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In the trenches, Israel struggles on the Lebanese battlefield

In a month-long ground campaign that has mobilized five divisions, advanced weaponry, and unrelenting air and naval power, Israel has failed to capture even a single Lebanese village as a resilient resistance continues to thwart any land incursion.



Photo Credit: The Cradle

In [recent weeks](#), the realities on the southern Lebanese battlefield have painted a stark picture of the challenges faced by the Israeli military.

Over a month has passed since the occupation state announced the start of its ground operations, and despite deploying massive forces – with five military divisions comprising over [50,000 soldiers](#), equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and supported by an enormous air and naval fleet – significant breakthroughs have been elusive.

Despite attempts to make headway across the northern border from west to east, the Israeli army's progress has been [minimal](#), rarely exceeding three kilometers into Lebanese territory. Their primary focus has been on the Al-Adaisa-Rab Thalateen axis, following a failed maneuver aimed at capturing [Aita al-Shaab](#).

Aita al-Shaab: A symbolic battleground

This town, resilient and unyielding in the face of hundreds of air and artillery strikes, repelled repeated Israeli efforts to breach its defenses. When the occupation forces failed to advance along this axis, they redirected their assault towards Khiam, hoping for a breakthrough from a new direction.

Aita holds deep [symbolic value](#) for the Israeli army – its capture was seen as a moral as well as a strategic objective, owing to its reputation from the 2006 war. The enemy launched hundreds of air raids and artillery attacks, determined to destroy Aita's homes, enter its streets, and raise their flag.

To achieve this, they maneuvered to encircle Aita from the west, hoping to isolate it from the rest of Lebanon. This was a bold tactical decision, but a costly one. Hezbollah's resistance fighters, understanding the terrain and the vulnerabilities of their attackers, managed to sever the advancing Israeli force from its support units, ultimately forcing it to retreat.

The fierce resistance, supported by neighboring areas like Hunayn, thwarted this strategy and inflicted significant troop losses on the Israeli side.

After being forced back from Aita, the enemy shifted its sights to Al-Adaisa and Taybeh, believing that a push from the border toward the Litani River might yield better results. The settlement of [Meskvaam](#) provided the Israelis with an effective firebase due to its elevated location – but even this advantage could not break the resistance's defenses.

Israel fails to 'tent' down in Khiam

Every attempt to advance was met with a fierce counterattack. The enemy tried yet again, this time from the settlement of Metulla, aiming to encircle Khiam from the east.

Once more, the resistance refused to yield, holding the high ground and preventing Israeli forces from establishing a foothold in this strategic town – a town with a [proud history of](#)

[struggle](#) and a vantage point that offers a commanding view not only over Lebanon but also across the border.

It was in Khiam (which means “[tents](#)”) where the occupation forces, in collaboration with the South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, ran a [notorious prison](#) and torture facility before being forced to withdraw in 2000.

The Israeli maneuvers in recent days reveal a pattern that speaks volumes about their strategy and its limitations. The occupation army has, in typical fashion, relied [heavily on air force](#), artillery, and naval support to avoid direct clashes with resistance fighters.

This overreliance on long-range tactics has made the advance of ground units sluggish and ineffective. The reluctance to deploy tanks and heavy vehicles stems from fear – the dreaded [Kornet missiles](#) possessed by the resistance can take out armored targets from a distance of five to seven kilometers, making any armored advance risky.

This hesitancy has left the infantry without sufficient support, limiting their operational depth. Operating in tightly knit groups of nine to 11 soldiers, they fear capture, and this deliberate, careful movement has made them [easier targets for the resistance](#), which has used every opportunity to strike, causing further losses.

Limitations of Israel’s strategy in the south

Despite the continuous air and artillery barrages, the resistance has retained control of the front, launching rocket and artillery attacks across the border. Many key locations have been targeted repeatedly, underscoring their strategic importance to the enemy's operations.

As a result, the Israeli army has [failed to occupy a single village](#) in southern Lebanon. The villages along the border have suffered [extensive destruction](#) – most of their houses reduced to rubble in a manner that blatantly disregards international law, including the principles of humanitarian law – but occupation and control have remained out of reach for Israel.

The legendary determination of the resistance has sent a clear message: military decisiveness is not possible here. Any advance into Lebanon will come at a tremendous cost, and even if achieved, sustaining control will be near impossible.

History is rich with the painful memories of Israel's [past incursions](#) into the south, and it seems they are destined to learn that lesson once again.

One of the most striking features of this current confrontation is the [strategic use of drones](#) by the resistance. These drones have proved remarkably effective at infiltrating Israeli airspace, dodging modern defense systems like the Iron Dome and David's Sling.

The Israeli Air Force has struggled to deal with these small, flexible aerial threats, failing to intercept them despite multiple attempts. This new factor has reshaped the battlefield, introducing a significant challenge for Tel Aviv.

Drones have turned into strategic weapons. Their impact is felt not only tactically but also [politically](#) as they continue to hover over strategic locations, slipping past defenses and landing wherever they please – including the home of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a military base [near Ben Gurion Airport](#).

A persistent state of insecurity

While Israel's ground maneuvers have faltered, it has tried to make up for these setbacks with aerial dominance. Intensive air raids and efforts to stop drone incursions have shifted much of the battle to the skies.

However, despite their destructive power, air operations have not altered the ground realities. Security remains elusive for Israel, especially in the north, as settlers still [refuse to return](#) “home” – a key stated objective for Tel Aviv in its war on Lebanon.

Indeed, the equation of "missing security" holds true on both sides of the border. While Lebanon endures the destruction of its homes and [heritage](#), Israel faces a different, albeit no less impactful – insecurity.

The constant rain of rockets and the persistent drone presence have shattered the sense of safety in Israeli cities, bases, farms, and barracks. Stability, it seems, will only return when Israel is ready to recommit to the terms of [UN Resolution 1701](#).

This is the stark reality on the ground. Southern Lebanon's defenders have shown resilience and strength, while Israel's campaign, despite backing from the US and superior firepower, has found itself constrained by the resilience of its opponents and the [ever-evolving dynamics of modern warfare](#).

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