



## Hezbollah's Policy for the Use of Force against Israel

July 11, 2024

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

- ▶ On October 8, 2023, a day after the start of the war in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah joined the fighting, opening another front on Israel's northern border. Its objective was to demonstrate solidarity with and to "support" Hamas in its war against Israel and to oblige Israel to invest combat and other resources on the northern border at the expense of fighting in the Gaza Strip.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Hezbollah's policy of using force is based on its so-called "deterrent equation" of proactive attacks, attacks in response to IDF offensive activity, attacks on important Israeli targets and increasing the range of attack in response to Israeli attacks on the organization's sensitive targets.
- ▶ According to the "equation", the organization applies "rules" to the use of force. Proactively, Hezbollah attacks Israeli military targets, limiting the area of activity to a range of three to five kilometers from the border, attempting to kill soldiers and damage military capabilities, while allegedly trying to avoid harming civilians.
- ▶ During the fighting, Hezbollah adjusted the "equation" with gradual escalation when it felt Israeli attacks had become disproportionate, usually during an escalation in the war in the Gaza Strip or following the elimination of senior Hezbollah commanders. The escalation included the use of more advanced weapons, the larger barrages of rocket launches and longer-range attacks.
- ▶ Meanwhile, Hezbollah is trying to preserve its "deterrent equation" even in the face of expanding the conflict should Israel initiate a ground operation in south Lebanon and to the point of an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah. To that end the organization combines statements from senior figures warning that it will fight "without rules and limitations" along

---

<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> For further information, see the November 24, 2023 ITIC report, "[Operation Iron Swords: The fighting on the Israel-Lebanon border.](#)"

with demonstrations of its capabilities of striking deep inside Israel. Hezbollah often states that it is preparing for an all-out war with Israel, and various reports indicate that Iran has increased the supply of weapons to Hezbollah since the beginning of the war.

► **Hezbollah is careful to justify every attack and escalation against Israel. In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah aspires to preserve the "equation" to prevent a more extensive confrontation with Israel, but reiterates that it is prepared for one. However, Hezbollah has repeatedly stated that when the war in the Gaza Strip ends it will stop attacking Israel. It has also repeatedly stated that only after the end of the war in the Gaza Strip, it will agree to negotiate the land border, but has also repeatedly stated that the current conflict forms the basis for Israel's withdrawal from all disputed border points, at the same time stressing that it will not relinquish the presence of Hezbollah operatives south of the Litani River, a position that may make it difficult to achieve a political settlement for the border.**

## Formulating Policy and "Deterrent Equations"

► Hezbollah's "rules of engagement" in the conflict with Israel are based on the "deterrent equation," which in turn is based on a combination of military buildup and the gradually increasing the use of its weapons, along with psychological warfare to glorify its capabilities and deter Israel from expanding the conflict.<sup>3</sup> The organization is aware of Israel's capabilities and understands that it is militarily inferior to Israel, **but on the other hand believes that it has capabilities which could neutralize Israel's military advantages, especially its ability to attack Israel's home front.**

► In recent years, Hezbollah has worked to expand the "deterrent equation." In 2015, with increasing Israeli attacks against Hezbollah-affiliated targets in Syria, an activity known as "the campaign between the wars," Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah warned that even attacking Hezbollah operatives in Syria warranted a "response" against IDF forces.<sup>4</sup> Beginning in 2019, Hezbollah included the Israeli Air Force's flights in Lebanese airspace in the "equation," threatening to attack its UAVs (al-Manar, September 2, 2019). In May 2023, Hezbollah erected two tents on the Israeli side of the border (the so-called "blue line") in

<sup>3</sup> Yoram Schweitzer, Orna Mizrahi and Anat Shapira, "The Development of Hezbollah's Deterrence Strategy Toward Israel," [https://www.inss.org.il/strategic\\_assessment/hezbollah/](https://www.inss.org.il/strategic_assessment/hezbollah/)

<sup>4</sup> For further information, see the ITIC August 2019 report, "[Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah said he would retaliate for the quadcopter attack in Beirut which he claimed Israel had carried out, and for the killing of two Hezbollah operatives in an Israeli attack in Syria.](#)"

Mount Dov, despite the fact that the area is demilitarized. Nasrallah claimed it was Lebanese territory and an Israeli attempt to remove the position would lead to a military response.<sup>5</sup> Nasrallah then extended the "equation" to the Palestinian arena, and after the Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021,<sup>6</sup> he said that if any damage was done to al-Aqsa Mosque or the Islamic holy places, the equation had to be a "regional war for al-Quds [Jerusalem]" and not just a reaction of the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip (al-Manar, May 26, 2021).

► Hezbollah's involvement in the war in the Gaza Strip began on October 8, 2023. It stated that its activities were part of the "struggle" to liberate Lebanese territories still held by Israel and supported the Palestinian "resistance" in the Gaza Strip, attacked by the IDF in response to the Hamas attack [and massacre] of October 7 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 8, 2023). Since then, the attacks have continued with varying intensity, and in Hezbollah's view are within the parameters defined by the organization, so that the attacks are carried out up to five kilometers from the border, and in exceptional cases at longer ranges and with greater intensity. The exceptional cases are responses to what Hezbollah considers as going beyond the borders of the equation, such as an attack on a senior Hezbollah military commander, a significant military asset or Lebanese civilians.

► **The "equation responses" since the beginning of the conflict on October 8, 2023 include:**<sup>7</sup>

- ◆ Damage to Hezbollah operatives will result in damage to military targets.
- ◆ Damage to civilians in Lebanon will result in damage to civilian targets in Israel.
- ◆ Attacking senior officials (military or civilian) will lead to an escalation of the response (in the range and intensity of the attack).
- ◆ An attack deep in Lebanon will lead to deepening the attacks inside Israel.
- ◆ Escalation of activity in response to Israeli escalation in the Gaza Strip or Lebanon.
- ◆ Deterrence to prevent a war or a limited Israeli operation in Lebanon.

---

<sup>5</sup> For further information, see the ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria \(June 16-29, 2023\)](#)."

<sup>6</sup> Operation Guardian of the Walls began on May 10, 2021 with the launch of rocket barrages by Hamas from the Gaza Strip at Jerusalem in the midst of Israel's Jerusalem Day events. The fighting between the IDF and Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian organizations lasted for 11 days, during which more than 4,300 rockets were launched at Israeli territory and the IDF attacked about 1,500 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. For further information, see the ITIC May 23, 2021 report, "[Escalation from the Gaza Strip – Operation Guardian of the Walls – Summary](#)."

<sup>7</sup> For further information, see the ITIC reports on the war in the Gaza Strip, beginning of October 8, 2023.

► Senior Hezbollah figures and affiliates made it clear from the beginning of the fighting that the organization intended to maintain the rules of engagement and the "deterrent equation:"

◆ After three Hezbollah operatives were killed in Israeli air strikes in south Lebanon in the first days of the conflict, Ibrahim al-Amin, the editor of the Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar, said Hezbollah could be expected to act according to the "equation of symmetry," which required it to carry out a military operation which would lead to the death of at least three Israeli soldiers (al-Akhbar, October 10, 2023).

◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, noted that the equation, according to which any "aggression" would be met with a response, was still in force. He added that how Hezbollah applied the equation in the field "depends on the resistance and its leadership." He also said that any harm to civilians would not go unanswered (al-Mayadeen, October 14, 2023).

► Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah gave several speeches, during which he presented the main points of the organization's policy in the current conflict:

◆ On November 3, 2023, he gave his first speech after the outbreak of the war.<sup>8</sup> He claimed that Hezbollah's "military activity" was intended to make it "easier" for Hamas in the Gaza Strip, since it forced Israel to move soldiers and resources to the north instead of having them fight in the Gaza Strip. He said that an attack on Lebanese civilians could cause Hezbollah to return to the equation of "a [killed Israeli] civilian for a [killed Lebanese] civilian," adding that he was prepared to escalate the intensity of the conflict if Israel escalated the fighting in the Gaza Strip or its attacks in Lebanon.



**Nasrallah delivers his first speech since the beginning of the fighting  
(al-Manar, November 3, 2023)**

<sup>8</sup> For further information, see the November 2023 ITIC report, "[Speech given by Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and reactions in the Arab world.](#)"

◆ In a speech given on January 3, 2024, Nasrallah stated that Hezbollah's attacks were conducted to serve Lebanese national interests, but warned that all limitations would be removed if Israel started a large-scale war in Lebanon. He added that the killing of Salah al-'Arouri,<sup>9</sup> the deputy head of the Hamas political bureau, in an attack in the southern suburb of Beirut on January 2, 2024, which was attributed to Israel, was a dangerous violation which would not go unanswered or unpunished (al-Manar, January 4, 2024).<sup>10</sup> Following the speech, Ibrahim al-Amin wrote an op-ed piece in which he said that the rules of conflict which had been in effect until October 7<sup>th</sup> had disintegrated and Israel was attempting to establish new rules on the ground. Referring to Nasrallah's statement that an all-out war without limitations would be waged, he said the "equation" would not be "a building for a building, but tens of thousands of enemy dead for thousands of dead in Lebanon." He added that Nasrallah's speech was intended to convey the message that the "resistance" in Lebanon would not accept the new rules and that the killing of al-'Arouri required a response which would restore deterrence (al-Akhbar, January 4, 2024).

◆ In a speech given on January 5, 2024, Nasrallah stated that Hezbollah's activity since the beginning of the conflict expressed the implementation of the "deterrent equation" vis-a-vis Israel. According to Nasrallah, the attacks were directed against all Israeli military positions on the border along a hundred kilometers, and in addition, against "settlements" [Israeli cities, towns and villages], which were also attacked "in response to attacks on civilians" from the Israeli side (al-Manar, January 5, 2024).

◆ In a speech given on February 14, 2024, Nasrallah provided the basis for the geographic expansion of the "deterrent equation" beyond the battle arena along the border, saying that if Israel expanded the war zone, Hezbollah would follow suit. He reiterated his claim that Hezbollah would stop its attacks if the war in the Gaza Strip stopped, but added that if Israel resumed fighting, Hezbollah would act "according to the rules and formulas," and the responses would be "proportional and effective" (al-Manar, February 13, 2024).

---

<sup>9</sup> For further information, see the ITIC January 2024 report, "[Reactions to the killing of Saleh al-'Aroui](#)."

<sup>10</sup> For further information, see the ITIC report, "[The main points of Hassan Nasrallah's speeches \(January 3 and 5, 2024\)](#)."

- ◆ In a speech given on February 16, 2024, Nasrallah related to the "deterrent equation" regarding attacks on Lebanese civilians. He pointed out that Hezbollah had formulated a strategy to protect civilians in 1992 and its implementation began in July 1993 (Operation Accountability), adding that any harm to civilians "crossed a red line." He accused Israel of "massacres" in communities in south Lebanon and noted that "the price for bloodshed will be paid in blood, not in buildings, vehicles or surveillance facilities." Referring to the extensive conflict with Israel, he noted that Hezbollah had missiles whose ranges extended from Kiryat Shmona to Eilat (al-Manar, February 16, 2024).
  - ◆ In a speech given on May 24, 2024, Nasrallah stated that the goals of the current fighting were to frame new rules vis-à-vis Israel and a new situation after the end of the fighting. He said the first goal was to "support" the Gaza Strip, the second was to block "any preventive action by the enemy against Lebanon," and the third was to improve Lebanon's national security, reclaim land (i.e., the 13 border points in dispute with Israel) and protect Lebanon's sovereignty (al-Manar, May 24, 2024).
  - ◆ In a speech given on June 19, 2024, Nasrallah said Hezbollah was prepared for any scenario, and warned that if a war was imposed on Lebanon the organization would fight "without rules and borders." He said the organization had "a bank of targets" and was capable of hitting any point in Israel. He added that all of Israel's coasts, ports and ships would be targets in the war (al-Manar, June 19, 2024).
  - ◆ In a speech given on July 10, 2024, Nasrallah said that since entering the current conflict, Hezbollah had set goals and was achieving them on a daily basis, claiming Israel "recognizes the achievements." He reiterated his position that as soon as a ceasefire agreement was reached in the Gaza Strip, the front in south Lebanon will also immediately enter into a ceasefire "without discussion," since it was [allegedly] a "support front." However, he warned that if Israel decided to continue fighting in south Lebanon after the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah "will not be tolerant." He added that Hezbollah remained cautious and was prepared for all "serious" possibilities, and although he wanted to remain optimistic regarding the end of the fighting, he was not afraid of an all-out war (al-Manar, July 10, 2024).
- Other senior Hezbollah figures and commentators affiliated the organization presented the main points of the "deterrent" policy in combat:

◆ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, said response to attacking civilians would be different from the response to attacking Hezbollah "fighters." He said Israel would pay a civilian price "because that is the only thing [Israel] understands" (Simia, November 8, 2023). He added that if Israel expanded its attacks in Lebanon, Hezbollah would expand its responses using what he called the "fourth range," meaning attacks using new rockets and missiles with greater destructive power and longer ranges (Lebanon 24, January 27, 2024). He noted that the conflict in south Lebanon was limited, but if Israel escalated its activities, Hezbollah would follow suit (Na'im Qassem's X account, February 21, 2024). He emphasized that any Israeli decision to expand the conflict, no matter how "limited," would lead to a Hezbollah "expansion" to deter Israel, which should expect "significant losses" (al-Nashra, June 15, 2024). He also said that from the beginning of the conflict, Hezbollah had noted that the objective of the fighting in south Lebanon was to support the Gaza Strip, the range of attacks would be three to five kilometers from the border and only the military, intelligence and informational levels would be attacked, not civilians. However, he added, when Israel changed its types of attacks or attacked civilians, Hezbollah was committed to an "appropriate response" that matched its "plan for the conflict" (Sputnik in Arabic, July 5, 2024).

◆ Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, claimed they had forced a genuine, difficult, unprecedented, continuous war of attrition on Israel (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 17, 2023). He added that the "resistance" escalated its actions in response to the Israeli escalation, and that Israel should know they were prepared for all possibilities of war and escalation in quantity and quality. He also stated that the "resistance" in Lebanon would continue its attacks as long as the "aggression" against the Gaza Strip continued (al-'Ahed, January 31, 2024). On another occasion, he said "resistance" would respond to escalation with greater escalation and Israel would achieve nothing "beyond loss and defeat" (al-'Ahed, June 14, 2024).

◆ Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that Hezbollah had escalated its actions against Israel to preserve the "deterrent equation" and to keep Israel from deluding itself into thinking it was capable of attacking Lebanon (Sawt Beirut International, May 19, 2024).

- ◆ Nine months into the fighting, Ibrahim al-Amin, al-Akhbar editor-in-chief, wrote an article stating that Hezbollah's plan of action following the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023 was carried out "in haste" and that the "war of attrition " had not been not included in the "resistance's" calculations. He said Hezbollah's leadership had to take a large number of calculations into account, and that during the past months there had been developments requiring new weapons and tactics, in addition to revealing advanced weapons, signaling the organization's capabilities to carry out larger and more intense attacks to deter Israel from a large-scale war (al-Akhbar, 6 in July 2024).
- ◆ Al-Akhbar correspondent Ali Haydar said Hezbollah sought to deter Israel by escalating its attacks in terms of targets and range without reaching an all-out war. He noted that since the beginning of the conflict, Hezbollah had made it clear that it would respond to any attack which in its opinion violated "the rules of engagement" it had [unilaterally] established on the ground, and because of that Israel [alleged] agreed [sic] to [Hezbollah's] attacks, which it [allegedly] "understood" were the price for any attack. He also said that even attacks which were carried out to defend Lebanon were part of the support for the Gaza Strip, because the arenas were "joined" (al-Akhbar, July 9, 2024).

## Putting Theory into Practice

### Support for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

► Since the beginning of the conflict on October 8, 2023, Hezbollah has stated that it was operating in "solidarity" with the Palestinians fighting Israel in the Gaza Strip in order to force Israel to divert soldiers and resources to the north, thereby easing the military pressure on the Palestinians. In its claim of responsibility for the first attack on October 8, 2023, on three military sites in Mt. Dov (the Sheba Farms), Hezbollah stated it had been "in solidarity with the victorious Palestinian resistance and with the struggling and patient Palestinian people" (Simia, October 8, 2023). Throughout the conflict, the vast majority of Hezbollah's claims of responsibility have stated that the attacks on Israeli targets were "in support of the determined Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and of their brave and honorable resistance," sometimes along with other reasons, such as attacks on Hezbollah operatives.





### Hezbollah's first claim of responsibility (Simia, October 8, 2023)

► Hezbollah also used the escalation of fighting in the Gaza Strip as an excuse to escalate its attacks in Israel:

- ◆ At the beginning of November 2023, when the IDF forces extended the ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah intensified its attacks by using new rockets and UAVs, with announcements stating that the attacks were "support for the steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and for the brave and honorable resistance" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 10, 2023). Hassan Nasrallah noted that there had been "progress" in Hezbollah's qualitative and quantitative military activity with the first use of explosive UAVs and Burkan rockets, whose warheads weigh between 300 and 500 kgs, as well as the use of UAVs for intelligence gathering as far from the Lebanese border as Haifa. Nasrallah stated that events in the Gaza Strip were related to the ongoing escalation in Lebanon (Hezbollah's public relations website, November 11, 2023).
- ◆ After the IDF entered Rafah on May 7, 2024, Hezbollah escalated its rockets with use of 500 kg Burkan rockets.<sup>11</sup> It also increased its use of UAVs, in terms of frequency and quantity, by launching UAV swarms.
- ◆ On June 8, 2024, following the rescue operation of four Israeli hostages in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, which the Palestinians claim left more than 200

<sup>11</sup> For further information, see the May 12, 2024 ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria \(May 6-12, 2023\)](#)."

dead, Hezbollah launched upgraded Falaq-2 rockets<sup>12</sup> for the first time (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 8, 2024 ).

- ▶ On November 24, 2023, a truce in the Gaza Strip as part of an agreement between Hamas and Israel resulted in the release of hostages in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners. During the truce Hezbollah stopped its attacks on the northern border and resumed them with the end of the ceasefire on December 1, 2023. Even before the ceasefire, a "source in Hezbollah" said that although the organization was not part of the negotiations, the hiatus in the fighting in the Gaza Strip would also apply to Lebanon, but any Israeli violation of the ceasefire would be answered in kind (al-Jazeera , November 22, 2023), thereby providing another example of the connection between the arenas.
- ▶ On July 3, 2024, Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, stated that if Israel merely limited its military operations in the Gaza Strip without a ceasefire, the consequences for the conflict in south Lebanon would be less clear and he did not know how Hezbollah would respond (AP, July 3, 2024).
- ▶ Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, said the decision of the political echelon in Israel to move to the third phase of fighting in the Gaza Strip and to stop the extensive military operations [allegedly] indicated Israel's recognition of Hezbollah's success in its "support" of the Gaza Strip and that it did not want to go to war with the organization (Radio al-Nour, July 3, 2024).

## Targeting Hezbollah operatives and facilities

- ▶ From the beginning of the conflict Hezbollah applied the equation, which had been in force before, according to which an attack on the organization's operatives in Lebanon or Syria would result in a similar attack on IDF forces. On October 9, 2023, after three Hezbollah operatives were killed in Israeli attacks in south Lebanon, Hezbollah launched anti-tank missiles and fired mortar shells at two IDF border posts, calling the attack an "initial response" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 9, 2023). On October 11, 2023, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching anti-tank missiles at an IDF border post, calling the attack "an uncompromising response to the Zionist attacks which led, two days ago, to

---

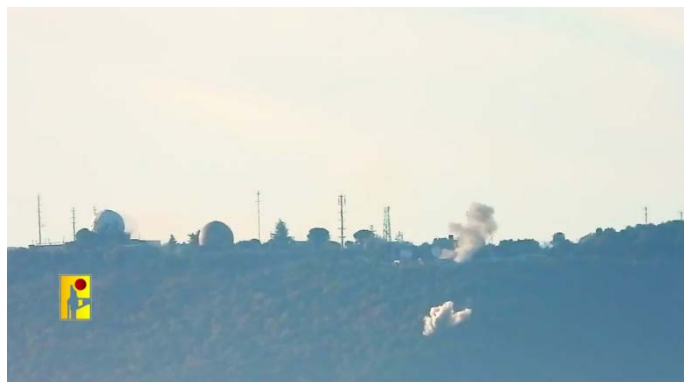
<sup>12</sup> For further information, see the June 9, 2024 ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria \(June 3-9, 2023\)](#)."

the death of a number of our mujahedeen brothers" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 9, 2023).

► Hezbollah's attacks, in terms of both intensity and range, if damage was perceived as more significant, such as the deaths of operatives or senior commanders. Attacking senior terrorist operatives in Lebanese territory who belonged to other terrorist organizations also led to an escalated response, and Hezbollah reacted strongly to attacks on its vital installations:

◆ On January 6, 2024, Hezbollah attacked the air control base on Mount Meron for the first time with a barrage of dozens of rockets. According to its claim of responsibility, it was "an initial response to the crime of the assassination of the great leader, Sheikh Saleh al-'Arouri and his martyred brothers in the southern quarter of Beirut" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 6, 2024).

◆ On January 8, 2024, Hezbollah announced the death of Wissam Hassan Tawil, believed to be the commander of the Radwan Force. He was the first Hezbollah casualty to be awarded the title of "shaheed commander," a nod to his status. A day later, Hezbollah attacked the northern command headquarters in Safed for the first time with explosive UAVs. According to the claim of responsibility, it was a response to the "crime of assassination" of al-'Arouri and Tawil (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 9 2024).



**The attack on the air control base on Mount Meron, a response to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 6, 2024)**

◆ On May 15, 2024, an Israeli Air Force attack near Tyre eliminated Hussein Ibrahim Makki, a senior field commander on Hezbollah's southern front who had previously commanded the organization's coastal sector. Hezbollah carried out three attacks, described as a direct response to the "assassination:" heavy Burkan rockets were fired at the headquarters of the 91<sup>st</sup> Division, dozens of rockets were fired at the air control base on Mount Meron and a surveillance balloon of the aerial warning system was hit

by UAVs near the region of the Golani Junction, the attack furthest from the border since the beginning of the conflict (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 15, 2024).

◆ On May 16, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for a UAV attack targeting defense plants in the southern industrial area of Kiryat Shmona, in response to an Israeli attack on industrial facilities in the Lebanon Valley (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 15, 2024).

◆ On June 12, 2024, Taleb Sami Abdallah, the commander of Hezbollah's al-Nasr Unit, responsible for the eastern sector of south Lebanon, was eliminated in an Israeli Air Force targeted attack. Hezbollah issued a mourning notice calling him a "shaheed commander," and its response lasted several days, with a sharp increase in the scope and range of the attacks on Israeli territory, which was extended to the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) region. According to Hezbollah, as part of the response, on June 13, 2024, 30 UAVs were launched and 150 rockets were fired at military headquarters and bases in the Galilee and Golan Heights.<sup>13</sup>

◆ On July 3, 2024, Muhammad Naama Nasser, the commander of Hezbollah's Aziz Unit, responsible for the western sector of south Lebanon, was eliminated in an Israeli Air Force attack in south Lebanon.<sup>14</sup> Hezbollah's response lasted two days and included the launch of concentrated barrages of rockets and explosive UAVs against military targets in Israel. On July 4, 2024, Hezbollah responded with its largest attack since the beginning of the conflict, which included the combined launch of more than 200 rockets of various types and about 20 explosive UAVs, which targeted IDF bases and headquarters in the Golan Heights, the Upper Galilee and the Western Galilee.

◆ On July 6, 2024, Maytham Mustafa al-Attar, a senior member of Hezbollah's aerial defense system, was killed in an Israeli Air Force strike in the Ba'albek region of the Lebanon Valley, a distance of more than a hundred kilometers from the border. In response, Hezbollah attacked areas where it had not previously attacked, but did not exceed the range of 35 to 40 kms from the border. Hezbollah fired dozens of Katyusha rockets at the IDF headquarters in the Lower Galilee, and explosive UAVs were launched

---

<sup>13</sup> For further information, see the June 16, 2024, ITIC report, "[Reactions to the targeted killing of Taleb Sami Abdallah, commander of Hezbollah's al-Nasr unit.](#)"

<sup>14</sup> For further information, see the July 7, 2024, ITIC report, "[Reactions to the targeted killing of the commander of Hezbollah's Aziz Unit.](#)"

at a base in Mount Hermon. According to Hezbollah sources, the attack on Mount Hermon was the largest by Hezbollah's aerial force since the beginning of the conflict in October 2023, and its objective was to send the message that Hezbollah recognized Mount Hermon as a strategic site for Israel (Lebanon24, July 7, 2024).

## Targeting Lebanese civilians and villages

► Most of Hezbollah's attacks since the start of the conflict have been aimed at military targets, but the organization has also attacked civilian cities, towns and villages in Israel, reportedly in response to Israeli attacks on Lebanese civilians and villages in south Lebanon, which is considered Hezbollah's "protected area." Since the residents of the northern communities in Israel within a range of about five kilometers from the border left their homes at the beginning of the war, Hezbollah finds it difficult to exact a price with direct attacks on Israeli civilians. Therefore, the organization justifies the shooting in the direction of the evacuated settlements, in response to damage to civilians and villages in south Lebanon, with the claim that IDF soldiers use houses and therefore they are "legitimate" targets:

- ◆ On November 5, 2023, Hezbollah launched a volley of Katyusha rockets at Kiryat Shmona. According to its claim of responsibility, it was "a response to the cruel and brutal crime of attacking civilian vehicles, which resulted in the death of a woman and her three grandchildren." Hezbollah added that it "will never tolerate attacks on civilians, and the response will be strong and uncompromising" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 5, 2023).
- ◆ On November 21, 2023, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for three attacks in response to an Israeli attack which resulted in the death of two al-Mayadeen TV correspondents and damage to civilian homes. The attacks included launching two anti-tank missiles at soldiers in Menara, firing Katyushas at a military base in the Beit Hillel region, and launching anti-tank missiles at soldiers in a building in Moshav Avivim (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 21, 2023).
- ◆ On March 5, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for shooting at a building in Kiryat Shmona in response to "Israeli attacks on the villages and houses of the steadfast civilians in the south, and in particular the damage to a civilian house and the death of a woman, her husband and their son in the town of Houla" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 5, 2024).



#### Attack on a civilian building in Metula

(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 9, 2024)

- ◆ On May 24, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for shooting at a building in Margalioth which was allegedly used by IDF soldiers, in response to "the Israeli attacks on the villages and homes of the steadfast civilians in the south" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 24, 2024).
- ◆ On June 15, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for firing dozens of Katyusha and Falaq rockets at Kiryat Shmona and Kibbutz Kfar Szold, calling the attack a general response to the damage to the villages in south Lebanon, the latest of which was against the town of Janata, resulting in "civilian deaths and injuries." Dozens of Katyushas attacked Moshav Margalioth in response to attacks in the town of Kfar Kila (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 15, 2024).
- ▶ On November 7, 2023, Hezbollah launched a campaign on social media with the hashtag, #unity\_of\_arenas\_and\_blood. The message was that there were "resistance fighter" and civilian deaths in Lebanon, and thousands of civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip, and as there is a unity of arenas, so the blood of the dead in Lebanon is equal to the blood of the deal Gazans (Simia, November 7, 2023). Hezbollah thereby represented the three dimensions of the "equation" against Israel: support for the Gaza Strip, killing terrorists and killing civilians.

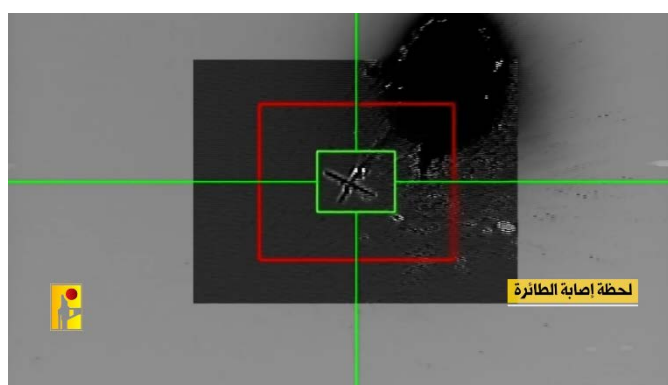


A poster of the "unity of the arenas and blood" campaign with the caption, "Our blood is one" (Simia, November 7, 2023)

## Attempt to limit Israeli Air Force activity in Lebanon

► In view of the ongoing Israeli fighter jet and UAV attacks, Hezbollah tried to reestablish its 2019 "deterrent equation," which was designed to prevent the Israeli Air Force from operating in Lebanese airspace. On February 26, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for downing an Israeli Hermes-450 UAV with a surface-to-air missile (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 26, 2024). On April 6, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for downing another Hermes-450 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 6, 2024). On June 1, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the downing of an Israeli Hermes-900 UAV (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 1, 2024).

► On June 9, 2024, a number of anti-aircraft missiles were launched at Israeli fighter jets operating in Lebanese airspace. No casualties or damage were reported (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 9, 2024). On June 12, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching an anti-aircraft missile at a fighter jet flying in Lebanese airspace. Hezbollah claimed that after the launch the plane returned to Israeli territory (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12, 2024). According to "sources," Hezbollah decided to reveal its air defense capabilities by launching a surface-to-air missile at the Israeli fighter jet, whose objective was not to shoot it down but to send Israel the message that the Israeli Air Force could no longer operate freely in Lebanese airspace (al-Nashra, June 12, 2024). According to a different report, "sources close to Hezbollah" stated the anti-aircraft missiles used were old and unable to shoot down a plane, and the objective was to convey a message to Israel (al-Medan, June 14, 2024).



**Intercepting a Hermes-450 UAV**  
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 22, 2024)

## Warnings of an all-out war

► Throughout the current conflict, Nasrallah and Hezbollah figures have expressed their reluctance to expand the conflict to an all-out war. However, in the face of Israeli threats regarding the possibility of an extensive operation against Hezbollah, senior figures warned that if Israel launched a ground operation in south Lebanon or an all-out war, the organization will operate "without limitations," in terms of both scope and firepower. In addition to public statements, Hezbollah has also waged psychological warfare:

- ◆ On June 18, 2024, Hezbollah published a 9:32-minute video which it claimed was filmed by a Hudhud UAV. The video documented the area around Haifa, the Haifa naval base and the identities of the ships within it, the port of Haifa, the Haifa airport, Iron Dome launchers and oil storage tanks (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 18, 2024). Nasrallah claimed that the published video was only a short selection of many hours of footage, including areas beyond Haifa (al-Manar, June 18, 2024). On July 9, 2024, Hezbollah published another video, 9:52 minutes long, which it claimed was also filmed by the UAV and which documented military installations in the Golan Heights (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 9, 2024).
- ◆ On June 22, 2024, Hezbollah published a video with Hebrew subtitles entitled, "And whoever understands will understand," with threats to hit strategic targets in Israel. The video began with Nasrallah's statement that "if war is forced on Lebanon, the resistance will fight without limitations, without rules and without reservations." Afterwards, landmarks and photographs of sensitive sites in Israel were shown, including the ports of Haifa and Ashdod, the gas rigs in the Mediterranean Sea, the nuclear reactor in Dimona and the oil refineries in Haifa. At the end of the video, a frame appeared reading, "Whoever [erroneously spelled "he"] who thinks about war with us will regret it, may Allah be willing" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 22, 2024).





**From the video "And whoever understands will understand"  
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 22, 2024)**

► Iran and the terrorist organizations belonging to the Iranian-led "resistance axis"<sup>15</sup> issued messages to help maintain the "deterrent equation" in the face of a possible war between Israel and Hezbollah. The Iranian delegation to the UN stated that if Israel initiated a large-scale military "aggression" against Lebanon, it would lead to a "war of annihilation," and that "all options, including the full involvement of all resistance fronts, are on the table" (Iranian delegation to the UN X account, June 29, 2024). The secretary general of the Iraqi militia, Abu Alaa al-Wala'i, warned that if Israel made a "foolish" move and started a war against Lebanon, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would switch to fighting "from zero range" against Israel. He said that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq was currently participating in Operation al-Aqsa Flood from a distance of more than 800 km, but the geographical distance would be canceled, the Resistance would use its entire military arsenal and would strike with greater precision (Abu Alaa al-Wala'i's X account, June 25 2024).

### **Possibility of an Israel-Lebanon land border arrangement**

► Since the beginning of the fighting, international efforts led by the United States and France have been made to promote a ceasefire in south Lebanon which would include distancing Hezbollah operatives from the border, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701,<sup>16</sup> alongside an for demarking a permanent border between Israel and Lebanon. At the center of the dispute between Israel, the Lebanese government and Hezbollah are 13 border points between Rosh Hanikra in the west and Mount Dov in the east, including the Sheba Farm

<sup>15</sup> Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution 1701 was passed by the Security Council after the Second Lebanon War calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the deployment of an armed UN force and Lebanese army forces in southern Lebanon and the disarmament of Hezbollah, to prevent Hezbollah from continuing to operate in southern Lebanon.

and the village of Ghajar (Sky News in Arabic, January 16, 2024<sup>1</sup> al-Nahar, January 17, 2024). Hezbollah has made it clear that they will not negotiate a settlement before a ceasefire has been reached in the Gaza Strip, along with presenting their opening positions for future talks:

► In a speech given on January 5, 2024, Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah said that establishing the "deterrent equation" during the fighting presented an opportunity, after the end of the war in the Gaza Strip, to reach an agreement for the "liberation of the rest of the occupied Lebanese lands," thus creating a new equation "that will prevent the enemy from violating Lebanese sovereignty in the air, sea and borders" (al-Manar, January 5, 2024).

► In a given speech on April 5, 2024, Nasrallah said that "achievements" on the Lebanese front would have a positive effect on Lebanon because they would strengthen the "balance of deterrence" and make it possible "to resolve the issue of land borders," while Hezbollah also planned to discuss the issue of oil and natural gas exploration in the Mediterranean. He added that discussions regarding the presence of Hezbollah operatives south of the Litani River were "worthless" since the facts on the ground were what would determine the situation (al-Medan, April 5, 2024). Al-Akhbar editorialist Ali Haidar said the speech clarified the organization's position, which was that the "resistance" intended to maintain its presence south of the Litani River, regardless of external events (al-Akhbar, April 8, 2024).

► In a given speech on July 10, 2024, Nasrallah claimed that distancing Hezbollah to eight or ten kilometers from the border, as Israel demanded, would not solve the problem (al-Nashra, July 10, 2024).

► Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, said that Hezbollah was not interested in discussing the Israeli demand regarding the southern Lebanese front, and said their position was clear; when the war in the Gaza Strip stopped, the Lebanese front would automatically cease fire. He added that Hezbollah was in no hurry to reassure or frighten anyone. He said nothing obligated the organization to discuss the situation in south Lebanon with anyone after the war ended, since south Lebanon had its own mechanisms (al-Akhbar, February 2, 2024).

► According to "informed sources," Hezbollah will not back down from two guiding principles: there will be no peace on the Lebanon-Israel border before a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, and there will be no withdrawal whatsoever of Hezbollah forces to the north of the Litani River. According to reports, Hezbollah expressed willingness to discuss the future situation on the border after a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, on the basis of "guaranteeing Lebanon's sovereign

rights, including Israel's withdrawal from the land points which have not been settled" and the cessation of the sorties of Israeli planes into Lebanon's airspace (al-Joumhouria, June 19, 2024).

► On July 3, 2024, Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, Nabil Kavek, said that Israel realized "can only return the residents to the [cities, towns and villages] through a political solution," but he emphasized that there would be no political solution on the border unless the war in the Gaza Strip ended (Lebanon24, July 3, 2024).