

FALLOUT IN LEBANON: THE IMPACT OF YABROUD

The Syrian regime's decisive victory over rebel forces in the Qalamoun stronghold of Yabroud, bolstered by support from Lebanese Hezbollah and Syrian National Defense Forces, has significant implications in the overall context of the three-year conflict.¹ Yet also worth a careful examination is the impact of the fall of Yabroud on Syria's fragile neighbor, Lebanon, whose own security situation remains fragile as the conflict continues to spill across the border. The ripple effects from Yabroud test the resilience of Lebanon, a country less than one decade removed from a 29-year Syrian military occupation, by flooding the border regions of Arsal and Wadi Khaled with militants, weapons, explosives, and refugees while threatening tenuous sectarian divisions.

IMPACT IN LEBANON

Violence related to the Syrian civil war has permeated nearly every major region in Lebanon, including Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, and the Bekaa Valley, where supporters and opponents of the Assad regime have exchanged increasingly frequent reprisal attacks since April 2013. Particularly, as a consequence of its role in Syria, Hezbollah has been the target of multiple vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) from domestic and external opposition, the majority of which were facilitated with support from the border regions. In 2014 alone, Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon have been hit by VBIEDs on eight separate occasions, resulting in more than 30 casualties with hundreds more wounded.²

Prior to the takeover of the rebel stronghold of Yabroud by pro-regime forces on March 15, the western Syrian town functioned as the primary staging area and support zone for Sunni extremist groups targeting Hezbollah fixtures in Lebanon, thus delineating the capture of the town as a central objective in Hezbollah's Syrian campaign. The offensive in Qalamoun, which began back in November 2013, was a phase of a broader initiative by Hezbollah and pro-regime forces to secure the Lebanese border with the stated intent of "ending the development of [terrorist] cells and armed groups...in the Qalamoun area until it is completely secured and is geographically linked with [Syria's] Qalaat al-Hosn."³

Pro-regime forces conducted simultaneous offensives in the Qalamoun region of Yabroud and Qalaat al-Hosn in early March, producing ripple effects in two distinct geographic areas of Lebanon: the eastern Bekaa Valley town of Arsal and the northern Akkar village of Wadi Khaled, both of which

already hosted vast networks of Syrian rebels and refugees. Field hospitals in Arsal and Wadi Khaled received the wounded, solidifying the status of the towns as an extension of the fighting in Syria to its regime opponents.⁴ Following up, the Syrian Air Force conducted daily airstrikes on the outskirts of the towns, targeting fleeing rebel fighters in a concerted effort to prevent their reconstitution in Lebanon.⁵

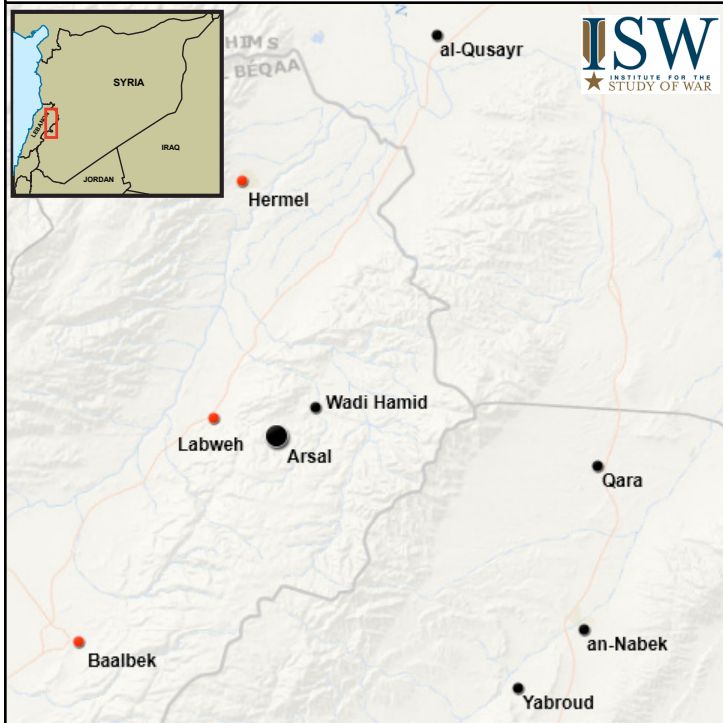
In the wake of victory in Yabroud, however, Hezbollah incurred immediate retaliatory attacks in its Bekaa Valley strongholds. A suicide car bomb targeted the Shi'a village of Nabi Othman, near the Hezbollah stronghold of Labweh, killing four Hezbollah officials and wounding several others. Jabhat al-Nusra's Lebanese branch claimed responsibility for the attack as retribution for the capture of Yabroud, calling it a "swift response to the swaggering and ranting of Iran's party [Hezbollah]."⁶

Siege of Arsal

In addition to the SVBIED in Nabi Othman, numerous rocket attacks targeted Shi'a villages throughout the Bekaa Valley where Hezbollah garners significant support.⁷ In response, residents of the town of Labweh, aided by Hezbollah militants, blocked off the road that connects the pro-rebel town of Arsal to the Hezbollah stronghold of Labweh, and in turn the rest of Lebanon, calling for the deployment of the Lebanese Army to protect the Shi'a villages from rocket attacks and car bombs.⁸

This "siege" of Arsal by Hezbollah militants, as it became known, isolated the town's pro-Syrian rebel community, and by extension its more than 50,000 Syrian refugees, sparking

Overview of Arsal



protests throughout the country by members of Lebanon's Sunni community.⁹ Protestors cut roads in the northern Akkar region, Beirut, the south, and the Bekaa Valley in solidarity with Arsal, prompting the Lebanese Army airborne regiment, supplemented by Internal Security Forces, to deploy heavily in the town to resolve the dispute.¹⁰ The Army ultimately reopened the Arsal road, along with others that were blocked in protest, but Hezbollah retained several unofficial checkpoints in the area that were only removed after the implementation of a new security plan in early April 2014.¹¹

Containing the threat posed by Arsal is a high priority for the Lebanese Army, which is being targeted for its efforts to secure the border, most notably on March 29 as a suicide car bomb at a military checkpoint on the outskirts of Arsal killed three soldiers and wounded four others.¹² Media reports estimated that as many as fifteen explosives-rigged vehicles crossed the border into Arsal around the time of Yabroud's capture.¹³

In the days since, units from the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) seized more than 20 stolen cars from the garages of a wanted individual in Arsal known to have rigged explosives to cars in the past, and disarmed multiple bomb-laden vehicles in the town's northeastern outskirts of Ras Baalbek and Wadi Hamid.¹⁴ Just one week after Yabroud's fall, LAF units had arrested 43 Syrians at checkpoints in Arsal, a significant number of which belonged to Jabhat al-Nusra (JN).¹⁵

Wadi Khaled

Concurrent to the mid-March offensive in Yabroud, the Syrian regime waged an offensive along Lebanon's northern border that sparked a separate flood of Syrian rebels and civilians into Lebanon. The border village of Wadi Khaled functioned as a primary smuggling route to rebel-held territory in Syria, namely Tal Kalakh and Qalaat al-Hosn.¹⁶ Syrian troops closed the unofficial Bqaiia border crossing into Lebanon's Wadi Khaled amid intense fighting that killed 12 members of the Syrian opposition and injured more than 50 others.¹⁷

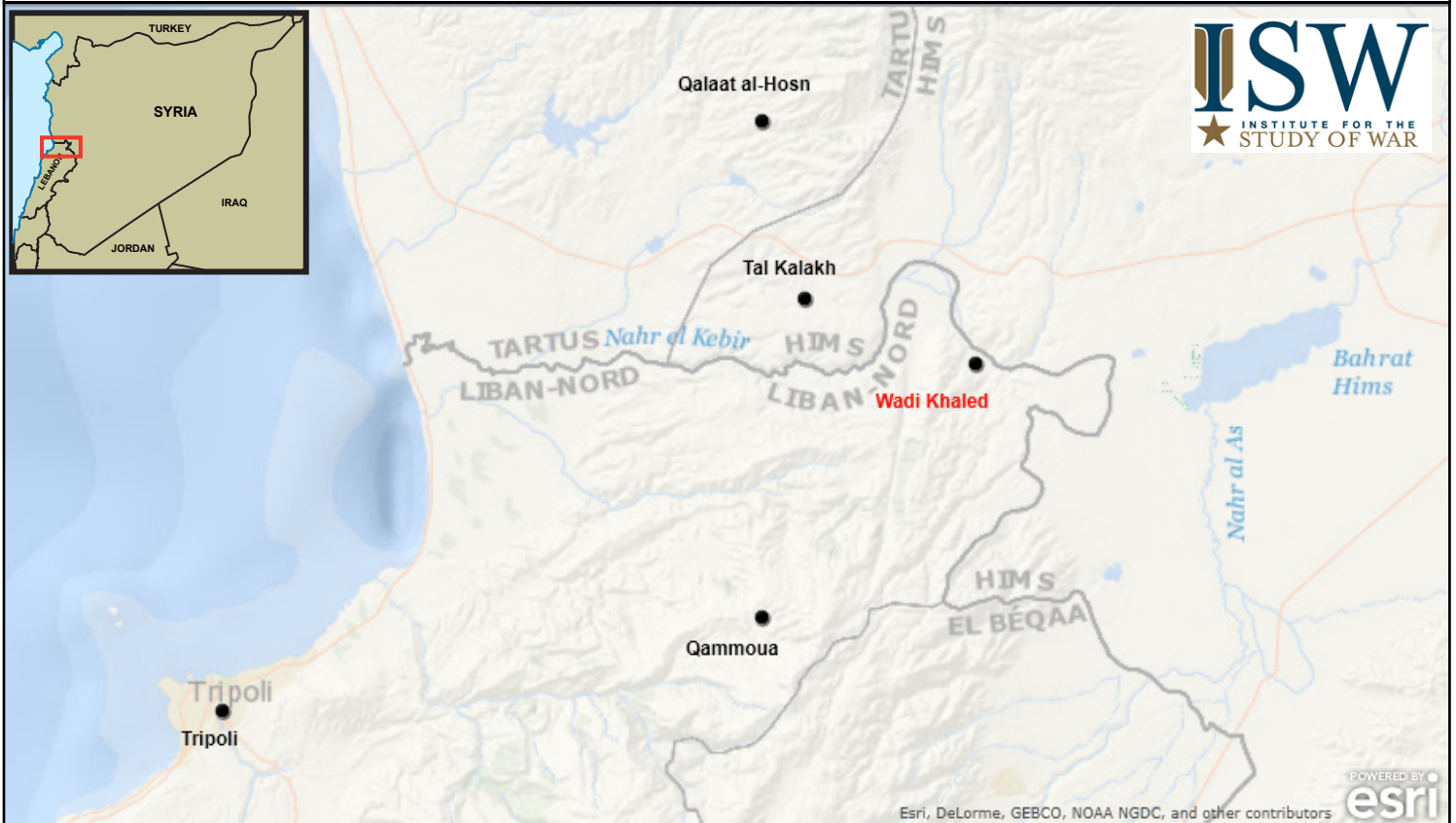
The Lebanese Army deployed heavily to the area to contain the influx, arresting a number of Syrian rebels entering the country illegally in possession of military-grade weapons. At the same time, more than one hundred wounded in the fighting in Qalaat al-Hosn arrived in Lebanon according to the Islamic Medical Association, an organization that established a field hospital in Wadi Khaled more than a year ago, indicative of the Akkar region's longstanding ties with the Syrian opposition.¹⁸ In addition, the Lebanese Army has raided multiple arms caches in the outskirts of Wadi Khaled in the past two months that have contained a large number of weapons and materials used to make bombs.¹⁹

Similar to the case of Arsal, Syrian troops shelled the outskirts of Wadi Khaled in the aftermath of the fighting, prompting Akkar residents to block a number of roads in the region and call on the LAF for protection.²⁰ President Michel Suleiman condemned the attacks, contacting officials in Akkar towns to inquire about the aerial shelling while urging LAF troops to secure the border.²¹ However, the notoriously porous and poorly demarcated border with Syria is a "breeding ground for the smuggling of arms and persons and a source of terrorism," making it difficult, if not impossible, to effectively secure.²²

Throughout the course of the conflict in Syria, Lebanese villages along the Syrian border have been the frequent targets of bombardments from Syrian warplanes looking to disrupt rebel movements and supply routes along the porous Lebanese-Syrian border region. These attacks have garnered consistent criticism from Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, who tasked Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil with documenting cross-border, aerial shelling of Lebanese villages in order to respond with diplomatic measures.²³ Only once, however, in December 2013, has the Lebanese Army responded to a violation of Lebanese airspace by firing at a Syrian aircraft.²⁴

Efforts by the Lebanese Army can be viewed in the context of a broader objective to secure the border with Syria in the fallout from Yabroud. The Lebanese state is deploying troops and erecting official checkpoints in the historically neglected border regions in order to identify and neutralize car bombs, as well as arrest rebels illegally entering the country. The Lebanese Army campaign coincides with Syrian regime offensives to secure their mutual border, though each is motivated by different factors.

Overview of Wadi Khaled



Political support for the LAF's border campaign came from the Arab League, which approved a draft law presented by Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil to arm and finance the Lebanese Army; and the Lebanese Cabinet, which implemented a security plan to stabilize the Bekaa Valley as a direct result of the fallout from events across the border in Yabroud.²⁵ Tactical support came from the U.S., which delivered 176 Humvees and 300 M-60 machine guns on April 2 to combat terrorism in the Lebanese-Syrian border regions, in addition to promises of increased support from the U.K.²⁶

The influx of armed Syrian rebels into Lebanese territory compelled responses from Hezbollah and the LAF, whose short-term security interests, though motivated by different causes, ultimately align, making any competing actions between the two groups unlikely. The implicit agreement between Hezbollah and the LAF in the implementation of a crackdown on pro-rebel supporters in the Bekaa Valley impacts the delicate sectarian divide in Lebanon.

LEBANON'S SUNNI COMMUNITY

Recent attacks against military checkpoints in Arsal and Wadi Khaled highlight a disturbing trend in Lebanon whereby

elements of an increasingly marginalized Sunni community view the Lebanese Army as unfairly targeting Sunnis in Lebanon, thereby acting in the interests of Hezbollah and the Syrian regime. Whether it's due to the arrests of Sunnis targeting Hezbollah in Lebanon, the lack of response to Syrian Army bombardment of Lebanese border villages, the inability to disarm Hezbollah or prevent its presence in Syria, or the historical influence of the Syrian Army on the Lebanese Army following the end of the Lebanese Civil War, many in the Sunni community have ceased to consider the army "an embodiment of the country's unity."²⁷

A prime example of this trend is evident in the northern Sunni bastion of Tripoli where the implementation of a recent security plan faced strong opposition, as hundreds of Sunni residents of Bab al-Tebbaneh protested against the Army entering the area.²⁸ In response, Lebanese Army troops in Armored Personnel Carriers deployed heavily to prevent protestors from reaching Tripoli, forcing organizers of the demonstration to call off the march.²⁹ Prominent Salafist cleric Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal warned the Lebanese Army that "something big will happen" in regards to measures taken in Tripoli.³⁰ Hours after that statement, gunmen ambushed an Army patrol in the Qammoua region of Akkar killing two soldiers and wounding a third. Along with the siege of Arsal, the Qammoua incident illustrates the potential for mobilization within the Sunni community against perceived aggression from Hezbollah

and the Lebanese Army, as well as the links between Sunnis in Tripoli and the Akkar region.³¹

The new Tripoli security plan was the first phase of a two-pronged stabilization effort in Lebanon, the second part involving the stabilization of the Bekaa region, an area hosting the bulk of the 1,000,000 Syrian refugees living in Lebanon.³² A majority of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon are young, poor, and unemployed Sunnis uncertain of the timeline for their return to Syria, making the area a major recruiting ground for al-Qaeda-linked groups in Lebanon capable of violent mobilization in certain circumstances.

AL-QAEDA IN LEBANON

In this context of an increasingly disenfranchised Sunni community in Lebanon, the capture of Syrian rebel-held territory in Yabroud and the ensuing exodus of opposition fighters across the border provides an opportune prospect for al-Qaeda affiliates in Lebanon to augment their numbers and provoke instability.³³ The main al-Qaeda affiliates in Lebanon, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) in Lebanon and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades (AAB), have claimed a number of suicide car bombings and rocket attacks against the Lebanese Army and Hezbollah dating back to the end of 2013.

In response, the Lebanese Army has waged an ongoing campaign to apprehend AAB and Lebanese JN-linked militants, inadvertently fueling accusations that Hezbollah controls the government. Notably, Sunni militant leader and fugitive cleric Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir released a statement last month calling on Sunnis to defect from the Army, sentiments echoed in a recent statement by the Free Sunnis of Baalbek Brigade, who accused Hezbollah of controlling the Lebanese Army.³⁴

The little-known Free Sunnis of Baalbek Brigade have claimed a spate of bombings and rocket attacks against Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army in the Bekaa Valley following Yabroud's capture, declaring open war on Hezbollah and the "crusader Army."³⁵ Previously, the group had only claimed attacks against Hezbollah, including rocket attacks, the car bomb in Nabi Othman on March 16, and the assassination of a high-ranking commander, Hassan al-Lakkis, in Beirut in December 2013.³⁶ The group publicly condemned JN for claiming responsibility for the Nabi Othman car bomb, warning the al-Qaeda-linked organization against transferring its conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) into Lebanon, while announcing the Free Sunnis allegiance to ISIS.³⁷ The emergence of the Free Sunnis of Baalbek Brigade necessitates a strong Lebanese Army presence in the historically lawless border regions in order to prevent the rise of like-minded groups.

Historically, however, the Sunni community in Lebanon has been slow to mobilize as a unified group. While elements of

Sunni communities in Aarsal and Wadi Khaled are quick to take up arms against perceived aggressions from Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army, the emergence of a coherent, countrywide front is unlikely. Sunni communities in northern and eastern Lebanon are isolated from one another geographically, and lack a unifying leader. Even the emergence of a figurehead to rally around, though, would not necessarily portend a unified front, as evidenced with the emergence, and decline, of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir in the June 2013 clashes with the LAF and Hezbollah in the outskirts of Sidon.

CONCLUSION

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of Yabroud, Hezbollah faced an uptick in the number of security incidents targeting its interests along the Lebanese border, while the group's blockade of Aarsal sparked widespread protests, further elevating sectarian tensions in the country. Hezbollah officials have heralded Yabroud as a strategic turning point in the conflict that will mitigate the threat posed to its supporters in Lebanon. The abundance of Syrian opposition-led attacks against Hezbollah in the Bekaa Valley in the period since Yabroud's fall, however, suggests the opposite. While Yabroud functioned as a launching point for car bombs and rockets destined for Lebanon, it is clear from the frequent rocket attacks, the abundance of stolen vehicles that are rigged with explosives, and the two successfully deployed car bombs in the months since its capture, that the area is replaceable, and Hezbollah will continue to be targeted in Lebanon.

In terms of security, Aarsal and Wadi Khaled will continue to be the loci for anti-Hezbollah actions in Lebanon. Given Aarsal's precarious position surrounded by Hezbollah strongholds in the Bekaa Valley and now across the border in Qalamoun as well, it is likely that the increasingly disenfranchised militant entities in the town will escalate attacks against Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army in a move of desperation. At some point in the future, as suggested by the reaction to the blockade of the town, a significant confrontation is possible between elements loyal to the Syrian opposition in Aarsal and Hezbollah and/or the Lebanese Army, reminiscent of clashes with supporters of Salafist cleric Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir in Abra in June 2013.³⁸

Wadi Khaled, as well, will be a flashpoint for security events between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Syrian rebels that fled to the northern Akkar town and its outskirts. Particularly, the Sunni community in the Akkar region could link up with militias in Tripoli, given their historical ties, similar worldview, and close proximity. The success of renewed efforts at a National Dialogue to develop a defense strategy hinges on the success of the implementation of the latest security plan for Tripoli and the Bekaa Valley. The Lebanese government must be prepared to address these areas adequately in order to distance itself from the Syrian conflict and reduce long-term instability in the country.

Geoffrey Daniels is a Lebanon research intern at ISW.

NOTES

1. Isabel Nassief, "The Fall of Yabroud and the Campaign for the Lebanese Border," *Institute for the Study of War*, March 26, 2014. http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISWBackgrounder_Yabroud_and_Lebanese_border.pdf
2. Alex Rowell, "Vehicle explosions in Lebanon since 2011," *NOW*, March 29, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/535852-vehicle-explosions-in-lebanon-since-2011>
3. Misbah al-Ali, "Hezbollah assesses its position after Yabroud victory," *The Daily Star*, March 19, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-19/250683-hezbollah-assesses-its-position-after-yabroud-victory.ashx#axzz2y6p46K68>
4. "Arsal security buffeted following Yabrud assault," *NOW*, March 16, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539427-arsal-security-buffed-following-yabrud-assault>
5. "Syrian warplanes raid Lebanon's Arsal," *NOW*, March 16, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539405-syrian-warplanes-raid-lebanons-arsal>; "Syrian helicopter raids Arsal outskirts," *NOW*, March 19, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539984-syrian-helicopter-raids-arsal-outskirts>; "Fresh Syrian Air Raids on Arsal," *Naharnet*, March 20, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123227-fresh-syrian-air-raids-on-arsal>; "Syrian violence rocks Lebanon border towns," *NOW*, March 22, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540275-syrian-violence-rocks-lebanon-border-towns>; "Syrian Helicopters Fire Rockets, Raid Arsal Regions," *Naharnet*, March 22, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123539-syrian-helicopters-fire-rockets-raid-arsal-regions>; "Syria conducts cross-border Beqaa raid," *NOW*, March 29, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/541240-syria-conducts-cross-border-raid>; "Five Injured in Syrian Raid on Mountains Surrounding Arsal," *Naharnet*, March 27, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/124084-five-injured-in-syrian-raid-on-mountains-surrounding-arsal>
6. "Free Sunnis of Baalbek fire back at Al-Nusra Front," *NOW*, March 17, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539597-free-sunnis-of-baalbek-fire-back-at-al-nusra-front>; "4 Dead, Several Hurt in Suicide Car Blast in al-Nabi Othman," *Naharnet*, March 16, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/122857-4-dead-several-hurt-in-suicide-car-blast-in-al-nabi-othman>; "Deadly car bomb strikes eastern Beqaa," *NOW*, March 16, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539468-deadly-car-bomb-strikes-eastern-beqaa>
7. "One dead, two injured by Beqaa rocket strikes," *NOW*, March 15, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539331-one-dead-two-injured-by-beqaa-rocket-strikes>; "Rockets strike Beqaa's Labweh," *NOW*, March 17, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539553-rockets-strike-beqaas-labweh>; "Rockets Hit Bekaa Towns as Tension Rises after Yabrud Fall," March 17, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/122916-rockets-hit-bekaa-towns-as-tension-rises-after-yabrud-fall>
8. "Hizbullah: Labweh Road was Blocked to Call for Army Deployment in Arsal," *Naharnet*, March 19, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123133-hizbullah-labweh-road-was-blocked-to-call-for-army-deployment-in-arsal>; "Hezbollah MP: Syrian fighters still threaten Lebanon," *NOW*, March 17, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539537-hezbollah-mp-syrian-fighters-still-threaten-lebanon>
9. "Army Reopens Labweh-Arsal Road, Deploys in Area," *Naharnet*, March 19, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123090-army-reopens-labweh-arsal-road-deploys-in-area>
10. "Roads Blocked across Lebanon 'in Solidarity' with Arsal, Mashnouq Says al-Labweh Road to be Reopened Wednesday," *Naharnet*, March 18, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123062-roads-blocked-across-lebanon-in-solidarity-with-arsal-mashnouq-says-al-labweh-road-to-be-reopened-wednesday>; "One dead as Sunni protests sweep Lebanon," *NOW*, March 18, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539735-protesters-block-beqaa-roads-in-support-of-arsal>; "Beirut residents block roads," *The Daily Star*, March 19, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon>

- News/2014/Mar-19/250725-beirut-residents-block-road-during-funeral.ashx#axzz2wY3kBywc; “Roads Blocked in Beirut over Killing of Young Man at Pro-Arsal Demo,” *Naharnet*, March 19, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123175-roads-blocked-in-beirut-over-killing-of-young-man-at-pro-arsal-demo>; Rakan al-Fakih, Dana Khraiche, Kareem Shaheen, “Army, police deploy in Arsal to contain tension,” *The Daily Star*, March 20, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-20/250794-army-police-deploy-in-arsal-to-contain-tension.ashx#axzz2wY3kBywc>; “Army reopens blocked Beqaa roads,” *NOW*, March 19, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539828-army-reopens-blocked-beqaa-roads>
11. “LAF to deploy between Arsal, Labweh,” *NOW*, March 18, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539794-laf-to-deploy-between-arsal-labweh>; “Army Begins Removing Hizbullah Checkpoints,” *Naharnet*, April 6, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/125354-army-begins-removing-hizbullah-checkpoints-in-baalbek-al-hermel>
12. Rakan al-Fakih, “Suicide bombing kills three soldiers in northeast Lebanon,” *The Daily Star*, March 29, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-29/251686-car-bomb-near-army-post-in-northeast-lebanon-sources.ashx#axzz2xZW2QeLA>
13. “Arsal residents fear car bomb attacks,” *NOW*, March 17, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539583-arsal-residents-fear-car-bomb-attacks>
14. Rakan al-Fakih, “Army bolsters security in northeastern Lebanon,” *The Daily Star*, March 18, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-18/250570-army-bolsters-security-in-northeast-lebanon.ashx#axzz2wY3kBywc>; Hassan Lakkis, Hussein Dakroub, “Army shootout kills ‘terrorist’ in Arsal,” *The Daily Star*, March 28, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-28/251521-army-shootout-kills-terrorist-in-arsal.ashx#axzz2xZW2QeLA>; “Bomb-Laden Car Dismantled, Stolen Vehicles Seized in Arsal,” *Naharnet*, March 31, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/124562-bomb-laden-car-dismantled-stolen-vehicles-seized-in-arsal>; “Security forces seize cars in Atrash’s Arsal depots,” *NOW*, March 29, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/541247-security-forces-seize-cars-in-atrashes-arsal-depots>
15. “43 Syrians Arrested to Date at Arsal Checkpoints,” *Naharnet*, March 22, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123521-43-syrians-arrested-to-date-at-arsal-checkpoints>; “Al-Nusra Front members arrested in Arsal,” *NOW*, March 19, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539947-al-nusra-front-members-arrested-in-arsal>; “LAF arrests Syrians near Arsal,” *NOW*, March 28, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/541080-laf-arrests-syrians-near-arsal>
16. Isabel Nassief, “The Fall of Yabroud and the Campaign for the Lebanese Border,” *Institute for the Study of War*, March 26, 2014. http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISWBackgrounder_Yabroud_and_Lebanese_border_1.pdf
17. “Syria closes Lebanon border crossing amid heavy clashes,” *Haaretz*, March 20, 2014. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.580958>; “Cautious calm in Wadi Khaled as army deploys,” *NOW*, March 20, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540081-cautious-calm-in-wadi-khaled-as-army-deploys>
18. “Army Arrests 19 Syrians, 2 Lebanese in Wadi Khaled for Illegally Entering Lebanon,” *Naharnet*, March 17, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/122935>; “Syrians pour in to Wadi Khaled after heavy fighting,” *NOW*, March 20, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540004-houses-hit-wounded-syrians-enter-lebanon-in-wadi-khaled>; “17 wounded Syrians transported to n. Lebanon hospitals,” *The Daily Star*, March 20, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-20/250804-17-wounded-syrians-transported-to-nlebanon-hospitals.ashx>; “Army arrests Syrians, Lebanese crossing into Akkar,” *NOW*, March 17, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539588-army-arrests-syrians-lebanese-crossing-into-akkar>
19. “Army raids arms cache in north Lebanon,” *The Daily Star*, March 28, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-28/251560-army-raids-arms-cache-in-north-lebanon.ashx#axzz2xZW2QeLA>; “Army arrests man in Akkar, seizes bullets,” *The Daily Star*, May 10, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-10/255988-army-arrests-man-in-akkar-seizes-bullets.ashx#axzz3ISWmJjrh>; “Army detains four, raids warehouse in n. Lebanon,” *The Daily Star*, April 9, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-09/255988-army-arrests-man-in-akkar-seizes-bullets.ashx#axzz3ISWmJjrh>

www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-09/252816-army-detains-four-raids-warehouse-in-n-lebanon.ashx#axzz3ISWmJjrjrh

20. "Village in Akkar Hit by Shells, Gunfire as Battles Intensify along Border," *Naharnet*, March 20, 2014. [http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123209-village-in-akkar-hit-by-shells-gunfire-as-battles-intensify-along-border](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123209-village-in-akkar-hit-by-shells-gunfire-as-battles-intensify-along-border;);
- "Interior Minister urges opening of blocked roads," *NOW*, March 20, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540066-interior-minister-urges-opening-of-blocked-roads>
21. "Village in Akkar Hit by Shells, Gunfire as Battles Intensify along Border," *Naharnet*, March 20, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123209-village-in-akkar-hit-by-shells-gunfire-as-battles-intensify-along-border>
22. "Lebanon-Syria Borders: 2009 Report," *NOW*, 2009. <https://now.mmedia.me/Library/Files/EnglishDocumentation/Other%20Documents/Border%20Report%20NOW.pdf>
23. "Suleiman Tasks Bassil with Documenting Cross-Border Attacks," *Naharnet*, March 24, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/123659-suleiman-tasks-bassil-with-documenting-cross-border-attacks>
24. "Lebanon fires on Syrian aircraft over airspace breach," *The Daily Star*, December 30, 2013. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Dec-30/242651-syrian-warplanes-strike-outskirts-of-lebanon-border-town.ashx#axzz2xZW2QeLA>
25. "Council of Arab Foreign Minister to provide aid for LAF," *NOW*, March 23, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540449-council-of-arab-foreign-ministers-to-provide-aid-for-laf>; "Cabinet agrees on security plan for Tripoli, Beqaa," *NOW*, March 27, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/540975-cabinet-agrees-on-security-plan-for-tripoli-beqaa>; "Arab League voices support for Lebanon, Army," *The Daily Star*, March 26, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-26/251314-arab-league-voices-support-for-lebanon-army.ashx#axzz2y6p46K68>
26. "Fletcher says more help on the way for Army," *The Daily Star*, April 15, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-15/253392-fletcher-says-more-help-on-the-way-for-army.ashx#axzz2yyGzd5pl>;
- "Army gets U.S. donation of weapons and vehicles," *The Daily Star*, April 3, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-03/252137-army-gets-us-donation-of-weapons-and-vehicles.ashx#axzz2y6p46K68>
27. Hilal Khashan, "Will Syria's Strife Rip Lebanon Apart?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2013, p. 77. <https://www.cimicweb.org/cmo/ComplexCoverage/Documents/Lebanon/3462.pdf>
28. "Lebanon security forces launch new push to halt Tripoli violence," *Reuters*, April 1, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/01/us-lebanon-tripoli-security-idUSBREA3016120140401>; Antoine Amrieh, Misbah al-Ali, "Army sweeps Bab al-Tabbaneh in Tripoli crackdown," *The Daily Star*, April 2, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-02/252027-army-continues-deployment-in-tripoli-launch-raids.ashx#axzz2y6p46K68>
29. Misbah al-Ali, "Army blocks Tripoli anti-security protest," *The Daily Star*, April 11, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-11/253013-heavy-security-in-tripoli-to-stop-protest-march.ashx#axzz2yXBPQoSsy>
30. "Salafist sheikh warns Army amid Tripoli protests," *The Daily Star*, April 8, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-08/252661-tripoli-residents-protest-ongoing-raids.ashx#axzz2yXBPQoSsy>
31. Antoine Amrieh, Mohammed Zaatari, "Soldiers killed in Akkar after Tripoli protests," *The Daily Star*, April 9, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-09/252760-soldiers-killed-in-akkar-after-tripoli-protests.ashx#axzz2yXBPQoSsy>
32. "More than 1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon: UN," *The Daily Star*, April 3, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-03/252152-more-than-1-million-syria-refugees-in-lebanon-un.ashx#axzz2y6p46K68>
33. Loveday Morris, "Fears for Lebanon's stability as al-Qaeda builds networks," *The Washington Post*, March 18, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-builds-networks-in-lebanon-as-

security-slips/2014/03/18/2071280d-6f4c-4f75-9205-3d95172724e3_story.html

34. “Free Sunnis Brigade’ Criticizes Security Plan in Tripoli, Says it Violates Sanctity of Muslim Homes,” *Naharnet*, April 4, 2014. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/125157-free-sunnis-brigade-criticizes-security-plan-in-tripoli-says-it-violates-sanctity-of-muslim-homes>

35. “Free Sunnis of Baalbek: Our battle with Hezbollah is open,” *NOW*, May 3, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/545762-free-sunnis-of-baalbek-our-battle-with-hezbollah-is-open>; “Free Sunnis of Baalbek claim responsibility for army ambush,” *NOW*, April 30, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/545355-free-sunnis-of-baalbek-claim-responsibility-for-army-ambush>

36. “Free Sunnis of Baalbek publishes picture of ‘Arsal bomber,’” *NOW*, March 30, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/541348-free-sunnis-of-baalbek-publishes-picture-of-arsal-bomber>; Ariel Ben Solomon, “Who killed top Hezbollah military commander Laqqis and why?” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 5, 2013. <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Who-killed-Laqqis-and-why-334030>

37. “Free Sunnis of Baalbek fire back at Al-Nusra Front,” *NOW*, March 17, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539597-free-sunnis-of-baalbek-fire-back-at-al-nusra-front>

38. Mitchell Prothero, “Lebanese Army threatens media that depict Hezbollah in Sidon battle,” *McClatchy DC*, June 28, 2013. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/06/28/195327/lebanese-army-threatens-media.html>