

Hezbollah in crisis as pressure mounts in Lebanon

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 10.08.2025

Since the November 2024 ceasefire, Hezbollah has been mired in a severe crisis, facing military, economic, and political attacks. Israel has been striking the terrorist organization's operatives and strategic infrastructure, the US has been intensifying sanctions, and the Lebanese government is under growing pressure to disarm Hezbollah and curb its influence.

Hezbollah rejected Lebanon's historic August 7 government decision to dismantle its military wing, and implementation now appears unlikely. Lebanon is motivated by two main factors: freeing itself from Iranian domination and meeting US conditions for urgently needed economic aid.

Lebanon's prime minister dismissed Hezbollah's long standing formula of "the army, the people, the resistance" and attempted to link disarmament to an Israeli withdrawal from five outposts in the country. The Trump administration refused, pushing instead for immediate disarmament.

Israel has been benefiting from Hezbollah's weakness, highlighted by its absence from Operation Rising Lion, in which Iran suffered a major blow. Under Naim Qassem, Hezbollah faces a prolonged recovery after the assassination of its senior leadership, which has also strained ties with Tehran. Although Qassem was appointed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's representative in Lebanon and received symbolic gestures of Iranian support, the personal dimension of the relationship has been disrupted by Hassan Nasrallah's elimination.

In a recent online address to a religious conference in Qom, Qassem portrayed Hezbollah as a direct continuation of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's ideology and praised its fight against Israel. In reality, he has largely refrained from retaliating for Israeli strikes that have killed more than 130 operatives and destroyed critical infrastructure. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has allowed the Israel Defense Forces to maintain control over five strategic positions along the border.

A 2024 poll found that 85% of Lebanon's Shiites express strong trust in Hezbollah, consistent with previous surveys indicating stable or growing support.

In the May 2025 municipal elections, Hezbollah strengthened its grip on Shiite-majority areas through political alliances, particularly with the Amal movement. This backing stems from both ideological loyalty and economic dependence.

With no economic alternative and continued Iranian funding, most Shiites remain loyal. To undermine Hezbollah's base, the US must lead a long-term strategy to challenge the terrorist organization's network of schools, welfare programs, religious institutions, and financial services, by creating a rival infrastructure backed by billions of dollars in American investment.

Such a strategy would aim to break Shiite economic dependence on Hezbollah. Shiites make up about 40% of Lebanon's population, compared to Sunnis at around 30% and Christians at 25%, and bring them under the Lebanese state's authority. With sustained American economic and political aid, Lebanon might persuade Shiites to keep only light weapons and give up Hezbollah's heavy arsenal, despite fears rooted in the sectarian bloodshed in Syria and security concerns.

Backed by US support and strengthened Shiite opposition to Hezbollah, combined with ongoing Israeli efforts to block its recovery, the terrorist organization's political and social influence could be eroded over the long term, rather than aiming for quick results during Trump's presidency.

Hezbollah, which remained armed under the 1989 Taif Agreement, has effectively become Lebanon's sovereign power, using its weapons for political assassinations. It still seeks to advance its vision of a Shiite revival and continued conflict with Israel, even as it attempts to reinvent itself.

The massacre in Syria's Sweida province has reinforced Hezbollah's determination to remain armed, fearing revenge from Sunnis and Christians. The terrorist organization remains loyal to Iran and signals readiness to renew armed conflict with Israel in the future, serving the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which relies on it as a key regional force.

Despite recent remarks by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Tehran appears to be avoiding public involvement in the dispute, weakened by the war and aware that open support would damage Hezbollah. This was evident in April 2024, when Lebanon's Foreign Ministry issued an unprecedented reprimand to Iran's ambassador in Beirut after he spoke out against Hezbollah's disarmament.

To counter Hezbollah's rejection of disarmament, Lebanon needs sustained US economic and political investment, along with continued Israeli action to prevent the terrorist organization's recovery, aimed at weakening its support among Shiites and diminishing its military and political power.

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