



Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria July 1 – 8 , 2024

The Northern Arena*

- 1,890 attacks
- 352 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 77 operatives of other organization killed
- Four non-affiliated operatives killed
- One Lebanese army soldier killed
- One Lebanese internal security operative killed

*Updated from October 8, 2023

Overview¹

- ▶ This past week Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **47 attacks** on military and civilian targets in northern Israel, up from 38 attacks the previous week. The intensity of the attacks increased in response to the killing of Muhammad Naama Nasser, commander of the Aziz Unit. In response to the IDF's eliminating another senior operative, Hezbollah attacked new Israeli targets. An IDF officer was killed and nine soldiers and civilians were injured, fires broke out and property was extensively damaged.
- ▶ Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hezbollah targets and operatives in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley. Hezbollah reported six of its men killed in the attacks.
- ▶ Hezbollah revealed rare documentation of the weapons and methods used by its artillery unit.
- ▶ Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah said that despite criticism, the organization would not withdraw its support for the Gaza Strip. Senior Hezbollah figures said there might be a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, after which the IDF might transition to a new combat phase and escalate the conflict in south Lebanon.

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

- ▶ Nasrallah met with a Hamas delegation to discuss efforts for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and to coordinate activities against Israel. Nasrallah's deputy met with a senior German intelligence official.
- ▶ Internal Lebanese criticism against Hezbollah continues. Representatives of the opposition warned the situation in the south could deteriorate into war, calling on the government to declare a state of emergency in south Lebanon and to transfer security control to the Lebanese army.
- ▶ According to reports, American special envoy Amos Hochstein reported that the draft agreement to regulate the Israel-Lebanon border was almost completed and he would arrive in the Beirut immediately after a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

South Lebanon

Hezbollah attacks

▶ This past week (July 1-8, 2024, as of 1 p.m.), Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **47 attacks** on military and civilian targets in northern Israel, up from 38 attacks the previous week. Hezbollah attacked with anti-tank missiles, artillery, UAVs and various types of rockets. An IDF officer was killed and nine soldiers and civilians were injured:

◆ **Escalation:** In response to the targeted killing of Muhammad Naama Nasser, commander of the Aziz Unit, Hezbollah escalated its attacks, launching concentrated barrages of rockets and explosive UAVs at military targets in Israel.² On July 3, 2024, 100 Katyusha rockets were launched at a military headquarters and an air defense base in the Golan Heights. On July 4, 2024, the largest attack was launched since the beginning of the hostilities in October 2023, with upwards of 200 rockets and 20 explosive drones targeting IDF bases and headquarters in the Golan Heights, the Upper Galilee and the Western Galilee.

◆ **New targets:** In response to the targeted attack on a senior operative in the air defense system in the Lebanon Valley, Maytham Mustafa al-Attar, Hezbollah attacked new targets but did not exceed the range of attacks of 35-40 kms (22-25 miles) from the border. In one attack dozens of Katyusha rockets were fired at IDF headquarters in the Lower Galilee. In another, explosive drones were launched at a base on Mount Hermon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 7, 2024).

² For further information see the July 7, 2024, ITIC report, "[Reactions to the targeted killing of Muhammad Naama Nasser, commander of Hezbollah's Aziz Unit.](#)"



Firing rockets and launching UAVs at IDF bases in retaliation for the targeted killing of the commander of the Aziz Unit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 4, 2024)

► The attacks (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 1-8, 2024):

- ◆ July 8, 2024 (till 1 p.m.): Hezbollah did not report any attacks. An anti-tank missile was fired at Metula. A fire broke out, with no casualties. A suspicious aerial target was intercepted in the skies over Lebanon (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 8, 2024).
- ◆ July 7, 2024: **Nine attacks**. About 20 rockets were fired at the Lower Galilee, some of which were intercepted by Israeli air defense fighters. Hits were reported in various areas; one person was seriously injured and fires broke out in several locations. Three people, including an IDF soldier and an American citizen, were injured by anti-tank missiles in the Zar'it region. Twenty rockets were fired at the Meron region, causing fires; there were no casualties. Five explosive UAVs were launched at Mount Dov and the Hermon, four were intercepted and one exploded; there were no casualties. A rocket hit the stadium in Kiryat Shmona, no casualties were reported. Two UAVs were intercepted in the Golan Heights and Ramot Naftali; no casualties or damage were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 7, 2024). Most of the attacks were carried out in retaliation for the killing of Maytham Mustafa al-Attar, a senior operative in Hezbollah's air defense system.



Right: Hezbollah launches rockets at IDF bases on July 7, 2024 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 8, 2024). Left: Fire in the Lower Galilee caused by rocket hits (Israel Fire and Rescue spokesman's unit, July 7, 2024)

- ◆ July 6, 2024: **Three attacks.** Four UAVs from Lebanon were intercepted; Two UAVs crashed near Beit Hillel; about ten rockets fell in open areas, one near a moshav close to the border; no casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 6, 2024).
- ◆ July 5, 2024: **Seven attacks.** One rocket was intercepted and four fell in Kiryat Shmona. Two soldiers were injured and a house was significantly damaged. Five rockets fell in the Zar'it region and three in Mount Dov; there were no casualties. Rockets hit open areas, there was a direct hit in a moshav near the border; no casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 5, 2024).
- ◆ July 4, 2024: **Nine attacks.** An officer was killed when a rocket hit an IDF base in the Golan Heights. Three civilians were injured by debris from interceptions and fires broke out in various areas of the Golan Heights, the Upper Galilee and the Western Galilee (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 4, 2024). The attacks were retaliation for the IDF's killing the commander of the Aziz Unit.
- ◆ July 3, 2024: **Ten attacks.** Some of the rockets were intercepted and several fell in open areas in the Kiryat Shmona region, and fires broke out in the central Golan Heights; no casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 3, 2024). The attacks were retaliation for the IDF's killing the commander of the Aziz Unit.
- ◆ July 2, 2024: **Two attacks.** Ten of the 15 rockets launched from Lebanon were intercepted and five fell in open areas near Kiryat Shmona area; no casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 2, 2024).

◆ July 1, 2024 (after 1 p.m.): **Seven attacks.** Five rockets were fired, then two more at different targets. All seven rockets fell in open areas in northern Israel; no casualties were reported (Telegram channel of the IDF spokesperson, July 1, 2024).

Hezbollah's artillery capabilities revealed

► On July 6, 2024, Hezbollah's al-Manar TV broadcast a program about the organization's artillery unit, including pictures of its rockets and mortars. One of the unit's officers, al-Hajj Muhammad Ali, his face blurred to conceal his identity, said Hezbollah had launched 1,442 projectiles since the start of fighting on October 8, 2023, including mortar shells, Grad rockets, Falaq rockets and Burkan rockets. He claimed Hezbollah had adapted its launch capabilities to combat Israel's air superiority, in part by converting stationary launch platforms into vehicle-mounted platforms to enable a quick retreat after firing, and placing concrete rocket launchers underground. He said Hezbollah manufactured the Burkan rockets, but not the Falaq-1 and Falaq-2 rockets (al-Manar, July 4, 2024).



Right: Concrete Katyusha rocket launcher. Left: Vehicle-mounted artillery
(al-Manar, July 6, 2024)

Iranian threat to Ben-Gurion International Airport

► "A high-level source" in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force warned that if Israel attacked Beirut International Airport following reports Hezbollah used it to store ammunition, Hezbollah would attack Ben-Gurion International Airport; the organization also conveyed the message to Israel through the Americans. According to the "source," Iran reduced the number of Iranian flights to Beirut out of concern Israel would attack the planes on the grounds that they were transporting weapons. The "source" said Iran had authorized Hezbollah to use certain weapons, which could not be disclosed, to attack Ben-Gurion International Airport, adding that Hezbollah had recently aimed "dozens of heavy missiles" at it. "The source" added that Hezbollah had received aerial defense systems which could detect the movement of Israeli aircraft within a range of 200 kilometers (125 miles), making it possible

to attack the aircraft before they entered Lebanon's airspace or during entry. He said that Hezbollah was keeping its surface-to-air missiles for an all-out war, but Iran had recently increased the quantity of missiles it transferred to Hezbollah, especially medium-range shoulder-fired missiles (al-Jarida, July 5, 2024).

IDF response

► In response to Hezbollah's attacks, Israeli Air Force fighter jets and UAVs attacked Hezbollah targets and operatives in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley. The targets included terrorist facilities, buildings used for military purposes, weapons storehouses depots, observation posts, launch sites, rocket launchers and a surface-to-air missile launcher to attack Israeli aircraft (IDF spokesperson, July 1-8, 2024).



Right: Attack on the town of Markaba (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, July 5, 2024). Left: A building in Markaba after the attack (Fouad Khreiss' X account, July 5, 2024)

► The Israeli Air Force attacked senior Hezbollah operatives:

- ◆ On July 3, 2024, a vehicle was attacked in al-Housh, southeast of Tyre in south Lebanon. Hezbollah confirmed that Muhammad Naama Nasser, aka al-Hajj Abu Naama, was killed in the attack; he had commanded the Aziz Unit, which is responsible for the western sector in south Lebanon. Killed with him was Muhammad Ghassan Khashab, aka Dhu al-Fiqar, born in 1997 in al-Mansouri in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024).



Right: The vehicle after the attack (Fouad Khreiss' X account, July 3, 2024). Center: Muhammad Naama Nasser. Left: Muhammad Ghassan Khashab (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024)

◆ On July 6, 2024, Maytham Mustafa al-Attar was killed in an attack in the Ba'albek region of the Lebanon Valley. He was a senior operative in Hezbollah's air defense system who had acquired his knowledge in Iran, and helped build up Hezbollah's military capabilities with Iranian weapons. He was also involved in terrorist attacks on Israel (IDF spokesperson, July 6, 2024). Lebanese media reported that an Israeli UAV attacked a vehicle near the town of Shaath in the Lebanon Valley, more than a 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Israeli border (Lebanese News Agency, July 6, 2024). Hezbollah announced the death of Maytham Mustafa al-Attar, aka Hadi, born in 1991 in Shaath (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 6, 2024).



Right: Scene of the attack in Shaath (Fouad Khreiss' X account, July 6, 2024). Left: Maytham Mustafa al-Attar (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 6, 2024)

Additional Hezbollah casualties

► Hezbollah reported the death of three additional operatives (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 1-8, 2024):

- ◆ Hamza Khader Shur, aka Abu Adel, born in 1991 in Tyre.
- ◆ Hadi Ahmed Shuraym, aka Haydar, born in 1996 in Houle.
- ◆ Mustafa Hassan Salman, aka Abu Hassan, born in 1991 in al-Qleileh.



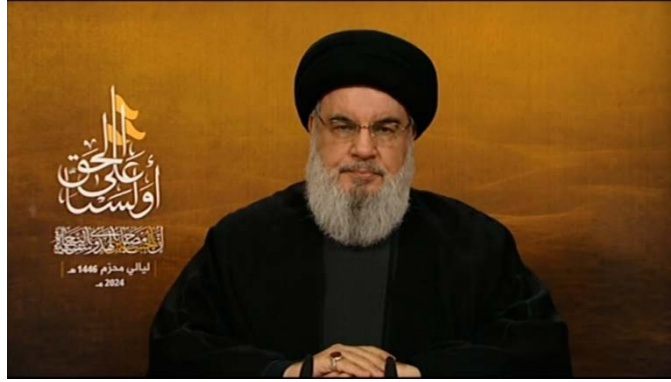
Hezbollah casualties (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 1-8, 2024)

Statements by Senior Hezbollah Figures

- ▶ On July 7, 2024, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, delivered a speech to mark the first night of Ashura³ and related to the fighting in south Lebanon. He admitted that the atmosphere of this year's events was different atmosphere because of the daily deaths and injuries, and said there was an atmosphere of combat in south Lebanon which would affect the Ashura ceremonies. Nasrallah added that he heard from "everyone" who belonged to the "resistance"⁴ that Hezbollah was in "the right place," in view of its support for the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians, and that the current war was different from previous ones. He also criticized those who warned of the consequences of the fighting and said Hezbollah had no intention of changing its position because it "supported the truth" (al-Manar, July 7, 2024).
- ▶ Hezbollah and Amal sources [both Shi'ite organizations] said the ongoing fighting was expected to affect the Ashura ceremonies, especially in south Lebanon, but it would not deter them from holding the events. According to the sources, security measures will be strict in south Lebanon and in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut. The Amal Movement cancelled its main Ashura marches and will focus on local marches in villages and towns, mainly in the south, while Hezbollah is expected to follow suit (al-Diyar, July 6, 2024).

³ The tenth day of Muharram, the first month in the Muslim calendar. The Shi'ites mark it as a day of mourning for the death of Imam Hussein bin Ali. For the Sunnis, it is a non-obligatory day of fasting.

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



Nasrallah speaks at the beginning of Ashura (al-Manar, July 7, 2024)

► Senior Hezbollah figures and its affiliated spokesmen said the possibility of a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip could mean the IDF's transition to a third combat phase of the war, and the conflict on the northern border could escalate:

◆ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, said that since the beginning of the conflict on October 8, 2023, Hezbollah had claimed that the fighting in south Lebanon was intended to support the Gaza Strip, that the range of its activity would be three to five kilometers, attacks would be on the military, intelligence and propaganda levels and there would be no attacks on civilians. However, he added that when Israel extended the range of its activities or attacked civilians, Hezbollah was committed to a "response appropriate to its plan for the conflict." In his assessment, a wide-scale war in Lebanon was not expected in the near future and Israel would negotiate, but he added that Hezbollah was preparing "for the most serious possibilities." He said that despite the attempts of the foreign envoys to separate what was happening in south Lebanon from the Gaza Strip, the position of the "resistance" was that there should be no negotiations before a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He also addressed those in Lebanon who, he claimed, hoped that war would weaken Hezbollah, noting that the "resistance" was strong and "would win" (Sputnik in Arabic, July 5, 2024).

◆ On another occasion, Qassem stated that if Israel merely limited its military operations in the Gaza Strip without a ceasefire, the consequences for the conflict in south Lebanon would be less clear and he did not know how Hezbollah would respond. He added that he did not think Israel currently had the ability to launch an all-out war against Hezbollah and in his opinion no decision had been made, but he warned that if Israel launched even a limited operation in Lebanon, the response would not be limited and would be carried out "without a letup and without rules set by Israel." He also said that Hezbollah rejected

the request of the American special envoy, Amos Hochstein, to put pressure on Hamas to accept the cease-fire proposal, claiming Hamas made its own decisions (AP, July 3, 2024).

◆ Ali Damoush, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council, said that the Lebanese front no longer only supported the Gaza Strip, but had become a real front to exhaust Israel. He added that the documents published by Hezbollah's combat information revealed the strength of the "resistance" and Israel's inability to prevent the "resistance" from achieving its goals (Lebanese News Agency, July 3, 2024).

◆ Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, said that the decision of Israel's political leadership to move to the third phase of fighting in the Gaza Strip and to stop the extensive military operations indicated that Israel sought to avoid a war in Lebanon and therefore recognized Hezbollah's success in its support for the Gaza Strip (Radio al-Nour, July 3 2024).

◆ Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that if Israel moved to the third phase of the fighting in the Gaza Strip, with the withdrawal of its forces from the populated areas and the unilateral halting of military operations while continuing the [so-called] "siege" of the Strip, it would be a "camouflaged official announcement" that it had failed to achieve its goals. At a memorial service held in the village of Tebnit for one of the Hezbollah casualties, he claimed the "resistance" attracted supporters and fighters to its ranks. He also wondered how Israel could threaten war against Lebanon, when "its soldiers and officers are [allegedly] confused" (al-Nashra, July 3, 2024). In a speech at a memorial service in Kafarmelki for a Hezbollah casualty, he claimed Hezbollah was paying the price of the war to preserve Lebanon's "honor and sovereignty." He stated Hezbollah was hitting Israel's centers of power to weaken and defeat them, and that the goal was to lay the foundations for the next stages of the "conflict," because "the enemy will continue its aggression until it disappears" (al-'Ahed, July 7, 2024).

◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament, said that all decisions regarding the day after the war as it applied to Lebanon would only be made by the officials in Lebanon and "resistance" bodies involved in the conflict. He said that the main principles would be to protect Lebanon's sovereignty, strengthen Lebanese deterrence and prevent Israel from achieving its goals. Referring to criticisms of

Hezbollah for its involvement in fighting alongside the Palestinians, he claimed they were trying to weaken the position of Lebanon and the Lebanese people in dealing with Israeli "aggression" (MTV Lebanon, July 6, 2024).

◆ Rami Abu Hamdan, a Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament, said Hezbollah was awaiting the results of the negotiations for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He added that the possibility of an all-out war still existed because of Israel's threats to choose a military solution if diplomatic efforts failed (al-Araby al-Jadeed, June 5, 2024).

◆ A Hezbollah "knowledgeable military source" said the organization did not intend to reduce its level of fighting, even if Israel moved to the third phase of the war in the Gaza Strip. He added that Hezbollah's conditions were clear and related to Israel's agreeing to a complete ceasefire (Lebanon24, July 2, 2024).

◆ Ibrahim al-Amin, the editor of the Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar, said Hezbollah's plan of action following the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023 was carried out "in haste" and the "resistance" had not calculated on a war of attrition. He said Hezbollah's leadership had to make a many calculations, and during the past nine months there had been developments requiring the introduction of new weapons and new tactics, in addition to revealing high-quality weapons and more advanced attacks to deter Israel from a large-scale war. He pointed out that the lack of a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip would affect the fighting in south Lebanon, and Israel would have to decide whether to intensify its "aggression," launch an extensive aerial operation or begin a limited ground operation, or even an extensive war. Therefore, he said, Hezbollah was preparing for all possibilities. Referring to a possible settlement in south Lebanon, he said Hezbollah was not opposed to strengthening Lebanese army forces in the south and to raising the level of coordination with UNIFIL, but "no more than that" (al-Akhbar, July 6, 2024).

Hezbollah's Foreign Relations

Nasrallah congratulates the new Iranian president

► Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, congratulated the new president of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, on his election. He said that Hezbollah and all the "resistance" movements in the region always regarded Iran as a strong, permanent and eternal supporter for the "resistance" operatives and the disadvantaged. He added that Hezbollah would continue to march alongside the Iranian government towards "guaranteeing the final victory, of which all-powerful Iran is the axis" (Mehr, July 6, 2024).

Nasrallah-Hamas meeting

► On July 5, 2024, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, met with a Hamas delegation headed by Khalil al-Haya, Yahya al-Sinwar's deputy. They discussed efforts for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, events on the fronts in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq, and coordination in all areas to achieve the "desired goals" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 5, 2024). According to reports, Hamas representatives agreed to the ceasefire proposal in the Gaza Strip and Nasrallah welcomed it (Reuters, July 5, 2024).

► "Informed sources" claimed that Hezbollah and Hamas agreed to cease their attacks immediately after the end of the war in the Gaza Strip. However, they noted the entire "resistance front" would escalate its attacks if Israel did not stop the war (al-Nashra, July 5, 2024).

► A "source close to Hezbollah" stated that the meeting focused on future cooperation, during and after the war, especially regarding training and supplies, and both movements noted their readiness to deal with any Israeli "thoughtless action" (al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 5, 2024).



Nasrallah meets with Hamas representatives (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 5, 2024)

Hezbollah deputy secretary general meets with a senior German intelligence officer

► On July 2, 2024, the Hamas-affiliated daily al-Akhbar quoted "sources" who stated that Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, had met with the Ole Diehl, deputy director of the German Federal Intelligence Service, in Beirut on June 29, 2024. According to "the sources," they presented their positions regarding regional events, especially regarding the fighting in south Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. The report stated that Diehl sought to complete the questions begun by Annalena Baerbock, the German foreign minister, during her visit to Beirut, regarding ways to prevent an escalation in south Lebanon, while Qassem reiterated the

organization's position that any discussion about a ceasefire in Lebanon was related to a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the "resistance" was prepared for the possibility of war. It was the first meeting between the two since January 27, 2024 and according to reports the atmosphere at the meeting was "positive" and Dial did not convey "threatening" messages (al-Akhbar, July 2, 2024). Qassem confirmed he had met with Diehl but did not provide details (AP, July 3, 2024).

► "Informed sources" said that the meeting focused on Hezbollah's position regarding Israel's transition to the third phase of fighting in the Gaza Strip. According to the "sources," Hezbollah's position will be determined by Israel's actions, and if the fighting in the Gaza Strip stops, Hezbollah will also stop its attacks. The report also stated that Hezbollah was surprised by the connection with Germany, which designates Hezbollah as a terrorist organization (Lebanon Debate, July 3, 2024).

► A Hezbollah "senior source" who was involved in the meeting, said Diehl tried to find out how the "resistance" would react if Israel began the third phase in the Gaza Strip and to what extent Hezbollah was willing to stop its attacks on the border. According to "the source," Qassem wondered about the third phase, and when Diehl stated that he did not have accurate information, Qassem replied that he could not discuss Hezbollah's activities if the mediators did not know what the new phase would be. The "source" added that according to current information about the third phase, Israel would retain the initiative and therefore the "resistance" would not agree to a ceasefire (al-Diyar, July 4, 2024).

► According to reports, Diehl's visit was related to the day after the war and he made "far-reaching" proposals, including plans for normalization between Israel and Arab countries. He reportedly refrained from talking about current developments and Israeli threats, but called on Hezbollah to increase cooperation with any plan that would bring an end to the war and to avoid presenting impossible demands. The report cited "diplomatic sources" in whose assessment Germany wanted to increase its involvement in the region and was waiting for the right moment to reveal its plans (al-Joumhouria, July 4, 2024).

► According to reports, Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, mediated between Qassem and Diehl, who reportedly proposed that Hezbollah forces withdraw to a distance of eight kilometers from the border, UNIFIL's missions be expanded, Resolution 1701 be implemented and the issue of the disputed border points be resolved, and sanctions against Hezbollah would be lifted. It was also reported that Qassem expressed "flexibility" and did not

object to discussing Hezbollah's withdrawal, but said the fighting in the Gaza Strip must stop first (MTV Lebanon, July 5, 2024).

► Hezbollah issued an official statement claiming that reports about the meeting were "full of lies and fabricated information." According to Hezbollah's version, the meeting was limited to a general discussion about the situation in the Gaza Strip and south Lebanon and they did not discuss any arrangements or a future arrangement regarding the situation in the south. It was also reported that the two sides coordinated the meeting without the involvement of another mediator (al-Ahed, July 5, 2024).

Criticism of Hezbollah

► On July 1, 2023, representatives of the opposition parties in Lebanon held a press conference where they warned of the danger of the situation Lebanon deteriorating into a comprehensive war "which is none of Lebanon's business," and made it clear that Lebanon should not pay the price "for any new equations." They presented a road map for the relief of tension, which called to disengage Lebanon from the Palestinian issue and opposed support for "armed groups, local or foreign, that operate in Lebanese territory and impose the logic of the unity of the arenas in the service of the regional resistance." They also called on the Lebanese government to stop all military operations that were not within the framework of the official Lebanese security forces, to declare a state of emergency in south Lebanon, transfer security control of the area to the Lebanese army and implement Resolution 1701 (al-Nashra, July 1, 2024).

► Samir Geagea, chairman of the Lebanese Forces Party, said Hezbollah had taken over all the decisions in Lebanon, making the country the only one of the 22 member states of the Arab League and the only one of the 57 countries in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation paying the price for regional events, except for "Palestine." He said that if an all-out war broke out, he and his people would stand by the country, but wondered why Lebanon should bear the cost of the losses, which he estimated at between 400 and 500 dead and enormous material damage, when all the solutions to the problems already existed, starting with the deployment of military forces in south Lebanon (MTV Lebanon, July 4, 2024).

► Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement Party in Lebanon, called for separating events on the Lebanese front from events in Gaza Strip, since Lebanon could not depend on Yahya Sinwar's decision regarding the future of the war. He added that the decision to enter the war should remain in Lebanon's hands, but he was not prepared for his country to enter a war it had not decided to start and for which it was paying the price with its economy, property

and the lives of Lebanese victims who should not have to die because of an ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians (Sky News in Arabic, July 4, 2024).

► Ghassan Atallah, a Free National Movement Party member of the Lebanese Parliament, said his party opposed any attack on Lebanon and did not want Hezbollah to continue supporting the Gaza Strip through the "front" in Lebanon. He added that Hezbollah had imposed an "excellent equation" on the front, but the price was very high and the damage was great. He said the dispute between the Free National Movement and Hezbollah began after the re-appointment of Najib Mikati as prime minister of the transitional government, however, after October 7, 2023, the movement tried to rebuild bridges with all parties (Voice of Lebanon Radio, July 6, 2024).

al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Group)

► Imad al-Hout, the al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya member of the Lebanese Parliament, gave a speech for the Islamic new year in which he said the movement was committed to the fight against the "Zionist enemy" but would not be part of any axis, and all its decisions would remain free and independent. He added that "everyone in Lebanon" agreed that Israel was an "enemy," but there were differences of opinion about how to confront it (al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya Telegram channel, July 8, 2024).

The Situation in South Lebanon

► Najib Mikati, prime minister of the transitional government in Lebanon, accused Israel of "destructive, terrorist aggression" through "deliberate killing, destroying houses and burning fields" in south Lebanon. In a speech at a conference on "Lebanon's role and its position between Israeli violations and international convention" held in Beirut, he warned against the expansion of the "devastating" war in the Gaza Strip to south Lebanon and throughout the region. He said Lebanon wanted peace and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701, but would not accept attacks on its sovereignty, national honor, territorial integrity and citizens. He called on the international community to put an end to "the criminal behavior" (Lebanese prime minister's X account, July 3, 2024).

► Nasser Yassin, Lebanon's minister of the environment, accused Israel of carrying out a "scorched earth" policy in south Lebanon and claimed that so far more than 12,500 dunams (about 3,100 acres) had been burned, more than twice the area burned in 2022 and 2023 combined (Sawt Beirut International, July 5, 2024). The Israel Nature and Parks Authority reported that since the beginning of the year, nearly 104,000 dunams (about 25,700 acres) had

been burned in northern Israel. In the fires that raged on July 4-5, 2024, set by the barrages from Lebanon, an area of 12,660 dunams (about 3,130 acres) burned (Nature and Parks Authority website, July 7, 2024).

► Muhammad Shams al-Din, a researcher at the Information International Research Center, said that 493 people had been killed and 1,880 houses destroyed in south Lebanon since the beginning of the fighting. He said that so far, the number of dead was half of all the dead in the Second Lebanon War in July 2006 (Janoubia, July 7, 2024).

Palestinians in Lebanon

► According to reports, Bassel al-Hassan, the chairman of the Lebanese government's Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, volunteered to formulate a work plan to "get rid of smuggled Palestinian weapons, which do not serve the Palestinians and harm the Lebanese." According to the report, his ideas, which he discussed with officials in Lebanon and the West and with Palestinians, reflect the demands of the West regarding plans that meet Israel's security needs. Al-Hassan had already offered to disarm the refugee camps in view of the clashes in the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp, but his activity was stopped by Israel's war in the Gaza Strip (al-Akhbar, July 6, 2024).

The Lebanese Government

Political efforts to prevent escalation

► A White House official stated that Amos Hochstein, the president's envoy, met in Paris with French officials to discuss joint efforts to restore peace to the Middle East. He also said that France and the United States were working to resolve the current conflict through diplomatic means to ensure regional stability and allow Israeli and Lebanese civilians to return to their homes (Reuters, July 4, 2024).

► "A Lebanese source" reported that at a meeting in Paris with Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French president's envoy, Hochstein said the border agreement between Israel and Lebanon was "almost complete" and that only "final touches are missing, in addition to the issue of guarantees from the parties involved." According to "the source," the agreement will give Hezbollah guarantees regarding its role and activities in south Lebanon in the areas where UNIFIL operates in accordance with Resolution 1701. According to reports Hochstein told Le Drian that immediately after a ceasefire had been reached in the Gaza Strip, he would go to Beirut in an attempt to start the negotiations for implementing Resolution 1701 and a border arrangement. "The source" added that Iran exerted pressure on Hezbollah and the United

States exerted pressure on Israel to prevent an escalation towards an all-out war, in accordance with indirect understandings between Iran and the United States (al-Anbaa, July 7, 2024).

► According to "sources," the meeting between Hochstein and Le Drian focused on calm in south Lebanon and efforts to prevent escalation and the expansion of fighting. According to "the sources," no visits of international envoys to Lebanon are expected before President Biden initiates a move to promote order in Lebanon. "The sources" also stated that the current month was crucial for promoting understanding in Lebanon, since after that international attention would focus on the American presidential elections and internal politics in the European Union and member states, when the Vatican might be the only party interested in Lebanon (al-Joumhouria, July 5, 2024).

► A French diplomat said France was working with all parties involved, including Hezbollah, in an attempt to deescalate the fighting. However, he added that no lull in the fighting was expected on the Lebanese border before a ceasefire was reached in the Gaza Strip (al-Hadath, July 3, 2024).

► "Knowledgeable sources" said that when Hochstein met with Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament in Beirut at the end of June 2024, he proposed that if Israel ended the fierce phase of the war in the Gaza Strip without a ceasefire, Hezbollah would limit the fighting to the Shab'aa farm. According to the report, Hochstein said would allow the displaced on both sides of the border to return to their homes. "The sources" also stated that Hochstein requested Hezbollah use its connections with Hamas to convince the movement to agree to President Biden's proposal for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages (al-Akhbar, July 3, 2024).

The Lebanese Army

► Lebanese Army headquarters received a grant of \$20 million from Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the emir of Qatar, as part of Qatar's ongoing assistance to the army "in light of the current challenges." The funds will be distributed equally among the army soldiers. The commander of the Lebanese army, General Joseph Aoun, acknowledged the initiative and noted that it would help ease the burden on the army (Lebanese army X account, July 1, 2024).

UNIFIL

► On July 4, 2024, Aroldo Lazzaro, the UNIFIL commander, met with a Lebanese parliamentary delegation led by Fadi Alama, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, to discuss the situation in south Lebanon and the activities of UNIFIL observers. Lazzaro noted that the ongoing exchange of fire caused enormous damage property and loss of life on both sides of the border and warned that wrong considerations could lead to an immediate, widespread escalation which would have devastating consequences. He said UNIFIL personnel were in contact with the authorities on both sides of the border to prevent escalation. Alama assured Lebanon's full cooperation in implementing Resolution 1701 (UNIFIL website, July 4, 2024).



**UNIFIL commander meets with members of the Lebanese Parliament
(UNIFIL website, July 4, 2024)**

► Representatives of UNIFIL and humanitarian aid agencies met in the village of Shama in southwestern Lebanon and discussed issues of security and support for the local communities affected by the ongoing violence along the border (UNIFIL X account, July 2, 2024).