

Lebanon agrees to align with US against Iran, disarm Hezbollah and accept Israeli occupation

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24 July 2026

US President Donald Trump’s meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun at the White House forms part of a broader US–Saudi strategy to isolate Iran by eliminating its influence in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

Aoun’s visit—brokered by Saudi Arabia’s de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman—was aimed at securing assurances that Washington would pressure Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, increase funding for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), support reconstruction in the devastated south, and approve loans and aid to avert economic collapse.

It came just one week after newly installed Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi agreed with Trump on steps to disarm pro-Iranian militias by the end of September, the deadline for the withdrawal of all US forces.

Aoun’s meeting followed his signing of the US-brokered “agreement” with Israel on June 26, signalling Lebanon’s intention to end the state of war that has defined Lebanese–Israeli relations since 1948 and establish peaceful and diplomatic ties. Aoun aligned his government with Washington and Tel Aviv’s campaign to disarm Hezbollah—which, with its Shi’ite allies, forms one of Lebanon’s largest political blocs, the March 8 Alliance—and dismantle it as a political force.

Aoun has redefined Hezbollah—an organisation with significant popular support and close ties to Iran—as a hostile, non-national actor, aligning Lebanon with Israel’s ongoing assault on Lebanese communities. He has legitimised Israel’s indefinite occupation of southern Lebanon until the LAF can disarm Hezbollah, all under the banner of restoring Lebanese “sovereignty”.

Lebanon signed the agreement—giving Israel a green light to continue its attacks on Hezbollah—just days after Washington signed, and then abandoned, a Memorandum of Understanding with Tehran that had made an end to Israeli strikes on Lebanon a central condition.

Whether Hezbollah should relinquish its weapons before Israel withdraws remains the central political fault line between Lebanon’s rival blocs. It presages explosive consequences for a country of six million—many of them impoverished Palestinian and Syrian refugees deeply hostile to Israel—now trapped in the crosshairs of US imperialism’s drive to destroy Iran’s remaining regional influence, and of Israel’s expansionist ambitions.

The agreement imposes no obligation on Israel to halt military attacks, release prisoners, or enable the return of the 450,000 Lebanese still displaced from southern Lebanon. Hezbollah’s disarmament must be “verifiable”, confirmed “by a mutually agreed-upon third-party entity”—in practice, the United States, Israel’s principal backer. Only after Israel identifies and dismantles Hezbollah’s infrastructure will territory be transferred to LAF control.

Since the LAF is widely acknowledged to be no match for Hezbollah—and any attempt to forcibly disarm it would risk civil war—the agreement renders Lebanon a virtual US protectorate administered

through Israeli military power. It hands strategic initiative to Israel while prohibiting Lebanon from pursuing legal action against Tel Aviv in international fora for mass displacement, bombardment of civilian areas, and other war crimes.

Presented internationally as a step toward ending the fighting, the agreement is nothing of the sort. Two days after its signing, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir approved plans for further military operations “in accordance” with the ceasefire. Israel has continued its activities from outposts established on Lebanese territory. Hezbollah has largely refrained from responding, raising fears among Lebanese communities of a “Gaza scenario”—a permanent war conducted under the guise of a ceasefire.

Former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora said, “We are forced to deal with the Americans,” and warned that Lebanon faces a “bitter reality” because rejecting the agreement would lead to “something even more bitter”—by which he meant the bankruptcy of Lebanon’s financial elite.

As a token concession, the IDF will withdraw from two zones north of the Litani River, in the Ali al-Taher mountain range near Beaufort Castle, leaving the LAF to dismantle Hezbollah infrastructure there.

Hezbollah’s origins and its disarmament

Hezbollah (Party of God) emerged in the 1980s during Israel’s brutal occupation of southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000, an extension of Lebanon’s 15-year civil war—a proxy conflict shaped by competing regional and imperialist powers and Israel’s suppression of the Palestinians. Backed by Iran and the Assad regime in Syria, the bourgeois religio-nationalist movement drew support from impoverished Shi’ite and Palestinian communities devastated by decades of state corruption and the looting of Lebanon’s wealth by a handful of billionaires who have dominated the country since 1990.

The party promotes corporatism, paternalism—providing vital welfare services—and religious obscurantism as a counterweight to class struggle. Together with its Shi’ite and Palestinian allies, Hezbollah forms the largest bloc in Lebanon’s sectarian and fragmented political system and remains the principal obstacle to domination by the US and Gulf-aligned financial elite. As part of Iran’s “Axis of Resistance”—which includes Hamas, Shia militias in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen—it supports Palestinian factions in southern Lebanon and hosts a Hamas bureau in Dahiyeh, its stronghold in Beirut’s southern suburbs.

Hezbollah’s reactionary ideology offers no way forward for Lebanon’s working masses. Its rise was made possible by the collapse of secular

Arab nationalism and the suppression—by Stalinism and its ideological offshoots—of any genuine socialist alternative capable of mobilising the working class.

The June 26 agreement to disarm Hezbollah with Israel’s help marks a decisive break with Lebanon’s decades-long policy of recognising Hezbollah as the semi-official “resistance” to Israeli occupation and repression of the Palestinians, symbolised in the slogan “the people, the army and the resistance”. It confirms the announcement made last August by Prime Minister Nawaf Salam’s cabinet committing to Hezbollah’s disarmament—without which no financial aid or loans from the US, France, or the Gulf would be released to rescue Lebanon’s bankrupt economy. The agreement repudiates any notion that the state retains political independence or sovereignty.

Israel’s wars against the “Axis of Resistance” in Lebanon and Syria

The trilateral agreement follows decades of US-led political and military interference in Lebanon aimed at empowering right-wing, pro-US forces such as the Christian Phalange, Lebanese Forces, and the Sunni parties of the March 14 Alliance, at the expense of the pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel sentiments of Lebanon’s workers and peasants, more than 80 percent of whom live in poverty.

These efforts unfolded against the backdrop of Lebanon’s catastrophic economic collapse. In October 2019, after years of distress, mass protests erupted demanding the downfall of the entire post-1990 political order. The crisis—exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, the March 2020 sovereign default, and the Beirut port blast that killed 211 people and destroyed much of the northern city—plunged more than half the population into poverty. The World Bank called it one of the worst economic collapses in 150 years.

The political system soon followed. Lebanon was left without a functioning government for more than two years, caught in the escalating conflict pitting the US, Israel and the Gulf petromonarchs against Iran and its allies, including Syria. Washington intensified pressure on Iran, while Gulf states conditioned aid on excluding Hezbollah from government. Western institutions withheld the \$11 billion pledged in 2018 until Beirut implemented IMF-mandated free-market reforms.

Just days after launching its genocidal war on Gaza, Israel seized on Hezbollah’s symbolic rocket fire in support of the Palestinians to trigger a pre-planned, all-out war on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria, where Hezbollah had spent more than a decade helping Russia and Iran prop up Bashar al-Assad’s regime. Over the following year, Israel escalated dramatically. Airstrikes on Beirut killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and other senior officials, followed by synchronised explosions in pre-compromised pagers and cell phones and a ground invasion that left thousands wounded and displaced tens of thousands. The World Bank estimated Lebanon’s losses at \$8.5 billion, including \$3.5 billion in direct damage to buildings and infrastructure.

Yet despite its overwhelming military advantage, Israel could not eradicate Hezbollah as a fighting force. It was pushed into a ceasefire in November 2024 by the US, backed by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies, who sought to stabilise Lebanon, prevent a premature regional war with Iran, and create political space to restructure Lebanon ahead of Washington’s planned confrontation with Tehran. Israel rejected the ceasefire’s political logic, violating it more than 10,000 times even though Hezbollah did not fire a single rocket at Israel.

The war nonetheless achieved Washington’s political aims. Weakened by military losses and with reduced leverage—especially after the December 2024 collapse of the Assad regime, which Hezbollah supported

against Islamist militias financed, trained and armed by the CIA, Gulf states, Türkiye and Israel—Hezbollah withdrew its veto over the presidency. It accepted a parliamentary consensus electing Washington and Riyadh’s preferred candidate, army chief Joseph Aoun, in January 2025. This marked a major shift in Lebanese politics, long dominated by Hezbollah.

Aoun appointed Nawaf Salam, from a prominent Beirut family, to form a government. Salam’s international profile rested on his role at the International Court of Justice, where he presided over the interim ruling that Israel was plausibly committing genocide in Gaza—a ruling ignored by the major powers. In office, he embraced the US line, dismissing armed resistance and advocating peace and eventual normalisation with Israel. He tightened border controls with Syria while doing nothing to stop Israel’s repeated ceasefire violations.

Following the seizure of power by Ahmad al-Shara’a and his Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Syria, Israel expanded its operations, striking Hezbollah and regime sites and moving troops into and beyond the UN-monitored buffer zone in Syria. Israel established a chain of bases from Mount Hermon’s peak to the Yarmouk River on the Syrian-Jordanian border—a 70km line of control—cutting new roads linking these bases to the Golan Heights and Majdal Shams.

With both Lebanon and Syria neutralised, the US and Israel launched a 12-day war of aggression against Iran in June 2025, even as Washington and Tehran were engaged in negotiations.

In October 2025, Trump signed the Sharm el-Sheikh “peace agreement”, attended by Middle Eastern regimes and major powers. Designed to secure the return of hostages and free Israeli resources for a future war against Iran, it left Israel free to continue its assaults on the Palestinians—albeit at lower intensity—since it contained no enforcement mechanism. The agreement, whose subsequent phases included Trump’s plans for an imperialist protectorate trampling Palestinian rights, was bound up with efforts to forge an anti-Iranian axis and prepare for regime change in Tehran while rolling back Chinese and Russian influence in the region.

Within days of the US-Israel assault on Iran on February 28, the IDF declared war on Hezbollah, activating a blueprint prepared long before Hezbollah fired a token volley of rockets in response to Israel’s assassination of Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Israel’s bombardment and ground invasion levelled infrastructure and neighbourhoods across southern Lebanon, Beirut’s southern and central districts, and the Beka’a Valley. It left 4,300 dead, more than 12,000 wounded, and displaced more than a million people—a fifth of the population. Entire villages in the south were levelled.

The April 16 ceasefire was a dead letter: Israeli strikes continued and five Israeli divisions remained inside southern Lebanon. The United Nations Development Programme estimated \$1.38 billion in direct building damage in South Lebanon and \$365 million in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, excluding roads, bridges, electricity networks, water systems, telecommunications and other infrastructure.

Washington and Tel Aviv have different interests in Lebanon

Once again, Washington had to push Israel into agreeing to a ceasefire. US and Israeli interests diverge sharply in Lebanon: while Washington seeks to contain Hezbollah and maintain a minimally functioning Lebanese state to preserve regional stability, Tel Aviv seeks unconstrained military freedom and a permanently weakened, penetrable northern frontier—a de facto security zone under Israeli control in preparation for full incorporation into a Greater Israel. Washington views this as

destabilising and counterproductive to its wider regional strategy and specifically included a sentence in the agreement that states, “Israel further declares that it has no territorial ambitions”.

Netanyahu has attempted to justify Israel’s stance by claiming—absurdly and without evidence—in a Fox News interview that Christians in Lebanon had asked Israel to “annex” their villages to protect them from Hezbollah. This flies in the face of Israel’s record in Lebanon, where the IDF has damaged or destroyed Christian villages, churches, and religious sites, even filming soldiers desecrating Christian symbols. He went further, asserting that “the Druze, the Sunni Muslims and quite a few of the Shiite Muslims” also sought Israeli protection.

Israel’s far-right cabinet has repeatedly called for an all-out assault on Lebanon. National Security Minister Ben Gvir demanded that “all of Lebanon must burn” after four Israeli soldiers were killed in southern Lebanon, while Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich urged Israel to “open the gates of hell” on the country. They have openly advocated annexing southern Lebanon and establishing Israeli settlements, echoing the ambitions of early Zionist ideologues.

In March, three weeks into the war, Smotrich declared that “the Litani must be our new border with the state of Lebanon”, comparing it to Israel’s “Yellow Line” in Gaza and the buffer zone on Mount Hermon in Syria. In May, as Lebanese and Israeli officials prepared to meet in Washington to discuss a ceasefire, Ben Gvir revealed that Israel had a “settlement plan for Lebanon”.

Response to the trilateral agreement

Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz have insisted that Israeli troops will maintain an indefinite presence in southern Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza. Netanyahu boasted, “We dominate southern Lebanon, from the summit of the Beaufort, and we will remain as long as required in the security zone. We do not intend to withdraw from it.” He claimed the agreement was a “major blow” to Iran, saying that Israel, Lebanon, and the United States were telling Tehran, “This is none of your business”.

Katz echoed this, declaring that Israel opposed withdrawal “despite all the pressures that exist and those that are yet to come”. He warned Iran that if it attacked Israel “because of our activities in Lebanon, or for any other reason, we will strike it with full force”, adding that the IDF was prepared for a potential resumption of operations in Iran “even for a third time”.

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem denounced the agreement as “null and void”, calling it humiliating and a surrender of sovereignty. He vowed to continue armed resistance against Israel’s occupation of Lebanese soil and rejected provisions linking Israeli withdrawal to Hezbollah’s disarmament, warning that the agreement could ultimately lead to annexation of Lebanese territory. Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah warned that the government could not enforce the agreement “unless they go, with American support, to civil war”.

A spokesperson for the Lebanese Armed Forces stated that it was not bound by an arrangement it had neither participated in nor approved.



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