

Hezbollah in the Pilot Zones Disguised as Civilian Organizations Dror Doron

Overview¹

- In June 2026, a framework agreement was signed between Israel and Lebanon under American auspices. Its objective was to regulate the withdrawal of the IDF from the areas it had taken control of during the latest hostilities with Hezbollah and to transfer responsibility for them to the Lebanese authorities. The agreement established pilot zones to examine the parties' compliance with the understandings and the Lebanese army's ability to dismantle Hezbollah's infrastructure and prevent the organization from returning to the area.
- Now, two months after the agreement was signed, it is apparent that the Lebanese army finds it difficult to meet the security requirements stipulated by the agreement, while organizations subordinate to or affiliated with Hezbollah are highly active on the ground, providing cover for its military-terrorist activity and enabling it to keep a foothold and presence in these areas.
- The two most prominent organizations are the Islamic Health Organization, which is subordinate to Hezbollah's Executive Council, and the *Wa Ta'awanu* Association, which promotes aid projects and the reconstruction of civilian infrastructure.
- **In Amit Institute assessment, the activity of the organizations in the pilot zone contradicts the framework agreement and exposes the difficulty and complexity faced by the Lebanese government in taking action against the presence of Hezbollah and its various civilian arms in south Lebanon. Compounding the problem are legal difficulties and the Lebanese army's lack of legal authority to search privately owned civilian properties, despite Hezbollah's use of those properties as cover for its military-terrorist activity.**

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the Amit Institute's daily updates as well as its other publications.

The Islamic Health Organization

► The organization was established in 1984 and provides medical services to the Shi'ite population in general and Hezbollah military-terrorist operatives in general. It is subordinate to Hezbollah's Executive Council² and operates an extensive network of hospitals, medical centers and clinics for the Shi'ite population throughout Lebanon, particularly in the south. The nature of its activity makes it part of the civilian infrastructure which supports Hezbollah's military-terrorist activity. Organization personnel provide healthcare services to Hezbollah operatives, both routinely and in emergencies, operate a fleet of ambulances among the military units and some personnel operate wearing Hezbollah uniforms. Over the years, Islamic Health Organization operatives have been killed either while performing their medical duties or while performing military-terrorist missions.³

► Over the years, the Hezbollah leadership has played an active role in the Islamic Health Organization's public activities. The head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, Hashem Safieddine, who was responsible for the organization's activities, was Hezbollah's senior representative at the inauguration of various clinics and medical initiatives operated by the organization (Islamic Health Organization website, June 13, 2016; Sidon Online, July 7, 2022).

► Lebanese media report the presence of Islamic Health Organization ambulances in the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh, which is one of the pilot zones, while ambulances belonging to the Red Cross or other organizations are prevented from entering the village. Sources in the village were quoted as saying that residents, including those known to be Hezbollah operatives, were permitted to return to their homes, including *ribat* operatives⁴ responsible for military coordination in the village, especially embedding the organization's military-terrorist infrastructure within the urban area under cover of the civilian population (This is Beirut, August 20, 22, 2026).

² The Executive Council is responsible for Hezbollah's civilian, institutional and social administration, including education, welfare, health and coordination of its daily activities.

³ For further information, see the July 2019 ITIC report, [The Islamic Health Organization: Hezbollah institution providing health services to Hezbollah operatives and the Shiite population in general as a means for gaining influence and creating a Shiite mini-state within Lebanon](#).

⁴ Operatives stationed at forward positions; *ribat* is part of the Muslim tradition and refers to the forward outposts of the Islamic territory.

► The coverage of the Islamic Health Organization's activity in Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh is slanted by the Hezbollah-affiliated media to promote the narrative that Hezbollah is the main body providing services to the south Lebanese (al-Manar, July 25, 2026). Its activity receives recognition from and is publicly supported by the Lebanese ministry of health, headed by Minister Rakan Nassereddine, on behalf of Hezbollah. The ministry of health issues statements condemning IDF attacks on Islamic Health Organization operatives active in south Lebanon (*al-Nashra*, July 24, 2026). During the organization's activity in the pilot zone in Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh, Lebanese army checkpoints at the entrance to the village reportedly did not search the vehicles of residents returning to the village or verify the passengers' identities (This is Beirut, August 20, 2026).



Right: Hezbollah Islamic Health Organization operatives searching for and recovering bodies in the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh accompanied by Lebanese army soldiers (al-Manar website, July 24, 2026). Left: Head of Hezbollah's Executive Council Hashem Safieddine speaking at a public event of the Islamic Health Organization (Islamic Health Organization Telegram channel, July 6, 2022)

The Mutual Aid Association

► The Wa Ta'awanu Association ("mutual aid association") provides food and housing assistance. Over the years, it has been suspected of providing cover for Hezbollah's military-terrorist infrastructure in the area. Accounts of the date the association was established are conflicting. The chairman, Afif Shuman, interviewed by a Hezbollah media outlet, claimed the association was established only in 2019, in response to the need to address the population's needs following the Lebanon's severe economic crisis, while denying any organizational subordination to Hezbollah (al-Mayadeen, October 17, 2022). However, according to sources affiliated with the anti-Hezbollah camp, the association was established in 2007 as one of the lessons Hezbollah learned from the Second Lebanon War and as part of its efforts to repair the damage to Shi'ite villages in south Lebanon during the war (Independent Arabia, July 2, 2025).



Trucks and equipment brought by the Wa Ta'awanu Association to the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh (association X account, August 22, 2026)

► The Lebanese media say Afif Shuman (Abu Fadl), who heads the association, a Hezbollah member, and has stated publicly in the past that the assistance the association provides to residents comes from Iran, while expressing gratitude for Iran's commitment to supporting the Shi'ites in Lebanon (al-Manar X account, July 22, 2026). In addition, in light of the association's unusual activity in the Akkar region in north Lebanon, which has a Sunni majority, media outlets affiliated with Hezbollah's opponents have accused the association of being a tool for strengthening the organization's foothold and influence in Sunni areas (*al-Nahar*, November 25, 2022). Shuman himself said Wa Ta'awanu activity in the area was directed by Hezbollah and the Akkar region received special attention from [the late] Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 7, 2023). Shuman also conducted a publicized tour of the area with the Hezbollah Executive Council figure responsible for the northern sector, Rida Ahmed, during which Ahmed thanked Shuman for the association's activity (al-'Ahed, January 3, 2025).



Right: Afif Shuman, head of the Wa Ta'awanu Association (al-Nabatiyeh Channel Facebook page, August 15, 2026). Left: One of the association's warehouses (Afif Shuman's TikTok account, July 17, 2026)

► Lebanese media outlets previously reported that the association's activity was in fact a "soft arm" which advanced Hezbollah's objectives of entrenching itself in the country, including in areas with a Sunni majority, while exploiting the absence of assistance from official state institutions (Asas Media, April 4, 2023). Moreover, it was claimed that the association's activity provides civilian cover for military and logistical infrastructure used by Hezbollah's military-terrorist wing, noting that an association center in the town of Houla was attacked by Israel on the grounds it was used as a storage site for weapons (Independent Arabia, July 2, 2025).

► Leaflets dropped by the Israeli Air Force in south Lebanon called on residents to avoid any contact with the association, which was defined as "hostile," meaning affiliated with Hezbollah (*al-Nashra*, June 4, 2025). Local media outlets opposed to Hezbollah quoted military sources interviewed by the Israeli media who confirmed that the IDF had attacked the association's infrastructure and portable structures because they were part of Hezbollah's efforts to reestablish a foothold in the area (Janoubia, April 15, 2025).



Leaflet dropped by the IDF in the village of Yaroun calling on residents to avoid any contact with the Wa Ta'awanu Association (24 website, June 4, 2025)

► The Wa Ta'awanu Association also operates openly in the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh, which is a pilot zone. It conducted a field survey to map the damage, placed a number of portable structures in the village for the use of local residents and was responsible for sending in supply trucks (association X account, August 15 and 22, 2026). Wa Ta'awanu activity receives media coverage from Hezbollah as part of its campaign to highlight the organization's activity in assisting residents returning to their villages (al-Manar, August 2, 2026).

► Further evidence of the association's connection to Hezbollah can be found in the fact that donations to the association are collected through a designated account at al-Qard al-Hassan,⁵ Hezbollah's financial institution, which is subject to American sanctions. That is

⁵ A financial institution directly affiliated with Hezbollah that operates as an alternative banking system or credit association for supporters of the organization and the Shi'ite public in Lebanon. For further information, see the May 2019 ITIC report, [Hezbollah's socioeconomic foundations: Al-Qard](#)

significant because other financial institutions in Lebanon have severed their relations with the association, apparently because of concerns that they themselves could be exposed to American sanctions (al-Akhbar, October 15, 2025).

► Evidence of the association's affiliation with Hezbollah also comes from the Good Face campaign launched by the association in early 2025. Its objective was to assist residents of south Lebanon to return to their villages, while the campaign logo was based on a figure bearing the face of former Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah (association's Facebook page, February 4, 2025). The campaign was perceived in Lebanon as a deliberate Hezbollah initiative to reestablish its foothold in the villages of south Lebanon.



Notice for the Good Face campaign launched by the Wa Ta'awanu Association (association Facebook page, February 4, 2025)

[al-Hasan, a quasi-bank that provides interest-free loans, mainly to members of the Shiite community.](#)