

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	587
Land:	Libanon
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Titel:	Hezbollah
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Lebanon: Hezbollah [Hizbollah, Hizbullah], including political participation and representation, military activities and areas under control; recruitment practices, including consequences for those who refuse to join; whether Hezbollah targets any segments of society for recruitment, including Lebanese citizens returning from abroad; ability to locate an individual in the country; state protection available (2016-November 2018)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa**1. Political Participation and Representation**

The Jamestown Foundation, which provides "research and analysis on conflict and instability in Eurasia" (The Jamestown Foundation n.d.), reports that Hezbollah is "a political party with a strong social-welfare arm" (The Jamestown Foundation 22 Jan. 2016, 10). According to a BBC profile on Hezbollah, the latter is a "political, military and social organisation" in Lebanon (BBC 15 Mar. 2016).

According to sources, Hezbollah won 13 seats in the 2018 elections (US 11 May 2018; Lebaneseelections.com 2018). A May 2018 article published by the US Congressional Research Service (CRS) [1] states that Hezbollah is part of a political coalition called "March 8" with "the Shi'a Amal Movement, the Maronite Christian Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and allied parties" (US 11 May 2018). Similarly, according to the Jamestown Foundation, Hezbollah has created "a political alliance with Maronite Christian factions, secular Druze and even Shia of the Amal Movement" (The Jamestown Foundation 22 Jan. 2016, 10-11). The CRS article indicates that Hezbollah's coalition won enough seats during the May 2018 elections to "secure a simple majority" in parliament (US 11 May 2018). The Encyclopaedia Britannica similarly reports that the March 8 bloc won a majority of seats during the May 2018 elections, "making Hezbollah politically dominant for the first time" (Encyclopaedia Britannica [2018]). According to the *Washington Post*, after the May 2018 elections, Hezbollah's coalition became "the largest parliamentary bloc" (*The Washington Post* 11 May 2018).

Reuters reports that, in the outgoing government, Hezbollah held the ministries of Industry and of Youth and Sports, and that according to a senior Lebanese official, it does not seek ministries such as finance, interior, defence or foreign affairs (Reuters 23 May 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Military Activities

The UN Security Council reports that "the armed component of Hizbollah is the most significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in [Lebanon]" (UN 21 Oct. 2016, para. 31). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016* indicates that Hezbollah has "[t]ens of thousands of supporters and members worldwide" (US 19 July 2017a). According to sources, Hezbollah has approximately 30,000 combatants (AP 18 Dec. 2015; *Financial Times* 14 Feb. 2017) or over "20,000 fully-trained combatants ... along with tens of thousands more part-time reservists" (MEI Nov. 2017, 6).

According to sources, Hezbollah has been fighting "in many areas across Syria" (US 19 July 2017a) or has expanded across Syria (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2017, 5; AP 18 Dec. 2015). A 2016 article published in the "Hezbollah Statements" section of Al-Manar, a pro-Hezbollah news website that reports on "leading events in the Arab region" (Al-Manar n.d.), states that Hezbollah "has been engaged in anti-terror operations in Syria" (Al-Manar 11 Sept. 2016).

2.1 Areas Under Control

According to sources, Hezbollah maintained a "de facto governance" in Southern Lebanon (MRG 19 June 2015) or is based in Southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley (US 19 July 2017a). Sources indicate that Hezbollah controls southern suburbs of Beirut (US 20 Apr. 2018, 18; UK 22 June 2018, para. 10.1.1). International Crisis Group describes al-Maamoura as Hezbollah's stronghold south of Beirut (International Crisis Group 23 Feb. 2016, 9). According to the Jamestown Foundation, Hezbollah has a "strong presence" in the Burj al-Barajneh district, "a mixed but largely Shia neighborhood" of southern Beirut (The Jamestown Foundation 22 Jan. 2016, 9). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 017* indicates that Hezbollah maintains checkpoints "in certain Shia-majority areas" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 18). The US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2016* states that Hezbollah controls checkpoints to access Dahiyah, a southern suburb of Beirut (US 15 Aug. 2017, 7). According to US *Country Reports 2016*, some Lebanese University campuses in Beirut are located in Hezbollah territory, "including the main campus and the [university's] southern branches" (US 3 Mar. 2017, 17). The same source reports that some Lebanese University campuses "host students affiliated" with Hezbollah (US 3 Mar. 2017, 16). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

US *Country Reports 2017* indicates that news outlets must obtain permission from Hezbollah's "media arm" to report in areas under its control (US 20 Apr. 2018, 12). The same source also explains that NGOs located in areas under Hezbollah's control face "harassment and intimidation, including social, political, and financial pressures" and that Hezbollah "reportedly paid youth who worked in 'unacceptable' NGOs to leave the groups" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 16). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

US *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016* indicates that Hezbollah "is capable of operating around the world" (US 19 July 2017a). Based on information provided by various sources between 2009 and 2017, International Crisis Group reports that Hezbollah is active in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, "though the depth of its involvement in those countries remains a matter of speculation" (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2017, 1).

2.2 Recruitment Practices

The Jamestown Foundation indicates that, according to Lebanese sources, and as reported by the Beirut-based newspaper *Daily Star*, Hezbollah "began recruiting Christians, Druze and Sunnis for the fight against the Islamic State in late 2014" [2] (The Jamestown Foundation 22 Jan. 2016, 11). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

International Crisis Group reports that Hezbollah, since its involvement in Syria, has increased its recruitment "in Lebanon's Shiite [Shia, Shi'a] community, including with training and financial incentives" (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2017, 6). Similarly, a 2015 Associated Press (AP) article, re-published by the online newspaper Times of Israel, reports that Hezbollah "has been conducting a large recruitment drive" from Lebanon's Shia community since its involvement in Syria (AP 18 Dec. 2015). The same source indicates the following:

Some elite fighters get more than \$2,000 a month for being in Syria, a very good salary by Lebanon's standards.

....

Hezbollah offers benefits that also motivate volunteers. The children of fighters get free education until they graduate from university. If a fighter is killed, his family continues to receive a stipend; if he is wounded, he is treated for free in the group's hospitals. (AP 18 Dec. 2015)

Le Monde diplomatique, a France-based newspaper, reports that the prolongation of the conflict in Syria has forced Hezbollah to [translation] "reduce the salaries and the aid it grants to its members," but it nevertheless remains "an attractive option" (*Le Monde diplomatique* Apr. 2016). Without providing further details, International Crisis Group states that, according to a 2016 interview in Beirut with an "Iraqi cleric with ties to Hizbollah," the Sayyida Zeinab shrine in Damascus mobilizes young Lebanese Shias to fight in Syria (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2017, 8). According to the "Hezbollah Statemen[t]" on the Al-Manar website, Hezbollah has fighters in Syria (Al-Manar 11 Sept. 2016). The BBC reports that "thousands of Hezbollah militants went to fight" in Syria (BBC 15 Mar. 2016). In 2015, AP reported that, according to the head of "the Middle East Center for Studies and Political Research in Beirut," Hezbollah had approximately 3,000 fighters in Syria (AP 18 Dec. 2015). In early 2016, the Jamestown Foundation indicated that Hezbollah had approximately 6,000 fighters in Syria (The Jamestown Foundation 22 Jan. 2016, 10).

Based on interviews conducted in 2016, International Crisis Group indicates that Hezbollah now employs recruits on a contract, and trains them for a "shorter" period [than the previous duration of training], which constitutes a "departure from long practice" (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2017, 7). The AP, also reporting on training for fighters in Syria, indicates that "[s]everal south Lebanon residents whose relatives are fighting [for Hezbollah] in Syria or have undergone training [with Hezbollah]" said that the training with Hezbollah lasts 60 to 90 days (AP 18 Dec. 2015). According to the same source, the residents explained that Hezbollah's fighters "in the past were prepared for more conventional warfare against Israel, but today they are trained for street battles and counter-insurgent tactics to deal with rebels" (AP 18 Dec. 2015).

The news website Middle East Eye (MEE) reports that, since its involvement in Syria, Hezbollah has "had to massively increase its recruitment. It expanded its recruiting pool by relaxing previously strict ideological and age requirements" (MEE 1 Nov. 2018). Sources indicate that Hezbollah has been recruiting "young men" (International Crisis Group 14 Mar. 2017, 5) or that "thousands of volunteers aged 17 and up have undergone [Hezbollah's] training in recent years" (AP 18 Dec. 2015). *Le Monde diplomatique* reports that, according to a [translation] "cultural sector" actor working in southern Lebanon, children can participate in Hezbollah's "'scout camps'" and, when they are around 16 years old, "'they are given a taste for combat'" (*Le Monde diplomatique* Apr. 2016).

Information on consequences for those who refuse to join Hezbollah could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information indicating whether Hezbollah targets Lebanese citizens returning from abroad for recruitment could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.3 Ability to Locate an Individual

Information on Hezbollah's ability to locate an individual in the country was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to *US Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, Hezbollah "had influence over some elements within Lebanon's security services" (US 19 July 2017b). A 2016 fact-finding mission report prepared by the Finnish Immigration Service similarly indicates that, according to a professor at the American University in Beirut, Hezbollah "can find anyone in Lebanon through the [Lebanese General Security (GS)]" because of the "closeness" between Hezbollah and the GS

(Finland 29 Sept. 2016, 21-22). US *Country Reports 2017* indicates that Hezbollah "used informer networks and telephone monitoring to obtain information regarding their perceived adversaries" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 11).

3. State Protection

The UN Security Council reports that Hezbollah "maintains a paramilitary capacity outside the authority of [the Lebanese government]" (UN 21 Oct. 2016, para. 46). US *Country Reports 2017* also indicates that Hezbollah operates outside the control of the Lebanese government (US 20 Apr. 2018, 1). Similarly, Freedom House reports that, "in practice," the authority of the Lebanese government is limited due to "the power of autonomous militant groups like Hezbollah" (Freedom House 2018). US *Country Reports 2017* indicates that government forces "were usually unable to enforce the law" in areas controlled by Hezbollah (US 20 Apr. 2018, 18).

According to US *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*,

[t]he Lebanese government did not take significant action to disarm Hizballah or eliminate its safe havens on Lebanese territory, nor did it seek to limit Hizballah's travel to and from Syria to fight in support of the Assad regime or to and from Iraq. ... [Hizballah was able] to operate with relative impunity. (US 19 July 2017b)

According to US *Country Reports 2017*, Hezbollah "continued the practice of extrajudicial arrest and detention, including incommunicado detention" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 8) and "reportedly operated unofficial detention facilities, but no information about these facilities was available" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 5). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides policy and legal analysis to the US Congress' committees and members (US n.d.).

[2] According to Mona Alami, a non-resident fellow at the Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East of the Atlantic Council, a US-headquartered (Atlantic Council n.d.a) think tank that works in the field of international affairs (Atlantic Council n.d.b), Hezbollah's offensive against a former al-Qaeda affiliate and the Islamic State (IS) [ISIS, ISIL, Daesh] on the Syria-Lebanon border in 2017 "gave credibility to Hezbollah's 'resistance against takfiris' narrative, anchored its position further within its mainly Shia constituency, and extended its reach outside its traditional base to Christian and Sunni communities" (Alami 28 Feb. 2018). The Associated Press (AP) indicates that "Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV often shows video encouraging Shiites to join the fight against 'takfiris,' a term [they use to refer to] Sunni extremists" (AP 18 Dec. 2015).

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<https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=457638>

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) are research reports on country conditions. They are requested by IRB decision makers.

The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIR. Earlier RIR may be found on the [UNHCR's Refworld website](#).

Please note that some RIR have attachments which are not electronically accessible here. To obtain a copy of an attachment, [please e-mail us](#).