



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah December 22 - 30 ,2024

Overview¹

- ▶ The IDF continued thwarting Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire, attacking its terrorist operatives and destroying weapons and terrorist facilities in south Lebanon, and attacking sites used by Hezbollah to smuggle weapons along the Syria-Lebanon border. The IDF reported 44 Hezbollah operatives killed since the beginning of the ceasefire.
- ▶ Senior Hezbollah figures claimed they were committed to the ceasefire but accused the Lebanese government and those responsible for implementing the ceasefire of not addressing "Israeli violations." The editor of a Hezbollah-affiliated daily newspaper warned of a resumption of Hezbollah's "military actions."
- ▶ The interim prime minister toured south Lebanon and met with members of the ceasefire oversight committee. He criticized the "Israeli violations," demanding the full withdrawal of IDF forces and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.
- ▶ According to reports, Hezbollah is appointing new leaders to replace secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and other senior figures. The organization continues its reconstruction efforts across Lebanon, but local residents complained they were not being compensated fairly.
- ▶ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said he was determined to hold the session to elect a new president on January 9, 2025. A senior Hezbollah figure claimed that the organization did not want a president who would "seek to attack the resistance."

The Ceasefire

IDF activities

- ▶ This past week the IDF continued to take action to prevent Hezbollah from violating the ceasefire which went into effect on November 27, 2024. IDF forces conducted airstrikes and located weapons and terrorist facilities which posed a threat to IDF forces and the State of Israel. The forces located and destroyed a combat compound with eight weapons depots,

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

some of which were underground. During operations in the al-Naqoura area in southwest Lebanon the forces found large quantities of weapons in a pharmacy building and a truck carrying 40 rocket launchers (IDF spokesperson, December 22–30, 2024).



Right: Entrance to tunnel linking eight weapons storehouses (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2024). Left: Forty tubes for rocket launchers (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2024)

- ▶ On December 27, 2024, the IDF attacked facilities at the Janta Crossing on the Syria-Lebanon border, a site used for transferring weapons from Syria to Hezbollah. According to the Israeli Air Force commander, seven border crossings were attacked. The IDF spokesperson said the objective was to make it more difficult for Hezbollah to restore the routes it uses to transfer weapons, the ceasefire notwithstanding (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2024).
- ▶ The IDF reported that during the first month of the ceasefire, 44 terrorist operatives were eliminated, 25 strikes were carried out in Lebanon and 120 Hezbollah violations of the agreement were documented. It was also reported that since October 8, 2023, approximately 3,800 terrorist operatives were killed in Lebanon, most of them during the intensified combat from mid-September 2024 (Israeli media, December 25 and 27, 2024). The IDF also reported that since October 1, 2024, the forces confiscated 85,000 Hezbollah weapons, including about 6,840 RPG launchers, rockets, anti-tank missile launchers and missiles, about 2,250 artillery shells, about 2,700 light weapons and approximately 60 anti-aircraft missiles (IDF spokesperson, December 25, 2024).
- ▶ Hezbollah-affiliated media outlets reported alleged violations of the ceasefire by Israel, claiming two people had been killed and one injured by an Israeli UAV strike on the town of al-Taybe in south Lebanon, near a school (al-Mayadeen, December 23, 2024). Another IDF strike was reported in the Hizzine plain in Lebanon's Beqa'a Valley (Sabereen News, December 25, 2024). According to reports it was the first time Israel had attacked the area since the ceasefire began (Lebanese News Agency, December 25, 2024). A "Lebanese security source" stated that

the attack targeted warehouses allegedly belonging to Hezbollah (Agence France-Presse, December 25, 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 take action against Israel. Nevertheless, Hezbollah claimed it remained committed to implementing the agreement:

- ◆ Hezbollah MP Ibrahim al-Moussawi stated that Israel was "claiming ownership of Lebanon," destroying homes, and that the "resistance," alongside the army and the Lebanese people, "provided protection." He said they were giving Israel and the ceasefire an opportunity, but their patience had limits and eventually a "clear stance" would be required (Radio al-Nour, December 22, 2024).
- ◆ Hezbollah MP Ali Fayyad said the entry of "enemy" forces into Lebanese territory up to Wadi al-Hajir was a dangerous development and a serious threat to the implementation of Resolution 1701, necessitating the state, the army and other relevant entities to reassess the situation (Radio al-Nour, December 26, 2024).
- ◆ Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah claimed that the "Israeli enemy" was using the ceasefire to implement its plans to destroy south Lebanon's villages by bulldozing and attacking them. He said responsibility lay with the Lebanese state, the monitoring committee, UNIFIL, the Lebanese Army and the countries which sponsored the agreement (al-'Ahed, December 27, 2024). He added that the people who had called on Hezbollah to stop the war, not take the defense of Lebanon upon itself and leave matters to international decisions and the Lebanese state, had done nothing during the 30 days since the ceasefire went into effect (al-Manar, December 27, 2024).
- ◆ "Hezbollah-affiliated sources" claimed the organization was managing the situation in south Lebanon "wisely" and refrained from being drawn into reopening the front. However, they added that Hezbollah would not tolerate "violations" and demanded that all relevant parties take responsibility. The "sources" added that the escalation of "violations" should primarily concern those who advocated for calling upon international bodies and view them as Lebanon's "protective umbrella" instead of the "resistance" (al-Joumhouria, December 30, 2024).

► Ibrahim al-Amin, editor-in-chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily newspaper al-Akhbar, criticized the handling of "Israeli violations," claiming that the "enemy" acted as though it were victorious and in a position of control. He said the Lebanese Army had informed the Americans of the "violations," but the United States was "indifferent," while certain European actors and UNIFIL officers felt that Israel's actions could legitimize Hezbollah's military actions against Israel. Al-Amin noted that the United States, France, UNIFIL and even the Lebanese Army were incapable of preventing the "enemy" from continuing its "aggression." He said that Lebanese residents were weary of war and did not want to be uprooted from their homes again, but the cost of confronting Israel would remain lower than the price of Israel's violations. He claimed that only the "resistance" could confront the "arrogance of the enemy" (al-Akhbar, December 28, 2024).

► "Hezbollah sources" claimed the organization would implement the ceasefire agreement verbatim in preparation for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, provided that geographically the agreement applied to the area south of the Litani River up to the Israel-Lebanon border. The "sources" said Hezbollah did not support any other interpretation, especially concerning the area north of the Litani, a matter which should be resolved through dialogue between Hezbollah and the future government as part of discussions on Lebanon's defense strategy (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 24, 2024).

► According to reports, Wafiq Safa, the head of Hezbollah's Liaison and Coordination Unit, asked Lebanese Army Commander Joseph Aoun to ensure that the confiscation of Hezbollah's weapons south of the Litani River would not be reported in the media. Reportedly Safa sought to establish Hezbollah's position that the confiscation of weapons would be limited to the south of the Litani and not extend northward (Asas Media, December 28, 2024).

The Lebanese government

► Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, visited south Lebanon to review the activities of army forces on the front lines. Mikati and army Commander General Joseph Aoun toured the army's deployment points and met with soldiers and officers at the headquarters of the 7th Infantry Brigade in Marjayoun. Mikati stated that the army represented Lebanon's unity and would prove it was capable of carrying out the required tasks. He called on the oversight committee to fulfill its role and apply pressure on Israel to stop the

"violations." He added that the presence of the Lebanese Army was essential for the withdrawal of Israeli forces (Lebanon24 and al-Nahar, December 23, 2024).



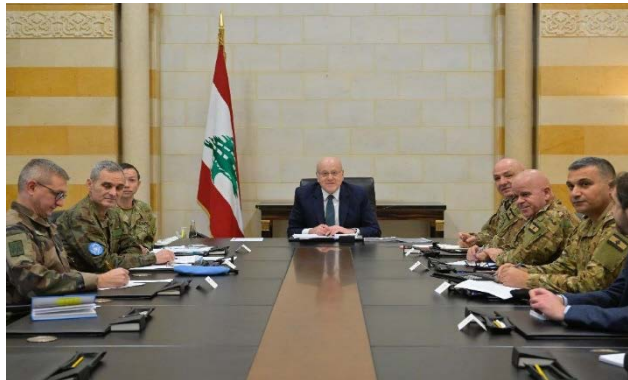
Mikati and Aoun meet with soldiers in south Lebanon (Mikati's X account, December 23, 2024)

► Mikati and Aoun also visited UNIFIL's eastern command in the town of Ibl al-Saqi and met with the force commander, Aroldo Lazzaro. Mikati said that the implementation of Resolution 1701, Israel's withdrawal and the cessation of "violations" were top priorities and that his objective was long-term stability in south Lebanon, for which he relied on the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL. The commander of UNIFIL's eastern sector said that the monitoring committee meetings would continue in order to carry out the required tasks (Lebanon24, December 23, 2024).



Mikati and Aoun in UNIFIL's eastern headquarters (Lebanese Army X account, December 23, 2024)

► On December 24, 2024, Mikati met with the ceasefire oversight committee to discuss halting the "Israeli violations" in south Lebanon and the withdrawal of IDF forces from border areas. Mikati stated that Lebanon was committed to the terms of the understandings, while "Israel continues its violations, which is unacceptable." He called on the committee to pressure Israel to implement the terms of the understandings (al-Mayadeen, December 24, 2024).



Mikati meets with the committee monitoring the ceasefire (al-Nashra, December 24, 2024)

- ▶ A "source" reported that the American General Jasper Jeffers, head of the ceasefire oversight committee, received a call from Mikati protesting the "Israeli incursion" into the Wadi al-Hajir area. According to the report, Jeffers promised Israel would withdraw within five hours after completing a military mission. The "source" also noted that Jeffers pledged to pressure Israel to halt the "violations" and to withdraw from all Lebanese territory by the end of the 60-day ceasefire (al-Joumhouria, December 27, 2024).
- ▶ Mikati's information bureau stated that reports claiming Israel would not complete its withdrawal at the end of the 60-day ceasefire were unfounded, emphasizing that Mikati's consistent position, presented to the United States and France, demanded pressure on Israel to withdraw from all Lebanese lands and to stop the "violations and hostilities" (Lebanon24, December 27, 2024).
- ▶ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, stated that the ceasefire oversight committee had to fulfill its obligations towards UNIFIL and ensure Israel's withdrawal from the Lebanese towns it had entered, allowing the Lebanese Army to deploy in its place. He also stressed that Hezbollah was working alongside the army to implement all terms which had been agreed upon (al-Nahar, December 30, 2024).
- ▶ The Lebanese foreign ministry filed a complaint with the UN Security Council protesting the "repeated Israeli violations" of the ceasefire, which it claimed totaled more than 816 incidents between November 27 and December 22, 2024. The foreign ministry argued that the Israeli "violations" undermined de-escalation efforts and posed a "dangerous threat" to international efforts for security and stability in the region. The ministry called on the Security Council and the countries overseeing the agreement to take a clear stance on Israel's "violations" and to take action to compel it to honor its commitments (al-Nahar, December 24, 2024).

The Lebanese Army

► The Lebanese Army announced that it had taken control of the Qousaya-Zahle center and a tunnel which previously belonged to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC). The Lebanese Army also reported seizing large quantities of weapons, ammunition and military equipment (Lebanon24, December 23, 2024). Nimr (Abu Rateb), a "security figure" of the PFLP-GC in Lebanon, claimed the organization had abandoned all its positions in Lebanon outside Palestinian refugee camps and handed them over to the Lebanese Army, along with the weapons and equipment in the positions. He added that the operation was coordinated with the Lebanese Army out of faith in Lebanon and its institutions. He also expressed gratitude to the Lebanese people for "hosting the Palestinian people" (al-Akhbar, December 23, 2024).



PFLP-GC post turned over to the Lebanese Army (Lebanese Army X account, December 23, 2024)

► The Lebanese Army stated that its forces continued to monitor the "Israeli violations." According to reports, "enemy forces" entered al-Qantara, Adshit, al-Qusayr and Wadi al-Hajir. After contact had been made with the ceasefire oversight committee, they withdrew from the areas and the Lebanese Army removed the blockades (Lebanese Army X account, December 22–30, 2024). "American diplomatic sources" stated that the failure to hand over Hezbollah's facilities to the Lebanese Army could lead to an extension of the 60-day ceasefire by an additional 60 days, thereby prolonging the Israeli withdrawal (Asas Media, December 27, 2024).

UNIFIL

► UNIFIL issued a statement marking the completion of the first month of the ceasefire, noting that "all actions threatening the ceasefire had to stop." According to the statement, UNIFIL continued to work to expedite the withdrawal of the IDF from south Lebanon and the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the area. UNIFIL also noted concern over the ongoing "destruction" carried out by Israel in residential areas, agricultural lands and roads in south

Lebanon, describing the actions as violations of Resolution 1701 (UNIFIL X account, December 26, 2024).

► According to reports, UNIFIL forces patrolled in the valleys between al-Qusayr, Deir Siryan, Adshit al-Qusayr and al-Qantara in search of military facilities belonging to the "resistance" (al-Akhbar, December 30, 2024).

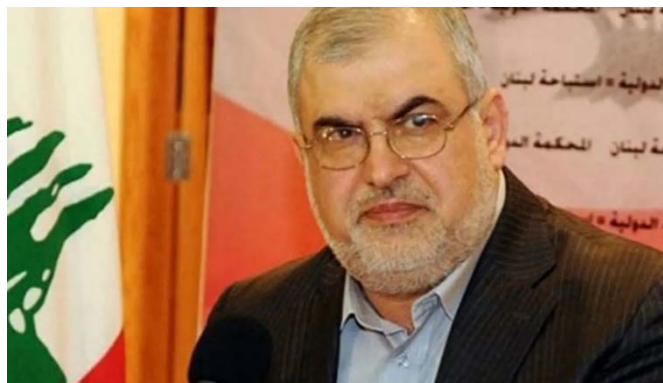
Hezbollah

Hezbollah organizes to reconstruct itself

► "Sources in Hezbollah" reported that the organization's top priorities were conducting a comprehensive assessment of the next phase, continuing investigations into the pager explosions, and making arrangements for the funerals of former secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, and Hashem Safi al-Din, the head of the executive council. The "sources" also said Hezbollah was completing the political and organizational structure to fill the gaps caused by the "deaths of dozens of political and military leaders [sic]" during the war (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 24, 2024).

► Hezbollah MP Hussein al-Hajj Hassan said that despite the attacks and threats, the organization had rebuilt all levels of its leadership and military structure. He said there were new regional challenges and Hezbollah, which was recovering quickly, would deal with them (al-Manar, December 25, 2024).

► According to reports, Mohammad Raad, head of Hezbollah's parliamentary faction, was appointed as Hezbollah's deputy secretary general following the selection of Na'im Qassem as secretary general after Nasrallah's death (al-Nahar; al-Liwaa; al-Hadath, December 29, 2024). "Several sources" reported that Ali Damoush was appointed head of the executive council to replace Hashem Safi al-Din, and Hassan Fadlallah was appointed head of the organization's parliamentary faction to replace Mohammad Raad (al-Hadath, December 29, 2024). Hezbollah denied the reports and stated that when the organization's leadership decided on new appointments it would announce them through official media channels (al-'Ahed, December 29, 2024).



Muhammad Raad (al-Nahar, December 29, 2024)

► According to reports, Yusuf al-Zein was appointed as Hezbollah's communications officer, replacing Mohammad Afif, who was killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut on November 17, 2024 (al-Wataniya, December 23, 2024).

Nasrallah's funeral

► "Sources in Hezbollah" stated that the site chosen for Hassan Nasrallah's grave was along the old road to Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut and would become a "pilgrimage site." According to a report, the funeral ceremonies of Nasrallah and Hashem Safi al-Din, will be shared. Safi al-Din will be buried in the village of Deir Qanoun in the Tyre area of south Lebanon, in accordance with his request (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 24, 2024). According to a different report, Hezbollah has taken control of the area of the bunker where Nasrallah was killed, and a large religious complex will be built there to house Nasrallah's remains and serve as a "pilgrimage site" (Lebanon Debate, December 24, 2024).

Hezbollah involvement in the reconstruction of Lebanon

► Hezbollah reported information about its reconstruction efforts, claiming that dozens of teams from various engineering fields were assessing the damage, while oversight and computing teams had been established to handle economic issues, including compensation. It was also noted that the properties of 200,000 people in south Lebanon had been damaged during the fighting (Lebanon Debate, December 23, 2024).

► According to data from Hezbollah's Jihad al-Bina Association, 40,731 residential buildings in 116 villages south of the Litani River in south Lebanon were inspected. North of the Litani River and in western Beqa'a 50,227 residential units in 107 villages were inspected, while in the Beirut area, in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia and al-Metn, 70,813 units in 93 villages were inspected. In the Beqa'a and Ba'albek-Hermel areas, 23,781 residential units in 126 villages were

inspected. According to the report, more than a thousand experts were involved in the inspections (al-Manar, December 28, 2024).

► Residents in Lebanon claimed Hezbollah's compensation did not meet the extent of the damages. A Lebanese man named Hassan Shahrour said before the war he had a workshop he had built in his home, but the strikes had damaged the house, ceiling and walls. He said Hezbollah representatives had surveyed the damage but the compensation he received was only \$215, even though an engineer and experts he hired privately had assessed the repair costs at \$2,000 (al-Hadath Lebanon Facebook page, December 23, 2024).



Hussein Shahrour's post with a photo of the payment he received
(al-Hadath Lebanon Facebook page December 23, 2024)

Criticism of Hezbollah

► Antoine Zahra, a senior member of the Lebanese Forces Party, claimed Israel was taking advantage of the current circumstances to complete the destruction of Hezbollah's infrastructure. He said the Lebanese government should thank Israel for "removing this burden" from the Lebanese Army to avoid accusations of collaboration and to prevent embarrassing the army (LB Screen, December 2024).

► A video on social media allegedly showed a conversation between the Shi'ite singer Ragheb Alama, one of the most famous artists in Lebanon and the Arab world, and Emirati composer Abdullah Balkhair, in which Alama seemingly celebrated the death of Hassan Nasrallah; Alama was heard saying, "No more Nasrallah." Following the video's release, both Alama and Balkhair denied its authenticity, claiming it had been generated by AI. Regardless, Hezbollah supporters expressed outrage at Alama, and a school in the southern suburb founded by the singer was attacked (al-Arabi, December 23, 2024).

Action taken against Hezbollah

► The Israeli defense ministry imposed economic sanctions on a Hezbollah donation campaign for victims of the pager explosions in September 2024. The campaign was conducted on crowdfunding platforms and enabled contributions through credit cards, bank transfers and PayPal, raising tens of thousands of dollars to support the organization's operatives and rebuild its operational capabilities. The economic sanctions, imposed on the recommendation of the Counterterrorism Economic Warfare Bureau of the Ministry of Defense, were aimed to disrupt Hezbollah's funding channels, which relied on social networks and crowdfunding platforms to raise funds (Lebanese defense ministry spokesperson, December 30, 2024).

The Situation in Lebanon

Rebuilding Lebanon

► Hussein Khair al-Din, head of the reconstruction project in Lebanon, stated that the current scale of destruction in Lebanon was two and a half times greater than the destruction following the Second Lebanon War in 2006. He reported that 317,500 housing units were damaged and 43,750 housing units completely destroyed. He estimated that the reconstruction process would take four years (al-Akhbar, December 24, 2024).

The Lebanese Army

► Joseph Aoun, Lebanese Army commander, visited Saudi Arabia and met with the Saudi Army Chief of Staff, Fayyad bin Hamid al-Ruwaili, and the minister of defense, Prince Khalid bin Salman. According to reports, they discussed the general situation in Lebanon, bilateral army cooperation and support for the Lebanese military institution, particularly in light of recent challenges (Lebanese Army X account, December 26, 2024).



Aoun (left) meets with the Saudi Arabian defense minister (Lebanese Army X account, December 26, 2024)

Electing a new Lebanese president

- ▶ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said he was determined to hold the session to elect a new Lebanese president on January 9, 2025, despite internal and international pressures to postpone it to allow for further consultations regarding candidates. According to Berri, several sessions might be held as part of the discussions on January 9, but the most important thing was for Parliament to elect a new president and for MPs to fulfill their constitutional duties (al-Arabiya, December 26, 2024; al-Nahar, December 30, 2024).
- ▶ Hezbollah-affiliated Mustafa Bayram, Lebanese labor minister, stated that Suleiman Frangieh, the head of the Marada Movement, remained Hezbollah's official presidential candidate. In his assessment, the parliamentary session on January 9, 2025, would end without the election of a president. He said Hezbollah would not accept a president who sought to "attack" the "resistance" and failed to consider it an "official fighting force" in Lebanon. He criticized the Lebanese Army, stating that although the Taif Agreement designated the Lebanese Army as the sole armed force in Lebanon, the army could not defend the country against Israel, and therefore Hezbollah had become the "official fighting force" in Lebanon (al-Manar, December 22, 2024).
- ▶ According to reports, Hezbollah and Amal, the "Shi'ite Twins," indirectly opposed the election of Lebanese Army commander Joseph Aoun as Lebanon's president, although international efforts and consultations on the matter continued (al-Jadeed, December 23, 2024). "Parliamentary sources" stated that the "Shi'ite Twins" and the Free Patriotic Movement were inclined to support the candidacy of former intelligence director George Khoury (MTV Lebanon, December 27, 2024).
- ▶ Hezbollah MP Hussein al-Hajj Hassan claimed that Iran was the only country which had not meddled in Lebanon's presidential elections. He asked, "Where are the people with their slogans of sovereignty, freedom and independence?" and called for demanding that ambassadors and international delegations cease their interference (al-Manar, December 25, 2024).
- ▶ According to reports, several international delegations are expected to arrive in Lebanon after the New Year to promote support for the candidacy of Lebanese Army Commander General Joseph Aoun for the presidency. However, it is generally agreed that without the consent of Nabih Berri and Hezbollah, no breakthrough is likely. "Informed sources" noted that Lebanese Forces Party leader Samir Geagea preferred that the parliamentary session be

postponed for two months to assess the position of the incoming Trump administration on the Middle East. Meanwhile, Geagea was examining the positions of several countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, regarding support for his candidacy (al-Akhbar, December 30, 2024).

► Samir Geagea stated that the "resistance axis"² and the Free Patriotic Movement did not support Joseph Aoun's candidacy for Lebanon's presidency and could block his election, since the required number of votes could not be secured without them. He further accused the "establishment," as he referred to Hezbollah and its allies, of working day and night to "slip in" the election of a president who would not fulfill the aspirations of the Lebanese people and instead ensure the previous situation continued (al-Jadeed, December 28, 2024).

² Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations in Lebanon.