

Roundtable: Lebanon in the Eye of Storm: War, Diplomacy, and State Survival

In early March 2026, the conflict between the U.S., Israel, and Iran escalated significantly. One of the consequences was the destabilization of the broader Middle East region. **Fighting between Israel and Hezbollah intensified once again** in southern Lebanon.

Clashes in the south of the country resumed on March 2, 2026. The immediate cause was the involvement of the Lebanese Hezbollah in the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war against Iran. Hezbollah, which has long been supported by Iran, launched rocket and drone attacks against northern Israel in support of its ally. Israel responded with extensive airstrikes targeting Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley, and the outskirts of Beirut.

Throughout March, the conflict continued to expand, and **the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) also launched ground operations in southern Lebanon** to push Hezbollah forces away from the border and prevent further rocket attacks against northern Israel, and **in order to create a buffer zone (called “Yellow Line”)**.

The fighting had severe humanitarian consequences. Thousands of people lost their lives, and more than one million residents were forced to leave their homes. Numerous towns and villages in the south of the country suffered extensive damage, while many civilians sought refuge in safer parts of Lebanon. **Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced during the very first week of the conflict.** According to the United Nations, approximately 700,000 residents of southern Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley, and Beirut’s southern suburbs had fled their homes by early March. **By the end of May 2026, the total number of displaced persons was estimated to exceed 1.2 million.**



Fig 1: Israeli army's attack in southern Lebanon during March 13-24, Source: Anadolu Agency

Hezbollah Attacks in Israel and Lebanon

Between May 30, 2026 at 2:00 PM ET and May 31, 2026 at 2:00 PM ET

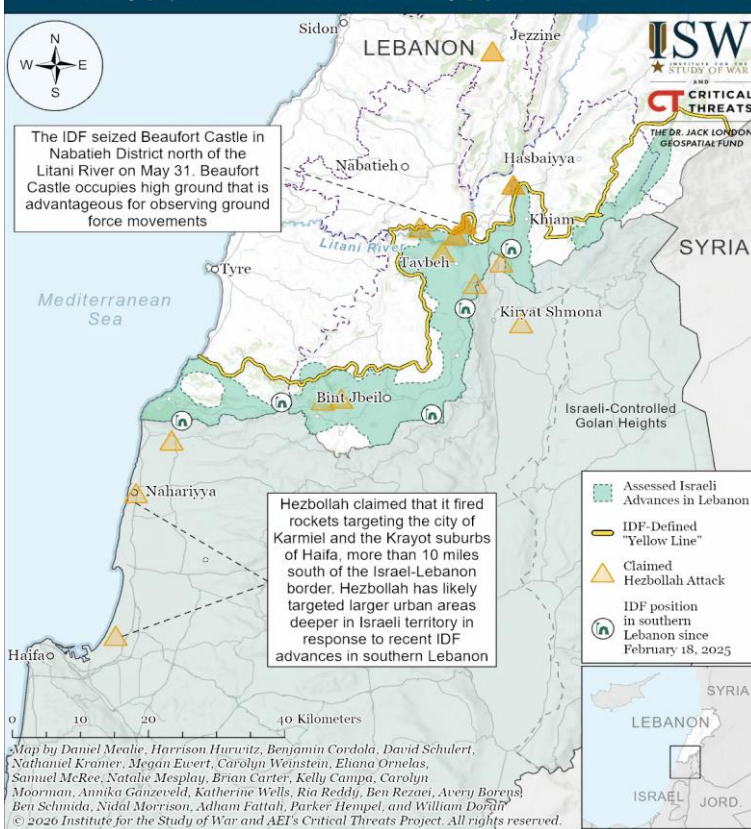


Fig 2: Hezbollah Attacks in Israel and Lebanon

Source: ISW

Hezbollah has expanded the scope of its attacks on northern Israel by targeting larger urban areas deeper inside Israeli territory, likely in response to recent IDF advances in southern Lebanon.

On May 31, 2026, the **IDF took control of Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon**. This medieval fortress is located on a strategically important hilltop overlooking the Litani River and provides commanding views of large areas of southern Lebanon as well as northern Israel. Due to its location, it enables effective monitoring of enemy movements, control of key transportation routes, and the conduct of military operations in the surrounding area. **The capture of Beaufort Castle therefore represented not only a tactical success for the Israeli military but also a significant symbolic achievement**, as Israel had previously held the fortress during its presence in southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000. The seizure of the castle was widely viewed as part of Israel's effort to weaken Hezbollah's military capabilities and strengthen security along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

Therefore, the conflict remains part of the broader regional confrontation between Israel and Iran and represented one of the most serious security crises in the Middle East in 2026.