



Operation Northern Arrows: Reactions in Lebanon and Insights

September 26, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ On September 23, 2024, the IDF launched the Operation Northern Arrows and attacked thousands of Hezbollah terrorist targets in Lebanon from the air throughout the country, for the most part sites where weapons were hidden in civilian buildings and facilities. Senior Hezbollah commanders were attacked in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, the southern suburb of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold.
- ▶ Hezbollah has carried out dozens of attacks on civilian and military targets in Israel, extending the range of its rocket and missile fire and using new weapons. For the first time, Hezbollah justified its attacks as "defending Lebanon" while continuing to "support" the Gaza Strip, its claim since the beginning of the fighting. Hezbollah attacked the Tel Aviv area with a ballistic missile for the first time; the missile was intercepted. Hezbollah reported that seven of its operatives were killed since the operation began, including Ibrahim Qubaisi, the head of Hezbollah's missile and rocket system. The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq also attacked Israel.
- ▶ Lebanese authorities reported that hundreds of Lebanese had died and hundreds of thousands had left their homes in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley after the IDF's threats to attack buildings where Hezbollah's weapons were stored. Hezbollah was criticized on the social media and accused of destroying Lebanon.
- ▶ Efforts for a ceasefire are underway in the international arena. The Lebanese prime minister continued diplomatic efforts at the UN General Assembly to promote a ceasefire and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, as long as no ceasefire has been reached, Hezbollah will continue its efforts to exert pressure on Israel to stop the attacks in Lebanon by attacking Israeli military and civilian targets, even at distances far from the border. Hezbollah is also determined to exhaust Israel as long as a ceasefire has not been reached in the Gaza Strip. It may also target Gush Dan again in response to the continuing targeted attacks**

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

on its senior terrorist operatives. However, in ITIC assessment, at this stage neither Hezbollah nor Iran wants to wage a total war against Israel, and Iran is working through diplomatic channels to bring an end to the fighting in Lebanon. If the IDF initiates a land maneuver Hezbollah may reconsider its options and escalate its attacks, along with the other organizations belonging to the "resistance axis."²

Elimination of Ibrahim Aqil and the Radwan Force Command

► On September 23, 2024, the IDF launched Operation Northern Arrows to attack Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. More than two thousand targets were attacked in south Lebanon, the Lebanon Valley and north Lebanon. The targets included terrorist operatives, hundreds of ammunition depots, rocket launchers, long-, medium-range and heavy rockets, UAVs and cruise missiles. A significant quantity of the weapons was hidden in homes and other civilian buildings. Dozens of targets of Hezbollah intelligence sites were attacked, including headquarters and facilities for collecting information (IDF spokesperson, September 23-26, 2024).



Right: Weapons discovered in a civilian structures attacked in south Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, September 25, 2024). Left: Remains of an Iranian Fattah-110 missile, destroyed in the airstrikes in Lebanon (Simay Azadi's X account, September 25, 2024)

► During the operation, the Israeli Air Force attacked the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut twice, targeting senior Hezbollah figures:

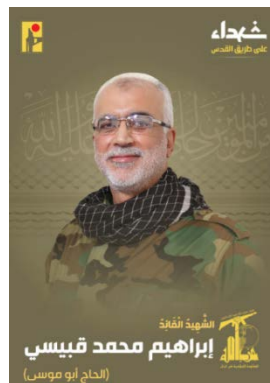
- ◆ In September 2024, Ali Qaraqi, commander of Hezbollah's southern front, was attacked in an apartment in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia. He became Hezbollah's most

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

senior military commander after the elimination of Fuad Shukr, the military commander, and Ibrahim Aqil, head of operations. According to reports, he was injured in the attack (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, September 22-23, 2024). Hezbollah claimed that Qaraqji had not been killed and was currently in a safe place, but did not provide details (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 23 2024).

◆ On September 24, 2024, Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi, head of Hezbollah's missile and rocket array, was eliminated, along with other senior commanders. He was responsible for firing rockets at the Israeli home front before and during the war, and was close to Hezbollah's senior military leadership. He joined the organization in the 1980s, held senior positions and planned the kidnapping of the three IDF soldiers in 2000 (IDF spokesperson, September 24, 2024). Hezbollah confirmed that Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi, aka al-Hajj Abu Musa, was killed in the Israeli attack. The announcement called him a "shaheed commander" and said he joined Hezbollah when it was founded in 1982 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 25, 2024).

►The IDF called on the residents of south Lebanon, and later on the residents of the Lebanon Valley, to evacuate their homes if Hezbollah's weapons were stored in them. The appeal was also made by Avichay Adraee, the IDF spokesperson in Arabic, by taking control of the regional radio and by sending text messages (Avichay Adraee's X account, September 23-24, 2024; Israeli media, September 23, 2024).



Hezbollah's mourning notice for the death of Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 25, 2024)

Hezbollah

Hezbollah attacks

► Since the beginning of Operation Northern Arrows, Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for 37 attacks on military and civilian targets, mainly in northern Israel (as of September 26, 2024,

at 2:00 p.m.). Hundreds of rockets were fired and UAVs were launched, and for the first time Hezbollah launched a surface-to-surface missile (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 23-26, 2024):

- ◆ **First use of a surface-to-surface missile:** On September 25, 2024, Hezbollah launched a surface-to-surface missile at Israel for the first time. The IDF reported that a David's Sling aerial defense system had intercepted a surface-to-surface missile launched from Lebanese territory at the Gush Dan area (IDF spokesperson, September 25, 2024). Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching a Qader-1 ballistic missile at "Mossad headquarters" in the suburbs of Tel Aviv. According to Hezbollah, Qader-1 is a tactical surface-to-surface missile weighing 2,870 kgs (6327 lbs) with a range of 190 kilometers (118 miles) and carrying a warhead weighing 500 kgs (1100 lbs) (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 25, 2024).



Hezbollah's Qader-1 surface-to-surface ballistic missile
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 25, 2024).

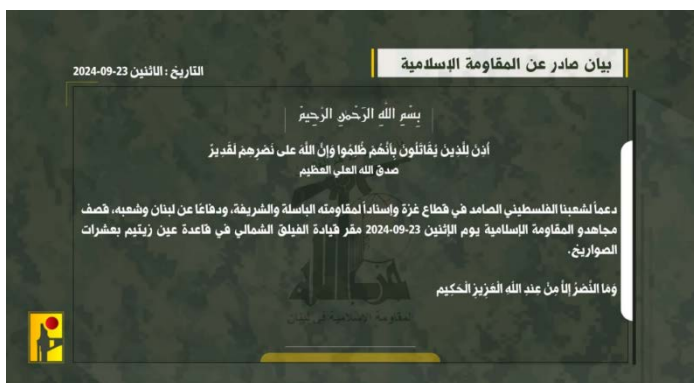
- ◆ **Use of new rockets:** On September 24, 2024, Hezbollah used new Fadi-3 rockets for the first time to attack an IDF base, and on September 25, 2024, a volley was launched at a factory near Zichron Ya'akov. Hezbollah did not provide details about the rocket, but belongs to the same series as the Fadi-1 and Fadi-2 rockets, which were first used on September 22, 2024 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 24-25, 2024).³

³ According to Hezbollah, they are tactical rockets which were first used in the Second Lebanon War in July 2006. Fadi-1 is a 220 mm rocket with a range of 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) and carrying an 83 kg (183 lbs) warhead, and Fadi-2 is a 302 mm rocket with a range of 100 kilometers (60 miles) and carrying a warhead weighing 170 kgs. (375 lbs). For further information, see the September 16, 2024 ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria \(September 16-23, 2024\)](#)."

◆ **Extending the attack range:** In response to Israeli Air Force strikes, including on targets deep in Lebanese territory, Hezbollah responded by extending the range of its attacks to Haifa and its suburbs, the Jezreel Valley, south Carmel (Zikhron Ya'akov and Atlit) and its first-ever attack on Tel Aviv. Hezbollah claimed it had attacked the Israeli Navy base, a military airport in Megiddo and various defense plants. Hezbollah also claimed responsibility for attacks on civilian settlements, in accordance with the threat issued by Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, on July 17, 2024, that in the event of an Israeli attack on civilians Hezbollah would attack targets which had not previously been attacked (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 23-26, 2024). The al-Mayadeen TV channel, which is affiliated with Hezbollah and the "resistance axis," reported that the attack on Tel Aviv indicated that it had entered the circle of fire, like Haifa, and that the attacks on "military bases" [sic] near Safed and Tiberias were meant to disrupt IDF capabilities and exert pressure on the residents of eastern Israel (al-Mayadeen, September 25, 2024).

Change in Hezbollah's claims of responsibility

On September 24, 2024, the Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel officially announced a change in the wording of its claims of responsibility, which it had used the previous day for the first time. According to the announcement, its attacks were "a sign of support for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and their 'resistance,' unchanged since the beginning of the fighting on October 8, 2023, were now "with and for the defense of Lebanon and its people," emphasized it in red and in a larger font. The first such claim of responsibility was issued on September 23, 2024 at 5:45 p.m. and with the firing of dozens of rockets at a Northern Command base (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 23-24, 2024).



Right: Explanation for the new version. Left: The new version
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 23-24, 2024)

Hezbollah casualties

► Since the start of Operation Northern Arrows, Hezbollah has announced the deaths of seven of its operatives in IDF strikes, including Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 23-26, 2024). Given the death tolls published in Lebanon (See below), Hezbollah may have additional casualties whose information has not yet been revealed.

Other casualties

► The Jerusalem Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), reported the deaths of four of the organization's affiliate in Syria while performing their "combat duty" in south Lebanon (PIJ combat information Telegram channel, September 24, 2024).

► The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, reported the death of "field commander" Hussein Mahmoud al-Nader, from Marjayoun in south Lebanon, who was killed in an Israeli attack in Lebanon on September 23, 2024 (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, September 24, 2024). The Jama'a al-Islamiyya, the Muslim Brotherhood's branch in Lebanon, also announced the death of Hussein al-Nader (al-Manarah lili'lam X account, September 24, 2024).⁴

Key reactions

► Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed that the Israeli announcements of severe damage to the organization were "misleading." He claimed that "the resistance missiles of all types are launched precisely and in accordance with the requirements of the defense of Lebanon." He added that "the enemy has expanded its aggression but will not be able to control the results of the war or its end" (al-Mayadeen, September 25, 2024).

► "Sources close to Hezbollah" claimed that Hezbollah's large amounts of weapons allowed it to cope with Israel's broad attacks in Lebanon. According to the "sources," Hezbollah appointed replacements for the senior figures who were killed in the operational department led by Ibrahim Aqil. They also claimed that 1,500 of the organization's operatives had been taken out of action when Hezbollah's communications devices explosives, as they had been blinded or had lost a hand (Reuters, September 24, 2024)

⁴ For further information, see the August ITIC report, "[The Organizations Assisting Hezbollah in Combat Against Israel.](#)"

►A reporter for al-Mayadeen TV, which is affiliated with Hezbollah and the "resistance axis," claimed Hezbollah had attacked military bases in the Safed and Tiberias areas to damage IDF capabilities and exert pressure on the residents of eastern Israel. Referring to the launch of the missile which attacked Tel Aviv, he said the city had entered the circle of attacks, as had Haifa, adding that if Israel invaded Lebanon by ground, Hezbollah was capable of decimating its military forces (al-Mayadeen, September 25, 2024).

►"Official sources" told the Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar that the organization had been warned to close its "aid front" for the Gaza Strip and been exhorted not to enter a total war against Israel, but a "serious proposal" to stop the current escalation had not yet been received. According to the newspaper, there was a general feeling among Lebanese politicians that the international community wanted to give Israel time to achieve its military, political and security goals before moving to negotiations (al-Akhbar, September 25, 2024).

The Situation in Lebanon

Casualties

►According to the Lebanese ministry of health, more than 700 people have been killed since the beginning of Operation Northern Arrows, including "dozens of children and women." It was also reported that 558 of the deaths were recorded on September 23, 2024, the highest figure since the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990 (al-Mayadeen, September 23-26, 2024). According to Nasser Yassin, Lebanese minister of the environment, at least 1,247 people have been killed and 5,278 injured, with most of the victims reportedly "civilians" (al-'Ahed, September 25, 2024).

The displaced

►Following the IDF's warnings to residents to evacuate their homes in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley, there was a mass exodus, mainly to the north of the country and Syria. Nasser Yassin, Lebanese minister of the environment, said that at least 150,000 residents had left south Lebanon (al-'Ahed, September 25 2024). According to the UN, about 90,000 people have left their homes since September 20, 2024 (ABC News, September 25, 2024).

►According to reports, more than 11,000 Lebanese and about 10,000 Syrians emigrated from Lebanon to Syria (al-Arabiya, September 25, 2024). Many cars were seen entering Syria at one of the crossings on the Lebanon-Syria border, "because of the recent military developments in Lebanon" (al-Suwaydaa, September 24, 25, 2024).

► Bassam Mawlawi, Lebanese minister of the interior, said there were 70,100 displaced persons in 533 shelters throughout Lebanon. He said the ministry was in contact with all the district governors for updates on the numbers of displaced persons and their needs. He added that 13,500 Syrians had left Lebanon during the past three days and returned to their country (al-Nashra, September 26, 2024).



Convoys of vehicles from Lebanon near a border crossing in preparation for their entry into Syria (al-Suwaydaa September 24, 25, 2024)

► "One of the organizers" at the shelter for displaced persons in Iqlim al-Kharrub in Mount Lebanon, south of Beirut, said Hezbollah was active in the displaced persons' centers, along with other political parties. He said Hezbollah operatives distributed aid and rooms, but also prevented unauthorized access to the centers (al-Sharq al-Awsat, September 26, 2024).

► The mass flight of thousands of residents from south Lebanon, many of them Shi'ites, to other areas of the country where other religious denominations have a majority, has rekindled sectarian tensions in Lebanon:

- ◆ Esmahan Shakir said that they left al-Nabatieh Kafr Rumann in south Lebanon on Monday. They tried to rent a house in the mountains of Lebanon, but were asked to pay rents ranging from \$2,500 to \$3000, while in some cases they were required to pay six months in advance. She also stated that the brokers asked for \$500 to \$600. In the end, the family rented two bedrooms in Tabarja, north of Beirut, for \$1,200 a month (Ktaeb website, September 26, 2024).

- ◆ Videos were posted to the social networks of Sunnis who lived in Tripoli, the largest city in northern Lebanon, demanding that displaced Shi'ites from south Lebanon and

the Dahiye al-Janoubia remove photos of Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah members (X account of the Voice of Lebanon, September 25, 2024).



Lebanese Sunnis remove a sticker with a picture of a Hezbollah operative from the rear window of displaced Shi'ites from south Lebanon (Voice of Lebanon X account, September 25, 2024)

The Lebanese Government

- ▶Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, attended the annual United Nations General Assembly session, where he met with foreign leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, American Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Amos Hochstein the special envoy of the American administration. According to reports they discussed "efforts to stop the ongoing Israeli aggression in Lebanon and to reach a solution to end the regional conflict" (Lebanese prime minister office's X account, September 24-26, 2024).
- ▶Mikati participated in a UN Security Council ad hoc meeting and accused Israel of launching a "brutal" attack and of possibly invading Lebanon. He said he had come to New York to "find a real solution and put pressure on Israel to stop its aggression on all fronts." He claimed Lebanon was committed to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and expressed appreciation for the efforts of France and the United States to end the fighting (Lebanese prime minister office's Facebook page, September 26, 2024).
- ▶Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, said he was working with international bodies, including the United States, to curb the "latest Israeli escalation" against Lebanon. He noted that the efforts took into account the relationship between the Lebanese and the Gaza Strip fronts, and were based on past negotiations of Amos Hochstein, the American envoy. He claimed it was the only solution that could be implemented (al-Arabiya, September 25, 2024).
- ▶Saad al-Hariri, former prime minister of Lebanon, said that "all of us" had to protect the residents of south Lebanon, the Beqa'a and the Dahiye in Beirut. He said the security of the residents "prevails over all considerations" and that "national solidarity is a moral and

political obligation at this stage in Lebanon's history" (Saad al-Hariri's X account, September 24, 2024).

►The Christian Phalange Party stated that "Hezbollah's threat to use its military capability to defend south Lebanon collapsed within days," while Resolution 1701 had still managed to "defend Lebanon" since 2006. The party also reiterated its opposition to Hezbollah's fighting for the sake of the Gaza Strip (al-Nahar, September 25, 2024).

Criticism of Hezbollah on the Social Networks

►Social activists and ordinary citizens in Lebanon posted criticism of Hezbollah on the social media accusing Hezbollah of dragging Lebanon into a war and responsibility for the extensive destruction, along with ridicule of the damage to the organization's military capabilities:

- ◆ Raymond Hakim, an activist for the implementation of Resolution 1701, uploaded a notice to his X account (with about 105 thousand followers) accusing Hezbollah of "destroying my country to build the country of its masters [Iran]" (Raymond Hakim's X account, September 26, 2024).



Anti-Hezbollah notice (Raymond Hakim's X account, September 26, 2024)

- ◆ Sami al-Murshed, a Saudi Arabian who was previously a researcher and writer in international relations and opposes Hezbollah, posted a cartoon (probably prepared with AI), to his X account (with about 34,900 followers) of Nasrallah fleeing with all his worldly goods. The caption read, "The Satan's descendant flees the [battle] field" (Sami al-Murshed's X account, September 25, 2024).



**Cartoon of Nasrallah fleeing the battlefield
(Sami al-Murshed's X account, September 25, 2024)**

- ◆ Rita K., a Lebanese Christian who opposes Iran and Hezbollah, posted a picture to her X account (with about 2,182 followers) of a smiling Nasrallah with the caption, "He said, 'I will burn Israel' and in the end he burned Lebanon" (Rita_k's X account, September 23 2024).



Nasrallah with a caption reading, "He said, 'I will burn Israel' and in the end he burned Lebanon" (Rita_k's X account, September 23, 2024)