



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah February 10 – 17, 2025

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

- ▶ Preparations are being made in Lebanon ahead of the February 18, 2025 deadline for the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. Hezbollah and senior Lebanese government officials expressed opposition to Israel's intention to retain military forces at five strategic points on the Lebanese side of the border and demanded a full withdrawal.
- ▶ IDF forces continued operations against Hezbollah ceasefire violations, targeting Hezbollah weapons depots and operatives in south Lebanon and inside the country. A senior member of Hamas's military wing responsible for orchestrating attacks in Judea and Samaria was eliminated.
- ▶ Hezbollah supporters rioted against Lebanese security forces near Beirut airport after the government prevented the arrival of an Iranian plane, having been informed that it was carrying funds for Hezbollah and could be targeted by Israel.
- ▶ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, gave a speech which related to the Israeli withdrawal, the events at the airport and the funeral of Hassan Nasrallah. He claimed the funeral would be a show of strength proving the continuing presence of the "resistance"<sup>2</sup> in Lebanon.
- ▶ Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's new prime minister, said only Lebanese security forces should bear arms. Reports indicated that the government's policy guidelines would not include Hezbollah's "Army-People-Resistance" formula.
- ▶ The Lebanese army closed several illegal crossings on the Syrian border used for smuggling.

### The Ceasefire

#### The IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon

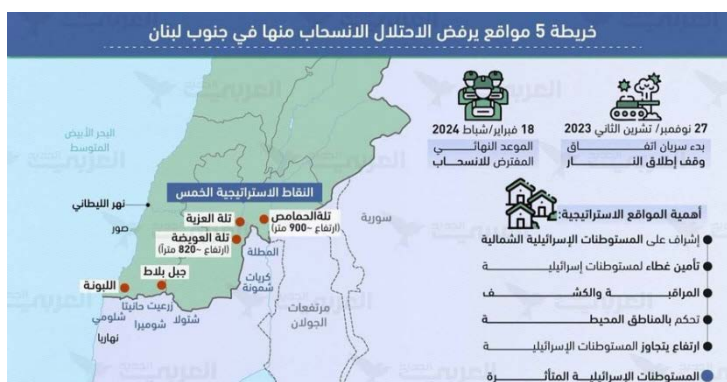
- ▶ On February 18, 2025, Israel is expected to complete the withdrawal of IDF forces from south Lebanon in accordance with the ceasefire agreement, after the date of the withdrawal was

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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.

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

extended from January 26, 2025. According to reports, with American agreement, the IDF will remain at five strategic points along the border (Israeli media, February 17, 2025): Tallet al-Hamams, Tallet al-Aweithea, Jabal Blat, al-Labouneh and al-Aziyah. The committee overseeing the ceasefire is expected to decide on the matter because of Lebanon's opposition to Israel's request, with assessments indicating that UNIFIL forces will be deployed alongside the Lebanese army at the points (al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 13, 2025).



**A map of the five points in south Lebanon where Israel wants to keep forces (Lebanosnews X account, February 15, 2025)**

► "Sources" reported that February 18, 2025, will be the final date for Israel's full withdrawal from south Lebanon, after the Lebanese presidency rejected Israel's request to maintain a permanent presence at the five "sensitive" locations. It was also reported that French President Emmanuel Macron contacted Lebanese President Joseph Aoun several times and conveyed to Israel his opposition to any Israeli presence. According to the "sources," pressure from France and Lebanon, along with United States persuasion, pushed Israel to agree to a full withdrawal by February 18 (al-Jadeed, February 13, 2025).

► On February 14, 2025, the committee overseeing the ceasefire convened at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura, with IDF and Lebanese army representatives present. They discussed the technicalities for transferring the remaining villages in south Lebanon to Lebanese army responsibility by February 18. The committee's chair, United States Army General Jasper Jeffers, expressed confidence that the Lebanese army would control all population centers in south Lebanon by February 18 and said they would continue to assist in implementing all articles of the ceasefire agreement even after Israel's withdrawal (CENTCOM X account, February 14, 2025). The committee vetoed the Lebanese army's intention to deploy in border towns still under "Israeli occupation" before February 25, despite Lebanon rejecting Israel's request to extend its presence in south Lebanon beyond February 18 (al-Akhbar, February 14, 2025).

► Hezbollah officials reiterated their demands that the Lebanese government enforce the ceasefire agreement and ensure Israel's complete withdrawal from south Lebanon by February 18, 2025, and the full withdrawal of IDF forces from all Lebanese territory, including the five points where the IDF intends to remain. They warned that the organization might take action against Israeli forces if they remained after the deadline:

◆ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, said Israel had to fully withdraw from all Lebanese territory by February 18 and had no right or excuse to hold onto five points in Lebanon. He said the state had the central and exclusive responsibility to ensure the completion of the Israeli withdrawal. He warned that if Israel remained in south Lebanon and did not abide by the agreement, Hezbollah would not reveal how it would respond, but said that "everyone knows how to deal with the occupation" (al-Manar, February 16, 2025).

◆ Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, called on the Lebanese government to exert pressure for a full and complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon by February 18. He said, "today it is Lebanon's turn to expel the Zionist enemy from our lands" and that "the enemy's presence at the five points is occupation, and it must withdraw from them" (al-Nour Radio, February 12, 2025).

► Lebanese government officials strongly opposed any further extension of Israel's presence in south Lebanon and called on the ceasefire monitoring committee and the international community to ensure that Israel removed all its forces from Lebanese territory by February 18:

◆ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said Israel could not be trusted and expressed concern that a full withdrawal might not take place. He said that in such a case, Lebanon's response would be a "unified and comprehensive national stance" but stressed that it would be strictly diplomatic, as Lebanon could not afford another war. He added that in addition to the Israeli withdrawal, Hezbollah's weapons should also be dealt with according to agreements by the Lebanese (Lebanese National News Agency, February 17, 2025). During a meeting with the ambassadors of the Quintet (the United States, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar), Aoun called for pressure to be exerted on Israel to complete the withdrawal. He said that once Israel had left, discussions would take place at UNIFIL headquarters on completing the ceasefire agreement's provisions,

primarily border demarcation and resolving disputed points along the Blue Line (Lebanese National News Agency, February 17, 2025).

◆ President Aoun told the United States and France that Lebanon demanded the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and a complete Israeli withdrawal, including from the five strategic border points. Reportedly, there is a French proposal for manning the five points, but Lebanon said it did not want any modification of foreign force missions within its territory and the Lebanese army and existing international forces would coordinate deployment mechanisms at the relevant points (al-Akhbar, February 12, 2025).

◆ Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said the Lebanese government would work to ensure Israel's withdrawal from the country would be completed according to the timeline which had been agreed on. He added that the government would use "diplomatic frameworks" to pressure Israel and emphasized that Lebanon always fulfilled its commitments, such as deploying the Lebanese army in the south and implementing Resolution 1701. When asked about the possibility of a delay in the withdrawal, Salam responded, "We will show patience if we are able" (al-Nashra, February 11, 2025). He also spoke with foreign leaders, including the prime ministers of Qatar, Egypt and Jordan, and the Arab League secretary general, to enlist support for demanding a full Israeli withdrawal without delay (Lebanese Prime Minister's office X account, February 16, 2025).

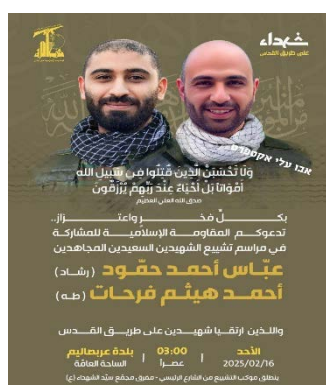
◆ Lebanon's new defense minister, Michel Mansour, said that border security was a high priority. He accused Israel of violating Resolution 1701 with its continued attacks (al-Nashra, February 13, 2025).

◆ Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met with United States Army General Jasper Jeffers, the head of the ceasefire monitoring committee, and said the United States had told him the IDF would withdraw from villages in south Lebanon by February 18 but would remain at five points. Berri said he rejected the American "request" and added that "if the occupation remains, Lebanon will be responsible for the consequences and its defense strategy" (al-Nashra, February 13, 2025).

## The IDF

► This past week the IDF continued operations in south Lebanon and inside the country to counter Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire and rearm. The IDF destroyed weapons

depots and rocket and missile launchers, and attacked military sites in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley from the air, sites where launchers and weapons were stored and Hezbollah activity was identified. A senior terrorist operative in Hezbollah's aerial unit, involved in launching UAVs into Israeli territory during the ceasefire, was eliminated (IDF spokesperson, February 10–17, 2025). Lebanese media reported that an airstrike between Abbassiyeh and Jarjouaa, near Nabatieh, killed Abbas Ahmed Hamoud, a Hezbollah aerial unit commander, and photographer Ahmed Haitham Farhat (Lebanese National News Agency, February 15, 2025; Shasha al-Arabiya YouTube channel, February 15, 2025; ALI HASSAN's X account, February 16, 2025).



**Right: Vehicle of the Hezbollah aerial unit operative after the strike (Nidaa al-Watan, February 15, 2025). Left: Hezbollah's announcement of the funeral for the operatives killed in the strike (Hezbollah combat information, February 16, 2025)**

► On February 17, 2025, the IDF eliminated Muhammad Shahin, head of the Hamas operations department in Lebanon, in an airstrike near Sidon. According to reports Shahin, funded by Iran, planned to attack Israeli civilians from Lebanese territory (IDF spokesperson, February 17, 2025). Hamas media confirmed that Muhammad Shahin, responsible for the military wing's operations in Lebanon and in charge of directing "resistance"<sup>3</sup> networks in northern Samaria, was killed in an airstrike on his vehicle near Sidon (al-Aqsa TV, February 17, 2025).

## The Lebanese return to the villages in the south

► On February 16, 2025, encouraged by Hezbollah, several local residents entered the town of Houle in south Lebanon after bypassing the dirt roadblocks set up by the IDF and Lebanese army forces at the town's entrance. Reportedly, one woman was killed by gunfire directed at the residents, several were injured, and the IDF detained several residents (al-Mayadeen, February 16, 2025). Following the incident, the Lebanese army reiterated that residents should

<sup>3</sup> Terrorist.

avoid areas in the south where the army had not yet completed its deployment (Lebanese army X account, February 16, 2025). Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, accused the "Israeli enemy" of "brutal aggression" against residents who entered Houle by shooting at civilians and killing a woman. He called on the authorities and the Lebanese army to provide the residents with "urgent protection" (al-'Ahed, February 16, 2025).



**Houle residents raising a Hezbollah flag over the ruins in the town (al-Akhbar, February 16, 2025)**

## The Lebanese army

► Acting Lebanese army Commander Hassan Ouda visited commanders at an army base near Marjayoun to discuss completing the army's deployment after the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory. He later visited a regional center for neutralizing land mines (Lebanese army X account, February 12, 2025).



**Ouda during his visit to south Lebanon (Lebanese army X account, February 12, 2025)**

## Hezbollah

### Violence ensues after planes from Iran are prevented from landing

► On February 12, 2025, Avichay Adraee, the IDF Arabic spokesperson, announced that funds from Iran for Hezbollah were entering on civilian flights and that the ceasefire monitoring mechanism had been warned that Israel would not allow the transfers (Avichay Adraee's X account, February 12, 2025). The following day, an Iranian passenger plane scheduled to fly

from Tehran to Beirut was prevented from taking off after Beirut airport authorities refused to authorize its landing (al-Akhbar, February 13, 2025). An "informed source" at the airport said that the Ministry of Transport had ordered the flight ban after receiving information that the plane was carrying funds for Hezbollah, making it a potential target for an Israeli attack (al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 13, 2025). A "Lebanese security source" reported that Lebanon had prevented the Iranian plane from taking off following a warning from the United States that Israel intended to attack if the plane landed. The source also noted that another flight from Tehran, scheduled for February 14, was canceled for the same reason (Agence France-Presse, February 16, 2025). Lebanon reportedly informed Iran that Iranian flights to Beirut would be suspended until February 18, 2025 (IRNA, February 16, 2025).

► Following the decision to prevent the Iranian plane from reaching Lebanon, Hezbollah supporters encouraged by the organization held protests and blocked roads near Beirut's international airport. Lebanese army forces arrived to reopen the roads (Lebanon 24, February 13, 2025). The protests continued the following day, during which a UNIFIL convoy was attacked and its vehicles were set on fire. The outgoing deputy commander of UNIFIL was injured, and clashes were reported between Lebanese army forces and protesters (al-Hadath, February 14, 2025).



**Right: Hezbollah supporters protesting the prevention of the Iranian plane's arrival in Beirut (LBCI, February 13, 2025). Left: Clashes between Hezbollah supporters and the Lebanese army in Beirut (al-Nour Radio, February 15, 2025)**

► On February 15, 2025, another Hezbollah-led protest near Beirut's international airport escalated into a riot against army forces. Hezbollah accused the Lebanese army of using tear gas to attack a "non-violent protest expressing the people's position" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 16, 2025). The Lebanese army reported that its units intervened after protesters blocked the road in violation of prior agreements, and 23 soldiers were injured (Lebanese army X account, February 16, 2025). Hezbollah and Lebanese

government officials responded to the decision to prevent the arrival of the Iranian plane and the riots near the airport:

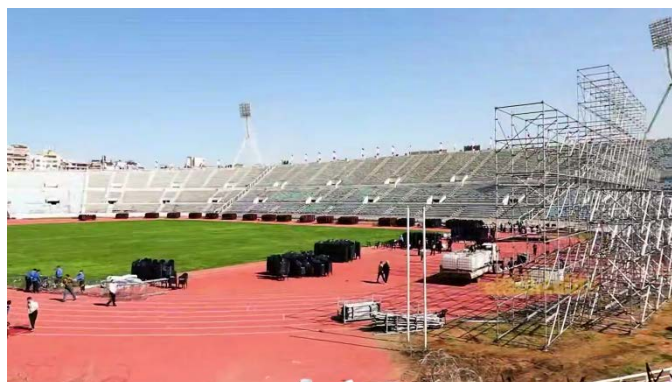
- ◆ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem claimed the government was submitting to an "Israeli dictate," adding that Israel should not be allowed to determine which planes could fly. He urged the government to reconsider and take a sovereign, independent stance, noting the interests shared by Iran and Lebanon. He also noted that Hezbollah and the Lebanese army were "brothers" and condemned the attack on the UNIFIL convoy (al-Manar, February 16, 2025).
- ◆ Wafiq Safa, Hezbollah head of liaison and coordination, condemned the attack on UNIFIL forces, calling it "unacceptable." He added that Hezbollah maintained good relations with UNIFIL, full coordination, and respect for Resolution 1701. He called for distinguishing between a peaceful protest against the decision to block the Iranian plane and the attack on UNIFIL. He also urged Lebanese authorities and the army to "consider the people's situation and not pressure them further" (al-Mayadeen, February 15, 2025).
- ◆ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun condemned the protests in Beirut, calling them "unacceptable," and stated that security forces would not allow any party to undermine the country's stability (Lebanese presidency X account, February 15, 2025).
- ◆ Prime Minister Nawaf Salam spoke the UNIFIL commander and with Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the UN special coordinator for Lebanon, and condemned the "criminal attack" on UNIFIL vehicles and personnel. He instructed the interior minister to take urgent action against the attackers. Acting Lebanese army Commander Hassan Ouda pledged to arrest those responsible (Lebanese National News Agency X account, February 15, 2025).
- ◆ Lebanese Interior Minister Ahmed al-Hajjar gave instructions that the people who had attacked the UN personnel were to be identified and arrested. He visited the hospital where wounded UNIFIL personnel were being treated and said the Lebanese government regarded the attack as a crime against the peacekeeping forces (Lebanese National News Agency, February 15, 2025).
- ◆ The Amal Movement condemned the attack on UNIFIL, calling it an "attack on south Lebanon." According to Amal, roadblocks undermined civil peace and security forces had to pursue the perpetrators (Lebanon 24, February 14, 2025).



◆ UNIFIL condemned the attack on its convoy, describing it as a violation of international law, and demanded a full and immediate investigation by Lebanese authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice (UNIFIL Telegram channel, February 14, 2025).

## Hezbollah makes preparations for Nasrallah's funeral

► This past week Hezbollah continued making preparations for the funeral of deceased secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and his successor Hashem Safi al-Din,, the head of the Executive Council, scheduled to take place on February 23, 2025. Ali Dhaher, chairman of the supreme committee overseeing the funeral ceremonies, said the funeral would be held at 1:00 p.m. and that representatives from 79 countries had been invited. He added that Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem would deliver a speech during the ceremony, which is expected to last about an hour and will take place at Camille Chamoun Stadium in Beirut (al-Manar, February 11, 2025).



### **Preparations at Camille Chamoun Stadium (al-Manar X account, February 16, 2025)**

► Mojtaba Amani, Iran's ambassador to Beirut, said there would be extensive public and official Iranian participation at the funeral of Nasrallah and Safi al-Din. He said that both had "longed to be shaheeds" and their deaths had "great moral significance, as they strengthened the determination of the jihad fighters and the defenders of the holy sites at the borders" (al-Nour, February 11, 2025).

► A Hezbollah parliamentary delegation presented official invitations to Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to attend the funeral ceremony (al-Nashra, February 13, 2025).



**Hezbollah delegation, led by Hezbollah bloc leader Mohammad Raad, delivering an invitation to President Aoun (al-Manar X account, February 13, 2025)**

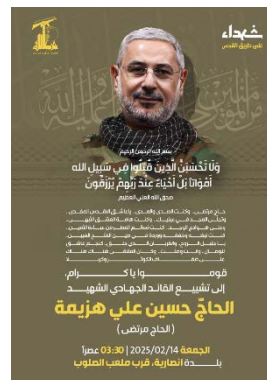
► On February 16, 2025, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem called for widespread participation in the funeral and urged attendees to maintain discipline and avoid gunfire or any behavior which could show disrespect. He claimed it would be an "exceptional funeral" and a "demonstration of strength," proving that "the resistance" remained active on the ground and would not capitulate to pressure. He added there would be representatives from Arab and Islamic countries and various political factions, noting that the "resistance public" was not limited to Hezbollah's immediate supporters but included all those who felt connected to its "cause"<sup>4</sup> (al-Mayadeen, February 16, 2025).

► On February 14, 2025, Hezbollah held the funeral of Hussein Ali Hazima, the head of Hezbollah's intelligence network, who was killed on the night of October 3, 2024, in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut, along with Hashem Safi al-Din. The official ceremony took place at the Imam al-Mujtaba complex in Beirut, after which the casket was transported for burial in Ansariyeh, near Sidon. Hezbollah's official operative in Beirut, Hussein Fadlallah, stated at the ceremony

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<sup>4</sup> The destruction and elimination of the State of Israel.

that the funeral of Nasrallah would take place on schedule "regardless of the circumstances" (al-'Ahed, February 14, 2025).



**Right: The invitation to the funeral of Hussein Ali al-Hazima (Hezbollah combat information, February 12, 2025). Left: Senior Hezbollah figures at the funeral ceremony (al-'Ahed, February 14, 2025)**

## The reconstruction of Lebanon

- ▶ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem said the State of Lebanon should lead the reconstruction of the destroyed areas, adding that Hezbollah was prepared to cooperate, as it would not abandon the Lebanese people when it came to reconstruction. He said he hoped the new homes would be better than those which had been destroyed (al-Manar, February 16, 2025).
- ▶ The al-Qard al-Hassan Association, Hezbollah's financial arm, announced it had resumed paying compensation to those affected by the "brutal aggression." On January 29, 2025, the association announced a halt in payments due to a "technical malfunction" (al-Manar, February 11, 2025).
- ▶ Suhail Ghamloush, an engineer and the chief coordinator of reconstruction operations for Jihad al-Bina, Hezbollah's building wing, reported that except for villages near the southern border, more than 90% of the damage assessment of structures had been completed. He said the reconstruction efforts would be determined by the Lebanese government, and Jihad al-Bina was working in coordination with state institutions, particularly with the Union of Suburb Municipalities, local municipalities in various regions, the Higher Relief Committee and the South Council, which oversees the southern region of the country (al-Manar, February 17, 2025).

## Public opinion poll gauging support for Hezbollah

- ▶ The Hezbollah-affiliated Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation in Lebanon published the findings of a survey indicating that 71% of respondents believed that Israel was responsible for a "planned aggression" against Lebanon, 96% were confident that the damage

caused by the attacks would be repaired, and 74% think that "the resistance" would recover and continue to serve as the cornerstone of the country's defensive strategy. Fifty-seven percent said "the resistance" had successfully thwarted the "enemy's" objectives, and the overwhelming majority of Lebanese Shi'ites still supported "the resistance" and viewed its role positively.

► The Hezbollah-affiliated news site al-'Ahed published the survey results, claiming that the findings contradicted the narrative presented in Israeli media, which suggested that "the resistance" in Lebanon had weakened and that public support had declined (al-'Ahed, February 13, 2025).

### **Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative killed**

► The Jerusalem Brigades, military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), announced that Uday Mahmoud Hussein, 24 years old, an operative in its Syria branch, was killed "on the borders of occupied Palestine" while participating in clashes with the "Zionist aggression" during Operation al-Aqsa Flood. No further details were given (PIJ Telegram channel, February 12, 2025).

## **The Situation in Lebanon**

### **The new Lebanese government**

► Led by Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's new government convened for its first session, which began with a moment of silence in memory of those "killed in the recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon." President Joseph Aoun said the most urgent issues for the government were the budget, local elections and the implementation of Resolution 1701, especially the need for an Israeli withdrawal by February 18, 2025 (Lebanese National News Agency, February 11, 2025).



**Nawaf Salam's new government, with President Aoun  
(Lebanese Presidency X account, February 11, 2025)**

- ▶ The committee formed by Lebanon's new government to draft its policy guidelines is expected to omit Hezbollah's longstanding slogan for defending Lebanon, "Army-People-Resistance," which appeared in previous governments' guidelines (al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 12, 2025).
- ▶ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem asked how policy guidelines could be approved without recognizing the right to "resistance,"<sup>5</sup> which he claimed was enshrined in the constitution, adding that appointments should be based on merit. He claimed Hezbollah had contributed to building the state, working with Amal and other forces for the country's benefit, and claimed that only the involvement of the "Shi'ite Twins" (Hezbollah and Amal) in the presidential election made it possible to reach a consensus, with Hezbollah playing a significant role in securing national agreement (al-Manar, February 16, 2025).
- ▶ In his first long interview with Lebanese media, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said that forming the government and electing the president provided Lebanon with a new opportunity which should not be wasted (al-Nahar YouTube channel, February 11, 2025):
  - ◆ He noted the criteria for forming his government, which were adherence to the principle of separation of powers, selecting ministers not involved in parliamentary or local elections, choosing ministers who were not party members and appointing ministers with high skills and qualifications.
  - ◆ He said he had appointed Amal-affiliated Yassine as minister of finance because the Shi'ite community faced severe challenges after the war, including many displaced people and extensive infrastructure damage. He said it was important to address the Shi'ite community's needs rather than exacerbating their suffering.
  - ◆ He noted the need to implement the Taif Agreement, which stipulates that the state must have a monopoly on weapons throughout the country. Regarding the area south of the Litani River, which is supposed to be demilitarized under the ceasefire agreement and UN Security Council Resolution 1701, Salam remarked, "In recent years, we have debated this issue, and the result has been a heavy price with significant destruction in the south."
- ▶ According to an article in al-Sharq al-Awsat, given the current situation and the intention to create a new political balance in Lebanon, the Israeli withdrawal would provide stability and end the country's exhaustion, allowing the government to focus on saving the nation. The

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<sup>5</sup> Violence and terrorism against Israel.

article claimed that the withdrawal would deprive Hezbollah of its pretext for retaining weapons as a means of "resistance" and enable the government to implement President Aoun's call for exclusive state control over arms. The article further noted that the withdrawal rendered Hezbollah's "People-Army-Resistance" formula a meaningless slogan with no place in the government's policy guidelines, especially as Lebanon entered a new political era (al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 10, 2025).

► Ibrahim al-Amin, editor-in-chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Akhbar daily newspaper, warned Lebanon's leadership not to follow the directives of President Trump, whom he called "the madman of our time." Al-Amin urged an examination be held to find out how the consensus to appoint Nawaf Salam as prime minister was reached and questioned "what conspiracies against the state are being hatched." He claimed that Salam's appointment, along with that of President Aoun and recent events at Beirut's international airport, represented an American attempt to integrate Lebanon into the Abraham Accords for the normalization of relations with Israel. He warned that continuing along the current path would lead to "brutal battles that could result in horrific civil violence," unless the current leadership realized that obeying American directives amounted to "suicide" (al-Akhbar, February 17, 2025).

### **The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Rafik al-Hariri**

► Saad al-Hariri, former Lebanese prime minister and leader of the Future Movement, delivered a speech in Beirut marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of his father, former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri. He expressed support for Israel's withdrawal from the villages of south Lebanon and the implementation of Resolution 1701, emphasizing that the monopoly on weapons in Lebanon should belong solely to the army and security forces.

► Al-Hariri did not publicly criticize Hezbollah, rather saying that the Shi'ite community played a crucial role in Lebanon's reconstruction and the realization of national sovereignty. He stressed that Lebanon was one nation and the Lebanese people were one body, vowing that the war damages would be repaired (al-Jadeed, February 14, 2025).



**Sa'ad al-Hariri at a memorial service for his father (LBCI, February 14, 2025)**

## The Syria-Lebanon border

- The Lebanese army reported that its forces had searched the homes of wanted individuals in the towns of al-Qasr in the Hermel region and al-Asfurja in the Akar region in northern Lebanon. Large quantities of grenade launchers, grenades, military weapons and ammunition were seized during the raids (Lebanese army X account, February 10, 2025).
- The Lebanese army also announced it had closed several illegal crossings used for smuggling along the northern border with Syria, including Hawsh al-Sayyid Ali, al-Qasr-Hermel and al-Qaa. A wanted person was arrested by a military patrol in the al-Nabi Othman-Beqa'a area, with weapons, military equipment and drugs found in his possession (Lebanese army X account, February 16, 2025).



**Lebanese army closing smuggling routes on the Syria-Lebanon border (Lebanese army X account, February 16, 2025)**

- The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese al-Akhbar daily newspaper claimed that Hezbollah had not been party to the clashes along the Syria-Lebanon border between the security forces of the new Syrian regime and smuggling clans affiliated with Hezbollah. The report stated that although Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, the militia led by de facto Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa (Abu Mohammad al-Julani), which led to the overthrow of the Assad regime and was now part of the new security forces, accused Hezbollah of escalating tensions at the border, "security

and local sources" asserted that Hezbollah had not intervened in the incidents and had been involved in efforts to calm the situation (al-Akhbar, February 11, 2025).