Overview

On October 8, 2023, a day after Operation Iron Swords began, Hezbollah joined the fighting, claiming solidarity with and support for Hamas in its war against Israel and to open another front, which would force Israel to invest manpower and resources on the northern border at the expense of its efforts in the Gaza Strip. So far Hezbollah has refrained from launching a broader campaign against Israel on the grounds that it is the Palestinians' war.

However, Hezbollah's combat methods have developed over time. Initially, the attacks involved sniper fire, artillery and mortar shell fire, anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and rockets. After approximately three weeks, Hezbollah introduced "suicide" UAVs, heavy Burkan rockets, whose warheads weigh between 300 and 500 kgs (660 and 1,100 lbs), and began using a double-barreled launcher to fire anti-tank guided missiles, with approximately half a second between launches. In January 2024 Hezbollah began using more advanced weapons, such as al-Mas electro-optic anti-tank missiles, with a range of approximately 8 kilometers (5 miles), and heavy Falaq-1 rockets. It also began to issue threats, claiming that if Israel waged a war with Lebanon it would use more sophisticated weapons. Meanwhile, from time to time Hezbollah increased the range of its attacks, sending its rockets deep into northern Israel, and began attacking not only the towns and villages near the border, but Kiryat Shmona, Mount Meron and Safed. The targets of the attacks and their scope depend, for the most part, on the number of Israeli counterattacks and the number and nature of the casualties (Hezbollah operatives, in which case, number and rank or civilians).

Hezbollah has carried out about 98% of all the attacks against Israel from Lebanon. Other organizations also participate in the fighting, apparently in coordination with Hezbollah.

1 Click https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en to subscribe and receive the ITIC’s daily updates as well as its other publications.
2 For further information, see the November 2023 ITIC report, "Operation Iron Swords (Updated to 1 p.m., November 23, 2023)."
including Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya and the Amal Movement. Hezbollah also coordinates the fighting with pro-Iranian militias, which operate under its direction in Lebanon and on the Syrian-Israeli border, and are mainly responsible for launching suicide drones and rockets to attack Haifa and Eilat and other targets.

During the five months of fighting, Hezbollah, according to its own announcements, carried out 959 attacks on Israel, using anti-tank guided missiles (266 attacks), Burkan heavy rockets (73), Falaq rockets (40), suicide drones (31) and surface-to-air missiles (6). In addition, they attacked with small arms fire, sniper weapons, mortar shells and artillery fire. At least 232 Hezbollah operatives were killed and the organization suffered significant damage to its operational infrastructure in south Lebanon and especially along the border fence with Israel. In addition, at least 45 operatives of other terrorist organizations were killed (Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Amal, al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya, and the Imam Hossein Division). Hezbollah attacks killed 16 people in Israel (ten soldiers and six civilians). About 100,000 south Lebanese left their homes and about 80,000 residents of northern Israel were evacuated. According to the IDF spokesman, IDF forces attacked more than 4,000 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon and Syria, killing more than 300 terrorist operatives.

Hezbollah employs a strategy of using force to confine the limits of the conflict to a few kilometers from the border and to preserve the so-called "equations" established by Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s secretary general, before the war. According to the "equations," any Israeli escalation in Lebanon or the Gaza Strip will be met with a Hezbollah escalation, for any attack on Lebanese civilians, Hezbollah will respond by attacking Israeli civilians. Hezbollah escalated its activities several times "in response" to IDF activity along the border and inside Lebanon and in response to the organization’s losses or the death of Lebanese civilians. Hezbollah claims its attacks on Israel are only intended "to help the Gazans in their war," and when the fighting in the Gaza Strip stops, Hezbollah will stop attacking Israel.

Despite Hezbollah’s losses in the fighting so far, which have been significant, and despite the suffering of the civilians in south Lebanon and the (few) criticisms voiced against it, Hezbollah has no intention of giving up its control of the border when the war ends, and as long as the fighting in the Gaza Strip continues, it rejects conducting negotiations for a settlement in Lebanon.
Senior Lebanese government officials have stated that they are prepared to implement Security Council Resolution 1701, but only after the war, and only within the framework of an agreement which will settle Lebanon's border claims, and only if Israel stops its incursions into Lebanese territory, especially from the air. The Lebanese government coordinates its positions with Hezbollah and works against Israel in the international arena.

Iran, which is not directly involved in the fighting, openly supports Hezbollah and Lebanon, provides the organization with weapons and equipment and also works against Israel in the international arena.

In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah’s military strategy along the Israel-Lebanon border has continued unchanged since the beginning of the fighting. Its objective is to exhaust the IDF and force it to divert resources from the Gaza Strip to the northern border, part of Hezbollah’s aid to Hamas and showing its commitment to the "resistance axis," the "unity of the arenas" and to preserve the organization's balance of deterrence vis-à-vis Israel. Apparently, as long as the fighting in the Gaza Strip continues, Hezbollah will continue attacking along the border and will refuse to discuss a possible settlement. Hezbollah is aware its policy of brinksmanship may deteriorate into a comprehensive war with Israel. The senior Hezbollah leadership has often reiterated the claim that they do not want a war with Israel, but they are prepared for one, and if Israel starts a war, Hezbollah will retaliate without reservation.

Hezbollah Attacks

On October 8, 2023, a day after the start of Operation Iron Swords, Hezbollah opened a fighting front along Israel’s border with Lebanon. Hezbollah regarded it as an act of "solidarity" with Hamas in the Gaza Strip and an expression of the concept of "unity of the arenas," which was formulated by the Iranian-led "resistance axis." Hezbollah defined its role as "helping" Hamas in the Gaza Strip with attacks on Israel which would result in the diversion of Gaza forces from Gaza to the northern border.

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3 The Security Council passed Resolution 1701 after the Second Lebanon War. It called for a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah and the deployment of an armed UN force and Lebanese army forces in southern Lebanon, to prevent Hezbollah from continuing to operate in southern Lebanon. It also called for disarming Hezbollah.

4 Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi’ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.
The scope of Hezbollah's activity

Between the beginning of the war in October 2023 and March 8, 2024, Hezbollah carried out 959 attacks along the northern border and in northern Israel, most of them directed against military sites. Other terrorist organizations, apparently coordinated with and directed by Hezbollah, joined the attacks: Hamas terrorist operatives in Lebanon carried out ten attacks; PIJ operatives, four attacks; and the Fajr Forces, the military-terrorist wing of the Jama'a al-Islamiyya, a Salafi-jihadist organization operating in Lebanon, two attacks. The Amal Movement is known to have lost operatives, but the ITIC has no information about attacks they participated in. The Imam Hossein Division, which is affiliated with Iran and operates in the service of Hezbollah, did not claim responsibility for any attack, even though its operatives were injured in IDF attacks.

Organizational distribution of the attacks on Israel's northern border

A graph of Hezbollah's daily activity (according to the organization's data) indicates an average of ten attacks per day. Two high points in the organization's activity were on November 2, 2023, the day before Hassan Nasrallah's first speech, when there was a
significant increase in Hezbollah attacks, possibly due to his desire for an "achievement" in preparation for the speech. On November 23, 2023, the day before the lull in the fighting, which lasted from November 24, 2023 to December 1, 2023, Hezbollah's attacks peaked again, apparently due to Nasrallah's desire for another "achievement" before the lull went into effect.

The targets

At the beginning of the war, for the most part Hezbollah attacked IDF positions along the Lebanon-Israel border and shot at Israel surveillance equipment. Later, with the change in IDF's deployment and the evacuation of the civilians living near the border, Hezbollah used anti-tank guided missiles and UAVs to attack civilian and military targets in areas distant from the border, such as IDF bases in Meron and Safed:

- On November 5, 2023, Grad (Katyusha) rockets were fired at Kiryat Shmona (most of whose residents had left the city), damaging houses, vehicles and businesses. On November 12, 2023, Hamas terrorists, coordinating with Hezbollah, fired rockets at Haifa (apparently targeting Haifa Port and the Karish gas rig). On November 17, 2023, Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, stated that the "resistance's" UAVs had reached Haifa and beyond (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 17, 2023).
- On the morning of November 23, 2023, Hezbollah launched its heaviest barrage of rockets at that point, firing 48 rockets at the Ein Zeitim base near Safed. Behind the attack may have been the death of six of Hezbollah's Radwan Forces operatives in an
Israeli airstrike in Beit Yahoun the previous day. It was also the eve of the lull in the fighting in the Gaza Strip, when the number of attacks increased.

- On January 2, 2024, **Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau and responsible for the movement’s activities in Judea and Samaria,** died in a killing attributed to Israel. Six additional terrorists were killed in the attack, two of them senior operatives in Hamas’ military-terrorist wing in Lebanon. In response, on January 6, 2024, Hezbollah attacked the Israeli Air Force’s control unit at the Mt. Meron base, located about seven kilometers south of the Israel-Lebanon border, firing 62 rockets and missiles of various types. Hezbollah called it “the initial response” to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri and the six other terrorists.

- On January 23, 2024, the air control unit on Mt. Meron was attacked again with rockets and anti-tank guided missiles. Hezbollah claimed the attack was a response to killings in Lebanon and Syria and attacks on civilians and houses in villages.

- On the morning of February 27, 2024 about 35 rockets was launched at the Mt. Meron area from Lebanon; no casualties or damage were reported.

- On the evening of February 27, 2024, an additional 20 rockets were fired into northern Israel. A few were intercepted and the rest fell in open areas. An anti-tank guided missile was fired from Lebanon at the Mt. Meron area and hit the air control unit but did not damage the systems (IDF spokesperson, February 27, 2024).

**Weapons**

Hezbollah’s use of its weapons has developed gradually. Initially, it employed sniper fire, artillery, mortar shells, anti-tank guided missiles and standard Grad (Katyusha) rockets. After about three weeks of fighting, Hezbollah began using other and more sophisticated weapons, suicide UAVs and, as of November 2, 2023, Burkan rockets, whose warheads weigh between 300 and 500 kgs (660 and 1,100 lbs). On November 16, 2023, Hezbollah fired two anti-tank guided missiles at a Merkava tank near the IDF’s Biranit camp, with an interval of about half a second between them, apparently using a dual-missile launcher. From the beginning of January 2024, Hezbollah began using more advanced weapons, such as an al-Mas electro-optical anti-tank missile, which has range of approximately 8 kms, and heavy Falaq-1 rockets.

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5 For further information, see the January ITIC report, "Reactions to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri."
In addition, surface-to-air missiles were used to attack IDF anti-tank UAVs, and in one instance an IDF UAV was shot down. Hezbollah announced that on February 26, 2024, its aerial defense unit had shot down an Israeli Hermes 450 drone ("Zik") using an air-to-surface missile, and released a video of the UAV's crash (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 26, 2024). The aircraft fell in Lebanese territory. In response, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked Hezbollah aerial defense complexes deep inside Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, February 26, 2024).

Hezbollah announced its operatives had used "appropriate weapons" 399 times, without specifying the type of weapons. An investigation of the events indicated that the weapons included sniper, light arms and artillery fire, anti-tank guided missiles, mortar shells and rockets. The announcement was deliberately vague, either to hide specific information or to misrepresent the situation to claim Hezbollah had used a unique secret weapon. Hezbollah repeatedly claims that they have not used all their weapons and that Israel can expect "surprises."
Anti-tank guided missile launcher

An anti-tank guided missile launcher before the attack on the IDF’s Narkiss post in Metula on March 3, 2024 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 3, 2024)

Launching anti-tank guided missiles

Photos from a Hezbollah video documenting the launch of anti-tank guided missiles at the IDF’s Margaliot post on October 20, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 21, 2023)

Artillery fire

From a Hezbollah video documenting the firing of artillery shells at the IDF’s Dvoranit post on November 19, 2023 at 12:45 p.m. (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 21, 2023)
Rocket launches

From a Hezbollah video documenting the launch of 107 mm rockets at the IDF's Gladiola post (Har Dov) on October 22, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 22, 2023)

Burkan heavy rockets

Right: Two Burkan rockets before firing at the IDF's Dvoranit post on March 3, 2024. Left: The launch of the first rocket (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 3, 2024)

Launch of a Burkan rocket at the IDF’s Ramim camp on November 11, 2023 at 9:45 a.m. (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 11, 2023)
Suicide UAVs and drones

Three Hezbollah suicide drones used to attack the Yiftah-Ramot Naftali area (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 10, 2023)

Introduction of new weapons, January 2024

- **Al-Mas guided missile**: On January 27, 2024, Hezbollah revealed it had begun using electro-optical anti-tank guided missiles called al-Mas, with a range of about eight kilometers, and a heavy rocket called Falaq-1.\(^6\) The revelation was apparently intended to show Israel that Hezbollah possessed advanced capabilities, with longer ranges and higher levels of accuracy (Lebanon 24, January 27, 2024). According to the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen network, the missile system used to attack the Dvoranit post on January 25, 2024, was a new Russian-made system which was reverse engineered in Iran, and it was not the first time that Hezbollah had used the system in Lebanon. According to al-Mayadeen, the camera mounted on the missile’s upper side is used to direct it, making it possible to hit targets not visible from the

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\(^6\)The name *Falaq* (“sunrise”) is taken from Surah 113 of the Qur’an, which deals with Allah’s protection from Satan’s evil.
firing position. It was also noted that the missile is guided by an electro-optical system, not a laser, and its warhead can be changed (al-Mayadeen, January 26, 2024). A few days earlier, **Na’im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general**, threatened that if Israel expanded its attacks in Lebanon, Hezbollah would expand its responses using the “fourth range,” by which he meant previously-unused rockets and missiles with greater range and destructive power. According to an article published on the Hezbollah-affiliated al-‘Ahed news website, the organization recently revealed it had several sophisticated tactical weapons in its arsenal with which to deter Israel. It could do so without using its strategic deterrent weapons, knowing that the use of such weapons would almost certainly lead to a widespread conflict and an open war (al-‘Ahed, January 29, 2024).

**Al-Mas guided missile**

Right: A Hezbollah terrorist operative prepares to launch an al-Mas guided missile at an IDF vehicle at the Yakinton base. Left: An al-Mas guided missile in flight (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 6, 2024)

IDF vehicles at the Yakinton post as seen by the al-Mas guided missile camera, a few seconds before the missile hit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 6, 2024)
The target before impact (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 25, 2024)

The Falaq-1 rocket

The Falaq-1 rocket: Hezbollah reported it had used a Falaq-1 rocket to attack the IDF’s Ma’ale Golan camp on January 26, 2024. The rocket has a range of ten kilometers can gain an altitude of 3,500 meters, weighs 113 kgs with a warhead of 50 kgs. It is 1.32 meters long and has a diameter of 240 mm. The rocket is launched from a double-barreled launcher mounted on a vehicle, and can also be used as a shore-to-ship rocket (al-Manar, January 26, 2024).
Right: A double-barrel Falaq-1 rocket launcher mounted on a vehicle (al-Manar, January 26, 2024). Left: A Falaq-1 rocket launched from a single-barrel launcher, one of nine such rockets fired at the Ma'ale Golan camp on January 26, 2024 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 27, 2024)

**Distribution of the use of various types of weapons**

- The distribution of Hezbollah's use of its weapons: Anti-tank guided missile fire, 266; Burkan heavy rockets, 73; Falaq-1 rockets, 40; Suicide attack drones, 31; Surface-to-air missiles, 6.

**Distribution of the types of weapons used**

**Other organizations which operate alongside Hezbollah**

- Along with Hezbollah, other organizations have attacked Israel from south Lebanon, significantly less than Hezbollah:
**Hamas**: Hamas terrorist operatives in Lebanon carried out border infiltrations, shot at IDF forces and launched dozens of rockets at northern Israel, some of them far from the border. The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades – Lebanon, Hamas’ military-terrorist wing, Lebanon Brigades, claimed responsibility for four rocket barrages attacking distant targets: on October 15, 2023, 20 rockets were fired at Shlomi and Nahariya; on October 19, 2023, 30 were fired at the Western Galilee, including Nahariya and Shlomi; on October 29, 2023, 16 were fired at Nahariya and on November 12, 2023, 15 were fired at north Haifa [Haifa Bay], Shlomi and Nahariya. On February 28, 2024, a barrage of rockets was launched at the Upper Galilee and Kiryat Shmona. The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for two rocket barrages of 40 Grad rockets attacking the headquarters of IDF Brigade 769 in the Gibor Camp and the airport camp in Beit Hillel. Hamas claimed the attack was carried out in response to Israel’s [alleged] "massacres" of "civilians" in the Gaza Strip and the killing of leaders and "their brothers" in Beirut (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel February 28, 2024).

**The Islamic Jihad in Palestine (PIJ)**: The organization's operatives made several attempts to penetrate Israeli territory. On October 9, 2023, the PIJ claimed responsibility for the infiltration of a squad which shot at IDF forces, killing three soldiers. Two terrorists were killed. On October 21 and 22, 2023, a squad fired small arms/machine guns at IDF forces during two failed attempts to enter Israeli territory. There were no IDF casualties. On October 29, 2023, a PIJ squad infiltrated Israeli territory near the IDF’s Hanita outpost. Two terrorists were killed. There were no IDF casualties.

**The al-Fajr Forces, the military wing of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood**: The Forces claimed responsibility for launching two rocket barrages at Kiryat Shmona on January 5, 2024, claiming direct hits. The Forces stated they would continue attacks and renewed their promise to respond to the killing of "resistance" leaders and fighters (al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya website, January 6, 2024). The two operatives were killed in Beirut along with Saleh al-'Aroui.

**The Amal Movement**: During January 2024 the Amal Movement announced that 11 of its operatives had been killed in a "jihad mission." No further information was provided.
Pro-Iranian militias on the Israel-Syria border: Pro-Iranian militias, operating from southwest Syria near the Israeli border, also joined the fighting in coordination with Hezbollah. The militias, operating as part of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (Iraqi pro-Iranian militias), launched a suicide UAV at Eilat on November 9, 2023, which hit a school; there were no casualties. They launched rockets at the Israeli cities, towns and villages in the Golan Heights and other missiles at Eilat.

The Imam Hossein Division: The division was established in 2016 and is an Iranian-Hezbollah proxy headed by "Zulfiqar" from the Shi'ite village of Hanawiya in south Lebanon. He joined Hezbollah's military-terrorist wing in the early 2000s, underwent training in engineering and sabotage, and rapidly climbed the ranks. After the Second Lebanon War he was appointed to command the engineering forces in the Aziz Unit, which operates in north Lebanon, and given a rank equivalent to lieutenant colonel. When the Syrian Civil War began he was sent to aid the Assad regime. Initially the division operated mainly in Syria, less in Lebanon, and was directed by the late Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force, who was killed in a targeted American strike in January 2020, and since then Zulfiqar's status has increased. The militia has an estimated 6,000 operatives of various nationalities, mostly Shi'ites from Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Lebanon and Afghanistan, who were recruited and trained as mercenaries, receiving hundreds of dollars every month (Walla website, November 10, 2023). During the war, the militia has not claimed responsibility for attacks, apparently operating within Hezbollah's organizational framework.

On March 2, 2024, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked vehicles on the main road of Naqoura which were carrying terrorists who had launched rockets at Israel; they reportedly belonged to the Imam Hossein Division (IDF spokesperson, March 2, 2024). According to another report, one of the terrorists was a Hezbollah commander and the other two were Hezbollah operatives (Fahd's X account, March 2, 2024).

7 The organization's activities do not appear in this report, which relates only to events along the Israel-Lebanon border.
Hezbollah infographic of its attacks along the border

On February 4, 2024, Hezbollah published an infographic summarizing its attacks between October 8, 2023 and February 4, 2024. According to Hezbollah, during 120 days it carried out 961 attacks against military targets on the Israel-Lebanon border, allegedly killing and wounding approximately 2,000 Israelis. The number of attacks is about 200 more than the number for which it claimed responsibility in its daily publications, and the number of Israeli casualties is a total fabrication invented for the organization’s propaganda needs and the glorification of its achievements.

According to the Hezbollah data, during the period in question it attacked 56 IDF armored vehicles and 26 IDF headquarters. The organization claimed that it had fired 323 mortar shells and launched 244 rockets, 23 attack UAVs and 385 anti-tank guided missiles. It claimed 68 sniper and machinegun attacks, 85 using "direct" weapons (apparently referring to a recoilless artillery or RPGs with increased range), 72 attacks using "various weapons" and the launching of 43 surface-to-air missiles (most likely shoulder-fired missiles). According to the infographic, the attacks caused approximately 230,000 Israeli residents to evacuate 43
“settlements” near the border (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 4, 2024).

Hezbollah's infographic (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 4, 2024)

Hezbollah casualties

A Beirut-based Lebanese consulting company called Information International, which conducts research on issues concerning Arab countries, published data regarding Hezbollah casualties in the fighting against Israel, according to age and place of origin. The data indicate that between October 7, 2023 and March 5, 2024, 290 people were killed in Lebanon, of whom 228 were Hezbollah operatives.

According to the data, the Hezbollah casualties came from 119 cities, towns and villages in Lebanon. The highest number of deaths came from the villages of south Lebanon, especially those near the border: Aita al-Sha’ab and Kafrkila (9 each), Aitaroun and Markaba (6 each), al-Taybeh and Kharbet Selem (6 each), Meis al-Jabal (5), Nabatiyeh (5), Kounin (4), Shakra (4), and Bint Jbeil Jabil (3). However, there are also deaths from other regions: al-Harmel, in northeastern Lebanon (5), Halabta, in northeastern Lebanon (2), Tyre (3), Beirut (2), Suhmur in the Beqa’a Valley (2) and al-Ansar in Ba’albek (1).

Age distribution: 9% between 20-25 years, 20% between 26-30 years, 21.5% between 31-35 years, 21% between 36-40 years, 28.5% over the age of 41.

The highest number of Hezbollah casualties, 28, was during the third week of the war, between October 22 and 28, 2023. In the period between February 11 and 17, 2024, there were 20 deaths. Between February 25 and March 5, 2024, 18 Hezbollah operatives were killed. The lowest number, 2, was between January 14 and 20, 2024 (Information International website, March 8, 2024).
Israel activities against Hezbollah, as reported by the IDF spokesperson

On March 12, 2024, the IDF spokesperson provided updated information about the IDF’s fighting against Hezbollah. According to the information, in the last five months of fighting, IDF forces attacked more than 1,200 Hezbollah targets from the air and more than 3,100 targets on land in Lebanon and Syria. More than 450 were Radwan Forces facilities, more than 150 surveillance and collection posts along the border, more than 70 manned headquarters and more than 50 heavy rocket launch facilities were attacked. The attacks killed more than 300 terrorists and wounded more than 750, including five senior commanders, and dozens of terrorist squads were attacked which had directed or fired anti-tank missiles and rockets at Israel. The attacks damaged Hezbollah’s air and ground capabilities and its chain of command. Lebanon (IDF spokesman, March 12, 2024).

Hezbollah's Strategies

The official reason for Hezbollah’s joining the fighting was "solidarity with and support for Hamas" in its war against Israel and the desire to keep Israel occupied on the northern border at the expense of fighting in the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah’s objective is to confine the conflict to a few kilometers from the border and to preserve the so-called "equations" Nasrallah
established before the war and which he has tried to preserve during it. According to the "equation," Hezbollah will respond to any attack on Lebanese civilians by attacking civilians in Israeli territory, and to any Israeli "escalation" in Lebanon or the Gaza Strip with "escalation." Hezbollah has in fact escalated its activities several times in response to intense IDF activity along the border and deep in Lebanon, including targeted attacks, and in response to the extent of the organization's losses. However, Hezbollah has claimed that it will stop fighting as soon as the fighting in the Gaza Strip stops. Hezbollah is also unwilling to engage in a dialogue about an arrangement between Israel and Lebanon as long as the fighting continues.

Hezbollah officials consistently claim that they do not want to wage a comprehensive war against Israel, but at the same time, they are apparently aware that their brinksmanship could lead to war. They reiterate that they are prepared for any scenario, and if Israel starts a war it will suffer heavy damage to property and extensive loss of life.

So far, Hezbollah's assets along the border have been severely and extensively damaged, and it has suffered losses of personnel. It is determined not to give up its control along the border at the end of the war and wants to return to the status quo ante of October 7, 2023, when it was granted freedom of action in south Lebanon, where it constructed its military infrastructure and deployed terrorist operatives throughout the region.

**Statements from Hassan Nasrallah and other Hezbollah leaders**

Hassan Nasrallah has delivered seven speeches since the beginning of the war about the organization's policies and strategy. Senior Hezbollah figures have also related the issues:

- **The reasons for Hezbollah's joining the fighting:** The fighting in the Gaza Strip was caused by [Israel's] "repressive regime of occupation" of the Palestinians. Nasrallah

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8 The speeches were delivered November 3 and 11, 2023; January 3, 5 and 14, 2024; and February 13 and 16, 2024. They were broadcast live by the organization's al-Manar tv. For further information see the ITIC reports of November 7, 2023; "Speech of Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah, and the reactions to it in the Arab world;" November 14, 2023, "Nasrallah announces escalation and calls for pressure on Israel;" January 8, 2024, "The main points of Hassan Nasrallah’s speeches (January 3 and 5, 2024);" January 15, 2024, "Operation Iron Swords January 15, 2024 (Updated to 1 p.m.);" February 14, 2024, "Operation Iron Swords (Updated to 1 p.m.);" February 18, 2024, "Operation Iron Swords February 18, 2024 (Updated to 1 p.m)."
said the Gazans had initiated and were conducting the "campaign" and Hezbollah joined the fighting to open another front to make Israel divert forces from the Gaza Strip and thereby help the "resistance [terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip." He falsely claimed Israel was committing "barbaric massacres" of Palestinians, and every "moral person" in the world had to stop them. Nasrallah also represented himself as a "supporter of the oppressed," a central element in the ideology of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (sixth speech). In an attempt to explain the "real" reason for this and previous wars, he claimed that the establishment of the State of Israel was what had caused "all the wars in the Middle East so far" and called the establishment of the State of Israel a "regional disaster" (sixth and seventh speeches).

**Escalation of the conflict and the possibility of a comprehensive war against Israel:**
As the fighting continued and Israel intensified its activities against Hezbollah, Nasrallah's threats became more violent and the organization escalated its operations. Nasrallah initially warned that "all options are open" (first speech). After the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri on January 2, 2024, attributed to Israel, Nasrallah threatened Israel with a harsh response, and Hezbollah escalated its attacks (fourth speech). On January 6, 2024 the day after the speech, 2024, Hezbollah attacked the IDF aerial control base in Mt. Meron. Following the targeted killing of Wissam Tawil, a senior commander in Hezbollah' Radwan force, on January 8, 2024, Hezbollah attacked the IDF Northern Command base in Safed with a UAV.

In response to the statement by Israeli Minister of Defense, Yoav Gallant, who said the IDF would go north and continue fighting Hezbollah at the end of the fighting in the Gaza Strip, Nasrallah threatened that the people of Israel should be prepared to open the shelters and erect tents and be prepared for two million refugees, not just 100,000 or 200,000. He added, "the resistance today is stronger and more determined than ever before to confront the enemy. Every time Israel escalates, the resistance will act accordingly," and "I remind Gallant, who is threatening Beirut, that Hezbollah has a powerful missile force that covers Israel from Kiryat Shmona to Eilat" (sixth speech).

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9 Saleh al-'Arouri was the deputy head of Hamas' political bureau and was responsible for the organization’s activities in Judea and Samaria. He was killed in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia region of Beirut on January 2, 2024. For further information, see the January 2024 ITIC report, "Reactions to the killing of Saleh al-‘Arouri in Beirut."
Hezbollah is ready for any Israeli escalation and will respond accordingly. The organization does not want a comprehensive war, but if Israel starts one the organization is ready for it. The same statement was repeated in several of Nasrallah’s speeches and also by senior Hezbollah figures. The threats were Hezbollah’s response to Israel’s statements that it would not tolerate the presence of Hezbollah along the border after the war in the Gaza Strip, even at the cost of a war with Hezbollah. For example, Nasrallah said it was not currently necessary for Hezbollah to participate fully in the war, since “the resistance in the Gaza Strip is winning,” and therefore no additional aid was required (first speech). On another occasion, he said the fighting would stop “when the aggression in the Gaza Strip stops and in south Lebanon stops.” He added that when Israel took action, Hezbollah’s responses would be “proportionate and effective” (sixth speech). Hezbollah did in fact stop its attacks between November 22 and December 1, 2023, during the ceasefire for the hostage deal.

Further statements:

Nabil Qaouk, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, claimed they had they forced a genuine, difficult, unprecedented, continuous war of attrition on Israel (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 17, 2023). He said the "resistance" had escalated its "high-quality" actions in response to the Israeli escalation and Israel should understand they were prepared for every possibility of war and escalation in both quantity and quality. Moreover, he said, the "resistance" in Lebanon would continue its attacks as long as the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip continued, and regardless of pressure, their position was firm and would not change (al-'Ahed, January 31, 2024).

Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, said that if Israel escalated its attacks in Lebanon, the organization would escalate its responses with the "fourth range," that is, the introduction of previously unused rockets and missiles with greater destructive force and a longer range (Lebanon 24, January 27, 2024). He later stated that so far the level of conflict in south Lebanon was limited, but if Israel escalated its attacks they would escalate their attacks. He added that they would not be surprised by any aggression from Israel. He also stated that their presence in the conflict was what deterred Israel (Na'im Qassem’s X account, February 21, 2024).
Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that they had already warned Israel not to make a mistake in its activity against Lebanon, because "graveyards" awaited them in Lebanon. He noted Hezbollah's willingness to confront Israel and said that so far Israel had seen only a small part of their force, and they were prepared to reveal it fully (al-Nashra, January 27, 2024).

Harming Lebanese citizens is grounds for a harsh response against Israeli citizens. Nasrallah clarified that "blood [of civilians] will be met with blood, not by attacking outposts, surveillance devices or vehicles [as the organization responds when it attacks a military target]." He alleged Israel was deliberately attacking civilians, adding "it is not possible to remain silent in the face of the civilians who were killed in Nabatieh, Souaneh and other places in south Lebanon." He claimed the February 16, 2024 attacks on Kiryat Shmona were an "initial" response. He later referred to the "massacres" [allegedly] committed by Israel and noted that their response was escalating and expanding the fighting (seventh speech). Intense activity by the IDF in the Gaza Strip that harms civilians is also a reason for escalation. Nasrallah said Hezbollah had begun using more sophisticated weapons, such as Burkan rockets and suicide UAVs, because IDF attacks had killed civilians in Lebanon and had completed bisecting the Gaza Strip [east-west] (second speech).

Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said Hezbollah would respond to any harm to civilians by attacking "the settlements on the border" (al-Mayadeen, January 22, 2024).

In a few isolated instances, Hezbollah escalated the fighting proactively and not as a response to Israel’s activity, for example the day before the first speech, which had raised many expectations, Hezbollah significantly increased its activity, apparently to score an achievement in the fighting in preparation for the speech.

10 On February 15, 2024, the Lebanese media reported attacks on locations and deaths resulting from them (al-Mayadeen, February 15, 2024). For example, an apartment in the center of Nabatieh, about 12 kilometers northwest of Metula, was attacked with a UAV. According to reports, Hossein Ahmed Daher Barjaoui and his family members were killed in the attack (al-Nashra, February 15, 2024). It was also reported that searches were being conducted for two missing people (al-Mayadeen, February 15, 2024). On the same day, it was reported that three people were killed in an attack in the village of Souaneh in south Lebanon. According to the reports, the attack killed a boy named Hussein Muhse, his brother Amir and his mother Rua al-Mohammed (International Voice of Beirut, February 15, 2024).
"The unity of the arenas:" The concept of the unity of the arenas has been consolidated in the "resistance axis" in recent years, according to which all the elements of the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and Syria would unite against Israel. If one of the "resistance" terrorist wings attacked, the others would join the fight. In practice, with the Hamas terrorist attack and massacre on October 7, 2023, and the outbreak of the war, Hezbollah did not join the war in full force. Nasrallah justified that by saying it was a Palestinian war and Hamas did not need Hezbollah's assistance, but nevertheless Hezbollah was "helping" it by opening another front against Israel. On several occasions Nasrallah stressed Hezbollah's contribution of participation, the importance of the involvement of Houthis in Yemen, of the pro-Iranian Shi'ite militias in Iraq for having "entered the heart of the campaign" and the Judea and Samaria front (first, second and fifth speeches). Since the beginning of the war, Nasrallah has not used the phrase "the unity of the arenas" in his speeches, but has referred to the participation of other "resistance axis" elements in the fighting. Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, explained the organization's approach by saying that when talking about the unity of the arenas, some people mistakenly thought that "unity" meant "the same activity of all the arenas." He claimed what it meant was that they shared a common position and vision, and were prepared to deal with common challenges, but each arena operated independently for its own reasons, related to capacity, readiness and influence vis-à-vis Israel (Na'im Qassem's X account, February 22, 2024).

The internal Lebanese arena: To generate broad legitimacy for the organization's activities vis-à-vis Israel and to stifle the voices of protest from the public in Lebanon, Nasrallah tries to justify Hezbollah's joining the fighting against Israel, praise the south Lebanese's determination to sacrifice and continues to adhere to the claim that Hezbollah is "Lebanon's protector." His overview is to counteract the voices who claim he is destroying Lebanon, involving the country in a war alien to Lebanon and sabotaging its regional and international relations for the interests of Iran and the "resistance axis." Nasrallah claimed the organization acted out of national and regional responsibility, adding that opening a front with Israel was in the national interest, it would prevent Israel from winning and lead to its defeat. Nasrallah added that "those who today bear the main burden on the Lebanese front are the residents of south Lebanon, and Hezbollah stands by them." He claimed that Hezbollah's interest had

11 For further information, see the March 2024 ITIC report, "Public Criticism in Lebanon of Hezbollah Activity along the Israel-Lebanese Border."
always been to deter and defeat Israel and prevent it from becoming strong. The "regional
goal," he claimed, was for Israel to be defeated [in Gaza], because if it won, it would become
a regional danger. He added, "[Thanks to Hezbollah] Lebanon has become a deterrent force
against Israel, and that raises Lebanon’s status in the eyes of the world" (sixth speech).

Glorification of the narrative of the "victory of the resistance" and the Israel's
weakness: Hezbollah has created a false narrative of "the victory of the resistance" and
represents Israel as weak and crumbling, unable to confront the "resistance" and in need of
help from the United States, while the "resistance" is flourishing and on its way to victory (first
speech). He claimed the war was becoming more difficult for Israel due to changes in world
public opinion, growing international pressure, the strength of the "resistance" working
against it from the various arenas and its internal pressures, including economic damages,
the Israelis displaced from their homes in the north and south and increasing pressure from
the families of the hostages (second speech). According to Nasrallah, in the Gaza Strip Israel
is losing because the "resistance" demonstrates resilience and survival, and the Hamas
government shows no signs of collapsing. Due to its [alleged] "weakness," Israel has achieved
nothing in the war and therefore is exacting "barbaric revenge" from the Gazans. On the other
hand, the "resistance" is killing many soldiers and Israel [allegedly] hides the number of its
victims, and Hezbollah also causes economic and political losses. In addition, he claimed,
Israel's image has been damaged, for example by the lawsuits at the International Court of
Justice in The Hague (sixth speech). According to Nasrallah, Israel has to lose the war, it will
admit defeat and the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip will stop. The loss will be reflected by the
"resistance axis" maximizing the damage to Israel's society and economy and preventing it
from achieving anything (fifth and seventh speeches). The Hamas picture of "victory" will
achieve will be part of the entire "resistance axis" victory over Israel (third speech).

Implementing Security Council Resolution 1701 and the possibility of an Israel-Lebanon
political settlement: With reference to Israel’s demand that Hezbollah withdraw from the
border Israel and move north of the Litani, as stipulated by Resolution 1701, Nasrallah said it
would be easier to move the Litani to the border than to move Hezbollah beyond the Litani
(sixth speech). He stated that the Lebanese government should demand that Israel withdraw

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12 The Resolution states that Israel will withdraw from Lebanon at the end of the war (Second Lebanon
War, 2006) in exchange for the withdrawal of Hezbollah beyond the Litani. The Lebanese government
committed to the decision, but did not act on its actual implementation, while Israel fulfilled its duty
according to the decision. The Resolution also states that Hezbollah will be disarmed.
from the territories that Hezbollah and the Lebanese government consider Lebanese because the land borders are common knowledge, and therefore any future negotiations will be based on the principle of "Leave Lebanese territories!" and not redesignating the borders (seventh speech). **Na’im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general**, said that at the present time, Hezbollah had no interest whatsoever in discussing the Israeli demand regarding the south Lebanese front, reiterating yet again that when the war in Gaza stopped, the Lebanese front would automatically end. He added that Hezbollah was in no hurry to reassure or frighten anyone, nothing obligated the organization to discuss the situation in south Lebanon with anyone after the war stopped since south Lebanon had its own mechanisms (al-Akhbar, February 2, 2024).

**Iran**: Nasrallah claimed that Iran was not involved in the war and that each element of the "resistance axis" operated independently, but Iran helped the "resistance" elements operating against Israel. On several occasions he thanked Iran for "its constant moral, material and military assistance." He noted that "today it is common knowledge that Iran is behind the resistance everywhere" and that "the achievements of the resistance in the region and in Lebanon are due to Iran and individuals such as Qassem Soleimani, former commander of the IRGC’s Qods Force" (second and sixth speeches). He added that "it is possible that some of Hezbollah’s activities, and especially the use of special weapons, may cause reservations in Iran because it might expose the organization’s strategic capabilities, which according to Tehran are meant to be used in a future conflict between Israel and Iran, and in view of the significant price that Hezbollah is paying for the continuation of the conflict with Israel."

**The United States**: Nasrallah systematically accused the United States of responsibility for the war in the Gaza Strip and as the force behind the war. He also claimed that without America, Israel would not have been able to conduct the war in its current format. Nasrallah accused the American administration of responsibility for the death of every person in the Middle East. He claimed that "if the transfer of American weapons to Israel is stopped, the war in Gaza will end regardless of the desire of the Israeli government" (seventh speech). Blaming the United States is rooted in the Khomeinist concept of considering the United States as the "Great Satan" and Israel as the "Little Satan." Na’im Qassem claimed that from an international perspective, the war lowered America’s prestige and would cause Arab and Islamic countries to reconsider their position on the Palestinian issue (al-Akhbar, February 2, 2024).
The Lebanese Administration in the Quagmire of the Fighting

The Lebanese government stated that it was prepared to implement Security Council Resolution 1701 only after the war and only within the framework of an agreement in which Lebanon's border claims would be met by Israel, which would stop trespassing on Lebanese territory:

- **Najib Mikati, the Prime Minister of the interim government in Lebanon**, said the Lebanese government was prepared to enter into negotiations for long-term stability in south Lebanon and the northern border of Israel and to adhere to international decisions and Resolution 1701. However, they were being warned of destruction and war by international envoys and threats that Hezbollah had to withdraw to the north of the Litani River, but they stated any arrangement had to include Israel's complete withdrawal from the territories it occupied, and stop its attacks on Lebanon and the violation of its sovereignty. According to Mikati, the situation on the border should be returned to the status quo ante of 1967 and the Shebaa farms, which were under Lebanese sovereignty, before they were gradually occupied, should be returned (al-Hura, January 8, 2024).

- **Abdullah Bou Habib, the Lebanese foreign minister**, stated that the presence of Hezbollah on the Israeli border depended on the continuation of the "Israeli occupation" of Lebanese territories. He said that any agreement or solution would only be reached after the election of a Lebanese president and the end of the war in the Gaza Strip. He also said the solution would be only the implementation of all articles of Resolution 1701. Regarding the visit to Lebanon of Amos Hochstein, the
American mediator (January 2024), he said that Hochstein’s purpose was to define or clarify what the borders were and the problem would be solved only if the border line were defined and Israel withdrew from the disputed locations, that is, the Shaba Farms, the Kafr Shuba hills and Point B1. He claimed he could speak for every responsible person in Lebanon, and Hezbollah held the same position (al-Joumhouria, Lebanon, January 10, 2024).

Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and leader of the Amal Movement, said that the Lebanese government was prepared to implement Resolution 1701, but only after the withdrawal of Israel from point B1 in Rosh Hanikra, and with the cessation of Israeli flyovers and intrusions into Lebanese airspace. Moreover, he stated that Lebanon would not give up one meter of its territory (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 2, 2024). When Josep Borrell, the EU foreign minister, visited Lebanon and met with senior Lebanese government officials, Berri emphasized Lebanon’s commitment to international decisions, especially Resolution 1701. He said it would be possible to talk about implementing the resolution after Israel "stops its aggression and withdraws its forces from all the occupied Lebanese territories." Burrell noted the need to stop the fighting and argued that peace had to be restored to Lebanon, at which point it would be easier to discuss the full implementation of Resolution 1701 (al-Nashra, January 6, 2024).

A "prominent Lebanese political source," who followed Amos Hochstein’s meetings, said that according to Hochstein, the solution was not to return to the situation before October 7, 2023, but to implement Resolution 1701 as it was supposed to have been implemented in 2006, which meant the complete cessation of military operations. The source also stated when Hochstein met with Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, he brought with him a draft proposal for a non-final agreement to determine Lebanon’s land borders, hinting at an exchange for the implementation of Resolution 1701 (al-Joumhouria, March 6, 2024).

The Lebanese government is in constant contact with Hezbollah and coordinates positions with it. Abdullah Bou Habib, the Lebanese foreign minister, said that the Lebanese government was in contact with Hezbollah all the time but could not tell it what to do, only try to convince it. He added that the Lebanese government hoped that Hezbollah would not commit to a bigger war. In another interview, he stated that in his opinion, after decades of
war, it was time to make peace, and only the United States could lead such a move (CNN, January 3, 2024). The Lebanese government also works actively against Israel in the international arena. Lebanon filed a complaint with the UN Security Council. Following the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri (January 2, 2024). In the complaint, Lebanon called the operation "the most dangerous step" in Israel's attacks "against the country." The complaint also stated that Israel used six missiles in the al-'Arouri attack and used Lebanon's airspace to attack Syria (Reuters, January 5, 2024). He later instructed Lebanon's ambassador to the United Nations to file a complaint with the Security Council following the series of attacks carried out by Israel against other targets in Lebanon (Radio al-Nur, February 16, 2024).

The Lebanese government is exploiting the war to enlist aid for the Lebanese army from Western countries, to be able, it claims, to enforce its sovereignty effectively. In practice, the Lebanese government apparently wants to strengthen its army in order to demonstrate governance, but it has neither the intention nor the ability to confront Hezbollah and disarm it. Interim Prime Minister Najib Mikati raised the issue with Annalena Baerbock, the German foreign minister, during her visit to Beirut, and said Lebanon respected international resolutions whose objective was to achieve permanent stability in south Lebanon, and called for support for the Lebanese army to enable it to carry out its duties (X account of the office of the prime minister of Lebanon, January 10, 2024).

As part of the Lebanese government's efforts, on February 23, 2024, the Lebanese army received three vessels from the United States for patrol purposes and four speed boats (Lebanon Army website, February 23, 2024).

The American Ambassador to Lebanon, Lisa Johnson, at the ceremony of transferring the vessels to the Lebanese Army (Lebanon Army website, February 23, 2024)