



Stakeholder Watch: Israel's Posture in Lebanon

May 29, 2025

Dive into the latest edition of SARI Global's Stakeholder Watch. Behind the scenes, our AI-driven STAKE engine transforms raw incident logs into vivid insights on armed actors and the real human cost they impose.

Executive Summary

Between 21 and 28 May 2025, Israeli forces sustained an unrelenting campaign of precision strikes and aerial surveillance along Lebanon's southern frontier, even as Hezbollah remained silent since the November 2024 ceasefire. Civilian vehicles in Yater, Aytaroun and Ain Baal were struck by drone-launched munitions, leading to fatalities and injuries. On 22 May, a coordinated air assault delivered twenty-two strikes against homes, observation posts and logistics nodes across Nabatieh, South Lebanon and the Bekaa. Daily low-altitude reconnaissance sorties over the Beqaa Valley, Beirut's southern suburbs and the Tyre/Iqlim El Tuffah region set the stage for follow-on attacks. In late May, Israeli ground units crossed into southern Lebanon, setting fire to agricultural lands on 27 May and making further incursions on the morning of 28 May. Concurrently, Israel's 28 May airstrike on Sanaa airport in Yemen, destroyed the last aircraft on the tarmac, underscoring a broader regional strategy of coercive aerial dominance.

Weekly Snapshot of Incidents

On 21 May at 13:10, unmanned aerial vehicles struck two civilian cars in Yater (Bint Jbeil District), killing one driver and wounding others, before targeting a separate vehicle in Ain Baal (Sidon District) and injuring nearby bystanders. The next afternoon, a drone strike in Aytaroun killed a motorcyclist and wounded his passenger. That same day's centerpiece was a barrage of twenty-two airstrikes against residential districts in Toul and Deir Antar, Hezbollah observation posts at Jabal Safi and Wadi Zibqin, and supply hubs at Flaweh and Jard Boudai.

Reconnaissance flights over the Beqaa Valley on 23 May enabled follow-on strikes in Majdal Zoun and the western expanse of southern Lebanon. On 25 May, multiple bombs fell in the Bekaa without confirmed coordinates. The operations of 26 May began with surveillance sweeps over Beirut's southern fringe and the Tyre/Tuffah area, then continued with strikes in Majdal Zouq, Beit Lijah and Al-Khreibah, injuring civilians and damaging private homes. In the pre-dawn hours of 27 May, Israeli ground forces crossed the border, torching agricultural fields in southern villages; similar incursions were recorded the morning of 28 May with an individual also targeted with a drone strike while driving a scooter.

Stakeholder Postures

Israel's Defense Forces demonstrated very high readiness, seamlessly integrating unmanned and manned reconnaissance with precision munition delivery. The combination of daily ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) sorties, stand-off drone strikes targeting soft-skin vehicles, and the capacity to mount massed air assaults reflects a posture of continuous offensive pressure. In the absence



of any Hezbollah retaliation, Israel's deterrence calculus has skewed toward kinetic escalation, heightening the humanitarian risk to border communities.

Hezbollah has remained entirely dormant since the November ceasefire. The collapse of the Assad regime has effectively severed its overland supply route from Iran, denying it access to rockets and anti-tank guided missiles that once flowed through Syrian depots. With its arsenal largely confined to legacy stockpiles and small arms, Hezbollah's capability to re-engage is severely diminished, reinforcing its current strategy of strategic restraint.

UNIFIL continued its moderating role along the Blue Line with moderate readiness, conducting routine patrols and serving as a deconfliction intermediary. While its presence helps dampen low-level tensions, it is neither mandated nor equipped to prevent precision strikes or ground incursions by a prepared adversary.

Weapon System Overview

Unmanned aerial systems, such as Hermes-450 and Heron drones, delivered small-diameter munitions against moving civilian targets with surgical intent. F-16 fighter jets, armed with precision-guided bombs and stand-off munitions, executed the twenty-two-strike surge on 22 May. These systems benefit from advanced US-licensed manufacturing, domestic upgrade programs and rigorous maintenance, supplied through established US logistical pipelines and indigenous support facilities.

By contrast, Hezbollah's remaining armament consists primarily of older rocket artillery (Katyusha, Zelzal) and a limited number of anti-tank missiles drawn from pre-collapse stockpiles. With key supply chains from Iran via Syria cut off, the group relies on localized maintenance, often improvised in scattered workshops, and dwindling reserves. Hezbollah's significant human, infrastructure, weapons, and financial losses and domestic pressures post-ceasefire significantly impede its ability to engage in an armed conflict with Israel.

Trend Analysis and Civilian Impact

Israel's campaign over the week illustrates a continued intelligence-led, surgical engagement, as shown since the start of the November ceasefire. Drone strikes on civilian vehicles occur on average every two days, reflecting a willingness to employ stand-off capabilities deep into border zones. The 22 May airstrike surge demonstrates that, when intelligence identifies a cluster of targets, Israel can rapidly escalate its use of airpower. Persistent ISR flights, both manned and unmanned, generate a near-continuous aerial presence, instilling fear and reducing daily life normalcy for communities under surveillance.

The human cost has been significant. Fatalities among non-combatants included a motorcyclist in Aytaroun and a vehicle driver in Yater. Widespread structural damage displaced families in rural villages, while coastal bomb remnants disrupted fishing livelihoods near Tyre. Injured civilians treated in local hospitals numbered in the dozens, and reports of panic during school hours highlighted the psychological trauma inflicted by unpredictable overflights and sudden explosions.

Israel's 28 May strike on Sanaa airport, a key logistics node for Yemen's civilian aviation, mirrors the northern tactics, extending its precision campaign beyond Lebanon's border. By targeting the last aircraft on the tarmac, Israel signaled that its willingness to leverage aerial dominance across multiple theaters, weaving a regional pattern of coercive air operations.



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