



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah January 20 - 27 , 2025

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

- ▶ January 26, 2025, marked the end of the 60 days specified in the ceasefire agreement for the IDF's withdrawal from south Lebanon. However, Israel announced it would not withdraw because the Lebanese army had still not finished deploying in the south of the country.
- ▶ On January 26, 2025, thousands of local residents began returning to towns and villages in south Lebanon, waving Hezbollah flags and escorted by Lebanese army forces. IDF forces fired at rioters and the Lebanese ministry of health reported 24 fatalities, including a soldier.
- ▶ The United States announced that the ceasefire agreement would be extended until February 18, 2025, and that negotiations would begin regarding the release of Lebanese detainees held by IDF forces. Lebanon's interim prime minister approved the extension of the agreement.
- ▶ Senior Hezbollah figures praised the residents of south Lebanon for returning to their communities, calling it "popular resistance" and the implementation of the "Army, People, Resistance" slogan. The organization also criticized the Lebanese authorities and the international community for not compelling Israel to complete the withdrawal.
- ▶ This past week IDF forces continued to take action against Hezbollah ceasefire violations, destroying weapons and terrorist facilities belonging to the organization in south Lebanon. The Lebanese army continued its gradual deployment into the areas evacuated by the IDF.
- ▶ According to reports, the head of Lebanese army intelligence in the south and other army officers transferred classified information to Hezbollah, enabling the organization to hide weapons. The Lebanese army denied the allegations.
- ▶ Hezbollah has paid \$400 million to Lebanese residents for shelter and reconstruction since the start of the ceasefire. Reportedly, the organization is formulating a new plan for its media activities after the war.

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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.

- ▶ Syrian security authorities seized a shipment of weapons en route to Hezbollah. Iranian diplomats reportedly smuggle money to Hezbollah on foreign airlines flying to Beirut.
- ▶ Nawaf Salam, designated Lebanese prime minister, continued efforts to form a new government. He denied having promised the finance portfolio to Hezbollah.

## Local Residents Return to South Lebanon

- ▶ On January 26, 2025, at 4:00 a.m., the 60-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon ended. However, on January 24, 2025, Israel announced it would not complete the withdrawal of IDF forces from south Lebanon after 60 days because the Lebanese army had not yet completed its deployment and Hezbollah had not withdrawn its forces to the north of the Litani River. Israel also said it would continue operations in the eastern sector of south Lebanon (Israeli media, January 24, 2025).
- ▶ The IDF spokesperson in Arabic banned local residents from entering towns and villages in south Lebanon, warning them of possible danger (Avichay Adraee's X account, January 26, 2025). The Lebanese army called on residents not to return to their communities for the same reason (Lebanese army X account, January 26, 2025).
- ▶ Nevertheless, starting on the morning of January 26, 2025, thousands of residents, encouraged by Hezbollah, began advancing toward towns and villages, some of which were still occupied by IDF forces. They went to Kafr Kila, Meis al-Jabal, Houla, al-Taybeh, Aita al-Sha'ab and al-Khiam. Many carried Hezbollah flags (Lebanese media, January 26, 2025).



**Right: Residents in south Lebanon with Hezbollah flags (UniNews Agency, January 26, 2025).**

**Left: Hezbollah supporters with a picture of Nasrallah in Aita al-Sha'ab (al-Manar X account, January 26, 2025)**

- ▶ The IDF spokesperson said forces had fired warning shots at rioters who threatened the soldiers, and a vehicle with Hezbollah flags which approached was shot at (IDF spokesperson, January 26, 2025). The Lebanese ministry of health reported that 24 people were killed, including six women, and more than 130 were injured after IDF forces [allegedly] "attacked

civilians attempting to return to their towns." Five of the fatalities were in Aita al-Sha'ab four in both Marjayoun and Kafr Kila, three in both Houla and Meis al-Jabal, two in al-Adeisa, one in Blida, and one Lebanese army soldier was reported killed in al-Dahaira (Lebanese ministry of health X account, January 27, 2025).

► On the night of January 26, 2025, the United States announced that an agreement had been reached to extend the ceasefire until February 18, 2025. It was also reported that the governments of Lebanon, Israel and the United States would negotiate the return of Lebanese detainees held by Israel since October 7, 2023 (White House website, January 26, 2025).

► Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, said that after reviewing the report from the ceasefire monitoring committee, the Lebanese government agreed to extend the ceasefire "understandings" until February 18, 2025, while affirming the preservation of Lebanon's sovereignty and security. He confirmed that negotiations would begin for the return of "Lebanese prisoners" detained by Israel (Najib Mikati's X account, January 27, 2025).

► On the morning of January 27, 2025, Lebanese residents continued advancing toward towns and villages. According to reports, they entered the town of Houla after Lebanese army forces had deployed in some neighborhoods. It was also reported that soldiers and residents entered the town of Aita al-Sha'ab despite IDF fire and advanced toward Meis al-Jabal in preparation for the IDF withdrawal (al-Manar, January 27, 2025).

## Hezbollah

► Hezbollah congratulated the residents on their return to the towns of south Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed it was not behind the return marches, which were "popular resistance" against the "occupation." Hezbollah also criticized the Lebanese authorities for failing to secure the withdrawal of IDF forces in accordance with the ceasefire agreement:

- ◆ Hezbollah praised the residents of south Lebanon who returned to their villages carrying pictures of "shaheeds" and flags of "the resistance." According to Hezbollah, the events on the ground reflected the slogan of "Army, People, Resistance," which "protected Lebanon from all enemies." It also called on all Lebanese to stand with the people of the south and demanded that the international community, particularly the countries sponsoring the ceasefire agreement, assume their responsibility regarding "the violations and crimes of the Israeli enemy" and compel it to withdraw from Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 26, 2025).

◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament who went to Aita al-Sha'ab, "told" the organization's senior figures who had been killed, including Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safi al-Din, that the events in the south represented "Army, People, Resistance." He added that "the resistance" had fought until the last day, the people had advanced to Aita al-Sha'ab and "liberated" it as they would later "liberate" Maroun al-Ras and Aitaroun. He said that "the enemy" wanted to continue its "occupation" but they would impose their will on it "through resistance,<sup>2</sup> not by acting like clowns" (al-Jadeed, January 26, 2025). On another occasion, he hinted at Hezbollah's involvement in the events in south Lebanon, stating that when the state abandoned its responsibilities, "the resistance" took the necessary steps to "liberate" the land and protect its people. He added that they would not accept the presence of any Israeli soldier in Lebanon (al-Jadeed, January 27, 2025).



**Hassan Fadlallah in Aita al-Sha'ab (al-Jadeed, January 26, 2025)**

◆ Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament who went to Kafr Kila, claimed Hezbollah was not behind the "popular movements" and that the return of local residents was in accordance with implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701. He claimed the residents would force the Israelis to withdraw, even at the cost of casualties, and that the residents themselves had insisted on returning and confronting the "Israeli invasion" (al-Nahar, January 26, 2025).

◆ Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, praised the residents of south Lebanon for returning to their villages. He claimed it "exposed the lies of the occupation" about its victory and its delusion that it could continue to occupy the land while hiding behind the countries supporting its "terrorism." He added it was also a call from the Lebanese people to all international actors to compel the "Zionist enemy" to withdraw from the south "without delay" (al-Nahar, January 26, 2025).

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<sup>2</sup> Anti-Israeli violence and terrorism.

► On the evening of January 26, 2025, residents celebrated in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, marking the return of residents to south Lebanon. Some of them carried Hezbollah flags and set off fireworks, and songs praising "the resistance" were heard in the background (al-Mayadeen X account, January 26, 2025). The Lebanese army stated the events were provocations endangering civilian safety, adding that army units had arrested several participants and were searching for others who had been involved (al-Nahar, January 27, 2025).



**Hezbollah flags in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia (al-Mayadeen X account, January 26, 2025)**

## The Lebanese government

► Senior Lebanese officials praised the conduct of the south Lebanese but urged them to act cautiously and in coordination with the Lebanese army forces deployed in the south. They condemned Israel for failing to complete its withdrawal in accordance with the ceasefire agreement:

- ◆ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on the residents of south Lebanon to "act with restraint and trust the armed forces." He stated that Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity were non-negotiable and that he was closely monitoring the issue to ensure the rights and dignity of the residents. Aoun emphasized that the Lebanese army had always stood by the residents and was committed to protecting them (Lebanese president's X account, January 26, 2025).
- ◆ Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, called on the countries sponsoring the ceasefire agreement to assume responsibility, deter the "Israeli enemy" and ensure its withdrawal from the territories it occupied. He said the Lebanese government warned that any violation of the ceasefire agreement or the implementation of Resolution 1701 would have severe consequences (al-Nahar, January 26, 2025).

- ◆ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, commended the "people of the border villages." He claimed that "the blood of helpless women, the elderly, and children shed" in south Lebanon by the "Israeli occupation forces" "proved" that Israel continued to violate Lebanon's sovereignty and the ceasefire. He called on the international community to compel Israel to withdraw immediately and without delay from the Lebanese lands it still "occupied" (al-Nashra, January 26, 2025).
- ◆ The Lebanese foreign ministry condemned Israel's "attacks" on Lebanese civilians attempting to return to their villages. It claimed that the residents' return was carried out in accordance with the ceasefire agreement, which Lebanon adhered to, while "the other side evades its obligations." The ministry called on the countries overseeing the agreement and international actors involved in maintaining stability in south Lebanon to condemn the attacks and pressure Israel to meet its obligations as outlined in the agreement (Lebanese foreign ministry X account, January 26, 2025).

## The Lebanese army

- ▶ As the 60-day period allocated for the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon under the ceasefire agreement ended, the Lebanese army blamed Israel for delaying its deployment in south Lebanon, citing "delaying tactics" which it claimed "complicates the implementation of its mission" (al-Manar, January 26, 2025).
- ▶ Despite the Lebanese army's call for residents not to return to the villages and towns, in light of the movement toward these areas, the army began escorting them. Army forces reportedly entered towns alongside residents, including Aita al-Sha'ab, Deir Siryan, Adshit al-Qasir, al-Taybeh, al-Qantara, Maroun al-Ras, and other areas near the border. The army announced that its forces continued to stand with the residents "in confronting the Israeli enemy," citing the "enemy's insistence" on harming soldiers and residents and its "blatant refusal" to adhere to the agreement. Residents were also urged to exercise restraint and follow army instructions to ensure their safety (Lebanese army X account, January 26, 2025).
- ▶ The Lebanese army reported that one of its soldiers had been killed between the towns of Marwahin and al-Taybeh, and another soldier was injured in the area of Meis al-Jabal-Marjayoun "by Israeli enemy fire." The Lebanese army accused the IDF of "ongoing attacks against civilians and military personnel in the border area of south Lebanon" (Lebanese army X account, January 26, 2025).



**The Lebanese army escorts local residents to the villages in south Lebanon (Right: Lebanese army X account, January 26, 2025. Left: Musayat website, January 26, 2025)**

## UNIFIL

- ▶ UNIFIL issued a joint statement with the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, stating that events indicated the conditions for the safe return of civilians to their villages along the Blue Line had not yet been met. It was further noted that adherence by both sides to the ceasefire agreement and the implementation of Resolution 1701 were the only ways to close the "dark chapter" and open a new era that ensured security, stability and prosperity for both sides (UNIFIL Telegram channel, January 26, 2025).
- ▶ UNIFIL expressed concern over reports of Lebanese civilians returning to their villages while IDF forces were still present and over reports of casualties caused by IDF fire. It was also stated that at the request of the Lebanese army, UNIFIL had deployed its forces in areas designated for monitoring the situation and preventing escalation. However, UNIFIL said its mandate did not allow it to direct the movement of residents. UNIFIL also called on the IDF to refrain from firing at civilians and urged the Lebanese population to adhere to the instructions of the Lebanese army, which were intended to protect lives and prevent escalation in south Lebanon (UNIFIL Telegram channel, January 26, 2025).

## The Ceasefire (As of January 26, 2025)

### IDF activities

- ▶ This past week the IDF continued its actions in south Lebanon to prevent Hezbollah from violating the ceasefire. IDF forces located and destroyed weapons and terrorist facilities which threatened IDF forces and Israeli territory. During searches large quantities of weapons were discovered, including Kornet anti-tank missiles, grenades and Kalashnikov assault rifles. Several tunnels used by Hezbollah as living quarters and weapons storage facilities were

revealed. During searches in the Saluki area a weapons cache was discovered inside a mosque, and beneath the mosque the soldiers found a vehicle with weapons, including rockets and explosives (IDF spokesperson, January 20–25, 2025).



**Right: Hiding place for Hezbollah weapons. Left: Some of the weapons seized (IDF spokesperson, January 23, 2025)**

## Hezbollah

► Before the end of the ceasefire Hezbollah said that any deviation in the withdrawal of "occupation forces" from "every inch" of Lebanese land would constitute a violation of the ceasefire agreement. Therefore, the agreement had to be fully and comprehensively implemented as stipulated. Hezbollah said the delay in the "enemy's" withdrawal and its prolonged presence in Lebanon obligated everyone, especially Lebanon's political authorities, to exert pressure on the countries guaranteeing the agreement to take action and monitor its implementation. Hezbollah said the withdrawal from Lebanese territory had to be complete to allow the return of residents to their homes and warned that any violation of the 60-day period would constitute a breach of the agreement, an infringement on Lebanon's sovereignty and the beginning of a new phase of "occupation" which demanded the state confront it by all means. Hezbollah further stated that it would monitor developments on the ground and would not tolerate violations of the agreement (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 23, 2025).

► Senior Hezbollah officials demanded Israel withdraw its forces from Lebanon by January 26, 2025:

- ◆ Ghaleb Abu Zaynab, a member of Hezbollah's political council, warned that the "enemy" had to commit to a full withdrawal from all Lebanese territory by Sunday [January 26], otherwise, Monday [January 27] would mark "a new phase of occupation" (al-Mayadeen, January 21, 2025).





**Ghaleb Abu Zaynab (al-Mayadeen, January 21, 2025)**

- ◆ Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that all the evidence provided by the Israelis and Americans showed that Israel had no intention of completing its withdrawal by the specified date. He said the claim by the "Israeli enemy" that the Lebanese army had not completed the required operations was a "limp excuse." Fayyad added that Israel's failure to fully withdraw within the designated period and the inability of the international committee overseeing the agreement to enforce compliance with Resolution 1701 threatened the commitments of the Lebanese government. He claimed the response of Lebanon's political actors had been weak and insufficient, and the government had to reassess the situation and explore the most effective ways to protect Lebanon's sovereignty, enforce an Israeli withdrawal and reassure the Lebanese people. He warned that Lebanon's commitments at all levels had been met with Israeli betrayal, which he described as "deadly, dangerous and unacceptable" (al-Nahar , January 25, 2025).
- ◆ Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, called on all senior Lebanese officials to meet their responsibilities and engage with the United States and France, the sponsors of the agreement, or with the UN, to ensure the completion of Israel's withdrawal. He added that "the resistance"<sup>3</sup> maintained the necessary connections with senior Lebanese officials and that when the organization decided on a particular course of action it would be announced (al-Akhbar, January 25, 2025).
- ◆ Ibrahim al-Moussawi, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that on Sunday [January 26] time would run out, and the "enemy" had to withdraw

<sup>3</sup> Hezbollah.

from Lebanon land or face "surprises it does not expect." He noted that continuing the path of "resistance," regardless of the cost, would not be compromised (al-Nashra, January 25, 2025).

## The Lebanese army

► The Lebanese army claimed it was prepared to complete the deployment of its forces south of the Litani River following Israel's withdrawal and continued to monitor the implementation of Resolution 1701, adding it had completed the deployment of forces in several areas in the south, primarily in the villages of Shebaa–Hasbaya in the eastern sector, as well as in the towns of al-Quzah, Jabal, Hanin, and Beit Leef–Bint Jbeil in the central sector. The army further urged civilians to avoid areas from which the "enemy" had withdrawn and to adhere to instructions until land mines had been cleared and suspicious objects left behind by the "Israeli aggression" had been removed (Lebanese army's X account, January 22–25, 2025).



**Lebanese army and UNIFIL APCs in south Lebanon (Lebanese army X account, January 22, 2025)**

► Amid the continued deployment of forces, the acting commander of the Lebanese army, Hassan Ouda, met with American General Jasper Jeffers, chairman of the monitoring committee responsible for implementing the ceasefire in Lebanon, and Guillaume Ponchin, the French representative on the committee, to discuss recent developments in south Lebanon and the stages of implementing the ceasefire agreement (al-Nashra, January 22, 2025).

► "Sources" reported that since the ceasefire with Israel was declared on November 27, 2024, the Lebanese army had conducted approximately 500 missions to uncover potential Hezbollah-related sites, dismantle infrastructure, and confiscate weapons, in coordination with and under the supervision of UNIFIL. "Security sources" claimed that the Lebanese army had met its obligations under the agreement and that most of Hezbollah's military infrastructure south of the Litani River had been dismantled. The "sources" noted that Hezbollah did not oppose any actions taken by the Lebanese army or UNIFIL to uncover

facilities, ammunition, or warehouses belonging to it. Additionally, it was emphasized that the Lebanese army confiscated all types of weapons or ammunition south of the Litani River that were found unsupervised, as part of implementing Resolution 1701 under the directive of the political leadership (Asharq al-Awsat, January 23, 2025).



**Right: Lebanese army armored vehicle in south Lebanon. Center and left: Lebanese army engineering vehicles remove rubble (Lebanese army X account, January 25, 2025)**

► In preparation for the end of the ceasefire, the Lebanese army called on residents to wait before heading toward south Lebanon due to the presence of mines and suspicious objects left behind by the "Israeli enemy." The army stated that its forces were continuously working to handle unexploded ordnance and clear roads and were reinforcing their deployment in the area south of the Litani River in organized stages, coordinated with UNIFIL and the quintet committee overseeing the implementation of the agreement. It was also noted that there had been delays in several stages due to "the delaying tactics of the Israeli enemy forces" (Lebanese army's X account, January 25, 2025).

► "Intelligence sources" reported that during the ceasefire, Suheil Bahij Gharb, head of military intelligence for the Lebanese army in the south, leaked secrets and sensitive information from the control room of the ceasefire monitoring committee to Hezbollah. According to the report, an international intelligence document indicates that Gharb was one of dozens of Lebanese army officers who leaked information to Hezbollah, warning them in advance of raids and patrols, thereby enabling the organization's operatives to evade detection. The document also stated that Hezbollah used sensitive information about the Lebanese army to conceal its activities from international bodies responsible for regional security. Additionally, "regional security sources" noted that while the Lebanese army did in fact confiscate Hezbollah's weapon caches in areas vacated by the IDF, the sensitive information allowed Hezbollah to retain weapons near the border (The Times, January 26, 2025). The Lebanese army denied the

report, stating that its officers carried out their missions in various units professionally and acted in accordance with orders from the military leadership (al-Nashra, January 27, 2025).

## The Lebanese government

► Lebanese President Joseph Aoun told Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles that he had received a message from the international community indicating that pressure should be exerted on Israel to withdraw from south Lebanon by the designated deadline. Robles emphasized the need for Israel to withdraw on time to maintain stability (Lebanese Presidency's X account, January 21, 2025). Robles also met with her Lebanese counterpart, Maurice Slim, and UNIFIL Commander Aroldo Lázaro. Slim noted that the Lebanese army would continue to cooperate with UNIFIL, particularly as the "Israeli enemy continues to commit violations." He stressed that Lebanon was committed to ensuring Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon by the agreed deadline of January 26, 2025 (al-Nashra, January 21, 2025).

► Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met with the chairman of the monitoring committee responsible for implementing the ceasefire in Lebanon, American General Jasper Jeffers, in the presence of U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Lisa Johnson. It was reported that they discussed recent developments regarding Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon, Israel's "violations" of the ceasefire agreement, and Resolution 1701 (Lebanese National News Agency, January 23, 2025). A "senior parliamentary source" indicated that Berri sought clarification during the meeting about the "excuses" Israel was using to justify its request to extend the deadline for withdrawal under the ceasefire agreement, as well as the implications of such an extension (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 23, 2025). "Informed sources" described the meeting as "not friendly." According to them, Berri emphasized to Jeffers that Lebanon categorically rejects any extension of the ceasefire "even for one day" and stressed the need to respect the agreement (al-Akhbar, January 24, 2025).



**Berri (right) and Jeffers (Lebanese News Agency, January 23, 2025)**

## UNIFIL

► It was reported that two UNIFIL personnel sustained minor injuries from shrapnel that struck their vehicle as a result of explosions carried out by an IDF force in Marjayoun and Rabeih Thalathin (Lebanon 24, January 22, 2025). It should be noted that UNIFIL had not issued an official statement confirming the details.

## Hezbollah

### Nasrallah's grave

► It was reported that former Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah would be buried behind the al-Saha Restaurant, near al-Hadi Garden, in Burj al-Barajneh in south Beirut, approximately one kilometer from the northern entrance to the Rafic Hariri International Airport (Lebanon 24, January 21, 2025).

### Reconstructing Lebanon

► "Informed sources" reported that within 55 days of the start of the ceasefire, Hezbollah paid a total of \$400 million to 140,000 people for alternative housing allocations, repair compensation, and other expenses. It was noted that each case received an average of \$2,860, with a maximum payment of \$14,000 depending on the extent of the damage, excluding reconstruction costs. Additionally, according to Hezbollah's Jihad al-Bina Association, as of January 20, 2025, assessments were conducted on 268,317 structures in 448 villages and towns, of which 77,232 housing units were south of the Litani River (al-Akhbar, January 23, 2025).

► "Informed sources" also reported that Hezbollah requested that journalists and commentators close to the organization reduce their media appearances or, at the very least, avoid discussing major issues such as events in Syria or the war with Israel. It was noted that, as part of its effort to rebuild its capabilities, Hezbollah seeks to develop a comprehensive plan for its basic media activities and to prevent the leakage of sensitive information about its strategies, military status, and operations (Lebanon 24, January 25, 2025).

### Smuggling weapons and money to Hezbollah

► Officials from the General Directorate for Border Security in Syria intercepted a shipment of weapons intended for Hezbollah in Lebanon. It was reported that the shipment was set to be smuggled through routes near the Syria-Lebanon border, close to the border town of Saraqaya in the rural Damascus area (Syrian News Agency, January 26, 2025).

► "Western intelligence sources" revealed that Iranian diplomats were using foreign airlines to transfer funds to Hezbollah, due to Israeli surveillance of Iranian airlines. According to the report, the diplomats travel from Iran to regional countries with suitcases "full of cash" and then continue to Beirut on foreign airlines. The "sources" also confirmed that Hezbollah was in urgent need of Iranian funding following the disruption of the funding route that previously passed through Syria (Sky News Arabia, January 22, 2025).

### **Senior Hezbollah figure killed**

► Mohammad Hamadi, Hezbollah operative in charge of the western Beqa'a region, was shot outside his home in the town of Mashghara. He was critically injured and pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital (al-Akhbar X account, January 21, 2025). It was reported that six bullets were fired at Hamadi (al-Jadeed, January 21, 2025). Hezbollah issued an invitation to the funeral of "Commander" Mohammad Khalil Hamadi. The statement did not accuse anyone for his death or provide information about its circumstances (The organization's social media archive, Simia, January 21, 2025).

### **Criticism of Hezbollah**

► The Lebanese National Forces Party responded to the statement by Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's secretary general, that "the resistance" would continue its activities. The party said that Hezbollah continued to disregard the ceasefire agreement, which stipulated that it had to disarm and dismantle its military structure. It was also noted that Qassem's speech obstructed Arab and international support for Lebanon and contradicted the inauguration speech of Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, which noted the state's monopoly on weapons. The party added that Qassem's remarks belonged to a "bygone era" (MTV, January 20, 2025).

## **The Situation in Lebanon**

### **Visit of the Saudi Arabian foreign minister**

► On January 23, 2025, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan arrived in Lebanon, marking the first visit of a Saudi Arabian foreign minister in 15 years. He met with President Joseph Aoun, outgoing interim Prime Minister Najib Mikati, designated Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. Following his meeting with Aoun, bin Farhan stated that Saudi Arabia was optimistic about Lebanon's future and the implementation of reforms. He added that he discussed with the Lebanese president the importance of adhering to the ceasefire agreement and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territories (al-Nashra, January 23, 2025).



**The president of Lebanon (right) and the Saudi Arabian foreign minister  
(al-Nashra, January 23, 2025)**

## Forming the new Lebanese government

► This past week, Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's designated prime minister, continued efforts to form a new government:

- ◆ According to reports, there are tensions between the "Shi'ite Couple" [Hezbollah and Amal] regarding the negotiations to form the government: Hezbollah is concerned about the indirect negotiations being conducted exclusively through MP Ali Hassan Khalil, Nabih Berri's political aide. According to claims, Hezbollah seeks to open direct communication channels and intervene if necessary, in an attempt to compensate for its significant military and political losses (Nidaa al-Watan, January 20, 2025).
- ◆ After meeting with President Joseph Aoun, Salam stated that the process of forming the government was continuing and that he wanted to complete it as soon as possible. In response to reports that he had agreed to give Hezbollah the finance portfolio, Salam said he had not committed to giving any portfolio to "anyone specific" and that the finance portfolio, like all others, did not belong to any particular sect (al-Nashra, January 21, 2025).
- ◆ It was also reported that Salam insisted that if the finance portfolio were given to the Shi'ites, the appointed minister would be independent and not affiliated with Amal or Hezbollah. According to Salam, the minister would be chosen through consultations between him and the Lebanese president. However, the "Shi'ite Couple" had voiced opposition (Nidaa al-Watan, January 22, 2025).
- ◆ "Political sources" claimed that Hezbollah had reached an understanding with outgoing Prime Minister Najib Mikati that the ceasefire agreement and Resolution 1701 applied only to the area south of the Litani River. Media outlets affiliated with Hezbollah reported that the new government's policy statement would include a formula replacing

the "Army, People, Resistance" slogan with something which would satisfy the organization, such as reaffirming "the right of the Lebanese to resist." On the other hand, "political sources" issued denials, claiming that such reports were merely intended to placate Hezbollah's base (Nidaa al-Watan, January 22, 2025).