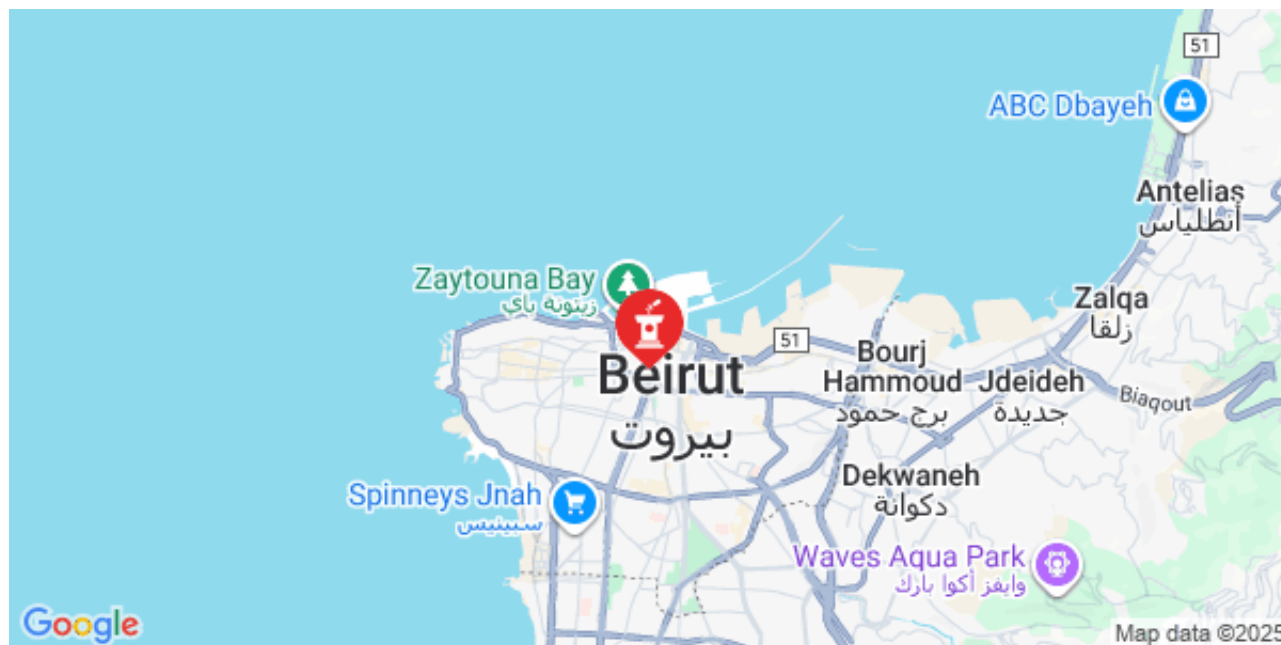


## Politics



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### Lebanon Snapshot: Government's endorsement of US proposal to disarm Hezbollah to face challenges, prompt protests by Hezbollah supporters

#### Current Situation:

- On August 5, the Lebanese government tasked the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) with preparing a plan for Hezbollah's disarmament by August 31, aiming to establish state control over all arms by the end of the year.
- On August 6, Hezbollah condemned the government's decision to disarm the group, claiming that it undermines Lebanon's resistance against Israel, contradicts the government's mandate, follows US Envoy Tom Barrack's agenda, and benefits Israel. Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem dismissed "external diktats," while stressing Hezbollah's role in Lebanon.
- The group stated that it would treat the decision "as if it does not exist" but remains open to dialogue. The Shiite-led Amal Movement also opposed the move, while the secular National Bloc, and Christian Kataeb Party, Lebanese Forces (LF), and Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) supported it.
- On August 7, Lebanese Information Minister Paul Morcos announced that the Cabinet had endorsed the objectives of a proposal issued by US Envoy Tom Barrack. These objectives include disarming all non-state groups, deploying the LAF to strategic areas, securing Israel's withdrawal from five southern positions near the border, resolving prisoner issues through indirect talks, and finalizing Lebanon's border demarcation with Israel and Syria.
- In the last week, pro-Hezbollah rallies against the decision were recorded on a near-daily basis in

Hezbollah strongholds across the country, including the Bekaa region, southern Lebanon, and Beirut's Dahiyeh suburb located near the Rafic Hariri International Airport. No major incidents of unrest were reported in the demonstrations that primarily consisted of gatherings and motorcades.

- On August 9, Lebanon's Shiite-led parties, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, stated that they would not withdraw from the government despite their disagreement with the decision to enable a plan for Hezbollah's disarmament. An unconfirmed Hezbollah source stated that the group "will not hand over the weapons" but would avoid clashes with the LAF.

## Assessments & Forecast:

### Cabinet establishes deadline for Hezbollah's disarmament

1. The cabinet's decision to establish deadlines for the exclusive state control of weapons, thus implying the disarmament of Hezbollah, represents a significant step in Lebanon's post-war trajectory. Although four ministers from Hezbollah and Amal walked out of the meeting, the move indicates broad governmental agreement on converting prior disarmament rhetoric into concrete timelines with the aim of projecting its authority and demonstrating its resolve to respond to sustained domestic and international demands on the issue.
2. The schism between the Shiite Hezbollah and Amal Movement and the Christian Kataeb Party, LF, and FPM also underscores the sectarian and political divisiveness surrounding the August 5 cabinet decision. This dynamic will heighten political tensions and may deepen sectarian divides in the country, although international actors are expected to intensify engagement in the coming weeks to prevent confrontations and support compliance with the disarmament roadmap.
3. In the more immediate term, the latest developments underscore the politically challenging position Hezbollah now faces, particularly given its reduced leverage within the government amid a broader cabinet consensus in favor of disarmament, including from parties like the FPM that have historically supported the group. The decision to continue consultations with the government is likely intended to frame the process as a negotiated, rather than unilateral decision, thereby preserving leverage in any eventual settlement and its clout more generally. The group's parallel indication that it seeks to avoid internal clashes with the LAF or triggering security disruptions appears aimed at reinforcing its image as a rational actor whose primary focus remains countering Israel. Concurrently, Hezbollah's linkage of any potential disarmament to specific preconditions underscores its sustained hardline stance and signals that the group views its military capabilities as non-negotiable.
4. **FORECAST:** The group is likely to continue projecting the Lebanese government as failing to fully implement the 1989 Taif Agreement. Through its current posture and rhetoric against Israel, Hezbollah likely aims to further mobilize public support for its position, discrediting the cabinet decision as weakening Lebanon's ability to confront recurring Israeli strikes and the [remaining IDF presence](#) in southern Lebanon. In the same vein, Hezbollah will continue to condition any willingness to potentially engage in a disarmament process on the cessation of Israeli operations in Lebanon, including the [withdrawal of IDF from southern Lebanon](#) and the halt of IDF airstrikes targeting its positions.
5. **FORECAST:** There are likely to be significant operational challenges to the LAF's ability to enforce the cabinet's deadlines, particularly in areas where Hezbollah's influence is entrenched. Limited resources, coupled with the need to avoid inflaming sectarian tensions, may constrain the LAF's willingness to confront the group directly. This raises the potential of the LAF's enforcement focusing only on incremental measures or symbolic deployments rather than direct disarmament operations in the near term. The perception of the LAF's neutrality and operational credibility will be a critical factor in determining whether the disarmament process gains or loses public legitimacy.

### Decision to prompt protests, potential unrest

1. Further protest activity and unrest remain likely across Lebanon, particularly in Hezbollah strongholds, in the coming days. These demonstrations are likely aimed at pressuring the government to reverse or at least stall the implementation of the decision to disarm Hezbollah. Additional pro-Hezbollah rallies in Beirut are also highly likely, with residents of traditional Hezbollah strongholds being mobilized in large numbers, especially as the group continues to frame the issue as a national cause or as evidence of Lebanon's subservience to Israel. While these gatherings are likely to remain concentrated in the group's traditional areas of influence such as the Dahiyeh, the potential influx of supporters from outside Beirut could increase the scale of the protests, increasing the likelihood of localized disruptions and straining security forces' ability to manage unrest. Furthermore, there also remains the possibility of renewed protests near Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, as Hezbollah supporters may continue to use the area to stage demonstrations as a means of drawing attention and applying pressure on the government. Should such gatherings take place, temporary disruptions to airport operations cannot be ruled out. Additionally, protests may be staged near key government sites, including the Presidential Palace in Baabda, particularly as a tactic to obstruct any further cabinet sessions related to the disarmament issue.
2. Beyond the immediate protest activity, the cabinet's decision may also risk heightening sectarian tensions in the country, particularly between Hezbollah-aligned communities and other groups opposed to the group's armed status. This particularly pertains to longstanding tensions between Hezbollah and Lebanon's Christian community/parties, which were already [exacerbated](#) by Hezbollah's decision to enter the conflict with Israel. However, instances of sectarian violence or clashes are less likely to transpire in the near term as the group is likely to prioritize sustaining pressure on the government through protests rather than provoking a broader confrontation that could erode public support or invite a harsh response from the Lebanese security authorities.
3. In addition to applying pressure through protests and demonstrations, Hezbollah may employ various political and institutional avenues through which it may seek to influence or delay the cabinet's implementation process. These could include utilizing parliamentary mechanisms by leveraging their current ministerial portfolios to slow implementation of unrelated policies.

## Recommendations:

1. It is advised to avoid nonessential travel to Lebanon at the current time due to the volatile security situation.
2. Remain cognizant of the potential for anti-disarmament protests led by Hezbollah or its supporters across Lebanon in the coming days. Avoid the vicinity of such protests due to the potential for violence and unrest.
3. Avoid all travel to Hezbollah strongholds in the country, including Beirut's Dahiyeh.
4. Those intending to travel to or from Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport are advised to allot extra time for travel due to the potential for traffic delays on thoroughfares in the area due to potential protests.
5. Avoid discussing Hezbollah's disarmament in public or on social media, as political sensitivities around the topic remain high and could attract unwanted attention or provoke hostility.