



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah December 30 ,2024 – January 6, 2025

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

- ▶ The IDF continued operations to prevent Hezbollah from violating the ceasefire, targeting Hezbollah operatives and destroying weapons and terrorist facilities in south Lebanon.
- ▶ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, and other senior organization figures reiterated their "commitment" to the ceasefire, saying that the Lebanese government and army should address "Israeli violations." **They also warned that the organization might resume attacks if Israel did not complete its withdrawal by the end of the 60-day ceasefire.**
- ▶ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, and Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, expressed concern over reports that Israel was going to extend the ceasefire beyond January 27, 2025, and keep its forces in south Lebanon. According to reports, the American general heading the oversight committee told the Lebanese that Israel would continue its operations because of the Lebanese Army's inability to clear the area of Hezbollah.
- ▶ **Hezbollah officially announced the launch of Lebanon's reconstruction campaign, stating that Iran would provide the necessary funding. A senior Hezbollah figure said the organization had restored its capabilities and warned its opponents in Lebanon "not to test us."**
- ▶ Lebanese security forces searched an Iranian plane on suspicion it was carrying funds for Hezbollah. The editor of a Hezbollah-affiliated daily accused the forces of capitulating to American pressure.
- ▶ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said he would not adjourn the session to elect a new president on January 9, 2025, until a consensus candidate had been found. Hezbollah said that it would not veto the candidacy of Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese Army.

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<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.

## The Ceasefire

### IDF activities

► This past week the IDF continued operations against Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire, which went into effect on November 27, 2024. The forces carried out airstrikes and uncovered additional weapons and terrorist facilities which posed threats to IDF forces and Israeli territory. While operating in the Salouqi area, the forces discovered a concealed warehouse containing a large quantity of weapons, including launchers, missiles and explosives. Nearby, missile launchers, dozens of Kalashnikov rifles, grenades, electrically guided missiles, mines, observation equipment, explosive devices and tactical combat gear were found. The IDF also targeted Hezbollah operatives transferring weapons from the warehouse to a vehicle, and rocket launchers in south Lebanon were destroyed. According to reports, the strikes were carried out after the Lebanese Army failed to act against Hezbollah's infrastructure as required (IDF spokesperson, December 30, 2024 – January 6, 2025).



**Right: Hezbollah operatives transfer weapons before being attacked by the IDF (IDF spokesperson, December 31, 2024). Left: Hezbollah weapons found in the Salouqi area (IDF spokesperson, December 31, 2024)**

► On January 6, 2025, the IDF spokesperson in Arabic issued a reminder to residents of south Lebanon, informing them that they were prohibited from returning to dozens of villages until further notice. The list included Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Aita al-Shaab, al-Taybeh and al-Naqoura (Avichay Adraee's X account, January 6, 2025).

► According to reports, IDF forces conducted a large-scale demolition operation in the al-Naqoura area, with the sounds of explosions heard across the entire western sector of south Lebanon (al-Nashra, January 6, 2025).

### Hezbollah

► Since the ceasefire went into effect on November 27, 2024, Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, has accused Israel of committing hundreds of violations from the air and on

land, demolishing homes and entering previously inaccessible areas. He claimed that Hezbollah was withdrawing its personnel and weapons as part of implementing the "cessation of aggression" agreement and argued that Lebanon's government should ensure Israel complied with its obligations to withdraw. Qassem said Hezbollah was giving the agreement a chance, allowing the Lebanese state to take responsibility and demonstrate its capabilities, as Hezbollah was unwilling to bear the responsibility for what others should manage [i.e., implementing the agreement on the ground] (al-Manar, January 1, 2025).

► In another speech, Qassem warned that Hezbollah's willingness to tolerate "Israeli aggression" could end before the period for implementing the agreement ended. He added that when the "resistance leadership" decided to act, its action would be "immediate and clear." He said the agreement applied only to areas south of the Litani River and called on the Lebanese state and its partners to "restrain" Israel (Radio al-Nour, January 4, 2025).

► Senior Hezbollah figures continued to accuse Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement and criticized Lebanese authorities, claiming they were not acting against Israel. They claimed that although Hezbollah remained committed to implementing the agreement, it might resume the fighting if Israel did not comply with the agreement and complete its withdrawal within 60 days from the start of the ceasefire:

◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah MP, accused Lebanon's official institutions and UNIFIL of failing to meet their responsibilities, claiming it was unacceptable for "the enemy" to achieve through the ceasefire what it could not achieve by fighting. He claimed Hezbollah wanted the implementation of the ceasefire but warned it would not last long under enemy pressure, as "the resistance" knew what to do. He added that the 60-day agreement tested the state's capabilities to manage affairs (al-Manar X account, December 30, 2024).

◆ Mahmoud Qomati, deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, said the organization would honor the ceasefire for 60 days but warned that the situation would change on the 61<sup>st</sup> day if Israeli forces remained on Lebanese soil. He said Hezbollah would treat such forces as "occupiers" and affirmed that Hezbollah's military and rocket capabilities, including drones and battlefield readiness, remained intact. He claimed Hezbollah was prepared for all possibilities and the United States and France should understand the organization's red lines (al-Manar, December 30, 2024).

- ◆ Ihab Hamada, also a Hezbollah MP, stated that "the resistance" protected Lebanon and prevented "the enemy" from attacking it. He warned that on the 61<sup>st</sup> day after the ceasefire, Hezbollah would show Israel its strength. He accused the oversight committee of lacking seriousness and warned that if "the occupation" took steps against Lebanon from the east due to its "expansion" into Syria, Hezbollah would fulfill its "national duty" (al-Mayadeen, December 31, 2024).
- ◆ Mohammad Raad, head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, met with Speaker Nabih Berri to discuss implementing the ceasefire. Raad accused "the enemy" of violating the agreement to compensate for its "failure" on the ground (Radio al-Nour, January 4, 2025).
- ◆ Wafiq Safa, head of Hezbollah's Liaison and Coordination Unit, claimed Israel "admitted it had not achieved its objectives during the 67-day ground invasion, advancing only hundreds of meters into Lebanon." He reiterated that the responsibility for implementing the agreement now lay with the Lebanese state and that Hezbollah would consider its options after the 60-day ceasefire period (al-Mayadeen, January 5, 2025).
- ▶ Political figures expressed concerns about renewed conflict in south Lebanon, attributing it to Israel's non-compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. They suggested that Hezbollah might not need weapons south of the Litani River in future confrontations, instead using long-range missiles like those employed by the Houthis (al-Kalima Online, December 31, 2024).
- ▶ The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar reported that the Lebanese Army had received "serious indications" from American Army General Jasper Jeffers, head of the United States-led ceasefire oversight committee, that Israel was planning to extend the ceasefire by 30 days. According to the report, the extension depended on Israel's achieving its objective of destroying Hezbollah's offensive capabilities. The daily accused the United States of bias in favor of Israel (al-Akhbar, January 4, 2025).

## **The Lebanese government**

- ▶ On January 2, 2025, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met with American Army General Jasper Jeffers, the chairman of the Quintet Oversight Committee, and Lisa Johnson, the American ambassador to Beirut. "Informed sources" reported that the atmosphere during the meeting was "positive" and that Berri spoke to the need to halt "Israel's ongoing violations

of the ceasefire agreement" (al-Joumhouria, January 3, 2025). Before the meeting, Berri expressed concern over Israel's systematic actions "harming" villages in south Lebanon and statements suggesting that Israel intended to extend the ceasefire, citing the Lebanese Army's inability to fully deploy across the south by January 27, 2025 (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 31, 2024).

► "Government sources in Beirut" stated that Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, had intensified internal and international contacts to ensure Israel's withdrawal from villages in south Lebanon after the 60-days of the ceasefire agreement expired. According to reports, Mikati warned that Israel's proposal to extend the ceasefire threatened Lebanon's stability (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 5, 2025).

## The Lebanese Army

► On January 6, 2025, Amos Hochstein, the American special envoy, arrived in Lebanon. He met with Army Commander General Joseph Aoun before a meeting of the ceasefire agreement oversight committee (al-Nashra, January 6, 2025).

► The Lebanese Army entered the town of Chama in the Tyre region following the withdrawal of IDF forces. The army announced that all entrances to the town had been closed and that residents would not be allowed to return until the area had been fully cleared (Lebanese Army X account, December 31, 2024).



**Lebanese soldiers at the entrance to the village of Chama  
(Lebanese Army X account, December 31, 2024)**

► The Lebanese Army reported that IDF forces had "invaded" the al-Taybeh and Marjayoun areas before dawn on January 5, 2025, setting up roadblocks on three routes. A military patrol which arrived on the scene monitored the situation alongside representatives of the ceasefire oversight committee and subsequently reopened the roads (Lebanese Army X account, January 5, 2025).

► According to reports, Army Commander General Joseph Aoun informed General Erik Kurilla, CENTCOM commander, that the Lebanese Army would not "switch shifts" with the IDF and Israeli forces had to withdraw before the Lebanese Army replaced them (Asas Media, January 2, 2025).

► An "informed source" stated that on January 4, 2025, for the third consecutive day, the Lebanese Army command sent a dispatch to General Jasper Jeffers, head of the ceasefire oversight committee, requesting coordination for the army's entry into al-Naqoura and its redeployment there. According to the source, Jeffers informed the Lebanese that Israel "has to take its time" to achieve the objectives of its ground operation, which included securing control over "resistance" facilities and weapons caches, since the Lebanese Army was incapable of clearing the area. The source noted that the Lebanese Army Command had noted the need for the withdrawal of "occupation forces," particularly from the towns where their operations had been concluded (al-Akhbar, January 4, 2025).

## UNIFIL

► UNIFIL claimed an IDF bulldozer had deliberately destroyed a blue barrel in Labouneh, marking the withdrawal line between Hezbollah and Israel, and a Lebanese Army observation tower near a post. It was further stated that the [alleged] intentional "destruction" of UNIFIL property and state military infrastructure constituted a blatant violation of Resolution 1701 and international law. The force also called on all parties to refrain from any actions which could jeopardize the ceasefire (UNIFIL X account, January 4, 2025).

## Hezbollah

### Speech given by Hezbollah Secretary General

► This past week Hezbollah Secretary General Na'im Qassem delivered two speeches. On January 1, 2025, a recorded speech was played at an international conference held in Tehran, and on January 4, 2025, he gave a speech marking five years since the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, former Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Qods Force Commander, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, former head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces. He also related to Hezbollah's role in the fight against Israel and the organization's planned actions inside Lebanon following the war (al-Mayadeen, January 1, 2025; Radio al-Nour, January 4, 2025):

- ◆ **Summary of the fight against Israel:** Qassem said Hezbollah's support for the Gaza Strip was part of its faith, nationalism and unity against a common enemy. He asked why the Islamic nation did not assist "Palestine." He stated that the organization stood firm



against "unprecedented aggression" which caused significant losses but claimed they had been prepared for such a situation. He added that just ten days after Hassan Nasrallah was killed the organization had returned to the battlefield "with strength." According to Qassem, when the ceasefire went into effect the "resistance" remained an important, influential force.

◆ **The essence of the "resistance"**: Qassem stated that there was no contradiction between jihad from an Islamic perspective and liberating land from a national perspective, asserting that when Islam and the homeland merged they created a "real power against aggression." He said the "resistance" would continue to "liberate" Lebanon and support "Palestine." He noted that the "leadership of the resistance" decided the timing, nature, methods and weapons.

◆ **Hezbollah's activities after the war**: Qassem said Hezbollah would work with its partners to elect a new president for Lebanon, rebuild the country, manage the state "according to its laws," and initiate reforms to revive the economy. He said Hezbollah would strive to stabilize Lebanon's internal unity and rebuild the nation.



Na'im Qassem gives a memorial speech for Qassem Soleimani (al-Manar, January 4, 2025)

## Hezbollah rebuilds itself

- ▶ Associates of Hezbollah said that **Mahdi Nasrallah, the son of former secretary general Hassan Nasrallah**, might be the most likely candidate to lead Hezbollah in the future. According to the "associates," Iran saw him as the natural successor to promote Hezbollah's doctrine and appeared to take action to strengthen his position (al-Nidaa al-Watan, December 31, 2024).
- ▶ On January 2, 2025, "Lebanese security sources" reported that an Iranian plane belonging to Mahan Air had been detained at the Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut on the grounds that it carried funds for Hezbollah. According to the report, "thorough searches" of the plane

were conducted and the contents of the bag of an employee of the Iranian embassy were seized after he refused to allow it to be searched (al-Nahar, January 2, 2025).

► Regarding the search of the plane:

◆ Bassam Mawlawi, Lebanese minister of the interior stated that the search had revealed sums of money and documents intended for the Iranian embassy in Lebanon, but he did not specify whether they had been confiscated (al-Arabiya, January 3, 2025). He also claimed it was a routine procedure and that the searches were meant to protect Lebanon and the Lebanese people and to prevent a "new aggression" against the airport. He noted that the following day, another Iranian plane which landed in Beirut had been inspected with no problems or objections (al-Nashra, January 3, 2025).

◆ According to reports, Lebanese authorities began inspecting Iranian planes landing in Beirut under pressure from Amos Hochstein, the special envoy of the American president. According to the report, Hochstein aims to stop the flow of money from Iran to Hezbollah (Sky News Arabia, January 3, 2025).

◆ Ibrahim al-Amin, editor-in-chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, claimed the events at the airport were an attempt to appease the American administration, carried out by those who believed that "the resistance" had been defeated in the war. He claimed that the ministry of the interior and the leadership of the Lebanese Army had permitted an American diplomatic-security team to verify that Lebanon was not allowing Hezbollah to receive assistance from Iran, while other aid planes were arriving from around the world, and it was unclear where the aid was stored. He warned that anyone trying to obtain a senior position such as president or prime minister [a hint at General Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese Army and a candidate for the presidency] by appeasing the United States or trying to insult members of "the resistance," was "foolish or stupid" (al-Akhbar, January 4, 2025).

◆ According to reports, one of the customs inspection teams at Beirut International Airport included three Shi'ites who facilitated the transfer of suitcases and goods related to Hezbollah and senior members of the organization, such as smuggled phones, gold and suitcases of money. According to the report, the employees were well compensated and had purchased several properties in Greece with the money they received. It was also noted that senior Hezbollah figures and smugglers coordinated their flights with the work shifts of the team members. Moreover, it was reported that senior Hezbollah



members entered areas of the airport accessible only with a special permit (MTV Lebanon, January 4, 2025).

## Hezbollah involvement in the reconstruction of Lebanon

► Ali Damoush, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's executive council, presented a Hezbollah-led plan for reconstructing Lebanon (al-Nashra, December 30, 2024):

- ◆ The reconstruction process will be divided into two phases: the period of renovation and providing shelter for the displaced, and the period of fully reconstructing houses and residential units. He said their top priority was to find shelter for families whose homes had been completely destroyed, followed by the reconstruction of buildings which were partially damaged.

- ◆ One hundred and forty-five groups were surveying the damage, some of which belonged to Hezbollah's Jihad al-Bina Association. So far, approximately 90% of all destroyed areas in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, the Beqa'a and Mount Lebanon have been surveyed, along with 80% of the destroyed areas in south Lebanon.

- ◆ Every family which lost its home in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia would receive \$14,000 in rent payments for a year, while every family in other areas of Lebanon would receive \$12,000.

- ◆ Although Hezbollah was working on a reconstruction plan, the state also had to meet its obligations to its citizens, as this was a national project.

- ◆ The funding required for the reconstruction process would come from Iran. Damoush expressed gratitude to Ali Khamenei, Iran's leader, for his interest in Lebanon and noted that the process was being carried out thanks to the Iranian people, who had agreed to support and help finance Lebanon's reconstruction. He also thanked the Iraqi government and the Popular Mobilization Forces (the umbrella organization for pro-Iranian militias) for their support for Lebanon.

- ◆ The reconstruction process was part of the "resistance" against Israel. He expressed hope that the homes of the Lebanese people would become even more beautiful than before and promised that Hezbollah would continue the project with determination and strength, enabling all families to return to normal lives

► Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of the Hezbollah bloc in the Lebanese Parliament, stated that the cost of rebuilding the destroyed areas in Lebanon would amount to \$7 billion (al-Akhbar, December 31, 2024).

► Muhammad al-Shami, manager of an al-Qard al-Hassan Association branch, said that since the beginning of the ceasefire, 35 branches of the association, which serves as Hezbollah's economic arm, had been opened (al-Manar, January 2, 2025).

## Hezbollah after the war

► On January 5, 2025, Wafiq Safa, head of Hezbollah's Liaison and Coordination Unit, held a press conference at the site where Hassan Nasrallah had been killed in Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut. He said Nasrallah's funeral would take place only after the end of the 60-day ceasefire and would be held in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in accordance with the clearing of the ruins. He rejected claims that "the resistance" had weakened or that its morale was low, claiming Hezbollah was stronger and that all its capabilities had been restored. He claimed the organization would remain involved in every detail of Lebanon's internal affairs. He warned against any attempt to attack the organization's "activists" in Lebanon, adding that "no one should test us," referring to reports about the arrest of three female supporters of the organization over social media posts (al-Nahar, January 5, 2025).



Wafiq Safa at the press conference (al-Jadeed, January 5, 2025)

## Criticism of Hezbollah

► The journalist Marian Zoueïn criticized senior Hezbollah figure Wafiq Safa, who warned, "Do not test us." She published an article in which she said that the Lebanese public had already "tested" Hezbollah in the war, and the result was that the organization's leaders hid among civilians while Hezbollah operatives were killed or injured by the explosions of pagers the organization "bought from the Mossad." She also said that Hezbollah had participated in governments which had failed to deal with the coronavirus and the electricity crisis and that the organization caused a political deadlock. She added that the Lebanese people were no longer afraid Hezbollah would burn the country because they had already done so. She

concluded by saying that Hezbollah should learn a lesson and understand that its project had failed (al-Nadaa al-Watan, January 6, 2025).

## The Situation in Lebanon

### The Lebanese government

► Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, told American Ambassador Lisa Johnson that Iran was the only country which had offered to rebuild Lebanon after the war. He warned that obstructing the process would result in the funds bypassing the state and being distributed by Hezbollah through other channels (al-Diyar, December 31, 2024).

► Mikati spoke with Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's de facto leader, for the first time, to discuss bilateral relations. According to reports, they discussed the challenges faced by the Lebanese Army on the border with Syria in the Beqa'a Valley. Al-Sharaa said Syrian mechanisms were doing everything necessary to restore calm at the border and prevent incidents. Al-Sharaa invited Mikati to visit Syria to discuss shared issues and strengthen bilateral relations (Lebanese prime minister's X account, January 3, 2025).

### The Lebanese Army

► Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese Army, met with Sébastien Lecornu, the French minister of armed forces, and Jean-Noël Barrot, the French foreign minister, to discuss the general situation in Lebanon and the region. They also discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between their armies and the continuation of support for the Lebanese Army in light of current developments (Lebanese Army's X account, December 31, 2024).

### Electing a new Lebanese president

► Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said he did not intend to end the session for electing a new president for Lebanon on January 9, 2025, until a consensus candidate had been chosen. He added that he was prepared for the session to continue "day and night," and if the members of parliament got hungry, sandwiches would be prepared for them (MTV Lebanon, January 1, 2025).

► Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, stated that the organization wanted the president to be elected by the parliamentary blocs through cooperation and understanding within the framework of open sessions (Radio al-Nour, January 4, 2025).

► According to reports, Bassil along with Hezbollah and Amal, the so-called "Shi'ite twins," were making efforts to agree on final candidates whom the entire Shi'ite bloc would support, aiming to effectively counter the opposition candidates and names widely accepted in

Lebanese politics, such as Joseph Aoun. According to the report, several members of the Lebanese Parliament had changed their positions following developments in Syria, making it difficult for "the Shi'ite twins" to secure their support (Lebanon 24, January 4, 2025).

► Wafiq Safa, head of Hezbollah's Liaison and Coordination Unit, said the organization had previously stated it would not veto the appointment of Army Commander Joseph Aoun as president, but it would oppose the election of Samir Geagea, Lebanese Forces leader, claiming that his presidency "could lead to civil war" (al-Jadeed, January 5, 2025).

► The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar accused Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces Party, of intending to disrupt the parliamentary session for electing a president to create chaos and trigger new parliamentary elections, assuming that Hezbollah would lose seats because of the war. It was also claimed that Geagea would attempt to prevent the election of Army Commander Joseph Aoun to the presidency, although, as of now, Geagea has not officially presented himself as a candidate for the position (al-Akhbar January 5, 2025).

## International Activity Against Hezbollah

### **American citizen accused of trying to join Hezbollah**

► The United States Department of Justice filed an indictment against Jack Danaher Molloy, a 24-year-old former soldier with dual American-Irish citizenship, for supporting Hezbollah and attempting to join the organization's ranks. According to the indictment, between August and December 2024, Molloy attempted to provide material support to Hezbollah; despite knowing it was a designated terrorist organization. In August 2024, he traveled to Lebanon and tried to join Hezbollah but was told that the timing was wrong and that he needed to take other steps before he could join. He subsequently moved from Lebanon to Syria in October 2024 with the intention of fighting in the organization. After returning to the United States, Molloy continued his efforts to join Hezbollah and publicly expressed hatred of Jews and support for violence against them. It was also alleged that Molloy lied to FBI agents when he claimed he had no plans to join Hezbollah (United States Department of Justice website, January 2, 2025).