



Lebanese Government's Decision to Disarm Hezbollah and the Realities on the Ground

Back in early August, the Lebanese government voted to endorse a U.S.-backed plan outlining a four-phase roadmap and set of objectives which seeks the disarmament of Hezbollah by the end of the year in addition to a cessation of Israeli military attacks and a withdrawal of its troops from southern Lebanon. The decision has called on the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to put together a detailed plan for this that will then be presented to the government for expected approval in either late August or early September. While this process unfolds, there are some key factors that will ultimately determine whether or not the plan is successfully implemented. One of these is the reality of the situation on the ground in Lebanon, and the importance of preventing external political actors from undermining the Lebanese government's attempts at state building and stabilization. Analysts have pointed to continued Israeli aggression as having a harmful impact on the prospect of carrying out the plan, and it remains to be seen if this can be curtailed by mediating parties such as the United States.

After meeting with Lebanese officials earlier this week, U.S. Special Envoy Tom Barrack himself emphasized the need for Israel to comply with the stipulations laid out in the plan for it to have any chance of success moving forward. To date, Israeli forces have not only failed to fully withdraw from southern Lebanon – something which was supposed to occur as a part of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah – but on top of this, they have also been carrying out near-daily violations of the truce and have continued these attacks on Lebanon even in the weeks since the early August Lebanese government's approval of the disarmament plan. Experts have contended that Hezbollah will likely insist on not agreeing to hand over its arms unless Israel stops launching attacks and withdraws from illegally occupied Lebanese territories. However, if Israel was to do so, there is strong reason to believe that Hezbollah would be willing to consider merging its weaponry into the Lebanese state's control. Thus, Israel is viewed as the biggest obstacle to potential implementation of the plan, and there is a need to above all put an end to Israeli aggression and violations of Lebanese sovereignty for anything else to take place thereafter.

Lebanese government officials have highlighted the necessity of this, imploring the United States to fulfill its responsibility in pressuring Israel to halt its hostilities and encroachments. Doing so would create stable domestic conditions that allow the Lebanese government to deal with Hezbollah as should be the case: as a matter of internal affairs and integration. Lebanon's stability and the legitimacy of its new government – both locally and to the outside world – must be the issue of first and utmost importance if any multi-phased disarmament plan is to have a chance of successful implementation. This requires forcing Israel to end its illegal occupation of sovereign Lebanese territory as well as ceasing attacks and attempts to undermine Lebanon's state building and reconstruction in order to truly propel the process to move forward. As many have drawn attention to, the United States has the means and the opportunity to play a positive role in bringing this about.

The most effective way to try to build a stable Lebanese state would be to put an end to destructive external interference from Israel and give the new government the ability to bolster its legitimacy. This could be aided by efforts to support the economic reconstruction of the country through the offering of tangible incentives as it navigates the current nascent political stage. Chiefly, it is critical that U.S. officials use their leverage over Israel to compel its adherence to the needed circumstances on the ground in southern Lebanon which would give the

Hezbollah disarmament plan the greatest likelihood of being implemented. On this note, there have been recent reports suggesting that Trump administration officials are discussing steps with the Israeli government that the latter should take given the Lebanese government's ongoing efforts – including a step-by-step Israeli withdrawal from its five positions in southern Lebanon – but whether or not these actually come to fruition is yet to be determined.