



Reactions to the targeted killing of Taleb Sami Abdallah, commander of Hezbollah's al-Nasr unit

June 16, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ On June 12, 2024, Hezbollah announced the death of Sami Taleb Abdallah, aka al-Hajj Abu Taleb, in an Israeli airstrike on a building in the town of Jwayya in south Lebanon. Three other Hezbollah operatives were killed in the attack. The IDF spokesperson confirmed that the Israeli Air Force had attacked Abdallah, who since 2016 had been in command of Hezbollah's al-Nasr unit, which operates in the eastern sector of south Lebanon.
- ▶ The Hezbollah announcement of his death referred to Abdallah as "the shaheed commander". Since the beginning of the current conflict in October 2023, it was only the second time that Hezbollah had called one of its eliminated operatives "commander," an expression of his senior position. Hezbollah also published photos and videos of Abdallah, showing him with Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and the commanders of the Iranian Qods Force. According to Hezbollah, Abdallah joined its ranks in 1984, was the commander during the fighting in south Lebanon until the withdrawal of IDF forces in 2000 and in the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006, and also led the attacks against Israel in the eastern sector on the Israeli border during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.
- ▶ The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar called the killing of Abdallah a "brutal and severe blow" to the organization. However, senior Hezbollah figures claimed his death would not change its commitment to "support" the Palestinians in the current conflict, adding that the organization would intensify its fighting against Israel. Commentators have claimed that Hezbollah has no interest in an all-out war.
- ▶ Hezbollah's response to the killing of Abdallah was a sharp increase in the attacks on Israeli territory, which lasted for several days. According to Hezbollah, part of its response was the most extensive attack it had carried out so far, including the launch of 30 UAVs and 150 rockets at IDF headquarters and bases in the Galilee and the Golan Heights. The IDF confirmed the

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firing of more than 200 rockets at Israel since Abdallah's killing, in addition to the launch of UAVs. Two IDF soldiers and two civilians were injured and widespread fires broke out in Israel's northern region.

► **The Hezbollah's response to Abu Taleb's killing is indicative of his important position in the organization and is intended to deter Israel from further targeted killings of its senior commanders. However, in Hezbollah's perspective, despite the increase in the intensity of rocket and artillery fire and the scope of UAV launches, the attack range was not extended beyond its so-called "equation" of within 35-40 km (22-25 miles) from the border and the organization refrained from bringing new settlements into the range of attack.**

► Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and organizations belonging to the so-called "resistance axis" led by Iran sent condolences to Hezbollah on Abdallah's death and expressed appreciation for his work for the "resistance" [Palestinian campaign to destroy Israel].

The Targeted Killing of Abdallah

Hezbollah announcement

► On the evening of June 11, 2024, Lebanese media reported that an Israeli drone had attacked a building in the town of Jwayya in south Lebanon, about 11 km (7 miles) southeast of Tyre and about 15 km (9 miles) from the border with Israel (al-Manar, June 11, 2024). It was later reported that one of the dead was Abu Taleb, who was identified as the "commander of the al-Nasr unit," which is responsible for attacking Israel in the eastern sector of south Lebanon, from the Bint Jbeil region to Mount Dov, and that it was the most significant Israeli attack since the current conflict began on October 8, 2023 (al-Hadath Telegram channel, June 11 and 12, 2024).

► Hezbollah also reported that three of its operatives had been killed in the attack: Muhammad Hussein Sabara, aka Baker, born in 1973, from the town of Hadatha in south Lebanon; Ali Salim Soufan, aka Kamil, born in 1971, from the town of Jwayya; and Hussein Qassem Hamid, aka Sajed, born in 1980, from Bint Jbeil in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12, 2024).



Right to left: Hamid, Soufan and Sabara (Telegram channel of Hezbollah's combat propaganda arm, June 12, 2024)

► After midnight on June 12, Hezbollah published an official mourning notice for the "shaheed commander" Taleb Sami Abdallah, aka al-Hajj Abu Taleb, born in 1969 in the town of Adshit in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12 2024). It was only the second time during the current conflict that Hezbollah gave one of the organization's dead the title of "commander" [the other instance was the killing of Wissam Hassan Tawil, the commander of the Radwan unit, on January 8, 2024], indicative of Abu Taleb's seniority in the ranks of Hezbollah.

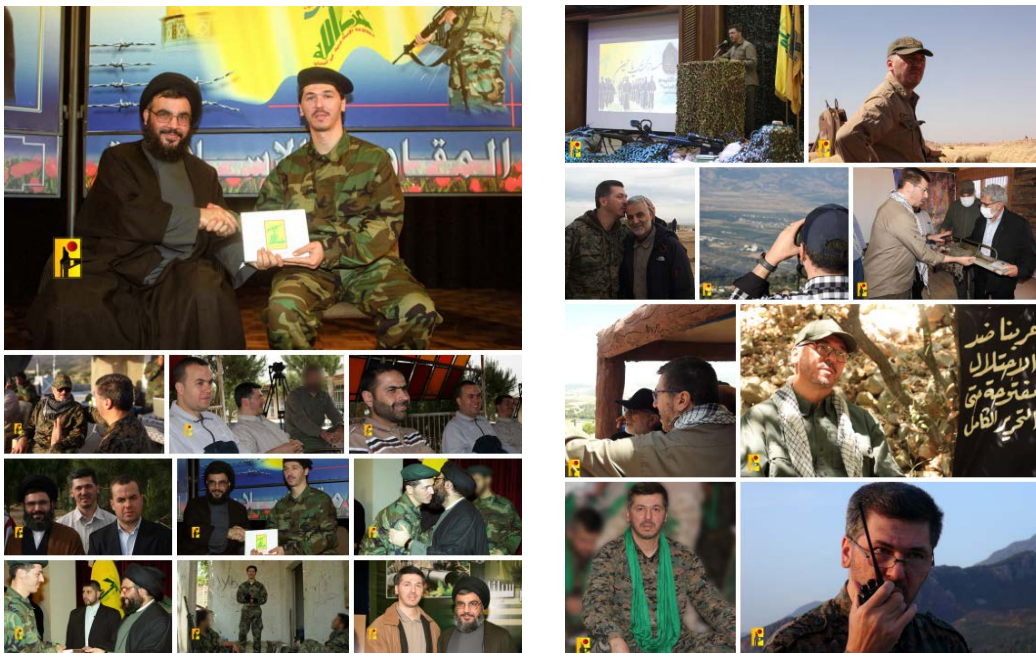


**Right: The building in Jwayya which was attacked (Fouad Khreiss' X account, June 11, 2024).
Left: Hezbollah's mourning notice for the death of the "shaheed commander" Taleb Sami Abdallah (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12, 2024)**

► Further evidence of the high rank of Abdallah, who was given awards by Hassan Nasrallah several times in appreciation of his service, was the publication issued by Hezbollah describing his landmark activities from the time he joined the ranks of the Islamic resistance in 1984 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12, 2024):

- ◆ He was one of the fighters (mujahedeen) who participated in the "defense of the Muslims" in Bosnia from 1992 to 1994;

- ◆ He was one of the commanders who participated in "specific" operations during the Israeli "occupation" of south Lebanon until the "liberation" in 2000;
- ◆ He commanded "heroic clashes" with Israel in the area of Maroun al-Ras, Bint Jbeil and Liberation Square in the Second Lebanon War in July 2006;
- ◆ He was involved as a commander in the conflict against "terrorist organizations" on the Lebanon-Syria border, in the defense of Lebanon;
- ◆ During Operation Al-Aqsa Flood he led the "military operations" [attacks] against Israeli sites, compounds and positions in the eastern sector of the Lebanon-Israel border;
- ◆ Hezbollah also published videos and photos of Abdallah over the years, showing him during activities and in meetings with Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, with the commander of the Iranian Qods Force, the late Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in an American operation in January 2020, with the current commander of the Qods Force, Esmail Qaani, and with Wissam Hassan Tawil, the commander of the Radwan Force who was killed in January 2024.



Photos of Abdallah published by Hezbollah (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12 and 14, 2024)

- ▶ A memorial ceremony was held for Abdallah in al-Ashuraa Square in the Dahieh al-Janoubia, the southern suburb of Beirut which is a Hezbollah stronghold, attended by the organization's operatives and a number of senior figures, headed by Hashem Safi al-Din, head of Hezbollah's Executive Council. His coffin was then moved to his native village of Adshit for burial (al-

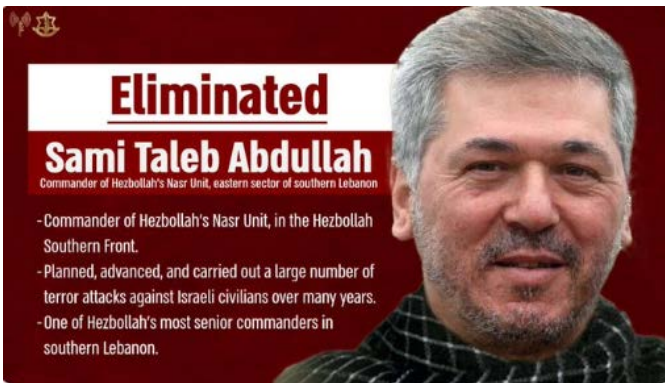
Manar, June 12, 2024). Hezbollah also opened a mourning tent in al-Mujtaba Complex in the Dahieh al-Janoubia, where people came to offer their condolences (al-'Ahed, June 13, 2024). Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, is expected to deliver a speech in Abu Taleb's memory on Wednesday, June 19, 2024.



**Right: Abdallah's coffin in a ceremony in the Dahieh al-Janoubia (al-Manar, June 12, 2024).
Left: Hezbollah operatives at the funeral in Adshit (Khutut Media X account, June 12, 2024)**

IDF announcement

► The IDF spokesperson confirmed that Abdallah, the commander of Hezbollah's al-Nasr unit, and three other Hezbollah operatives were killed in an Israeli Air Force attack on Hezbollah's headquarters in Jwayya, from where the organization directed its attacks against Israel from southeast Lebanon. The IDF spokesperson stated that Abdallah had planned, orchestrated and carried out many acts of terrorism against the citizens of Israel (IDF spokesperson website, June 12, 2024). According to reports, Abdallah had commanded the eastern sector of south Lebanon since 2016 and commanded the attacks on Israel in the current conflict. He was also responsible for an attempted abduction of IDF soldiers in Kafr Ghagar in 2005, commanded the Bint Jbeil Brigade in the Second Lebanon War in 2006, and led an anti-tank missile ambush in which two IDF soldiers were killed on Mount Dov in 2015 (Israeli media, June 12, 2024).



Right: The attack on Abdallah in Jwayya. Left: Information about Sami Taleb Abdallah (IDF spokesperson's website, June 12, 2026)

Significance of the Killing from Hezbollah Perspective

- ▶ In a speech given at the memorial ceremony, Hashem Safi al-Din, head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, said that Israel had not learned from the past and claimed that "every time one of our leaders is killed, the resistance becomes stronger and more determined on the battlefield." He said that the killing of Abdallah would not deter Hezbollah from continuing "to support the Gaza Strip," and its response would be to increase its operations in terms of "intensity, power, quantity and quality." He said that "if the enemy screams and laments about what happened to him in northern Israel, he has to prepare himself to cry and whimper more" (al-Nashra, June 12, 2024).
- ▶ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, stated that the organization's response to the "assassination" of Abdallah and his companions focused on the activity of the al-Nasr unit along the eastern part of the border, to show that despite the death of the unit's commander, it still had continuity (al-Nashra, June 15, 2024).
- ▶ Nabil Qaouk, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, said that the death of Abu Taleb and killing the organization's leaders "will not change the fact that Israel is defeated, is in crisis and turmoil." He noted that since the killing of Abu Taleb the "resistance" had increased the level of the conflict's goals, depth and intensity of the attacks and that "there is no intention to go back" (al-'Ahed, June 14, 2024). At a memorial ceremony for Ali Salim Soufan, one of the three operatives killed with Abdallah in the attack in Jwayya, Qaouk said that the "resistance" had turned 2,000 square kilometers of Israeli territory into a "burning scene of conflict" and if Israel escalated the fighting, it should expect a larger response (al-'Ahed, June 15, 2024).

► Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, praised Abdallah's work as a "leader" in the ranks of Hezbollah, especially in the current fighting against Israel. He claimed that Abdallah had been with the fighters at the front in the last eight months in order to strike the enemy with "heavy blows." He added that the "resistance" was suffering losses, but Israel was also paying a heavy price, and that the death of Abdallah and his colleagues would only increase their desire to continue their path and would "give birth to new, skilled field commanders" (al-Nour, June 12, 2024). Interviewed by al-Manar, he said that Abdallah had understood the "enemy" very well and believed that the conflict against Israel was "existential." He added that Abdallah was "an educator, and took care of the smallest details of the mujahideen and of the affairs of his people" (al-'Ahed, June 14, 2024).

► "A senior Hezbollah figure" said that the attack on Abdallah was a "severe blow" for the organization, but added that "such is the nature of war" and that Abu Taleb was a field commander who was close to the line of fire. He claimed that the unprecedented attack in response to the killing of Abdallah was intended to deter Israel from assassinating other Hezbollah figures, but was not meant to lead to an all-out war or a regional escalation. He claimed that if Israel understood the message, the fighting would remain within the framework of the "rules of conflict," as it had been since October 8, 2023, but if Israel took an "irresponsible" step against Lebanon, Hezbollah was prepared ready, determined and [allegedly] "capable of breaking and defeating the IDF" (al-Diyar, June 14, 2024).

► The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar reported that the Israeli attack was a "cruel, severe blow" for Hezbollah and called it a "high-quality [sic] and dangerous" escalation by Israel which "opens the door to a managing the conflict differently" (al-Akhbar, June 12, 2024).

► Ali Haidar al-Akhbar correspondent for Israeli affairs, said that from Israel's point of view, the killing of Abu Taleb raised in the level of response to Hezbollah, but not to a level that would lead to an all-out war, since Abu Taleb was a commander on the front and was directly involved in fighting against Israel. According to Haidar, Israel hoped that killing him would deter Hezbollah from continuing to "support the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians." He added that Israel would discover that killing a senior Hezbollah commander would not bring the desired results and that "the pressures on Israel on the battlefield will increase in a way it has never witnessed before" and it is expected to fall into "a military, political and strategic impasse" (al-Akhbar, June 13 2024).

► Hezbollah's al-'Ahed news site issued an infographic of the main landmarks of Abu Taleb's activities, entitled "Crushing the Pride of the Residents of Zion" (al-'Ahed, June 14, 2024).



The infographic of Abdallah's life and quotes from Hashem Safi al-Din (al-'Ahed, June 14, 2024)

Hezbollah's Military Response

► Hezbollah's response to the killing of Abdallah was a sharp increase in the intensity of attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets, including the launch of explosive UAVs and anti-tank missiles, and firing artillery and various types of rockets. At the same time, Hezbollah was careful not to extend the range of its attack beyond 35-40 km (22-25 miles) from the border.

► On June 12, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 19 attacks, stating nine were retaliation for the killing of Abu Taleb (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12, 2024):

- ◆ Launching guided missiles at a factory making equipment for protecting vehicles.
- ◆ Firing dozens of Katyusha rockets at the IDF Northern Command Headquarters.
- ◆ Firing dozens of Katyusha rockets at the reserve headquarters of the Northern Command at the reserve base of the Galilee Division and its warehouses.
- ◆ Firing dozens of Katyusha rockets and artillery shells at "the headquarters of the air surveillance unit and the air operations department."
- ◆ Firing artillery shells against a post on the border.
- ◆ Firing Katyusha rockets at IDF artillery positions in the area.
- ◆ Launching Burkan rockets at artillery positions near a nature preserve.
- ◆ Launching Burkan rockets at an outpost.
- ◆ Launching a UAV attack at a brigade headquarters.



Right: Launching missiles at the factory manufacturing vehicle protection. Left: The damage to the factory (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 14, 2024)

► During the day, sirens were sounded in dozens of cities, towns and villages along the border, in the Upper and Lower Galilee, including the Kinneret [Sea of Galilee] and Tiberias area, where no sirens had been heard since October 2023. The IDF spokesperson said that about 200 hostile aircraft had crossed the Lebanese border, some of which were intercepted, and UAVs were intercepted in the Hermon region. There were no casualties, but the crashes caused widespread fires, mainly in the area of the Biriya and Miron forests (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, June 12, 2024).



Right: A fire near the town of Kadita (Northern District Fire and Rescue Department, June 12, 2024). Left: A fire in the Biriya forest (Safed municipality spokesman's unit, June 12, 2024)

► On June 13, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 12 attacks, two of which were described as a response to the targeted killing (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 13, 2024):

- ◆ A combined attack using UAVs, Katyushas and heavy Falaq rockets targeted IDF six posts and bases along the border and the Golan Heights, a UAV swarm attack on a base in Safed, a camp which Hezbollah claimed was home to the intelligence unit responsible for the organization's senior figures and a brigade headquarters. A "source" in Hezbollah called it the largest attack since the beginning of the current conflict,

stating it had used 30 UAVs and 150 rockets (al-Jazeera Telegram channel, June 13, 2024).

- ◆ A second attack of UAV swarms on intelligence centers.

► The IDF spokesperson reported that about 40 rockets were launched at the Galilee and the Golan Heights and that some of them were intercepted, as were seven out of nine explosive aircraft that penetrated Israeli territory. Two IDF soldiers were injured by an anti-tank missile and two people were injured in the Golan Heights, a house was damaged in a kibbutz and fires broke out in various areas of the Golan Heights and the Upper Galilee (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, June 13, 2024).

► On June 15, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for three attacks, two of which were described as retaliation for the targeted killing (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 15, 2024):

- ◆ Guided missiles were launched at the "headquarters of the air surveillance unit and the air operations department." The IDF spokesperson confirmed that two hits were detected in the area of the air control unit, there were no casualties and no damage to the unit's capabilities (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 15, 2024).

- ◆ An explosive UAV attack on the "artillery battalion headquarters." The IDF spokesperson confirmed that a number of unmanned aircraft crashed in the Western Galilee, and that interception attempts failed. There were no casualties, but a fire broke out (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 15, 2024).



Launching an explosive UAV (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 16, 2024)

Significance of Hezbollah's attacks

► Hezbollah's retaliation took various forms:

- ◆ **Combined attacks:** There were simultaneous concentrated barrages of various types of rockets and explosive UAVs to make air defense more difficult and increase the

chances of hitting targets. The concentrated firing was also intended to increase the chance of fires as a result of direct hits or of shrapnel from interceptions, as actually happened.

◆ **Range of activity:** Despite the unusual attack on the northern Kinneret area, Hezbollah did not extend the range beyond which it has operated so far, about 35 to 40 km (22-25 miles) from the border. Most of the attacks were concentrated along the border and in the Upper and Lower Galilee areas. No attacks were located in the Nahariya, Acre or Haifa regions.

◆ **The duration of the response:** Unlike previous retaliations for the killing of terrorist operatives or civilians in south Lebanon, the attacks following the killing of Abdallah were prolonged and not limited to one day. According to Hezbollah, the main response to his death was carried out two days after the Israeli attack in Jwayya, and another the following day.

Palestinian and "Resistance Axis" Reactions

► Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the Iranian-led "resistance axis" offered their condolences on Abdallah's death and expressed appreciation for his work:

◆ Hamas expressed hope that "his pure blood" would be a curse which would persecute Israel and its army and inspire the Palestinian people to "resistance" and further sacrifices, and pave the way for the "liberation of the land and the holy places." Hamas also emphasized the efforts, participation and support of "our brothers in Hezbollah and the Islamic resistance in Lebanon" during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.

◆ The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, stated that it mourned the death of "the great leader of the Islamic resistance in Lebanon" who was killed "in a treacherous Zionist raid." The announcement praised the central role played by Abu Taleb in supporting the Palestinian people and their "struggle" during the Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and his central role "at the forefront of the 'resistance' against the Zionist occupation for centuries [sic]" (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, June 12, 2024).

◆ The PIJ sent its condolences to Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, to Hezbollah fighters and to their "Lebanese brothers" for the "heavenly ascension of the great shaheed." The condolence message stated that Abdallah had had a large and

honorable presence in the march [forwards] of the "resistance," especially in the clashes on the front in south Lebanon and in defense of "Palestine" and its people, who "are struggling in the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria" (PIJ Telegram channel – Ministry of Information, June 12, 2024).

◆ The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing, said they knew well the meaning of losing "a great leader like Hajj Abu Taleb." The announcement stated that he had been "a big brother and a solid supporter of the Jerusalem Brigades in times of peace and war." It also stated that he had spent "most of his time" supporting the fighters of "Palestine," especially the operatives of the Jerusalem Brigades, provided for their needs and removed obstacles that prevented them from carrying out their "their duties towards Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque." The Jerusalem Brigades promised that "the brotherhood baptized in blood will remain an inspiration for us until liberation and return" (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, June 12, 2024).

◆ The militia of the Hezbollah Brigades in Iraq sent its condolences to Hassan Nasrallah and the fighters of the Islamic resistance in Lebanon for the death as a martyr of Abu Taleb and a group of his "brave" companions after "a brilliant history that was seen in the arenas of confrontation and jihad and resistance to the occupying invaders" and especially his largest and most honorable presence in the conflicts conducted by Hezbollah fighters on the southern Lebanese front in support of the Palestinian people. The announcement also stated that Hezbollah's sacrifices while fighting to support the Palestinian people were a source of pride for every "resistance" fighter, and that history would remember them for their "honor, pride and steadfastness" in dealing with the "Zionist entity supported by the United States" (Sabrin News Telegram channel, June 12, 2024).