



By: TA | AP Brief

Leaders from Lebanon, France and Jordan to discuss struggling Lebanese military



The heads of state of Lebanon, France and Jordan will meet Thursday in Paris as part of an effort to drum up support for the struggling **Lebanese military**.

A donor conference for Lebanon's cash-strapped army was initially set to take place in February, led by France, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

However, it was postponed following the eruption of the Iran war and the latest round of the Israel-Hezbollah war.

The Lebanese army has now found itself caught between the Israeli military — now occupying much of **southern Lebanon** — and Hezbollah. The militant group has refused calls to give up its weapons.

In June, the Lebanese and Israeli governments announced a **framework agreement** under which Israel would withdraw gradually from southern Lebanon and the Lebanese army would assume control, while Hezbollah would be disarmed. Implementation of the deal has stalled.

Thursday's meeting in Paris will center on preparing the ground for a donor conference.

It will also focus on the situation in southern Lebanon and plans for an international presence there after the mandate of the **U.N. peacekeeping force** known as UNIFIL expires at the end of the year, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's office said in a statement.

Confrontation between the army and Hezbollah

Hezbollah was severely weakened in the last war that ended in November 2024, and Lebanon subsequently elected Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, who committed to **disarming Hezbollah** and other non-state armed groups in the country.

Lebanon has been criticized by **Israel and the United States** for not taking direct military

action to force the militant group to disarm.

Lebanese officials are wary of a confrontation between the army and Hezbollah, fearing it could spiral into a civil war.

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The government has also insisted it needs a larger and better-equipped military to deploy across Lebanon and win over Hezbollah's supporters who question the army's ability to protect them.

The small Mediterranean country's military is underfunded and underequipped, for years relying heavily on international donors, notably the United States, United Kingdom, France and Italy.

Saudi Arabia had initially earmarked \$3 billion in 2013 to support the Lebanese army with French weapons.

But Saudi Arabia decided to halt the aid in 2016 as Hezbollah grew in power politically and the Lebanese government's ties with the kingdom deteriorated.

Many soldiers had left the military or worked second jobs since the country's fiscal crisis in late 2019, which affected state institutions that once provided decent salaries and benefits, and locked the savings of millions in the banks. The military has struggled to adequately pay salaries as inflation soars and state budgets shrink.