

Where Does “Israel” Stand on De-escalation with Iran?



At the moment the United States and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire, it appeared that the major war one that had turned the Gulf into a theater for ballistic missiles and paralyzed the global economy was nearing its end.

In “Israel,” however, a paradox quickly emerged. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office welcomed the agreement, while clarifying that “the ceasefire does not include Lebanon.” Meanwhile, the Israeli military continued targeting the country and reissued evacuation orders for residents of southern Lebanon.

How, then, did Israel both government and opposition respond politically and in the media to the ceasefire with Iran? And why did it insist on continuing its offensive in Lebanon, despite Tehran’s assertion that the country was covered by the understandings?

Political Positions in “Israel”

1. The Government

Netanyahu’s office announced its support for Washington’s decision to halt strikes on Iran for two weeks, but stressed that the agreement “does not apply to Lebanon.” It further asserted that any ceasefire would depend on reopening the Strait of Hormuz and on Iran and its allied groups halting all attacks.

This official position reflects the government’s desire to project that the United States had accepted Israel’s conditions, and that Israel would continue confronting what it describes as the “real threat” Hezbollah, which possesses a missile arsenal capable of threatening the country’s north.

The Israeli military echoed this stance, stating that the de-escalation changes nothing in Lebanon. It renewed warnings to civilians in Beirut’s southern suburbs, urging evacuation on the grounds that “the battle in Lebanon continues, and the ceasefire does not include Lebanon.”

This rhetoric reveals the government’s broader strategy: maintaining coordination with Washington against Tehran, while focusing on Lebanon as a theater where it can compensate for what it failed to achieve in Iran.

At the same time, some ministers sought to frame the ceasefire as the culmination of military successes. In mid-March, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar declared that “Israel has already won” the war and that Iran had become “dramatically weaker.”

Yet he acknowledged that Iran remains capable of launching long-range missiles, and that the stated objective of toppling the Iranian regime remains far from realization.

2. Opposition Parties

On the other side, the opposition seized on the ceasefire to intensify its criticism. Opposition leader Yair Lapid described the ceasefire as “an unparalleled political disaster,” arguing that Israel “was not at the table” when the decision was made, and that Netanyahu had “failed politically and strategically, achieving none of the goals he himself set.”

Yair Golan, leader of the Democratic Party, called the truce a “severe strategic failure,” describing it as “one of the gravest setbacks Israel has experienced.”

Avigdor Lieberman, head of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, warned that the ceasefire gives the Iranian regime “an opportunity to regroup,” insisting that any agreement must include Tehran abandoning uranium enrichment, ballistic missile production, and support for armed groups.

The intensity of criticism across the political spectrum underscores the opposition’s view that suspending the war constrains Israel while leaving Iran capable of recovering.

Some right-wing Knesset members even accused U.S. President Donald Trump of “cowardice” for halting the war, while local council heads in northern Israel warned that stopping operations in Lebanon would constitute “a moral and

security failure.”

For the opposition, this shift reflects the collapse of the broader strategy. If the war’s declared objectives were to disable Iran’s nuclear program, destroy its ballistic missile capabilities, and curb its regional influence, then redirecting the conflict toward Lebanon appears to be an attempt to deflect attention from Israel’s shortcomings in Iran.

The exchange of accusations between government and opposition also reflects electoral calculations. Polls suggest that the war has not boosted Netanyahu’s popularity, with support for his coalition hovering around 40 percent roughly equal to that of the opposition. This helps explain his insistence on continuing strikes in Lebanon to project an image of resolute leadership.

The War’s Outcome: A Gap Between Goals and Results

1. Declared Objectives vs. Actual Outcomes

Since the launch of the offensive against Iran in late February 2026, Netanyahu raised the bar for declared objectives: dismantling Iran’s nuclear program, destroying its ballistic missile capabilities, undermining the regime in Tehran, and disarming Hezbollah.

These goals were echoed by both government and opposition, raising public expectations. Yet the course of the war later exposed a clear gap between what was promised and what was actually achieved.

On the ground, Israel and the United States struck dozens of missile launch sites and facilities linked to Iran’s nuclear program, and killed a number of field commanders.

However, these announced military gains were offset by contrary realities—most notably Iran’s continued ability to launch missiles, indicating that its arsenal was not fully neutralized, and that its nuclear program remains intact.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah suffered significant blows but was not disarmed. The continuation of the war there, and Lebanon’s exclusion from the ceasefire, reveal that Israel has not achieved the decisive victory it had promised.

Israeli military sources have acknowledged that fully disarming Hezbollah is “an unrealistic goal,” prompting a shift toward a more limited objective: establishing a buffer zone rather than dismantling the organization.

2. Human and Economic Costs

The Israeli government announced the killing of thousands of Iranian fighters and the destruction of command centers. However, independent reports indicate that the war has resulted in more than 5,000 deaths across the region, including

over 1,600 civilians in Iran and hundreds more in Lebanon.

This toll raises serious questions about the notion of “moral victory” promoted by both Tel Aviv and Washington, given that the majority of casualties have been civilians.

Economically, Israel’s Ministry of Defense estimated the cost of each day of war at between 1.5 and 1.7 billion shekels roughly \$480 million to \$550 million.

The Ministry of Finance, for its part, estimated that 30 days of fighting pushed the total cost to around 40 billion shekels, or \$12.6 billion. Analysts cited by the Hebrew newspaper Calcalist warned that any large-scale ground operation in Lebanon would drive costs even higher.

Losses extend beyond direct military spending. Partial shutdowns of industrial zones in northern Israel have led to weekly losses estimated at 9.4 billion shekels, alongside additional billions added to the defense budget.

In sum, Israel has emerged from the current round of war with an ambiguous outcome. The ceasefire with Iran represents an implicit acknowledgment that the open-ended war failed to achieve its major objectives. Meanwhile, the insistence on keeping the Lebanese front active reflects a desire to project strength and secure tactical gains.

The opposition sees this as a double failure: accepting a ceasefire that excludes Beirut suggests the government failed to reap the benefits of confrontation with Iran, while shifting the center of gravity to Lebanon risks dragging Tel Aviv into a new quagmire.