



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah January 6 – 13, 2025

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

- ▶ The IDF continued to combat Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire, targeting Hezbollah operatives and destroying weapons and terrorist facilities in south Lebanon. Meanwhile, IDF forces withdrew from the western sector of south Lebanon and Lebanese army forces began deploying in the area. According to reports, the Lebanese army dismantled approximately eighty Hezbollah military sites.
- ▶ Hezbollah continued to accuse Israel of violating the ceasefire and delaying the deployment of the Lebanese army in south Lebanon. A senior Hezbollah figure claimed the organization's leadership would decide how to act when the ceasefire ended.
- ▶ Amos Hochstein, the American special envoy, visited Lebanon and met with senior government officials. According to reports, he said Israel would complete its withdrawal from Lebanese territory on January 26, 2025, one day before the end of the ceasefire.
- ▶ The son of late Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, claimed he had no plans to lead the organization in the future.
- ▶ Reconstruction in Lebanon: 250,000 destroyed housing units were mapped and Hezbollah paid \$200 million in compensation.
- ▶ Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, visited Syria and met with Ahmed al-Sharaa (Abu Mohammad al-Julani), the country's de facto leader. Al-Sharaa said that Syria would not allow the transfer of Iranian weapons to Hezbollah.
- ▶ General Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese army, was elected Lebanon's new president after more than two years during which the position stood vacant. In his inauguration speech, he said he would enforce the state's monopoly on the holding of arms throughout the country and noted the need to expel the "Israeli occupation" and respond to IDF attacks.

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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 to combat Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire which went into effect on November 27, 2024. IDF forces conducted airstrikes on terrorist operatives seen loading weapons onto vehicles and uncovered additional weapons and terrorist facilities which posed a threat to IDF forces and Israeli territory. IDF forces completed an operation in a fortified mountainous area in south Lebanon where they found five weapons depots with mortar shells and launchers. During searches in a village in south Lebanon, a multiple-barrel rocket launcher, mortar shells, shoulder-fired missiles and other weapons were found. On January 12, 2025, airstrikes targeted Hezbollah sites deep in south Lebanon and attacked routes on the Syria-Lebanon border used to transfer weapons to Hezbollah. According to the IDF, the strikes were carried out after the mechanism "monitoring" the ceasefire and the Lebanese army had failed take action against the violations (IDF spokesperson, January 6-13, 2025).



**The launcher and weapons found in south Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, January 10, 2025)**

► On January 10, 2025, the Lebanese Ministry of Health reported that six people had been killed in an Israeli attack on the town of Tair Debba in south Lebanon. Explosions and heavy smoke covering the area were reported. According to field reports, an Israeli UAV attacked a commercial vehicle in the Karam al-Jadeed area to the west of Tair Debba as Hezbollah operatives were preparing to transfer ammunition from the area (al-Modon, January 10, 2025).

### Hezbollah

► Mahmoud Komati, deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, said the "resistance" leadership would decide how to act after the ceasefire ended. He accused the "enemy" army of violating the ceasefire and "invading" more Lebanese towns, claiming the IDF was hindering the deployment of Lebanese army forces in south Lebanon. He said discussions about

establishing a buffer zone in south Lebanon were unacceptable (al-Mayadeen, January 10, 2025).

► Ibrahim al-Moussawi, a member of Hezbollah's bloc in the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization had agreed to a ceasefire agreement explicitly concerning the area south of the Litani River. He did not relate to the disarmament of Hezbollah north of the Litani River and said they hoped the day would come when the state [of Lebanon] would be able to defend the country. He claimed the problem was not the Lebanese army but the state and its indecision to take action against the "enemy," as well as the international decision preventing the army from possessing weapons which could threaten Israel (LBCI, January 10, 2025).

### **The Lebanese army**

► According to a report, the Lebanese army dismantled approximately eighty Hezbollah military sites. In accordance with the Lebanese army's commitment under the ceasefire agreement and with the assistance of UNIFIL, rocket launchers, additional weapons and underground passages in villages which had been identified by IDF forces were destroyed. It was also reported that the Lebanese army was awaiting further assistance to continue deploying forces beyond the current region between al-Naqoura and Rmeish (al-Nahar, January 11, 2025).

► On January 6, 2025, the Lebanese army announced that its forces had deployed around the town of al-Naqoura in coordination with UNIFIL following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the site. A day later, it was reported that army units had entered Ras al-Naqoura, Alma al-Shaab, Tayr Harfa, Beit Lif and other towns in the western and central sectors after the withdrawal of IDF forces. On January 11, 2025, it was reported that the deployment in Ras al-Naqoura-Tyre and the towns of Alma al-Shaab, al-Dhahira, Ayta al-Shaab, Bint Jbeil, Tayr Harfa, Majdal Zoun, al-Salhani and al-Qouzah had been completed and the forces were working to secure key points in coordination with the UN and the committee overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire. It was further noted that engineering units were working to clear unexploded ordnance, open roads and remove debris, and that residents had been advised not to return to the area yet (Lebanese Army X account, January 6-11, 2025).



**Right: A Lebanese army force accompanied by a UNIFIL armored vehicle, in al-Naqoura (Lebanese Army X account, January 6, 2025). Left: Lebanese army forces deployed in the western sector of south Lebanon (Lebanese Army X account, January 11, 2025)**

► American General Jasper Jeffers, head of the committee overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire, visited the headquarters of the Lebanese army's Fifth Brigade, approximately five kilometers north of al-Naqoura, accompanied by General Guillaume Fonchain, the French representative on the committee, following the withdrawal of IDF forces from the area. The two viewed weapons confiscated by the army from "unauthorized armed groups," which were expected to be destroyed. Jeffers noted that the Lebanese army was the legitimate defender of Lebanon and continued demonstrating its ability, intent and leadership to ensure the country's security (American Embassy in Lebanon website, January 7, 2025).



**Jeffers examining confiscated weapons during a tour at the headquarters of the Lebanese army's Fifth Brigade (American Embassy in Lebanon website, January 7, 2025)**

## The Lebanese government

► On January 6, 2025, American envoy Amos Hochstein visited Lebanon. He met with Lebanon's Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, and General Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese army (before his election to the post of president). He also participated in a meeting of the five-party committee overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire:

◆ During the meeting with Hochstein, Mikati demanded an end be put to Israel's "security violations," including ongoing attacks on villages in south Lebanon, the [alleged] "systematic destruction" of homes and facilities, and violations of Lebanese airspace. He also called for a specific schedule for the completion of the Israeli withdrawal before the end of the sixty-day ceasefire. Hochstein said the United States supported the Lebanese army and expressed hope that stability and security would return to south Lebanon. He acknowledged that the agreement's implementation had not proceeded as quickly as hoped but noted that it had led to the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the western sector, who were replaced by the deployment of Lebanese army forces (al-Nashra, January 6, 2025).

◆ Hochstein called his discussions with Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, "very productive" and thanked him for his cooperation. Regarding the implementation of the ceasefire, Hochstein noted that it was not an easy task and reaffirmed America's commitment to supporting the Lebanese army. He added that Israeli withdrawals would continue until all Israeli forces had completely left Lebanese territory, alongside the continued deployment of the Lebanese army in the south of the country (Lebanese National News Agency, January 6, 2025).

◆ During the five-party committee meeting, the participants discussed technical military plans for the phased withdrawal of IDF forces and the deployment of the Lebanese army, starting from the western sector and moving eastward (American Embassy in Lebanon website, January 6, 2025).



**Right: Hochstein (left) and Mikati (Lebanese Prime Minister's X account, January 6, 2025). Left: Hochstein reviewing maps during a committee meeting (American embassy in Lebanon website, January 6, 2025)**

► The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily newspaper al-Akhbar reported that American envoy Amos Hochstein told Lebanese authorities that he had received a detailed schedule from Israel

for the withdrawal of forces, and that Israel's presence would end on January 26, 2025, one day before the ceasefire ended (al-Akhbar, January 10, 2025). According to another report, "sources" said Hochstein and General Jeffers had agreed that Israel could keep control over three strategic hills where they could establish military bases: the Leva Forest in the western sector, located near al-Naqoura and Alma al-Shaab, opposite the western Galilee communities; Jabal Balat in the central sector, between Marwahin, Ramyeh and Beit Lif, opposite Zar'it and Shtula, two border moshavim; and al-Hamamas, between the plains of al-Khiyam and al-Wazzani, opposite Metula (al-Akhbar, January 8, 2025).

► Najib Mikati said the Lebanese government had unequivocally informed international representatives that Israel had to withdraw from Lebanese territory. He added that UN Security Council Resolution 1701 should be implemented not only by the Lebanese but also by the Israelis. He added that the Lebanese insisted that "violations" had to stop as they could threaten the situation, which no one wanted (Radio al-Nour, January 7, 2025).

## Hezbollah

### Hezbollah reorganizes and redeploys

► Muhammad Mahdi Nasrallah, the son of former Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, related to suggestions he might lead Hezbollah in the future. He said he had no plans to be involved in the organization's "military" activities or in politics but intended "to focus on his religious studies" (Beirut International, January 11, 2025).

► Hezbollah sources reported that the organization had decided to cooperate with the Lebanese army and evacuate all positions in south Lebanon, even if it benefitted Israel in the short term by allowing it to monitor Hezbollah's positions and villages south of the Litani (Beirut International, January 7, 2025).

► Ghaleb Abu Zainab, a member of Hezbollah's political council, said that expressing doubts about the "major achievement" of the "resistance" and claiming it had become weak were "brainwashing." According to him, the "resistance" was strong enough to achieve new victories, remain the strongest political force in Lebanon and dedicate itself to rebuilding the state. On the issue of Hezbollah's weapons, Abu Zainab said the organization did not want Lebanon to become an "open area" for Israel, and if Lebanon did not have a "resistance" force, Israel would think it could continue to occupy it, even to the extent of [allegedly] establishing settlements. Therefore, Hezbollah would continue to exist (al-Manar, January 7, 2025).

► Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of Hezbollah's bloc in the Lebanese Parliament, said the "resistance's" position had not changed and it "still protects Lebanon's sovereignty and lands." He said Hezbollah and Amal would be central partners in the new government which would be formed. He also said it was necessary to address the challenges following the war, including reconstruction, repairs and providing shelter, claiming that Hezbollah would lead the efforts (Lebanon Debate, January 12, 2025).

### **Hezbollah involves itself in the reconstruction of Lebanon**

► According to reports, 250,000 destroyed housing units have already been mapped and in 20% of the cases, compensation has already been paid for shelter, renovations and furniture. According to estimates, Hezbollah has so far paid compensation amounting to \$200 million via its al-Qard al-Hasan Association, which operates branches seven days a week to expedite the payment process (al-Akhbar, January 8, 2025).

► Hazin Khair al-Din, an engineer and the general reconstruction coordinator in Hezbollah's Jihad al-Bina Association, said 80% percent of the damaged buildings had been inspected so far. He claimed there were delays, but they were related to technical inspections conducted by experts, which required more thorough examinations. He said assessing the damage to the housing units would take time, as it necessitated preparing new maps, measuring the area and examining the final work. Therefore, by the end of 2025, the number of affected housing units was expected to become clear. He also noted that compensation had already been paid for more than 40,000 housing units but he added that the payment process might take longer due to the high number of individuals affected (Shafaqna, the Shi'ite news agency, January 7, 2025).

## **The Situation in Lebanon**

### **Lebanon-Syria relations**

► On January 11, 2025, Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, visited Damascus and met with Ahmad al-Sharaa (Abu Muhammad al-Julani), Syria's de facto leader. It was the first visit by a Lebanese prime minister to Syria since 2010 (Lebanese News Agency, January 11, 2025).

► At the joint press conference after the meeting, al-Sharaa said they had discussed bilateral relations, their mutual border and the smuggling across it. He said relations with Lebanon would be "strategic, long-term and built on solid foundations." Mikati said Syria was Lebanon's natural gateway to the Arab world, adding that "as long as Syria was OK, Lebanon would be

OK." He added that it was urgent for both countries to address the crisis of displaced Syrians in Lebanon and facilitate their return to Syria. Mikati said they were looking forward to friendly relations based on cooperation, and announced the establishment of an ad hoc committee to address the demarcation of the land and maritime borders between Lebanon and Syria (al-Nashra, January 11, 2025).



**Mikati (left) and al-Sharaa (al-Nashra, January 11, 2025)**

## Reconstruction in Lebanon

► “Lebanese sources” who participated in Mikati’s visit to Syria reported they had agreed to establish a joint committee to address issues of mutual concern, primarily the matter of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, whose number stands at approximately 1.5 million. According to the “sources,” al-Sharaa said Iran had damaged Syria and Hezbollah had left it deeply wounded. He claimed Syria would no longer serve as a conduit for transferring Iranian weapons to Hezbollah, but added that Syria was prepared to cooperate with all parties in Lebanon and sought only Lebanon’s welfare, particularly following the election of the new president, Joseph Aoun (al-Hadath, January 12, 2025).

## The Lebanese army

► According to reports, the American administration will transfer \$95 million to Lebanon from military aid originally intended for Egypt, primarily to support the Lebanese army and strengthen border security. It was also reported that the aid would address the security demands resulting from the regime change in Syria (Beirut International, January 7, 2025).

► Following Joseph Aoun’s election as Lebanon’s new president, Lebanese Defense Minister Maurice Selim appointed Lebanese Army Chief of Staff Hassan Ouda as acting commander of the Lebanese army, effective January 9, 2025 (al-Nahar, January 9, 2025).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Chief of Staff is the second-ranking officer in the command hierarchy of the Lebanese Army, after the Army Commander.





**Major General Hassan Ouda, acting commander of the Lebanese army  
(Janoubia, January 9, 2025)**

## Electing a new Lebanese president

► On January 9, 2025, the Lebanese Parliament convened to elect a new president after the position had been vacant since October 31, 2022. In the first round of voting, Army Commander General Joseph Aoun received 71 votes, short of the required two-thirds majority of 86 votes. After consultations, a second round of voting was held, resulting in Aoun's election with 99 votes (al-Nashra, January 9, 2025).

► In his inaugural speech, Aoun stated that a new phase in Lebanon had begun. He pledged to protect national interests and to rapidly conduct parliamentary consultations to form a new permanent government<sup>3</sup> (Lebanese News Agency, January 9, 2025):

- ◆ He promised to act equally toward all Lebanese and to stamp out the country's mafias.
- ◆ He said he would take action to ensure the state's monopoly on arms and the state would invest in the army to help maintain border security, stabilize the situation in south Lebanon, prevent smuggling, combat terrorism, preserve territorial unity and implement international resolutions, including respecting the armistice agreement and preventing Israeli attacks on Lebanon.
- ◆ He called for a discussion on Lebanon's defense policy and said it was necessary to expel the "Israeli occupation" and respond to IDF attacks on Lebanon.
- ◆ He promised to repair the damages caused by Israeli attacks on south Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, the Dahiye al-Janoubiya, Beirut and throughout Lebanon. He said Lebanon's sovereignty and independence were not to be undermined, and it was important to invest in international relations and be self-reliant.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the sectarian political arrangements in Lebanon, the president is a Maronite Christian, the prime minister is a Sunni and the speaker of parliament is a Shi'ite.

- ◆ He expressed support for the two-state solution to the Palestinian issue and the [so-called] "right of return," and said he was committed "to 'resistance' against the occupation of Palestinians." He said the state would enforce its responsibilities of governance, including in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.
- ◆ He pledged to maintain strategic ties with Arab countries, Gulf States and North African nations and to oppose any attempts to undermine Lebanon's regime and sovereignty.



**Aoun delivers his first speech as president (al-Jadeeda, January 9, 2025)**

- Following Aoun's statement that security forces would maintain Lebanon's and serve as the sole entity authorized to bear arms, Mohammad Raad, head of Hezbollah's bloc in the Lebanese Parliament, remarked that his organization was the "true protector" of the Lebanese people and would remain "loyal to our country and our people." Addressing Hezbollah's lack of support for Aoun in the first round of voting, Raad claimed it had been a statement that Hezbollah safeguarded the country's national consensus (al-Nashra, January 9, 2025).
- "Knowledgeable sources" reported that before the second round of voting, a meeting took place between representatives of the "Shi'ite twins" (Hezbollah and Amal) and Aoun, during which "agreements were reached" which "allowed the factions to support Aoun's candidacy." According to the sources, it was agreed that UN Security Council Resolution 1701 was unrelated to UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and that the boundaries of Resolution 1701 were south of the Litani River, not to its north.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the "Shi'ite twins" would play a central role in forming the next government, with guarantees provided regarding the Ministry of Finance and future appointments in the judiciary, army and security agencies. Assurances were also given

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 of 2004 called for the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias in the country and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, as well as the extension of state control over all Lebanese territory. Resolution 1701, passed at the end of the Second Lebanon War in 2006, also called for the implementation of Resolution 1559.

about reconstruction efforts, including securing international funding and grants (al-Manar, January 10, 2025).

- ▶ Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese Forces Party, said Aoun's election was not a consensus but rather a case of the "resistance bloc's" being unable to do anything other than vote for Aoun. He claimed it was well known that the "Shi'ite twins" did not particularly like Aoun because he did not yield to unreasonable demands and pressures. Geagea added that for the first time, a president had been elected without the backing of the "resistance" and the Syrian regime (MTV Lebanon, January 9, 2025).
- ▶ Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, met with President Aoun to discuss the country's political situation and challenges. Mikati said they talked about the situation in south Lebanon, the need to complete the Israeli withdrawal, stop "Israeli violations" and restore stability in south Lebanon. Referring to Aoun's statement that weapons in Lebanon should be under state control and in line with Resolution 1701, Mikati claimed it marked the beginning of a new phase in south Lebanon, especially south of the Litani River, to ensure the state's presence throughout Lebanese territory and stability in the south (Lebanese News Agency, January 10, 2025).
- ▶ On January 13, 2025, Aoun met in Beirut with an American military delegation led by Michael Kurilla, CENTCOM commander. Also present was Brigadier General Jasper Jeffers, head of the ceasefire monitoring committee in Lebanon, and Lisa Johnson, the American ambassador to Beirut (Lebanese Presidents X account, January 13, 2025).
- ▶ In various parts of Lebanon, there were billboards with Aoun's picture and the slogan "Army, People, State," to emphasize the state as the sole authority holding arms. That contrasted with Hezbollah's slogan, "Army, People, Resistance" (Samia Khadaj's X account, January 11, 2025).



**"Army, People, State" (Samia Khadaj's, January 11, 2025)**