



Spotlight on Terrorism : Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria April 1-8, 2024

The Northern Arena*

- 1,226 attacks
- 267 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 62 operatives of other terrorist-organization killed
- Two non-affiliated operatives killed
- One Lebanese army soldier killed
- One Lebanese internal security operative killed

***Updated from October 8, 2023**

Overview

- ▶ This past week Hezbollah continued its attacks on northern Israel, attacking military and civilian targets 43 times. In response, the IDF attacked Hezbollah facilities along the border and in Ba'albek. In one of the attacks a senior operative in Hezbollah's Radwan Force was killed.
- ▶ Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, delivered two speeches for World Jerusalem Day. In his speeches he emphasized the "uniqueness" of Jerusalem Day this year, claiming that Israel was on the road to destruction and that Hezbollah was ready for any scenario.
- ▶ Hezbollah, the Lebanese foreign ministry and other government groups condemned the airstrike attributed to Israel near the Iranian embassy in Damascus, where Muhammad Rada Zahedi (Hassan Mahdawi), the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force commander in Syria and Lebanon, his deputy and five other Iranians were killed.
- ▶ This past week, to raise the morale of its soldiers, Hezbollah published a large number of notices on social networks threatening Israel.
- ▶ Internal Lebanese criticism of Hezbollah gained momentum, mainly from Christian groups.

▶ UNIFIL is investigating an incident in which four security force operatives were injured by an explosion in the area of Rmeish, in south Lebanon. According to the initial investigation, they were injured when a mine exploded.

▶ The economic situation in south Lebanon is deteriorating, and reportedly there is a shortage of medicines.

South Lebanon

Hezbollah attacks

This past week (April 1-7, 2024) Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **43 attacks** using

▶ anti-tank missiles, rockets of various types, firing mortar shells and launching UAVs (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 1-7, 2024):

- ◆ On April 1, 2024, there were **four attacks**,
- ◆ On April 2, 2024, there were **six attacks**, mainly involving rockets and anti-aircraft fire. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching rockets at Kibbutz Gesher Ziv [allegedly] in response to IDF attacks, especially in the village of Yarine, in which a civilian was injured (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 2, 2024).
- ◆ On April 3, 2024, there were **six attacks**, mainly involving artillery fire.
- ◆ On April 4, 2024, there were **five attacks**, mainly involving artillery fire.
- ◆ On April 5, 2024, there were **seven attacks**, mainly involving artillery and anti-aircraft fire.
- ◆ On April 6, 2024, there were **11 attacks**, mainly involving anti-aircraft fire, various types of rockets and UAVs. Hezbollah also claimed responsibility for intercepting an IDF Hermes 900 UAV. According to the IDF spokesperson, a surface-to-air missile was launched at IDF UAV in the skies of Lebanon; it was damaged and crashed in Lebanese territory. The incident is being investigated (IDF spokesperson, April 6, 2024).



Right: A Hermes 900 UAV. Left: The interception of the Hermes 900 UAV on April 6, 2024 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 7,2024)



Hezbollah's propaganda notice with a UAV and an inscription reading, "Our aerial defense [lies] in ambush," February 26, 2024 (Nissim Center, February 26, 2024)

- ◆ On April 7, 2024, Hezbollah announced that its operatives had launched dozens of rockets at an air force base and at the Yoav camp.
- ◆ On April 7, 2024, there were **four attacks**, mainly involving artillery fire. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching dozens of Katyusha rockets at the Air and Missile Defense Headquarters in the Kela military camp and the Yoav base and missile and artillery camp in response to IDF attacks in the Lebanon Valley region. According to Hezbollah, the attack was carried out as a response to Israel's attack in the al-Beqaa area. The al-Jazeera network reported the launching of at least 40 rockets from south Lebanon at the Golan Heights ("the occupied Syrian Golan"). In addition, a UAV was launched at an IDF force and its armored personnel carriers behind the Dalia post on Mount Dov

IDF response

▶ In response, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon and the Beqaa area. Amal targets were also attacked (IDF spokesperson, April 2-7, 2024):

- ◆ A military compound and three military facilities of the aerial defense system in the Ba'albek region (the night of April 6, 2024)
- ◆ Terrorist facilities and a military structure in Aita al-Sha'ab and al-Adeisa.
- ◆ A military structure belonging to the Amal movement, in the Marjayoun area where terrorists were identified. In Lebanon it was reported that a building near a camp of the Lebanese army in the center of Marjayoun was destroyed (Ali Shoeib's X account, April 5,2024).



Right: IDF attack in Marjayoun (IDF spokesperson, April 5, 2024). Left: The attack in Marjayoun (Ali Shoeib's X account, April 5, 2024)

- ◆ Military buildings and Hezbollah facilities in the area of Blida and Einata.



Right: Attack in the area of Blida. Left: An attack in Einata (IDF spokesperson, April 3, 2024)

- ◆ A Hezbollah terrorist facility and military positions in the area of Kafr Hammam. One of The positions was used by the organization's terrorist operatives to launch rockets at Mount Dov.



Attack in Kfar Hammam (IDF spokesperson, April 3, 2024)

- ◆ Hezbollah observation posts in the al-Khiyam area and terrorist facilities in the Kfarkila area. Terrorist facilities in the area of Yaroun, Einata, and Maroun al-Ras. Lebanese sources stated that attacks were carried out in Kfarkila and the eastern neighborhood of Balida (Azmtayyar's X account, April 4, 2024; Fouad Khreiss' X account, April 3, 2024).



Attack in Yaroun. (Right: IDF spokesperson, April 4, 2024). Left: Attack on Yaroun (Ali Shaoeib's X account, April 4, 2024)

- ◆ A Radwan Force military complex with seven buildings in the l-Khiyam area, a military headquarters in the area of Kfar Toura, about seven kilometers northeast of Tyre. A house in the area between Jannata and Toura (about two kilometers northwest of Jannata). It was the first time the IDF attacked the area (Lebanon 24, April 7, 2024).



Attack in the al-Khiyam area (IDF spokesperson, April 7, 2024)

Hezbollah casualties

▶ Three Hezbollah operatives were killed in the Israeli Air Force attack on the night of April 7, 2024 in the al- Sultaniyah region, about 15 kilometers west of Kiryat Shmona,. Among the dead was **Ali Ahmed Hussein, commander of Ramim Ridge area of Hezbollah's Radwan Force**. Ali Ahmed Hussein was a senior Hezbollah operative with a rank equal to brigade commander. He was responsible for orchestrating terrorist operations in the Ramim region and launched rockets at Israel from the beginning of the war. Two terrorists under his command were also killed (IDF spokesperson, April 8, 2024). Hezbollah announced the death of Ali Ahmed Hussein, aka Abbas Jafar, born in 1984 in Beirut (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 8, 2024).



Right: The attack in al-Sultaniyah (IDF spokesperson, April 8, 2024). Left: Ali Ahmed Hussein (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 8, 2024)

▶ During the week Hezbollah reported the deaths of eight operatives, all from south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel , April 2-8, 2024).

- ◆ Hussein Rida Yusuf, aka Hadi, born in 1986 in al-Khiyam.
- ◆ Hassan Ibrahim Aloul, aka Hassan, born in 2003 in Al-Saksakiyah.

- ◆ Ali Nasser Abd Ali, aka Kafil, born in 1998 in Ayteet.
- ◆ Bilal Haidar Halal, aka Sajed, born in 1996 in Qana.
- ◆ Abbas Diyab Daibs, aka Abu al-Fadal, born in 1994 in Meis Al-Jabal.
- ◆ Ahmed Ali Hamed, aka Yaqoub, born in 1992 in Toura.
- ◆ Abd al-Amir Hassan Halawi, aka Ali al-rida, born in 1976 in Kafrkila.
- ◆ Ahmed Amin Shams al-Din, aka Abdallah, born in 1990 in Markaba and a resident of Aita al-Sha'ab.



Hezbollah casualties (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 2-8, 2024)

Amal casualties

▶ The Amal Movement reported the death of three terrorist operatives, all from south Lebanon (Amal movement central media information office, April 5, 2024).

- ◆ al-Sayid Musawi Abd al0Karim al-Musawi, aka al-Sayid, born in 1977 in al-Nabi Shit.
- ◆ Muhammad Ali Wahhabi, aka Abu Shamran, born in 1987 in al-Khiyam.
- ◆ Muhammad Dawood Sheet, aka Falah, born in 1992 in Kafrkila.



The Amal casualties (Amal Movement X Account, April 5, 2024)

- ▶ Amal also reported the death of Hasi Muhammad Assaf, aka Sajed, born in 2006 from (Meis al-Jabal, a medic in Amal's Islamic Message Scout Association.¹ According to reports, he was wounded by gunfire on April 1, 2024, while spying on the Israel-Lebanon border area (Amal Movement Telegram channel, April 6, 2024).



Amal Movement casualty (Amal Telegram channel, April 6, 2024)

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) casualty

- ▶ the PIJ reported the death of Muhammad Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, aka Abu Ali, 32 years old, who belonged to the Martyr Abu Hamza al-Maghdoub Regiment – Lebanese arena. He was reportedly killed on the Israel-Lebanon border part of Operation al-Aqsa Flood (The Jerusalem Brigades combat information Telegram channel, April 3, 2024).

¹ The Islamic Message Scout Association is a Lebanese scout movement founded in 1977 by Imam Musa al-Sadr (founder of the Amal movement, who also serves as a role model for Hezbollah) together with Shi'a and Sunni religious scholars. The Association currently has 275 battalions deployed in various regions throughout the country, in the Lebanon Valley, Beirut, Mount Lebanon and south Lebanon.



The PIJ casualty (The Jerusalem Brigades combat information Telegram channel, April 3, 2024)

Hezbollah focuses on the use of UAVs

► According to an Alma Center study, during the past month Hezbollah made increasing use of UAVs and less of rockets and anti-tank missiles in attacking Israel. The study compared the number of launches during February and March 2024, and showed that **in March four and a half times more UAVs were launched than in February**, seven in February and 31 in March 2024. In March 2024 Hezbollah claimed responsibility of four UAV attacks, perhaps in an attempt to avoid a "proportional response," according to its own "equation" of "an attack in return for an attack." The number of anti-aircraft missile launches decreased from 75 in February to 48 in March, but the organization still has significant capability to attack (Alma Center website, April 2, 2024).

Statements from senior Hezbollah figures

Hassan Nasrallah

► Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, gave a short speech on April 3, 2024 as part of the "Jerusalem pulpit" event, a virtual gathering, during which speeches were given by the leaders of the "resistance axis"² for World Jerusalem Day.³ He addressed the following issues (al-Jazeera , April 3, 2024):

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

³ World Jerusalem Day was established by the creator of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, to unite Muslims against Israel. It is marked in Iran and around the world (especially among the Shi'ite population identified with the Iranian regime) on the last Friday of Ramadan.

- ◆ **World Jerusalem Day:** It is unique this year in that it takes place in the shadow of Operation al-Aqsa Flood (the Gaza Strip War) which, he claimed, would lead to the "liberation of Al-Aqsa."
- ◆ **The "resistance axis":** Nasrallah thanked and praised the "Palestinian resistance" and the Gazans for their "resistance" and the creation of the "ethos of al-Aqsa Flood." He also praised the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria for their sacrifice and the fronts supporting the Gaza Strip in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. He praised Syria which stood up under international pressure [even though] it was attacked daily, and Iran for standing with the Palestinians and the "resistance" movements [terrorist organizations]. He also thanked the protesters around the world who took action for the Palestinian issue, including in the United States.
- ◆ **Israel's activity:** Israel, he said, ignores international law and the international community, which calls on it to stop the fighting and it continues "in its Nazi actions and its barbarism against the Palestinian people".
- ◆ **The need for a firm stance:** Nasrallah said it was necessary to stand firm, continue to take action and believe that victory would eventually come to Gaza and all "resistance" fronts.
- ◆ **Aid to fight Israel:** He called for the provision of all possible forces for fighting Israel to realize the goals of Operation al-Aqsa Flood. He called it "a duty of all of us."
- ◆ **Achievements of Operation al-Aqsa Flood:** He called the achievements of Operation al-Aqsa Flood to be stressed, and for fighting the "hypocrites" In the Arab-Islamic world who focus on the victims of the fighting and ignore the magnitude of the achievements. The "hypocrites," he said, gave the enemy moral support. He also called for stressing the strategic implications of Operation al-Aqsa Flood on the status of the United States and of Israel, its economic losses and the influence on its future.
- ◆ **Israel's situation:** Operation al-Aqsa Flood, he claimed, brought Israel to the brink of annihilation. He described Israel's decay over the years: in 2000 (withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon) Israel lost the dream of "Greater Israel from the [Euphrates] River to the Nile;" in 2006 (the Second Lebanon War) Israel lost the dream of becoming a regional power in the Middle East and Operation al-Aqsa Flood brought Israel to the brink of the abyss and discourse about its survival. The coming years will be the last years of its existence.

- ◆ Ending the war with a victory: Everything must be done to end this war with a victory and realize the "final goal" [the destruction of Israel].



Nasrallah gives a speech for the "Jerusalem pulpit" (al-Jazeera, April 3, 2024)

- ▶ On April 5, 2024, Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech for World Jerusalem Day, relating to the following topics (al-Manar, April 5, 2024):

- ◆ **Praise for the "martyrs":** He praised the sacrifice of the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon in the current campaign. He mentioned the "shaheeds" of the "attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria,"⁴ whom he called "valuable," and especially Muhammad Rada Zahedi, commander of the IRGC Qods Force in Syria and Lebanon⁵. He offered condolences to their families and praised Zahedi for great and many-year contribution to the "resistance." Nasrallah described his killing as "a watershed incident" the fighting since October 7, 2023, implying a fundamental change in combat or in the organization's strategy. It is certain that sooner or later there will be Iranian response to the Israeli attack in Damascus. Even in Israel they understand that and have started making preparations and [allegedly] storing food.

- ◆ **Words of praise for Khomeini and the Iranian regime:** He praised Ayatollah Khomeini, the creator of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which established World Jerusalem Day in accordance with a religious concept common to Sunnis and Shi'ites regarding activity for the "liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem." The current Iranian regime continues to act in the light of the concept. He emphasized the depth of Hezbollah's ties with Iran, which are a source of "great pride." Iran, he said, sacrificed a lot for its stance against Israel, and Hezbollah's connection with Iran is an honor for Hezbollah.

⁴ Actually, the building next to the Iranian consulate in Syria.

⁵ In addition to Zahedi, his lieutenant and five other Iranians were killed, apparently IRGC operatives.

- ◆ **October 7 for Israel:** There is no doubt that October 7, 2023 was the beginning of a different era, in which Israel is in existential danger and Operation al-Aqsa Flood proved its military, national and political weakness, despite the aid from the United States. Israel, he claimed, failed to realize its goals for the war and lacks a plan for the day after, has lost the international arena, is entangled in internal problems, all of which is the proof of its failure. The "resistance" in the Gaza Strip and on all fronts is moving forward to victory over Israel.
- ◆ **The part of the USA:** Not only are the hands of the United States covered in Palestinian blood, but it is drowning in the blood of the Palestinians. In addition, it fails to cope with the achievements of the Houthis in the Red Sea.
- ◆ **Managing the fighting with Israel:** From the moment it receives the order, within minutes Hezbollah can fire a hundred missiles at the Golan Heights. Hezbollah's preparedness is very high and it has not yet used all the types of weapons in his possession. Everyone must be prepared for any eventuality and if Israel starts a war it will regret its decision. The "resistance" in Lebanon is not afraid of war and has conducted the last six months of fighting from a strategic perspective.



Nasrallah give a speech (al-Manar, April 5, 2024)

Other statements

- ▶ In a speech given for World Jerusalem Day, **Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general**, said Hezbollah was not dragging Lebanon into war, but rather Israel was leading the region to "problems." He claimed the "resistance" was in a defensive position and would prevent Israel from achieving its goals. He also noted that a fixed "equation" had been set for the current conflict, according to which if Israel expands its activities, so will the "resistance." He added that the fighting would continue as long as the "aggression" against the

Gaza Strip continued, adding that Hezbollah was prepared for any possible eventuality (al-'Ahed, April 4, 2024).

► **Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council**, claimed that Israel had lost control over the war and its many threats testified to its weakness. He claimed the army was scattered, tired and without organized battle plans. On the other hand, he claimed, the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] was strong and united and the level of coordination between all axis parties was high. Hezbollah had advanced weapons, which turned it into a strong front. In addition, the "resistance" in Judea and Samaria had achieved a great deal and would play a central role in the coming days (al-Aqsa TV , April 5, 2024).

► In Lebanon, Hamas and Hezbollah held a joint conference for World Jerusalem Day, at the Imam Khomeini cultural center in Ba'albek. **Muhammad Yazbek, head of Hezbollah's Sharia Committee**, and **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, participated in the conference. Yazbek said that Hezbollah supported the "Palestinian brothers" in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and everywhere. According to him, the residents of South Lebanon were paying the highest price, to be with "our brother and our people to prove that our blood and their blood is one blood." Abd al-Hadi said that those in distress were the Americans and the Israelis, who knew they would have no achievements and would not be able to pressure the members of the political leadership to change their conditions (al-Mayadeen, April 5, 2024).

► **Nabil Qaouk, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council**, said that after the Israeli attack on Aleppo on March 29, 2024, the "resistance" launched a missile with a range of 1,110 km, to hit the "Israeli enemy's positions." He did not specify where the missile was launched from and whether Hezbollah had launched it. Later, the article in which the quote appeared was corrected to read that an Ashtar missile weighs 1,110 kgs and does not have a range of 1,110 km. He claimed that all Israel's threats, attacks and maneuvers did not frighten them and they would not change their position regarding supporting the Gazans. He also claimed that Israel could disregard UN resolutions but had to endure the attacks of the "resistance" and would not be able to return the "settlers" [i.e., the residents of northern Israel] to their "settlements" unless it surrendered to the resistance (al-'Ahed, April 1, 2024).

Internal Lebanese Affairs

▶ Nagib Mikati, prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon, said a meeting had been held with UN agencies, during which the Lebanese government had asked for rapid assistance for the displaced persons from south Lebanon, who numbered 100 thousand. He added that since October 7, 2023, 313 people had been killed in Lebanon and over a thousand had been injured. He claimed south Lebanon be declared an agricultural disaster zone, since the problem will drag on for years. He added that the Lebanese government wanted peace and human justice and was asking the international community to condemn Israel's attacks and pressure it to stop the war and turn towards the path of peace (al-Nashra,, April 4, 2024).

▶ **Bilal Abdallah, chairman of the Parliamentary Health Committee in Lebanon**, said it was unlikely that the hospitals in South Lebanon would be able to withstand a situation of total war, especially in terms of support, budgets and equipment and therefore reliance would be shifted to hospitals far from the Lebanon-Israel border (Lebanese News Agency, April 4, 2024).

▶ **Layla Khalil, a reporter for al-Ghad TV in south Lebanon**, said that it was more than six months since the pharmaceutical companies had stopped distributing medicine to pharmacies 25 kilometers from the border with Israel because of the war. She stated that the owners of the pharmacies were forced to transport medicines in their own cars accompanied by a driver and security, risking their lives. She added that a number of pharmacies in south Lebanon remained open thanks to the independent supply initiative from Beirut, but many pharmacies in the combat zones had closed their doors and their owners suffered serious financial losses (al-Ghad TV, as published on munisibpe's TikTok account, April 4, 2024). In June 2023 it was reported that Hezbollah intended to expand its al-Murtada chain of pharmacies (MTV Lebanon News, June 3, 2023). Apparently following the war the arrangement was not implemented because of the war.

▶ Ziad Hawat, a member of the Lebanese parliament, met with Lisa Johnson, the American ambassador to Lebanon, who came to visit Jbeil. She said the city of Jbeil shows signs of cultural and civilian coexistence despite the war, and that its residents were trying to prepare the area for the summer tourist season. She also noted the importance of electing a president for Lebanon and the implementation of UN resolutions 1707 and 1559. She

also said Lebanon must not collapse economy and socially (Ziad Hawat's X account, April 6, 2024).

UNIFIL

▶ On March 30, 2024, UNIFIL announced that three observers of the organization and a Lebanese translator had injured by a while they were conducting a walking tour in south Lebanon. Andrea Tenenti, UNIFIL spokesman, said that injured soldiers had not been hit by direct or indirect fire, and noted that the circumstances of the explosion were being investigated (Reuters, April 3, 2024). A Lebanese army source said that the results of initial investigations indicated that the UNIFIL force had been injured when a mine exploded (al-Jadeed, April 3, 2024). A legal source in Lebanon also confirmed the [Israeli] version, according to which UNIFIL personnel were injured by a mine explosion and not by an Israeli attack (al-Arabiya in Lebanon Facebook page, April 3, 2024).

▶ A few days later, Lebanese army forces located a bomb planted by Hezbollah operatives on the outskirts of the Christian town of Rmeish in south Lebanon. After the Lebanese army engineering unit dismantled it, it turned out to be a 12 kg load with a remote activation mechanism (Akhbar Kol Muwaten Facebook page, April 5, 2024).



Lebanese army soldiers who located the IED. Left: The IED (Akhbar Kol Muwaten Telegram channel, April 5, 2024)

▶ **Joanna Wronecka, the special coordinator of the UN in Lebanon, and Arold Lazzaro, the commander of UNIFIL,** said in a joint statement that half a year had passed since the clashes on Israel-Lebanon border began, and a high price had been exacted price from the residents. They stated that the attacks by both sides constituted a serious violation Resolution 1701, and the escalation raised the risk of the situation deteriorating. They called all parties to recommit to stopping such actions as part of Resolution 1701, adding that the UN was prepared

to support efforts for a permanent ceasefire and to resolve the conflict (UNIFIL's Telegram channel, April 8, 2024).

Criticism of Hezbollah

► **Jabran Bassil, chairman of the Free National Movement in the Lebanese Parliament**, said in a speech that he did not know how Israel could be defeated while Lebanon as a state was collapsing, the economic situation was bad, their institutions were crumbling and national unity was threatened. He added that if anyone believed he could control the rest of the citizens and defeat Israel, he was mistaken. He said all Lebanese today did not want war, nor did the United States nor Iran. He claimed that only the Israeli government wanted war and therefore he wondered if they would allow the Israeli government to continue to kill and destroy or would they adopt a policy that separated Lebanon from the Gaza Strip and demand a ceasefire in Lebanon. He said he understood that Hezbollah was waging a war for the sake of Lebanon, but he could not understand conducting wars which were not in Lebanon's interest of Lebanon (Bassil's X account, April 6, 2024 and the Lebanese News Agency, April 6, 2024).

► **Samy Gemayel, chairman of the Phalange Party**, said in an interview that for Lebanon to get out of its current situation, international efforts were necessary, since Hezbollah's strength and funding came from Iran. He said the problem was not local to Lebanon and therefore international solutions were needed. He noted the need for the international community to exert pressure to implement international resolutions (Kon Mowaten, April 3, 2024).

► Karen Boustany⁶, a Christian Lebanese journalist, gave an interview in which she expressed her opposition to Lebanon's joining the circle of fighting against Israel while directing sharp criticism at Hezbollah. In the interview she wondered why Lebanon, which is in a state of collapse, entered a war which was not its own, regardless of its solidarity with the Palestinians. She emphasized that Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon were the only countries participating in the fighting, and the reason for that was is that proxies of Iran operated in those countries, which obeyed to it. She wondered whether Hezbollah knew of a case where someone had attacked Israel and profited from it. She stated that the damage caused to

⁶ Karen Boustany, Lebanese Christian international media personality, writer, businesswoman, director and producer, was supported as a candidate for the seat of Maroni in the local elections by the Lebanese Forces party of Samir Geagea, known for its opposition to Hezbollah

agriculture in south Lebanon was estimated at about \$2.5 billion and that people had also died (MTV, posted on manar melhm's TikTok account, April 4, 2024).



Karen Boustany (MTV, posted on Manar Melhm's TikTok account, April 4, 2024)

▶ Christians in south Lebanon reiterated their demand to remain neutral in the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, in order to avoid attacks on their villages. They expressed anger with Hezbollah and feared that their houses would be set on fire, which would force them and their families to flee their villages near the border with Israel. A resident of Rmeish, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of Hezbollah's reaction, said that the residents have had to do with to the war and wondered if Hezbollah wanted to uproot them from their homes (Lebanon Files, April 1, 2024).

▶ The Lebanese news website Janoubia published an article claiming that Hezbollah was drowning Lebanon in mud following its support of Iran and Gaza. According to the site, the war was becoming "endless" and subsequently Israel expanded its attacks deep into Lebanon. After six months of war, Hezbollah had not backed down and was paying with Lebanese victims and assets. Meanwhile, according to the website, the war would not progress into a broader war with the United States and Israel (Janoubia, April 7, 2024).

Lebanon's economy

▶ **Hector Hajar, the Lebanese minister of welfare**, referred to the dire economic situation in Lebanon and noted that there was an increase in the percentage of Lebanese defined as poor since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2019, with the result that the rate of poverty had reached 82%, of which 32% are in extreme poverty. Hagar noted that the war south Lebanon had a negative effect on many families which were unable to reap their crops, which had previously provided them with funding for an entire year. He said a national welfare strategy had been determined which was supposed to support the residents in the middle and

lower class through social assistance, social security, providing job opportunities and financial support for education and health services (al-Sharq al-Awsat, April 1, 2024).

► The American embassy in Lebanon announced that the United States remained committed to providing critical humanitarian assistance to those who need it throughout Lebanon. The embassy issued an urgent call for additional donors to join the efforts to meet urgent needs as soon as possible and prevent the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Lebanon (United States Embassy in Lebanon, April 3, 2024).

Reactions to the Killing of the Qods Force Commander in Syria and Lebanon

► Following the attack in Damascus which resulted in the death of Zahedi, the commander of the Qods Force in Syria and Lebanon, his lieutenant and five other Iranians, Hezbollah published a statement stating that had been killed by "a crime committed by the Israeli enemy" on the Iranian consulate building in Damascus. According to the Hezbollah, Zahedi was one of the first supporters of Hezbollah and persisted for many years in developing and promoting "resistance" activity in Lebanon. He decided to stay far from his homeland [Iran] with his family because " he loved the resistance and wanted to defend the oppressed in our region and especially in Palestine." It was also noted that the "crime" indicated that Israel still believed could stop the "erupting wave of resistance. Naturally, , it will not pass without punishment and revenge" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 2, 2024).

► **Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council**, said that the killing of Zahedi was not proof of Israel's power, but on the contrary, would only push the "resistance axis" to take action act and try harder to defeat it . He also stated that if Israel believed that killing the Iranian commanders would stop the "resistance" in the area, it was wrong. That was because the "resistance" was a religion, life and honor and could not be given up (al-Manar TV, April 2, 2024).

► During Zahedi's funeral in Ispahan, **Nabil Qaouk, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council**, said that because Hezbollah and Iran shared a position, the killing would not stop the "support front" in the Gaza Strip, but would only make matters worse for Israel. Any UAV or and missile launched at Israel would be an expression of Zahedi's presence and he would remain a partner in all the nation's achievements (al-'Ahed, April 6, 2024).

► The **Lebanese foreign ministry** condemned the airstrike attributed to Israel near the Iranian consulate in Damascus, where Zahedi and other terrorist operatives were killed. According to the foreign ministry, attacking "embassies" diplomatic places is a violation of international law. The ministry also conveyed Lebanon's condolences to Iran and to the families of the dead, and claimed that dangerous escalation threatens the peace and security of the region and the world (Lebanese foreign ministry X account, April 2, 2024).

► **Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and chairman of the Amal Movement**, sent communiqués to Ali Khamenei, the president of Iran and the speaker of the Majlis, in which he condemned the attack in Damascus and expressed condolences on behalf of Lebanon to the families of the victims. He claimed the ongoing Israeli "aggression" crossed borders and countries and was a blatant example of [alleged] "state terrorism" (NBN Lebanon, April 2, 2024).

Hezbollah's Battle for Hearts and Minds

► This past week Hezbollah published a large number of notices on social networks, in which its operatives can be seen armed and in full combat readiness. The announcements, intended to convey a threatening message to Israel, included phrases to raise the morale of the organization's operatives, for example, "Inspire him [the organization's fighter] with courage and grant him persistence," "Much deceit towards them," "Oh Allah, strike their enemy with this [weapon], "Support the defenders with your power" and "Guard their property and prevent the attack against them" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 2-3, 2024).



Hezbollah operatives in action
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, April 2-3, 2024).