

# Truce in Lebanon: Can Diplomacy Rise from the Ruins?

By [Medea Benjamin](#) and [Nicolas J. S. Davies](#)

Global Research, December 04, 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [THE WAR ON LEBANON](#)

*On November 26th, Israel and Lebanon signed an agreement for a 60-day truce, during which Israel and Hezbollah are both supposed to withdraw from the area of Lebanon south of the Litani River.*

The agreement is based on the terms of [UN Security Council resolution 1701](#), which ended the previous Israeli assault on Lebanon in 2006. The truce will be enforced by 5,000 to 10,000 Lebanese troops and the UN's 10,000-strong [UNIFIL](#) peacekeeping force, which has operated in that area since 1978 and includes troops from 46 countries.

The truce has broad international support, including from Iran and Hamas. Israel and Hezbollah were apparently glad to take a break from a war that had become counterproductive for them both. Effective resistance prevented Israeli forces from advancing far into Lebanon, and they were inflicting mostly senseless death and destruction on civilians, as in Gaza, but without the genocidal motivation of that campaign.

People all over Lebanon have welcomed the relief from Israeli bombing, the destruction of their towns and neighborhoods, and thousands of casualties. In Beirut, people have started returning to their homes.

In the south, the Israeli military has warned residents on both sides of the border not to return yet. It has declared a new [buffer zone](#) (which was not part of the truce agreement) that includes 60 villages north of the border, and has warned that it will attack Lebanese civilians who return to that area. Despite these warnings, thousands of displaced people have been returning to south Lebanon, often to find their homes and villages in ruins.

Many people returning to the south still proudly display the yellow flags of Hezbollah. A flag flying over the [ruins of Tyre](#) has the words "Made in the USA" written across it, a reminder that the Lebanese people know very well who made the bombs that have killed and maimed so many thousands of them.

There are already many reports of ceasefire violations. Israel shot and [wounded](#) two journalists soon after the truce went into effect, and then, two days after the ceasefire, Israel attacked five towns near the border with tanks, fired artillery across the border and conducted [airstrikes](#) on southern Lebanon. On December 2nd, Hezbollah finally [retaliated](#) with mortar fire in the disputed Shebaa Farms area, and Israel responded with heavier strikes on two villages, killing 11 people.

An addendum to the truce agreement granted Israel the right to strike at will whenever it believes Hezbollah is violating the truce, giving it what Netanyahu [called](#) "complete military

freedom of action,” which makes this a precarious and one-sided peace at best.

The prospect for a full withdrawal of both Israeli and Hezbollah forces in 60 days seems slim, since Hezbollah has built large weapons stockpiles in the south that it will not want to abandon, and Netanyahu himself has warned that the truce “can be short.”

Then there is the danger of confrontation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese military, raising the specter of Lebanon’s bloody civil war, which killed an estimated 150,000 people between 1975 and 1990.

So violence could flare up into full-scale war again at any time, making it unlikely that many Israelis will return to homes near the border with Lebanon, Israel’s original publicly stated purpose for the war.

The truce [agreement](#) was brokered by the United States and France, and signed by the European Union, Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. France was a colonial power in Lebanon and plays a leading role in UNIFIL, but Israel initially rejected France as a negotiating partner. It seems to have [accepted](#) France’s role only when the Macron government agreed not to enforce the ICC arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu if he comes to France.

The U.K. also signed the original truce proposal on November 25th, but doesn’t appear to have signed the final truce agreement. The U.K. seems to have withdrawn from the negotiations under U.S. and Israeli pressure because, unlike France, its new Labour government has publicly [stated](#) that it will comply with the ICC arrest warrants against Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant – although it has not explicitly said it would arrest them.

Netanyahu justified the truce to his own people by saying that it will allow Israeli forces to focus on Gaza and Iran, and only die-hard “security” minister Ben-Gvir voted [against](#) the truce in the Israeli cabinet.

While there were hopes that the truce in Lebanon might set the stage for a ceasefire in Gaza, Israel’s actions on the ground tell a different story. Satellite images show Israel carrying out new mass demolitions of hundreds of buildings in northern Gaza to build a new road or [boundary](#) between Gaza City and North Gaza. This may be a new border to separate the northernmost 17% of Gaza from the rest of the Gaza Strip, so that Israel can expel its people and prevent them from returning, hand North Gaza over to Israeli settlers and squeeze the desperate, [starving](#) survivors in Gaza into an even smaller area than before.

And for all who had hopes that the ceasefire in Lebanon might lead to a regional de-escalation, those hopes were dashed in Syria, when, on the very day of the truce, the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) launched a surprise offensive. HTS was formerly the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front. It [rebranded](#) itself and severed its formal link to al-Qaeda in 2016 to avoid becoming a prime target in the U.S. war in Syria, but the U.S. still brands it as a terrorist group.

By December 1st, HTS managed to seize control of Syria’s second largest city, Aleppo, forcing the Syrian Arab Army and its Russian allies onto the defensive. With Russian and Syrian jets bombing rebel-held territory, the surge in fighting has raised the prospect of another violent, destabilizing front reopening in the Middle East.

This may also be a prelude to an escalation of attacks on Syria by Israel, which has already [attacked](#) Syria more than 220 times since October 2023, with Israeli airstrikes and artillery bombardments killing at least 296 people.

The new HTS offensive most likely has covert U.S. support, and may impact Trump's reported [intention](#) to withdraw the 900 U.S. troops still based in Syria. It may also impact his nomination of Tulsi Gabbard as Director of National Intelligence. Gabbard is a long-time critic of U.S. [support](#) for al-Qaeda-linked factions in Syria, so the new HTS offensive sets the stage for an explosive confirmation hearing, which may backfire on Syria hawks in Washington if Gabbard is allowed to make her case.

Elsewhere in the region, Israel's genocide in Gaza and war on its neighbors have led to widespread anti-Israel and anti-U.S. resistance.

Where the United States was once able to buy off Arab rulers with weapons deals and military alliances, the Arab and Muslim world is coalescing around a position that sees Israel's behavior as unacceptable and Iran as a threatened neighbor rather than an enemy. Unconditional U.S. support for Israel risks permanently downgrading U.S. relations with former allies, from Iraq, Jordan and Egypt to Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Yemen's Ansar Allah (or Houthi) government has maintained a blockade of the Red Sea, using missiles and drones against Israeli-linked ships heading for the Israeli port of Eilat or the Suez Canal. The Yemenis have [defeated](#) a U.S.-led naval task force sent to break the blockade and have [reduced](#) shipping through the Suez Canal by at least two-thirds, forcing shipping companies to reroute most ships all the way around Africa. The port of Eilat filed for [bankruptcy](#) in July, after only one ship docked there in several months.

Other resistance forces have conducted attacks on U.S. military bases in Iraq, Syria and Jordan, and U.S. forces have retaliated in a low-grade tit-for-tat war. The Iraqi government has strongly condemned U.S. and Israeli attacks in Iraq as violations of its sovereignty. Attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have flared up again in recent months, while Iraqi resistance forces have also launched drone attacks on Israel.

An emergency [meeting](#) of the Arab League in Cairo on November 26th voted unanimously to support Iraq and condemn Israeli threats. U.S.-Iraqi talks in September drew up [a plan](#) for hundreds of U.S. troops to leave Iraq in 2025 and for all 2,500 to be gone within two years. The U.S. has outmaneuvered previous withdrawal plans, but the days of these very unwelcome U.S. bases must surely be numbered.

Recent [meetings](#) of Arab and Muslim states have forged a growing sense of unity around a rejection of U.S. proposals for normalization of relations with Israel and a new solidarity with Palestine and Iran. At a meeting of Islamic nations in Riyadh on November 11th, Saudi crown prince **Mohammed Bin-Salman** publicly called the Israeli massacre in Gaza a [genocide](#) for the first time.

Arab and Muslim countries know that Trump may act unpredictably and that they need a stable common position to avoid becoming pawns to Trump or Netanyahu. They recognize that previous divisions left them vulnerable to exploitation by the United States and Israel, which contributed to the current crisis in Palestine and the risk of a major regional war that now looms over them.

On November 29th, Saudi and Western officials told Reuters that Saudi Arabia has [given up](#) on a new military alliance with the U.S., which would include normalizing relations with Israel, and is opting for a more limited U.S. weapons deal.

The Saudis had hoped for a treaty that included a U.S. commitment to defend them, like U.S. treaties with Japan and South Korea. That would require confirmation by the U.S. Senate, which would demand Saudi recognition of Israel in return. But the Saudis can no longer consider recognizing Israel without a viable plan for Palestinian statehood, which Israel rejects.

On the other hand, Saudi relations with Iran are steadily improving since they restored relations 18 months ago with diplomatic help from China and Iraq. At a meeting with new Iranian prime minister Pezeshkian in Qatar on October 3rd, Saudi **Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan** [declared](#),

“We seek to close the page of differences between the two countries forever and work towards the resolution of our issues and expansion of our relations like two friendly and brotherly states.”

Prince Faisal highlighted the “very sensitive and critical” situation in the region due to Israel’s “aggressions” against Gaza and Lebanon and its attempts to expand the conflict. He said Saudi Arabia trusted Iran’s “wisdom and discernment” in managing the situation to restore calm and peace.

If Saudi Arabia and its neighbors can make peace with Iran, what will the consequences be for Israel’s illegal, genocidal occupation of Palestine, which has been enabled and encouraged by decades of unconditional U.S. military and diplomatic support?

On December 2, Trump [wrote](#) on Truth Social that if the hostages were not released by the time of his inauguration, there would be “ ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East.” “Those responsible,” he warned, “will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America.”

Trump and many of his acolytes exemplify the Western arrogance and lust for imperial power that lies at the root of this crisis. More threats and more destruction are not the answer. Trump has had good relations with the dictatorial rulers of the Gulf states, with whom he shares much in common. If he is willing to listen, he will realize, like they do, that there is no solution to this crisis without freedom, self-determination and sovereignty in their own land for the people of Palestine. That is the path to peace, if he will take it.

\*

Click the share button below to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

### [Global Research’s Holiday Fundraiser](#)

**Medea Benjamin** is the cofounder of [CODEPINK for Peace](#), and the author of several books, including [Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#).

**Nicolas J. S. Davies** is an independent journalist, a researcher for CODEPINK and the

author of [Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq](#).

**Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies** are the authors of [War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict](#), published by OR Books, with an updated edition due in February 2025. They are regular contributors to Global Research.

The original source of this article is Global Research

Copyright © [Medea Benjamin](#) and [Nicolas J. S. Davies](#), Global Research, 2024

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Medea Benjamin](#)  
and [Nicolas J. S. Davies](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)