



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah February 23 – March 2, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ **On the night of March 1, 2026, Hezbollah fired rockets at northern Israel, announcing that it was a response to the elimination of Iran's leader Khamenei and to the Israeli strikes in Lebanon. The IDF responded by attacking Hezbollah targets and the elimination of senior figures in the organization in south Lebanon and the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut.**
- ▶ In response to the rocket fire, the Lebanese government **banned Hezbollah's military and security activities and limited it to politics.** Prime Minister Salam instructed the army to accelerate the disarmament of Hezbollah north of the Litani River "by all means." Reportedly, Speaker of Parliament Berri is preparing to remove political cover from Hezbollah because of the rocket fire.
- ▶ Before Hezbollah entered the war, it condemned the Israeli and American strikes in Iran and the elimination of Khamenei but did not explicitly say it would attack Israel. The Lebanese leadership tried to persuade Hezbollah not to intervene in the Israel-America war on Iran out of concern of a broad Israeli response against Lebanon.
- ▶ Before the war broke out on February 28, 2026, the IDF continued attacks in south Lebanon, targeting Hezbollah's military assets as part of the effort to enforce the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and prevent the organization's renewed military buildup and possible preparations to attack Israel. The IDF attacked Radwan Force camps, launch positions and tunnels.
- ▶ Due to the regional developments, the conference in support of the Lebanese army scheduled to convene in Paris on March 5, 2026 will be postponed to April 2026.
- ▶ Reportedly, the former head of Hezbollah's coordination and liaison unit, Wafiq Safa, was appointed assistant to the head of the political council.

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

Hezbollah Joins the War and the Lebanese Government Bans Its Military Activity

Hezbollah

► On the night of March 1, 2026, Hezbollah fired rockets at northern Israel (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, March 2, 2026). Hezbollah stated it had attacked the "missile defense base Mishmar HaCarmel south of the 'occupied city of Haifa' " with a barrage of precision missiles and a swarm of UAVs. Hezbollah claimed it was a response to the spilling of the "pure blood" of Khamenei "by the criminal Zionist enemy," in defense of Lebanon [sic] and the people and in response to the ongoing Israeli "aggression." It was further stated that the leadership of the "resistance"² had long said the continuing "aggression" and the killing of leaders, youths and residents "grants us the right to defend ourselves and respond at the appropriate time and place." Hezbollah also claimed it was a "legitimate defensive [sic] response" and placed responsibility on the Lebanese leadership and the parties involved to put an end to the "Israeli-American aggression" against Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 2, 2026).

The IDF

► In response to the rocket fire from Lebanon, the IDF eliminated senior figures in the organization, attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon and in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, including headquarters, weapons depots, facilities of the economic wing al-Qard al-Hasan and other infrastructure. Hussein Makled, head of Hezbollah's intelligence headquarters, was eliminated (IDF spokesperson, March 2, 2026). Israeli Minister of Defense Israel Katz said Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem had been pressured by Iran to join the war, adding he was now a target for elimination (Israeli media, March 2, 2026). The Lebanese ministry of health reported that at least 31 Lebanese had been killed and 149 wounded in the Israeli strikes (al-Akhbar, March 2, 2026). According to unverified information, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary faction, Muhammad Raad, was eliminated, who was reportedly supposed to be appointed deputy secretary general of Hezbollah (al-Hadath, March 2, 2026).

► The IDF issued evacuation notices for dozens of villages in south Lebanon and in the western Beqa'a Valley and warned residents that attacks on Hezbollah targets were expected

² Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

to continue, including on facilities located near civilian areas (IDF Arabic spokesperson X account, March 2, 2026). In the wake of the attacks and the evacuation notices, long convoys of Lebanese vehicles were photographed leaving the villages in south Lebanon and the Dahiye al-Janoubia in Beirut in an attempt to move to areas considered safer (Beirut Time X account, March 2, 2026).



Traffic jams in south Lebanon (Right: X account of the Phalange Party, March 2, 2026. Left: Facebook page of the Upper Chouf region, March 2, 2026)

The Lebanese Government

► The Lebanese leadership condemned the rocket fire but did not explicitly refer to Hezbollah:

- ◆ The president of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, said the rocket fire from Lebanese territory was detrimental to the state's efforts to distance Lebanon from regional military confrontations and from the predicted repercussions. He called for logical, responsible conduct which made the national interest the top priority. Aoun also condemned the Israeli strikes in Lebanon and added that those who ignored the calls to preserve security and stability were the ones who would bear responsibility, adding that the state would not allow it to happen again (Nidaa al-Watan, March 2, 2026).
- ◆ The prime minister of Lebanon, Nawaf Salam, condemned the rocket fire, calling it "irresponsible and suspicious," endangering the stability of the state and providing Israel with a pretext to continue its attacks. He said he would not allow Lebanon to be dragged into further confrontations, and declared that the government would take measures against those responsible and preserve the security of the citizens (Nawaf Salam's X account, March 2, 2026).
- ◆ The Lebanese army announced it had deployed units in the area from which the rockets were reportedly fired to clarify circumstances and investigate the details of the event (Lebanon 24, March 2, 2026).

► However, after an ad hoc government session chaired by President Aoun, Prime Minister Salam said **they had decided to ban all Hezbollah military and security activities and to permit only the organization's political activity to ensure that the state had the exclusive authority to decide on war and peace.** He also demanded that Hezbollah hand over its weapons to the state and instructed the Lebanese army command to immediately implement the plan to limit weapons, especially north of the Litani River, using "all means." Salam added that the government condemned the rocket fire, which violated the desire to keep Lebanon from being dragged into the regional war, negated government decisions and disrespected the will of the majority of the Lebanese. He also called on the states that guarantee the ceasefire agreement to obtain an Israeli commitment to stop the attacks and implement the agreement, and noted the government's readiness to renew negotiations with civilian representation and international sponsorship (al-Nashra, March 2, 2026).

► The Lebanese minister of information, Paul Morcos, stated that during the meeting President Aoun said that whoever fired rockets bore the responsibility for his actions and did not take into account the interests of his people and the security of his environment. He said Aoun had accepted Salam's request to convene the meeting so that all ministers would share responsibility for making the decision. Morcos added that Salam said firing rockets and launching UAVs violated the state's position regarding the decision on war and peace and it was no longer possible to ignore the identity of the responsible party, adding that the threat of civil war no longer made an impression on anyone and the majority of the Lebanese supported the government's position. According to Morcos, Salam said they did not want a confrontation with Hezbollah, but were not prepared to accept rocket fire from Lebanon or the threat of civil war (VDL News, March 2026).

► Sources close to **Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and leader of the Amal Movement, and considered an ally of Hezbollah, said he was shocked by Hezbollah's behavior.** They said Berri had decided to support the position of the Lebanese state and was moving toward removing the political cover he granted Hezbollah. However, no official statement on the matter was issued by Berri or the Amal Movement (al-Hadath, March 2, 2026).

Hezbollah's Opponents

► During the government meeting, ministers from the Christian Lebanese Forces Party called to vote that all state institutions considered Hezbollah an illegal organization because of the risk it posed to the state and to take all legal and administrative measures against those

responsible for decisions that broke the law and against entities connected to them (Nidaa al-Watan, March 2, 2026).

► Former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri said Hezbollah's firing rockets from Lebanese territory was irresponsible, exposed the Lebanese to risks and dragged the country into war. He said he supported the Lebanese state and its legitimate institutions, noting that the time had come for Hezbollah understand that Lebanon was a homeland for all its citizens, not a battlefield for settling the accounts of foreigners and their agendas (Saad Hariri's X account, March 2, 2026).

The Positions of Hezbollah and the Lebanese Government before Hezbollah Joined the War

► Before Hezbollah joined the war, it said it fully supported Iran because of the American and Israeli attacks which began on February 28, 2026 and condemned the elimination of Iran's leader Khamenei. However, the organization's senior figures did not explicitly threaten Israel, although during the First Iran-Israel War in June 2025, Hezbollah had warned of "disastrous consequences" in the event of an attack on Khamenei:³

◆ Hezbollah called the American-Israeli strikes against Iran a "dangerous escalation and a violation of international law and the UN Charter." The organization said the strikes would strengthen Iran and its determination, declared full solidarity with it and called on the regional states to stand against the "aggression" while warning that the United States and Israel would fail to achieve their objectives (al-Akhbar, February 28, 2026).

◆ Hezbollah's secretary general, Na'im Qassem, issued a statement about the "great and blessed martyrdom of our leader and our guardian," Iran's leader Ali al-Khamenei, and called the attack "a mark of shame on the forehead of humanity." He said Hezbollah and the "Islamic resistance"⁴ in Lebanon would continue the same path with "unshakable determination," would fulfill their duty to confront the "aggression" and would not abandon the "field of honor and resistance" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 1, 2026).

³ See the March 2026 ITIC report, "[The Resistance Axis Reacts to the Israel-United States War against Iran and the Elimination of Ali Khameni](#)"

⁴ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

- ◆ The deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, Mahmoud Qamati, claimed the organization could not remain neutral, but how it would react would depend on developments and on the leadership of Hezbollah's military wing, which would determine what best served Lebanon and the region (Al Jazeera Mubasher, March 1, 2026).
- ▶ The Lebanese leadership did not hide its concern over Hezbollah's intervention in the war, which would lead to an Israeli response not limited only to the organization's targets, and tried to persuade Hezbollah to exercise restraint, warning against dragging the country into new "adventures" after the damage caused during Hezbollah's "support" for the Gaza Strip. The president of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, noted the need to prevent any repercussions which would harm Lebanon and its citizens. He called for a high level of preparedness and the coordination of all constitutional authorities and relevant bodies, noting that the situation was sensitive and required full commitment to national responsibility and placing the interests of Lebanon and the Lebanese above any other consideration.
- ▶ Political and security sources pointed to movements of Hamas operatives in Lebanon during recent weeks, carried out in coordination with or with the backing of Hezbollah, raising concern over a possible escalation that would drag the country into a "support war" for Iran in the event of an American-Iranian confrontation. The Palestinian terrorist organizations in Lebanon, including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), would attack Israel from Lebanese territory while Hezbollah would initially try to distance itself from the event and represent any response on its part as exclusively defensive. Such a scenario would allow Hezbollah to avoid direct responsibility toward the Lebanese public, but in practice could lead to Lebanon's integration into a broad regional war without the state itself having control over its course or its consequences (Nidaa al-Watan, February 23, 2026).

Events in Lebanon before the Escalation of February 28, 2026

IDF Activity against Hezbollah

- ▶ The IDF continued attacking Hezbollah terrorist targets as part of the effort to enforce the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and prevent Hezbollah's renewed military buildup. The forces attacked eight military camps used for storing weapons and for training the Radwan Force in the Baalbek area in the Beqa'a Valley, and launch positions and tunnels used by Hezbollah in south Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, February 23-March 2, 2026).

► According to claims, Hezbollah's security and military center of gravity is in the Beqa'a Valley, which it considers safer than the south, while adapting its combat doctrine to increasing reliance on UAVs and precision rocket fire. According to the report, the organization rejected demands by the state and mediators to hand over UAVs, long-range and precision missiles, most of which are located in the Beqa'a Valley (Nidaa al-Watan, February 23, 2026).

► Reportedly, the elimination of Hezbollah commanders in strikes in the Beqa'a Valley on February 20, 2026 led to raising the alert level and a significant tightening of security procedures within the organization, including reducing the movements of operatives and recruiting additional forces out of concern over further strikes. A source close to the organization noted that despite the intelligence risk, there were senior figures who continued actions which could be dangerous, including the use of mobile phones and relatively visible movement, which required changing places of residence and increased caution, especially during the month of Ramadan (Nidaa al-Watan, February 27, 2026).

The Ceasefire Monitoring Committee

► On February 24, 2026, the ceasefire monitoring committee held a meeting in Naqoura for the first time since December 19, 2025. No civilians attended, only officers from the Lebanese army, the IDF, the United States, France and the UNIFIL commander. Sources stated the meeting was formal only, without a substantive change in the situation (al-Akhbar, February 24, 2026). A diplomatic source noted that the objective of limiting the committee's authority to the issue of the ceasefire was to prevent a slide into direct negotiations with Israel and to reduce the significance of the Lebanese initiative to add civilians to the committee. According to him, the Israeli refusal, with American backing, to limit the talks only to the issue of the ceasefire led to the exclusion of civilians from the committee. Meanwhile, a proposal is being advanced for direct contacts at the ministerial level and above outside the framework of the committee, in order to accelerate agreement (al-Liwaa, February 23, 2026).

The Lebanese Security Forces

► The Lebanese army reported that IDF forces opened fire at a new observation post in the Sarda-Marjayoun area, north of Ghajar on the border with Israel. According to the report, the army command instructed its forces to remain at the post and reinforce it, and to respond to the sources of gunfire, while the army operated in coordination with the ceasefire monitoring committee and UNIFIL (Lebanese army X account, February 24, 2026).

► According to military sources, the Lebanese army erected 25 positions in south Lebanon, some of them near points held by the IDF, for surveillance and to prevent Israel from incursions into Lebanese territory. They added that the positions were being erected in coordination with the committee supervising the ceasefire in Lebanon, and with the close accompaniment of UNIFIL (al-Jadeed, February 25, 2026). It was later reported that the Lebanese army had erected seven new positions in Yaroun, Maroun al-Ras, Aitaroun and Meis al-Jabal to reinforce its presence and deployment along the border with Israel and as part of a plan to deal with IDF incursions into border communities. According to the report, the army plans to establish five additional positions soon (Malchak, February 27, 2026).

► The war with Iran led France to announce that the Paris conference in support of the Lebanese army and security forces had been postponed from March 5, 2026 to April 2026, reflecting the need to protect Lebanon's stability and strengthen its institutions and sovereignty (al-Akhbar, March 2, 2026). Before the postponement was announced preparations for the conference continued, alongside assessments that expanding assistance to the Lebanese security forces would be linked to tangible progress in implementing the exclusivity of arms and presenting a timetable for the second phase north of the Litani River:

- ◆ Diplomatic sources said some states were reserved about granting significant additional assistance to the army and security forces, mainly because of the delay in completing the issue of the state's exclusivity of weapons and dissatisfaction with the progress of the second phase north of the Litani River. However, the sources said Arab support, especially from Qatar, and Western support, mainly from the United States, was expected to continue in its current format both before and after the conference (al-Liwaa, February 23, 2026).

- ◆ The commander of the Lebanese army, General Rodolph Haykal, and the commander of the internal security forces, Major General Raed Abdullah, participated in the meeting in Cairo to prepare for the Paris conference. According to reports, Lebanon presented the army's needs and the stages of implementing state sovereignty over all its territory, alongside the operational challenges it faced. The participants praised the army's performance and said they were committed to strengthening its logistical and operational capabilities, noting that Lebanon's stability was central to regional stability. On the sidelines of the meeting, Haykal held talks with the Egyptian minister of defense

and ranking Egyptian army officials, focusing on regional developments and increasing military cooperation (Lebanese army X account, February 26, 2026).



**The meeting in preparation for the international conference
(Lebanese army X account, February 26, 2026)**

◆ Sources familiar with the details claimed that the absence of the American ambassador to Lebanon, Michel Issa, from the meeting in Cairo was not only caused by technical issues, but reflected American dissatisfaction with the failure to set a timetable for the second phase of arms exclusivity north of the Litani River. According to the report, Washington considered sending a political-military delegation, but cancelling participation was an indirect message of protest in the wake of an assessment that the army was avoiding commitment to a timetable and sought to link its progress to securing early support at the Paris conference (al-Akhbar, February 26, 2026).

UNIFIL

► UNIFIL announced it would continue to support the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south of the country, noting that the deployment of forces at 165 positions since the ceasefire was a significant step toward strengthening state sovereignty and improving local security, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. To strengthen Lebanese security institutions, UNIFIL transferred two buses to the internal security forces and 32 vehicles, as well as information technology equipment to the general directorate of general security (Nidaa al-Watan, February 25, 2026; Lebanon Debate, February 26, 2026).

Disarming Hezbollah

► In remarks marking one year since receiving the Lebanese Parliament's vote of confidence in his government, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam noted the government's commitment to the state's exclusivity of arms. He said the Lebanese army had completed the first phase south of the Litani River, adding that the second phase was expected to be carried

out within approximately four months, subject to continued international assistance (Nidaa al-Watan, February 25, 2026; Akhbar al-Youm, February 26, 2026).

► Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji gave a speech at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in which he related to the extension of state sovereignty over the country's entire territory, collecting illegal weapons and their restriction to legitimate forces, alongside institutional reforms and economic recovery. He called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to implement Resolution 1701 and the 2024 ceasefire agreement, and to support the Lebanese army, including through the planned conference in Paris, to strengthen its ability to limit the weapons of non-governmental groups (al-Markazia, February 24, 2026). In response, the president of the al-Khiyam Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, Muhammad Safa, called for Rajji's dismissal, claiming he ignored the issue of Lebanese prisoners in Israel and did not place it at the top of the international agenda. He also attacked Rajji's call for Hezbollah to hand over its weapons and claimed that by doing so he created an improper equivalence between "the executioner and the victim," instead of demanding the release of detainees or allowing Red Cross visits (al-Akhbar, February 24, 2026).



Rajji: "The government wants to reform, fight corruption, liberate the land, extend sovereignty and limit weapons..." Mario Bassil [a well-known Lebanese comedy actor]: "And what, you don't also want to cure lepers and raise the dead?!" (al-Joumhouria, February 25, 2026)

► Foreign Minister Rajji also met with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Dmitry Liubinsky on the sidelines in Geneva. He demanded the cessation of Israeli strikes and the withdrawal of its forces from the points under its control, and again publicly emphasized the government's commitment to the principle of exclusivity of arms in the hands of legitimate military institutions, in accordance with the government decision of August 5, 2025, the 1989 Taif Agreement and international resolutions. Rajji explicitly called on Hezbollah to hand over its weapons, claiming that the state was prepared to assume full sovereign responsibility over its entire territory (Lebanon 24, February 23, 2026).

► The Christian Phalange Party called for swift, decisive action by the legitimate security forces to dismantle Hezbollah's military and security apparatus throughout the country, adding that the lack of state authority deployment damaged the integrity of elections and political freedom of action. It noted that any substantive change in the governing system was conditional upon the state's exclusivity over weapons and over the decision on war and peace (al-Madan, February 24, 2026).

Reorganization in Hezbollah's Leadership

► According to reports, Hezbollah's leadership appointed Wafiq Safa as assistant to the head of the organization's political council⁵ after he finished serving as head of Hezbollah's coordination and liaison unit.⁶ It was noted that the appointment of Safa, who has been considered a veteran, influential figure in Hezbollah's security-political coordination apparatus for nearly four decades, indicated a strengthening of the organization's organizational-political dimension and its intention to increase control and coordination in the arena of internal and external Lebanese relations (al-Jadeed, February 23, 2026).

Reconstructing Lebanon

► Meeting with a delegation from the council of the village of Rmeish, near the border with Israel, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said that "the steadfastness of the residents of the south on their land gave the strongest meaning to connection with the land as a value and identity." Aoun said it was the state's duty to provide all components of resilience, and reconstruction of the area was waiting for economic support (Lebanese Presidency X account, February 26, 2026).

► The minister of the environment, Tamara al-Zein, said environmental damage caused to Lebanon by the war with Israel exceeded \$440 million, and that more than 8,700 hectares of green areas (about 21,500 acres) had been damaged. She said a comprehensive professional report had been prepared in cooperation with the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) to document and assess the damage (al-Diyar, February 24, 2026).

⁵ The political council, headed by Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, serves as an advisory body to the secretary general and to the Shura Council and concentrates the management of the organization's political relations apparatus in the internal Lebanese arena, including with Islamic, nationalist and Christian parties, vis-à-vis the Palestinian organizations and within Arab and international interfaces.

⁶ See the February 2026 ITIC report, [The Reorganization of Hezbollah Leadership and the Resignation of Wafiq Safa](#).

The Palestinians in Lebanon

► Palestinian sources expressed concern at the inclusion of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in the Israeli "target bank," following the strike on the headquarters of the Joint Palestinian Force in the Ain al-Hilweh camp on February 20, 2026. Dr. Ayman Shannaa, in charge of national relations for Hamas in Lebanon, claimed that the expansion of the circle of strikes reflected messages for the "resistance" organizations and an attempt to exert pressure on their support base, but was not expected to change the positions of the Lebanese and Palestinians who supported the "resistance" (al-Nashra, February 23, 2026). The IDF stated that the structure which was attacked was a Hamas headquarters for planning attacks on IDF forces and the State of Israel.

► Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam met with the chairman of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, Fadi Allamah and committee members, and with the chairman of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. The funding crisis of UNRWA and other UN agencies was raised at the meeting, and its implications for Lebanon, which hosts approximately 200,000 to 230,000 Palestinian refugees. Committee members warned of an expected 20% to 40% cut in agency budgets, and claimed that Lebanon was among the most vulnerable countries in light of the double humanitarian burden of Palestinian and Syrian refugees, as well as UNIFIL obligations (Lebanese Prime Minister X account, February 25, 2026).