



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah December 22-29, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ The IDF continued its activity to enforce the ceasefire agreement and to prevent Hezbollah's renewed military buildup, and struck targets in south Lebanon and in the northern Beqa'a Valley, including Radwan Force training facilities and launch sites. The forces eliminated four Hezbollah operatives, one of them a soldier on active duty in the Lebanese army, and a terrorist operative in the Qods Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.
- ▶ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem said they were not afraid of a new war and accused the Lebanese government of making "free concessions" without Israel's fulfilling its commitments under the ceasefire agreement.
- ▶ Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said he hoped the "cloud of war" was receding from Lebanon, after allegedly receiving American guarantees that Israel would not launch a new large-scale campaign.
- ▶ European countries are reportedly working to maintain a presence of their forces in south Lebanon to assist the Lebanese army after the end of UNIFIL's mandate.
- ▶ Given the [alleged] completion of the first phase of Hezbollah's disarmament south of the Litani River in accordance with the declaration from the Lebanese government, and Hezbollah's opposition to further surrender of weapons, it was reported that the Lebanese government had still not made a decision regarding the transition to the second phase of demilitarizing the area between the Litani and Awali Rivers, and that the army commander would not give an order to collect weapons, citing a threat to civil peace in the country.
- ▶ Hezbollah is having difficulty financing housing allowances for tens of thousands of displaced families among its supporters following the intensified blockade of its funding sources.

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

- Reports noted a growing presence of Houthis in Lebanon, with and joint exercises and the exchange of knowledge and expertise with Hezbollah.
- The chairman of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee "expressed surprise" that some of the armed Palestinian factions in the refugee camps in Lebanon were not cooperating with the plan to limit weapons south of the Litani River.

Israel-Hezbollah Tensions

The IDF

- This past week, the IDF continued attacking Hezbollah targets to enforce the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and prevent Hezbollah's renewed military buildup. The IDF struck a training and instruction complex used by the Radwan Force in the northern Beqa'a Valley and Hezbollah military training facilities in south Lebanon. Four Hezbollah operatives were eliminated, along with a senior operative in the Qods Force's operations unit who in recent years had been involved in promoting terrorist activity against Israel in the Syria-Lebanon arena. In one strike, three Hezbollah operatives were eliminated, one of whom was also in a Lebanese army intelligence unit (IDF spokesperson, December 22–29, 2025). The Lebanese army confirmed the death of a soldier in its ranks, but denied he was connected to Hezbollah (*al-Nashra*, December 23, 2025). The three were buried together in Humin al-Tahta, with the soldier's coffin draped only with the Lebanese flag, while the other two were draped with Hezbollah flags (*al-Akhbar*, December 24, 2025).



Two Hezbollah flags and a Lebanese flag, the funeral in Humin al-Tahta
(al-Akhbar, December 24, 2025)

Hezbollah

- Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem alleged they had no plans to initiate an offensive action against Israel but were not afraid of a new war, would not relinquish their "natural right" to self-defense and would defend the people and the state. He accused the Lebanese government of making "free concessions" even though Israel offered no commitments in

return and continued to "occupy" territories in Lebanon. In a speech delivered at a ceremony in memory of senior Hezbollah figure Muhammad Hassan Ya'ghi, Qassem claimed that Lebanon was at the center of a storm of instability due to the "brutal policy" of the United States and Israel, and warned that the country stood at a decisive historical crossroads, saying, "Either we give Israel and the United States what they want, namely total control over Lebanon, or we rise up as a nation to reclaim our sovereignty." He claimed Lebanon was not required to take any further action before Israel met its commitments, halting "aggression" on land, in the air and at sea, a full withdrawal, release of prisoners and the start of reconstruction in south Lebanon, and only afterward would the organization be prepared to discuss a national security strategy. Qassem further claimed that if south Lebanon fell there would be no state, saying, "we will defend and achieve our goals even if it takes time." Qassem claimed that "service to the people" stood at the foundation of Hezbollah's approach, and the organization and the "Islamic Resistance" had "liberated" Lebanon in cooperation with the various "factions"² and with the support of the people and the army. Referring to claims regarding the abduction of former intelligence officer Ahmad Shukr, Qassem wondered about the state's responsibility to safeguard its sovereignty (al-Manar, December 28, 2025).



Na'im Qassem (al-Manar, December 28, 2025)

- Other Hezbollah figures strongly opposed negotiations with Israel in light of the continued "aggression" and Israel's failure, in their view, to meet its own commitments under the ceasefire agreement, and made clear that the "resistance"³ did not intend to surrender despite international pressure.
 - ◆ The chairman of Hezbollah's executive council, Ali Damoush, said that although the Lebanese Army had completed its actions south of the Litani River and was

² Terrorist organizations.

³ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

approaching the end of the first phase, the "aggression" had not stopped. He said that one of the great mistakes of the Lebanese authorities was the "failure" to link the steps taken under the agreement with the steps required of the "Israeli enemy." He added that the aim was to push Lebanon and the Lebanese army into internal conflict, incite against the "resistance" and force Hezbollah to retreat and surrender. He said the "resistance" would not allow internal conflict or retreat or surrender (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, December 26, 2025).

- ◆ Hassan Fadlallah, member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said at a meeting of the Planning and Budget Committee of Asian countries in Doha that the region faced growing challenges due to the policies of the Israeli government, and called for greater cooperation among regional countries in the face of a shared threat. He condemned "Israeli aggression" toward Iran, Yemen and Syria, and claimed it endangered international peace and security (al-Manar, December 23, 2025).
- ◆ Hezbollah's bloc in the Lebanese Parliament said that ending the "Zionist occupation," halting "aggression" and releasing prisoners were the top national priorities, and demanded Israel's unconditional acquiescence. The bloc called on the state to take decisive action for a ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal, and to avoid accepting Israeli conditions meant to subdue the people and the army. The bloc added that "resistance to occupation is a legitimate right," and the government had to take firm steps to force Israel to meet its commitments, without evasion or blackmail (al-Manar, December 24, 2025).
- ◆ Ali Fayyad, member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, accused Israel of failing to respect agreements and international law, adding that despite the killing and destruction, Israel would not strip Lebanon of the "right to defense." He questioned the value of negotiations while "Lebanon continues to bleed" (al-Manar, December 24, 2025).



**Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament
(al-Manar, December 24, 2025)**

The Lebanese Government

► With the talks between civilian representatives of Israel and Lebanon at the ceasefire monitoring committee and the approaching deadline for completing the demilitarization of south Lebanon south of the Litani River, the Lebanese leadership expressed hope that a new escalation could be prevented and reiterated its demand that Israel cease its strikes and withdraw its forces from positions in south Lebanon:

- ◆ In a Christmas speech, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said he hoped Lebanon would become a "state of institutions and not parties." He referred to the "bleeding wound" in the south in light of the strikes and the continued detention of Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails, and called for a future without wars in which Lebanon could live in peace. Aoun said the "cloud of war is receding from Lebanon" and expressed optimism regarding the current negotiations. Addressing the weapons issue, he said the decision regarding their regulation had been made and implemented according to the conditions (*al-Nashra*, December 25, 2025). "Well-informed political sources" said that the president had received "certain guarantees" from the Americans that Israel would not launch a new extensive campaign, and therefore he said he was optimistic regarding the chances of preventing a new escalation. They admitted they feared that Prime Minister Netanyahu might persuade the Americans that a "painful attack" was necessary to destroy the heavy weapons still in the Hezbollah's possession, but in their opinion the American administration would try to secure an additional two-month grace period for Lebanon (*al-Diyar*, December 29, 2025).



Lebanese President Aoun (al-Nashra, December 25, 2025)

- ◆ President Aoun also conducted a series of diplomatic contacts to mobilize regional and international support for the Lebanese government's position. He spoke with Turkish President Erdoğan and with Jordan's King Abdullah II, and hosted a senior Iraqi delegation. Those he spoke with said they were prepared to assist Lebanon and its army and noted their support for Lebanon's security, stability and sovereignty (X account of the Lebanese Presidency, December 24, 2025).
- ◆ Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Mitri acknowledged there was no guarantee Israel would not initiate a new escalation, and that fears were justified. He said the leadership's duty was to prevent any pretext which would allow Israel to attack, adding that the ceasefire oversight committee was examining the IDF's compliance with its commitments. Mitri noted that in the United States there was now an understanding that despite its limitations, the Lebanese army was fulfilling its missions, but at the same time it was recognized that the army lacked certain required capabilities, and therefore discussion had resumed regarding a French-Saudi initiative to convene an international conference to strengthen and support the Lebanese army (Lebanese News Agency, December 23, 2025).
- ◆ "Sources in Lebanon" said the state had conveyed to the United States and European countries its willingness to open negotiations with Israel to halt the strikes, in accordance with the initiative presented by President Aoun. According to the report, Aoun asked Washington to pressure Israel to implement the ceasefire terms and to act as a mediator to prepare the ground for talks on the land border. The issue is expected to arise during visits by American envoys to Beirut, or during a possible visit by Aoun to Washington. Subsequently, a visit to the United States by the Lebanese army commander, General Rodolph Haykal, is also expected, during which an American

assistance package for the army may be examined, subject to progress and to the results of the international conference to be convened in support of the Lebanese Army (*al-Liwa'*, December 23, 2025).

- Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, met with a delegation from the political bureau of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, to discuss the political-civil situation and the implications of the confrontation with Israel. Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya claimed that Israel continued to violate the ceasefire, noting that national resilience, unity and preparedness were necessary in the face of threats, especially the "Israeli threat," which they claimed continued despite existing understandings (Telegram channel of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, December 23, 2025).
- "A legal source in Lebanon" said that "security bodies" suspected Israel was behind the abduction of Ahmad Shukr, a reserve officer in the Lebanese Army, and Beirut believed the incident was linked to the disappearance of the Israeli navigator Ron Arad, missing since 1986 (al-Arabiya, December 23, 2025). Shukr was lured out of his home in the al-Nabi Chit area of the Beqa'a Valley and disappeared near Zahle. "Security sources" and "family associates" noted that Ahmad Shukr was the brother of Hassan Shukr, who was killed in the battle of Meidoun in 1988, and a relative of former Hezbollah military commander Fouad Shukr, who was eliminated in July 2024 (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 23, 2025).

The Lebanese Army

- Following the elimination of a Hezbollah operative who served in the Lebanese Army, the Lebanese defense minister's office and the Lebanese army issued separate denials of reports claiming that army personnel within the military institution had ties to parties and organizations. The statements called the claims "incorrect," saying the loyalty of soldiers, NCOs and officers was solely to the state, the law and the flag. The army called on the public and the media not to spread "dubious news" that harmed the institution's reputation (Lebanese News Agency, December 23, 2025).
- Lebanese Army commander Rodolph Haykal met with leadership figures to discuss recent developments "regarding Israeli violations and strikes." Haykal said his recent visit to France had strengthened international confidence in the army because of its meeting its commitments throughout Lebanon, especially in the south of the country, despite its limitations of resources. He added that the goal was to strengthen operational capabilities so that the army would serve as a reliable, stabilizing factor, and the first phase of its strategic

plan had been completed, with additional phases planned (X account of the Lebanese Army, December 23, 2025).



Haykal and senior officers of the Lebanese Army
(X account of the Lebanese Army, December 23, 2025)

UNIFIL

- ▶ Meeting with Italian Minister of Defense Guido Crosetto, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said Lebanon welcomed the participation of Italy and other European countries in a new force which would be established after the end of UNIFIL's mandate. He said the force could assist the Lebanese army in maintaining security and stability along the southern border after Israel withdrew from the areas it still "occupied." "Diplomatic sources" said that European countries sought to maintain a presence of their own in south Lebanon to assist the state, but also to preserve influence in the Middle East, and that behind-the-scenes discussions were under way to formulate a framework which would allow an international presence in the border area (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, December 24, 2025).
- ▶ UNIFIL claimed that an IDF force shot at UN soldiers who were inspecting a roadblock during a patrol in the village of Bastara. According to the statement, no damage was caused to UNIFIL property, but the hearing of one soldier was affected by the noise of explosions and gunfire. It was also reported that there was "heavy IDF fire" near a UNIFIL patrol in the village of Shuba, despite UNIFIL's claim that the activity had been coordinated in advance with Israel as required. The organization said harm to its forces was a serious violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and called on the IDF to halt its attacks along the Blue Line (UNIFIL Telegram channel, December 27, 2025).

Challenges for Hezbollah⁴

⁴ For further information, see the December 2025 ITIC report, [Hezbollah: One Year After the Ceasefire](#)

Disarmament

- ▶ Interviewed by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji said Lebanon's security interest lay in disarming Hezbollah. He said there was no objection to the existence of the organization's political wing, but the military—"security" [terrorist] wing had to be dismantled, which was also the "demand of the Lebanese people." He said the organization "agreed" to keep south Lebanon out of confrontation only to buy time, hoping for a regional or international change that would allow it to reconstruct itself and return to taking control of the state. Rajji argued that the confrontation with Israel served Hezbollah as a pretext for keeping its weapons, and that its real aspiration was renewed control over state institutions. At the same time, he said, Lebanon sought proper relations with all countries, but accused Iran of direct interference which included financing, arming, and handling an illegal armed organization. He also rejected Tehran's denials and stressed that they were no longer accepted by the international community (*al-Nashra*, December 23, 2025).
- ▶ However, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem accused the plan to disarm Hezbollah of being an "Israeli-American project" disguised as a claim of the state's monopoly over weapons. He claimed the objective of disarmament was to dismantle Lebanon's military capabilities and sow conflict between the "resistance" and the people, while Israel continued its "occupation" of the five points in south Lebanon. He reiterated the organization's position that it had no intention of handing over its weapons and claimed that "the resistance's weapons are defensive weapons, not offensive" (*al-Manar*, December 28, 2025).
- ▶ "An Iranian Qods Force source" claimed that an initiative was being advanced in Lebanon to contain Hezbollah's weapons by storing them in sealed warehouses north of the Litani River to be opened only in the event of an attack on Lebanon. According to the "source," Hezbollah agreed "in principle" and committed to defensive use only, but refused to provide the army with maps of the storage sites, a move that empties the proposal of practical substance. It was further claimed that the initiative, raised by an Arab country and given initial approval by Iran, was also adopted by Lebanese army commander Rodolph Hayka because of his intention to declare Hezbollah as disarmed south of the Litani River. However, it is still unclear whether the army will promote a similar move north of the river, given Hezbollah's opposition, fearing leaks, to revealing the locations of the warehouses (*al-Jarida*, December 25, 2025).
- ▶ Ahead of the completion of the phase of disarmament south of the Litani River by the end of 2025, according to reports, the Lebanese army, with American assistance, had dismantled

85% of Hezbollah's military infrastructure. According to the published data, the army confiscated weapons from 360 depots; cleared 10,000 unexploded rockets; seized 400 guided missiles, including 58 Fateh-110 surface-to-surface missiles and Kornet anti-tank missiles; restored control over 300 Hezbollah positions, or about 90% of the positions known to the army, and reassured control over 33 positions near the border with Israel (Aram News, December 22, 2025).

► Meanwhile, the Lebanese army continues its efforts to implement the demilitarization plan. A Lebanese army force reportedly searched four buildings in Beit Lif, a building in Beit Yahoun, and another building in Kounine after receiving information from the ceasefire oversight committee that Israel claimed weapons were hidden there. However, the report said that no weapons or other military equipment were found in the searches (Lebanon Files, December 27, 2025).



Army forces search one of the buildings (al-Mustaql news site, December 27, 2025)

► In preparation for the second phase of the plan to implement the monopoly on weapons, which is supposed to be carried out between the Litani and Awali Rivers, it was reported that the Lebanese Army was deliberately not accessing positions north of the Litani, while at the same time preventing smuggling and the transfer of weapons across the Syrian border. "Security sources" said that moving to the next phase of disarmament required a political decision, as a confrontation with Hezbollah could threaten civil peace (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 23, 2025).

► Reportedly, the government had not made a political decision to proceed to the second phase, because Lebanon wanted Israel first to withdraw its forces from positions in south Lebanon, release Lebanese detainees, and take "positive steps." It was further claimed that Lebanon had already received American guarantees that the war would not expand, and

therefore, for the time being, the state was freezing the second phase (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, December 29, 2025).

► "Sources following Hezbollah's position" noted that there were figures in Lebanon who believed they could present Hezbollah with a fait accompli regarding disarmament north of the Litani River, but that could lead to severe consequences and the dangers had been made clear to them. According to the "sources," that was the reason the army commander would not give the order to collect weapons north of the Litani River, claiming it would constitute a threat to civil peace in the country, regardless of the internal and external pressures exerted on him (*al-Diyar*, December 29, 2025).



The child says, "Can you bring me a balloon, a gun and a tank?" and Santa Claus replies, "There is disarmament, I don't dare" (*al-Jumhuriya*, December 22, 2025)

Restoring Military Capabilities

► According to reports, Hezbollah's main emphasis in restoring its military capabilities is to produce and operate attack UAVs, represented as an advantage in light of restrictions on the use of heavy missiles. Meanwhile, the limited smuggling of missiles from Syria continues along alternative routes, alongside the fortification of weapons depots and protecting sensitive equipment from attack. In the Beqa'a Valley, movement and communication procedures for operatives have been tightened, and therefore there are fewer targeted strikes in the area compared to south Lebanon. The report claimed that Hezbollah's activity indicated caution and maintenance of readiness, and did not amount to a dramatic leap in military capabilities (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, December 27, 2025).

Hezbollah-Syria Relations

► "A source in the Qods Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps" revealed intensive contacts between Iran and Hezbollah, and Turkey and the Syrian government. According to "the source," two meetings were held between Hezbollah representatives and the brother of the Syrian president, Ahmad al-Shara', one in Beirut and the other in Damascus. The meetings

took place after a previous meeting in Turkey to coordinate between the two sides to prevent clashes. The "source" noted that the Syrian government claimed that it has no intention of attacking Hezbollah or intervening in Lebanon (al-Jarida, December 25, 2025).

The Challenge of Reconstruction

- "Sources in Lebanon" said Hezbollah needed between \$250 and \$300 million to finance housing allowances for tens of thousands of displaced families among its supporters during 2026, but currently has less than 1% of the required amount because the blockade of the organization's external funding sources had been intensified. According to the "sources," the crisis is expected to grow as early as February 2026, after the expiration of the housing allowance distributed in 2025, amid reports of embezzlement and damage to public trust. According to reports, about 100,000 people from Hezbollah's support base are still displaced, and some were not included in the most recent assistance programs. In contrast, Hezbollah shifted the responsibility to the state, while the government is examining a housing allowance program that would be contingent on mobilizing assistance, mainly from Arab countries (Aram News, December 25, 2025).
- Lebanese Minister of Economy and Trade Amer al-Bisat said that Lebanon's recovery and prosperity depended on the state's monopoly on weapons and the establishment of full, secure stability. He said reconstruction and development plans existed, but their implementation was delayed by a severe lack of funding, and progress would be possible only through a conference of international donors (RT Arabic, December 23, 2025).

Cooperation with the Houthis

- Reports noted a growing presence of Houthi elements inside Lebanon, especially in areas controlled by Hezbollah. They reportedly conduct joint exercises, exchange knowledge and expertise, and deepen coordination with other elements of the "resistance axis."⁵ According to the report, the Houthi presence is an internal threat to Lebanon due to the deepening reliance on extra-state mechanisms, alongside an external threat as a result of damage to Lebanon's relations with its friends in the Arab world, especially the Gulf States, which view Houthi presence in Lebanon as hostile. "Parliamentary sources" called on the authorities to take a stance and put an end to Houthi activity on the country's territory to prevent further escalation and preserve Lebanon's political maneuver room (al-*Liwa'*, December 23, 2025).

⁵ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq.

The Palestinians in Lebanon

- Ramez Dimechkie, chairman of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, said Lebanon continued to implement regulation of weapons inside and outside the Palestinian refugee camps, based on the principle of exclusive state control of weapons. He expressed his "surprise" at the lack of responsiveness by some Palestinian "factions" to the state's plan to limit weapons south of the Litani River by the end of 2025, despite their commitments to respect the law and Lebanon's sovereignty. Dimechkie also made it clear that respect for sovereignty had to be translated into practical steps that reflected a genuine commitment to the state's decisions (LBC, December 22, 2025).
- It was reported that the issue of disarmament in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon was at a "sensitive stage." It was noted that although the Lebanese army had established almost full control from the southern border to the Litani River, it had so far not taken comprehensive steps inside the camps. According to the report, currently pressure was directed primarily at Hezbollah, while the Palestinian camps were perceived as a less urgent threat. In addition, the army suffered from a shortage of manpower for a large-scale operation, and the state granted Hamas a grace period to hand over weapons, a situation that the organizations interpreted as a conditional and ongoing move. It was further noted that only a limited portion of the weapons in the refugee camps was handed over, some of it outdated, while additional information points to underground storage facilities in the al-Rashidiya refugee camp and coordination between Hezbollah and Hamas with the objective of delaying the process (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, December 27, 2025).