

## MEIRSS

### LEBANON WEEKLY BRIEF

28 September - 4 October 2026

#### ABSTRACT

*The week of 28 September to 4 October 2026 was defined by the gap between Lebanon's push to operationalize state authority and the security and economic constraints limiting it. In Washington, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam pressed for reciprocal implementation of the Lebanon-Israel framework, including a timetable, verification mechanism, Israeli withdrawal and exclusive state control of weapons. Meetings with the U.S. Treasury, World Bank and IMF linked this security agenda to banking reform, reconstruction financing and action against Iranian and Hezbollah financial networks. In the south, Israeli strikes, demolitions and ground activity continued throughout the week while Salam announced 23 reconstruction tenders during a visit to Nabatieh. The Syria-Hezbollah file also sharpened: Damascus announced an alleged Hezbollah-linked cell in Daraa, Hezbollah denied the accusation, Reuters reported disputed secret contacts in Turkey, and the Lebanese Army seized about 245 kilograms of TNT being smuggled from Syria. Domestically, Cabinet approved the 2027 draft budget and higher transport allowances as IMF-linked banking reforms remained contested. Overall, institutional activity advanced, but the security environment remained unstable.*

## PART I | WASHINGTON AND THE FRAMEWORK: FROM DIPLOMACY TO IMPLEMENTATION

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*U.S. diplomacy, financial pressure and Lebanon political coordination, 28 September-4 October 2026*

### DEVELOPMENTS

Prime Minister Nawaf Salam's Washington visit converted the sovereignty language used at the United Nations into a more specific implementation agenda. The central question was no longer simply whether Lebanon supports Israeli withdrawal and exclusive state control of weapons, but how the two tracks are sequenced, verified and enforced, and how external financial and security support can reinforce state capacity.

- Salam-Rubio meeting, 28 September - Salam called for activation of the tripartite framework through reciprocity and phased implementation. The Lebanese position linked full Israeli withdrawal, restoration of sovereignty and exclusive state control of weapons, and subsequently clarified that Beirut was asking for a clear timetable and a credible verification mechanism so that withdrawal and the extension of state authority advance in parallel. The U.S. readout reaffirmed support for the framework and for a sovereign Lebanese state free from Hezbollah and Iranian influence.
- Correction of a fabricated meeting record, 29 September - After Lebanese media circulated statements purportedly taken from a Salam-Rubio meeting record, the Prime Minister's media office said the material was fabricated. It restated the officially confirmed points: reciprocity, phased implementation, a timetable, Israeli withdrawal, extension of state authority, weapons confined to the state and a reliable verification mechanism. This clarification is important because it sets the evidentiary boundary for reporting on the Washington talks.
- Treasury track, 28 September - Salam and Finance Minister Yassine Jaber met U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. The Lebanese side emphasized financial-sector reform, anti-money-laundering measures and reducing reliance on a cash economy. The U.S. Treasury said Bessent urged Lebanon to take proactive steps to disrupt Iranian and Hezbollah financial networks and stressed the importance of financial reforms that restore confidence in the banking system. The meeting placed financial compliance and the Hezbollah file inside the same U.S. policy framework.
- World Bank and reconstruction financing, 28 September - Salam met World Bank Group President Ajay Banga and IFC President Makhtar Diop to discuss reform, recovery and reconstruction, including energy, water, infrastructure, digital transformation, regional connectivity and social protection. The government asked for expanded financing for priority projects, reinforcing the link between institutional reform and the resources required for reconstruction.

- IMF negotiations, 28-29 September - Finance Minister Yassine Jaber said Lebanon was seeking a new staff-level agreement with the IMF, while acknowledging that a full programme still depends on resolving the distribution of financial-sector losses. Salam and Jaber then met IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on 29 September. The two sides agreed that an IMF delegation would return to Lebanon after the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings to resume negotiations.
- Aoun and Berri meet U.S. lawmakers, 29 September - President Joseph Aoun and Speaker Nabih Berri separately received U.S. Representatives Darin LaHood and Josh Gottheimer in Beirut. Both pressed Washington to use its leverage to secure Israeli compliance with the framework and an end to attacks. Aoun also stressed the need to strengthen the Lebanese Army so that the state can control borders, combat smuggling and terrorism, preserve civil peace and expand its authority in the south.
- Post-UNIFIL diplomacy - Salam told MTV on 30 September that Lebanon still wants a United Nations presence after UNIFIL capable of monitoring developments, reporting incidents and issuing regular assessments. Separately, a senior European diplomatic official said a proposed European mission would not replace UNIFIL but would support the Lebanese security institutions, including the Army's role in extending state authority and addressing the weapons file. These proposals remain under discussion and should not be treated as a finalized post-UNIFIL architecture.
- Regional follow-up, 2 October (reported 4 October) - Jordan's King Abdullah II and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio discussed Lebanon, the Lebanon-Israel framework and Hezbollah's disarmament in a phone call on Friday, 2 October, according to official Jordanian and U.S. statements subsequently reported on 4 October. The conversation showed that implementation of the Lebanon file remained on the regional diplomatic agenda after Salam's departure from Washington.

#### ASSESSMENT

*The Washington round produced a more integrated U.S.-Lebanese agenda than the first draft captured. Security implementation, financial compliance, banking reform, reconstruction and Lebanese Army capacity were treated as connected components of state authority. The most consequential addition is the Treasury meeting: Washington is not separating Hezbollah's military role from financial networks, and Beirut's access to international confidence will increasingly depend on both. The convergence does not eliminate domestic disagreement over the pace and method of disarmament, but it strengthens the government's argument that implementation cannot be one-sided. The key unresolved issue is enforcement: Beirut can propose reciprocity and verification, yet it still depends heavily on U.S. and international leverage to convert those principles into reciprocal action.*

## PART II | THE SOUTH: CONTINUING MILITARY PRESSURE AND A RECONSTRUCTION TEST

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*Strikes, demolitions, explosive hazards and state recovery efforts, 28 September-4 October 2026*

### DEVELOPMENTS

- 28 September escalation - Israeli airstrikes, artillery and demolition activity intensified across southern Lebanon. L'Orient Today reported dozens of strikes and explosions in areas of the Tyre, Bint Jbeil and Marjayoun districts, with Mansouri a major focus. The Israeli military said it had completed a brigade-level operation there and claimed to have dismantled more than 600 sites and eight underground routes. Those figures are Israeli military claims and are not independently verified in this brief. The Lebanese Army also dismantled an Israeli surveillance device equipped with a solar-power system in Wadi Zibqin.
- Demolitions and wider fire, 29 September - Large explosions and demolitions were reported in Mansouri, Zawtar al-Sharqiyeh and Aitaroun, alongside artillery fire on Baraashit, Mayfadoun, Wadi Slouqi and other areas. L'Orient Today also reported Israeli strikes on Qantara, the outskirts of Baraashit and Kfar Tibnit, house demolitions in Houla and additional detonations in Majdal Zoun and Bani Hayyan. Israel said it had 'neutralized' two people who entered what it calls its security zone; the identities and circumstances were not independently established in the sources reviewed.
- Nabatieh al-Fawqa explosion, 30 September - A soldier and three civilians were injured in Nabatieh al-Fawqa. Some early reports described an Israeli drone strike, but the Lebanese Army later said the injuries resulted from the explosion of a suspicious object while the Army was escorting residents to inspect property. The Army opened an investigation and continued engineering inspection. The corrected Army account is used here because it is the later official description of the incident.
- Sustained attacks, 1 October - Israeli operations continued in Mansouri, Mais al-Jabal, Houla, Zawtar al-Sharqiyeh, Beit Lif, Bani Hayyan, Khiam and the Hadatha-Harees area. Reporting described airstrikes, artillery, machine-gun fire, house demolitions, property burnings and the movement of military vehicles and explosives. The Israeli Air Force separately claimed it had struck more than 370 Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon during September. That number is presented as an Israeli operational claim rather than an independently verified strike count.
- Reconstruction under fire, 2 October - Salam toured Nabatieh and nearby areas with ministers and local officials while Israeli shelling and fire continued in parts of the south. He announced that the Council for Development and Reconstruction had launched 23 tenders covering debris clearance, roads, shelters, ambulances, medical equipment and

communications, and said 12 additional tenders were being prepared during October, including work related to five hospitals. He acknowledged that the scale of destruction exceeds the state's financing capacity and linked reconstruction to full Israeli withdrawal, safe return and a single state authority over war and peace.

- UNSCOL visit, 2 October - Jean Arnault, Officer-in-Charge of UNSCOL and Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on the Middle East conflict and its consequences, visited Nabatieh and met communities affected by destruction. The UN account emphasized residents' demand for peace, security and a responsive state, adding an international recovery dimension to Salam's state-led reconstruction message.
- School demolition and civilian infrastructure, 3 October - Israeli forces demolished Jabal Amel Intermediate School in Houla amid continuing airstrikes, artillery and demolitions. Additional activity was reported in Beit Yahoun, Mais al-Jabal, Bani Hayyan, Wadi al-Hujeir, Wadi Slouqi and other localities. The destruction of a school is strategically significant because it illustrates that recovery needs extend beyond housing and roads to educational and social infrastructure needed for durable return.
- Attacks continue, 4 October - Israeli shelling and demolition operations continued in the south. The Israeli military also reported that two of its soldiers had been injured in an operational accident in southern Lebanon on Friday, one seriously and one lightly. The incident remained under investigation and is relevant mainly as evidence that Israeli ground activity was continuing inside southern Lebanon at the end of the reporting period.

#### ASSESSMENT

*The revised chronology makes clear that the south was not experiencing a low-level residual ceasefire problem; it was facing sustained military activity across the entire reporting week. This matters for evaluating reconstruction. Announcing tenders is a meaningful administrative step, but contracts, demining, property access and civilian return remain vulnerable while strikes, demolitions and ground movements continue. The destruction of Jabal Amel Intermediate School is particularly important because it shows how military pressure can directly undermine the social infrastructure required for communities to return. The government's reconstruction policy is therefore inseparable from the security framework: financing alone cannot produce recovery if new damage is being generated faster than institutions can repair it. The week strengthened the case for a monitoring and verification mechanism, but it also showed how far the operational reality remains from a stable post-war environment.*

## PART III | SYRIA-HEZBOLLAH AND THE BORDER: ACCUSATION, CONTACT AND DENIAL

*Data allegations, contested diplomatic reporting and cross-border security, 29 September-1 October 2026*

### DEVELOPMENTS

- Daraa cell allegation and denial, 29-30 September - Syrian authorities announced on 29 September that they had dismantled a three-person cell in the Yarmouk Basin of Daraa that they described as affiliated with Hezbollah and accused of preparing rocket launch platforms for attacks intended to destabilize security. On 30 September, Hezbollah categorically denied any relationship with the alleged cell, said it had no presence or security or military activity in Syria, and called on Syrian authorities to investigate what it described as attempts to create tension between the two countries.
- Reuters report on alleged direct talks, 1 October - Reuters reported, citing six sources including Syrian officials, a U.S. official and a senior Lebanese security source close to Hezbollah, that Syrian government representatives and Hezbollah had allegedly held at least one secret face-to-face meeting in Turkey sometime in September. The reported agenda included arms smuggling, alleged sleeper cells, mutual security concerns and assurances regarding possible Syrian involvement in Lebanon. Reuters did not establish a precise meeting date, so the alleged meeting may have occurred before this reporting window; the 1 October report itself is the weekly development recorded here.
- Damascus and Ankara deny the meeting - After publication, Syria's Ministry of Information said no such meeting had occurred. Turkey's presidential communications apparatus also described the claims about the date, venue, content and contacts as baseless and speculative. Because both governments denied the central factual claim, the reported meeting must remain classified as contested reporting rather than confirmed diplomacy.
- Border interdiction, 1 October - The Lebanese Army said it seized approximately 245 kilograms of highly explosive TNT, four explosive devices, eight detonators and associated wiring while the material was being smuggled from Syrian territory into Lebanon along the northern and eastern borders. The smugglers escaped back toward Syrian territory and follow-up coordination was continuing.
- Strategic contradiction - The Daraa allegation, the reported-and-denied Turkey channel and the confirmed TNT seizure all point to the same structural problem: state-to-state normalization between Beirut and Damascus is developing alongside persistent armed networks, smuggling routes and mutual security suspicion. Even if direct Hezbollah-Syria contacts eventually become confirmed, they would represent crisis management rather than proof that these underlying networks have been dismantled.

## ASSESSMENT

*This file requires unusually careful source discipline. The confirmed facts are that Syria publicly accused an alleged Hezbollah-linked cell in Daraa, Hezbollah denied the accusation, and the Lebanese Army intercepted a major explosives shipment from Syria. The direct Syria-Hezbollah meeting is different: Reuters' sourcing makes the report significant, but categorical denials by both Damascus and Ankara prevent it from being treated as established fact. Analytically, however, the convergence of these events is still important. Syria's new authorities and Hezbollah have strong incentives to avoid a direct confrontation while simultaneously distrusting each other's cross-border activities. The border is therefore becoming a test of whether formal Lebanese-Syrian relations can replace the informal security arrangements and armed logistics networks that developed during the Assad era.*

## PART IV | THE LEBANESE ARMY AND THE POST-UNIFIL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

*International military support, border control and expanding operational responsibilities, 28 September-1 October 2026*

### DEVELOPMENTS

- EU-LAF meeting, 28 September - Army Commander General Rodolph Haykal met EU Ambassador Sandra De Waele in Yarzeh to discuss regional developments and the post-UNIFIL phase. The ambassador reaffirmed continued EU support for the Army and its security role. The meeting followed earlier EU announcements that a new mission was being developed to advise and train the armed forces.
- German and British military contacts, 29 September - Haykal met German Ambassador Thomas Zahneisen and the British Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, Lt. Gen. Charlie Kollins. The German meeting addressed military cooperation and the post-UNIFIL phase; the British delegation discussed support for Army capabilities, particularly border control and protection. These contacts show that post-UNIFIL planning is increasingly moving from political declarations toward capability discussions.
- U.S. vehicles, 29 September - The Army received 47 Humvee vehicles and five trucks at the Port of Beirut under U.S. assistance programmes. The Army described the delivery as intended to strengthen operational capabilities and unit readiness.
- MTC4L medical support, 30 September - Military Healthcare received medical equipment through the Military Technical Committee for Lebanon. The contribution addressed the less visible logistics and medical burden created by prolonged deployments and an expanding mission set.
- Civil-military recovery support, 30 September - Through cooperation between the Army's Civil-Military Cooperation Directorate and UNDP, solar-powered lighting equipment was

delivered to Srifa in the Tyre district. The Directorate also organized a medical day and distributed assistance in Zawtar al-Gharbieh, linking military presence with stabilization and relief in communities affected by Israeli attacks.

- Operational workload - During the same week the Army dismantled surveillance equipment in the south, escorted residents in damaged areas, responded to explosive hazards, received new equipment, monitored the northern and eastern borders and seized a major explosives shipment. These tasks sit alongside the political expectation that the Army will eventually assume more security functions after UNIFIL and enforce the state's monopoly over weapons.
- European mission debate - A senior European diplomatic official said a prospective European mission would not replace UNIFIL and would be designed to support Lebanese state security institutions, including the Army's role in extending authority and addressing Hezbollah's weapons. Because the mandate remains under negotiation, the statement is best read as an indicator of European intent rather than a finalized operational plan.

#### ASSESSMENT

*The Army section is more consequential when the week's additional contacts are included. EU, German, British and U.S. engagements all point toward a common international assumption: the Lebanese Army will be expected to shoulder substantially more responsibility after UNIFIL. Yet the week also demonstrates the risk of a capability-mandate gap. Vehicles, medical equipment, training and border assistance can improve readiness, but they do not by themselves create the manpower, financing, political authority or secure operating environment required to control the south, borders and non-state weapons simultaneously. The post-UNIFIL problem is therefore not only what international mechanism comes next; it is whether Lebanon's military institution can absorb an expanded mandate without being overstretched or drawn into an internal confrontation it has been politically instructed to avoid.*

## PART V | 2027 BUDGET, IMF REFORMS AND SOCIAL PRESSURE

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*Bank restructuring, public-sector relief and the credibility of economic recovery, 28 September-2 October 2026*

### DEVELOPMENTS

- 2027 draft budget, 1 October - Cabinet approved the 2027 draft budget after completing its review. It also approved a revised daily transport allowance for public-sector employees based on the equivalent cost of five litres of gasoline, with a floor of LBP 500,000 and a ceiling of LBP 800,000. The measure responded directly to the cost of commuting and public-sector labour pressure.
- Public-sector and transport labour pressure, 29 September-1 October - The General Confederation of Lebanese Workers and land-transport unions suspended a nationwide strike planned for 30 September to allow the government time to implement promised measures and continue negotiations. Public administration employees, however, maintained their strike for 30 September and 1 October and their Friday closures, underscoring that the transport allowance did not fully resolve salary and purchasing-power concerns.
- Aoun challenge becomes public during the reporting week - President Joseph Aoun's challenge to Article 3 of the bank-resolution law was publicly reported on 30 September and 1 October. Reporting indicated that the filing itself may have been made several days earlier. The challenge concerns a provision affecting the relationship between Banque du Liban's Central Council and the Higher Banking Commission, and it reopened an institutional dispute over regulatory powers just as the government was trying to demonstrate reform momentum to the IMF.
- IMF conditions, 1 October - IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said a programme requires continued progress including entry into force of the Bank Resolution Law, an appropriate financial-gap law consistent with international standards, a 2027 budget and medium-term fiscal framework compatible with debt sustainability, and structural reforms focused on public financial management and governance. The IMF said it would assess any changes resulting from Constitutional Council review for consistency with international standards.
- Financial-gap law remains decisive - Reuters reporting during the Washington visit emphasized that a full IMF programme still depends on legislation allocating the financial-system losses among the state, Banque du Liban, commercial banks and depositors. This means that even a new staff-level agreement would not by itself resolve the core political problem of how losses are distributed.

- Public transport capacity, 28 September - Lebanon received 20 buses donated by the Sultanate of Oman for the public transport network. Public Works and Transport Minister Fayez Rasamny said the system currently operates on 11 routes with five additional routes under development. Although modest relative to national needs, the donation provides a tangible public-service measure at a time when transport costs are central to labour unrest.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Economic reform advanced and became more internally contradictory during the week. Cabinet approved a budget and transport relief while the government pursued an IMF agreement in Washington, but Aoun's Constitutional Council challenge introduced legal uncertainty around one of the reforms the IMF had explicitly welcomed. That does not automatically derail negotiations: the IMF said it will assess whatever changes emerge. It does, however, underline the problem of reform credibility in Lebanon, where laws can remain contested after parliamentary passage. At the same time, the suspension of the transport strike and continuation of the civil-service strike show why fiscal adjustment cannot be evaluated only through macroeconomic indicators. The government is trying to maintain fiscal discipline, rebuild the financial system and prevent renewed social unrest at the same time. The viability of that strategy depends on whether targeted relief can protect household purchasing power without recreating unsustainable public spending.*

## PART VI | DOMESTIC GOVERNANCE: JUSTICE, EDUCATION, AND STATE ENFORCEMENT

*Institutional decisions beyond the core security and IMF files, 29 September-2 October 2026*

### DEVELOPMENTS

- Justice Minister on Hezbollah weapons and Beirut Port, 30 September - Justice Minister Adel Nassar said the principle of handing Hezbollah's weapons to the state was no longer open to debate and argued that surrendering the weapons would not harm any sect. In the same press conference, he said the Beirut Port explosion investigation was proceeding and that an indictment was expected before the end of the year. The statements connected the monopoly-of-arms question with a broader state-accountability agenda.
- Parliamentary care-policy legislation, 30 September - Joint parliamentary committees approved a proposal aimed at strengthening care policies related to maternity and paternity entitlements, breastfeeding, childcare services and social security. The decision is not central to the security crisis but is relevant to institutional governance because it shows Parliament continuing sectoral social-policy work amid the wider emergency.
- General amnesty implementation preparations, 1 October - Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation Judge Ahmad Rami al-Hajj visited a joint central operations room at the Internal Security Forces in preparation for implementing the general amnesty law if it enters into force. The mechanism was established while awaiting the Constitutional Council's decision on a challenge to the law, meaning operational preparations were being made before the legal dispute was fully resolved.
- Beirut Port fee recovery, 1 October - State Security said it uncovered maritime companies that had evaded Port of Beirut fees and had recovered approximately \$6.5 million for the Treasury, with additional amounts still under follow-up. The case is significant as an example of revenue enforcement and administrative accountability at a state asset closely associated with Lebanon's governance failures.
- School consolidation, 29 September - Education Minister Rima Karami defended the ministry's school-consolidation plan as a restructuring measure intended to improve quality, reduce waste and make more efficient use of teachers and administrators. She said decisions were based on enrolment, staffing, alternative nearby schools, distance, security and geographic conditions, language of instruction and inclusion needs, and could be reviewed where evidence showed harm to students.
- Education reform financing, 30 September - Karami, the Educational Center for Research and Development and the French ambassador signed the 'Manhajuna' project, backed by a EUR4 million French grant through the French Development Agency, to support

implementation of pre-university curriculum reform. This adds a longer-term institutional reform track to the immediate debate over school consolidation and war-related disruption.

- Riad Salameh litigation, 1 October - Lawyers for former Banque du Liban governor Riad Salameh challenged before the Paris Court of Appeal the French judiciary's jurisdiction to seize assets abroad in the Lebanese illicit-assets case. The disputed seizures in the United Kingdom and Belgium reportedly total EUR37 million, with a decision expected on 26 November. The case remains separate from Lebanon's IMF negotiations but is part of the broader accountability environment surrounding the financial collapse.

#### ASSESSMENT

*The domestic-governance picture is more active than a security-and-economy-only brief suggests. Judicial authorities, Parliament, education institutions and enforcement agencies all took concrete steps during the week. Their significance lies less in any single decision than in the breadth of state activity: Lebanon is simultaneously trying to enforce revenue collection, reorganize public education, prepare implementation of a contested amnesty law, advance social legislation and revive the Beirut Port investigation. These files also expose a recurring institutional pattern. Major decisions frequently move through overlapping political, judicial and constitutional channels, slowing implementation and creating uncertainty about final outcomes. The state's credibility will depend not only on adopting policies but on converting them into durable, legally enforceable outcomes.*

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