



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah January 13 – 25 , 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ The IDF continued to thwart Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire. IDF forces located and destroyed weapons and terrorist facilities in south Lebanon, some near UNIFIL bases and in residential buildings. Lebanese army forces continued to deploy in the villages evacuated by the IDF in the western and central sectors of south Lebanon.
- ▶ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah secretary general, warned Israel not to try the organization's patience with "violations." A Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament threatened that if Israel did not withdraw by January 26, 2025, the ceasefire agreement would collapse and the Lebanese would have to "confront the enemy."
- ▶ French President Macron and UN secretary general Guterres visited Beirut and met with senior Lebanese officials. They called for the completion of Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon and expressed their commitment to the success of the ceasefire, strengthening the Lebanese army and rebuilding Lebanon.
- ▶ Senior Hezbollah officials rejected claims that the organization had been weakened and stated that the "resistance" remained strong and was cooperating with state institutions. Alleged information about the planned burial site for Hassan Nasrallah was posted to social media.
- ▶ Lebanese President Aoun gave Nawaf Salam, president of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the mission of forming a new government. Hezbollah representatives announced they did not support Salam's appointment; however, according to reports, progress has been made in discussions regarding integrating Hezbollah into the government.

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The Ceasefire

IDF activities

▶ This past week the IDF continued to thwart Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire which went into effect on November 27, 2024. IDF forces located additional weapons, munitions and terrorist facilities which posed a threat to IDF soldiers and the State of Israel. In the western sector of south Lebanon, the IDF discovered tunnel shafts inside civilian buildings and destroyed arms warehouses near a UNIFIL base. A loaded launcher aimed at Israeli territory was destroyed (IDF spokesperson, January 13-20, 2025)



Weapons found and destroyed (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2025)

Hezbollah

▶ On January 18, 2025, Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's secretary general, gave a speech at a conference in Iran in support of the Gaza Strip. Regarding the ceasefire, he claimed Hezbollah had shown "patience" regarding Israeli "violations" to allow Lebanon's state authorities, as signatories of the agreement, to handle the matter. He warned Israel not to try Hezbollah's patience and urged the authorities to be "steadfast" in the face of the "violations" and confront them "resolutely" (al-Manar, January 18, 2025).

▶ Ali Fayyad, a Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization was waiting till January 26, 2025, the date when Israel was supposed to complete its withdrawal from Lebanese territory. He warned that "the enemy's" lack of "compliance" would signify the collapse of the agreement and undermine international sponsorship for the agreement. Fayyad added that if that happened, the Lebanese would form new "equations" and confront "the occupation" with all means and methods at its disposal to remove Israel from Lebanese territory. He claimed the confrontation would be the responsibility of the Lebanese people, the government, the army and "the resistance," except for those who wished

to exclude themselves because the south "means nothing to them" (LBC Lebanon, January 20, 2025).

► Ibrahim al-Amin, editor-in-chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, said that any attempt by Israel to do what it pleased in Lebanon would be an invitation to the "resistance" to launch a "direct plan of action" to compel Israel to honor the agreement. He called on the president and the prime minister-designate of Lebanon to work with the United States and France to ensure that the "enemy" upheld the agreement, claiming Israel's compliance was even more critical than forming the new government. He argued it was "unreasonable" to think that the "resistance" in Lebanon could not continue to fight, noting that the "resistance" had to remain "prepared," especially in light of the IDF's new deployment in Syrian territory, which he claimed was a "direct threat to Lebanon" (al-Akhbar, January 18, 2025).

The Lebanese army

► The Lebanese army announced that soldiers had been recruited in the first phase of the plan to strengthen military units deployed in the south. According to the plan, the army was expected to recruit 6,000 soldiers to work towards implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (Lebanese Army X account, January 14, 2025).



The new recruits in the Lebanese army (Lebanese army X account, January 14, 2025)

► American General Jasper Jeffers, chairman of the monitoring committee responsible for implementing the ceasefire in Lebanon, and Guillaume Ponchin, the French representative on the committee, visited seven Lebanese army checkpoints in south Lebanon. According to reports, the army was preventing the movement of "unauthorized armed groups," restoring the southern region and securing the return of residents to their homes. Regarding the withdrawal of IDF forces, Jeffers stated that "we are on the right path," adding that the

Lebanese army's checkpoints were operating efficiently, with soldiers undertaking the mission of maintaining Lebanon's security (American Embassy in Lebanon website, January 15, 2025).



General Jeffers visits Lebanese army checkpoints (American Embassy website, January 15, 2025)

► This the past week, the Lebanese army continued deploying its forces in areas evacuated by the IDF in south Lebanon. It was reported that army units completed their deployment in the towns of Ain Ebel, Debl, Rmeish-Bint Jbeil, Bint Jbeil and Ainata in coordination with UNIFIL forces and the ceasefire monitoring committee. Reportedly, the forces were working to open roads, clear unexploded ordnance and remove suspicious objects "left by the Israeli enemy as it continues to violate the ceasefire and attack Lebanon's sovereignty." Residents were also told not to return to their homes yet (Lebanese Army X account, January 19, 2025).



Lebanese army APCs deployed in Bint Jbeil (Lebanon24, January 19, 2025).

The Lebanese government

► Joseph Aoun, newly-elected president of Lebanon, met with a delegation from the Supreme Islamic Shi'ite Council headed by Sheikh al-Khatib, where he said that "any attack on any part of Lebanon was an attack on all of Lebanon." He said efforts were ongoing to complete

the Israeli withdrawal and to deploy Lebanese army forces in the south. Regarding the disarmament of Hezbollah, Sheikh al-Khatib said, "The weapons are not sacred to us; the unity of the state and the dignity of the people are." (al-Nashra, January 14, 2025).

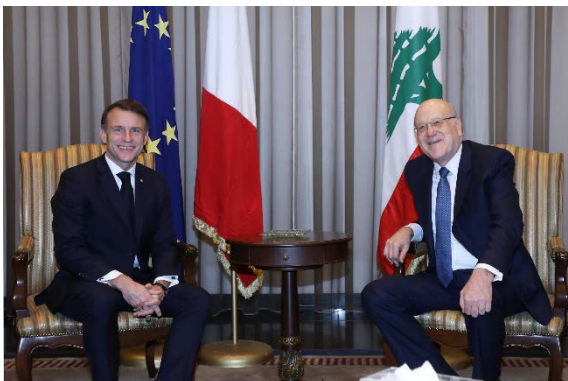


Sheikh Ali al-Khatib (left) meets with Aoun (al-Nashra, January 14, 2025)

▶ On January 17, 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Lebanon and met with senior Lebanese officials, including President Joseph Aoun and Najib Mikati, the outgoing prime minister of the Lebanese interim government. They discussed the implementation of the ceasefire and developments in Lebanon (al-Nashra, January 17, 2025):

- ◆ Aoun noted the importance of shoring up the ceasefire and ensuring Israel's withdrawal from the areas it still occupied within the agreed timeframe.
- ◆ Mikati expressed hope that the Israeli "violations" would cease at the end of the 60-day ceasefire. He said Macron understood Lebanon's situation and promised to support the new government, and monitor assistance and the implementation of Resolution 1701.
- ◆ Macron stated that they expected a complete withdrawal of IDF forces from Lebanese territory and that weapons in the country would be under the exclusive control of the Lebanese army. He also noted the continued strengthening and reinforcement of the Lebanese army and its deployment in south Lebanon. Macron said France would

establish a center to train 500 Lebanese soldiers and would work with Lebanon to demarcate the borders along the Blue Line.



Mikati and Macron's meeting (Lebanese Prime Minister's X account, January 17, 2025)

▶ On January 16–17, 2025, UN secretary general Guterres visited Lebanon and met with senior Lebanese officials:

◆ Meeting with Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib, Guterres said the UN would support all sectors in Lebanon to restore its peace, beauty and prosperity, and that UNIFIL forces and UN offices in Lebanon would support the country's stability. Bou Habib stated that Lebanon was a peace-loving nation committed to international law and expressed gratitude for UN support (Lebanese foreign ministry's X account, January 16, 2025).

◆ Lebanese President Aoun told Guterres that the Israeli forces had to withdraw from Lebanese territory in accordance with the agreement. He added that the continued Israeli "violations" went against the spirit of the agreement and represented an ongoing infringement of Lebanese sovereignty and the will of the international community. Aoun also praised the firm stance of the UNIFIL soldiers as their positions were attacked and their full coordination with the Lebanese army. Guterres said he believed Lebanon would recover and become stable under Aoun's leadership, claiming the UN would ensure the Israeli forces withdrew as stipulated by the agreement (Lebanese president's X account, January 18, 2025).

UNIFIL

▶ UN secretary general Guterres visited UNIFIL headquarters in Ras al-Naqoura, where he said that since the ceasefire began the force had found more than 100 weapons depots belonging to Hezbollah and its allies in south Lebanon. He added that the presence of armed personnel and weapons, other than those of the Lebanese army and UNIFIL, constituted a violation of Security Council Resolution 1701. He also criticized the [alleged] "ongoing occupation by the Israeli military" in UNIFIL's area of operations and called for an end to Israeli military actions in Lebanese territory, as they violated the resolution (Lebanese National News Agency, January 17, 2025).



Guterres at a UNIFIL outpost visit (Lebanese National News Agency, January 17, 2025)

▶ Meeting with outgoing interim Prime Minister Mikati after his visit to south Lebanon, UN secretary general Guterres praised UNIFIL soldiers for operating "under the most difficult conditions." He noted that he had seen a UNIFIL position which had been damaged during the fighting but said the "brave and heroic" UNIFIL troops had remained at their posts and continued their missions to create the conditions necessary for the ceasefire (Lebanese Prime Minister's X account).

▶ A "military source" reported that flights of American UAVs had been identified over the area south of the Litani River. According to the report, the objective of the flights was to gather coordinates and survey the terrain after the United States assumed leadership of the ceasefire monitoring committee. It was also reported that UNIFIL was using drones in its areas of operation to identify coordinates related to "resistance" [Hezbollah] facilities and bases (al-Akhbar, January 15, 2025).

Hezbollah

▶ On January 18, 2025, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem delivered a speech broadcast during the Gaza, Symbol of Resistance Conference in Iran to mark World Gaza Day.

In addition to the Lebanon-Israel ceasefire, he related to the Hamas-Israel ceasefire and to political developments in Lebanon (al-Manar, January 18, 2025):

◆ **The Palestinian issue:** Qassem stated that Operation al-Aqsa Flood [the Hamas attack and massacre of October 7, 2023] had "revived" the Palestinian cause, adding that the "resistance fighters"² and the Palestinian people had foiled Israel's "grand plan," which he alleged was to eliminate the cause. He congratulated the Palestinians on the ceasefire agreement, which he said demonstrated their firm stance and ability to achieve their goals. He added that Lebanon provided the Palestinians with "very important support" by means of Hezbollah and Amal and claimed that the only "solution" was the "return of 'Palestine' to its people."

◆ **Election of a Lebanese president:** Qassem said that without Hezbollah and Amal's participation in the vote, Joseph Aoun would not had been elected president, saying that "we cannot be excluded or ostracized." He also addressed Hezbollah's rivals in Lebanon, claiming that the outcome of the [Israeli] "aggression" should not be exploited in Lebanon's internal politics, as the political arena was separate from the "resistance."



Na'im Qassem (al-Manar, January 18, 2025)

▶ Senior Hezbollah figures said that despite claims by the organization's opponents that Hezbollah had been weakened, the "resistance" remained strong and was determined to continue its "activities," cooperating with the Lebanese army and state institutions to rebuild Lebanon:

◆ Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization had decided to support the government and the Lebanese army for success in their mission to enforce a full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese land,

² Terrorist operatives.

protect the country's sovereignty and prevent any form of "hostile activity" (al-'Ahed, January 13, 2025).

◆ Mohammad Komati, deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to the "resistance" and noted the need to preserve it. He said Hezbollah cooperated with the Lebanese army and was prepared to work with all parties in Lebanon to strengthen the state's role in serving its citizens (Lebanon Debate, January 18, 2025).

◆ Ammar al-Moussawi, Hezbollah's head of international relations, stated that some people in Lebanon were talking about a shift in the balance of power, suggesting that Hezbollah had become weak. He claimed that the "resistance" had not been defeated but was victorious at every turn of events. As proof, he claimed on the morning of the ceasefire, Hezbollah operatives returned to their villages immediately, while Israelis had not yet returned to their homes in the north. He claimed that [allegedly] showed Israelis did not trust their government, whereas the Lebanese people had confidence in the "resistance" and its leadership (Lebanese National News Agency, January 17, 2025).

Hassan Nasrallah's funeral

▶ "Sources close to Hezbollah" reported that preparations for the funeral Hassan Nasrallah, the late Hezbollah secretary general, had been completed and that the ceremony would be "an extraordinary event" in Lebanon's history, providing Hezbollah with an opportunity to respond to rumors about "the organization's demise." According to reports, the funeral will take place during February 2025, with the final date announced after January 29, 2025, after the implementation of the ceasefire in accordance with Israel's commitments (Lebanon 24, January 18, 2025).

▶ Alleged documentation of the future burial site for Nasrallah and Hashem Safi al-Din, the late head of the executive council, was posted to Hezbollah-affiliated social media accounts. One account had a map showing the burial site near the international airport in south Beirut (Shaheed Hassan Nasrallah's Instagram channel, January 16, 2025). Other

accounts presented a video of "the shrine" to be built in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut (al-Janoubiya, January 17, 2025).



Right: The map of the burial site complex in Beirut (Shaheed Hassan Nasrallah Instagram channel, January 16, 2025). Left: A model of the burial site (al-Janoubiya, January 17, 2025)

The reconstruction of Lebanon

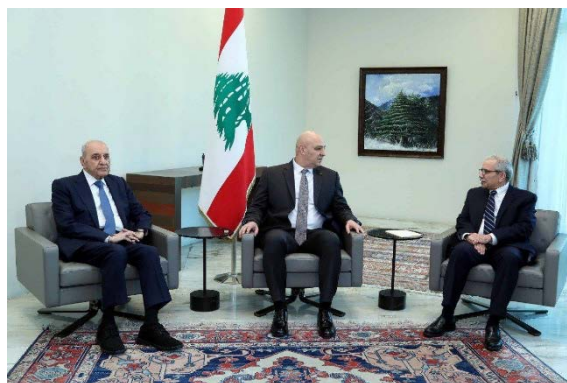
▶ A source close to Hezbollah reported that the reconstruction of houses destroyed in the Israeli "aggression" in Beirut, the Beqa'a Valley, Tyre and Nabatieh, was expected to be completed within four to six weeks. The source said the organization had so far spent approximately \$200 million on renovating houses (Lebanon Debate, January 19, 2025).

The Situation in Lebanon

Appointing a prime minister

▶ On January 13, 2025, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun announced that Nawaf Salam, president of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, would be given the task of forming the new government. During consultations between Aoun and representatives of the factions in the Lebanese Parliament, Salam received 84 votes, compared to 35 votes for Najib Mikati, former prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, while 35 others did not name any candidate (Lebanese President's X account, January 13, 2025).

▶ On January 14, 2025, Salam formally received the mandate during a meeting with Aoun and Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. In his first speech, Salam said it was vital to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701, assert Lebanese sovereignty over all its territories and for the IDF to withdraw from all Lebanese land. He pledged to work toward the reconstruction of villages in south Lebanon and other "devastated areas" across the country. He called for Lebanon to be a free country with a central government which exercised its authority over all its territories. He stressed his belief in unity and partnership rather than exclusion and marginalization (Lebanese News Agency, January 14, 2025).



Right to left, Salam, Aoun and Berri (NBN TV, January 14, 2025)

▶ Mohammad Raad, head of Hezbollah's Loyalty to the Resistance faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the faction had not selected any representative for the position of prime minister. He claimed Hezbollah had taken a positive step by supporting the election of President Aoun, but "its outstretched hand was cut off." He noted that the organization would "wait calmly and act wisely" out of concern for Lebanese national interest but would continue monitoring the government's actions "to expel the occupier from our land" (Radio al-Nour, January 13, 2025).



Press conference held by Hezbollah's Loyalty to the Resistance faction in the Lebanese Parliament (NBN, January 13, 2025)

▶ According to reports, during a meeting between President Aoun and representatives of the Hezbollah bloc, the representatives expressed dissatisfaction, claiming that agreements were not being respected. According to the report, the issue allegedly related to an agreement to appoint Mikati as prime minister (al-Nashra, January 13, 2025). It was also reported that Hezbollah and Amal, the "Shi'ite twins," believed they had been subjected to a "serious political deception" and that Nabih Berri, who was Amal leader and speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said the situation was unacceptable (al-Arabiya, January 13, 2025).

▶ In response to Hezbollah's criticism, Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces Party, claimed that his political project had triumphed over Hezbollah's and dismissed Raad's

comments as unfounded, asserting that no one exerted pressure or attempted to marginalize anyone (Lebanon Debate, January 13, 2025). Christian Lebanese Parliament member Mark Daou said they were not obliged to include ministers from Hezbollah or Amal in the new government (al-Jadeed, January 13, 2025).

► "Well-informed sources" reported that talks held by Salam with Hezbollah representatives on January 18 and 19, 2025, had been "positive," with Salam expressing commitment to sectarian representation in the government. According to the sources, both sides showed willingness to cooperate, and Salam acknowledged that he could not avoid the representation of the "Shi'ite twins." The sources added that Hezbollah and Amal demanded the Ministry of Economy as well as a significant public services portfolio, such as the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Public Works. However, Salam has not finished allocating ministerial portfolios and has to hold discussions with other parties (al-Akhbar, January 20, 2025).