

February 2013

## HIZBALLAH – BRIEFING DOCUMENT

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Emblem of Hizballah



Emblem of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

"We categorically reject any compromise with Israel or recognizing its legitimacy; this position is definitive, even if everyone recognizes Israel" - Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah, November 2009<sup>1</sup>

### SUMMARY OF HIZBALLAH

- Hizballah is a militant, paramilitary Lebanese Shia Islamic organisation.
- It also includes a political party, which, along with its allies, has held a dominant position in the cabinet of Prime Minister Mikati's government.
- Its emergence in 1982 has been attributed to a number of factors: the Lebanese civil war, the marginalisation of Lebanon's Shia community, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Islamic revolution in Iran.
- It receives financial and political support from Iran and Syria, and it is perceived to be a 'resistance' movement throughout much of the Arab and Muslim world.
- Hizballah leaders call for the destruction of the State of Israel, which is referred to as the "Zionist entity."
- Its military forces are trained and have been led, at times, by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).
- Historically, Hizballah's Shura Council, the group's executive board and primary decision-making body, has included nine members: seven Hizballah members and two Iranians.
- Hizballah acts as a surrogate for Iran.

### ACTIVITIES

- Hizballah has been responsible for actively aiding the Assad regime in Syria during its current civil war.
- Hizballah's international criminal activities are often overlooked but constitute an important source of the group's funding. These illicit ventures include drugs and arms smuggling, money laundering and document fraud, among others. This is done to assist with its operational - military and terrorist - needs. Hizballah has been particularly involved in the drugs trade in South America. Additionally, operatives living in the US have been convicted of other criminal activities too.
- Hizballah is responsible for, and has been implicated in, terrorist activities inside Lebanon and across the globe. Examples include the 1983 bombing of the US Embassy in Lebanon, causing over 60 fatalities; the 1983 bombing of the compound of the multinational force in Beirut, killing

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.english.moqawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=9632&cid=214>

241 US Marines and 58 French soldiers; the abduction of nearly 100 Western nationals during the 1980s as bargaining chips; and the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 85 and injuring 200; among other plots and attacks.

- Since January 2012, a number of incidents have taken place linked to Hizballah and Iran that have targeted Jewish and Israeli locations worldwide. These have included foiled attacks in Bangkok (Thailand) and Baku (Azerbaijan); attempted simultaneous attacks in New Delhi (India) and Tbilisi (Georgia); an incident in Bangkok on the following day; a foiled attack in Mombasa (Kenya); an arrest in Limassol (Cyprus); and on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, which was the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bomb attack on the AMIA Jewish community centre, the bomb attack on a bus carrying Israeli tourists outside Burgas airport in Bulgaria, killing five Israelis and the Bulgarian bus driver. Although firm evidence regarding responsibility for the Burgas bombing has not emerged publicly, several reports have linked Hizballah to the attack.
- A similar plot targeting Israeli tourists in Bulgaria was thwarted in January 2012, just weeks ahead of the fourth anniversary of the assassination of Hizballah operations chief Imad Mughniyeh.
- In addition to all of the above, Hizballah has also directed its aggression towards the State of Israel, including the abduction and murder of Israeli soldiers, and the firing of thousands of Katyusha rockets against Israeli civilians in northern Israel.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF HIZBALLAH AS A TERRORIST ORGANISATION**

- Countries that currently classify Hizballah as a terrorist organisation:
  - The Netherlands
  - United States
  - Israel
  - Canada
  - Australia - Military wing only
  - UK - Military wing only
- The US and Israel have long called for the EU to classify Hizballah as a terrorist organisation, but it has refused to do so.
- The UK now supports this initiative.
- The obstacles reside both in the European bureaucratic processes, and in the resistance of particular countries that have actively opposed such a move, such as Germany, France, Spain and Belgium.
- To add Hizballah to the list of terrorist organisations, a consensus must be found among all 27 EU members. The European Council, comprised of representatives of all member-states, must unanimously agree on a “common position.” Achieving this consensus is difficult, especially with the expanding EU. Pressure is needed to ensure that this happens.
- Hizballah’s position in the Lebanese government ought not to protect it from EU proscription: Hamas controls the government in the Gaza Strip and is on the EU’s list of Proscribed Terrorist Organisations, in recognition of its terrorist activities.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF HIZBALLAH**

- Classifying Hizballah as a terrorist organisation would freeze funding and accounts of Hizballah related personnel, and the group as a whole, from within the EU. While this would not cripple Hizballah entirely, as the group has its aforementioned links in Iran and South America, it would greatly damage its work within the EU and against Israeli, Jewish and non-Jewish civilians.

- Classification would allow greater cross border cooperation against Hizballah operations inside the EU.
- There is consensus growing amongst European and US experts that disrupting and stopping terrorist financing is a key tool in counter-terrorist strategies, and unlike other 'tools' is obtainable. Whilst terrorism can be performed relatively 'cheaply', global terrorism relies on finances from across the world. Cutting or 'delinking' terrorist organisations from their financing streams could save lives.
- Hassan Nasrallah has also recognised that terrorist classification would seriously damage the organisation, including its sources of finance.<sup>2</sup>
- Separating Hizballah into separate military and political wings is an artificial exercise. Hizballah has long insisted that its military and non-military activities are indivisible. For example, Hizballah's Deputy Secretary-General, Sheikh Naim Qassem, stated the following in an interview with the *LA Times*: "‘Hezbollah has a single leadership,’ said the 57-year-old cleric in a rare interview with an American reporter recently. ‘All political, social and jihad work is tied to the decisions of this leadership,’ he said. ‘The same leadership that directs the parliamentary and government work also leads jihad actions in the struggle against Israel.’"<sup>3</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UK Government should continue to pressure other EU governments to place Hizballah on the list of recognised terrorist organisations.
- The UK Government should classify Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation.

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<sup>2</sup> BBC Monitoring service translation of Nasrallah's speech on 17 February 2005, as broadcast on Al-Manar TV.

<sup>3</sup> Borzou Daragahi, "Lebanon's Hezbollah savors increasing legitimacy," *LA Times* online, 13 April 2009: <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/13/world/fg-lebanon-hezbollah13>