



Hezbollah: One Year After the Ceasefire

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Overview¹

- ▶ November 27, 2025, marked one year since the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon went into effect, ending the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah which began on October 8, 2023.
- ▶ The results of the war and regional and internal geo-strategic developments in Lebanon over the past year put Hezbollah in the most complex situation it had experienced since its establishment, with the loss of its leadership and senior figures and thousands of field commanders and operatives, the continuation of targeted killings and damage to the organization's infrastructure as part of the IDF's efforts to enforce the ceasefire agreement, the halting of flights from Iran and the blow to smuggling routes and sources of funding, the Lebanese government's decision to implement the state's monopoly over weapons, international pressure on Lebanon and criticism from within the Shi'ite community.
- ▶ Despite the difficulties, Hezbollah has shown itself eminently capable of adapting and rebuilding itself through organizational decentralization to improve the survivability of the leadership, reliance on continued Iranian support and the development of alternative methods for smuggling weapons and funds, manufacturing weapons itself, the preservation of its internal Lebanese political power base while strengthening the status of the organization and "the resistance" among young Shi'ites in Lebanon.
- ▶ Throughout the year, Hezbollah's senior figures changed their rhetoric. In the first months, they claimed commitment to the ceasefire and placed responsibility on state institutions to deal with [alleged] "Israeli violations." However, continued attacks and targeted killings, along with growing pressure on the government to disarm Hezbollah and begin negotiations with Israel, led Hezbollah to harden its defiant rhetoric and increase threats to "respond" to Israel

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and take action against anyone who attempted to harm it within Lebanon, although it continued to maintain restraint and did not "respond" to Israel's attacks.

► The targeted killing of Hezbollah's acting chief of staff, Haitham Ali Tabataba'i, underscored the dilemma facing Hezbollah, that is, threats of retaliatory action and the understanding that any response, especially if carried out unilaterally by Hezbollah, would have severe consequences for Lebanon in general and the organization in particular.

► **In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah's ongoing efforts to rebuild its military capabilities and replenish its arsenal, the inability of the Lebanese armed forces to stop them and the Lebanese government's failure to meet the deadlines it set for disarming Hezbollah and other armed militias, and the intensification of Israeli enforcement measures, may erode Hezbollah's caution and restraint and increase the risk of escalation, which would include a response targeting IDF forces or Israeli territory. Despite Hezbollah's weakened state, it apparently still has sufficient power to deter the Lebanese government from any attempt to fully enforce on Hezbollah the state's monopoly over weapons, while remaining the central power broker within the Shi'ite community without any significant opposition capable of challenging its position.**

The Challenges facing Hezbollah

► On November 27, 2024, the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon went into effect, halting the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah which began on October 8, 2023. Over the past year Hezbollah has been in most complex situation it has faced since its establishment in 1982, with significant challenges caused by the damages it suffered during the war against Israel and the geopolitical shifts in Lebanon and the Middle East.

Damage to Hezbollah's Leadership

► During the war against Israel, and especially during the last two months, from September 23, 2024 until the ceasefire, Hezbollah lost thousands of terrorist operatives and dozens of senior figures and commanders, foremost among them the secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah and his intended successor, Hashem Safi al-Din.

► Na'im Qassem was appointed secretary general during the war and after the ceasefire other senior positions were filled, among them Ali Damoush, who was appointed to replace Safi al-Din as head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, although Hezbollah did not issue official announcements for most of the appointments. The targeted killing of Ali Haitham Tabataba'i

in an Israeli attack in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut on November 23, 2025 revealed that he had served as Hezbollah's acting chief of staff since the end of the war against Israel.



Haitham Ali Tabataba'i (SIMIA, Hezbollah's social media monitoring unit, November 24, 2025)

► Despite Hezbollah's attempts to project stability and rehabilitation within the top echelons of the organization, reports by media outlets opposed to Hezbollah pointed to internal tensions and alleged power struggles within the organization's leadership, and even between the leadership and field-level ranks:

◆ There were reportedly power struggles between hawks, who also opposed Qassem's leadership despite his effective appointment by Iran, and doves, who sought to act according to the situation on the ground. As a result, three rival factions emerged within the leadership: the moderates led by Qassem, which claimed commitment to the ceasefire and to the organization's continuing role within the government of Nawaf Salam, but also opposed relinquishing weapons; the hawks, led by the head of the Liaison and Coordination Unit, Wafiq Safa, and deputy head of the Political Council, Mahmoud Qamati, who threatened the Lebanese government; and the doves, led by MP Hassan Fadlallah, who linked the disarmament of Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations to Israel's withdrawal from five positions in south Lebanon, the return of Lebanese detainees held in Israel and the reconstruction of south Lebanon. According to the report, all mediation efforts failed and "well-informed political sources" said Hezbollah was falling apart and could not make decisions (al-Nahar, Lebanon, October 21, 2025).

◆ In addition, there were reportedly disagreements between Hezbollah's Military Council and the Executive Council regarding Tabataba'i's successor. A "senior security source" said there were five possible candidates, the most prominent of whom was Talal Hamiyah, a long-time Hezbollah member who is wanted by the United States. Also on

the list were Military Council member Muhammad Haidar, Khadr Yousef Nader, who heads Unit 900 (Hezbollah's security unit), and Amin Fadl and Ali Ammar, who belong to the elite Radwan Force and have operational experience against Israel and in the Syrian civil war, though they are considered second-tier commanders. According to the report, there is a struggle between senior Hezbollah figures associated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and second- and third-tier Hezbollah figures who are pushing to increase their representation in the organization's military leadership, at the very least with an appointment as acting deputy chief of staff if one of the other three candidates is appointed as the new commander. It was further noted that at the field level, especially in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley, there is anger toward the leadership because people feel they are subjected to daily attacks and their families do not receive compensation and rehabilitation, while the leadership is perceived as detached, enjoying resources and not making even symbolic responses to Israel. According to "the source," as a result, even within Hezbollah's power base there are voices mocking the organization and claiming it is "finished" and there is no one left in its ranks capable of filling the roles of those killed in Israeli attacks (Aram News, November 24, 2025).

Damage to Hezbollah's Efforts to Rebuild Its Military Capabilities

► Throughout the year, the IDF continued to take action against Hezbollah terrorist operatives and the organization's military infrastructure because of violations of the ceasefire agreement, which prohibits the presence of armed groups (with Hezbollah foremost among them) and military infrastructure not belonging to the official security forces of Lebanon south of the Litani River, and because of the organization's attempts to rebuild its military capabilities and replenish its arsenal. According to IDF data, more than 370 terrorist operatives, most of them from Hezbollah, were eliminated, and approximately 1,200 targeted ground operations were conducted to destroy terrorist infrastructure and damage Hezbollah's military capabilities, during which structures used for terrorist purposes, weapons depots, rocket and missile launch sites, rocket and missile launchers and observation and firing positions were located (IDF spokesperson, November 27, 2025). Most of the attacks targeted south Lebanon on both sides of the Litani River, with the objective of preventing the rebuilding of terrorist infrastructure and Hezbollah's ability to carry out ground raids or launches against Israeli territory, alongside attacks on strategic Hezbollah targets in the Beqa'a Valley, in the Dahiye al-Janoubia and in

other areas in Lebanon. The IDF attacked terrorist operatives and commanders involved in rebuilding capabilities and infrastructure, including Radwan Force training camps, smuggling routes from Syria to Lebanon, weapons depots and launch sites, underground facilities and heavy engineering equipment.



Elimination of a Hezbollah operative in south Lebanon (al-Mayadeen, November 18, 2025)

Damage to Smuggling Networks and Funding Sources

► During the war against Hezbollah, the IDF took extensive action against the organization's smuggling network, targeting commanders and operatives in Unit 4400, which is responsible for transferring weapons, as well as Iranians involved in assisting Hezbollah, especially the senior IRGC official in Syria and Lebanon, Hassan Mahdavi, and attacking smuggling routes above and below ground on the Syria-Lebanon border. The effort continued after the ceasefire with the targeted killing of operatives involved in smuggling, the most prominent of whom was the deputy commander of Unit 4400, Hussein Ali Nasser, who was eliminated in April 2025, and of weapons dealers and Lebanese operatives of the Qods Force and against smuggling routes on the border with Syria.

► In addition, political changes in Lebanon and broader regional changes in the Middle East challenged Hezbollah and Iran's efforts to rebuild the organization. The closure of the air route between Iran and Lebanon by the Lebanese government's decision in February 2025 to halt civil flights between Iran and Lebanon out of concern that Israel would attack Beirut airport; the fall of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024 and the activity of the new regime under President Ahmed al-Sharaa to prevent smuggling to Lebanon; the elimination of the Iranians responsible for assisting Hezbollah during the Israel-Iran War, including the head of the Palestine Branch of the Qods Force of the IRGC, Muhammad Saeed Izadi (Hajj Ramadan), who was responsible for the Qods Force's ties with Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the commander of Unit 190 of the Qods Force, Benham Shahriari, who was

responsible for transferring funds and weapons from Iran to Hezbollah and Iran's other proxy organizations.

► In July 2025, the Central Bank of Lebanon issued a directive prohibiting any dealings with financial institutions operating without a Central Bank license and subject to international sanctions, including the al-Qard al-Hassan Association, Hezbollah's economic arm. The bank warned that those who violated the directive would be liable for legal action and the suspension or revocation of license, freezing of accounts and assets and referral to the Special Investigation Commission (al-Akhbar, July 15, 2025). After a delegation from the United States Department of the Treasury visited Beirut and demanded that Lebanese authorities toughen their measures against Hezbollah's funding sources, especially against al-Qard al-Hassan, the Central Bank of Lebanon announced enhanced oversight of all unlicensed financial institutions and noted its intention to take additional steps to tighten compliance with regulations in the entire financial sector (Lebanese News Agency, November 14, 2025). The authorities also reportedly plan to halt all banking operations of al-Qard al-Hassan, including the use of ATMs (al-Hadath, November 15, 2025). However, "sources in the Lebanese government" stated that the possibility of granting the association a "three-month grace period" to "settle its accounts with its clients before it is closed" was being considered (al-Hadath, November 27, 2025).



Al-Qard al-Hassan branch (Lebanon Debate, November 27, 2025)

► Meanwhile, international activity continued to neutralize Hezbollah's funding sources. The United States Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on individuals and entities that were part of Hezbollah's financial network, among them Jafar Muhammad Qasir, who is responsible for managing Hezbollah's financial team and who enabled the organization to raise funds for its rebuilding and ongoing operations, including through oil sales and the use of money-exchange companies (Treasury Department website, March 28, May 15, July 3 and November 6, 2025). The United States State Department offered a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the disruption of Hezbollah's financial mechanisms in the tri-border

area of South America between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay (Rewards for Justice website, May 19, 2025). Kuwait added Hezbollah and al-Qard al-Hassan to its sanctions list (al-Sharq al-Awsat and the Kuwait ministry of foreign affairs website, July 28, 2025) and Ecuador became the tenth country in Latin America to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 3, 2025).

The Demand to Disarm Hezbollah

► In his inaugural speech in January 2025, the president of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, said he would take action to implement the state's monopoly on weapons throughout the country, a position which was also included in the policy guidelines of the government of Nawaf Salam formed in February 2025. In early August 2025, the Lebanese government instructed the army to prepare a plan to dismantle all armed militias, including Hezbollah, by the end of 2025, and approved the principles of the ideas paper of United States special envoy Thomas Barrack, which included a timetable for disarmament. In early September 2025, the Lebanese government authorized the plan presented by the commander of the army, Rodolf Haykal.

► The government's decision referred to implementing the monopoly on weapons throughout the country, but the army focused on disarming only the areas south of the Litani River, and it claimed that its forces located and seized weapons, closed tunnels and blocked smuggling routes. According to the army, the mission is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, subject to the IDF's ending its presence at positions on Lebanese territory. UNIFIL also reported that more than 360 weapons depots in Lebanese territory were transferred to the Lebanese army (al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 27, 2025).



**A Hezbollah tunnel located by the Lebanese army and displayed during a press tour
(MTV Lebanon, November 28, 2025)**

► Meanwhile, reservations were voiced in Lebanon about the international pressure led by the United States and Israel demanding the disarmament of Hezbollah in other parts of the country, although in return generous financial aid needed for the country's reconstruction was

promised. The Lebanese leadership and the army expressed concern that such a broad move could lead to civil war and direct confrontation with Hezbollah, primarily in the organization's strongholds north of the Litani River, in the Beqa'a Valley and in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut. Prime Minister Salam said the focus in the areas north of the Litani River would be on "containing the weapons" to prevent the transfer of weapons between different areas or their use. He also acknowledged that the state was behind schedule in implementing the weapons monopoly and expanding its authority (al-Nashra, November 27, 2025).

The Possibility of Negotiations between Lebanon and Israel

► In light of the Israeli measures and the fear of further escalation, international efforts increased, mainly by the United States and Egypt, in an attempt to persuade Lebanon to agree to direct or indirect negotiations with Israel to resolve the disputes to prevent further escalation and find a solution for the issues in dispute between the countries, including border demarcation and the possibility of normalization.

► At first the Lebanese expressed their desire to hold only technical talks within the framework of the committee supervising the ceasefire agreement. The president of Lebanon, Aoun, expressed support for negotiations with Israel under international auspices, saying the use of force would achieve nothing. However, Aoun and Prime Minister Salam claimed that Israel was not responding to proposals regarding talks. In contrast, Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and an ally of Hezbollah, strongly opposed talks outside the supervisory committee and said Israel had to implement the ceasefire agreement.

Hezbollah's Status in the Shi'ite Community

► The extensive destruction left by the war against Israel in Hezbollah's strongholds, mainly in villages in south Lebanon and in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, posed a significant challenge to Hezbollah's status in the Shi'ite community. For that reason, senior organization figures were quick to state that reconstruction and assistance to the displaced were their top priorities, and demanded that the government invest in rebuilding the destruction.

► The local elections held in Lebanon in May 2025, for the first time since 2016, showed that Hezbollah had preserved its status with the Shi'ite public. The joint Hezbollah-Amal Development and Loyalty list won in all the councils in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, in the overwhelming majority of the councils in south Lebanon, in dozens of councils in the Beqa'a Valley and in all 80 local elections in the Baalbek-Hermel governorate, including in the city of Baalbek. After the vote, Hezbollah claimed that the effort of Shi'ite opposition elements to

undermine its influence failed and did not penetrate the core circle of support (Al Jazeera, May 26, 2025).

► However, the delay in the reconstruction process and the prevention of the return of residents to most of the villages on the front line near the border, along with continued Israeli attacks on Hezbollah strongholds in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley, are taking their toll on relations between the Shi'ite community and Hezbollah. Experts on Lebanese affairs pointed to a marked erosion in Hezbollah's grassroots support, since the Shi'ite population is not prepared to pay the price of another round of fighting after losing homes, livelihoods and family members, and sees any new military adventure as a direct threat to its existence. The experts said that behind Hezbollah's official rhetoric lies fatigue, suffering and growing frustration with ongoing wars, as Hezbollah's supporters increasingly recognize that decisions on the use of force are dictated by Tehran without regard for civilian distress. In their assessment, a broad dissatisfaction is emerging which threatens to undermine the organization's historic support base if it is drawn into another confrontation (Aram News, November 10, 2025).

► The close political alliance between Hezbollah and the Amal movement, led by Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, is important. Berri continued to play a central role in promoting Hezbollah's interests in Lebanon's political system, he led the opposition to direct negotiations with Israel, rejected claims of violations of the ceasefire conditions by Hezbollah and opposed any initiative calling for the organization to be disarmed (Arab News, September 1, 2025). His role in blocking implementation of the commitments required by the ceasefire agreement led to calls in the American Congress to impose personal sanctions on him because of his negative impact on Lebanon's stability (al-Arabiya inEnglish, November 13, 2025).



Right: Nabih Berri (al-Nashra, September 29, 2025). Left: Senior Hezbollah and Amal figures meet (Radio al-Nour, June 18, 2025)

► Another indication of Hezbollah's weakening inside the Shi'ite community is the emergence of unprecedented criticism by Shi'ite opposition figures who accuse it of subordination to Tehran and of prioritizing Iranian interests over the needs of Lebanon and the Shi'ite community. Among the prominent voices are the journalist Nancy Lakiss, who writes critical op-ed articles for al-Nahar and on social media and who received death threats because of her opinions (Aruba News, May 7, 2025), and Ali al-Amin, editor of the al-Janoubia news site, who publicly offers strong support for disarming Hezbollah as a necessary step for rebuilding the state and "saving the Shi'ite community from disaster" (al-Janoubia, August 20, 2025).

Hezbollah's Response to the Challenges

Adjusting the Organization's Structure to the New Situation

► In the late stages of the war against Israel, and especially since the ceasefire a year ago, Hezbollah has been in a complex process of reorganizing and rebuilding its ranks after the extensive damage to its upper command and field levels. It reportedly reduced its reliance on electronic communication in light of Israel's technological capabilities and created a new structure which would allow it greater survivability.

► Analyst and terrorism researcher Pierre Jabbour claimed that Hezbollah returned to using "primitive means," relying on a decentralized structure that would allow it to survive and adapt to a prolonged war of attrition against Israel's intelligence, technological and cyber superiority. According to Jabbour, the practical meaning is Hezbollah's disconnection from encrypted digital communication and a transition to basic means such as couriers, signals and landlines, as well as a return to fighting based on small cells, camouflage, secrecy and exploitation of terrain and geography, similar to the organization's early period of activity in the 1980s (*al-Nahar*, October 15, 2025).

► Ali Fayyad, member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, confirmed that the organization had "a new secret military structure, with a younger and more dynamic leadership," while "a source in the organization" noted that Hezbollah is operating clandestinely, similar to the way it did in the 1980s, with separation between the military and political wings and shorter command chains. However, "a Hezbollah operative" admitted that panic and chaos still existed among some of the organization's leadership and affected the command rank and the security behavior of its operatives (*Le Figaro*, October 18, 2025).

► A "senior Lebanese security source" said Hezbollah's leadership was focusing on reshaping and reorganizing its ranks to close gaps and address weaknesses following the elimination of

an estimated 10% to 15% of its commanders and operational sites in only 15 months. According to "the source," another focus is on experts in technology and artificial intelligence to improve the security of Hezbollah's leadership, command centers and military sites, especially in light of Israel's successes in attacking leaders and underground sites and harming technicians and engineers in the pager-explosion operation. "The source" added that Hezbollah was avoiding escalation to concentrate on rebuilding its human military capabilities and reorganizing its structure with the establishment of new groups in the field, army and technical arenas and the appointment of new brigade commanders (Aram News, October 27, 2025).

► "Arab intelligence elements" reported that Hezbollah was again becoming decentralized, as it was in the 1980s, and similar to the way Hamas changed its mode of operation during the war in the Gaza Strip. According to the "elements," although Hezbollah, like Hamas, suffered severe damage to its leadership, it continues to recruit new fighters and is not prepared to give up its activity. Randa Slim, a fellow of the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University, noted that Hezbollah did not feel it had been defeated in the war and in its own assessment was capable of rebuilding itself, especially with Iran's support (*Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2025).

Developing Alternative Ways to Rebuild the Organization

► The damage to arms-smuggling and financial routes forced Hezbollah, with Iran's assistance, to build new, sophisticated bypass mechanisms for rebuilding its military capabilities, replenish its arsenal, rearm and finance its military and civilian activity:²

◆ **Use of money changers:** The United States Treasury Department reported that since the beginning of 2025 the IRGC had transferred approximately \$1 billion to Hezbollah to rebuild the organization's military capabilities through a network of money-changing agencies and cash businesses, exploiting legitimate financial mechanisms to conceal the source and destination of the money. Reportedly, profits of hundreds of millions of dollars from oil sales were transferred to money-changing agencies, private companies and Iranian-linked businessmen and couriers in Dubai, where the funds were deposited with a local trader and paid out by a Lebanese trader, with the two settling accounts

² For further information, see the October 2025 ITIC report, [Hezbollah's Reconstruction Efforts Amid the IDF's Enforcement of the Ceasefire in Lebanon](#), and the November 2025 report, [Iran Assists Hezbollah's Post-Ceasefire Reconstruction](#)

between them later (*Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 2025).³ It was also reported that in addition to using money-transfer companies and charitable associations, Hezbollah operates an alternative financial network based on anonymous digital wallets, some registered in African countries and on platforms that allow transfers outside the supervision of the central bank (Aram News, November 18, 2025).

◆ **Smuggling via Turkey:** Danny Danon, the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, lodged a complaint with the Security Council on February 21, 2025, accusing Turkish entities of serving as a conduit between Iran and Lebanon (Nordic Monitor, May 5, 2025). At the end of February 2025, Lebanese security authorities arrested a Lebanese man who arrived on a flight from Turkey carrying \$2.5 million for Hezbollah, who confessed that he had received the suitcase from an Iranian (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 28, 2025).

◆ **Smuggling via Iraq:** Iran reportedly transfers large amounts of cash to Lebanon via Iraq, with estimates of \$20 to \$30 million a month. Pro-Iranian Iraqi Shi'ite militias, which maintain vast financial networks, transfer tens of millions of dollars every month from Iraq or overland via Syria using smuggling gangs that have assisted Hezbollah and Iran for years. Money is also transferred by Lebanese tourists visiting Shi'ite holy sites in Iraq or by Iraqi Shi'ite tourists visiting Beirut (Aram News, October 28, 2025).

◆ **Gold smuggling:** During the past year, attempts to smuggle gold through Beirut International Airport were foiled. According to assessments, industrial gold is brought into Lebanon by citizens and gangs, where it is converted into gold bars (Aram News, October 28, 2025).

◆ **Smuggling by sea:** In light of tightened oversight of the port of Beirut, where Hezbollah operated a network of accomplices in customs and supervisory mechanisms, "American sources" reported that Iran and Hezbollah exploited the port of Tripoli in north Lebanon as an alternative smuggling route, using people outside the Shi'ite community. Smuggling was carried out through investment companies, financial companies and personal accounts, with the objective of disguising the smuggling activity and making it harder for oversight bodies to detect movements of money and goods (al-Arabiya, November 22, 2025).

³ It is a traditional method called *hawala*, based on trust and allowing two distant parties, who are not close to a regulated financial system or who wish to avoid using paperwork, to rely on intermediaries who arrange the transfer of funds while settling the accounts between themselves.

◆ **Import of goods into Lebanon:** Hezbollah reportedly imports electronics and construction materials for resale to bring in revenue. Another method of money laundering is the purchase in Europe, mainly in Belgium and Germany, for small amounts of money, of used cars that were in accidents, transporting them for Lebanon for repair and resale at inflated prices (Aram News, October 28, 2025). "Lebanese security sources" reported that Hezbollah also imported packages of clothing and beauty products in which money was hidden, addressed to temporary import companies, some of them shell companies, with customs personnel in Lebanon who were still linked to Hezbollah easing the passage of the packages through Beirut International Airport and Beirut's seaport (Aram News, November 13, 2025).

◆ **Smuggling via Syria:** Despite the efforts of the Syrian security forces, Hezbollah and Iran still successfully use their traditional smuggling networks to transfer weapons, using Shi'ite gangs in the border area between the countries. In October 2025, shipments of Kornet anti-tank missiles were seized in the al-Qusayr area of the Homs governorate, foiling an attempt to smuggle "medium and heavy" weapons in the city of Homs (Telegram channel of the Syrian interior ministry, September 27, 2025 and October 11, 2025; al-Arabiya, October 12, 2025). However, unlike past smuggling using truck convoys, this time small vehicles and motorcycles were used, passing through mountainous areas which were difficult to monitor. Forces of the Interior Security Directorate in the al-Qusayr area seized a motorcycle carrying ammunition boxes hidden in barrels intended for transporting milk and en route to Lebanon (al-Ekhbariya al-Suriya Telegram channel, August 24, 2025). In addition, IDF forces exposed attempts to smuggle weapons from Syria through the Hermon area. The shipments included, anti-tank rockets, rifles, pistols, grenades and ammunition (IDF spokesperson, October 18 and 23, 2025).



Right: Motorcycle used to smuggle weapons in Syria (al-Ekhbariya al-Suriya, August 24, 2025).

Left: Weapons seized by IDF forces in the Hermon area (IDF spokesperson, October 18, 2025)

◆ **Local production:** In addition to attempts to smuggle weapons, Hezbollah increased its reliance on local production inside Lebanon for rearmament, using the experience the organization gained over years, especially since the Second Lebanon War (*Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2025).⁴

Hardening Rhetoric and Increasing Defiance

► On December 2, 2024, just days after the start of the ceasefire, Hezbollah launched two rockets at the Mount Dov area which fell in open areas. According to Hezbollah's claim of responsibility, it was a "preliminary warning response" following "repeated violations of the ceasefire" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, December 2, 2024). The organization has not attacked Israel again and has only stated that it was committed to the ceasefire and expected Lebanese state institutions to respond to the "Israeli violations." It also claimed willingness to discuss the weapons issue but only within a discussion on a "national defense strategy," and after Israel implemented the ceasefire. However, the frustration over continued Israeli attacks in Lebanon, combined with the government decisions on disarming Hezbollah and the possibility of negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, led to a hardening of Hezbollah's rhetoric, accompanied by threats to use force against any attempt at disarmament, warning that "the resistance"⁵ was prepared to take action against Israel if the state did not fulfill its role.⁶

⁴ For further information, see the January 2025 ITIC report, [Weapons Used by Hezbollah Against Israel, October 8, 2023 to November 27, 2024](#)

⁵ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

⁶ For further information, see the weekly ITIC reports, "Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon," and the November 2025 report, [Hezbollah's defiance, the instability of the ceasefire and attempts to promote an Israeli-Lebanese dialogue](#).

► The secretary general of Hezbollah, Na'im Qassem, said the organization's holding of weapons was "a legitimate right intended to defend our homeland and our existence." In an interview marking a year in office, he said that if the Lebanese army did not have the ability to deal on its own with "Israeli aggression, popular resistance" was necessary to confront it along with the army. He asked why Hezbollah should disarm if Israel continued to attack in Lebanon. He said Israel first had to stop attacking, after which it would be possible to discuss the issue of weapons. He added that Hezbollah had not "responded" to Israeli attacks so far in order not to give Israel an excuse for out a broad attack, but they were prepared for a new war if Israel started one and would continue the "resistance" even if they remained "only holding sticks." He said, "Our decision is for defense and resistance until the last breath, and let the enemy try to come and disarm us itself" (al-Manar, October 26, 2025).



Na'im Qassem gives a memorial speech for Tabataba'i (al-Manar, November 29, 2025)

► The deputy head of Hezbollah's political bureau, Mahmoud Qamati, said the organization would not disarm and would not hand its weapons over to the Lebanese state, claiming that it feared for the fate of Lebanon and the fate of the Lebanese army and "not for any other reason." He rejected calls to turn Hezbollah into a purely political body and said the organization's position was to continue to maintain its military capabilities to defend Lebanon and the principles of "the resistance" (Al Jazeera, November 20, 2025).



Mahmoud Qamati (al-Alam, November 25, 2025)

- Hezbollah issued an "open letter" in which it repeated its claim that the organization and Lebanon had implemented all the clauses of the ceasefire agreement, while "the Zionist enemy" was continuing "violations" of Lebanon's sovereignty. The organization warned not to try to drag Lebanon into new rounds of "negotiation traps" and called "the resistance to occupation and aggression a legitimate right" and not part of "a decision of peace or war," but rather intended for defense against "an enemy that imposes war" on Lebanon. Hezbollah also claimed that the government's decision on exclusivity of weapons was "a mistake," and claimed that discussion on the issue could take place only within a national framework with the objective of reaching agreement on a comprehensive strategy for security, defense and preservation of sovereignty, and not in response "to a foreign request or Israeli extortion."
- Hezbollah also used the Shi'ite heritage of the Battle of Karbala⁷ to explain its refusal to give up weapons. The secretary general, Na'im Qassem, warned that if "the resistance" were required to hand over its weapons, it would be ready to embark on "another Karbala " against the "Israeli-American plan," whatever the price, adding that Hezbollah was confident it would emerge the victor from such a confrontation. He also shifted responsibility to the Lebanese government for any civil war, which he claimed Hezbollah did not want: "Either we survive together or everything collapses, and you will bear the responsibility" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, August 15, 2025). The chairman of Hezbollah's executive council, Ali Damoush, also warned that "whoever confronts us will enter the Battle of Karbala."

⁷ The Battle of Karbala (680 CE) was a clash between the followers of Imam Husayn bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and the army of the Umayyad caliph Yazid. Imam Husayn and his companions were killed after refusing to surrender, and the battle became for the Shi'ites a symbol of the *shaheed*, a Muslim who sacrificed his life for a religious duty, an emblem of absolute loyalty to principles and of struggle to the very end, even in the face of certain defeat.

► The elimination of Tabataba'i pointed up the fundamental dilemmas facing Hezbollah. On the one hand, Hezbollah's leadership called it a "red line" crossed by Israel, stating that the organization would not let it pass in silence. The secretary general of Hezbollah, Na'im Qassem in a speech at a ceremony marking Tabataba'i's death, called it "a blatant attack and a heinous crime, we have the right to respond and we will determine the timing" (al-Manar, November 28, 2025). Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah claimed "the resistance"⁸ did not want war but would not accept "submission to the enemy" and would not allow the state to do so (al-'Ahed, November 29, 2025). On the other hand, statements by senior Hezbollah and Iranian figures indicated that they too understood the possible risks in a revenge operation against Israel, at least unilaterally.

► The deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Political Council, Mahmoud Qamati, considered one of the organization's hawks, admitted that they were not taking any action so as not to harm the role of the state. He claimed they sought to form a mutual deterrence equation with Israel together with the state and the Lebanese army, because if "the resistance" were to impose a unilateral counter-equation, it would be accused of violating the ceasefire. Qamati said Hezbollah now found itself between two boundaries, maintaining internal stability in Lebanon versus the desire not to remain silent in the face of any "new aggression" against Lebanon (al-Alam network, November 25, 2025).

► Hezbollah MP Ali Ammar said that the current stage required wisdom and preparedness, and therefore "the resistance" was now demonstrating "strategic patience," arising from considerations related to regional and international developments and also from the internal Lebanese situation, which he said "creates noise around the resistance and delays it from fulfilling its duties." He demanded that the government order the Lebanese army "to repel the enemy and liberate the occupied territories" and called for restoring the "people-army-resistance" equation, because the only options were "submission to the enemy or confrontation with it" (al-Mayadeen, November 27, 2025).

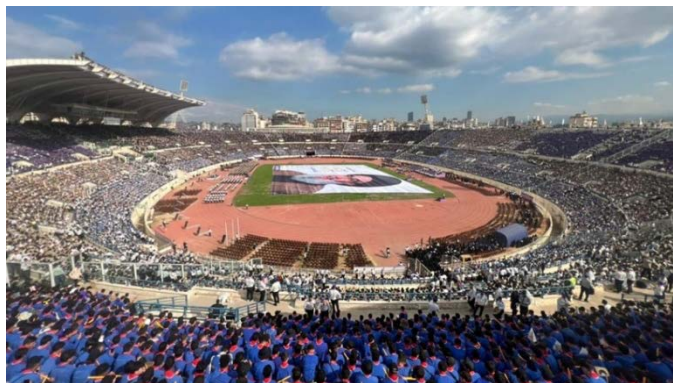
► A member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Hassan Qashqawi, said Hezbollah was going through a difficult period following the elimination of Tabataba'i. He called it a "direct hit" to Hezbollah's upper command because Tabataba'i was one of the architects of the organization's battle doctrine and responsible for handling sensitive issues related to special units, and in addition he was a key figure in the

⁸ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

connection between the IRGC and Hezbollah's leadership. Qashqawi noted that Hezbollah had shown restraint for a year, but the attack on Tabataba'i posed a real dilemma for Hezbollah's leadership, as there was growing internal pressure, mainly from the military wing, to respond to his elimination. In his assessment, a Hezbollah response would increase the likelihood of a destructive and extensive war which would also increase internal pressure on Hezbollah, but if the organization did not respond, it would allow Israel to continue its attacks and would in effect constitute Hezbollah's acceptance of the current status quo, and therefore it was a dangerous scenario for the organization (Aram News, November 25, 2025).

Strengthening Hezbollah's Status within the Shi'ite Community

► On October 12, 2025, Hezbollah held a rally in Beirut to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts Association, the organization's youth movement intended to train new generations of operatives and to consolidate the organization's standing also among young Shi'ites.⁹ More than 74,000 members of the scouts movement from across the country participated in the event, chanting slogans in support of Hezbollah and "the resistance" and pledging allegiance to the secretary general, Na'im Qassem. Hezbollah's media outlets leveraged the event to highlight the role of the younger generation in the continuity of "the resistance," and Qassem said in a recorded speech at the event that the association represented "the resistance" in the broadest and most comprehensive sense, adding "the promised hope for a better future remains, even if there are difficulties, you choose resistance" (al-Manar, October 12, 2025).



Hezbollah Scouts Association rally (al-Manar, October 12, 2025)

⁹ For further information, see the June 2019 ITIC report, [The Imam Al-Mahdi Scouts Association: Hezbollah's youth movement which indoctrinates youth with Iranian radical Shiite Islam and serves as a source of youngsters who join Hezbollah](#)

