persons and exercising tighter management of the discourse surrounding the costs of the war and the organization's losses.

► **At this stage there are no particular signs of a collapse in Hezbollah's Shi'ite support base or the emergence of an organized political alternative with a real ability to challenge its status. However, the accumulation of destruction, displacement, economic hardship and growing criticism of Iran is creating a broader critical space than has been seen in recent years. In Amit Institute assessment, if the fighting in Lebanon continues and the reconstruction of the state is delayed, such processes may evolve from limited deterioration of the organization's standing to a more significant political and social challenge for Hezbollah and the Shi'ite community.**

Implications of the Military Hostilities for Lebanon and the Shi'ites

► Hezbollah's war against Israel between October 8, 2023 and November 27, 2024, called "support for the Gaza Strip," left more than 3,700 dead, about 30% of them women and children, with estimates indicating that many of the men who were killed were Hezbollah operatives and members of other terrorist organizations that fought alongside Hezbollah (Lebanese ministry of health website, December 4, 2024). Nearly 900,000 people were displaced, the overwhelming majority from Lebanon's Shi'ite areas, which are also considered Hezbollah strongholds, in the south of the country, the Baalbek area in the Beqa'a Valley and the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report, November 28, 2024).

► The high number of casualties, together with the enormous destruction to the Shi'ite areas, posed a serious challenge for Hezbollah, which was required to provide its support base with a response through the mechanisms of its extensive social network, built over many years, especially the Jihad al-Bina Association and the al-Qard al-Hassan Association, Hezbollah's economic arm. However, Israeli attacks, measures taken by the Lebanese authorities, and international sanctions imposed on Hezbollah's sources of funding, made it difficult for the organization to meet its supporters' expectations regarding the pace of reconstruction and compensation, and senior Hezbollah figures shifted responsibility to the

Lebanese state. Nevertheless, in the local elections held in May 2025, Hezbollah, along with the Amal Movement, won overwhelmingly in the Shi'ite strongholds.²

► On the night of March 1, 2026, Hezbollah fired rockets at northern Israel for the first time since the ceasefire. One day later, following a series of Israeli strikes throughout Lebanon, Hezbollah officially announced its intention to continue the hostilities against Israel and began attacking military and civilian targets inside Israel and IDF forces in south Lebanon. Hezbollah represented the new attacks as "defensive" and in response to Israeli attacks which had continued since the ceasefire. Hezbollah claimed it had no choice because the efforts of the Lebanese government to stop the "aggression" had failed. The organization's secretary general, Na'im Qassem, said the Israeli-American hostilities against Iran and the elimination of Iran's leader, Ali Khamenei, had provided the "appropriate timing "for renewing the fighting.³

► Since the outbreak of the hostilities, and despite ceasefire declarations on April 16 and June 3, 2026, which failed to halt the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, more than 3,700 Lebanese have been killed and more than 1.1 million have been displaced, while the IDF called for the evacuation of the entire area south of the Zahrani River, including the city of Tyre; more than 61,000 buildings throughout the country were reported damaged or destroyed. Beyond the direct damage, displaced persons face growing economic distress, including soaring rents, loss of livelihoods and depletion of family savings. According to reports in the Lebanese media, some families have even been forced to return to combat

² See the May 2025 Amit Institute report, [Challenges Faced by Hezbollah after the November 27, 2024 ceasefire](#), and the September 2025 report, [The Anniversary of Nasrallah's Death and the Challenges facing Hezbollah](#)

³ See the March 2026 Amit Institute report, [Hezbollah's Use of Force During the Current Fighting Against Israel](#)

zones because economic hardship prevents them from remaining in safer areas (*al-Nashra*, June 2, 2026; *al-Akhbar*, June 2, 2026; *al-Markazia*, June 6, 2026).



**A displaced Lebanese holds a check from Hezbollah while the entire south of the country burns
(*al-Joumhouria*, May 25, 2026)**

The Deterioration of Shi'ite Support for Hezbollah

► For the most part, the current hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel has damaged Lebanon's Shi'ite areas, which are Hezbollah's strongholds, where the population has borne most of the fatalities and displacement, and where the infrastructure has suffered the greatest damage. The continuing deterioration in living conditions and the economic resilience of families, most of whom have still not recovered from the consequences of the war "in support for the Gaza Strip," is increasing frustration and the erosion of trust, and is fertile ground for the growing criticism of the conflict and the price Lebanese society in general, and the Shi'ite community in particular, are required to pay.

The Challenge of Displacement

► Repeated displacement has taken a psychological toll on the Shi'ites. In early June 2026, following new Israeli threats against the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, thousands of families were once again forced to leave their homes, many of them having already experienced several waves of displacement since the beginning of the current hostilities. Statements from the field pointed to exhaustion, loss of direction and growing uncertainty, with many families reporting that they no longer knew where to turn after reception centers had become filled and rent had become unaffordable. For many, the problem was no longer how to return home but how to secure basic living conditions while coping with a continuing sense of impermanence and growing damage to personal and family security (*al-Araby al-Jadeed*, June 1, 2026).

► Some displaced persons are gradually realizing that the situation may continue much longer than expected, and the discourse is shifting from return and reconstruction to

survival. Reports indicate that many families have begun searching for permanent sources of income and educational frameworks for their children in the areas to which they have been displaced, unhappily assuming that a return to their previous homes cannot be expected in the near future. That may indicate a gradual shift from viewing displacement as a temporary condition to adapting to long-term uncertainty and altered patterns of life (al-Madan, June 7, 2026).

► Many families from south Lebanon no longer plan a return to their villages but are rather learning to cope with depleted savings, shortages of medications and a continuing rise in the cost of living. They are becoming aware that even after the fighting ends it will not be possible to rebuild the damaged areas without broad external intervention and assistance. That deepens the sense of uncertainty and erodes public confidence in the ability of local actors, including Hezbollah, to provide an adequate response to the consequences of the war (*Akhbar al-Youm*, June 1, 2026).

► Journalist and social activist Nancy al-Laquis warned of the emergence of a new "generation of displacement" within the Shi'ite community. She said children and adolescents growing up in reception centers and during prolonged displacement will feel humiliated, unstable and lose hope. That could affect the political and social identity of the next generation and create a growing gap between ideological narratives and everyday life experience (Nancy al-Laquis, June 2, 2026).



Right: Destruction in a Shi'ite neighborhood in Lebanon (al-Hall website, June 9, 2026). Left: Shi'ites displaced from the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut because of IDF warnings (al-Sharq al-Awsat, June 2, 2026)

The Narrative of "Resistance" versus Reality

► For years, Hezbollah reiterated the claim that the interest of the Shi'ites in Lebanon was closely linked to the continued existence of the "resistance axis."⁴ However, the months of fighting and displacement heightened the Shi'ite public's sense of uncertainty and widened the gap between the narrative of the "resistance" and the realities of life. Many of the displaced persons care more about rebuilding their lives than on the results of the hostilities, while coming to feel that the costs of the war exceed its perceived benefit. That contributes to the erosion of trust in the "resistance" narrative and its ability to ensure stability and security over time (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 17 and June 4, 2026).

► They also increasingly question whether the current hostilities actually serve the Shi'ite interest, and instead of dealing with the goals of the hostilities or their achievements, feelings of fatigue, anxiety and lack of prospects have become more pronounced. Some of the critics argued that the two most recent hostilities conducted by the organization did not stem from internal Lebanese considerations but from "broader regional considerations." Some Shi'ites are not satisfied with criticizing the war itself but question the strategic price the community is paying as a result of Hezbollah policy. They claim that each additional round of fighting inflicts more social, economic and demographic harm on the Shi'ite community and positions it before continuing existential threats. More and more voices are being heard claiming that the main danger to the future of the community comes not only from the external enemy but also from its continued involvement in regional conflicts that are not directly related to its needs and welfare (Independent Arabia, June 5, 2026).

► Some Shi'ite critics claim that the current hostilities created a deep cognitive crisis among the Hezbollah-supporting public. They claim that the longstanding promises of "inevitable victory" and the steadfastness of the "resistance" has collided with destruction, displacement and continuing loss. Thus the gap between the ideological narrative and the results of the war on the ground erodes public trust in the rhetoric on which Hezbollah's leadership has relied for years (Nancy al-Laquis, *From Spider's Web to Scorched Earth*, June 2, 2026).

► Public opinion polls also point to an increase in support for the possibility of a political arrangement and direct negotiations with Israel, even among Shi'ite respondents, contrary

⁴ 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.

to polls published by bodies close to Hezbollah. A poll by Statistics Lebanon showed that 34% of Shi'ites supported a political arrangement, while a poll by the International Information Company pointed to a jump in the rate of those supporting a peace agreement with Israel from about 25% to about 49% in less than a year, along with an increase in support for full normalization [of diplomatic relations]. According to the report, the economy continues to be the Lebanese's main concern even during wartime, and the data reflect growing erosion in public support for the military option and an increase in willingness to examine political solutions (*al-Nahar*, May 30, 2026).

Lack of Trust in Hezbollah's Ability to Respond to the Community's Needs

► A sense of abandonment and disappointment is growing among many Shi'ite families in view of the gap between their growing living needs and the scope of the assistance provided to them. As the period of displacement grows longer, they recognize that the situation may continue for months and become a semi-permanent condition. Growing complaints are being heard from displaced persons about Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, claiming that the assistance is insufficient and that preference is being given to operatives and supporters of the organizations over those harmed. That reflects not only growing economic distress but also gradual erosion in trust in the ability of the "Shi'ite duo" to provide an appropriate response to the community which bore most of the burden of the war (*Nidaa al-Watan*, June 1, 2026).

► Such criticism was especially expressed in the Beqa'a Valley region. According to local reports, anger is growing among families in the region who feel abandoned and rail against the handling of the issue of detainees and wanted persons, alongside prolonged neglect of the region's development and service needs. It may indicate that alongside the criticism of the security and economic price of the war, the civil and social functioning of the central power actors within the Shi'ite community is being challenged (Lebanon Debate, May 28, 2026).

Difficulty Recruiting Public Support

► One sign of erosion in Hezbollah's public standing is the decline in its ability to mobilize its traditional support base for public and political activity. At the end of May 2026, a body identified with Hezbollah organized a protest rally against the government in Beirut, but drew only dozens of participants. That contrasted with the past, when the organization could bring many thousands into the streets on short notice (This is Beirut, June 9, 2026).



**The limited demonstration against the government
(Northern Observatory for Media Facebook page, May 31, 2026)**

Tension between Hezbollah and Amal

► The growing tension within the Shi'ite community in the shadow of the continuing hostilities against Israel is also reflected in the increasing disagreements between Hezbollah and its longtime partner, the Amal Movement. According to reports, Hezbollah continues to promote a more confrontational line toward the Lebanese government and the continuation of the "resistance" as the main way to deal with the crisis. However, the speaker of Lebanese Parliament and Amal leader, Nabih Berri, who has positioned himself as the most prominent figure in the Shi'ite community since the elimination of Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah in September 2024, and his supporters note the need to preserve the stability of the political system, prevent internal confrontations and advance political courses. Berri expressed concern over the social, economic and political prices the Shi'ite community paid as a result of the continuation of the fighting and Lebanon's increasing isolation, and promoted a more pragmatic approach adapted to the changes in the regional balance of power. Although there is no overt dispute between the sides, the gaps reflect tension between the desire to preserve the concept of the "resistance" and the need to deal with the cumulative consequences of the war for the Shi'ite environment and Lebanon as a whole (*al-Joumhouria*, May 31, 2026; Aram News, June 3, 2026).

► The disagreements began to spill into the streets when riots broke out between local Amal supporters and Hezbollah operatives in the town of al-Baisariyeh in the Sidon area over the organization's activity in the town, as the residents warned it could lead to Israeli attacks. Reportedly, Hezbollah operatives tried to place rocket launchers in homes, or wanted to expand Hezbollah's communications network in the town. Army forces arrived at the scene to separate the sides. The head of the town, Ali al-Nabulsi, denied that rocket launchers had been placed in homes and claimed that the reports were incorrect and the confrontation was between two rival families and had no direct or indirect political ties to Hezbollah or Amal (Janoubia, al-Jadeed, *al-Nahar*, June 5, 2026).

► To calm tensions and present a united front, Rami Najm, head of Amal media, and Youssef al-Zein, head of Hezbollah media, met and agreed on the importance of preserving national unity and adopting a "comprehensive and responsible" discourse to strengthen internal stability. They called on social media activists not to post incitement propaganda and to demonstrate awareness and responsibility, and urged the media to be professionalism and calm the tensions (*al-Nahar*, June 6, 2026).

Early Alternatives to Hezbollah in the Shi'ite Arena

► The growing frustration over the price the Shi'ite community is paying because of Hezbollah's military hostilities has also led to organized public initiatives from within the community which seek to strengthen the role of the Lebanese state and constitute a Shi'ite political alternative to Hezbollah and the Amal Movement. Although the Shi'ite opposition is fragmented and lacks a unified leadership, there are increasing claims that the community needs a new political framework which will deal with reconstruction, the economy, employment and strengthening the state, and not only with military confrontation. According to various assessments, the deeper the sense of the war's failure becomes, the broader the public space open to these ideas will become (This is Beirut, June 9, 2026):

◆ Residents, activists and public figures from Tyre and al-Nabatieh called for declaring them "open cities" and "free of weapons" under the sponsorship and protection of the Lebanese state alone. The signatories, including prominent figures from society, culture, academia and the economy in the south, called for an end to the war, strengthening the deployment of the Lebanese army and security forces, promoting an international diplomatic initiative to protect the south and ensuring humanitarian corridors and basic services for residents and displaced persons. They noted the need

to distance the south from the "wars of the axis" and apply state sovereignty over all Lebanon. A petition by residents of al-Nabatieh noted the need to protect Beaufort Castle (Qal'at al-Shaqif) and the historical sites in the area. Reportedly, the calls had broad political and media resonance and may indicate a change in the public mood in the south. Shi'ite political researcher Hareth Suleiman claimed that reflected a decline in public trust in Hezbollah's military role and the strengthening of the view that the state and the diplomatic track were the only path to stability and protection, while part of the public in the south held the organization responsible for the destruction and loss caused by the continuation of the military confrontation (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 30, 2026; Lebanon Files, May 29, 2026).

◆The most prominent Shi'ite association attempting to counter Hezbollah and Amal's control of the community's political life is the Forum of Shi'ite Lebanese, established in June 2025, which includes Shi'ite academics, jurists, business people and public figures. In conferences and statements the Forum has emphasized the need to return the powers of security, war and peace to the Lebanese state, strengthen the Lebanese army and establish a broad national partnership of all components of Lebanese society. The forum's founder, Muhammad al-Amin, called "to return the Shi'ite community to the Lebanese state and its Arab identity," while criticizing a situation in which the Shi'ite community paid the price of regional wars and confrontations (Transparency News, May 5 and 10, 2026; Arab Files News, June 5, 2026). In a speech al-Amin delivered at The Shi'ite Lebanese - Between Disasters and the Desired Stability conference in early May 2026, he said Shi'ite opposition activists had often had to cope with silencing, expulsion, ostracism and persecution, and said defending them was defending freedom of expression, and state institutions had to stand by them (Forum of Shi'ite Lebanese Facebook page, May 9, 2026).



Right: The opening conference of The Forum of Shi'ite Lebanese. Left: Muhammad al-Amin speaking at the conference (al-Nahar, June 1, 2026)

◆Others presented themselves as part of the community and as a political and ideological alternative to its current leadership, and were harshly critical of Hezbollah, which they view as having subordinated the Shi'ite and Lebanese interest to Iranian considerations. For example, political activist Hadi Murad claimed that the war was "being conducted at the expense of the Shi'ites in Lebanon and by an Iranian decision," while activist Zeinab Saad noted the existence of "another Shi'ite voice" that opposed wars and supported the Lebanese state. Journalist and activist Nancy al-Laqis went further, calling for disarming Hezbollah and a peace agreement with Israel, claiming that only such a move would enable the residents of the south to return to their homes. Ahmad Isma'il accused the organization of ignoring the warnings about the consequences of the "war of support for Gaza" (Jusur News, June 5, 2026). Although they do not necessarily represent most of the Shi'ite public, their public appearance reflects the expansion of the boundaries of critical discourse within the community and the willingness of Shi'ite elements to openly challenge Hezbollah's basic assumptions and those of the "resistance axis."

Shi'ite Criticism of Iran and Its Involvement in Lebanon

► Open criticism has also begun to appear within the Shi'ite environment of Iran and its role in Lebanon. According to reports in the Lebanese media, some displaced persons and residents of the south feel they paid the price of a war conducted for Tehran's regional interests, while the Shi'ite community was left alone to cope with the destruction, displacement and loss of life. Thus there is a growing erosion of trust in the concept of "unity of the arenas," which for years served as one of the pillars of the "resistance" narrative, and

doubts are being raised about the extent of the practical commitment of Iran and its allies to defending Lebanon during a crisis. There is growing emphasis on the precedence of Lebanese interest over regional considerations and calls for issues of war, peace and negotiations to be transferred to the Lebanese state. That reflects not only criticism of Iranian policy but also the beginning of a broader process in which parts of the Shi'ite environment are reexamining the relationship between Hezbollah, Iran and the Lebanese national interest (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 17, 2026).

► While the Forum of Shi'ite Lebanese does not reject historical, religious or cultural ties with Iran, it seeks to distinguish between them and political-strategic subordination. The implied message is that the supreme interest of the Shi'ites in Lebanon should be the Lebanese interest, even when it does not overlap with Tehran's regional interests. According to the Forum, positive ties with Iran can be maintained without turning Lebanon into an arena of confrontation or a tool for its regional struggles. That is a direct ideological challenge to one of Hezbollah's basic principles, itself as an inseparable part of the "resistance axis" (Transparency News, May 5, 2026; Arab Files News, June 5, 2026).

► Marwan al-Amin, a prominent voice in the Shi'ite opposition to Hezbollah, claimed that the organization's future depended not only on its military capabilities but also on the historical relationship between Iran and parts of Shi'ite society in Lebanon. He said any regional arrangement which left the political and ideological connection between Tehran and the Shi'ite community intact would enable Hezbollah to gradually rebuild its power and influence. Therefore, he called for a gradual severing of the political link between the Shi'ites in Lebanon and Iran and for strengthening the community's integration within the Lebanese state as a condition for long-term stability and reducing Hezbollah's influence (This is Beirut, March 22, 2026).

► Ali al-Amin, editor of the Janoubia website and a prominent Shi'ite critic of Hezbollah, claimed that the Iranian missile fire at Israel on June 7, 2026, in response to an Israeli strike in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, was mainly political and had no real military significance. He said the fact that Iran was satisfied with limited fire while the destruction, displacement and continuing damage in south Lebanon continued strengthened the Shi'ite feeling that Lebanon was a tool of Tehran's regional struggles. He added that Iran sought to make clear that any attempt to reduce its influence in Lebanon would have a price, and that as far as

Iran was concerned, Hezbollah and the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia were central strategic assets in its regional hegemony project (Janoubia, June 9, 2026).

Hezbollah's Efforts to Curb the Loss of Trust

► Given the growing criticism of the continuation of the fighting and its consequences, and in the organization's understanding that there is a need to frame the crisis as the result of external pressure and not as the result of its own policy, Hezbollah is working to strengthen the "resistance" narrative and shift responsibility away from itself. Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem said the solution did not lie in direct negotiations with Israel but in continuing the "resistance," while accusing elements in Lebanon of trying to damage the "resistance" and promote American and Israeli interests (*al-Ahed*, May 4, 2026).

► Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, called on Hezbollah and Amal supporters to continue adhering to the "path of resistance" despite security, economic and political pressures. He called the organization's supporters a "pillar" of Lebanese society, represented the war as part of an existential struggle against Israel and rejected reliance on political arrangements or external guarantees (*Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc website*, May 22, 2026).

► Muhammad Yazbek, head of Hezbollah's Shura Council, published an open letter to the organization's supporters and displaced persons, in which he praised the Lebanese' "patience, steadfastness and determination" and claimed Hezbollah shared their suffering and distress. The letter sought to strengthen the sense of partnership between the organization and its support environment and to present the price paid by the population as an integral part of the "resistance" struggle (*al-Diyar*, May 31, 2026).

► One facet of Hezbollah's growing concern over the effects of the war on its support environment is the change in making the organization's casualties public. According to reports in the Lebanese media, Hezbollah reduced the publication of death notices for its operatives who were killed and shifted to holding limited funerals away from media exposure. According to the report, the purpose of the move was to reduce the public's ability to follow the extent of the losses and prevent further damage to morale and public support for the organization in view of the heavy human cost of the war (*al-Nahar*, May 15, 2026).

► Another concession made by Hezbollah was the unusual entry of the Lebanese army for enforcement activity in the heart of the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, the organization's stronghold in Beirut, where the state had not acted independently for years. According to the reports,

Hezbollah not only did not confront the move but allowed it because of growing public sensitivity to issues that had aroused criticism within its close environment (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 5, 2026).

► To calm the resentment within the Shi'ite support environment, Hezbollah also distributed financial aid to displaced families and families harmed by the war. However, many critics and residents felt the assistance could not compensate for the loss of homes, sources of livelihood and personal security. That also reflected loss of trust in the effectiveness of Hezbollah-affiliated welfare mechanisms, which for years served as a central source of legitimacy and public loyalty within the Shi'ite community (MinBeirutNews Instagram account, June 1, 2026).



Right: "\$200 from Hezbollah for the displaced in the north - an attempt to silence the people and curb their anger [with two \$100 bills]" (MinBeirutNews Instagram account, June 1, 2026).

Left: "Image rehabilitation workshop." Hezbollah tries to stem the erosion of its public standing through image rehabilitation, strengthening public presence and projecting a sense of control (Sa'er Sabil X account, May 17, 2026)