

Decisive Test for Lebanon Amid Foreign Pressure to Disarm Hezbollah



A Lebanese army vehicle drives in Khiam near the border in southern Lebanon.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon’s upcoming cabinet session on weapons regulation is shaping up to be a flash-point, with ministers from the Amal Movement and Hezbollah expected to attend but voicing firm opposition to any fixed deadlines for enforcing the government’s plan.

The cabinet is scheduled to convene on Friday, at 3 p.m. at the Presidential Palace in Baabda.

Hezbollah sources told Al-Manar that rigid timelines risk undermining cooperation, particularly in southern Lebanon near the Litani River, a sensitive area facing persistent Israeli threats.

The sources also warned Prime Minister Nawaf Salam against pursuing policies that could destabilize the country, cautioning that confrontational moves risk national ruin de-

spite advice from local and regional actors to avoid escalation.

Hezbollah, long regarded as Lebanon’s most effective force against Israeli occupation and aggression, remains pivotal in defending Lebanese sovereignty amid a fragile state security apparatus.

Hezbollah’s armed presence is widely seen within Lebanon as a crucial deterrent against ongoing

Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty. Israel’s occupation and repeated airstrikes, particularly in the south, have intensified fears of renewed conflict.

Against this backdrop, Hezbollah’s military capabilities are viewed by many as Lebanon’s last credible shield, compensating for the state’s limited ability to enforce its sovereignty.

The cabinet is expected to review a weapons control strategy that aims to place arms under state authority, but political divisions run deep. Hezbollah and its allies have reiterated their refusal to disarm, warning that such measures threaten national stability and security. The party’s leadership insists that disarmament is not just a political issue but a matter of protecting Lebanon from external aggression.

As Lebanon grapples with a prolonged economic crisis and regional instability, the coming cabinet session could determine the balance between state sovereignty and the resistance’s role in countering Israel’s expansionist ambitions.

With Hezbollah’s resistance seen as a bulwark against occupation, any move to disarm the group risks undermining Lebanon’s defense in an increasingly volatile region.

‘Amazing’: Trump Says Israel Has Lost Grip on U.S. Congress

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump has said Israel has lost its once-dominant influence over the U.S. Congress, calling the shift “amazing” and expressing surprise at the rapid erosion of its political clout.

Speaking to right-wing outlet Daily Caller, Trump said Israel had previously wielded unmatched lobbying power on Capitol Hill, describing its influence as stronger than any country, corporation, or interest group he had seen.

“They had total control over Congress, and now they don’t,” Trump said. “I’m a little surprised to see that.”

Trump’s remarks reflect a broader shift in U.S. political attitudes toward Israel, as public and congressional criticism of the occupying regime’s military

atrocities in Gaza continues to grow.

While his administration was one of the most overtly pro-Israel in recent history, even Trump acknowledged growing discontent, particularly among younger voters and within his own Republican base.

A recent Quinnipiac University poll found that 60% of Americans now oppose sending additional military aid to Israel—marking the highest level of opposition recorded since the poll began tracking the issue in November 2023. Only 32% support continued arms transfers.

The sentiment was particularly pronounced among Democrats (75% opposed) and Independents (66% opposed), while Republican support, though still a majority, has declined to 56%.

Critics argue that U.S. support for Israel has undercut American foreign policy credibility and weakened the “America First” agenda Trump has long championed.

Far-right lawmakers like Marjorie Taylor Greene and conservative commentators such as Tucker Carlson have openly questioned the billions of dollars in U.S. aid sent to support Israel’s ongoing assault on Gaza, which human rights groups have described as collective punishment and potentially genocidal in scope.

Public sympathy for Palestinians has also grown. In the same poll, more Americans expressed support for Palestinians (37%) than for Israelis (36%), with 27% expressing no preference. This represents a dramatic shift from

earlier decades when support for Israel among U.S. voters was overwhelmingly dominant.

Israel’s continued occupation, settlement expansion, and the devastating impact of its military invasions on Gaza’s civilian population have drawn increasing scrutiny, particularly among younger voters, progressives, and international observers. Humanitarian groups have repeatedly warned of mass displacement, widespread civilian casualties, and the collapse of essential infrastructure in Gaza.

While Israel remains a key U.S. ally, the growing skepticism in Congress and among the public may signal a recalibration of American foreign policy in the region—one where unconditional support for Israel is no longer politically unassailable.

Israeli Forces Raid Syrian Border Town, Kidnap Seven Civilians

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Israeli forces raided the Syrian border town of Jbata al-Khashab in Quneitra province, kidnapping seven civilians, Syrian media reported Wednesday.

The individuals were taken to an undisclosed location as Israeli troops established a checkpoint and conducted house searches,

with drones reportedly monitoring the area.

The raid occurred within the disengagement zone of the occupied Golan Heights, a region of long-standing tension between Israel and Syria. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military regarding the aggression.

According to the so-called Syr-

ian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), Israel has carried out over 95 attacks on Syrian territory since the start of 2025. These include 84 airstrikes and 11 ground invasions targeting approximately 135 locations, such as weapons depots, military headquarters, command centers, and vehicles. The strikes have resulted in at least 61 fatalities.

The latest raid followed reports of Israeli shelling east of the town of Brega in southern Quneitra on Tuesday night, targeting the Al-Tawahin Company site, which has been used by Syrian regime forces. The shelling coincided with explosions heard in the occupied Golan Heights, attributed to Israeli military training exercises.

Kuwait Scrambles Major Project to Combat Power Crisis

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) – Kuwait has opened bids for the first phase of the 1.8 gigawatt Al Khairan power and water project, aimed at addressing the country’s growing power shortages, the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) said.

The Al Khairan Phase 1 Independent Water and Power Producer (IWPP) project will also produce 125 million imperial gallons of water per day, KAPP said, as Kuwait grapples with increasing electricity demand driven by rapid population growth, urban expansion, rising temperatures, and maintenance delays at existing plants.

Pre-qualified international consortia invited to submit bids include a group led by Abu Dhabi National Energy Company (TAQA), another led by Saudi Arabia’s ACWA Power, and a third led by China Power International Holding. Other qualified companies involved are Nebras Power and Sumitomo Corporation.

The project will be developed under a public-private partnership (PPP) model involving the financing, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and eventual transfer of the facility, which will be located about 100 kilometers south of Kuwait City along the Gulf coast.

The winning bidder will establish a project company to sign a 25-year agreement to sell power and water to the Kuwaiti government, KAPP said.

Under the PPP framework, the strategic partner—whether Kuwaiti, foreign, or a consortium—will hold between 26% and 44% of the company’s shares. Kuwaiti citizens will be offered a 50% stake, with the remainder retained by the government.

Separately, in August, KAPP signed contracts worth over \$3.27 billion with ACWA Power and Gulf Investment for the development of Al-Zour North phases 2 and 3.

Netanyahu... (Continued From Page One)

naval retaliation against Western interests.

Inside Israeli settlements, internal dissent clouds plans for a large-scale invasion of Gaza City. Israeli reservists, exhausted after more than 280 days of fighting since October 2023, are increasingly refusing to report for duty amid mistrust of Netanyahu’s regime and skepticism about the offensive’s aims.

Haaretz reported hundreds of reservists conflicted over concerns for Israeli captives held by Hamas and doubting regime claims the invasion will secure their release. “No one can tell me any fairy tales after 280 days of fighting,” said one reservist. “The conquest of Gaza has nothing to do with bringing back the hostages.”

Senior Israeli officials acknowledged a “crisis of trust” between the cabinet and military leadership. Commanders have held discussions with troops to address fears ahead of the invasion. Israeli army chief Eyal Zamir reportedly urged Netanyahu to reconsider, warning the assault could endanger hostages and soldiers.

Reservists have issued statements vowing refusal to obey orders, calling the operation illegal and politically motivated. “This is a political, cynical and dangerous step,” said reservist Ron Feiner. Another commander accused Netanyahu of prolonging the war for political survival.

The psychological toll on Israeli troops is mounting, with over 10,000 soldiers reportedly suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder since the conflict’s start. To compensate for shortages, the military has recruited university students through informal channels.

Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and former war minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes in Gaza. Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

Protests erupted near Netanyahu’s Al-Quds residence, with demonstrators setting fires and demanding a prisoner exchange with Hamas. Israeli police arrested activists protesting outside the main library building amid widespread anti-regime demonstrations.

Dozens of captives have died amid bombardment and worsening siege conditions, while international calls for a ceasefire and humanitarian relief have largely been ignored.

Despite UN Security Council appeals and International Court of Justice directives urging protection of civilians and prevention of genocide, Israeli forces continue a devastating assault that has pushed Gaza toward collapse.

Invasion... (Continued From Page One)

Aid flows remain woefully inadequate. Bulk food items like eggs, dairy, and fruits are largely banned, while some aid is looted or withheld for military control.

UN agencies warn of long-term impacts if malnutrition remains unchecked. WHO representatives emphasize the potential irreversible harm to children’s health and development, including stunting and immune suppression.

Amid global pressure, figures in Washington have demanded a surge in humanitarian aid, especially baby formula, to save lives. Still, the reality in Gaza remains grim: nearly two million people live under siege, with no end in sight. Even basic staples like wheat flour have become scarce luxuries.

Rescue... (Continued From Page One)

The Taliban government deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat told AFP areas that had taken days to reach had been finally accessed.

“We cannot determine the date for finishing the operation in all areas as the area is very mountainous and it is very difficult to reach every area.”

More than 12,000 people have been directly affected by the earthquake, according to ActionAid, noting women and girls were particularly vulnerable in emergencies as they face steep restrictions under the Taliban authorities.

Residents of Jalalabad, the nearest city to the quake epicenter donated money and goods such as blankets to be delivered to those impacted by the quake.

“I am a simple laborer and I came here to help the earthquake victims because I felt very sad for them,” said resident Muhammad Rahman. “If I could do more, I would help even more, but I helped with what I had.”

Around 85 percent of the Afghan population lives on less than one dollar a day, according to the United Nations.

The Taliban government’s defense ministry said it organized 155 helicopter flights to evacuate around 2,000 injured and their relatives to regional hospitals.

“Urgent humanitarian aid is needed, and forcing Afghans to return will only deepen the crisis,” the Norwegian Refugee Council said on X.

This is the third major earthquake since

the Taliban took power in 2021, but there are even fewer resources for the cash-strapped government’s response after the United States slashed assistance to the country when President Donald Trump took office in January.

Even before the earthquake, the United Nations estimated it had obtained less than a third of the funding required for operations countrywide.

Western Herat province was devastated in October 2023 by a 6.3-magnitude earthquake, which killed more than 1,500 people and damaged or destroyed more than 63,000 homes.

And a 5.9-magnitude quake struck the eastern province of Paktika in June 2022, killing more than 1,000 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless.

Imam ... (Continued From Page One)

Judge Hassan Shami, secretary of the official committee investigating the case, also participated in the program to clarify outstanding questions.

However, the family expressed concern over a segment of the documentary in which the BBC used artificial intelligence (AI) to compare a blurry hospital image from western Tripoli in 2011 with photographs of Imam Sadr. The documentary suggested the image might be of the missing cleric.

The family said this comparison was made without their knowledge or consent. “From the very first moment we saw the footage, we were astonished,” the statement said, pointing to clear differences in facial structure, hair color, and other features that they said ruled out the image as being that of Imam Sadr.

To address further questions, Judge Shami, representing both the family and the official committee, was about to appear on BBC Arabic to provide additional clarifications.

Imam Musa al-Sadr and his two companions vanished after traveling to Libya on August 31, 1978. Their fate remains unknown.

Pezeshkian... (Continued From Page 2)

The summit’s final communiqué condemned what it described as the “unprovoked war” imposed on Iran by Israel and the United States in June, calling it a “flagrant violation” of international law and the UN Charter. The statement stressed the negative impact of such aggression on regional and global security.

Members of the SCO also emphasized the need for permanent guarantees for nuclear safety during armed conflict and reaffirmed the binding nature of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

The communiqué warned that attempts to reinterpret the resolution risk undermining the credibility of the Security Council, referring to European efforts to reinstate sanctions on Iran when the resolution expires in October.

The summit also acknowledged Iranian initiatives such as the establishment of a “Strategic Security Studies Center,” a taskforce to ensure the supply of essential medicines and equipment, cooperation on new technologies, and the formation of an industrial insurance union.

On the sidelines of the summit, Pezeshkian held bilateral talks with key leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, who described Iran as a strategic partner. Xi reaffirmed China’s support for Iran’s right to peaceful nuclear energy and called for expanded cooperation, particularly in transportation and connectivity.

China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Beijing places “paramount importance” on relations with Iran and stands ready to deepen bilateral cooperation.

“China always places its relations with Iran high on its diplomatic agenda in the Middle East,” Mao said on social media platform X. “China stands ready to work with Iran to carry forward the friendship, deepen mutual trust, and strengthen cooperation in various areas.”

Mao added that China will continue its efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. “China will continue to uphold justice, work for a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue that accommodates the legitimate concerns of all parties, and make continued efforts for realizing lasting peace in the Middle East,” she said.

Majlis... (Continued From Page 2)

other defense sectors, in accordance with the Seventh Development Plan.

Welfare of Armed Forces Personnel: Improving the living conditions of active and retired military personnel who play a central role in national defense.

Funding and Resources: Ensuring timely and full provision of resources and budget allocations to reinforce the country’s defense infrastructure.

The statement concluded by reaffirming Parliament’s full support for the Armed Forces and the government in pursuing advanced defense and military capabilities.