



The Reorganization of Hezbollah Leadership and the Resignation of Wafiq Safa

Yuval Rosenberg

February 15, 2026

Overview¹

- The Israel-Lebanon-Hezbollah War ended in November 2024, and since then Hezbollah has been reorganizing to repair the damage it suffered, including to the top leadership, and to adapt to Na'im Qassem as the new secretary general.
- Alongside reports of disputes and power struggles between the "pragmatic" figures led by Qassem, and the proponents of an extremist approach, senior organization figures claimed that Hezbollah had recovered and rebuilt the leadership structure, adapting it to the continued Israeli targeted killings as part of enforcement actions, and preparations for a new war.
- According to reports, at the beginning of February 2026, Hezbollah's leadership accepted the resignation of Wafiq Safa, who had headed the Coordination and Liaison Unit since 1987 and was considered close to Hassan Nasrallah and one of the most prominent and influential figures in the organization's top leadership. Media commentaries opined that he resigned because of his disputes with Qassem, but also noted that the move was part of the secretary general's efforts to reorganize Hezbollah's hierarchy by tightening his control over the organization's media, and political and "security" forces, while relying on figures loyal to himself and with lower media prominence, in order to reduce the risk of being targeted by Israel.
- **In ITIC assessment, the termination of Wafiq Safa's role was intended to stabilize Hezbollah's leadership, reduce the vulnerability of senior figures and consolidate the secretary general's control after the profound shock undergone by the organization. However, concentrating authority in the secretary general's office and weakening veteran power centers may awake latent frictions and undermine internal balances. The success of the move will be partially measured by the organization's ability to preserve cohesion,**

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

prevent further intelligence leaks and redefine Hezbollah's relations with the Lebanese state without relinquishing its core principles.

Reorganization Since the End of the War with Israel

- During the war against Israel, which lasted from October 8, 2023 to November 27, 2024, and especially between September 23, 2024 and the ceasefire, Hezbollah lost thousands of terrorist operatives, including dozens of senior leadership and command figures, foremost among them secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, his designated successor, chairman of the Executive Council Hashem Safi al-Din, and the organization's military commander, Fuad Shukr. Since the ceasefire, within the framework of enforcement activity, the IDF eliminated hundreds of Hezbollah terrorist operatives and commanders, the most prominent of whom was the organization's acting chief of staff, Ali Haytham Tabataba'i, who was eliminated in November 2025.²
- At the end of October 2024, after the elimination of Nasrallah, Hezbollah announced that the Shura Council had chosen Sheikh Na'im Qassem, who had served as deputy secretary general since 1991, as the new secretary general.³ After the ceasefire other senior positions were filled, including Ali Damoush, who was appointed head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, and Youssef al-Zein, who was put in charge of communications, although in most cases no official announcements were issued.
- Outwardly, senior Hezbollah figures, mainly members of Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, continued to represent the organization as having recovered from the severe blows it had sustained and claimed that it had rebuilt all levels of its leadership and military structures. For example, Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed that the organization had a new secret military structure, with younger and more dynamic leadership, renewed separation between the military wing and the political wing and shortening of command chains. However, "sources in the organization" admitted that panic and chaos were still evident near the leadership and that impacted the command fabric (*Le Figaro*, October 18, 2025).
- Meanwhile, independent and opposition claimed there were serious disputes and power struggles between rival factions at the top of the organization:

² See the May 2025 ITIC report, [Challenges Faced by Hezbollah after the November 27, 2024 ceasefire](#) and the December 2025 report, [Hezbollah: One Year After the Ceasefire](#)

³ See the November 2024 ITIC report, [Sheikh Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's Newly – Appointed Secretary General](#)

- ◆ Power struggles were reported between the hawks, who also opposed Qassem's leadership despite his de facto appointment by Iran, and the doves, who sought to operate according to the current situation on the ground, including the government's decision to implement a state monopoly on weapons. As a result, three rival camps were formed in the leadership: one, the moderate camp led by Qassem, which expressed commitment to the ceasefire and to the organization's remaining within the government of Nawaf Salam, but also opposed disarmament; two, the camp led by the head of the Coordination and Liaison Unit, Wafiq Safa, and deputy head of the Political Council Mahmoud Qamati, who promoted were extremist and threatened the Lebanese government, and three, the camp led Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, who linked disarmament to Israeli withdrawal from five positions in south Lebanon, the return of Lebanese detainees held in Israel and the reconstruction of south Lebanon. Reportedly, all mediation attempts between the camps failed and "knowledgeable political sources " said Hezbollah was disintegrating and unable to make decisions (Hona Lebanon, October 21, 2025).
- ◆ After the elimination of Tabataba'i, a struggle reportedly began between senior Hezbollah figures identified with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and senior figures in Hezbollah's second and third level leadership who wanted to increase their representation in the organization's military leadership. It was also noted that field ranks, especially in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley, were angry at the leadership because they were subjected to daily attacks and their families did not receive compensation, while the leadership was seen as detached and enjoying resources and not making even a symbolic response to Israel. According to the "source," for that reason even Hezbollah's support base was mocking the organization and claiming it was finished, and claiming that there was no one in its ranks who could replace those killed in Israeli strikes (Eram News, November 24, 2025).
- ◆ "Sources close to Hezbollah" said the top of the organization's leadership was coping with internal tensions. Reportedly, there were also power struggles within the Shura Council which were influenced by the split between pragmatic and conservative currents in Iran, creating paralysis in major decision-making and casting doubt on the current leadership's ability to impose consensus. One example was the delay in the appointment of Hezbollah's parliamentary faction chairman, Muhammad Raad, as deputy secretary

general of the organization, a delay perceived as a sign of hesitation by secretary general Qassem and pressures from conservative currents opposing leadership renewal, particularly the appointment of a political figure who was not a cleric. "Sources" opined that completion of the appointment, if it occurred, would begin a struggle for the leadership of Hezbollah's parliamentary faction and increase internal turmoil (Janoubia, December 16, 2025).

- ◆ It was further reported that Qassem was trying to strengthen his control and promote a more moderate approach, including to the issue of Hezbollah's weapons, but was facing opposition from the extremist faction, which is committed to preserving and reconstructing the organization's military capability. It was also reported that he was making extensive appointments to the military and security forces to preserve his standing (al-Jarida, December 17, 2025).
- ◆ In the assessment of "sources close to Hezbollah," the organization is at a crossroads, juggling the hawks and the "pragmatists" and dealing with internal and external pressures regarding the weapons issue and the status of the state. There is reportedly criticism of Qassem's leadership because Hezbollah has failed to resolve the displaced people's crisis, ceased compensation to families of those killed and shown poor economic management. Despite calls to replace Qassem, there is concern that such a move would widen the split, while continuation of his leadership might accelerate the erosion of the organization's public legitimacy (Eram News, December 17 and 19, 2025).



Na'im Qassem struggles to reassemble the Hezbollah's puzzle (Elaph, February 12, 2026)

The Resignation of Wafiq Safa

- On February 6, 2026, it was reported that Wafiq Safa submitted his resignation as head of Hezbollah's Liaison and Coordination Unit, an unusual and unprecedented move for the

organization's security forces.⁴ According to "various sources," he resigned because of disputes with the organization's secretary general, Na'im Qassem, and with Shura Council member and parliamentary faction chairman Muhammad Raad, over the reduction of his powers and his deviation from the organization leadership's decisions, for example by encouraging protests regarding the restrictions of weapons. "Sources" noted that Safa submitted his resignation some time ago, but Hezbollah's leadership accepted it only after he insisted. The powers of the Liaison Unit were transferred to Hussein Abdallah, close to Qassem and former security chief in south Lebanon, while Ahmed Mahna, who was Raad's assistant, was put in charge of contacts with the state and external actors (Reuters, al-Hadath, al-Jadeed, February 6, 2026; *al-Quds al-Arabi* February 8, 2026). Hezbollah did not publish a statement regarding Safa's resignation.

► According to commentaries in the media, Safa's resignation from the position he had held since 1987 was apparently part of a broad organizational move by Hezbollah's upper echelons, intended to entrench the hierarchy under Na'im Qassem and centralize decision-making in his hands, while appointing figures with lower media prominence, alongside an attempt to reduce friction with state institutions:

- ◆ Safa's resignation was not a dismissal, but rather a move of reorganization and restoration of control within Hezbollah's upper echelons alongside reducing power centers which had developed over the years around veteran figures, and adapting the organizational structure to a post-war situation of high security sensitivity, internal political erosion and the need to avoid direct friction with state institutions. However, Safa's remaining within the senior organizational echelon and his receiving new tasks indicate the leadership's desire to preserve his experience and standing, while changing his arena of activity and reducing his public exposure. The timing of the "official announcement" was intended to present the move as a controlled process of the distribution of functions in response to regional and international pressures and not as a sign of internal crisis (Lebanon 24, February 7, 2026). Journalist Ali Reda from Hezbollah's al-Manar channel published a picture of himself alongside Safa in his new office and wrote: "Relax, he only changed offices, but he is still sitting in your heart" (X account of journalist Ali Reda, February 7, 2026).

⁴ For further information about Wafiq Safa, see the Appendix.



Ali Reda with Safa (X account of journalist Ali Reda, February 7, 2026)

- ◆ Safa's responsibilities were split into three: security responsibility went to Hussein Abdallah, institutional coordination to Dr. Ahmed Mahna and management of political contacts to a dedicated department. Reportedly, that reflected the transition from centralization, relying on a single key figure, to decentralization and caution intended to reduce personal vulnerability and restore hierarchical control to the leadership center (RED TV, February 9, 2026).
- ◆ "Knowledgeable Lebanese sources" said Safa's resignation was only the visible tip of a broader reshuffling following the war with Israel, with a growing concentration of decision-making in the office of secretary general Qassem. Unlike the Nasrallah period, in which the Executive Council functioned as a kind of "internal government," Qassem seeks to connect all party institutions directly to the general secretariat and tighten hierarchical control over the media, and political and military forces. In addition, there are more "civilian" political figures within the decision-making circle, at the expense of the religious dominance which characterized Nasrallah's leadership, and of figures who worked alongside Qassem in the Islamic Dawah Party and the Islamic Committees before he joined Hezbollah upon its establishment. Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, is expected to be appointed as Qassem's deputy after the parliamentary elections in the spring, while Muhammad Fneish, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, will lead the Executive Council with Ali Damoush responsible for its operational and executive roles. Media will be consolidated under Ibrahim Mousawi, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament who operates in full, direct coordination with the organization's leadership. Moreover, "sources" noted that after the Liaison and Coordination Unit had also fulfilled political and media roles under Safa, it would now again be limited only to security and technical

coordination with the Lebanese security forces, and all political decisions and contacts would be handled solely by the political leadership, especially secretary general Qassem, bloc chairman Raad or Qassem's political aide, Hussein Khalil (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 7, 2026).

- ◆ The Liaison and Coordination Unit was re-subordinated to the Political Bureau and will operate as a "coordination unit" in the narrow sense only. Reportedly, the move was politically supervised by secretary general Qassem and militarily by figures close to the Qods Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and its objective was to return the unit to technical missions and strip it of any independent political, legal or security authority. That ended its status as a parallel power center, and control over sensitive files was transferred to Hezbollah's senior political and security echelon (Asas Media, February 11, 2026).
- ◆ Another commentary linked Safa's resignation to a process of renewed preparation and organizational "slate-cleaning," whose objective was compartmentalization, secrecy and reducing the public visibility of senior security figures as lessons learned from the exposure of cover and protection networks. Given the growing international and internal demands to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and to leave weapons exclusively in the hands of the state, it was noted that Hezbollah's leadership might decide that figures identified with the previous era were no longer suitable for managing the next stage, which required "less provocative faces" and a fundamentally different pattern of action (Middle East Online, February 6, 2026).
- ◆ Editor of the Janoubia website, Ali al-Amin, said Hezbollah's upper echelons were being reorganized because Na'im Qassem wanted a team which would operate according to his vision, thereby changing the leadership which had surrounded Nasrallah. Therefore, Qassem is taking steps to avoid previous mistakes by tightening control over political, media and security functioning (Al-Hurra, February 10, 2026).
- ◆ According to another report, Hezbollah's reorganization also relies on internal investigations conducted following the war and the eliminations of the leadership, to close security and organizational breaches. "Sources" noted that in addition to rebuilding decision-making mechanisms, the organization's leadership sought to come to terms with Lebanese state institutions and prepare the ground for dialogue in response to the regional and American pressure directed at Iran. Wafiq Safa's demotion

was presented not only as an internal move, but also as an attempt to reduce image-based and political friction with state mechanisms (Anatolia Agency, February 8, 2026).

Appendix: Profile of Wafiq Safa

► For years, Wafiq Safa was considered a central, influential figure in Hezbollah's security forces, with direct access to the top leadership. His unique status, as someone with ties to Lebanese security forces and high public exposure, made him both an organizational asset and a vulnerable figure in an era of growing intelligence and operational pressure.



Wafiq Safa interviewed about his acquaintance with Nasrallah (al-Mayadeen, February 18, 2026)

► Safa joined Hezbollah in 1984 and in 1987 was appointed to head the Security Committee, which later became the Liaison and Coordination Unit. Although ostensibly he dealt with internal security disputes or with other actors, Safa gradually became the leading figure in Hezbollah's contacts with Lebanese state institutions, security forces, the judicial system and international actors (al-Arabiya, October 10, 2024, *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 7, 2026). His sense of power was illustrated in September 2021, when he reportedly threatened Tareq Bitar, the judge investigating the 2020 Beirut port explosion, telling him that Hezbollah "would remove him from office" if he continued to "politicize" the investigation (CNN, September 23, 2021).⁵

⁵ See the November 2025 ITIC report, [Iran Assists Hezbollah's Post-Ceasefire Reconstruction](#)



**Safa meets with UN special coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert
(al-Akhbar, May 30, 2025)**

- ▶ Safa controlled a network of aides in the customs authority and in oversight mechanisms at Beirut airport and the city's seaport, which enabled the Hezbollah to smuggle funds and equipment (al-Hadath, April 8, 2025). However, at the beginning of 2025, the Nawaf Salam government tightened its control over the international airport and the port of Beirut and identified employees linked to Hezbollah, which weakened Safa's ability to continue operating without disruption.
- ▶ In July 2019, the United States Treasury Department placed Safa on its sanctions list of terrorist operatives. According to the Department's statement, as head of Hezbollah's security forces Safa exploited Lebanon's ports and border crossings to smuggle goods, drugs and weapons and to facilitate travel for Hezbollah operatives. It was further stated that he had ties to Hezbollah partners and to the organization's financiers (United States Treasury Department website, July 9, 2019).
- ▶ Safa also led the negotiations that resulted in the return of Israeli soldiers abducted by Hezbollah, a deal in January 2004 to return the bodies of three IDF soldiers abducted from Har Dov in October 2000 and an Israeli civilian who was abducted in October 2000 in exchange for the release of Palestinian and Lebanese terrorists, and the deal in July 2008 in which the bodies of two IDF soldiers abducted in July 2006 were returned in exchange for the release of prisoners and the bodies of Hezbollah terrorists. Safa himself oversaw the transfer of the bodies of the two soldiers to UNIFIL personnel (al-Arabiya, October 10, 2024, Middle East Online, February 6, 2026).
- ▶ On October 10, 2024, according to reports, Israel attacked Beirut. Wafiq Safa reportedly was the target of the attack and was seriously wounded (Sky News Arabic, al-Hadath and Israeli media, October 11, 2024). However, "sources in Hezbollah" said that the attempted elimination

failed and that Safa had not been present at the targets which were attacked (al-Mayadeen and al-Manar, October 10, 2024). Immediately after the announcement of the ceasefire on November 27, 2024, Safa was the first senior Hezbollah figure to appear in public, arriving at the site of Nasrallah's elimination in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia (LBCI, November 27, 2024).



Wafiq Safa in his first appearance after the start of the ceasefire (LBCI, November 27, 2024)

- On September 25, 2025, Safa arrived at the Beirut Corniche opposite Raouche Rock when Hezbollah staged a display for the anniversary of Nasrallah's elimination, during which images of the former secretary general and his designated successor Hashem Safi al-Din were projected onto the rock, contrary to a government ban. Clashes also developed at the site between Lebanese army soldiers and demonstrators who waved Hezbollah flags and pictures of the organization's leaders while calling for the "resistance"⁶ to continue (al-'Ahed, al-Mayadeen and *al-Joumhouria*, September 25, 2025).
- Safa was also a dominant figure in Hezbollah's contacts with the army leadership during the efforts of the Lebanese government to advance the state's monopoly on weapons and disarm Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations. A few days before the government's decision on the disarmament plan, he met with the commander of the Lebanese army, Rodolph Haykal (al-Jadeed, July 31, 2025). The two also spoke hours after Haykal announced before the ministers the actual completion of the first stage of the demilitarization plan south of the Litani River at the beginning of January 2026, when Safa arrived at the funeral of the army commander's mother-in-law (Telegram channel Noon News, January 10, 2026).

⁶ Anti-Israel terrorist attacks and violence in an effort to destroy the State of Israel.