



THE SHEBAA FARMS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

➤ While Hezbollah has been open in its desire to annihilate the Jewish state, one of the claims it continually advances to maintain support domestically in Lebanon among the non-Shia populations is to portray itself as a liberator fighting for the interests of Lebanon. The key to this message is the Shebaa farms.

What are the Shebaa Farms, and what are the claims on this strip of land at the intersection of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel?

Approximately 5,400 acres and containing 14 farms, the ownership of the Shebaa farms has long been a topic of dispute. As Lebanon and Syria became states in the 1940s, a dispute followed over the farms, with Israel becoming party to the dispute in 1967.

- **Pre-1967:** The dispute over the sovereignty of Shebaa Farms partly resulted from the failure of the French Mandate administrations, and subsequently the Lebanese and Syrian governments, to demarcate the border between Lebanon and Syria. French officials expressed confusion about the actual location of the border. However, at the end of the French mandate in 1946, the land was administered by Syria and was represented as such on maps of the time.
- **The Six-Day War:** In 1967, when Israel fought a multi-front war for its survival, the IDF captured the Gola Heights from Syria, which also included the Shebaa farms. Israel maintains control over the Golan heights and the Shebaa farms to this day.
- **Lebanon Withdrawal:** In 2000, Israeli forces withdrew from South Lebanon, complying with United Nations Security Council Resolution 425. The UN recognized the Shebaa farms as being part of the Syrian Golan Heights and not Lebanese territory. Thus, Hezbollah began to assert its claim to the territory.
- **The Israeli position:** Israel asserts that the Shebaa Farms are part of the Golan Heights, a territory that it captured in a defensive war with Syria. Israel annexed the territory in 1981, and the US recognized the Golan as part of Israel.



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- **Legality:** Because the Shebaa farms were considered to be part of Syria before 1967 and were captured in war, the same legal considerations that apply to the rest of the Golan Heights apply.
- **Strategic Considerations:** The Shebaa Farms hold strategic importance for Israeli security. The area acts as a buffer against potential aggression from Syria and Lebanon, which are still in a legal state of war with Israel. Israel's presence in the Shebaa Farms is a vital deterrent to Hezbollah terror activities.
- **The Blue Line:** When Israel withdrew from South Lebanon in 2000, the withdrawal was verified by the United Nations to confirm Israel had complied with UNSC Resolution 425. The UN would delineate the "blue line" to mark out the border between Israel and Lebanon; this excluded the Shebaa Farms, reaffirming the Israeli position that the Shebaa Farms are not part of Lebanon.
- **Hezbollah:** Hezbollah's claims over the Shebaa Farms are a pretext to maintain a state of conflict with Israel and maintain domestic support in Lebanon.

CONCLUSION

The Shebaa Farms have immense strategic importance, given that Syria and Hezbollah maintain hostilities against the Jewish state, Israel's control over the area is seen as a necessary measure for security and stability and to counteract the nefarious intentions of the regime in Tehran. Hezbollah's weak claims to the area are merely a pretext for terrorism, nothing more.