



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah December 16 - 22 ,2024

Overview¹

- ▶ The IDF continued operations against Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire, targeting Hezbollah operatives and destroying weapons and terrorist facilities in south Lebanon. The Lebanese Army continued deploying in towns near the southern border and took control of positions vacated by Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Beqa'a area.
- ▶ Senior Hezbollah figures continued to accuse Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement while claiming the organization was committed to its implementation. However, they warned that Hezbollah might take action if Israel did not complete its withdrawal from south Lebanon without a response from the Lebanese government and army. Hezbollah expanded its compensation payments to homeowners whose properties were damaged in IDF strikes.
- ▶ Reports indicated that Hezbollah was unaware of the fate of more than a thousand operatives with whom contact was lost during the fighting. A Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament stated that the funeral ceremony for Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safi al-Din was expected to be held in early 2025.
- ▶ Indictments were filed against three Israeli citizens for assisting Hezbollah during the war.
- ▶ The Lebanese minister of welfare noted that the arrival of approximately 100,000 displaced persons as a result of the revolution in Syria was complicating the Lebanese efforts to rebuild the country.
- ▶ Suleiman Frangieh, Hezbollah's preferred candidate for the Lebanese presidency, announced that he was continuing his candidacy ahead of the parliamentary session on January 9, 2025. However, Army Commander Joseph Aoun is considered the leading candidate for the position.

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

The Ceasefire

IDF activities

▶ This past week the IDF continued operations against Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire, which went into effect on November 27, 2024. IDF airstrikes targeted terrorist operatives and IDF forces on the ground uncovered weapons and terrorist facilities which posed a threat to IDF forces and Israeli territory. They forces uncovered a mobile launcher used to fire heavy rockets at the Galilee Panhandle and destroyed a compound of eight above- and below-ground weapons depots, along with an underground tunnel leading to a Hezbollah command post (IDF spokesperson, December 16 to 22, 2024).



Weapons and rocket launchers in south Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, December 16, 2024)

▶ Hezbollah-affiliated media outlets reported alleged Israeli violations of the ceasefire, including two injuries in an airstrike on a vehicle in Majdal Zoun near Tyre, the destruction of buildings in the villages of Qalaa and al-Naqoura, and low-altitude Israeli UAV flights over south Lebanon (al-Manar Telegram channel, December 16 to 22, 2024). According to reports, on December 20, 2024, IDF forces withdrew from the town of Bani Hayyan after operating there for two days (Lebanon24, December 20, 2024).

Hezbollah

▶ Senior Hezbollah figures continued to accuse Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement and criticized Lebanese authorities and the international community for allegedly failing to act against Israel. However, they claimed Hezbollah was committed to the agreement:

- ◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah representative in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed that the "resistance" had agreed to the ceasefire but did not agree to stop the war at any cost, and had amended the draft agreement. He claimed that Israel

was using the 60-day agreement period to carry out attacks and "assassinations" and that Hezbollah expected the government to fulfill its role. He added that all parties involved bore responsibility for maintaining the ceasefire but were not achieving the "desired outcome" (Lebanese News Agency, December 16, 2024).

◆ In another interview, Fadlallah said they were giving the agreement a 60-day chance but Hezbollah's "finger is still on the trigger." He warned that if Israel did not withdraw after 60 days, the government and the army had to take action, and if none were taken, he claimed it would prove the government's inability to protect Lebanon. He also asserted that Hezbollah had established new facilities in south Lebanon, prompted by the "campaign between wars" conducted by Israel after the Second Lebanon War (al-Jadeed, December 18, 2024).

◆ Ali Fayyad, also a Hezbollah representative in the Lebanese Parliament, said the "resistance" was not being dragged into confrontation over Israel's military violations because the organization's priority was completing Israel's withdrawal and supporting the reconstruction of the country for the Lebanese people. He added that Hezbollah wanted the Lebanese government and army to fulfill their roles in successfully defending Lebanon's territory and sovereignty according to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (al-'Ahed, December 20, 2024).

▶ Reportedly, as part of the ongoing dialogue between the Lebanese Army and Hezbollah, an agreement was reached on a roadmap. According to the agreement, the Lebanese Army would have exclusive control south of the Litani River, while the "resistance" would comply with the army's requests on a set timeline, including withdrawing forces and heavy weaponry. "Sources" noted that the Lebanese Army agreed to recognize Hezbollah's weapons north of the Litani as a national political issue subject to government decisions, depending on political developments following the election of a new president and the formation of a new government (al-Binaa, December 16, 2024).

The Lebanese government

▶ Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib met with a delegation from the Ceasefire Monitoring Organization in Lebanon, led by Chief of Staff General Patrick Rocher. Bou Habib said the government hoped the mechanism implementing the ceasefire would be successful and noted the importance of continued cooperation and coordination with UNIFIL to achieve stability and calm in south Lebanon. He added that the border between Lebanon

and Israel had to be demarcated and that Israel had to withdraw from Lebanese land it had "occupied" (Lebanon24, December 17, 2024).

▶ Lebanese Minister of Information Ziad al-Makari read the government's decision calling for an end to Israel's "unacceptable violations" of the ceasefire agreement. He stated that the Lebanese government stressed the need to implement all provisions of the agreement and Resolution 1701 (Sawt Beirut International, December 17, 2024).

The Lebanese army

▶ This past week, Lebanese Army forces expanded their activities in al-Khiyam, Ain al-Arab, and Shebaa in south Lebanon (al-Mayadeen, December 17, 2024).

▶ On December 21, 2024, the Lebanese Army took control of two positions vacated by Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah al-Intifada, in the Beqa'a area near the Syrian border. The Lebanese Army said it would continue to take control of "military centers occupied by Palestinian organizations within Lebanese territory" to maintain the country's security and stability (Lebanese Army X account, December 21, 2024).



Right: Lebanese army force evacuates one of the Palestinian terrorist organizations' posts in the Beqa'a area. Left: Weapons confiscated in the posts (Lebanese army X account, December 21, 2024)

Hezbollah

Hezbollah casualties

▶ "Knowledgeable sources" reported that the fate of between 1,000 and 1,500 Hezbollah operatives remained unknown. Contact was lost with them during the fighting against Israel and their bodies have yet to be found. According to the report, estimates suggest that the organization's death toll has exceeded 3,000. "Local sources" noted that the issue of prisoners and missing operatives had caused a crisis between Hezbollah and the families of the

operatives, who protested and accused the Hezbollah leadership of negligence (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 19, 2024).

▶ Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah representative in the Lebanese Parliament, stated that preparations were being made for the joint funeral of the organization's former secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, and the head of the Executive Council, Hashem Safi al-Din. He said a special team was handling the arrangements and a burial site befitting Nasrallah's status would be located. However, he said the funeral would take place only in early 2025, and Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, would separately announce the date when it had been determined. He added that Nasrallah was expected to be buried in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, and Safi al-Din in south Lebanon (al-Jadeed, December 17, 2024).

Hezbollah involvement in the reconstruction of Lebanon

▶ Hussein Khair al-Din, coordinator for the reconstruction portfolio in Hezbollah's Jihad al-Bina Association,² released a document addressing the compensation procedure for residential units destroyed during the fighting. According to the document, residents of the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut would receive \$6,000 annually for rent and \$8,000 for purchasing furniture. Additionally, the Waad (Promise) Company would rebuild their residential units. Residents of south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley would receive \$4,000 annually for rent and \$8,000 for purchasing furniture. The procedure includes an assessment of the size of the structure, rebuilding costs and compensation for the property owner. The document also noted that funds provided by other sources to individuals whose homes were damaged would be deducted from the allocated reconstruction amount (Simia, December 15, 2024)., Khair al-Din stated that damage assessments had so far been conducted for approximately 119,000 homes, and around 1,200 engineers were operating in more than 400 communities (al-Manar, December 16, 2024).

² The Jihad al-Bina Association, established as a branch of the Iranian Jihad al-Bina organization, was one of Hezbollah's leading social institutions. For further information, see the June 2019 ITIC report, "Jihad al-Bina Association in Lebanon: A Hezbollah social foundation engaged in construction and social projects among the Shiite community, being a major component in Hezbollah's civilian infrastructure."



**The Jihad al-Bina's reparations statement for living quarters and furniture
(Simia, the electronic compensation of Hezbollah's Executive Committee, December 15, 2024)**

▶ On December 16, 2024, according to reports, Hezbollah began distributing funds to homeowners in the Second Jabal Amal³ in Nabatiyeh, whose properties were damaged by Israeli attacks, through the al-Qard al-Hassan branch. According to Azzam Qutraini, responsible for damage assessments in the area, a comprehensive survey of approximately 30,000 housing units has been completed, covering about 55% of all destroyed units (al-Manar, December 16, 2024). According to reports, the distribution of funds to owners of destroyed housing units in the Beqa'a and Hermel districts has also commenced (al-Manar, December 19, 2024).



**Jihad al-Bina employees making lists of appeals for aid in the Nabatieh region
(al-Manar, December 16, 2024)**

▶ The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar criticized the Lebanese government, claiming that the reconstruction plan was "fumbling." According to the paper, the government had decided to allocate \$44 million, but that amounted to only 0.86% of the total estimated direct damage, according to the World Bank's assessment. The report also stated that there

³ The name of an area in Jabal Amal.

was no clear mechanism for initiating the first phase of damage assessment and debris removal, leaving the matter entirely in the hands of Hezbollah (al-Akhbar, December 19, 2024).

Hezbollah's political activity

▶ According to reports, Wafiq Safa, head of Hezbollah's liaison and coordination unit, met with Gebran Bassil, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement. It was Hezbollah's first overt political move since the ceasefire went into effect. Ghassan Atallah, a member of the Strong Lebanon Bloc, said they wanted stable relations with Hezbollah and Amal, despite reservations about Hezbollah on various issues (Lebanon24, December 20, 2024).

Hezbollah-Hamas relations

▶ A Hamas delegation led by Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, the movement's representative in Lebanon, met with Hassan Hab Allah, the Hezbollah person responsible for Palestinian affairs and a former Lebanese parliamentarian. They discussed developments in the Palestinian arena and Hezbollah's confrontations with the "occupation" until the ceasefire. Abd al-Hadi praised Hezbollah's actions, claiming they had "foiled the enemy's plans to end the resistance." He said his movement wanted a ceasefire agreement which included ending the war and the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip (Quds Press, December 18, 2024).



Al-Hadi (left) meets with Hassan Hab Allah (Quds Press, December 18, 2024)

Criticism of Hezbollah

▶ Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces Party, stated that the ceasefire in Lebanon and the fall of the Assad regime in Syria created a real opportunity for reconstructing Lebanon, which he described as having once been a source of inspiration for many countries around the world. He noted that conditions now existed which had been absent for 30 years, providing an opportunity to rebuild Lebanon. He added that for the past 30 years Lebanon had

not been a state, but rather "land with neither supervision nor oversight" (al-Nashra, December 16, 2024).

Israeli citizens accused of helping Hezbollah

▶ On December 19, 2024, an indictment was filed against Muhammad Saadi, 19 years old, from Nazareth, for connections with Hezbollah and passing information during the war. Investigation revealed that Saadi, who was detained in November 2024, had contacted Hezbollah several times in recent years and even requested to join its ranks. He also contacted Hezbollah's al-Manar TV to send them photos and videos, including during the war with Israel. The investigation revealed that Saadi had provided information about missile impact sites, aircraft movements and IDF force locations (Israeli Police and Shin Bet spokesperson, December 19, 2024).

▶ On December 22, 2024, an indictment was filed against two Jerusalem residents, Abd al-Salam and Thaer Assili, for their connections with a Hezbollah operative and passing information to the organization during the war. According to the indictment, the two contacted a woman named "Dania" via a WhatsApp group and shared information about Israel, even after learning she was a Hezbollah operative. The indictment alleged that Abd al-Salam sent photos from the Caesarea area at her request, and Assili shared news reports about Israel and the security situation. The indictment further stated that the two were asked to contact a senior Hezbollah intelligence officer known as "al-Hajj," and that Assili purchased a new SIM card for this purpose but refused a request to take photos in the Metula area (Israeli media, December 22, 2024).

The Situation in Lebanon

The Lebanese government

▶ Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, met in Ankara with Turkish President Erdoğan to discuss cooperation between the two countries and recent regional developments. In a joint press conference, Erdoğan said Turkey stood with Lebanon

against Israeli attacks and would provide humanitarian aid. He called on the international community to pressure Israel to meet its commitments (al-Nashra, December 18, 2024).



Mikati (left) shaking hands with Erdogan in Ankara (Mikati's X account, December 18, 2024)

▶ Mikati participated in the D8 Leaders' Summit (Organization for Economic Cooperation of Islamic Countries) in Cairo. He gave a speech in which he said the Lebanese government was firm on adhering to international resolutions, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 1701. He said only the cessation of destructive wars and the withdrawal of the "occupation" forces would make it possible for Lebanon to develop (al-Nashra, December 19, 2024).

Reconstruction activities in Lebanon

▶ Hector al-Hajjar, Lebanese minister of welfare, said in a speech at the Arab Housing Conference in Algeria that Lebanon was facing a severe crisis and urgently needed construction equipment of all kinds, glass, iron and significant amounts of medical aid. He said that in the wake of the events in Syria, approximately 100,000 displaced persons has arrived in Lebanon, residing in 133 informal shelters, aggravating challenges for the Lebanese authorities in rebuilding the country (Lebanon Debate, December 17, 2024).

▶ Elias Bou Saab, deputy speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, met with Jean-Christophe Carret, the World Bank's Regional Director for the Middle East, to discuss a report on the cost of the war in Lebanon and the cost of reconstruction. They reviewed the World Bank assistance plans for energy, the economy and agriculture, whose first phase was estimated at \$750 million. They also discussed second-phase assistance programs focused on clearing war debris, rebuilding infrastructure and providing aid to the poorest individuals to restore their homes, amounting to \$250 million (Lebanese News Agency, December 19, 2024).

Internal Lebanese security

▶ The Lebanese internal security agency warned residents of Lebanon not to use Waze because it had been developed in Israel and funded by two Israeli companies and an American

company. The agency urged citizens to use alternative applications, such as Google Maps (Sawt Beirut International, December 17, 2024).

Electing a new Lebanese president

▶ According to "multiple sources" in Lebanon, Lebanese Army Commander General Joseph Aoun is the leading candidate for the presidency of Lebanon, with support from the United States and France (Lebanon Debate, December 18, 2024). It was also reported that the Phalange Party and the "Shi'ite Duo," Amal and Hezbollah, might join in supporting Aoun's candidacy, but most likely not before the parliamentary vote scheduled for January 9, 2025 (al-Jadeed, December 18, 2024).

▶ Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces Party announced that it was open to proposing additional candidates as long as the elected president implemented the ceasefire agreement, including the clause related to disarming Hezbollah. The party stated that its primary candidate remained Geagea but it was willing to discuss other names, including General Aoun (Sawt Beirut International, December 16, 2024). Lebanese commentators suggested that Geagea might try to obstruct the January 9, 2025 parliamentary session to wait for "developments" from the Trump administration regarding Iran, arguing that a weakened Iran and "resistance axis"⁴ would facilitate his election (Lebanon Debate, December 16, 2024).

▶ Suleiman Frangieh, leader of the Marada Movement and Hezbollah's preferred candidate, announced he was continuing his bid for the presidency but was prepared to support another "balanced" candidate. However, according to "diplomatic sources," Frangieh might withdraw from the race and nominate MP Farid Haykal al-Khazen instead (al-Akhbar, December 17, 2024; al-Liwaa, December 17, 2024). Mahmoud Qamati, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Political Council, said Hezbollah remained committed to Frangieh's candidacy and would continue supporting him as long as he did not announce his withdrawal (Lebanon Debate, December 19, 2024).

⁴ Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinianf organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.