



Hezbollah: Background

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The Hezbollah is an umbrella organization of various radical Shi'ite groups and organizations which adhere to a Khomeinistic ideology. The organization was established following the 1982 Peace for Galilee War in Lebanon (and an increased Iranian presence and influence in Lebanon). The Hezbollah organization was established as an organizational body for Shi'ite fundamentalists, led by religious clerics, who see in the adoption of Iranian doctrine a solution to the Lebanese political malaise. This included the use of terror as a means of attaining political objectives.

Toward the end of 1982, Iran sent fighters from its 'Iranian Revolutionary Guards' in order to assist in the establishment of a revolutionary Islamic movement in Lebanon whose members would participate in the 'Jihad', Holy War, against Israel. These forces, which were located in the area of Ba'albek in the northern Beqa'a valley, bestowed on the area an Iranian-Islamic character and constituted the core of the Hezbollah organization in Lebanon.

The organization maintains a training apparatus in Lebanon throughout the villages and their surroundings, as well as outside of Lebanon. Training is aimed at building a reliable manpower source for its military forces as well as for its terror arm.

The spiritual father of the movement in Lebanon is Sheikh Muhammed Hussein Fadlallah who acts as Chief Mujtahid - arbiter of Islamic law - of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon. With the passage of time, Hezbollah has turned into an organization of secondary level groups working on the local level led by regional functionaries.

The current Secretary General of Hezbollah is Hassan Nasrallah. At the start of the 1980's he was responsible for the Beka'a area on behalf of the AMAL movement. He left the organization in 1982 and affiliated with Hezbollah, taking with him many of his followers. Following the death of Abbas Musawi, he was unanimously elected as his successor as commander of operations.

Ideology

The ideological basis of Hezbollah is Khomeinism and its principle goal is the establishment of a pan-Islamic republic headed by religious clerics.

The organization's world view was first published in its political platform in February 1985, as follows:

- The solution to Lebanon's problems is the establishment of an Islamic republic as only this type of regime can secure justice and equality for all of Lebanon's citizen's.
- The Hezbollah organization views as an important goal the fight against 'western imperialism' and its eradication from Lebanon. The group strives for complete American and French withdrawal from Lebanon, including all their institutions.

- The conflict with Israel is viewed as a central concern. This is not only limited to the IDF presence in Lebanon. Rather, the complete destruction of the State of Israel and the establishment of Islamic rule over Jerusalem is an expressed goal.

Part of this radical ideology is the group's militant approach using terror as a means of attaining its goals. Hezbollah decries the existence of Israel ('the little Satan'), viewed as foreign to the region and which constitutes a threat to Islam and Muslims. The destruction of Israel and the liberation of Jerusalem is deemed a religious obligation. The Hezbollah organization justifies the use of terror against these enemies as a weapon in the hands of the weak and oppressed against the strong aggressor. In an effort to act upon and realize the predetermined ideological lines the group's leaders actively plan and perpetrate terror attacks against IDF and SLA forces, preach religious extremism against Israel and disseminate Iranian ideology. The Hezbollah extends the conflict into Israeli territory and does not restrict its struggle to areas in Lebanon.

With the signing of the 'Ta'if Agreement' (1989) and the beginning of the 'Syrian arrangement in Lebanon, the Hezbollah has been forced to conform to Syrian dictates. The Syrian interest in the continuation of terrorist attacks in South Lebanon has enabled the Hezbollah to maintain its unique status in the Lebanese arena as the only major military force yet to be disarmed. The Syrians have prevented the Lebanese government from harming the military capabilities of the Hezbollah, under the pretext of opposing the Israeli occupation, while at the same time enforcing their dictates upon the organization during periods when they are interested in calming the situation in southern Lebanon (as was the case following 'Operation Accountability' in July 1993 or the period coinciding with the Assad-Clinton meeting in January 1994).

The spread of Hezbollah into Southern Lebanon

As the organizational infrastructure developed, Hezbollah, with Iranian and Syrian assistance, began to establish an extensive military network in the Ba'albek area. Its militias have since spread into the Shi'ite neighborhoods in southern and western Beirut as well as into southern Lebanon. This network is the principle base of Hezbollah activities as well as for those of other radical Shi'ite groups. Thousands of Hezbollah activists and members are located in the Beqa'a valley, Beirut and southern Lebanon. These areas also offer a base for the recruitment of additional activists and fighters among the local Shi'ite populations.

Following the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon in 1985 the Hezbollah organization consolidated itself. The consolidation included the establishment of storage depots for weapons, recruitment of activists and fighters, and widespread aid to residents in S. Lebanon, such as the donation of money, equipment, medical supplies, etc. The purpose of the aid was to gain the support of the local population in favor of the organizations activities in the South.

Attacks and terrorism

Using cover names such as 'Islamic Jihad', 'The Revolutionary Justice Organization' and 'The Islamic Resistance', with the blessings of its religious leaders, Hezbollah has carried out a series of high profile attacks against Israeli targets in southern Lebanon and American and Multinational Forces targets in Lebanon. Only later did their attacks become more intensive as well as demonstrating better planning, especially immediately prior to the opening of the peace process. In 1991, the Hezbollah was responsible for 52 attacks, as compared to 19 attacks the organization carried out in 1990. In 1992, the Hezbollah launched 63 attacks and in 1993, 158 attacks, when

during the course of 'Operation Accountability' they fired hundreds of Katyusha rockets into the Security Zone and Israeli territory.

In 1994 a total of 187 attacks against Israeli troops and positions by Hezbollah were recorded. There were 119 instances of artillery fire, 31 detonations of explosive charges and 2 frontal assaults on IDF positions.

In 1995 a total of 344 attacks against Israeli troops and positions by were recorded. There were 270 instances of artillery fire, 64 detonations of explosive charges and 2 frontal assaults on IDF positions.

<https://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfa-archive/1996/pages/hizbullah%20-%2011-apr-96.aspx>