



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah June 16–23, 2025

### Overview

- IDF forces attacked Hezbollah weapons in south Lebanon and eliminated organization operatives as part of ongoing action against Hezbollah's presence in south Lebanon, contrary to the understandings of the ceasefire agreement, and against the organization's renewed efforts to rebuild its military capabilities.
- Thomas Burke, United States special envoy for Syria, was appointed temporary envoy to Lebanon and met in Beirut with government officials who reiterated the need to end the Israeli "aggression and occupation." Burke urged them to advance the issue of dismantling the "resistance's"<sup>1</sup> weapons.
- Hezbollah continued to express support for Iran in the Israel-Iran War and condemned the threats against Iran's leader, Ali Khamenei, and the American attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. According to Hezbollah, Iran is capable of handling matters on its own, but the organization did not rule out the possibility that it might actively intervene if circumstances changed. Lebanese officials expressed confidence that the country would not be drawn into the military confrontation.
- The bodyguard of former Hezbollah secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, was killed in an Israeli attack in Iran.
- In Lebanon, the PLO was blamed for the delay in weapons' collection in the Palestinian refugee camps. Prime Minister Salam urged Palestinian Authority chairman, Mahmoud Abbas, to act on the understandings which had been reached on the issue.

### The Ceasefire

#### The IDF

- The IDF continued operating against Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon which violated the November 27, 2024 ceasefire agreement, which prohibits the organization's presence south of the Litani River, and against Hezbollah's capabilities and efforts to rebuild its military strength.

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<sup>1</sup> Terrorist organization.

The IDF attacked Hezbollah weapons depots and rocket launchers, and a building belonging to the organization's elite Radwan Force in south Lebanon. Six Hezbollah terrorist operatives were reportedly eliminated, including the commanders of the rocket fire and artillery arrays in the Litani sector (IDF spokesperson, June 16-23, 2025). Lebanese media reported six killed in Israeli attacks in south Lebanon. There were also reports of attacks in the areas of Qatrani, al-Mahmoudiyeh, between al-Rihan and al-Aaichiyeh, and on the outskirts of Kafr Houneh (Lebanese media, June 16-23, 2025).

## **Hezbollah**

► Mahmoud Qamati, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's political council, said they would return to fight the "Israeli enemy" if the Lebanese state reneged on its promises to confront it. He added that the "resistance" would not shirk its national duty if it became clear that the state was no longer able or willing to deal with "continued Israeli aggression," and again insisted that Hezbollah still saw the confrontation with Israel as a sovereign and national issue (al-Jazeera, June 16, 2025).

► In his Friday sermon at the Imam al-Hassanayn Mosque in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, senior Shi'ite cleric Ali Fadlallah<sup>2</sup> said that Lebanon and the "resistance"<sup>3</sup> remained committed to implementing all the clauses of ceasefire agreement to maintain the security of the Lebanese people, even though the "Zionist enemy" continued its "assassinations and its drones roamed Lebanese areas." He repeated the call for the Lebanese state to prove its credibility by stopping the "bloodshed and terrorism against civilians, and restoring their freedom to live in their villages." Fadlallah said it was unacceptable that after more than six months of ceasefire, Lebanon's sovereignty continued to be violated and attacks on the lives and resources of the Lebanese people continued (al-Nashra, June 20, 2025).

## **The Lebanese leadership**

► Thomas Burke, American special envoy for Syria, met in Beirut with Lebanese officials to inform them that he would temporarily serve as the American envoy to Beirut, after the end of the tenure of the American deputy special envoy for the Middle East, Morgan Ortagus. He told Lebanese president Joseph Aoun that he understood the Lebanese demand that Israel withdraw from the "occupied areas," stop the "violations," and release the Lebanese detainees

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<sup>2</sup> Ali Fadlallah is the son of the Shi'ite religious leader Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, who was one of the founders of Hezbollah and considered the highest religious authority of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon.

<sup>3</sup> Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

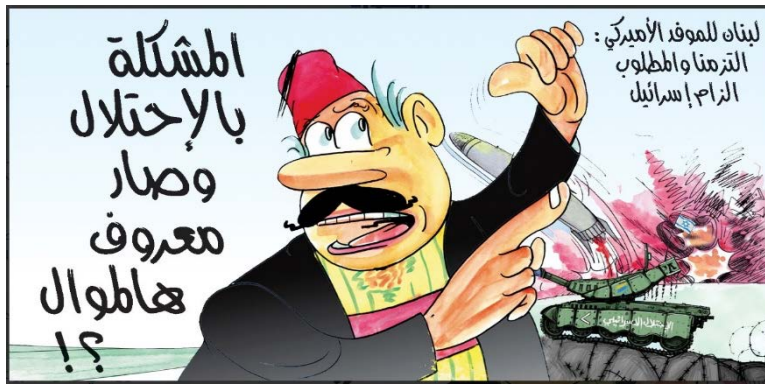
held in Israel. Burke urged the Lebanese leadership to accelerate dealing with the issue of "resistance" weapons, but added that discussions were again being conducted according to the "step-by-step" principle, according to which Lebanon would act on the weapons issue only after Israel took a step of its own. Aoun said that Lebanon expected American support for establishing stability in south Lebanon and claimed that the Lebanese army continued to take action to establish sovereignty, but struggled to complete its mission due to the "Israeli occupation." Burke said that the United States administration believed that with the new leadership in the country, the process of peace and recovery would begin, and was committed to assisting Lebanon (LBCI, June 19, 2025).

►Burke also met with Lebanese parliament speaker Nabih Berri to discuss developments in Lebanon and the region. Berri thanked the United States for its support of the Lebanese army and claimed that it was fulfilling its role and implementing the ceasefire agreement while Israel continued to "violate" it (al-Nashra, June 19, 2025). Berri said the meeting had been "excellent" and added that Burke was an experienced diplomat who was "not provocative" and did not request a timetable for disarmament (MTV, June 19, 2025).



**Right: Burke meets with Aoun (Lebanese presidency X account, June 19, 2025).**

**Left: Burke meets with Berri (al-Nashra, June 19, 2025)**



[At the right] Lebanon to the American envoy, "We fulfilled our commitment, and now you must demand the same from Israel. [At the left,] "The problem is the occupation, right? And you know that already!" (al-Liwa, June 20, 2025)

## UNIFIL

► Lebanese president Joseph Aoun met with Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN undersecretary general for peace operations, and Aroldo Lazaro, the outgoing UNIFIL commander. Aoun reiterated Lebanon's commitment to UNIFIL's continued presence in south Lebanon and to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701 in coordination with the Lebanese army. He also said maintaining stability in south Lebanon was vital not only for Lebanon but for the entire region, and UNIFIL played a vital role. Aoun said he hoped the countries which fund international peacekeeping missions would secure the necessary budget for UNIFIL's activity and noted that Lebanon was in contact with "brotherly and friendly" countries.



**Aoun awarded Lazaro Lebanon's National Order of the Cedar in appreciation for his service during his command of UNIFIL forces (Lebanese presidency X account, June 18, 2025)**

► There was another confrontation between residents in south Lebanon and UNIFIL forces. "Lebanese sources" reported that residents of the town of al-Sultaniyeh in the Bint Jbeil area prevented a UN force patrol from passing through Wadi al-Sultaniyeh because it was not accompanied by Lebanese army soldiers (al-Nashra, June 21, 2025). UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said that more than 50 people halted the patrol in the al-Sultaniyeh camp, northwest of the town of Tibnin. He said they were hostile but the soldiers did not detect

weapons. He added that the patrol commander managed to calm the situation and the soldiers returned safely to their base after coordination with the Lebanese army. Tenenti stressed that freedom of movement was a basic condition for UNIFIL's mandate, including its ability to operate independently and neutrally, and that any restriction of its freedom constituted a violation of Resolution 1701 (Lebanese news agency, June 21, 2025).

## Hezbollah and the Israel-Iran War

► Hezbollah continued to support Iran in the Israel-Iran War and condemned the threats to attack Iran's leader, Ali Khamenei, and the American attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Although the organization continued to claim that Hezbollah did not intend to intervene in the fighting and that Iran was capable of coping with the "aggression" on its own, they did not completely rule out the possibility that the organization might change its position depending on developments:

◆ Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem said they stood alongside Iran in its confrontation with "global oppression" because they supported "Lebanon's independence, the liberation of its land and its freedom to choose." He stated that Hezbollah was not neutral and that it would act as it saw fit in the struggle against "Israeli-American aggression." He claimed that the United States and Israel would not succeed in "subjugating" the Iranian people and added that "the weakness of Israel which was revealed when it sought America's support does not exempt the United States from the responsibility of standing by Iran." According to Qassem, Trump's threat against Iran's leader Khamenei and the "aggression" against Iran constituted "aggression" against all the peoples of the world (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 19, 2025).

◆ Hezbollah warned that the Israeli threat to attack Iran's leader Khamenei was "stupid and reckless, with disastrous consequences" due to his "enormous status" in his country, in the Islamic nation and around the world. Hezbollah claimed that today it was more determined and loyal to Khamenei's approach and positions. It also said that the United States would discover that it had fallen into a deep abyss by supporting "Israeli aggression" in Gaza, against the "resistance" and against Iran, and that the millions united around Khamenei's leadership could not be defeated (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 19, 2025).



◆ Hezbollah also condemned the "barbaric American aggression" against Iran's nuclear facilities and claimed it exposed the true face of the United States as "the greatest threat to regional and international security and stability." Hezbollah added that the American attack was a "gross violation" of international law and a dangerous escalation threatening to "expand the war and push the world into the unknown." The organization said the United States had two options, "surrender and humiliation or murder and destruction," and claimed that America tried to achieve what the "Zionist entity" could not, to compensate for its failure to achieve its goals and to deal with Iran's missiles. Hezbollah claimed it was "fully confident that Iran could "confront the aggression and defeat the American and Zionist enemy." It called on Arab states to stand by Iran, and on the UN, particularly the International Atomic Energy Agency, to take responsibility regarding "this dangerous aggression, which could have led to nuclear contamination threatening large areas of the world" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 22, 2025).

◆ Mahmoud Qamati, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's political council, said Iran was "very strong" and steadfast and did not need military assistance from any quarter. However, he said political, popular and media support from the entire region was required in the confrontation with Israel. He claimed Israel had failed in its attempt to overthrow the Iranian regime and attack its nuclear program and called for a return to peace, negotiations and international solutions regarding nuclear energy (Sputnik agency, June 17, 2025). Journalist and Hezbollah opponent Tony Issa said Qamati's remarks were intended to provide ambiguity which would allow Hezbollah flexibility and maneuverability regarding the possibility of entering the confrontation if circumstances changed (al-Joumhouriya, June 21, 2025).

◆ A "source close to Hezbollah" said that developments in Iran might require the organization's involvement, but it would intervene only if it felt that the regime in Tehran had become destabilized. According to the source, Hezbollah had been assigned a larger role in the scenario of a war between Iran and Israel, but the blows it suffered in its recent fighting against Israel prevented it from assuming the role. However, the source claimed Hezbollah still possessed significant capabilities, and therefore, if the organization joined the fighting, its role would be "more than a distraction" (al-Hadath, June 18, 2025).

◆ "Sources in Hezbollah's leadership" said the organization's support for Iran depended on the course of the war. They also said Hezbollah had been in contact with Lebanese figures, including President Joseph Aoun, regarding the war's implications for Lebanon, and an understanding had been reached according to which the organization did not intend to enter the war because Iran was defending itself and did not need support. The sources added that the fighting "dispelled the rumors" that Iran used its allies to advance its goals to develop its nuclear program (al-Diyar, June 18, 2025).

◆ Hassan Izz al-Din, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization supported Iran, which, he claimed, had not abandoned Lebanon. He warned that American involvement in an attack alongside Israel could lead to a dangerous regional escalation, and the United States and its allies would not be immune to the consequences of "aggression" and would suffer material and moral losses, which require nations, government, and political forces to take a clear stand alongside "justice" (al-Akhbar, June 21, 2025). After the American attack on Iran, Izz al-Din stated that the United States had "lit the fuse of war and increased regional tension and instability." He added that "America's aggression is a crime which violates all international conventions" and that "all options are open, including the possibility of all-out war, and if the situation escalates, not even Washington will be able to control it." He noted that Iran had a "natural and legitimate right" to self-defense and reserved the right to respond "as it sees fit, using all the means at its disposal and according to the time and place its leadership chooses" (Lebanese news agency, June 22, 2025).



**Hassan Izz al-Din (al-Manar, June 21, 2025)**

◆ Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, warned that it would be a "grave mistake" on Israel's part to kill Khamenei, as he claimed Israel was unaware of the "religious, spiritual, and supreme human symbolism" he embodied.

Fayyad added that any attack on Iran's leader would spark "boiling rage that cannot be contained" and responses across the Muslim world with unpredictable outcomes (al-Markaziya, June 21, 2025).

◆ According to an editorial in Hezbollah's Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, Hezbollah's position regarding involvement in the campaign is linked to two developments: the realization of the American-Israeli threat to attack Iran's leader, Ali Khamenei, which could cause an "earthquake" in the region; the possibility of direct United States involvement in the fighting, which could lead to an all-out war that would threaten all the regional countries and the powers. The editorial claimed that such intervention would give legitimacy to all parties to enter the battle and defend their interests (al-Akhbar, June 21, 2025).

► In addition to statements, Hezbollah organized public displays of support for Iran in the streets and on social networks. Hezbollah supporters held demonstrations in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia after Friday prayers and in other towns, mainly in the south of the country. The demonstrators waved the flags of Iran, Hezbollah, Lebanon and "Palestine" and chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel," as well as swearing allegiance to Iran's leader (al-'Ahed and Naharnet, June 20, 2025). SIMIA, Hezbollah's social media monitoring unit, launched an online campaign to support Iran, claiming that "Iran has the right to have us support it, even if only in our position, after it supported our causes and our resistance." The organization called on the public to participate in the campaign with the hashtag "Iran\_Definitely\_Wins" (SIMIA, June 18, 2025). Hezbollah also distributed a video of some of its operatives offering blessings and swearing allegiance to Iran's leader (al-Manar, June 19, 2025).



**Right: Demonstration of support for Iran in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia. (al-'Ahed, June 20, 2025).**

**Left: Hezbollah operative swears allegiance to Khamenei (al-Manar, June 19, 2025)**

► Nevertheless, according to reports, residents of the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, Hezbollah's main stronghold, fear the possibility that the organization would join the fighting, especially if Iran issued a religious decree (fatwa) requiring Hezbollah's leadership to do so. Consequently,



according to reports, an increased number of residents have left, and there has been a rise in rentals of houses in "safer" areas (al-Nahar, June 20, 2025; al-Sharq al-Awsat, June 22, 2025).

► Senior representatives of Hezbollah and the Amal movement, the two most important and consistently active Shi'ite movements in Lebanon, held a coordination meeting during which they condemned the attacks on Iran. Reportedly, they regarded the attacks as a "desperate attempt to attack the entire resistance axis"<sup>4</sup> (Radio al-Nour, June 18, 2025). Amal leader and Lebanese Parliament speaker Nabih Berri noted that Hezbollah secretary general Qassem's statement that the organization was "not neutral" did not indicate an intention to join the fighting, but rather was a position Hezbollah had to put forward because of its ties with Iran (al-Jadeed, June 20, 2025). Berri also said "Iran does not need Lebanon but Israel is the one that needs assistance," and expressed confidence that there was a "200% probability" that Lebanon would not intervene in the war because it was not in its best interests and it would pay the price (MTV Lebanon, June 19, 2025).



**The meeting between Hezbollah and Amal representatives (Radio al-Nour, June 18, 2025)**

► Senior Lebanese government officials continued to state that Lebanon, and by implication Hezbollah, should not intervene in the Israel-Iran War. Lebanese president Joseph Aoun said that Lebanon did not want to pay a price again for regional wars, whose costs were beyond Lebanon's ability to pay. He called for restraint and serious negotiations to restore stability to the region and prevent further killing and destruction (Lebanese presidency X account, June 22, 2025). Aoun reportedly conveyed messages to Hezbollah through army commander Rodolph Haykal, stating that Lebanon had to remain neutral in the war because otherwise the price would be unbearable; messages were also conveyed from European countries about a harsh Israeli response. Aoun also stated that Lebanon would take it very seriously if anyone

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<sup>4</sup> Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations operating in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and the Houthis in Yemen.

tried to exploit the war between Israel and Iran to strengthen their influence (al-Akhbar, June 17, 2025).

► The position of Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem was raised at a cabinet meeting when Lebanese foreign minister Youssef Rajji demanded that the government take a stand against Qassem's statements, which in his opinion could lead to negative international positions against Lebanon. His demand reportedly sparked debate, with Prime Minister Salam responding that Qassem had issued a statement expressing opposition to being dragged into war, but Rajji said that was not enough and the government had to issue its own position. While several government ministers reportedly supported Rajji's demand, the prime minister did not agree to comply with the request (al-Liwaa, June 21, 2025).

► According to reports, on June 21, 2025, Abu Ali al-Khalil, who was former Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah's bodyguard and personal assistant, was killed in an Israeli attack in Iran near the Iraqi border, along with his son and a senior official in the Iraqi Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada militia (Sabereen News, June 21, 2025). Accounts identified with Hezbollah published a mourning notice for the deaths of Khalil and his son (South Lebanon – Observer of the Enemy Telegram channel, June 21, 2025). Khalil, who joined Hezbollah soon after the organization was founded, accompanied Nasrallah at all public events for years. At Nasrallah's funeral in February 2025, he accompanied the coffin and even earned the title Protector of the Master for allegedly protecting the coffin from Israeli Air Force planes flying in the area. He was later appointed to guard Nasrallah's tomb compound in south Beirut (al-Madan, June 21, 2025).



**Right: Khalil with Nasrallah. Left: Khalil next to Nasrallah's coffin (South Lebanon – Observer of the Enemy Telegram channel, June 21, 2025)**

## Challenges Faced by Hezbollah

### Assembling a new leadership

► According to reports, Wafiq Safa, head of Hezbollah's coordination and liaison unit, is in effect head of the organization's executive council, a position held by Hashem Safi al-Din until his

elimination in early October 2024. Safa is reportedly leading the organization's efforts to prevent state institution actions against Hezbollah, including disarmament, and is therefore trying to prevent Hezbollah's involvement in the Israel-Iran War so as not to accelerate actions against the organization (Israel TV channel Kan 11, June 17, 2025).

### Combating arms smuggling

► Lebanese army forces and intelligence agency raided the homes of suspects in the town of Arsal in the northern Beqa'a Valley and arrested two civilians on suspicion of trafficking in military weapons. Several mortar shells and missiles were seized during the raid, along with a large quantity of military weapons and ammunition in the Wadi Fara area on the outskirts of Arsal (Lebanese army X account, June 18, 2025). Anti-tank missile launchers in Hezbollah's possession were also seized.

► Syrian internal security forces in the Hama area seized a shipment of Grad rockets which was reportedly meant to be smuggled into Lebanon (Syrian state television, June 19, 2025).



**Right: Anti-tank missile launcher seized in the raids in Arsal (Lebanese army X account, June 18, 2025). Left: Weapons seized by Syrian security forces (Syrian television, June 19, 2025)**

## Rebuilding Lebanon

► The municipality of Tyre began repairing damage to the sewer system which was hit by a direct attack on the city's new drainage facility during the recent "Israeli aggression" against Lebanon. According to the municipality, the repairs are part of efforts to rehabilitate the infrastructure damaged in the fighting in order to restore services to proper condition (Tyre municipality Facebook page June 21, 2025).



**Repairing the sewer system in Tyre (Tyre municipality Facebook page June 21, 2025)**

► According to "well-informed sources," it is still unclear how the Israel-Iran War will affect the international aid conference for Lebanon scheduled to convene in France in October 2025. According to the sources, rebuilding Lebanon requires intensive efforts and joint initiatives of the Lebanese government, the international community and civilian society organizations. They added that European countries, led by France, supported the reconstruction process, but France demanded that Lebanon first resolve the issues of reform and the state monopoly on weapons so that the conference could be used to encourage donor countries to fund the reconstruction (al-Diyar, June 21, 2025).

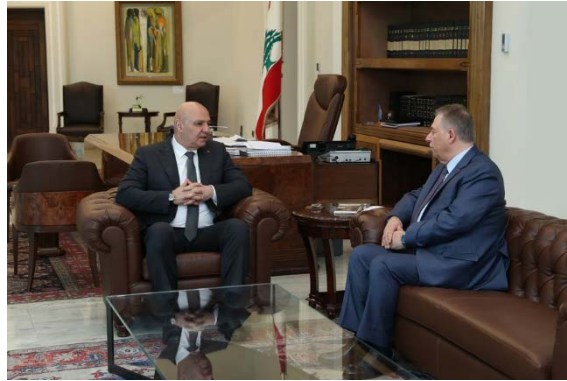
## The Palestinians in Lebanon

► Lebanese prime minister Nawaf Salam told a cabinet meeting that he had asked Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas to implement the decisions regarding the collection of Palestinian weapons in Lebanon. He said no official date had been set for the start of the weapons transfer, after the process was supposed to begin on June 16, 2025, in the three refugee camps in Beirut (al-Akhbar, June 16, 2025).

► A "senior Lebanese security source" said the delay in collecting weapons from the Palestinian refugee camps was not related to the Israel-Iran War. He claimed it was due to the PLO's lack of preparedness and its need for additional time to organize in a way which would provide the political conditions for activating the plan. The source added that the state of Lebanon bore no responsibility for delay in implementing the first phase but rather responsibility lay with the PLO and the Palestinian "opposition factions" which did not communicate with the Palestinian leadership (al-Sharq al-Awsat, June 19, 2025).

► Lebanese president Joseph Aoun met with the Palestinian ambassador to Beirut, Ashraf Dabbour. After the meeting, Dabbour said the Palestinians and their leadership respected

Lebanon's sovereignty and their willingness to support the expansion of Lebanese state authority over all its territory, including the refugee camps (Lebanese presidency X account, June 20, 2025).



**Aoun meets with the Palestinian ambassador (Lebanese presidency X account, June 20, 2025)**