

HEZBOLLAH

IN EUROPE



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In July 2013, the European Union placed Hezbollah (Arabic for „Party of God“) on its list of terrorist organizations. The good news was that this meant the 28 member states had finally done something — inspired by a decisive Bulgarian government that had experienced a deadly Hezbollah attack in the previous year and a Cypriot government that had arrested a Hezbollah member who had been scouting out locations for an attack.

The bad news was that the EU had made a theoretical separation within the organization and only placed Hezbollah’s „military wing“ on the list of terrorist organizations, not the „political wing“. The EU made this differentiation arguing that Hezbollah is part of the government in Lebanon, and that a general ban would endanger diplomatic contacts. A closer look, however, provides no support for this argument as Hezbollah is banned in many countries that continue to have good relations with the Lebanese government. Hezbollah as a whole is banned in the USA (1997)¹, Canada (2002)², the Netherlands (2004)³, the Gulf Cooperation Council (2016)⁴, the Arab League (2016)⁵, Israel⁶, Great Britain (2019)⁷, Argentina (2019), Paraguay (2019), Colombia (2020), Honduras (2020) and most recently in Germany (2020)⁸, Lithuania (2020) and Estonia (2020). Germany made the ground-breaking decision to ban the terrorist organization in its entirety following long years of debate. The government’s action prohibits all activity, including the public display of all symbols, and mandates the confiscation of of Hezbollah’s assets in Germany. AJC welcomed this much anticipated and significant decision.

Even though Hezbollah has been active in the EU for decades, with far-reaching, established structures, Brussels has not yet placed the entire organization on the terror list, nor has it placed any sort of prohibition on the organization. The terrorist organization uses its networks within the EU primarily to generate funding. However, in the EU, little is known about the activities of the „Party of God“ despite the fact that Hezbollah would undoubtedly try to attack Israeli and Jewish institutions in Europe in the event of a renewed military confrontation between the organization and Israel, or between the Jewish state and Iran.

In this briefing, we would like to provide information about Hezbollah’s beginnings, its ideology, and its activities in Europe. Only with sufficient background knowledge is it possible to carry out an informed political debate about Hezbollah. We also aim to show why a separation of Hezbollah into political and military wings does not reflect reality and why it is necessary to classify all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

In recent years, the role Europe has played in the organization’s funding has only become clearer and Central-Eastern Europe is also proved to be affected. In 2013 Hezbollah carried out a terrorist attack on a tourist bus in Burgas, Bulgaria, and attempted attacks in Cyprus in 2012. Several apartments and hideouts have been discovered throughout Europe, storing huge quantities of explosives and chemical materials for the manufacture of powerful explosive devices. In 2015, a warehouse containing 8.3 tons of ammonium nitrate was found in Cyprus. Six months later, four hiding places were found in London containing three tons of the same material. It is becoming increasingly apparent that Hezbollah generates millions through organized crime, and that this money then flows into financing terrorist acts and war in the Middle East.

In recent years Hezbollah has become an even stronger actor in the Syrian civil war. As an extended arm of the government in Tehran, Hezbollah has carried out war crimes and crimes against humanity. Hezbollah may have lost thousands of fighters in Syria, but, in the conflict, it has also gained skills and knowledge that it could use in a new confrontation with Israel. After all, nothing has changed about Hezbollah’s primary goal: destroying the Jewish state. The danger Hezbollah poses, whether in Europe or in the Middle East, has not diminished. We therefore continue to call for a complete ban of Hezbollah in the EU and for the entire organization to be listed as a terrorist organization at the European level.

This call is perfectly in line with the commonly accepted values of Europe as described in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. „Fundamental freedoms which are the foundation of justice and peace in the world and are best maintained [...] by an effective political democracy.“ A genuine political party must adhere to these principles. It should not arm its members or other persons, or perpetrate acts of violence. Hezbollah, which committed such violations, should not be recognized as a legitimate political party.

WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH?

Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shi'a terrorist organization founded by Iran in 1982 during the Lebanese civil war. In doing so, Iran's mullah regime aimed to export the Islamic revolution that had taken place in Iran in 1979 and set up similar regimes in other Middle Eastern countries.

Shortly after its founding, members of the organization carried out highly publicized attacks, including a suicide bombing that killed 241 US marines in Beirut in October 1983⁹. The organization went public under the name Hezbollah when it published its manifesto in 1985¹⁰. In the following years, due to massive material and financial support from the Islamic Republic of Iran, the „Party of God“ became one of the most powerful military factions in the Lebanese civil war. Hezbollah was able to establish and expand its dominant position, especially in the Shi'a strongholds in the Bekaa Valley and the southern city districts of Beirut — positions it maintains to this day.



Flag of Hezbollah

IS HEZBOLLAH A REGULAR POLITICAL PARTY?

With the Taif Agreement ending the civil war in Lebanon in 1989, Hezbollah entered a new era. Since then, it has participated in elections, without renouncing its military capabilities. Hezbollah has become involved in democratic processes only for tactical reasons; the organization continues to pursue the goal of establishing an Islamist theocracy like the one in Iran. The only thing that has changed is the strategy with which it attempts to reach this goal. The Secretary-General of the „Party of God“ since 1992, Hassan Nasrallah, stated:

„We do not want to establish an Islamic state with violence and force. Instead, we prefer to wait for the day on which we engage in a dialogue in an open atmosphere with our fellow citizens and convince them that an Islamic state is the only alternative.“¹¹

Hezbollah’s participation in elections misleads Western observers into dividing the organization into military and political wings. This perception is reflected in the EU’s 2013 decision to place only the so-called military wing of Hezbollah on the list of terrorist organizations but not the political one.¹² Hezbollah itself disputes this differentiation and takes every opportunity to publicly emphasize that it is one organization.

Only a few years ago, Hezbollah’s Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem stated:

„We don’t have a military wing and a political one; we don’t have Hezbollah on one hand and the resistance party on the other... Every element of Hezbollah, from commanders to members as well as our various capabilities, are in the service of the resistance.“¹³

The fact that this differentiation is artificial can also be seen in its organizational structure that is led by one unified level of leadership.¹⁴ Naim Qassem confirmed this as well in an interview with a US reporter:

„Hezbollah has a united leadership. All political, social, and jihadist efforts are bound to the decisions made by these leaders. The same leaders who are managing the parliament and governmental work are also managing the jihadist work in the struggle against Israel.“¹⁵

How little regard Hezbollah has for democratic processes becomes clear every time, in its view, it is in danger of losing influence in Lebanon; the „Party of God“ never hesitates to protect its interests with violence. When the Lebanese government tried to eliminate a telephone network operated exclusively by Hezbollah in May 2008, and, at the same time, to fire a Hezbollah sympathizer serving as a chief of security at Beirut’s airport, the terrorist group resorted to violence, clashing with rival Sunni militias for several days.¹⁶

When the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri was murdered in 2005, Hezbollah members were the prime suspects according to the investigations of a UN tribunal.¹⁷ They were accused of committing the murder on behalf of the Syrian regime, which, feeling that its dominant position in Lebanon was endangered by Hariri, used Hezbollah as a proxy.¹⁸ The organization also has no scruples in making entire countries suffer. In 2006, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli army patrol along the border, plunging Lebanon into a 30-day war, which cost the lives of thousands of people, mostly civilians, both in Lebanon and Israel.

Besides the political and military components, Hezbollah also controls an impressive network of social institutions in Lebanon that it uses to secure support, especially among the Shi'a population. For example, the organization operates free schools and hospitals.

However, it can only afford to offer these social benefits and maintain its military strength through financial and material support from Iran. Experts believe that the terrorist group receives up to \$700 million from Tehran each year.¹⁹

In February 2016, a „Party of God“ representative described the relationship between the two actors:

„Hezbollah is more than just an Iranian ally. The relationship is more like that of a father and a son.“²⁰

Hezbollah continues to openly support the rule of Islamic jurists, as practiced in Iran. It aims to establish a totalitarian government in Lebanon in which the Shi'a clergy make policy.²¹

Further evidence that Hezbollah is first and foremost an extended arm of Tehran is its role in the Syrian civil war. The terrorist organization intervened in the neighbouring country's conflict on the side of the Assad regime no later than the summer of 2012; and starting in 2013, Hezbollah openly participated in larger military operations.

Hezbollah's objectives in the conflict are both political and military. Its primary political goal is the survival of the regime in Damascus. If Assad is overthrown, Hezbollah, which is based in Lebanon, would be isolated both politically and geographically. This political objective is linked to its military goal: maintaining the supply route running through Syria that enables Hezbollah to receive most of its weaponry and critical materiel from Iran.

This supply route through Syria ensures Iran's link to arm Hezbollah primarily with missiles. The Israeli government now assumes that Hezbollah has at least 150,000 missiles²² and some of this arsenal could hit targets throughout Israel down to Eilat.²³

In Syria Hezbollah was able to gain valuable knowledge and battlefield experience for its next conflict. Experts emphasize that Hezbollah has already adapted its strategic planning based on its experiences in Syria.²⁴

HEZBOLLAH'S ANTISEMITISM

Because of its close organizational and personnel connections to Iran, Hezbollah's ideology is also strongly influenced by the regime in Tehran. Just like the Islamic Republic, it embraces elements of traditional and modern antisemitism, and preaches the elimination of Jews.

The end goal of this ideology is to destroy the Jewish state. Hassan Nasrallah emphasized this in an interview: „We are an Islamic movement and respect all governments that support Islam and fight the Israeli enemy, which is our key objective.“ The justification for this existential struggle can be found in the Hezbollah's manifesto of 1985: „This enemy is the greatest danger to future generations and the destiny of our countries [...]“²⁵

Israel is presented as an existential danger to all Muslims, and Hezbollah therefore rejects all negotiations, discussions, or peace treaties with it. The policy document continues:

„Our fight will therefore not end until this entity has been eliminated. We did not recognize any agreement with [Israel], no peace treaty [...]. We emphatically condemn all plans for negotiations with Israel.“²⁶

Destroying the Jewish state is not Hezbollah's only goal, however. The terrorist organization also sees itself in a global and existential conflict with all Jews. In 1997, Nasrallah clearly stated:

„If we searched the whole world for a more cowardly, lowly, and weaker individual in spirit, ideology, and religion, we would find no one worse than the Jews — I do not say the Israeli: we must know our enemy.“²⁷

Hezbollah clarified its proposal for resolving this conflict in an earlier statement from 1992:

„It is an open war until the elimination of Israel and until the death of the last Jew on earth.“²⁸

Nasrallah re-emphasized this goal in 2002, stating: „If they all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide.“²⁹

This is not merely rhetoric. Hezbollah's attacks on Jewish institutions show that it intends to actively work toward realizing this goal on a global scale.



Hezbollah's activities are not limited to Lebanon and the Middle East. The organization has a global network of followers in North America, Latin America, Africa, and Europe, and can therefore carry out terrorist attacks at a short notice around the globe. The organization's Shi'a holy warriors have carried out attacks outside of the Middle East on behalf of or in cooperation with the Iranian regime. One may remember, for example, the attacks on the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and on the Buenos Aires Jewish community center in 1994. The global reach demonstrated by these attacks was one reason the then-CIA director George Tenet classified Hezbollah as more dangerous than Al Qaeda.³⁰ This assessment continues to be valid and the organization has even been able to expand and strengthen its networks in recent years. Currently, Hezbollah is primarily using these and other organized criminal networks, such as the drug trade and money laundering, to fund its activities.³¹

Germany is undoubtedly the center of Hezbollah's European activities. Its presence stretches back to the 1980s when many Lebanese Shiites fled the civil war in their home country. Hezbollah followers and members were among those refugees.

In recent years, the number of Hezbollah supporters and members in Germany has remained steady but high. The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution reports that the organization has 1,050 members and followers nationwide³² with Berlin as a focal point (250 people).³³

The terrorist organization's supporters and members are affiliated with around thirty mosque associations in Germany. The facts clearly show that differentiating between the military and political wings in no way reflects reality and actually makes it more difficult for security agencies to investigate the organization.

On this point, terrorism expert Matthew Levitt commented:

„The irony is that by limiting the designation to Hezbollah's ‚military wing‘, the EU effectively undermined its ability to seize any funds under this asset forfeiture regime. Hezbollah accounts in Europe are not likely to list as account holders ‚Hezbollah military wing‘. Legally, any funds tied to Hezbollah but not expressly linked to its military wing remain untouchable in Europe. Money being fungible, Hezbollah will likely continue soliciting funds in Europe but under the rubric of political and social activities. Siphoning off funds for less altruistic activities such as the group's militia or terrorist activities would not be difficult at all.“³⁴

Once a year, Hezbollah followers and members make a public appearance as part of „Quds Day“ (Arabic for „Jerusalem Day“). This event was initiated in 1979 by the Iranian Revolution's leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. Since then, on the last Friday of Ramadan, demonstrations calling for Israel's destruction take place around the world. Since the 1980s, there have also been Quds Day events in Germany.

HEZBOLLAH'S WORK

WITH REFUGEES

In April 2016, national headlines reported on revelations made by the AJC Berlin Ramer Institute: The co-organizers of the Quds demonstration were working with refugees through „Refugee Club Impulse“ (RCI), which had applied for €100,000 in funding from the state of Berlin's project fund for cultural education. Photographs held by the AJC Berlin Ramer Institute proved that Hezbollah activists participated in the Quds demonstrations, displaying Hezbollah's emblem that betrayed their affiliation. The extent to which Hezbollah followers systematically attempt to recruit and influence refugees in Europe is uncertain. Still, there is a legitimate reason to be concerned, as young unaccompanied refugees are especially vulnerable to Islamists' recruitment efforts.³⁵

As early as 1989, police arrested a member of Hezbollah who was planning attacks in Germany. The terrorist had gathered information about Israeli, Jewish, and American targets, and security agencies found plans for building bombs in his apartment. Large segments of the German public only became aware of Hezbollah and its activities after the Mykonos attack on September 17, 1992, when Hezbollah teams assassinated four exiled Kurdish-Iranian politicians on Tehran's behalf.

The Berlin Appellate Court commented in its judgment at the time:

„Hezbollah is to be viewed largely as an offshoot of Iranian politics. It was established by Iran, and Iran continues to play a key role in funding, equipping, and training its members. This is not done altruistically. Iran uses Hezbollah not only to spread the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon, but also to fight opponents of the Iranian Islamic regime with militant means.“³⁶

In addition, Hezbollah attempts to recruit people in Germany for its activities. The most famous case is likely that of Steven Smyrek. The German convert to Islam was arrested by Israeli security agencies at Ben Gurion Airport in November 1997 after Hezbollah had sent him to Lebanon for weapons and explosives training and then tasked him with scouting out possible locations for attacks in Israel.³⁷ According to his statement, his goal was to carry out a suicide attack in Tel Aviv or Haifa.³⁸

There are also more recent examples: On July 16, 2008, 29-year-old Khaled Kashkoush was arrested upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. Up until that point, the Arab-Israeli had been studying medicine in Göttingen. According to Israeli security agencies, the medical student was recruited and paid by Hezbollah to gather information on other Arab-Israeli students in Germany in order to find more recruits. He was supposed to find a job in an Israeli hospital to collect information about security agents or soldiers being treated there.³⁹

HEZBOLLAH'S MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES IN EUROPE

1982 – 1992

Several European and U.S. citizen kidnappings in Lebanon, 96 people kidnapped, at least eight dead.⁴⁰

1983

Attack on American and French bases in Beirut, 305 dead.⁴¹

1983

Attack on US Embassy in Beirut, 63 dead.⁴²

1985

Hijacking of TWA flight 847 en route from Athens to Rome followed by stops at multiple airports around the Mediterranean, one dead. One of the four hijackers was Imad Mughniyeh⁴³, Hezbollah's second-in-command. After the incident, the United States placed him on the FBI list of most wanted terrorists.

1985

Attack on a synagogue in Copenhagen.⁴⁴

1985 – 86

13 bombings in Paris carried out by an organization linked to Hezbollah⁴⁵, 13 dead, at least 300 injured.⁴⁶

1989

Murder of Kurdish opposition member in Vienna by Iran and Hezbollah members.⁴⁷

1992

Attack in Mykonos Restaurant in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, four Kurdish-Iranian opposition politicians killed; three Swedish politicians returned to Sweden shortly before, avoiding the attack. Partially based on testimony from one of the masterminds, Youssef Amin, the Berlin appellate court's judgment from August 10, 1997, arrived at the conclusion that the attack was commissioned by Tehran and carried out by Hezbollah representatives in Berlin. In 2007, those charged with the crime were released from prison after 15 years and deported to Iran, where they were welcomed home as „heroes of the nation“.⁴⁸

1992

Attack on Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, 29 dead and 242 injured.⁴⁹

1994

Attack on the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, eighty dead and more than 300 injured. The organization Ansar Allah, a branch of Hezbollah, took responsibility for this attack. After the investigations into the attack dragged on, President Nestor Kirchner reopened them in 2005. Subsequently, charges were brought against Hezbollah representatives and the former Iranian president Ayatollah Rafsanjani as well as former and current members of the Iranian government. In addition, Argentinian authorities issued arrest warrants.⁵⁰

1994

In July Hezbollah bombed the Israeli Embassy in London, injuring fourteen people.⁵¹

2005

Former Lebanese minister president Rafic al-Hariri dies on February 14. In 2011, investigation by a UN special tribunal led to arrest warrants issued for four Hezbollah members considered to be suspects.⁵²

2011

Failed attack on Israeli ambassador in Istanbul. The Turkish authorities consider it to have been proven that Hezbollah was behind the attack.⁵³

2012

Planned attack in Azerbaijan against the Israeli ambassador⁵⁴ as well as against the principal and rabbi of the local Jewish school.⁵⁵

2012

Attempted assassination of then Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak in Singapore foiled by security agencies.⁵⁶

2012

Failed attack on members of the Israeli Embassy in Tbilisi⁵⁷. Further attacks planned on Israeli targets in Cyprus, Thailand, and India were prevented or failed.⁵⁸

2012

Suicide attack in Bulgarian town of Burgas, five Israelis and local bus driver die.⁵⁹

2013

Denmark deports Hezbollah member who had no apparent reason for being in the country.⁶⁰

2015

A Hezbollah member arrested in Cyprus. 8.2 tons of liquid ammonium nitrate, one of the basic ingredients for producing explosives, are found in his cellar.⁶¹

2015

In London, investigators arrest a Hezbollah member who had stored over 3 tons of ammonium nitrate, a basic ingredient for producing explosives. The case only becomes public in 2019.⁶²

Hezbollah represents a serious risk to the domestic security of Germany and the entire European Union for the reasons detailed above. It has hopefully also become apparent that the EU's and Germany's differentiation between the „political“ and the „military“ wing of Hezbollah is fictitious, not reflecting the reality of Hezbollah's organizational structure.

On this, David Harris, CEO of the AJC, commented:

„Isn't it high time for the EU to finish the work on Hezbollah it began with its initial decision in 2013? This important step would significantly hamper Hezbollah's ability to operate freely in Europe by empowering governments to shut down the group's organizing and fundraising efforts within EU borders.

Terrorism poses a threat to us all. In responding, we need to be clear-eyed, resolute, and unflinching. Hezbollah is what it says it is — a doctrinaire, violent group rooted in Shiite Islam. No effort to pretend otherwise will succeed. No belief that it will change its spots because we're ready to meet them halfway can work, not when it comes to non-negotiable beliefs and faith.“

Hezbollah poses an immediate and serious threat to Jewish life both in the European Union and in Germany, making it urgent that the EU take action. Especially in light of history, it is unfathomable that an organization openly calling for the murder of Jews has not yet been banned. **We therefore call on those in positions of political responsibility to finally draw the necessary consequences and ban Hezbollah.** This would not only increase domestic security, it would be an important step toward protecting Jewish life in Germany. The German government should also push for placing the entire Hezbollah organization on the EU list of terrorist organizations.

This is warranted in part because the organization can continue to collect donations in Europe as long as it does so under the cover of its „political“ wing, which makes it difficult for security agencies to effectively take action against Hezbollah.

ن حزب الله هم العالمون



مقاومة منظمة في لبنان

لبنان

FALSE CLAIMS THAT BENEFIT HEZBOLLAH

On the following pages we want to introduce you to widely spread claims about Hezbollah and at the same time give you some facts, details and arguments against those.

CLAIM NO. 1

„Hezbollah is not an extension of the Iranian regime. In fact, it has tried to distance itself from Iranian patronage to increase its domestic legitimacy among parties that view it as Tehran’s lackey.“

SHORT RESPONSE

Hezbollah is the long arm of Iran!

THE FACTS

There is a reciprocal relationship between Iran and Hezbollah. **While Iran supports Hezbollah’s activities in the regional and international arenas, Hezbollah promotes Iranian interests.** Iranian investment in the organization has increased over the years with Hezbollah’s transformation into a hybrid terrorist organization that operates a welfare system and a political party alongside its military-terrorist wing. Although Hezbollah has tried to mask its real relationship with Iran over the years, many statements by its leaders alongside other publications have attested to the depth of these ties.

KEY DETAILS

The relationship between Iran and Hezbollah can be described as a reciprocal system.

Though Hezbollah was at first under Iranian control and mentoring in the 1980s, it began to operate more independently in the 1990s to position itself as a legitimate player in Lebanon’s restored political system.

The patron-client relationship that shares an Islamic-Shi’ite common denominator rests on the existence of a supreme religious authority in Iran. The Iranian regime has been funding Hezbollah since its establishment and invests huge sums to develop and strengthen the organization’s capabilities, from an estimated \$70 – \$100 million per year in the 1990s to approximately \$700 million a year in 2017. In addition, Iran supplies Hezbollah with various weapons, mostly through the Damascus airport. Since 1982, Hezbollah’s operational infrastructure has been built almost entirely with Iranian support, with some Syrian political and military assistance. From Iran’s point of view, Hezbollah serves as an arm to carry out terrorist activities and achieve Iranian interests and fight against Israel. It should be emphasized that **Iran helped and continues to help build Hezbollah’s global terrorist infrastructure** through operatives of the Iranian security services and the Revolutionary Guards from inside its embassies around the world. Hezbollah is a strategic asset for Iran.

Hezbollah operatives, under Iranian guidance, are active in every place where Iran has interests, such as Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and the Palestinian areas. In order to expand its hold on the ground, the Revolutionary Guards are aided by Hezbollah’s Unit 3800, which is entrusted with advising and training organizations outside Lebanon.

In August 2018, Saudi officials posted videos of the Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah training Houthis. Similarly, the Kata’ib militia, which originally operated in Iraq, was sent to Syria by Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Quds Force, which is responsible for the activities of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards outside Iran’s borders. The leader of the militia, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, even thanked Iran in 2018 for supporting them with weapons and money and Hezbollah for training its fighters. Both Suleimani and Muhandis were killed in a U.S. drone attack in January 2020.

The changes that have taken place in Lebanon and the Middle East since 2005, such as the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, the Second Lebanon War, the nuclear agreement, and the „Arab Spring“ revolutions, deepened Iran’s control over Hezbollah and reduced the group’s independence. Hezbollah went from being a Lebanese player to a regional and international actor that operates on behalf of Iran. On the outside, Hezbollah continues to attach itself to the Lebanese system while concealing **its real relationship with Iran. However, there have been many statements made by senior Hezbollah figures and other publications attesting to the depth of the organization’s ties with Iran.**

- ▶ In 2016, Hezbollah’s Secretary-General admitted for the first time that the organization’s budget, revenues, expenses, food, and weapons, all are connected to Iran. In a speech to a small audience that was recorded and leaked to the Iranian media, Nasrallah admitted that **the organization regarded itself as a soldier in the service of Iran’s Supreme Leader.** Hezbollah claimed the recording was forged.
- ▶ Similarly, Sheikh Naim Qassem, Nasrallah’s deputy, claimed in 2009 that Iran’s Supreme Leader Khamenei „sets the general guidelines for us that release us from guilt and grant us legitimacy.“ **Qassem emphasized that Hezbollah cannot launch an operation against Israel without religious justification from Iran’s ruling cleric.**
- ▶ In the „Hezbollah Program“, which was published in 1985 and has never been changed, the organization described its identity: „We are the sons of the umma (Muslim community) - the party of God (Hezb Allah) the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran. There the vanguard succeeded in laying down the basis of a Muslim state which plays a central role in the world. We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and faqih (jurist) who fulfils all the necessary conditions: Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini. God save him!“ Since the death of Khomeini, the faqih is Ayatollah Khamanei.

In addition, **Iran or subsidiaries of Iranian organizations own Hezbollah institutions.** For example, the Martyrs Foundation is an Iranian institution established by Imam Khomeini that supports the families of martyrs. Its Lebanese branch helps the families of Hezbollah martyrs. They are all identified by the U.S. Treasury as terrorism supporters.

Recently, several Iranian and Hezbollah operatives were arrested on European soil, attesting to the close ties between the two. Among other things, French police conducted searches in the city of Grande-Synthe, in northern France, at the headquarters and home of the leaders of the Shi’ite organization „Zahra Center“, which have ties to Hezbollah. The center apparently served as logistical support for Iranian operations in France and was closed by authorities.

CLAIM NO. 2

„Groups that pose a terrorist threat in the Middle East don't necessarily pose a threat to the EU. What happens in the Middle East stays in the Middle East. The refugee crisis is water from a different stream.“

SHORT RESPONSE

Hezbollah has established a terrorist infrastructure in Europe and executes terrorist attacks against non-european targets on European soil.

THE FACTS

Events that take place in the Middle East have a global impact. Even in cases where terrorist organizations do not attack „host“ countries directly, any action on European soil or aid for such action threatens the continent at large. In addition to a potential terrorist attack, extremists also put the cultural cohesion of European society at risk.

TERRORIST THREATS TO EUROPE POSED BY HEZBOLLAH

- ▶ **Physical threat:** Globalization and easy passage between countries has allowed terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah, to expand their scope of activity. Hezbollah carried out a terrorist attack on a tourist bus in Burgas, Bulgaria, and attempted attacks in Cyprus in 2012. In recent years, several apartments and hideouts have been discovered throughout Europe, storing huge quantities of explosives and chemical materials for the manufacture of powerful explosive devices. In 2015, a warehouse containing 8.3 tons of ammonium nitrate was found in Cyprus. Six months later, four hiding places were found in London containing three tons of the same material.
- ▶ **Involvement in the arms trade:** Hezbollah is involved in weapon trading operations on European soil. For example, in 2014, a Hezbollah arms dealer named Ali Fayad was arrested in the Czech Republic. Following the arrest, Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon kidnapped several Czech citizens who were freed in exchange for Fayad's release.
- ▶ **Hezbollah's crime and financing network:** Most of the organization's illicit financing activity comes from drug trade, trafficking illegal substances, theft, and money laundering. A drug network run by Ayman Juma smuggled cocaine from South America to West Africa, and from there to Europe and the Middle East. The value of the capital laundered through a Lebanese Canadian Bank was estimated at \$200 million per month. As part of „Operation Cedar,“ U.S. authorities discovered a second network in 2016 in which 16 members of the organization's criminal network in Europe – France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy – were arrested after laundering up to one million euros from international drug deals by buying and selling luxury goods worldwide. Hezbollah's criminal activity also extends to cyberspace. In October 2018, several servers in the Czech Republic were seized and shut down after Hezbollah used them to break into networks and computers around the world for the purposes of extortion and information theft.
- ▶ **Hezbollah exploits the freedom of movement of its operatives in Europe to commit crimes, raise funds, incite, and recruit new members.** According to a German intelligence report from May 2019 on Hezbollah's threat to Germany, the number of Hezbollah operatives in the country rose from about 950 to about 1,050. Over the past 20 years, the organization has used its presence in Germany to recruit Caucasian terrorist operatives. For example, in 1997, a German Hezbollah operative named Steven Smirk was arrested in Israel. He was trained in Lebanon before being sent on a suicide bombing mission. Smirk converted to Islam in Germany and underwent religious radicalization by Hezbollah representatives in the country.

- ▶ **The community of Lebanese exiles around the world is a regular source of income for the organization.** With the help of mosques, Shi'ite cultural centers, and charities, Hezbollah turns to exiles for donations to the organization. Donations are recorded as assistance to the needy and to the organization's social activities in Lebanon. In practice Hezbollah's social institutions in Lebanon support its military activities. For instance, the Jihād al-Binā' Foundation initiates social projects while serving as the engineering wing of the organization. In 2013, Germany outlawed two charities for orphans because they transferred donations to the Martyrs Foundation in Lebanon, which directly assists Hezbollah's military-terrorist activities.
- ▶ **Incitement against its opponents, namely the United States and Israel, is another aspect of the organization's activities in Europe.** Every year, the organization's Secretary-General himself calls on the organization's operatives and supporters to participate in marches, such as the „Al Quds Day march“, around the world. This activity, along with incitement in mosques and in Shi'ite cultural centers throughout Europe, **contributes to an increase in antisemitism throughout the continent.** Josef Schuster, head of the German Central Council of Jews, said that „Al Quds' demonstrations „transport nothing but antisemitism and hatred of Israel.“ In 2019, within two months alone, four Shi'ite cultural institutions were shut down in France for incitement.
- ▶ **The dawah threat:** By providing support to the community in which they operate, Islamic terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah, use their social networks to strengthen their ideological and economic support. By recruiting clerics within immigrant communities and the Shi'ite population in various European cities, Hezbollah strengthens its ideological narrative and mobilizes supporters.

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE THREAT TO EUROPE

In the age of globalization, events do not occur in a vacuum. Instability in several Middle Eastern countries has led to civil war, and to an unprecedented stream of refugees from failed states to European countries. In an age of open borders and freedom of movement, Europeans must cope with a range of threats, including foreign fighters returning to their countries of origin in Europe. In recent years, and especially since the rise of the Islamic State, the Middle East has served as a recruitment and radicalization center for European Muslims. Those who survived the fall of the so-called Caliphate are making their way back to Europe and have become a security threat to the continent.

Political crises and a weak central government, coupled with civil wars, are causing populations to flee Middle Eastern countries, longing for a better life in the West. Moreover, when an ethnic and sectarian crisis occurs, there is a clear interest in diluting the enemy population in order to create demographic changes in the country. **For Hezbollah operatives in Europe, these refugees constitute a target for recruitment.**

Over the years, several terrorist attacks and attempted attacks were carried out against non-European targets on European soil. When wars take place in the Middle East, efforts are made to attack the regime opponents in Europe. In 2018, twice Iranian intelligence tried and failed to carry out mass attacks against regime opponents– a plot to detonate an explosive device at a conference in France and an attempted assassination in Denmark. In addition, in 2015 and 2017, two opponents of the Iranian regime were assassinated in Holland. Hezbollah also imports terrorism from the Middle East, as demonstrated in the 1980s when it hijacked three planes and carried out several deadly attacks against shops and hotels in Paris. In the 1990s, the organization was accused of detonating two car bombs at the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish charity in London, and in 2012, the organization carried out an attack on a bus of Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria.

SHORT RESPONSE

Through the External Security Organization (ESO), which operates a unit called Business Affairs Component, Hezbollah is involved in criminal activities, gathering intelligence and building an infrastructure to carry out terror attacks in Europe.

THE FACTS

Since the designation of its military wing as a terrorist organization by the EU in 2013, Hezbollah has carried out illicit activities. In 2016, for example, **a joint investigation by the DEA, Europol, and some European countries project uncovered extensive Hezbollah activity related to drug trafficking, money laundering, and arms dealings.** This activity was led by the ESO.

KEY DETAILS

- ▶ **Operations Cassandra and Cedar**, led by the U.S., exposed the criminal-business wing of Hezbollah via the External Security Organization Business Affairs Component (BAC). During Operation Cassandra, Hezbollah elements involved in drug trafficking were arrested in the U.S., South America and several European countries, including France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. Hezbollah’s criminal activity in Europe is run by BAC, which reports to ESO, AKA Unit 910 or Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO). Abdallah Safieddine, Hezbollah’s representative in Iran, is also involved in this activity.
- ▶ **Hezbollah’s threat to Europe is also manifested in the build-up of infrastructure.** In recent years, authorities have uncovered safe houses and warehouses containing tremendous quantities of explosive materials. In 2015 a warehouse storing 8.3 tons of ammonium nitrate was discovered in Cyprus and six months later 3 tons of ammonium nitrate were discovered in four London hideouts. On top of the risk for accidental detonations that threaten residential neighborhoods, it was revealed that the charge used in the Burgas bombing in 2012 contained ammonium nitrate.

HEZBOLLAH’S CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

- ▶ Ali Fayed, a gun smuggler for Hezbollah was arrested in 2014 in the Czech Republic. In response, Hezbollah kidnapped a few Czech citizens in Lebanon to get him released.
- ▶ **In the past decade, authorities have exposed two major Hezbollah crime rings with a significant European presence:** In the Canadian-Lebanese Bank scandal exposed in 2011, a drug trafficking network led by Ayman Jumma smuggled cocaine from South America through Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The volume of illegal funds laundered through that bank was estimated at \$200 million per month. In 2016, Operation Cedar saw the capture of 16 Hezbollah operatives who acted as members of that crime ring in France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy, laundering money through the international purchase and sale of luxury goods. At the height of their activity, the crime ring laundered about one million euros per week, mostly through Germany.
- ▶ Hezbollah raises money from donations from various charities, Islamic institutions, private individuals and Shi’ite donors. **Fundraising activities are being carrying out in Germany, U.K., Belgium (diamond dealing) and other countries.**
- ▶ Additionally, **Hezbollah raises funds through criminal activity in Europe**, specifically counterfeiting Euros. For instance, during Operation Cassandra in 2008, German authorities arrested two Lebanese nationals holding over 8 million euros, which have been raised by Hezbollah’s cocaine smuggling network. A year later, two other ring members were arrested for their involvement in drug trafficking from Beirut to Europe, in a raid on their home in the German city of Speyer.

SHORT RESPONSE

Hezbollah has adopted the anti-Zionist rhetoric of modern-day antisemitism.

THE FACTS

Hezbollah was established on the ideology of antisemitism. Its founding principles are rooted in the hatred of Jews, the elimination of the Jewish state, and the determination to deny Jews their right of self-determination or nationhood. Hezbollah knows that more Jewish blood has been spilled in Europe than anywhere else, which makes the continent a fertile breeding ground to fulfil its mission.

However, Hezbollah has learned to manipulate the guilt complex that permeates certain European countries whose Jewish communities were decimated during the Holocaust. Thus, its rhetoric is framed as anti-Zionist rather than antisemitic. They overstate the oppression of the Palestinians that they say is perpetuated by Israeli politics, then use that friction to justify delegitimizing a Jewish state. As long as Europe allows any manifestation of antisemitism, regardless of the rhetoric (i.e. „old school“ or under the anti-Zionist cover), Europe is complicit in the violation of human rights within its borders. To stop this rising antisemitic tide, Europe has the moral and legal obligation to halt all of Hezbollah’s activities within its jurisdiction.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In November 2018 the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a report on antisemitism. The report said that antisemitism may be manifested in various forms, including verbal and physical abuse, threats, harassment, discrimination and unfair treatment, property damage and bodily injury, graffiti, other forms of expression as well as on the web. Antisemitic incidents, which are in fact hate crimes, violate basic human rights, including liberty, human dignity, and the right for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion provided to all people in Europe under ECHR. Wherever Hezbollah sets up shop, its goal is to carry out hate crimes against Jewish and Israeli targets around the world in the form of terrorist attacks.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance defines antisemitism as „a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions, and religious facilities.“ IHRA provides several examples of antisemitism and explains its „manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity“.

Any European nation that has agreed to uphold the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and/or has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism cannot intellectually defend the political or social welfare wing of Hezbollah as legitimate. Doing so allows Hezbollah to become respectable contributors to the mainstream discourse rather than antisemites, but simultaneously informs a rising tide of anti-Jewish hatred.

ANTISEMITIC TRENDS IN EUROPE

In recent years, antisemitism has been on a steep rise in Europe. For example:

- ▶ **The French Ministry of Interior** reported in February 2019 that France has seen an increase of 74 % in attacks against Jews in the previous year, and Germany has seen a 60 % increase in violent antisemitic attacks.
- ▶ **Haaretz (Israeli newspaper)** reported at the end of May 2019 that Chancellor Angela Merkel called for police protection at all Jewish institutions in the face of rising anti-semitism in Germany. According to a December 2018 survey of Jews across Europe conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 89 % of European Jews say antisemitism has increased in their country over past five years.
- ▶ **CNN (American news TV network)** survey of antisemitism in Europe from September 2018 found that 28 % of the participants believed Jews had too much influence within the business and financial sectors globally. The survey included over 7,000 people and one out of five of them responded that antisemitism is a reaction to the everyday behavior of the Jewish people.
- ▶ **Politico (American newspaper)** reported in April 2019 that antisemitism in Europe is at a five-year high.

HEZBOLLAH'S ANTISEMITIC RHETORIC

- ▶ **In a 2002 speech, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah said that all the Jews are banded together in Israel**, making it possible to fight them when they are grouped together and saving the trouble of chasing them around the world.
- ▶ **In another speech, aired on Al-Manar TV in 2010, Nasrallah openly and publicly denied the Holocaust.** The IHRA working definition lists Holocaust denial as an example of antisemitism.
- ▶ **Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's second in command, once said that history proved that, regardless of the Zionist question, Jews are people with evil ideas.**
- ▶ **Nabih Berri, the Lebanese parliament speaker and the leader of the pro-Hezbollah movement Amal, made an anti-Jewish racist remark in an interview** he gave in June 2019 to Al-Joumhouria. Berri said that, in order to identify a Jew, one has to throw a piece of gold at the feet of a pregnant woman. If the foetus jumps out of her womb to pick it up, he said, then it is a Jew.
- ▶ **Celebrating Al Quds Day around the world and particularly in Europe** constitutes another antisemitic manifestation. A march in Germany, in 2019, where antisemitism is on the rise, saw some 1,000 attendees, including Hezbollah operatives, calling for Israel's destruction. One need only see the Stars of David engulfed in flames and hear the death chants to understand this has less to do with Israel and more to do with a deep-seated demonization of the Jewish people.

ANTI-ZIONIST RHETORIC (ANTISEMITISM 2.0)

Demonization of Jews and Israel has undeniably reached new heights. This phenomenon is partly due to the rise of fanatical fundamentalist Islam and its blatant refusal to accept the Jewish right to self-determination, coupled with the exercise of Jewish sovereignty in an area it perceived as purely Muslim. In the Arab world the term Jew (Yahud) is interchangeable with Zionist (Sahyuniyyun) or Israeli. In his research, the late Holocaust scholar Robert S. Wistrich demonstrated that the **radical antisemitic narrative has camouflaged itself as anti-Zionism much more since the turn of the 21st century**. Nasrallah allegedly made a distinction between Jews and Zionists and said he opposed only Zionism. But even if **Hezbollah has tried to rebrand its antisemitic rhetoric as anti-Zionist, its substance has stayed the same**.

Moreover, **Hezbollah notoriously feeds two streams of discourse – one in Arabic, the other in the vernacular of the country where its operatives live. In Arabic, they speak of killing Jews and destroying Israel. In the vernacular, they call themselves simply anti-Zionists**.

IMPACT OF RHETORIC

Though Jewish life has witnessed a resurgence in Europe in recent years, Jews living in Europe are still sensitive to the historic and present-day threats endangering their families. In 2018, German authorities broke up a Hezbollah terrorist cell that had been conducting surveillances of targets, including a Jewish kindergarten in Berlin. The head of the German Central Council of Jews has pleaded with that country's government to outlaw Al Quds Day parades because they promote hatred on the streets of Germany. Distinguishing between the military and political wings of Hezbollah is much like distinguishing between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. It also achieves the same effect. It tells members of a community what should and should not make them feel uncomfortable, unwanted, and unsafe when they walk down the streets or drop their children off at school. European decision-makers must listen to people who live in fear of those who hate them.

The free speech concerns that came up when people try to quell anti-Zionist rhetoric also disrupts the ability of security operatives to conduct adequate surveillance of suspects.

But those free speech limitations evaporate when countries acknowledge that anti-Zionist rhetoric is not legally protected when it incites antisemitic violence. And that is what Hezbollah strives to do. It strives to take advantage of Europe's democratic values in order to undermine them. Designating Hezbollah in its entirety a terrorist organization would reassure European Jewish communities that the countries they call home are serious about history not repeating itself.

SHORT RESPONSE

There is no accurate assessment of the number of Hezbollah operatives and/or supporters on European soil. However, the U.S. led „Operation Cassandra“ revealed a well-established infrastructure throughout Europe.

THE FACTS

To date, the German security services are the only ones to publish a count of Hezbollah operatives in their territory. **Their latest report speaks of approximately 1,050 operatives vs. 950 operatives in years past.** Other European countries refrain from publishing any data. Still, the findings from Operation Cassandra, an effort led by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to undercut Hezbollah funding from illicit drug sources, revealed a well-established infrastructure in several European countries that could include hundreds or thousands of operatives.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In Europe, Hezbollah operatives live among the Shi'ite diaspora. They engage in international criminal activity, drug trafficking, and money laundering. Under the command and guidance of Hezbollah's terrorist wing, some gather intelligence and provide the logistical support and infrastructure required to carry out terror attacks. The most glaring example of this phenomenon is in Germany, where Hezbollah's infrastructure includes operatives, crime families, and Shi'ite Islamic centers.

Most of Hezbollah's illegal revenue comes from drug trafficking (mostly cocaine), contraband trade, and money laundering. Just in the past ten years, two major crime rings have been directly linked to Hezbollah's European enterprise. The first was involved in the Lebanese-Canadian Bank affair uncovered in 2011. A drug trafficking network led by Ayman Jumma smuggled cocaine from South America through Western Africa and Europe to the Middle East. The value of the money laundered was estimated at \$200 million/month.

The second crime ring was uncovered in 2016 during Operation Cedar. Sixteen Hezbollah members were arrested in France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy for laundering money through the international acquisition and sales of luxury goods. At the height of the crime ring's activity it laundered 1 million Euros per week, primarily through Germany.

Hezbollah also conducts legitimate business activity. On behalf of for-profit corporate entities owned by Hezbollah or the charities under its control, Hezbollah operatives engage in the oil trade, real estate, and small commerce. Only during May 2018 did the Terrorism Financing Targeting Center (TFTC) announce new sanctions on Hezbollah and some of its senior members. Ali Youssef Charara, chairman of the Lebanese telecom company Spectrum, which provides telecom services in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, was included on that list based on his activity raising and laundering money for Hezbollah.

THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF HEZBOLLAH OPERATIVES IN GERMANY

In the past 20 years Hezbollah leveraged its presence in Europe to recruit terror activists with Caucasian features. For example, in 1997 Israel arrested a Hezbollah operative by the name of Steven Smirk who underwent training in Lebanon before he was sent on a suicide mission. Smirk converted to Islam and was radicalized by Hezbollah operatives in Germany.

Hezbollah takes advantage of the fact that not all European countries have made a full designation. Most (except the Netherlands in 2004, the UK in 2019 and Germany in 2020) have not designated Hezbollah in its entirety and are relying on the EU law in that regard.

- ▶ **Germany:** In January 2018 the German police raided the homes of 10 individuals suspected of being members of Al Quds force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who had been gathering intelligence on Jewish and Israeli targets such as the Israeli Embassy, senior dignitaries, and kindergartens. Al Quds Force is an Iranian special force tasked with international operations, such as training and supervising Iranian proxies, Hezbollah included. The German Interior Ministry reports that an organization raised over \$4 million between 2007 and 2013 for a Hezbollah-linked charity in Lebanon.
- ▶ **Belgium:** In 2003, Belgian police raided the offices of Soafrimex, a food exporter to Africa headed by Kassim Tajideen, one of Hezbollah's major donors. Tajideen was arrested for tax fraud, money laundering, and diamond smuggling valued at tens of millions of Euros.
- ▶ **France:** French police searched the headquarters and home of the leaders of the Shi'ite organization „Zahra Center“, which has ties to Hezbollah. Authorities closed the center, in the city of Grande-Synthe, in northern France, as it served as logistical support for Iranian operations in France. In 2015, a joint U.S.-French operation arrested Iman Kobeissi and Joseph Asmar on charges of conspiracy to launder money from drug trafficking and gun smuggling for Hezbollah.
- ▶ **Cyprus:** In 2012 Hezbollah was involved in several failed attempts to carry out terror attacks. Hezbollah's warehouse in Cyprus held 8.3 tons of ammonium nitrate.
- ▶ **United Kingdom:** Four safe houses were discovered in London that held three tons of ammonium nitrate. Hezbollah also engages in money laundering from seemingly legitimate activity in the UK. Three charities that have laundered money for Hezbollah – Lebanese Welfare Committee, HELP Charity Association for Relief, and Arbar Islamic Foundation – recently urged people to partake in the Al Quds Day march in London.
- ▶ **Bulgaria:** On 18 July, six people were killed, and 32 others injured when a bomb was detonated inside a bus full of Israeli tourists at Burgas airport. The bombing coincided with the 18th anniversary of the attack on the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in which 85 people were killed.
- ▶ **Italy:** Between 2008 and 2018, Italian law enforcement alongside other authorities arrested several Hezbollah operatives as part of Operation Cassandra, an international task force to uncover Hezbollah's drug trafficking.
- ▶ **Czech Republic:** Hezbollah conducts arms trafficking in the Czech Republic and endangers European citizens. In 2014, a gun runner for Hezbollah named Ali Fayed was arrested. In response, Hezbollah kidnapped a few Czech citizens who were released in return for Fayed. Hezbollah is also criminally active in cyberspace. In October 2018, Czech servers were shut down when Hezbollah used them to hack into computers and networks around the world for information theft and extortion purposes.

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Shapiro Silverberg AJC Central Europe Office
ajccentraleurope@ajc.org

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