



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah February 17 – 24, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ Hezbollah held a funeral for its former secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, and his designated successor, Hashem Safi al-Din, in Beirut. Hundreds of thousands of people attended, including an Iranian delegation led by the foreign minister and the speaker of the Majlis, as well as foreign delegations affiliated with the "resistance axis."² The Lebanese president and prime minister did not attend the ceremony; the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament was the highest-ranking government representative.
- ▶ Hezbollah' secretary general, Na'im Qassem (who did not attend the funeral), said the organization would follow Nasrallah's "legacy" and continue on the path of "resistance," adding that they would continue to support the Palestinians. He claimed Hezbollah had demonstrated resilience and agreed to the ceasefire because they did not wish to continue fighting without a "political horizon." He also said the organization would participate in the government and in managing the state on key issues.
- ▶ The IDF completed its withdrawal from south Lebanon, except for a presence at five strategic points near the border with Israel. Even after the withdrawal, IDF forces continued operations to prevent Hezbollah from strengthening its presence and military capabilities in south Lebanon. Senior Lebanese government officials said they would continue diplomatic efforts to secure the full withdrawal of Israel, while Hezbollah said the state was responsible for completing the withdrawal and warned they were prepared to take action if the "occupation" continued.
- ▶ Senior Lebanese officials met with the Iranians who arrived for Nasrallah's funeral. Lebanese President Aoun told them his country was weary of the wars of other countries and called on foreign nations not to interfere in its internal affairs.

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

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

► For the first time in 25 years, Hezbollah's "article of resistance" was not included in the new Lebanese government's policy guidelines.

Nasrallah's Funeral

► Hezbollah held a funeral for its former secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed by Israel on September 27, 2024, and his designated successor, Hashem Safi al-Din, former head of the executive council, who was killed by Israel on October 3, 2024. The main event took place at Camille Chamoun Football Stadium in Beirut, where the two coffins were driven on a truck through the crowd at the stadium. The masses chanted "At your service, Nasrallah," "We are all resistance," "Death to Israel and America," etc. Nasrallah's coffin was transferred to a mausoleum built near Beirut International Airport, while Hashem Safi al-Din was buried in his hometown of Deir Qanoun in south Lebanon on February 24, 2025. Hundreds of thousands were estimated to have attended the funerals, while Hezbollah-affiliated media claimed the number was between one and 1.4 million (al-Mayadeen, February 23, 2025; al-Manar, February 23, 2025; al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 24, 2025).



Right: The coffins of Nasrallah and Safi al-Din in Beirut (Uni News Agency, February 23, 2025).

Left: The funeral at Camille Chamoun Stadium (Uni News Agency, February 23, 2025)

► Although Hezbollah invited Lebanon's ruling officials and party leaders, the highest-ranking Lebanese official in attendance was Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, and leader of the Amal Movement, a close associate of Nasrallah, who represented President Joseph Aoun. Muhammad Haidar, Hezbollah minister of labor in the Lebanese government, was the official representative of Prime Minister Nawaf Salam (al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 23, 2025). The Future Movement, led by former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, also did not attend the funeral despite receiving an official invitation (Lebanon24, February 21, 2025). Several foreign delegations affiliated with the "resistance axis" attended the ceremony:

◆ The Iranian delegation included Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and Acting Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Ali Fadavi (al-Manar, February 23, 2025). A letter from Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was read, stating that "The enemy should know that the resistance against evil, plunder and arrogance has not ended and will continue until the goal is achieved" (Iranian Supreme Leader's Telegram channel, February 23, 2025).



The Iranian representatives upon their arrival at the stadium for the funeral ceremony (SNN.IR, February 23, 2025)

◆ Hamas announced that a delegation had attended the ceremony, led by Osama Hamdan, senior Hamas official in Lebanon, Taher al-Nunu political bureau advisor, Ali Barakeh, a member of the national relations office, and Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon (Hamas Telegram channel, February 24, 2025).

◆ Falih al-Fayadh, head of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and Abu Fadak al-Muhammadawi, head of the PMF's general staff, represented the Iraqi militias (Sabereen News Telegram channel, February 23, 2025). "Iraqi sources" reported that they had flown to Lebanon on a private Iraqi Airways plane and brought \$4 million for Hezbollah (Sky News Arabic, February 22, 2025).

◆ The Houthis in Yemen were represented by the movement's chief mufti, Shams al-Din Sharaf al-Din (al-Masirah Telegram channel, February 22, 2025).

► Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, did not attend the funeral but delivered the only speech, which was televised. He thanked the crowds, described key milestones in the lives of Nasrallah and Safi al-Din, and noted the senior figures who were killed in the attacks which eliminated them (al-Manar, February 23, 2025):

◆ **Nasrallah's legacy:** Qassem claimed Nasrallah was "honorable, humble, brave and wise [sic]," a strategist loved by the "resistance" who always had "Palestine" and Jerusalem in his thoughts. He quoted Nasrallah, who said, "the path of resistance must

continue, even if we are killed and our homes destroyed." He claimed that the massive turnout for the funeral demonstrated "unmatched loyalty in Lebanon's history."

◆ **The confrontation with Israel:** He praised the "resistance fighters"³ who he claimed had stood up to 75,000 Israeli soldiers. He claimed the ceasefire was a testament to the strength of the "resistance" and that Hezbollah accepted "Israel's request" for a ceasefire because the organization did not want to continue fighting without a "political horizon" and practical changes. He claimed Lebanon had adhered to the agreement, but alleged Israel had "violated" it, and since the agreed-upon withdrawal period ended while the "occupation" continued, the responsibility now lay with the state. He said Hezbollah would monitor the government's diplomatic actions and warned that "the resistance remains powerful in size and equipment." He added that while they were in a new and different phase of confrontation, "the resistance is present and ready" and that it "will uproot the occupier, even if it takes time." Addressing the demand to release Lebanese prisoners still held in Israel, he claimed they would not remain with the "enemy" and that Hezbollah would exert "all necessary pressure" to secure their release.

◆ **Support for the Palestinians:** Qassem said Hezbollah would continue working to "revive the Palestinian cause," adding that the organization's support for Gaza was part of its belief in the "liberation of Palestine." He also condemned the Trump administration's plan to displace Gazans.

◆ **Hezbollah's involvement in Lebanon's internal affairs:** He said Hezbollah would participate in the government and state management on key issues, including expelling "the occupier," securing prisoner releases and reconstruction. He said Lebanon was the homeland of all its citizens and claimed Hezbollah was a part of them. He said Hezbollah supported the Lebanese army and the alliance with the Amal Movement remained strong, adding that no one could drive a wedge between them.

³ Terrorist operatives.



Na'im Qassem delivering his speech at the funeral (al-Manar, February 23, 2025)

► During the funeral four Israeli Air Force jets flew over Beirut and over the stadium as the truck carrying Nasrallah and Safi al-Din's coffins passed through (IDF spokesperson, February 23, 2025). The crowds responded with chants in support of the "resistance" and against Israel, but the funeral continued (al-Mayadeen, February 23, 2025). Ibrahim al-Moussawi, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed the flyover was "evidence of the enemy's failure and emptiness." He added that "the enemy killed Nasrallah's body, but his spirit and the resistance will continue to live" (Ibrahim al-Moussawi's X account, February 24, 2025).



Right: Israeli fighter jets over Beirut during the funeral (IDF spokesperson, February 23, 2025). Left: "This arm will continue to fight you," Hezbollah poster in reaction to the IAF flyover during the funeral (Simia Telegram channel, Hezbollah's social media monitoring unit, February 23, 2025)

► Since the ceasefire went into effect on November 27, 2024, Hezbollah has continued holding funerals for its operatives killed fighting the IDF. On February 22, 2025, one of the largest funerals took place, where 35 Hezbollah terrorist operatives were buried in the town of Ainata, south Lebanon. Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization would continue on the path of "resistance" and that "wherever there is occupation, there is resistance" (al-Akhbar, February 22, 2025).



The mass funeral for Hezbollah terrorist operatives in Ainata (al-Akhbar, February 22, 2025)

The Ceasefire

The IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon

► On February 18, 2025, Israel completed the withdrawal of IDF forces from south Lebanon in accordance with the ceasefire agreement, following an extension from the original deadline of January 26, 2025. According to reports, with American approval, the IDF remained at five strategically located points in Lebanese territory near the border: Rachaf Ridge (al-Labouneh), overlooking the town of Shlomi; Jabal Blat, above Shtula and Zar'it; the Shaked Ridge (Jabal al-Deir), overlooking Avivim and Malkiya; the Tzivoni Ridge (Markaba-Houla), overlooking Margaliot; and the al-Hamamas Ridge, above Metula (Israeli media, February 17-18, 2025).



Map of south Lebanon after the withdrawal. The villages from which the IDF withdrew are marked in yellow, and the locations where the IDF remains are marked in (al-Manar, February 18, 2025)

► Until the withdrawal was completed, IDF forces continued ground operations against Hezbollah in south Lebanon. They exposed and destroyed an underground facility of Hezbollah's Radwan Unit, extending dozens of meters and containing living quarters and combat equipment. Even after the withdrawal, the IDF continued targeting Hezbollah's military buildup efforts and its presence in south Lebanon in violation of the ceasefire

agreement, which prohibits a Hezbollah presence south of the Litani River. Among the targets attacked were sites with rocket launchers and weapons in south Lebanon and the Ba'albek area in the Beqa'a Valley after Hezbollah activity had been detected, and border crossings between Lebanon and Syria used by Hezbollah to smuggle weapons into Lebanon. A terrorist operative involved in developing weapons in Aita al-Sha'ab in south Lebanon was killed in an aerial attack (IDF spokesperson, February 17-24, 2025). Lebanese media reported that the operative was the son of the mayor of Aita al-Shaab (al-Akhbar, February 19, 2025).

Hezbollah

► Senior Hezbollah figures demanded that the Lebanese government take action to ensure Israel's withdrawal from the five points where IDF forces remained in south Lebanon. They claimed the Israeli presence constituted "occupation" and warned that the organization might take action against Israeli forces:

◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, visited the town of Yaroun in south Lebanon after the IDF withdrawal, claiming it was "a day of resistance, homeland and Lebanon." He said the government was responsible for expelling "the enemy" and that national efforts were required. He also called for stronger cooperation with the Lebanese army, saying it was the national army and Hezbollah supported it (al-'Ahed, February 18, 2025). On another occasion he criticized the Lebanese government for not meeting its responsibility to liberate Lebanese land. He said Hezbollah would "continue the path of resistance" and was prepared for any course of action "to protect the resistance's dignity and achievements" (al-Mayadeen, February 22, 2025).

◆ Nawaf al-Moussawi, Hezbollah's head of resources and borders, said Hezbollah would not allow an "occupying" force to remain in Lebanon. He said the organization had been operating to remove "the enemy" for years and that "the resistance" would continue to focus on the issue. He added that the IDF's presence in south Lebanon reflected the Lebanese government's failure to achieve stability (al-'Ahed, February 19, 2025).

◆ "Informed Lebanese political sources" said the United States had informed the Lebanese president that the country's reconstruction was conditional on Hezbollah's disarmament. According to the sources, the decision was made after Israel refused to withdraw from all Lebanese-claimed territories and "intended to create a new crisis between the state and Hezbollah." The sources added that Hezbollah rejected any

possibility of disarmament, viewing its weapons as part of its self-defense, and considered any attempt to disarm as capitulating to American-Israeli pressure (Aram News, February 19, 2025).

◆ "Sources close to Hezbollah" reported that it supported the Lebanese state's diplomatic efforts to address the continued "Israeli occupation" at the five points in south Lebanon. According to the sources, Hezbollah is currently prioritizing the funerals of its former leaders Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safi al-Din, and rebuilding itself and its capabilities (al-Joumhouria, February 20, 2025).

◆ "Sources close to Hezbollah" claimed that if Israel refused to withdraw from the five points, Hezbollah might attack the forces, citing the self-defense clause in the government's policy framework and arguing that it would be for territorial defense (al-Madan, February 20, 2025).

► Hezbollah's allies also demanded that the government take action against the "Israeli occupation" in south Lebanon.

◆ Hezbollah and Amal figures met in south Lebanon and expressed their opposition to "the occupation" and the destruction of homes and villages. They called on the international community to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and "prevent violations of Lebanese sovereignty." They also stated that the reconstruction of war-damaged areas and compensation for war victims had to remain the top priority for the new government (al-Nashra, February 20, 2025).

◆ The Sunni organization al-Jama'a al-Islamiya, the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, declared that the continued presence of "the Zionist enemy" on Lebanese soil constituted "occupation and a blatant violation of national sovereignty," as well as a breach of Resolution 1701 and "an attack on the ceasefire agreement signed with Lebanon." The organization demanded that the Lebanese authorities deal with the issue and apply pressure to "liberate all Lebanese lands" (al-Jama'a al-Islamiya Telegram Channel, February 18, 2025).

The Lebanese government

► On February 18, 2025, following the withdrawal of IDF forces from Lebanon except for five strategic points along the border, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met to discuss the situation. They noted the state's "united national stance" and the need for "a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese

territories." They also noted that the role of the Lebanese Army was to secure the borders and ensure the safety of residents in south Lebanon, and announced measures to address "continued Israeli violations" (al-Jadeed, February 18, 2025):

- ◆ To appeal to the UN Security Council, demanding it take measures to address "Israeli violations" and compel Israel to immediately withdraw to the international border. They claimed that the continued Israeli presence on even one centimeter of Lebanese territory constituted "occupation, with all the associated legal implications under international legitimacy."
 - ◆ To complete the implementation of the November 27, 2024 ceasefire agreement through Lebanon's technical-military committee and the United States-France-UNIFIL mechanism.
 - ◆ To continue negotiations with the international monitoring committee regarding the implementation of the ceasefire and with the International Red Cross for the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel.
- ▶ Diplomatic efforts to secure Israel's complete withdrawal from South Lebanon:
- ◆ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun spoke with United States National Security Advisor Michael Waltz. He said it was imperative to end "the Israeli occupation" of the remaining points and complete the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and UN Resolution 1701. He also called for the return of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. Waltz said the American administration was monitoring developments in south Lebanon and praised the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south. He reaffirmed the American commitment to Lebanon and to resolving issues through diplomacy (Lebanese president's office X account, February 19, 2025). Meeting in Beirut with Congressman Ronny Jackson (TX-13), Aoun reiterated that achieving stability in south Lebanon and along the border required Israel's withdrawal from the areas it still held and the return of Lebanese prisoners detained by Israel during the war. Aoun added that the Lebanese army had deployed across all areas from which Israel withdrew in accordance with Resolution 1701 (al-Nashra, February 22, 2025).
 - ◆ Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam met with an American Congressional delegation accompanied by American Ambassador Lisa Johnson. Salam asked that the United States exert pressure on Israel for a full withdrawal from the areas it held, arguing that its continued presence violated Resolution 1701 and Lebanese sovereignty. The

delegation reportedly expressed support for Lebanon and its army (Lebanese Government X account, February 21, 2025).

◆ Lebanese Defense Minister Michel Mensa met with American Ambassador Lisa Johnson in Beirut. He accused Israel of evading its commitments and violating Resolution 1701, and called for a complete withdrawal from Lebanese territory. They also discussed the situation in Lebanon and United States support for the Lebanese army (al-Nashra, February 19, 2025).

The Lebanese army

► After the withdrawal of IDF forces, the Lebanese army announced that its units had completed their deployment in all border towns in southern Lebanon in coordination with the ceasefire monitoring committee and UNIFIL. The army said "the enemy" had not fully adhered to its withdrawal and remained present at several points along the border, and it violated Lebanese sovereignty through its "ongoing attacks" against Lebanon and its citizens. The army said its units continued conducting engineering inspections, opening roads and dealing with unexploded ordnance, calling on residents to follow instructions to ensure their safety (Lebanese Army X account, February 19, 2025).



Deployment of Lebanese Army forces in the south of the country following the IDF withdrawal (Lebanese Army X account, February 19, 2025)

► Acting Lebanese Army Commander Hassan Ouda visited the headquarters of the Third Infantry Brigade in Jeb Jennin in the Beqa'a Valley and met with officers and soldiers. He praised their steadfastness during the [alleged] recent "Israeli aggression" against Lebanon and instructed them to remain on alert for the next phase, given "the enemy's continued occupation" at several points in southern Lebanon (Lebanese Army X account, February 19, 2025).



Ouda visiting his troops in the Beqaa (Lebanese Army X account, February 19, 2025)

UNIFIL

► The UN special coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and UNIFIL commander Aroldo Lázaro issued a joint statement following the IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon. They said any delay in the IDF's withdrawal beyond the Blue Line and in the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south would constitute a violation of Resolution 1701. They added that the Lebanese president and government were determined to extend the state's authority throughout all areas of the south and therefore had to be given "unwavering support." They said much work remained and called on both sides to fulfill their commitments and fully implement the ceasefire agreement and Resolution 1701 (UNIFIL Telegram channel, February 18, 2025).

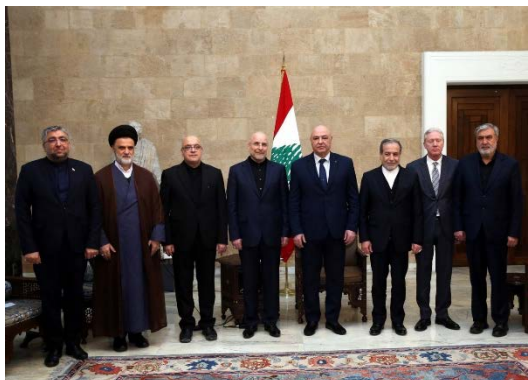
The Lebanese Government

An Iranian delegation visits Lebanon

► Senior Lebanese government officials met with the Iranian delegation which arrived for Nasrallah's funeral, led by Foreign Minister Araghchi and Majlis [Parliament] Speaker Qalibaf. They discussed developments in Lebanon and the region, as well as bilateral relations, including the Lebanese government's decision to prevent flights from Iran due to concerns that Israel might attack Beirut International Airport if intelligence indicated that the planes were transporting funds for Hezbollah (al-Nashra, February 23, 2025):

- ◆ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun told the Iranians that "Lebanon is weary of the wars of other countries," the unity of the Lebanese people was the best way to deal with "loss or aggression," and foreign countries should not interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs. He said Lebanon had paid a heavy price for the Palestinian cause, noting that they

supported the call for a two-state solution and recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians.



**Lebanese president Aoun with the Iranian delegation
(Lebanese president's office X account, February 23, 2025)**

- ◆ Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam told Iranian Majlis Speaker Qalibaf that they were exerting diplomatic and political pressure on Israel to complete its withdrawal from south Lebanon and were committed to reconstruction. Regarding flights from Iran, Salam said the safety of Beirut's airport and its passengers was the primary consideration in operating flights to and from it.
- ◆ Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met with his Iranian counterpart Qalibaf to discuss bilateral relations. Qalibaf said he hoped his visit would lead to increased bilateral cooperation, especially as the new government began its work.
- ▶ Regarding the suspension of flights from Iran to Lebanon, President Aoun denied any discrimination against Shi'ites and said the measures they were taking were solely related to sanctions imposed on the airlines (al-Nashra, February 18, 2025). Berri said he believed the crisis with Iran over flights should be handled "responsibly and quietly, away from the media." He warned that mutual mistakes could lead to unnecessary tension and called for a direct dialogue between Lebanon and Iran to resolve the issue. Berri said Israel should not be allowed to influence decisions regarding Iranian planes, noting the importance of preserving national sovereignty and addressing the crisis only with a view to promote to Lebanese interests (al-Joumhouria, February 17, 2025).

Foundation of the new Lebanese government

- ▶ The Lebanese ministry of information announced that the new government had approved its policy guidelines. It stated that all Lebanese territories had to be liberated, the state held a monopoly on weapons and had to extend its sovereignty to all parts of the country, and the government was committed to fully implementing Resolution 1701 and the articles of the

ceasefire agreement of November 27, 2024. For the first time in 25 years, the policy guidelines did not include the "resistance clause," which was based on Hezbollah's "Army-People-Resistance" slogan. Instead, it stated that "Lebanon has the right to defend itself in accordance with the UN Charter and is responsible for maintaining its security and borders;" the guidelines still require parliamentary approval (al-Nashra, February 17, 2025).

► Incoming Foreign Minister Youssef Raji said Lebanon was committed to UN resolutions and the ceasefire agreement and would therefore eliminate all illegal weapons. He also said foreign policy would be independent and sovereign, serving only Lebanese interests (Nidaa al-Watan, February 18, 2025).

Reconstructing Lebanon

► According to reports, the Americans told Lebanon that any aid or loans to help rebuild the country after the war would be conditional on the establishment of an official fund managed independently to handle the finances. The fund had to include mechanisms to prevent Hezbollah from managing the money. An "official source" claimed that Lebanese President Joseph Aoun preferred to establish an independent reconstruction fund (al-Akhbar, February 18, 2025).

► Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and his ministers met with a World Bank delegation to discuss war-related damages. According to the Lebanese finance minister's estimates, the cost of reconstruction will reach approximately \$1 billion, with the World Bank expected to provide \$250 million and additional funds expected from other countries (al-Nashra, February 20, 2025).

► Lebanese President Joseph Aoun met with Dubravka Šuica, European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Basin Affairs, to discuss economic aid for the country after in May 2024 the European Commission announced the allocation of €1 billion in grants. The commissioner stated that half of the amount had been transferred to Lebanon in August 2024 and the additional €500 million was contingent upon restructuring the banking sector and reaching an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (Agence France-Presse, February 21, 2025).