



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah March 10-17, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces continued operations to counteract Hezbollah's military buildup and presence in south Lebanon, contrary to the ceasefire agreement. A commander of the air defense system of a regional unit within the organization was eliminated, and Hezbollah Radwan Force facilities in south Lebanon were targeted.
- ▶ Lebanese government officials and Hezbollah figures called for exerting international pressure on Israel to withdraw from the five sites in Lebanon where the IDF remains stationed.
- ▶ The Lebanese government dismissed the possibility that the discussions held by the ceasefire oversight committee could potentially lead to normalization of relations between Israel and Lebanon.
- ▶ There were clashes with casualties on the Syria-Lebanon border. The new Syrian government accused Hezbollah of attacking its soldiers; Hezbollah denied the accusations.
- ▶ Criticism in Lebanon persists over the failure to disarm Hezbollah.
- ▶ The Lebanese security forces appointed a new army commander and a new director for the General Security Directorate.

The Ceasefire

The IDF

- ▶ This past week IDF operations continued to counter Hezbollah's efforts to strengthen its military capabilities and activities in south Lebanon, in violation of the ceasefire agreement which prohibits the organization's presence south of the Litani River. The IDF targeted weapons storage and rocket launch sites, including a strategic Hezbollah weapons manufacturing and storage facility in the Beqa'a Valley. It also targeted operatives handling weapons in the Froun area of south Lebanon, and attacked a Radwan Force headquarters and buildings used by Hezbollah for terrorist purposes in Yaroun and Kafr Kila. The IDF eliminated Hassan Abbas Izz al-Din, head of the Hezbollah Badr regional unit's air defense array north of

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

the Litani River. Four Hezbollah operatives were reportedly killed and several others were wounded (IDF spokesperson, March 10–17, 2025).



The IDF targeted two vehicles carrying Hezbollah operatives who were violating the ceasefire agreement. Right: Attack in Bourj al-Muluk. Left: Attack in the village of Yater (al-Mayadeen, March 15–16, 2025)

► On March 16, 2025, a vehicle in Avivim was shot at. The IDF responded by shooting at Einata, near Bint Jbeil; two fatalities were reported (IDF spokesperson, al-Akhbar, NBN, March 16, 2025).

Hezbollah

► Hezbollah continued to demand the Lebanese government take action against "Israeli violations," primarily the presence of IDF forces at five points in the south and the continued airstrikes. Hezbollah also threatened it might begin "military activity" against IDF forces if the state did not perform its functions:

- ◆ Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the Israeli attack on the Bourj al-Muluk road in south Lebanon targeted civilian sites and was hostile activity against the Lebanese. He claimed Israel violated UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and received support from the United States, and called on the Lebanese government to take strong action to protect the population (Lebanese National News Agency, March 15, 2025).

- ◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, spoke at the funeral held for organization operatives in Maroun al-Ras. He said the organization "has entrusted the state with the responsibility of dealing with the Israeli violations and attacks." He said the highest levels of the state had to respond to the attacks, adding that America and Israel were trying to drag Lebanon into making political decisions inconsistent with the sacrifices and price paid by the Lebanese people (al-Mayadeen, March 16, 2025).

◆ A Hezbollah source in the Lebanese Parliament claimed there were Lebanese who succumbed to American pressure and "threats" not to support the country's reconstruction unless Hezbollah disarmed. According to the source, while the state had to confront dangers and block foreign projects, including normalization with Israel, Hezbollah left the defense of Lebanese land and rights to the state. However, he warned there were limits to Hezbollah's patience and it could not disarm as long as the Israeli "occupation" and threats continued. He called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel (al-Araby al-Jadeed, March 14, 2025).

◆ Ali Damoush, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council, said Hezbollah was determined to complete its reconstruction project and paying compensation, as reconstruction was "part of resistance to the occupation." However, he said that the organization's efforts did not absolve the state of its responsibilities (al-'Ahed, March 14, 2025).

The Lebanese government

► Senior Lebanese government officials, including the president and the speaker of parliament, opposed the continued Israeli presence at five points in Lebanon and called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to withdraw from Lebanese territory:

◆ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said Lebanon was committed to protecting its diversity and preserving the unity of the state. He said stability and prosperity could not be achieved as long as the southern border remained tense and without international security guarantees. He added that internal and external cooperation was necessary to rebuild the country and turn over a new leaf in the region (al-Nashra, March 15, 2025).

Meeting with General Jasper Jeffers, the chairman of the ceasefire oversight committee, Aoun requested that pressure be exerted on Israel to implement the agreement, withdraw from the five points where it remained in south Lebanon and return the Lebanese prisoners (Lebanese presidential office X account, March 14, 2025).

◆ Tarek Mitri, Lebanese deputy prime minister, claimed Israel was violating the ceasefire agreement and UN Security Council Resolution 1701, adding that the continued IDF presence on Lebanese soil provided an excuse for those who wanted to "resist the occupation," while the Lebanese army was clearing Hezbollah's warehouses south of the Litani. He said that strengthening the Lebanese army was of utmost importance as a prerequisite for removing illegal weapons. He added that government would discuss

disarming Hezbollah but no timeline could be set. He claimed Israel was using security pretexts to avoid withdrawing from the five disputed points (al-Hurra Network, March 10, 2025).

◆ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said Lebanon would not succumb to pressure and would act to defend its sovereignty and liberate its lands from Israeli occupation. He said defending Lebanon was a national responsibility and had broad support (Lebanese National News Agency, March 14, 2025).

◆ Gebran Bassil, chairman of the Lebanese Free Patriotic Movement, said the Israeli "occupation" of Lebanese lands, international silence and its domestic acceptance posed a risk to Lebanon. He added that the state should have the monopoly on weapons and expand its authority over its territories, but it also had to know how to use weapons to defend Lebanon (al-Nashra, March 16, 2025).

◆ Morgan Ortagus, American deputy special envoy for Middle East peace, said she was optimistic about finding a solution for the problem of the five disputed points. She said the destruction of Hezbollah's facilities south of the Litani was part of the agreement and the focus should be on rebuilding the south rather than the organization. She added that efforts were underway to construct the Lebanese army's capabilities to make it the sole governing force in the area (al-Jadeed, March 11, 2025).

Possible Israel-Lebanon Normalization of Diplomatic Relations

► Morgan Ortagus said discussions about implementing the ceasefire in Lebanon were "a kind of introduction to Lebanese-Israeli negotiations aimed at reaching a bilateral normalization agreement." The political establishment in Lebanon rejected the possibility of normalization talks between Israel and Lebanon, stating the discussions currently taking place were related to security issues and the implementation of the ceasefire and did not concern political matters:

◆ "Sources" reported that Lebanese President Joseph Aoun told the Americans that if a channel were opened regarding the border with Israel and the disputed points related to it, consultation with Hezbollah and prominent elements in Lebanon would be required. The sources said that at the meeting of the oversight committee in Ras al-Naqoura it was agreed to open a negotiation channel after a foundation had been laid for additional issues (al-Akhbar, March 12, 2025).

- ◆ Lebanese political sources said appointing three committees to resolve issues between Lebanon and Israel was part of implementing Resolution 1701. The sources stated there was no intention to use the committees for direct negotiations with Israel. They said the committees were the preface to normalization but would deal with existing issues such as the Lebanese territories occupied and still held by Israel, border demarcation disputes and Lebanese prisoners held by Israel (al-Mayadeen, March 12, 2025).
- ◆ Tarek Mitri, deputy Lebanese prime minister, denied claims that Lebanon had received an official request to sign a peace agreement with Israel, stating that no pressure had been exerted regarding the issue and there were no plans to sign an agreement or to allow the continued Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. He said removing Hezbollah from Lebanese politics was entirely unrealistic (al-Hurra Network, March 10, 2025).
- ◆ An "official Lebanese source" said normalization with Israel was not on the agenda: the committee appointed after the ceasefire dealt with security, not politics, and focused on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The committee was responsible for monitoring Israel's withdrawal from the five border points, defining 13 disputed points and securing the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 13, 2025).
- ◆ Ibrahim al-Amin, editor of the Hezbollah's daily al-Akhbar, criticized the decision to begin negotiations on the demarcation of the land border between Israel and Lebanon and the desire to establish three joint working groups in coordination with the American-French ceasefire oversight. He claimed Lebanon did not need to accept the formula when it knew it was a deception and "working groups" was merely a code name for "negotiations to normalize relations." He said beginning negotiations would show that some people in Lebanon did not understand history or recognize the inherent dangers. He warned that those in responsible positions in Lebanon had to understand they would bear responsibility for the destructive consequences of discussing normalization. Israel, he claimed, wanted Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah by force, which was impossible and would lead to civil war. He added that after the ceasefire, the Lebanese president had made it clear to the United States that they should not expect him to achieve what the United States and Israel could not do (al-Akhbar, March 12, 2025).

◆ Ali Damoush, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council, claimed "the Lebanese people reject normalization" and it was the state's duty to protect the country from the dangers of normalization and "the ambitions of the enemy, which, along with the United States, is trying to push for direct negotiations and link reconstruction and external economic support to political conditions" (al-'Ahed, March 14, 2025).

Hezbollah

► The Lebanese news site Akhbar al-Balad reported that according to social media posts, for several days, crates of ammunition and weapons have been transferred from storage in a building in the Riyaq area of the Beqa'a Valley, which was bombed last summer and which Hezbollah denied contained weapons. Reportedly the crates were being moved to an unknown location, openly and in broad daylight. The posts noted that the activity raised questions regarding Hezbollah's ability to carry out the action without intervention from state security forces, given the ceasefire agreement and the government's commitment to confiscating illegal weapons and establishing a monopoly of state security forces over arms in the country (Akhbar al-Balad, March 11, 2025).



Hezbollah operatives evacuating crates of ammunition from a site bombed by the IDF during the war (Akhbar al-Balad, March 11, 2025)

► Ibrahim al-Amin, editor of Hezbollah's daily al-Akhbar, wrote an editorial claiming that any attempt to dismantle the "resistance"² by force would lead to civil war, and that no force in Lebanon was capable of carrying out such a task. He called for Israel's immediate withdrawal from Lebanon, arguing that the points where the IDF was present had been taken by force. He claimed President Aoun, Prime Minister Salam and Lebanese military commanders were weak and allowed the United States to exert remote control over Lebanon's decision-making. He said the United States did as it pleased through the oversight committee because it knew there

² Hezbollah.

was no one in Lebanon to stop it or resist its dictates. He claimed the direct responsibility for the situation lay with President Aoun and the prime minister.

► Hezbollah claimed that some people in Lebanon were yielding to American pressure and "threats," refusing to support or assist in the country's reconstruction unless Hezbollah was disarmed. Hezbollah said that while the state had to confront dangers and halt foreign projects, including normalization with Israel, Hezbollah entrusted the state with defending its land and rights. However, the organization warned its patience was limited and it could not be disarmed as long as the Israeli "occupation and threats" continued, and called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel (al-Araby al-Jadeed, March 14, 2025).

► Ali Damoush, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's executive council, said Hezbollah was determined to complete its project of reconstruction and paying compensation, claiming the "project" was "part of the resistance to occupation." However, he said the organization's efforts did not absolve the state of its responsibilities (al-'Ahed, March 14, 2025).

► On March 16, 2025, 20 Hezbollah operatives who were killed during the war were buried in the town of Maroun al-Ras in south Lebanon. The funeral included a speech by Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament (al-Mayadeen, March 16, 2025).

► Hassan Izz al-Din, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization would not allow Israel to impose new conditions on the organization or Lebanon and the government was responsible to ensure the situation changed (Lebanese National News Agency, March 17, 2025).

Criticism of Hezbollah

► Members of the Lebanese Parliament from parties opposed to Hezbollah, especially the National Forces Party, criticized Hezbollah and said they demanded a schedule for Hezbollah's disarmament. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam promised to discuss the issue with the Supreme Defense Council (al-Hadath, March 14, 2025).

► Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji claimed Hezbollah's desire to return to "resistance"³ had brought them to their current situation. He said that if in the past the "resistance"⁴ had failed to prevent Israel from "violating Lebanon's sovereignty," it would not succeed now. He said that the only option was to allow the state to function despite the propaganda regarding

³ Attacking Israel.

⁴ Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

the possibility of a return to civil war. Israel justified its presence at the points under its control until Hezbollah disarmed; Hezbollah justified its return to "resistance" by blaming the "continuing occupation." Rajji called on the state to meet its commitments and exert pressure on Israel through diplomatic channels to implement the agreement and withdraw from Lebanon. However, he said it was important to communicate with Hezbollah so it would cooperate with the government and facilitate the ceasefire (al-Nahar, March 12, 2025).



**Coffins of Hezbollah terrorist operatives at the funeral in Maroun al-Ras
(al-Mayadeen, March 16, 2025)**

Internal Lebanese Affairs

The Lebanese army

- ▶ The Lebanese government approved several security appointments, including Rudolf Haykal, who was appointed commander of the Lebanese army, and Hassan Shakir, who was appointed director of General Security. The government also approved the recruitment of 4,500 soldiers for the Lebanese army (al-Jadeed, March 13, 2025).
- ▶ Rudolf Haykal, the new commander of the Lebanese Army, said Lebanon faced historical challenges, primarily threats and attacks from Israel. He said at this stage the role of the army was crucial in implementing Security Council Resolution 1701 (Lebanese National News Agency, March 17, 2025).



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun awarding the ranks to the new commander of the Lebanese Army, Rudolf Haykal (Lebanese presidency X account, March 13, 2025)

Clashes along the Lebanon-Syria border

- ▶ The Syrian ministry of defense reported that Hezbollah gunmen crossed the border in the Homs countryside area and shot three members of the Syrian security forces to death. Sources in Lebanon claimed that the gunmen had infiltrated Lebanese territory and were shot, whereas Syrian sources claimed they were killed inside Syrian territory and that people loyal to Hezbollah snatched their bodies and took them to Lebanon. It was also reported that following the incident the Syrian army began preparing to deploy forces along the border with Lebanon (Al Jazeera and al-Arabiya, March 16, 2025). Reportedly the gunfire killed a child from al-Qasr and wounded four others, forcing local residents to flee (al-Mayadeen, March 16, 2025).
- ▶ Hezbollah denied reports on social media about the organization's involvement in the events on the Syria-Lebanon border and claimed the organization had no connection to events inside Syria (Hezbollah's social media monitoring unit Simia, March 16, 2025).
- ▶ Several media outlets and social media channels published videos showing Syrian forces launching rockets at Lebanese territory. A media channel affiliated with the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq published pictures allegedly showing Syrian forces attacking Lebanese villages near the border.

Additional statements from Lebanon

- ▶ Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Druze community in Lebanon, at the ceremony marking the anniversary of his father Kamal Jumblatt's assassination, noted the "importance of liberating south Lebanon from Israeli occupation, completing border demarcation, and rehabilitating the south and other affected areas." He also called for restoring Lebanon-Syria relations on new foundations and urged the Druze community "to preserve their Arab identity and be wary

of Zionist infiltration, which seeks to turn you into a force to divide Syria" (al-Nashra, March 16, 2025).

► Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, also issued a statement marking the anniversary, saying, "firm positions are what unite the Lebanese in defending their national rights." He referred to "the difficult phase the Arab region is experiencing" and called on the Druze community "to emphasize their steadfastness, adhere to their Arab and Islamic identity, be part of the state in Syria and Lebanon, always stand by Palestine and its just cause and not fall into the enemy's traps" (al-'Ahed, March 16, 2025).



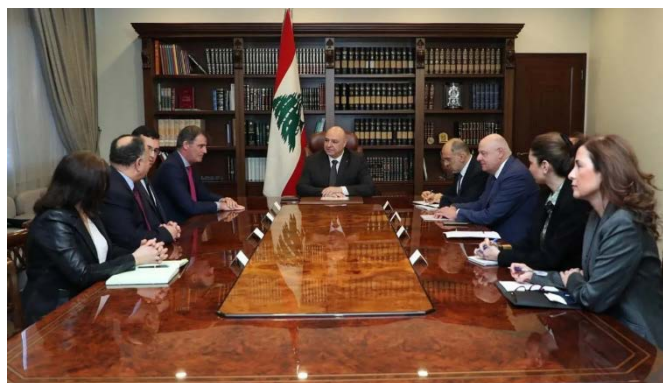
From right to left: Lebanese Prime Minister Salem, Sunni Mufti Daryan, Lebanese President Aoun and Parliament Speaker Berri at a festive iftar [Ramadan fast-breaking] dinner hosted by the Mufti (al-Nashra, March 15, 2025)



Syrian army forces fire rockets at Lebanon in the al-Qusayr area along the Syria-Lebanon border (Telegram channel Saber News, March 16, 2025)

Rebuilding Lebanon

► Lebanese President Joseph Aoun met with a delegation from the International Monetary Fund to discuss a plan to help Lebanon overcome the country's crises. Aoun said Lebanon was committed to continuing the implementation of reforms (al-Nahar, March 12, 2025).



The Lebanese president meets with an IMF delegation (al-Nahar, March 12, 2025)

► According to the World Bank, direct and indirect damages to Lebanon’s energy sector and electricity production amounted to \$307 million, including \$98 million in direct damages to the power grid and stations and \$209 million in indirect damages. The worst damage was in south Lebanon. The cost of restoring the electricity sector to operational capacity is estimated at \$147 million (al-Akhbar, March 17, 2025).



A damaged electrical panel on a utility pole in Lebanon (al-Akhbar, March 17, 2025)