

## Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon May 4 – 11, 2026

### Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ The IDF continued to destroy terrorist infrastructure and eliminate terrorists within the forward defense zone (the Yellow Line) and other areas in south Lebanon, as well as the Beqa'a Valley. The commander of the Radwan Force was eliminated in a strike in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, the first of its kind in a month. An IDF soldier was killed and at least 16 were wounded by explosive drones.
- ▶ Hezbollah ramped up its attacks and issued 132 claims of responsibility for attacks on IDF forces in south Lebanon and on military targets in northern Israel, with nearly half of the attacks using explosive drones. According to reports, thousands of foreign fighters affiliated with the "resistance axis" are operating to assist Hezbollah in light of the heavy losses to its ranks.
- ▶ On May 14 and 15, 2026 Lebanon and Israel will reportedly hold the third round of direct talks in Washington with the participation of expanded delegations. The Lebanese administration continues its attempts to institute a complete ceasefire to focus the discussions on the remaining issues, but the United States and Israel reportedly insist on practical steps to disarm Hezbollah. The president and prime minister of Lebanon said the objective of the talks was to formulate security arrangements and not to promote normalization.
- ▶ Hezbollah continued its opposition to the continuation of direct negotiations, claiming they violated the Lebanese constitution and damaged state sovereignty, but did not rule out the possibility of indirect negotiations with Israel.
- ▶ The al-Qard al-Hassan association, Hezbollah's financial arm, reportedly renewed its activity in a branch in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia which was not attacked by the IDF, while the

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

organization continues to operate an international financing network to bypass sanctions and to reduce dependence on Iranian assistance.

► The Syrian authorities exposed a Hezbollah cell which trained in Lebanon and planned attacks and assassinations. Hezbollah denied the existence of such a cell and claimed that it had no presence in Syria.

► Hezbollah accused the American ambassador to Beirut of damaging coexistence in Lebanon after he visited the Maronite Patriarch following attacks on him by Hezbollah supporters.

► The Lebanese army carried out unusual activity in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia to arrest Hezbollah gunmen involved in shooting incidents during weddings, but opponents of the organization criticized the army for excessive "caution."

► The Lebanese minister of social affairs reported that 33 countries had sent aid amounting to about a quarter of a billion dollars.

## The Fighting in Lebanon

### The IDF

► This past week the IDF continued extensive ground and air activity within the Yellow Line, attacking and destroying terrorist infrastructure, including Hezbollah weapons warehouses, observation posts and launchers, and eliminating terrorists who posed a threat to IDF forces. The IDF attacked Hezbollah targets in other areas in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley, eliminating terrorist commanders and operatives, rocket and explosive drone launch positions and facilities for the production of weapons. A targeted strike in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut eliminated Ahmed Ghaleb Balout, commander of the Radwan Force, , together with several other terrorist operatives; it was the first such attack in a month. According to the IDF, between the beginning of the ceasefire on April 17 and May 7, more than 220 terrorist operatives were eliminated and more than 180 military facilities were attacked. An IDF soldier was killed and at least 16 additional soldiers were wounded, some of them critically, by explosive drone hits (IDF spokesperson, May 4–11, 2026).

### Hezbollah

► Between May 4 (12:00 noon) and May 11, 2026 (12:00 noon), Hezbollah issued 132 claims of responsibility (49 the previous week) for attacks using explosive drones (56 of the attacks), UAVs, anti-tank missiles, rockets, mortar shells and anti-aircraft missiles. Most of the attacks targeted IDF forces in south Lebanon, and others targeted sites in Israeli territory, including

a helicopter landing site and an Iron Dome battery. Hezbollah claimed that at least 18 attacks were in response to the strike in the Dahiye al-Janoubia (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 4–11, 2026).



**Attack on an Iron Dome battery using an explosive drone  
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 10, 2026)**

► Lebanese media analyzed Hezbollah’s military activity:

- ◆ In the assessment of a Western diplomatic source, Hezbollah currently faces a difficult strategic situation after its military, political and diplomatic capabilities have weakened, and any attempt to carry out "security" attacks or assassinations within Lebanon could lead to a harsh response from the United States and the West.<sup>2</sup> According to the source, the organization suffers from high intelligence exposure, severe damage to its security apparatuses and the Lebanese security forces' increasing freedom of action with Western intelligence assistance. According to claims the United States, Britain and European countries are increasing their military and intelligence readiness in the region, particularly in Cyprus, in preparation for possible scenarios in Lebanon. The source, reported that Hezbollah no longer aspired to a full victory, but was trying to prevent a complete defeat and to preserve a limited security and political role for itself in a future arrangement in Lebanon, although its chances of success "appear very low" (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 8, 2026).
- ◆ Reportedly, Hezbollah is planning to use attack drones, producing and assembling them locally in Lebanon, distributing them to many cells along the front and training of operators to operate them.<sup>3</sup> According to the report, drone activity relies on a broad intelligence system which collects information on the deployment of IDF forces,

<sup>2</sup> See the May 2026 Amit Institute report, [Hezbollah’s Unit 121](#)

<sup>3</sup> See the May 2026 ITIC report, [Hezbollah Uses First Person View Drones Against Israel](#)

movement routes, surveillance systems and the hiding places of soldiers in south Lebanon. According to claims, Hezbollah relies on surprise and high precision strikes, making it difficult for forces to survive in the field, and Israel is working to reduce the gap through the development of early warning systems which will allow the forces a short response time before drone impact (*al-Akhbar*, May 8, 2026).

◆ Sources claimed that thousands of foreign fighters affiliated with the "resistance axis"<sup>4</sup> were operating within Hezbollah, including operatives from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries, who assist the organization following its heavy losses. According to the report, some of them belong to Iranian-supported militias and operate in coordination with Hezbollah, while others were brought to Lebanon after fighting in different combat arenas. According to Lebanese commentator Ali al-Amin, Hezbollah conceals some of the losses of foreign fighters to prevent public criticism, and the presence of foreign fighters in Lebanon without state supervision reflects the existence of a parallel authority operating outside the framework of Lebanese sovereignty (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 8, 2026).

◆ Hezbollah is reportedly discussing the possibility of returning to suicide operations against IDF forces in south Lebanon, similar to the suicide bombing attacks of the 1980s and 1990s. According to the report, the option is being examined behind closed doors in an effort to exhaust the IDF by blowing up headquarters, vehicles and attacking officers and forces in the field. Hezbollah also reportedly still maintains operational control in some southern villages through a network of tunnels, explosive drones, charges, missiles and Katyusha launchers, and is preparing showcase attack on IDF forces in the foreseeable future (*al-Diyar*, May 8, 2026).

## Direct Negotiations between Lebanon and Israel

### The Lebanese Administration

► Lebanese media reported that the third round of direct talks between Lebanon and Israel would take place in Washington on May 14 and 15, 2026, when for the first time the two states would have larger delegations. According to the reports, alongside Lebanon's ambassador to the United States, Nada Hamadeh Maouch, who represented her country in the previous two rounds, the delegation will be led by the former ambassador, Simon Karam, the chargé

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<sup>4</sup> Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq, whose collective objective is the destruction and elimination of the State of Israel.

d'affaires of the deputy ambassador, Wissam Botros, and include Lebanese army representatives (LBCI, May 6, 2026; al-Jadeed, May 7, 2026).

► Sources stated that efforts were being made in Lebanon for a declaration of a full, permanent ceasefire before the beginning of the talks to allow them to focus on the additional central issues on the beginning of the Israeli withdrawal and the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south of the country, the release of Lebanese detainees held in Israel, the return of the displaced to their homes and the stabilization of the border. However, reportedly the United States and Israel want to focus on disarming Hezbollah, and the other steps will be implemented only after disarmament and the establishment of Lebanese sovereignty over all the territory of the state have been achieved (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 9–10, 2026; MTV Lebanon, May 8, 2026; *al-Diyar*, May 10, 2026).

► An official Lebanese source said the American administration had been officially informed that President Joseph Aoun's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu at this time could sabotage the efforts to achieve stability, and there was "American understanding" of the Lebanese position (Al Jazeera, May 7, 2026). American sources then stated that contacts were taking place behind the scenes to set a date for President Aoun's arrival in the United States for a meeting with the American president without meeting with Netanyahu. According to the sources, the American president understands Aoun's concerns, and "liked his personality" when they spoke by telephone (*Nidaa al-Watan*, May 9, 2026).

► President Aoun said there was no alternative to negotiations under American auspices to achieve Israeli withdrawal, stabilization of the ceasefire and the return of the prisoners. He also attacked Israeli activity in Lebanon and claimed that the Israeli strikes harmed "civilians and medical teams" and violated international law (Lebanese presidency X account, May 5–6, 2026).

► Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said Lebanon was not promoting normalization with Israel, but rather limited security arrangements to stabilize the ceasefire and lead to an Israeli withdrawal, release of the prisoners, return of displaced persons and strengthening Lebanese state sovereignty. They said that any political progress was conditional on the cessation of Israeli strikes and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms and international guarantees, while reiterating Lebanon's commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 and the principle that the Lebanese state was the exclusive body managing

the negotiations and holding the legitimate weapons (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 4; Lebanese News Agency, May 6; Al Jazeera and al-Jadeed, May 8, 2026).

► Lebanon's Prime Minister Salam visited Syria and met with President Ahmad al-Sharaa. Sources said they discussed the negotiations with Israel, and Salam said the Lebanese objective was to achieve a ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal and the formulation of security arrangements. He said Lebanon was committed to the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 (al-Jadeed, May 9, 2026), and said they had agreed on the need to tighten supervision of the border in order to prevent smuggling "of any kind" (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 9, 2026).



**Meeting of Salam and al-Sharaa (Nawaf Salam X account, May 9, 2026)**

► Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, continued his opposition to direct negotiations between Israel and Lebanon, demanding that because of "Israeli violations," any progress be conditioned on a full ceasefire and international guarantees. He claimed Hezbollah was committed to the ceasefire agreement, adding that the Lebanese leadership relied on internal unity and Arab support. He said he hoped for a positive conclusion to the negotiations between Iran and the United States, adding that the Iranian foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said Lebanon would be part of any future agreement (Lebanese News Agency, May 6, 2026).

► Given the Israeli and American demands to disarm Hezbollah, Prime Minister Salam said there would be no walking back of the government decision to limit weapons to the state and to apply its sovereignty over all Lebanese territory, even if its implementation was gradual. He said the Lebanese army and the security forces were increasing enforcement activity in Beirut and other areas, including reinforcing checkpoints and combating illegal possession of weapons and disturbances, adding that no one was above the law. He also said they had no intention to wage an internal confrontation with Hezbollah, but rather to

advance the implementation of state decisions gradually while preserving internal stability (Lebanese News Agency, May 4, 2026).

### **Hezbollah's Position**

► Hezbollah leaders and Hezbollah-affiliated media outlets continued defiant opposition to the continuation of direct negotiations with Israel, claiming the move was "illegal" and endangered state sovereignty and the future of the "resistance," although they did not rule out the possibility of indirect negotiations to achieve the objectives:

◆ Hassan Ezzedine, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that any contact with Israel should be "indirect and technical," similar to the ceasefire monitoring mechanism. He claimed direct negotiations would harm Lebanon's sovereignty and mean "submission to the dictates of the enemy," and called on the Lebanese leadership to abandon its current path and return to the option of resistance, which he claimed was supported by the majority of the Lebanese public. He said Hezbollah regarded Israel as a "strategic, existential threat" to all of Lebanon, adding that Israel had failed to achieve its objectives in south Lebanon and had not curbed the drone activity of the "resistance" (Lebanese News Agency, May 5, 2026).

◆ Ihab Hamadeh, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, warned that any future meeting between President Aoun and Prime Minister Netanyahu would "bid farewell to the familiar Lebanon." He said such a move would harm the "national pact" and the Taif Agreement, and would be perceived as an alliance between part of the Lebanese regime and Israel against Hezbollah. He said Hezbollah would oppose any attempt to disarm it and would confront the "conspiracy against the Lebanese" by all means (Sputnik, May 6, 2026).

◆ Hezbollah-affiliated daily *al-Akhbar* wrote that the possibility that Aoun and Netanyahu would meet showed that the idea of peace with Israel was still present in Aoun and Salam's political thinking. The paper claimed Aoun had retreated from the idea at this stage mainly because there were no American guarantees for a ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal, alongside concern over strong internal opposition from Hezbollah, Amal and additional actors in Lebanon. The paper also accused the Lebanese leadership of ignoring the fact that that in practice the United States and Israel sought to disarm Hezbollah and distance Lebanon from the Iranian axis, and stated it would not be possible to reach a stable arrangement without recognizing the

status of the "resistance" and the need to integrate it into any future agreement (*al-Akhbar*, May 8, 2026).

◆ Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said his organization supported indirect negotiations with Israel which would achieve the objectives "through certain steps." He said the direct negotiations in Washington deviated from the Lebanese constitution, adding that Hezbollah called on the Lebanese government to abandon the talks. He said the government could tell the Americans that they had not provided a full ceasefire and Israel attacked the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia and south Lebanon daily, good reasons to leave the negotiations (*al-Akhbar*, May 9, 2026). He added that the organization opposed negotiations both in principle, because they meant the recognition of Israel, and for political reasons, since they would lead Lebanon to "dangerous concessions" for its sovereignty and security (*al-Diyar*, May 10, 2026).

◆ Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the Lebanese leadership was going to a third round of talks without having succeeded in achieving even a ceasefire. He said the government was "selective" in its attitude toward casualties of the fighting and did not condemn Israeli attacks, while the "resistance" continued, he claimed, to do its duty in "defending Lebanon" (*al-Nashra*, May 9, 2026).

## Opponents of Hezbollah

► Political forces opposing Hezbollah continued publicly supporting Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, direct negotiations with Israel and the state's efforts to strengthen its sovereignty, while accusing Hezbollah of damaging state stability, internal incitement and promoting Iranian interests at Lebanon's expense. They presented the diplomatic contacts as part of a broader process intended to reestablish the authority of the Lebanese state to bring about Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon and to reduce Hezbollah's military and political influence:

◆ The chairman of the Lebanese Forces party, Samir Geagea, attacked the critics of negotiations, hinting at Hezbollah, and claimed that anyone who did not recognize the authority of the president and the government to conduct diplomatic contacts denied the Lebanese state itself. Geagea said President Aoun and the government had broad constitutional and democratic legitimacy from the Parliament, and called on state

authorities to act against "elements that refuse to recognize the authority of the state and its decisions" (Samir Geagea's X account, May 5, 2026). On another occasion he said the purpose of direct talks was to reach a "normal, stable" situation in south Lebanon and to return the state to a path of sovereignty and stability, far from external influences and from its continual transformation into a regional conflict arena. He praised the president and government's managing of the contacts, but claimed that implementation of state decisions still encountered opposition from the "deep state" and Hezbollah, which continued "to operate as a parallel center of power under Iranian influence." He ruled out the possibility of a civil war in Lebanon, and stating the security forces were taking decisive action to prevent internal deterioration despite the growing tension (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 9, 2026).

◆ The Phalange Party called for the acceleration of implementing government decisions to limit weapons to the state and to dismantle Hezbollah's military and security forces, which it called an "illegal militia," claiming its continued existence eroded Lebanon's sovereignty and served Iranian interests (Lebanese News Agency, May 5, 2026).

◆ Member of parliament Fouad Makhzoumi said a "realistic approach, far from slogans and internal confrontations" was necessary, adding that he supported the government and its sovereign decisions, and called for strengthening state authority and reinforcing official security mechanisms as the sole body responsible for security in Beirut and throughout Lebanon. He demanded that Israel commit to the understandings which would be reached and carry out a gradual withdrawal from Lebanese territories, alongside promoting a general, just, comprehensive amnesty law as part of efforts to stabilize the internal arena in Lebanon (Lebanese presidency X account, May 8, 2026).

◆ The Lebanese Forces party accused Hezbollah of deviating from the constitution and attempting to justify the continued existence of illegal weapons outside the authority of the state. The statement noted that the contacts President Aoun was conducting were part of his constitutional powers, while Hezbollah had led Lebanon into war, the reentry of the IDF into Lebanon and the deepening of the internal crisis (Lebanese Forces information apparatus, May 10, 2026).

## Hezbollah

### **Financing Hezbollah**

► According to reports, the al-Qard al-Hassan association, Hezbollah's main financial arm, renewed its activity in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, after many of its branches were attacked during the recent hostilities. Reportedly, the branch in Haret Hreik, the only one which was not attacked, resumed operations although it may be a target for future Israeli strikes. Meanwhile, criticism is increasing in Lebanon regarding the legal status of the association, after the governor of the central bank raised the issue for discussion in the government and in forums related to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) because of claims that the association operated as a financial system parallel to and outside state supervision. Legal and financial elements in Lebanon warned that the activity of al-Qard al-Hassan harmed the state's financial status and illustrated the weakness of its institutions vis-à-vis Hezbollah, while sources in the organization claimed that the activity of the association continued even during the fighting due to the need to provide a financial response to Hezbollah supporters and to the Shi'ite population (al-Hadath, May 9, 2026).

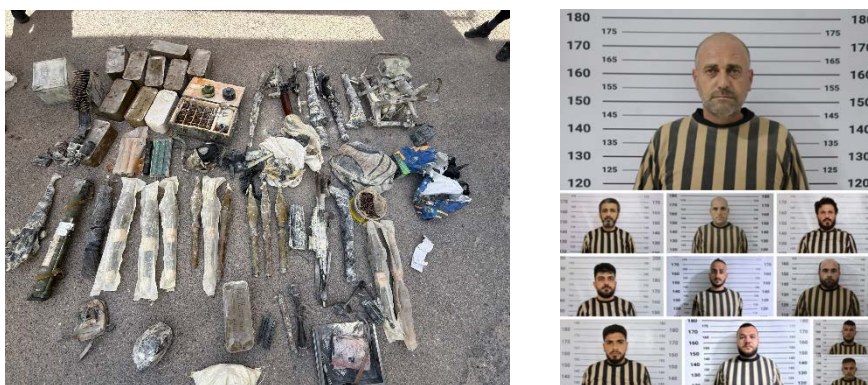
► Reportedly, Hezbollah continues to operate a decentralized global financing system based on economic networks in Africa, Latin America and Europe to bypass international sanctions and reduce its dependence on direct Iranian funding. The system is based on extensive activity in the trade in diamonds, gold, real estate, used cars and on money laundering, with the increasing use of cryptocurrencies and alternative financial systems such as al-Qard al-Hassan. It was also claimed that networks linked to Hezbollah exploited the spread of Lebanese communities in Africa for the purpose of transferring funds, and that part of the activity was integrated into drug trafficking routes from Latin America to Europe. According to the report, a significant portion of the organization's budget currently comes from illegal financial activity and international money laundering networks (Nidaa al-Watan, May 9, 2026).

### **Hezbollah in Syria**

► The Syrian ministry of the interior reported that security forces, in cooperation with the general intelligence apparatus, had foiled a "terrorist plot" attributed to Hezbollah which included a network that operated in several provinces in Syria after undergoing training in Lebanon. According to the announcement, the network planned to assassinate senior officials in the Syrian government, and the security activity led to the arrest of its members

and its dismantling (Syrian ministry of the interior Facebook page, May 5, 2026). It was later reported that among those arrested was the person responsible for the network's assassination file, and during the operation weapons were seized, including explosive devices, RPG launchers, rifles and ammunition (Lebanon Debate, May 6, 2026).

► Hezbollah denied the Syrian version and claimed that the organization currently had no presence or activity in Syria, and that the objective of the accusations was to ignite *fitna* (enmity) between the Lebanese people and the Syrian people. Hezbollah also claimed it regarded the security of Syria as part of the security of Lebanon, and represented itself as acting only against Israel and against its "expansionist" plans (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, May 5, 2026).



**Right: Network members. Left: Weapons seized in the possession of the network (Syrian ministry of the interior Telegram channel, May 5–6, 2026)**

## Sectarian Tensions in Lebanon

► Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun continued to promote messages of national unity and the strengthening of state institutions while warning against a return to internal confrontations and the lessons [apparently not learned] from past wars. He said "nothing remains for the Lebanese except the state," called for rallying around the Lebanese army and the government institutions, and said strengthening the state was a central condition for stability and preventing further internal deterioration (Lebanese presidency X account, May 6, 2026).

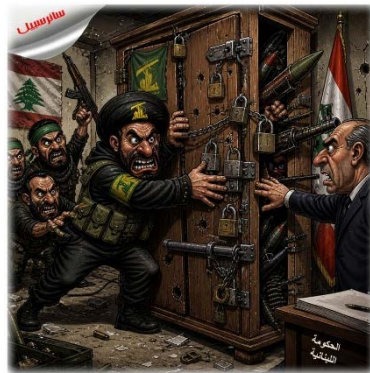
► The American ambassador to Lebanon, Michel Issa, visited the Maronite Patriarch, Bechara al-Rai, after attacks by Hezbollah supporters on the Maronite Patriarchate. Issa noted the importance of coexistence in Lebanon and the need to strengthen state sovereignty and its institutions. His remarks led to a sharp backlash from Hezbollah, its political representatives and its affiliated media outlets, which represented him as an American-Israeli envoy promoting disarming Hezbollah and changing Lebanon's political

identity (*al-Nashra*, May 4–5, 2026). An editorial in the Hezbollah's daily *al-Akhbar* accused the ambassador of adopting a "exclusionary and divisive" discourse which harmed the idea of coexistence in Lebanon and fueled internal tension in the country. The article represented Issa's remarks as part of an American attempt to reshape the political system in Lebanon and to grant legitimacy to the camp opposing Hezbollah (*al-Akhbar*, May 6, 2026).



**The American ambassador. The Arabic reads, "persona non grata" (nesrlbikaa X account, May 6, 2026)**

► In an attempt to curb escalation in Lebanon's internal discourse, the Lebanese minister of defense, Michel Menassa, met with the Maronite Patriarch and said the Lebanese government was acting to strengthen the state, limit weapons to the legitimate institutions only and prevent deterioration into *fitna* and internal conflict. Menassa condemned the attacks on institutions and national figures and warned against the continued radicalization of the public discourse in Lebanon (*al-Joumhouria*, May 8, 2026).



**The struggle in Lebanon over disarming Hezbollah, as the organization clings to its military power, while the state attempts to restore control and sovereignty (Saer Sabil X account, May 7, 2026)**

► The Phalange Party attacked the "incitement and hatred campaigns" conducted by Hezbollah against the president, the prime minister and the Maronite Patriarch. The party warned of attempts to provoke sectarian conflict and harm Lebanon's internal stability (Lebanese News Agency, May 5, 2026).

## The Lebanese Army

► President Aoun met with the commander of the Lebanese army, Rodolph Haykal, to discuss security developments in the country, particularly in south Lebanon. They reviewed the deployment of the Lebanese army and its positioning in different areas of the country as part of efforts to maintain security and stability (Lebanese presidency X account, May 6, 2026).

► On May 5–6, 2026, the Lebanese army operated in two of Hezbollah's main areas of influence, the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut and the Baalbek area in the Beqa'a Valley. During the operation, carried out by large army forces, several armed Hezbollah supporters who carried out shooting during funerals were arrested, and weapons were seized in their possession (Lebanese Army X account, May 5, 2026).

► It was the first time the army had operated in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia to implement state sovereignty. However, the "cautious nature" of the activity was criticized, as the army chose to deal with an issue "which was not expected to provoke Hezbollah," while avoiding direct contact with the organization's weapons infrastructure. Reportedly Hezbollah allowed the army to operate because the arrests related to public disturbances which angered its own environment (*L'Orient-Le Jour*, May 6, 2026).



Lebanese army forces in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia (*L'Orient-Le Jour*, May 6, 2026)

## The Civilian Situation in Lebanon

► The Lebanese ministry of health reported that since the beginning of the hostilities on March 2, 2026 at least 2,795 people had been killed, in addition to 8,586 wounded (*al-Nashra*, May 9, 2026).

► Lebanon's minister of social affairs, Hanin al-Sayyed, said the government continued operating accommodation and assistance centers for displaced persons because of the deterioration in security and the increase in the number of evacuees. She said Sports City in

Beirut had been converted into a secure reception center operated by the Lebanese Red Cross and secured by the Lebanese army. She added that Lebanon had received about \$248 million worth of aid from 33 countries, in addition to thousands of tons of equipment, and announced the launch of a new government platform to present data on the distribution of aid as part of a policy of full transparency (Lebanon Debate, May 6, 2026).