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**Security Council Update No. 3**  
**Rising Tensions in Lebanon and Surrounding Member States**

***Introduction***

Lebanon is a Member State made up of multiple religious sects, three of which hold a majority and maintain power in the government. This religious diversity, and often the discord that results from disagreements between factions of the religious and associated political parties, and extremist organizations, often makes the Member State a target for interference by external powers.<sup>1</sup> For example, the growing influence of Hezbollah, a Shi'a Muslim political party and militant group based in Lebanon, has continued to be a divisive factor in Lebanon, as well as for the international community.<sup>2</sup> Tension between Hezbollah and Sunni Muslims have risen in the last decade, leading to years of political instability in Lebanon that have been a catalyst for the Member State becoming a “proxy battleground” for the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia).<sup>3</sup> Further escalating matters, with the tumultuous power changes of the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and its role in supporting Iran, which directly supports Hezbollah, tension throughout the region and the complexity of the relationships between Member States continues to increase.

***History of the Situation Faced by Lebanon***

In 1943, Lebanon created a system of governance that would allow representation from the three major religious groups: Maronite Christians, Shi'a Muslims, and Sunni Muslims.<sup>4</sup> However, continued tensions between the religious sects caused the Lebanese Civil War, which decimated the Member State from 1975 to 1989.<sup>5</sup> These religious tensions were further exacerbated by external regional conflict between Shi'a-majority Iran and Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia, rivals for hegemonic power within the Middle East.<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to take power away from the Saudis, Iran sought to gain control over the Middle East by seeking to overthrow Israeli occupation.<sup>7</sup> Shi'a Muslims in Lebanon welcomed the help of Iran to overthrow the Israeli occupation and stop the influx of Sunni Palestinian refugees from Israel.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, by 1982, Iran had provided funding and training to a rising Shi'a political and militant group, Hezbollah.<sup>9</sup>

***Israel-Hezbollah Relations***

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<sup>1</sup> “Lebanon: Why the Country Is in Crisis.” BBC News. BBC, August 5, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53390108> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> “Lebanon: Why the Country Is in Crisis.”

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hezbollah?” Council on Foreign Relations, September 1, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Makdisi, Samir, and Richard Sadaka. *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*. Report. Edited by Collier Paul and Sambanis Nicholas. World Bank, 2005. 59-86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep02484.7>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Makdisi, Samir, and Richard Sadaka. *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*.

<sup>6</sup> Mabon, Simon. “Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Struggle for Supremacy in Lebanon and Bahrain,” London School of Economics and Political Science, June 20, 2018. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2018/06/20/saudi-arabia-iran-and-the-struggle-for-supremacy-in-lebanon-and-bahrain/>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Mabon, Simon. “Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Struggle for Supremacy in Lebanon and Bahrain.”

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hezbollah?” Council on Foreign Relations, September 1, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hezbollah?”

An increase of Palestinian refugees fleeing to Lebanon due to continued military confrontations between Palestine and Israel, and especially the Six-Day War of 1967, created a base for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon.<sup>10</sup> The PLO ran operations out of Lebanon, providing cover for civil raids against Northern Israel.<sup>11</sup> After years of attacks, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978.<sup>12</sup> Despite United Nations (UN) Security Council (SC) Resolution 425, which called on Israeli forces to immediately withdraw from Lebanon, fighting between the Israelis and PLO in Lebanon continued into the next decade.<sup>13</sup> Following an attempted PLO assassination of an Israeli ambassador in 1982, Israel again invaded southern Lebanon in retaliation.<sup>14</sup> The 1982 Lebanon War saw Israeli and Western militaries occupy the Lebanese capital Beirut and much of the southern border, with the intent of installing a Western-friendly Maronite Christian government.<sup>15</sup> Hezbollah engaged in guerilla warfare in southern Lebanon until Israel withdrew due to domestic criticism in 1985.<sup>16</sup> However, Hezbollah continued to attack Israel utilizing rocket launches, suicide attacks, and hostage situations.<sup>17</sup> By 1992, Hezbollah had become a major political party within Lebanon, running on anti-Israel platforms.<sup>18</sup>

Tensions between Israel and Hezbollah erupted in 2006.<sup>19</sup> Hezbollah launched a cross-border raid into Israel, to which Israel responded with airstrikes on Lebanese civilian targets and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon.<sup>20</sup> The Thirty-Four-Day Lebanon War caused the SC to increase the length of the peacekeeping mandate in the region to end the hostilities.<sup>21</sup> Undeterred by the actions of the SC, in 2009, Hezbollah released a new manifesto detailing the organization's commitment to Israel's destruction.<sup>22</sup> To this day, Hezbollah continues to carry out rocket attacks and ambushes on Israeli civilians and military patrols, occasionally clashing with UN peacekeepers.<sup>23</sup>

### *Israel-Syria Relations*

As a supporter of Iran, Syria has a tumultuous relationship with Hezbollah, and as a result, Lebanon.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the 1990's, peace negotiations between Syria and Israel led to several armed protests within Lebanon.<sup>25</sup> Matters escalated between the Member States when the attempts at peace failed, which led to a stronger coalition between Syria and Hezbollah as Bashir al-Assad assumed the Syrian presidency in 2000.<sup>26</sup> Under this new partnership, Assad worked with Hezbollah to fight against accused Israeli occupation in Lebanon.<sup>27</sup> For example, in 2005, Hezbollah

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<sup>10</sup> JustVision. "1982 Lebanon War," Accessed January 22, 2021. <https://justvision.org/glossary/1982-lebanon-war>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> "Jun 1979 - Israeli Invasion of Southern Lebanon, March 1978 -Deployment of UN Peace-keeping Force -Israeli Withdrawal," Keesing's Record of World Events, vol. 25, June 1979. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/3994-1979-06-KS-A-AMS.pdf> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> "Jun 1979 - Israeli Invasion of Southern Lebanon..."

<sup>13</sup> "Jun 1979 - Israeli Invasion of Southern Lebanon..."

<sup>14</sup> JustVision. "1982 Lebanon War," Accessed January 22, 2021. <https://justvision.org/glossary/1982-lebanon-war>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> JustVision. "1982 Lebanon War."

<sup>16</sup> JustVision. "1982 Lebanon War."

<sup>17</sup> Mapping Militant Organizations. "Hezbollah." <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/hezbollah> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Mapping Militant Organizations. "Hezbollah."

<sup>19</sup> Marcus, Raphael D. "Chapter 4. The Erosion of Deterrence, the 2006 War, Amd the Dahiya Doctrine (2000-2017)." In *Israel's Long War with Hezbollah: Military Innovations and Adaptation Under Fire*, 90–112. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Marcus, Raphael D. "Chapter 4. The Erosion of Deterrence, the 2006 War, Amd the Dahiya Doctrine (2000-2017)." In *Israel's Long War with Hezbollah*.

<sup>21</sup> Marcus, Raphael D. "Chapter 4. The Erosion of Deterrence, the 2006 War, Amd the Dahiya Doctrine (2000-2017)." In *Israel's Long War with Hezbollah*.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, Kali. "What Is Hezbollah?" Council on Foreign Relations, September 1, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Marcus, Raphael D. "Chapter 4. The Erosion of Deterrence, the 2006 War, Amd the Dahiya Doctrine (2000-2017)." In *Israel's Long War with Hezbollah*.

<sup>24</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship," Carnegie Middle East Center, March 29, 2019. <https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/29/power-points-defining-syria-hezbollah-relationship-pub-78730>.

<sup>25</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

<sup>26</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

<sup>27</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

and Syria were accused by the United Nations (UN) of assassinating an anti-Syria Lebanese Prime Minister.<sup>28</sup> Assad withdrew troops from Beirut amid anti-Syria protests, leaving Hezbollah the main decision-maker regarding the Syria-Hezbollah-Iran alliance.<sup>29</sup> But in 2009, Saudi Arabia sponsored a reconciliation between the Assad regime and the Lebanese government, jumpstarted by the Syrian Civil War.<sup>30</sup> As a result, Hezbollah and Iran played key roles in keeping Assad in power as militant groups overtook Syrian territory.<sup>31</sup>

### *United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL)*

In response to the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the SC passed S/RES/425(1978) and S/RES/426(1978), creating the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL).<sup>32</sup> The initial goals of UNIFIL were to confirm Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and assist the Lebanese government to regain authority over the state.<sup>33</sup> Since its creation, the UNIFIL mandate has been updated twice: once in response to the 1982 Israeli invasion and another after the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.<sup>34</sup> The 2006 Lebanon War caused the SC to expand UNIFIL's mission to include: monitoring cessation of hostilities, accompanying the Lebanese Armed Forces in south Lebanon, and aid in humanitarian relief.<sup>35</sup> UNIFIL's mandate is renewed by the SC every year at the request of the Lebanese government and was last renewed on August 28, 2020.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Recent Developments***

Tension has increased recently between Israel and Lebanon, after the discovery of underground tunnels stretching across the border, allegedly created by Hezbollah.<sup>37</sup> Operation Northern Shield was created in late 2018 as a response, and UNIFIL determined that two of the discovered tunnels violated the 2006 cease-fire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel.<sup>38</sup> Lines of communication remain tense between Hezbollah and Israel, and in August 2020, Israel launched air strikes on Hezbollah observation posts in response to shots fired from the posts on Israeli soldiers.<sup>39</sup> Further, Hezbollah soldiers are known to frequently shoot down Israeli drones that cross the Israel/Lebanon border.<sup>40</sup> Lebanon recurrently files complaints with the UN against Israel regarding drones and jets that are sent over the border.<sup>41</sup>

Hezbollah has been accused of numerous attacks against Israelis across the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. These attacks include the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy and 1994 bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as well as the most recent attack on a bus of Israeli tourists in

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<sup>28</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

<sup>29</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

<sup>30</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

<sup>31</sup> Ali, Mohanad Hage. "Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship."

<sup>32</sup> UN Security Council. "Resolution 425 (1978)." UN, March 19, 1978. <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/71622>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. "UNIFIL Mandate," December 2, 2019. <https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-mandate>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping. "UNIFIL," December 2020. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unifil>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. "UNIFIL Mandate," December 2, 2019. <https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-mandate>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. "Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for One Year, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2539 (2020)," August 28, 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14289.doc.htm>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>37</sup> "Political Instability in Lebanon | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, 2020. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>38</sup> "Political Instability in Lebanon | Global Conflict Tracker."

<sup>39</sup> Al Jazeera. "Israel Launches Air Attacks at Hezbollah Posts on Lebanon Border." Lebanon|Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, August 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/26/israel-launches-air-attacks-at-hezbollah-posts-on-lebanon-border>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>40</sup> Staff, Reuters. "Missile Fired at Israeli Drone over South Lebanon." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, February 3, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-israel-drone-idUSKBN2A3218> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>41</sup> Staff, Reuters. "Missile Fired at Israeli Drone over South Lebanon."

Bulgaria in 2012.<sup>42</sup> While Iran has been the primary supporter of Hezbollah, there is a strong support-system in Latin America that aids in funds and operations.<sup>43</sup> Hezbollah has been named as the “world’s most heavily armed non-state actor” according to a study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.<sup>44</sup> Israel has repeatedly expressed concerns over Hezbollah’s alleged weapon stockpiles and of the dangers the group poses for the international Jewish community and the citizens of Lebanon.<sup>45</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

Ultimately, the situation in Lebanon is incredibly complex and derives from a number of differing tensions. Religious tensions within the Member State are exacerbated by outside influence and interference, often leaving Lebanon to be a pawn of otherwise confrontational or warring factions. This has only been exacerbated by the role of Hezbollah in the region, as well as its expanded influence across the globe. As Lebanon’s government struggles to placate the various religious sects represented across the government, the tensions between Hezbollah and Israel continue to grow.<sup>46</sup> Attacks from both sides become more frequent along the land border and at sea, and it is feared that any attack could lead to a number of civilian fatalities between the two and their allies.<sup>47</sup> Hezbollah’s growing influence within the Lebanese government has led to a great divide amongst Lebanese people based on their religious beliefs, and continues to create concerns over tensions between Lebanon and its surrounding Member States.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “Hezbollah.” Anti-Defamation League, 2020. <https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/hezbollah>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>43</sup> Linthicum, Kate. “Could Iran - and Hezbollah - Strike in Latin America?” LA Times. Los Angeles Times, January 10, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-01-10/the-trump-administration-is-warning-that-hezbollah-could-strike-in-latin-america> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Shaikh, Shaan, and Ian Williams. “Hezbollah's Missiles and Rockets.” Hezbollah's Missiles and Rockets . Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 5, 2018. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hezbollahs-missiles-and-rockets> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Wainer, David, and Dana Khraiche. “Netanyahu Tells UN Hezbollah Has Missile Plant Near Gas Company.” Bloomberg.com. Bloomberg, September 29, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-29/netanyahu-tells-un-hezbollah-has-missile-plant-near-gas-company> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> Schweikle, Sina. “Lebanese Divided over Hopes for Wider Peace with Israel: DW: 21.10.2020.” Lebanese divided over hopes for wider peace with Israel. Deutsche Welle, October 21, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/lebanon-israel-relationships-beirut/a-55345009>. (Accessed March 9, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Schweikle, Sina. “Lebanese Divided over Hopes for Wider Peace with Israel: DW: 21.10.2020.”

<sup>48</sup> “Political Instability in Lebanon | Global Conflict Tracker.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, 2020. (Accessed March 9, 2021).