

Interview

Crisis in Lebanon : The Enemy of My Enemy is My Enemy

Saturday 14 December 2024, by [AKRAM-BOSCHAR Shireen](#), [MAJED Rima](#) (Date first published: 13 December 2024).

Lebanon became embroiled in Israel's latest war on Gaza almost immediately after its beginning in October 2023. On October 8, 2023, Hezbollah began launching rockets at Israel in support of Gaza, which continued as Israel's war on Gaza intensified. Israel soon began to bombard the south of Lebanon, destroying villages and displacing tens of thousands, while threatening to bomb Beirut. In September 2024, Israel launched a full-scale war on Lebanon, including on its capital, Beirut. A sixty-day ceasefire agreement was drawn up at the end of November, but its future remains unclear. In this interview, Lebanese scholar and activist Rima Majed discusses the roots and dynamics of Israel's war on Lebanon and its connections to both the war on Gaza and to transformations across the region.

Rima Majed is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at American University of Beirut (AUB). Her research focuses on social movements, sectarianism, conflict, violence, gender, and intersectionality in the Middle East. Her work has appeared in many academic and media platforms including *Social Forces*, *Mobilization*, *Middle East Law and Governance*, *Global Dialogue*, *Idafat: The Arab Journal of Sociology*, *Al Jumhuriya*, *Middle East Eye*, *OpenDemocracy*, and *Al Jazeera English*.

Shireen Akram-Boshar - On November 26, a ceasefire mandating that both Hezbollah and Israel vacate the south of Lebanon for a cessation in fighting was put into effect. While the ceasefire enabled many Lebanese to return to their homes in the South in defiance of Israel's dictates, it leaves Gaza more vulnerable and frees up Israel to focus its energies on brutalizing Gaza. Moreover, many of its aspects seem shaky and unstable: Israel has already violated the ceasefire by repeatedly shelling parts of the South of Lebanon. Could you speak about the terms of the ceasefire, its consequences, and whether you think it will last?

Rima Majed - The "Cessation of Hostilities" deal was negotiated between the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, and the US envoy, Amos Hochstein, on behalf of Hezbollah and Israel, respectively. The deal, brokered by France and the United States, aims to put an end to the war by fully implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon. [1] This time, the implementation of the UNSCR 1701 will be supervised by a five-country committee, headed by a US general and including France, the United Kingdom, Lebanon, and Israel, to ensure compliance with the ceasefire. [2] While the officially signed document has not been published, and there are many rumors about a possible side agreement between the United States and Israel, the full text of the agreement was shared by the United States and France and was published after the ceasefire came into effect. [3] The agreement includes thirteen points and gives a sixty-day grace period for both the Lebanese army to deploy South of the Litani River and the Israeli army to withdraw from the villages it has invaded in that area. However, the agreement

requires the immediate cessation of all military activities of Hezbollah, while guaranteeing the right of Israel to continue its hostilities in case it suspects any threat from Hezbollah. The Government of Lebanon is required to guarantee that Hezbollah will retreat behind the Litani River and that only the Lebanese army will be deployed between the Litani River and the Blue Line. Similarly, the government of Lebanon is responsible for ensuring that all arms deployment, production, or storage sites that do not belong to the Lebanese Army—that is, those that belong to Hezbollah—are dismantled, as well as for preventing militant groups from regrouping and rearming. The agreement limits the right of self-defense to the official armies of Lebanon and Israel, meaning that Israel has the right to attack Lebanese territories at any point if it suspects any Hezbollah movement, while Hezbollah has no right to retaliate. As the Lebanese army—mainly funded and armed by the United States—will not attack or retaliate against Israel under any circumstances, the fragile truce is clearly skewed in Israel's favor. In fact, during the last weeks of the war, Israel has deliberately targeted the Lebanese Armed Forces on several occasions and has killed a soldier with no retaliation from the Lebanese government. More recently, a United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon source told CNN that Israel has violated the ceasefire deal more than a hundred times since the cessation of hostilities on November 27, 2024. [4] Israel has been carrying out daily airstrikes on Lebanon since the truce came into effect, demolishing homes, violating Lebanon's airspace, killing more than twelve people, and injuring dozens of civilians in less than a week of ceasefire. Israel has also prevented thousands of Lebanese from returning to villages that are still occupied, and it has opened fire at citizens trying to return to check on their homes in several villages south of the Litani River. In response, Hezbollah launched rockets on the occupied Shebaa Farms on Monday, December 2, 2024. While Hezbollah's projectiles fell on empty occupied land and caused no casualties or serious damage, this event led to an escalation, with Israeli officials considering Hezbollah's attack a serious breach to the truce and threatening to return to full-blown war. The Israeli Defense Minister, Israel Katz, warned that if the truce "collapses, we will act strongly and stop separating Hezbollah from the state of Lebanon." [5] Israel retaliated through a number of airstrikes on villages in South Lebanon, killing more than fifteen people in one day. This all points to a very shaky ceasefire with unclear horizons beyond the initial sixty-day cessation of hostilities.

While the deal has so far limited the number of Israeli strikes on Lebanon, it has not put an end to the war, especially in the South. In his first speech following the announcement of the ceasefire on Tuesday, November 26—the most violent day of the war in Beirut as Israel launched a massive airstrike campaign targeting more than twenty sites within the capital—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "the length of the ceasefire depends on what happens in Lebanon. We will enforce the agreement and respond forcefully to any violation. We will continue united until victory." [6] This means that the ceasefire is temporary and fragile, and that it can fail at any point and quickly spiral back into a bloody war. In the same address, Netanyahu mentions three main reasons for the timing of the ceasefire: first, "to focus on the Iranian threat," second, "to give our forces a breather and replenish stocks," and third, "to separate the fronts and isolate Hamas." [7]

This final point, on delinking Lebanon from Gaza, is crucial as we have seen an escalation in the attacks on Gaza in the past week and a dramatic turn of events in Syria days after the ceasefire in Lebanon came into effect. While the rapid mobilization of the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir El Sham (HTS), including the seizure of major towns in Syria such as Aleppo, Hama, and Homs, is too complicated to unpack here, it remains crucial to note that the unfolding events in Syria are part of a larger change in the region that will probably see a decline in the role of Iran and its allies and a reshuffling of power dynamics at the local levels. While caution and fear regarding the timing of this mobilization in Syria and the political powers behind it are in order, there is no doubt that the image of thousands of prisoners being freed from the horrific prison of Assad's regime are cause for celebration among large sections of the Syrian (and Lebanese) populations. After all, the despotic Assad regime has killed, imprisoned, tortured, and forced into exile millions of people since the start of the Syrian

revolution in 2011, and it has never attempted to liberate the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights or to retaliate against the hundreds of Israeli airstrikes on Syria in the past years. It cannot conceivably be an ally to the people of this region, who long to both liberate Palestine and live in dignity in their land.

Let's take a step back. In September, Israel expanded its war on Gaza into Lebanon. Israel's attacks on Lebanon from September through November were massive, killing and displacing unprecedented numbers of the population. Increasingly, Israel seemed to copy its Gaza playbook onto Lebanon, targeting medical infrastructure, engaging in mass collective punishment, and flattening entire neighborhoods to the ground. Can you talk about the situation on the ground in Lebanon? Why has Israel taken up this level of brutality, and why now? What are its aims in the war?

The situation on the ground in Lebanon is catastrophic. Beyond the humanitarian toll that has transformed whole neighborhoods and communities, with more than a million displaced and thousands injured or permanently maimed, this war has also exacerbated the crisis of an already fragile infrastructure (in terms of electricity, water, sewage, and so on) in most regions of the country that had to host the displaced. To be accurate, this latest Israeli war on Lebanon did not start in September 2024, but on October 8, 2023—that is, in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation. In that sense, it is hard to understand the developments in Lebanon in the past year without linking it to Gaza.

Although the first eleven months of the war on Lebanon (from October 2023 to September 2024) were “contained” as part of what Hezbollah called a “support front” for Gaza, the Israeli attacks on South Lebanon during those months displaced more than 110,000 people and destroyed countless villages. Over that period, Israel shelled agricultural areas, used illegal weapons (such as white phosphorus munitions), assassinated numerous Hezbollah members, and killed hundreds of civilians (including reporters, journalists, healthcare workers, children and women).

Bearing in mind this early aggression, the war took a new turn with September's escalation of Israeli military operations in Lebanon. This escalation occurred against the backdrop of mounting tension following Israel's July 30 assassination of Hezbollah's top commander, Fuad Shukr. Israel probably perceived Hezbollah's softer-than-expected response and its decision to avoid escalation on the Lebanese borders as weakness that signaled of the end of the deterrence equation that was put in place since the end of the July 2006 war, which had until then prevented potential military attacks through the threat of serious retaliation. This perceived opportunity, in addition to the approaching US elections and the military developments on the ground in Gaza, led the Israeli government to escalate its military operation into Lebanon.

The week following the pagers and walkie-talkie attacks on September 17 and 18 witnessed dramatic escalations, with Israel beginning its airstrikes in Lebanon on September 23, killing more than five hundred and displacing more than a million people in a single day. These attacks were followed by the intensification of Israel's decapitation of Hezbollah leaders with the assassination of Hezbollah's top figure, secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah, on September 27 and a ground invasion beginning on October 1. More than 1.32 million people have been displaced since the start of this war, with more than 4047 martyred and 16,638 injured since September 2024. [8] As in Gaza, Israel has crossed all red lines, committing war crimes by targeting civilians (mainly women and children), razing whole areas to the ground, demolishing infrastructure, using illegal weapons, and deliberately targeting medical, religious, archeological and historic sites in cities like Baalbeck, Tyre, and Nabatiyeh.

Since September 2024, the most affected regions in the country have been the South, the Beqaa

region, and the southern suburb of Beirut (Dahiye)—areas that are predominantly inhabited by Shia. This, of course, does not mean that other regions in the country are not affected. The economic cost of the war on Lebanon's already fragile state and economy is immense and will have repercussions on the country as a whole for years, if not decades, to come.

However, the everyday experience of the war extends far beyond the Shia-majority regions most heavily targeted by Israel. Sonic bombs have been heard all over Lebanon since the war started in 2023. This psychological warfare has intensified in the past months with the continuous buzz of Israeli surveillance drones flying over several parts of the country, sparking panic and causing chronic headaches. Similarly, the displacement of over one-fifth of the population has put immense pressure on host areas in a country that was already suffering from one of the deepest financial crises in the world, political deadlock (Lebanon has had a caretaker government since 2022, meaning there is no actual president), decaying infrastructure, and the lack of state-provisioned services or welfare. Moreover, Israel has used the same old (and tired) pretext of Hezbollah using displaced civilians as "human shields" to expand its aerial bombing to villages and cities that have been receiving displaced people in areas hitherto considered safe in the heart of Beirut, the North, and Mount Lebanon.

While Israel's declared aim for this war is to secure the return of its settlers to the North and to dismantle Hezbollah's military capacity, it would be shortsighted to believe that the story either begins or ends here. Israel's history of invasion and aggression towards Lebanon started long before the existence of Hezbollah. Israel has repeatedly invaded and occupied Lebanese territories since 1948, each time under a different pretext. In 1982, invading Israeli forces arrived all the way to Beirut. It was then that Hezbollah was created. South Lebanon remained occupied from 1982 until 2000, when Israel was forced to withdraw under the pressure of the resistance. The South saw a short period of relative calm until 2006, when the July war again destroyed many of its villages and killed more than a thousand people. Throughout all of these wars, Israel has always had the intention to push Lebanese citizens (not just, as it claims, "fighters") behind the Litani River and to create a buffer zone extending all the way to the Awali River. This aggressive expansion is in line with the Zionist project, which to this day does not have declared borders. In fact, Israel's ambitions beyond the waters of the Litani river are no secret: many of the maps of "Greater Israel" include the South of Lebanon as part of the Zionist state. In that sense, the aim of the war in both Lebanon and Palestine is the continuation of a settler colonial project that began eight decades ago, and has intensified over the past year. The wars on Gaza and Lebanon are not separate from the escalations in the West Bank and the expansions of Israeli settlements that are grabbing land and either killing or expelling its people. This war needs to be understood in a broader perspective, beyond its stated aims of destroying Hamas and/or Hezbollah. Historically, every resistance movement that has emerged—from leftist and nationalist to Islamist and religious—have been labeled as "terrorist organizations" before being targeted by Israeli violence. This war is no exception and can be understood as a deadly turn in a long and violent history of Zionist settler colonialism in the region—this time fully and openly backed, funded, and armed by the United States of America.

While engaging in mass collective punishment, Israel has also worked to decapitate the leadership of Hezbollah in its response to October 7. Most notably, at the end of September, Israel assassinated Hassan Nasrallah—Hezbollah's figurehead for thirty-two years—and has continued to assassinate its leadership. Can you talk about Hezbollah's response to October 7? What were its goals and what assumptions did it have of confrontation with Israel? Will Hezbollah be able to maintain its forces even in the aftermath of the assassination of much of its leadership?

There is no doubt that the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah and many of Hezbollah's commanders came as a major blow to the party. Hezbollah's strategy since October 2023 has been linked to the

so-called “Axis of Resistance”—a loose alliance controlled by Iran and running through Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. Despite denying any prior knowledge of the October 7 operation, Hezbollah launched an attack on the Israeli-occupied Shebaa Farms on October 8, 2023 to express solidarity with Gaza and Palestine.

Initially, this move indicated the possibility of a coordinated Hezbollah-led escalation against Israel in support of Gaza; however, this never materialized. Unable to launch a full-blown war on Israel, Nasrallah took a whole month to make his first public speech after October 7, declaring a “unity of fronts” and the maintenance of what he called a “support front” in Lebanon. The aim was to force Israel to fight simultaneously on multiple fronts in order to alleviate the military pressure on Gaza. This strategy proved to be deadly, as it signaled military weakness on the part of Hezbollah (and of its supporters in Iran and its proxies), especially with the intensification of the genocide in Gaza. While the whole world either watched in silence or backed Israel’s genocide, the so-called “Axis of Resistance” proved unable to rescue Palestinians from the genocidal violence despite its outward support.

At that time, Israel continued to escalate in Lebanon. It repeatedly tested the waters with Hezbollah through targeted assassinations and its crossing of expected battle lines in Lebanon between October and August 2024. It was specifically the targeted assassinations that pointed to a major weakness within Hezbollah, with potentially high levels of penetration by spies and collaborators that many analysts have linked to Hezbollah’s fatal intelligence exposure since its military entry into Syria to defend the Assad regime.

There is also no doubt that Israel’s technological advancement and supply of the most sophisticated and lethal weaponry (provided by the United States and many European countries) made this war clearly disproportionate in terms of military power. Similarly, the unprecedented open political backing of Israel during its televised genocide by most Western governments and, importantly, by the Arab states that have signed the Abraham Accords, has tilted the power dynamics.

While Hezbollah has surely received several major blows that have weakened its structure and decapitated its leadership, it remains unclear what the future of the party will be—especially given that Hezbollah’s fate is tightly linked to the future of the regime in Iran and the developments on the ground into its main lifeline in Syria. In spite of this uncertainty, it remains clear that resistance is bound to emerge in various shapes and forms so long as Israeli aggression and oppression remains.

Today, fighters in the south—the inhabitants of the villages that are being shelled and invaded by the IOF [Israeli Occupation Forces]—are resisting on the ground with all they have to defend their land, their histories, and their futures. This historical articulation of the struggle for liberation took the shape of political Islam with Hezbollah; if the party does not survive, the next articulation might take another shape, as has been the case with previous secular, leftist, and nationalist articulations of resistance. However, it is hard to imagine that a people will surrender to the aggressions of an occupier short of the annihilation of the whole population. Israel has adopted this genocidal strategy in Gaza since 2023.

There is no symmetry in this genocidal, destructionist war. This is not only in military terms, but this past year has exposed the depths of a global racial system that perceives us and our lives as disposable and less worthy than those of Israelis. This region has become a point of intensification of this global system of settler colonialism, imperialism, and racism. For example, we keep hearing about Israel’s goal of returning the 60,000 displaced settlers to the North, but we don’t hear the same outcry about the 1.3 million Lebanese people displaced since the war started in September 2024, or the almost 2 million displaced Gazans. These double standards highlight the depth of the racist system. Similarly, we keep hearing European and US officials talking about Israel’s right to

defend itself; do Lebanon or Palestine also have a right to defend themselves? Would they allow Lebanon to use the same tactics of war that Israel is using to defend itself against the Israeli aggressions? Will they fund it and arm it as they do with Israel? Of course not! This is what racial capitalism and imperialism means; moreover, this is what terrorism means. Today, we are unfortunately living in a world where fascist claims are normalized in the name of the right to defend a settler colonial state.

Israel's war on Lebanon is a war against the most vulnerable that most acutely affects those at the bottom of the economic ladder: Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees, migrant workers, and poor Lebanese. Additionally, Lebanon has been experiencing one of the world's most severe economic crises over the past five years, meaning that much of its population has been pushed below the poverty line. Could you speak about the class dynamics of this war? How are the above-mentioned populations particularly affected? What are the ramifications of these dynamics?

Like everywhere else in the world, the most vulnerable always pay the highest price in times of war and crises. This is obviously a matter of class, but also gender, race, disability, and so on. Wars do not fall equally on everyone, and it is often poor women, queer people, disabled people, migrant workers, and refugees that suffer the most. Lebanon's past five years have been alarming, with more than 80 percent of the population living under multidimensional poverty line, with a healthcare sector on the brink of collapse, and with an almost complete breakdown of vital state services, infrastructures and institutions. For example, the state does not provide electricity or water for most regions around the country. This already dire situation was exacerbated with the major wave of displacement that has left hundreds of thousands without shelter, food, or healthcare since the start of the war. While the more affluent people were able to afford housing in safer areas or leave the country for their safety, there are countless stories about domestic workers—mainly women—left behind. Similarly, this war has particularly targeted many Palestinian refugee camps, and it has affected considerable areas in both the Beqaa Valley region and the South that host a large population of Syrian refugees. Already displaced from their homelands, these refugees had to be displaced again under the difficult circumstances of growing xenophobia and financial hardship that made it difficult for them to afford safety and basic dignity. This war has also been extremely difficult on the poorest strata of Lebanese society, who had to leave their homes, land, and livelihoods behind in search of safety. Many refused to leave their lands during the war, especially shepherds or farmers who could not move their cattle or leave their crops. However, most of the displaced Lebanese were hosted by relatives or friends and were welcomed in most areas across the country. Those who had nowhere to go and who spent the first few weeks of the war on the streets in Beirut, or other parts of the country, have gradually been relocated to shelters (mainly in public schools) offered by either the government or through civil society initiatives. However, Syrian and Palestinian refugees and migrant workers have faced the most hardship in this war, since there are far fewer initiatives that offered them help. In cases like this it becomes clear that humanitarian responses cannot solve political crises and their repercussions on their own, and that, in many cases, humanitarianism can become deeply dehumanizing and thus heavily problematic.

Israel's strategy in Lebanon has been to target on a sectarian basis, primarily bombing Shia-majority towns and neighborhoods, as it sees the Shia population as Hezbollah's base. What are the effects of this strategy on Lebanese society more broadly? What is the response of broader segments of the society? Has the impulse largely been to react in solidarity across the lines drawn by the sectarian system, or is there a potential for more of a sectarian breakdown as Israel hopes will happen?

The general impulse since the start of the war has been to react in solidarity and to provide support where possible. The initial weeks of the war saw remarkable social solidarity, with people welcoming the displaced and offering a supporting environment. Many have hosted displaced families in their homes, and most villages and cities across the country have received and rushed to help people

arriving from areas that are being shelled by Israel. However, Israel has tried to instigate sectarian strife by targeting some Christian, Sunni, or Druze areas that have received displaced Shia, under the pretext of targeting Hezbollah members hiding amongst civilians. This tactic has increased fear amongst host communities, stirring up political divides that often take on a sectarian turn and create tension. However, it is important to note that however deep or real, such social tension along sectarian lines cannot turn into civil war in the absence of a conscious political decision. In other words, while many today are talking about the danger of civil war, unlike revolutions, such wars are not social explosions. Civil wars require political decisions that depend on the availability of arms, the readiness of sectarian leaders, and political backing from regional powers. I am not trying to downplay the possibility of sectarian breakdown; I am simply noting that this can only happen if local politicians play along with the Israeli's sectarian strategy and capitalize on it to create a new sectarian balance in the country. While this remains a possibility, such an outcome would be the deliberately produced result of a *political* strategy, rather than an outbreak of some essential conflict between sects.

Hezbollah is a part of the Lebanese government and its sectarian political system and has been for nearly twenty years. But within the Lebanese state, Hezbollah is the one force with significant military and organizational strength. What impact is Israel's war on Lebanon having on the Lebanese state and this arrangement? And how would you characterize the various approaches to Hezbollah within Lebanon? Where are they coming from? And what is their social base? What pressures are being placed on the Lebanon's political system during this bombardment?

It is true that we are at a turning point in terms of internal politics in Lebanon. The Ta'if agreement that ended the fifteen-year civil war and inaugurated a new system of parity between Muslims and Christians has collapsed. Since 2008, Hezbollah (in the name of the Shia community) has monopolized most power by virtue of its military strength and its regional position (as a proxy for Iran). This has created considerable tension with other parties in the country who either saw Hezbollah as a real threat to Lebanon's power-sharing system or were allied with Iran's regional enemies. The conflict between these two camps has led to chronic political deadlock that has rendered it impossible for the state or the government to fulfill their role. Power has effectively been displaced to parastate channels that have governed the country through mechanisms that have transformed the state into a collection of rubber-stamp institutions that benefit the interest of oligarchs and stronger militias. Hezbollah had the upper hand in this context for at least the past two decades. This equation is now coming to an end with this war. While it is still unclear how Hezbollah will get out of the war, it is reasonable to predict that it will be far less powerful than it was. The impending political changes are opening new discussions about the role of the army, the country's political system, and the election of a new president, along with deeper and more essential questions about the survival (or not) of Lebanon as we know it. The internal contradictions in the country have reached a boiling point. One can only expect major changes in the years to come that, while accelerated by this war, have been caused mainly by long-simmering internal social and political tension.

In early 2020, we spoke about the uprising in Lebanon that began in 2019 and was, at the time, still ongoing. It featured mass protests against Lebanon's sectarian state and banking system and calls for a civil state. This uprising was a high point for many Lebanese who were beginning to organize themselves. How would you describe the change from then to today? Are there forces from the 2019 uprising that still exist, that are organizing today, or that might have influence today amidst the catastrophe?

The 2019 uprising was unfortunately faced by a strong counterrevolution that was led by Hezbollah

in defense of the sectarian neoliberal state, despite the fact that large sections of the party's constituencies were among the uprising's early mobilizers. [9] Organizing efforts throughout the uprising also took consecutive blows with the imposition of COVID-19 lockdowns, the deepening of the financial crisis, and the August 4 Beirut port explosion. These blows have left the opposition movement deeply divided, if not torn apart. Lacking a clear political vision and coopted by many streams of traditional sectarian political parties in the country, the uprising's groups mobilizations have either transformed their effort into humanitarian initiatives responding to the catastrophes that have hit the country or have played the game of electoral politics individually (rather than as political coalitions or parties that can represent the masses that mobilized in 2019). This means that, despite the existence of some small groups of political activists still trying to organize today, the popular opposition that emerged within the 2019 uprising did not materialize into a political project with either influence or a real role today. However, it is important to note that the 2019 uprising was the result of deep contradictions within Lebanese society that have only amplified in the past years. While the mobilization in the streets has decreased and the organizing efforts have not succeeded in creating a political alternative, the material conditions that both made the uprising possible and turned many against their sectarian leaders have only worsened. This, together with the Israeli war on Lebanon and the major changes in Syria, signal that the deep social crisis in Lebanon is far from being resolved; rather, it is likely to yield more waves of contention that could take different shapes. Consequently, organizing politically and creating a social base for an alternative political project—through neighborhoods, workplaces, student movements, cooperatives, or even the diaspora—is crucial to fight the heavy polarization and sectarianization occurring in the country today. While a few such initiatives are already at work, they remain small and marginal.

Since last year's start of the war, the activists and groups that have emerged out of the 2019 uprising have also been deeply divided over the role of Hezbollah. While many have—despite their internal criticisms—supported Hezbollah's role as a resistance movement against Israel, others strongly opposed Hezbollah's military role against Israel and argued that Lebanon should dissociate itself from the war in Gaza. These divides made more difficult to mobilize beyond the fault-lines that govern the country's political and sectarian landscape. Despite this polarization, it is important for those interested in a revolutionary horizon that could get us out of this sectarian neoliberal crisis to be able to have a clear position that does not only (and rightly!) blame Hezbollah for its many wrongdoings in Lebanon and Syria, but that also (and mainly) acknowledges the serious dangers of the Zionist settler colonial project. Such a position must grapple with the complexity and necessity of the question of resistance. In that sense, despite any rightful opposition to Hezbollah, one cannot turn a blind eye to the genocidal turn the Zionist settler colonial project has taken in Gaza, nor ignore the fact that its expansionist ambitions continue to be a real threat to Lebanon too. After all, Israel is a state that has no declared borders and that is expanding at the expense of the indigenous people of this region. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the long social history that links Jabal Amel in South Lebanon to historic Palestine, where cities like Haifa, rather than Beirut, have long been the commercial and economic center for the people of South Lebanon. This social history makes it impossible to think of the Sykes-Picot-created nation-states of the region in an insular and siloed way, or to think it possible to have a prosperous Lebanon by dissociating it from its geographic milieu. Lebanon's borders with Palestine and Syria hold a history of shared social, political, and economic relations that cannot be erased, suppressed or disregarded at the popular level.

In such a situation, the position of the revolutionary forces in Lebanon should be clear: the enemy of my (internal) enemy is also my enemy and cannot be my friend! Any reactionary positions that try to minimize the Israeli (and US imperial) danger, or that attempt to dissociate Lebanon from Palestine in time of genocide in order to focus on Hezbollah (and Iran), are missing the point. The same goes for any position that only focuses on Israel and completely overlooks the serious problems posed by

Hezbollah and Iran for the region. Thus, a nuanced position that unequivocally supports the resistance against Israel, even if—or while—it opposes Hezbollah as a party is essential at this historical conjuncture. Therefore, any serious revolutionary political project in Lebanon cannot, and should not, dissociate itself from the plight of both the Palestinian and Syrian people—rather than the Palestinian and Syrian regimes—for liberation, freedom and dignity. Any political position that either pits these struggles against each other or gives one supremacy over the other are bound to fall into reactionary politics. After all, the struggle for Palestine and the popular movements of the Arab uprisings—despite their many differences—are at the core a fight against oppression, subjugation, and tyranny. Beyond that point of national and political liberation, it becomes the struggle for social and environmental justice that links all our movements in the Arab region and beyond to imagine and enact a different world beyond monstrous capitalism.

Rima Majed, Shireen Akram-Boshar

P.S.

- Spectre. December 13, 2024:
<https://spectrejournal.com/the-enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-enemy/>
- Shireen Akram-Boshar is a writer, translator, and editor interested in internationalism and revolutionary movements around the world. Shireen is on the editorial board of *Spectre* and a member of the Tempest collective. Among other topics, she has written on revolutions in the Middle East.

Footnotes

- [1] “Lebanon: Closed Consultations,” Security Council Report, December 3, 2024,
<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/12/lebanon-closed-consultations.php>.
- [2] The New Arab Staff, “US General to head committee overseeing Lebanon-Israel ceasefire: report,” New Arab, November 27, 2024,
<https://www.newarab.com/news/us-general-head-lebanon-israel-ceasefire-committee-report>.
- [3] Josephine Deeb, “Full-text of the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel,” Middle East Eye, November 27, 2024,
<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/full-text-ceasefire-agreement-lebanon-and-israel>.
- [4] Mick Krever and Dana Karni, “Israel threatens to ‘go deeper’ into Lebanon as strikes strain ceasefire,” CNN, December 3, 2024,
<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/12/03/middleeast/israel-threatens-hezbollah-lebanon-ceasefire-intl/index.html>
- [5] “Israel-Lebanon ceasefire in Lebanon tested by intensifying cross-border strikes as both sides claim breaches,” CBS News, December 3, 2024,
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-war-palestinians-ceasefire-hezbollah-lebanon-strained-by-strikes/>

[6] Israel's Netanyahu to present Hezbollah ceasefire deal to full cabinet," Al Jazeera, November 26, 2024,
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/26/israel-reportedly-set-to-approve-ceasefire-with-lebanons-hezbollah>

[7] "Statement by PM Netanyahu," gov.il, November 26, 2024,
<https://www.gov.il/en/pages/spoke-statement261124>.

[8] "4, 047 Martyrs and 16, 638 Wounded, the Total Updated Toll of the Israeli Aggression," Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Health, December 4, 2024,
<https://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/127/77347/>.

[9] Shireen Akram-Boshar, "The Lebanese Uprising Continues: An Interview with Rima Majed," Jacobin, February 17, 2020,
<https://jacobin.com/2020/02/lebanon-uprising-protests-banks-sectarianism-hezbollah>.