Hezbollah Involvement in the Syrian Civil War

Overview

1. For Iran and Hezbollah, the preservation of Bashar Assad's regime is of supreme strategic importance. Syria is Iran's greatest "resistance camp" ally, providing it with a firm foothold in the heart of the Middle East as well as political and military influence. Syria also plays a vital role in Hezbollah's military buildup, helping it to construct offensive and deterrent capabilities against Israel. For Iran and Hezbollah, the fall of the Syrian regime would be a disaster, it would weaken Iran's regional position against the United States and Israel and damage Hezbollah's military capabilities and political influence in Lebanon.

2. Iran and Hezbollah have not only strategic interests, but also feel religious-sectarian solidarity for Syria's Shi'ite population (an estimated 400,000-450,000 strong) and with the Alawite sect that rules Syria. That solidarity, noticeable in

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1 Full version. This document was updated after the Hebrew Internet version had been issued.
Nasrallah's recent speeches, has became stronger since the Syrian Shi'ites and their holy sites in Syria became targets for harassment by the rebels (particularly organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda, such as the Al-Nusra Front, which considers Shi'ites as infidels).

3. With those dangers in mind, **Iran and Hezbollah employ two parallel strategic courses**: the first, immediate course is intended to prop up the Syrian regime's ability to survive and continue governing, and entails military, economic, political and propaganda support. The second, planned as both an intermediate- and long-term strategy, is intended to make it possible for the Shi'ites and Alawites to defend themselves by founding a "popular army." In our assessment such a popular army is planned for an estimated 100,000-150,000 militiamen, and will give Iran and Hezbollah a foothold in the areas populated by Shi'ites and Alawites, making them important factors in the internal Syrian arena in the post-Assad era.

4. In addition to providing a response to potential dangers, **Hezbollah seeks to acquire advanced military capabilities from the Syrian regime**, the possession of which could deter Israel and challenge its technological superiority. Such advanced capabilities include **advanced surface-to-surface missiles** (such as the Iranian Fateh-110s), **anti-ship cruise missiles** (Russian Yakhonts) and **anti-aircraft missiles** (Russian SA-17s and other systems). In our assessment also **Hezbollah wants to exploit the weakness and strategic distress of the Assad regime to gain a foothold in the Golan Heights from which to carry out terrorist attacks against Israeli**. Hezbollah's desire for "game-changing" weapons and its willingness to "help" the so-called "Syrian popular resistance" in the Golan Heights were **openly mentioned in a speech given by Hassan Nasrallah on May 9, 2013**. Israeli policy, as stated by Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, was "to prevent, the transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah and to [other] terrorist elements."²

5. Iranian policy regarding the civil war in Syria is handled by the **Qods Force** (commanded by Qassem Suleimani), with **Hezbollah as Iran's main subcontractor**. Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war is manifested by its sending **several thousand operatives** to participate in the fighting in Shi'ite regions. Hezbollah also supports the Syrian regime by **training** (its forces in guerrilla warfare), **providing it with intelligence, securing the Syrian-Lebanese border, taking preventive measures inside Lebanon and waging propaganda campaigns**.

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² [http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokeStart190513.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokeStart190513.aspx)
6. The operatives sent to Syria play an important role in the fighting, **especially in locations where Hezbollah (and Iran) have sectarian-religious interests.** They include the **Al-Qusayr** region, south of Homs, near the northern border with Lebanon where there is a Shi'ite population living within a Sunni area (on June 5, 2013, the Syrian army announced its takeover of Al-Qusayr) and **the grave of Al-Set Zaynab,** located south of Damascus, an important holy Shi'ite pilgrimage site. **Hezbollah continues to be sucked further into the civil war in Syria despite its losses and the political price it is forced to pay:** so far **more than one hundred of its operatives** have been killed (most of them in the campaign for Al-Qusayr) and criticism of Hezbollah has increased among its opponents in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world.

7. Hezbollah was involved in the first year of the civil war in Syria but was careful to keep a low profile. In 2012 it sent a limited number of its military operatives to Syria, mainly as advisors and for security missions. **Hezbollah was actively drawn into the war (as opposed to Iran's caution) during the first half of 2013.** That was because in both Iranian and Hezbollah assessment the survival of the Syrian regime was in jeopardy and that Shi'ite religious-sectarian interests were being threatened. However, despite its having been sucked into the Syrian morass, Hezbollah's direct involvement in the war is **still relatively limited** and its overall influence on events in Syria is secondary. However, **its involvement may grow as the Syrian regime weakens and the dangers to Iran and Hezbollah's strategic interests increase.**

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Iran and Hezbollah Interests in Syria

1. For Iran, preserving the regime of Bashar Assad is of supreme strategic importance: Syria is Iran's most important ally in the so-called "resistance camp" and provides Iran with a firm foothold in the heart of the Middle East. The Iranians are concerned that the collapse of the Assad regime and its replacement by a pro-Western regime are liable not only to damage Iranian influence in Syria and Lebanon, but to weaken its political influence in the Middle East against the United States, Israel and pro-Western Arab countries, and strike a blow to its desire for regional hegemony.

2. Hezbollah, Iran's proxy, has its own reasons to support the Syrian regime and keep it from collapsing: Syria (with Iran) plays a vital role in Hezbollah's military buildup, and in maintaining its offensive and deterrent capabilities against Israel. For Hezbollah, Syria is an important source of advanced weaponry (including long-range rockets and missiles) and the main transit station for the weapons sent from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon. In addition, Hezbollah feels religious-sectarian solidarity with the Shi'ites and Alawites in Syria. For years Syria has supported Hezbollah in the internal Lebanese arena and given it backup in its fight against its political opponents (the March 14 Camp). All of the above made Syria, under President Hafez al-Assad and more so under his son Bashar, a strategic ally, giving Hezbollah logistic depth and important political support.

3. Hezbollah's interests and Syria's importance were expressed by Hassan Nasrallah in a speech on May 25, 2013, marking the 13th anniversary of the IDF's withdrawal from the security zone in south Lebanon. He publicly admitted Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian civil war and elaborated on the claim that by participating Hezbollah was protecting Lebanon, Palestine and Syria (Radio Nur, May 25, 2013):

   1) The threat to Lebanon and the Lebanese: Nasrallah claimed that the civil war was not an uprising of the Syrian people against the regime or a demand for reforms, but rather a war led by global jihad-affiliated networks from all over the world (the takfirs, to quote Nasrallah). Their conquest of regions near the Lebanese border (a hint at the Al-Qusayr region which Hezbollah later took control of) was, he said, "a danger to all Lebanon and Lebanese," not only to Hezbollah or the Shi'ites. He appealed to the Lebanese to consider the

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3 In Islamic law, takfir refers to the practice of the extreme Islamists' declaring other Muslims as infidels and thus they may be killed.
thousands of religious-sectarian suicide bombing attacks carried out by global jihad groups in Iraq and to learn from the lesson of their crimes in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia. He also referred to the atrocities carried out by global jihad groups that "rend bodies, shatter heads, burrow into graves and destroy the past...the present and the future, reject every political solution and insist on fighting."

2) **The danger of the West's taking control of Syria**: What is happening in Syria, according to Nasrallah, is not a "popular revolution" against the regime. Rather, it is an attempt to enforce an American-Western political agenda, compatible with Israel's agenda, on the region, using "regional states" (a hint at rebel-supporting Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Turkey).

3) **The danger to the "Palestinian resistance"** [i.e., the Palestinian terrorist organizations]: Nasrallah repeatedly stated that Syria was the "backbone of the resistance" and "its support." Therefore, if Syria fell into the hands of the Americans, Israeli, global jihad organizations (the takfirs) and the Arab-Muslim countries supporting the rebels ("the regional cats paws"), the "resistance would be besieged" and Israel would enter Lebanon to enforce its conditions on the Lebanese people.

4. According to Nasrallah, "if Syria falls, Palestine will be lost, the resistance will be lost, and Gaza, the West Bank and holy Jerusalem will be lost. If Syria falls into American, Israeli and fundamentalist hands, then the people of the region and the countries of the regions will be force-marched to hard times, terrible, dark times..."

Therefore, "the resistance remain idle and allow its back to be broken and its support to be broken." He stressed that in recent weeks Hezbollah had entered a new phase, "fortifying the resistance and defending its back [i.e., Syria], fortifying Lebanon and defending its back [i.e., Hezbollah]." **Hezbollah, he said, would win the campaign and be victorious, as it had been victorious in other campaigns.**

5. A current example of the importance of Syria as a transit station for advanced weapons from Iran was the two aerial attacks attributed by the foreign media to Israel, carried out in the Damascus region at the beginning of May 2013. According to a report in The New York Times, American officials said the attacks had targeted a shipment of Fateh-110 surface to surface missiles sent from Iran to Hezbollah. The missiles, according to the article, had been stored in a warehouse in the Damascus international airport and secured by operatives belonging to Hezbollah and the Iranian Qods Force. The missiles were mobile, accurate and solid
fueled, and their range covered most of Israeli territory, including the Tel Aviv area. (The New York Times, May 4, 2013).

The Dangers and Potential Opportunities of the Syrian Civil War

6. In addition to protecting vital interests, a military presence on Syrian soil and the construction of armed Shi'ite and Alawite militias in Syria might preserve the Iranian-Hezbollah foothold in Syrian politics and society for the morning after the collapse of the regime. As far as Iran and Hezbollah are concerned, their presence not only props up the Syrian regime but also provides a response to the dangers which may develop in Syria and Lebanon if it collapses or is significantly weakened. There are three possible dangers:

1) The civil war will seep into Lebanon. The collapse of the Syrian regime may lead to political and physical harm to the Alawites and Shi'ites in Syria. The situation is liable to seep into Lebanon and damage its delicate sectarian fabric, encouraging the Sunnis (and members of other sects) to try to harm Hezbollah's political and military power base. That might in turn lead to violent confrontations between Hezbollah and its opponents and in the end harm its military power and political influence in Lebanon. One current example of what might potentially happen if Hezbollah becomes seriously involved in the Syria civil war were the violent confrontations in Tripoli between Sunnis (who oppose the Syrian regime) and Alawites (who support it) which claimed dozens of lives. Other examples were the two rockets fired at the southern suburb of Beirut and Baalbek, both Hezbollah strongholds.4

2) Significant involvement of Western and/or pro-Western Arab-Muslim countries (Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar) in Syria's internal affairs might lead to the establishment of a pro-Western Syrian regime. The new regime might remove Syria from the "resistance camp," adopt pro-Western policies and politically challenge Iranian and Hezbollah influence in Syria, Lebanon and the entire region.

4 Another current example of the seeping of the Syrian crisis into Lebanon occurred on June 9, 2013, after this document had been written. In Beirut an unprecedented demonstration was held in front of the Iranian embassy against Hezbollah involvement in the Syrian civil war. During the demonstration shots were fired (from and unknown source) and a student activist who organized the demonstration was killed. Lebanese army forces imposed order and instituted a search for the assassin.
3) Organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad might become stronger, especially the Al-Nusra Front. These organizations are hostile to Shi'ites and Alawites as well as to Iran and Hezbollah, and consider Shi'ites as infidels. If they become stronger they might genuinely be a danger to the Shi'ites and Alawites in Syria and Lebanon. They might also turn Syria into an exporter of jihadist terrorism and take on Hezbollah's role as "resistance" leader. In addition, their influence might seep into Lebanon from Syria, strengthening the radical Sunni networks hostile to Hezbollah.

7. In addition to finding ways to overcome the dangers, Hezbollah seeks to exploit the potential advantages from the weakening of the Syrian regime and its deepening great dependence on Iran and Hezbollah:

1) Hezbollah wants advanced military capabilities from the Syrian regime, capabilities whose possession might deter Israel and challenge its technological superiority. Some types of military capabilities that might fall into Hezbollah's hands were noted in a speech given by the head of Israeli military intelligence, General Aviv Cochavi (13th Herzliya Conference, March 13, 2013). He said they included advanced missiles, anti-ship missiles and aerial defense systems. An example of preventing the Syrians from transferring advanced aerial defense systems to Hezbollah was the attack on a convoy carrying advanced Russian SA-17 missiles in January 2013, attributed to Israel. If the missiles had reached Hezbollah they would have endangered the Israeli Air Force's ability to operate over Lebanon (New York Times, May 4, 2013).

2) Hezbollah's desire to acquire advanced military capabilities was publicly expressed in a speech given by Hassan Nasrallah on May 9, 2013. Referring to the attacks on the shipment of Fateh-110 missiles from Iran on May 3 and 5, attributed by the foreign media to Israel, he said that one of the objectives of the attack had been to prevent "game-changing" weapons from being delivered to

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5 The Al-Nusra Front for Support of the Residents of Greater Syria is the most prominent Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic organization fighting the Syrian regime. Its name is generally shortened to the Al-Nusra Front.

6 Amos Yadlin, head of Institute for National Security Studies, (INSS) wrote an article based on foreign reports which alleged that Israel had carried out the attack. He said that "It is important to understand that this time, for the first time in a decade, Israel took action against a route used for the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah from Iran and Syria. Until 2000, Assad senior limited the arms to Hezbollah...Assad junior, on the other hand, reshuffled the cards...The weapons from Iran arrive by air at the Damascus international airport and from there are transported to Lebanon. Despite UN Security Council Resolution 1701 passed in 2006, which forbids the supply of weapons to Lebanon to any entity other than the Lebanese government, Israel did not act against the arms shipments. However, when it became obvious at the end of the last decade that all of the obstacles to the provision of weapons to Hezbollah had been overcome, Israeli designated four systems of weapons it would have to act to prevent Hezbollah from attaining, even at the risk of escalation: advanced aerial defense systems, long range surface-to-surface missiles, Yakhont anti-ship cruise missiles and chemical weapons" (INSS, Overview (242), May 9, 2013) (ITIC translation and emphasis).
Hezbollah ("the resistance"). He claimed that following the attack the Syrian regime made the strategic decision to provide Hezbollah with "a high quality weapon it had not yet received." He said that Hezbollah was ready to accept a "game-changing weapon" which would be used to repel "Israeli aggression" (Speech given by Hassan Nasrallah, Radio Nur, May 9, 2013).7

3) Hezbollah involvement in terrorist activity from the Golan Heights: Another possible advantage considered by Hezbollah would be to turn the Golan Heights into a terrorist front against Israel. Speaking on Radio Nur on May 9, 2013, Nasrallah referred to what he called the opening of a Golan Heights front for attacks by the Syrian regime following the attacks allegedly carried out by Israel. Nasrallah said that "As Syria has stood shoulder to shoulder with the Lebanese people, supported the [Lebanese] popular resistance both physically and morally so that it could liberate south Lebanon, we, the Lebanese resistance [i.e., Hezbollah] declare that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Syrian popular resistance, and we will provide it with physical and moral support, collaboration and coordination, for the sake of liberating the Syrian Heights."8

### Iranian Support for the Syrian Regime

8. Because of Syria's great importance, Iran and Hezbollah, led by the Iranian Qods Force, provide the regime with military, economic, political and propaganda support in an effort to prevent its collapse and the collapse of the entire "resistance camp." In our assessment, both Iran and Hezbollah work on the assumption that the Syrian regime may still survive and that the clock can be turned back, or as Qods Force commander Suleimani paraphrased at the end of the first year of the Syrian civil war, the Syrian illness will not lead to the death of the Syrian regime (Speech by Suleimani

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7 The declaration was accompanied by a threat from "a senior Hezbollah figure." According to the Hezbollah source, the significance of Syrian-Hezbollah solidarity was that a united front had been created against Israel. If Israel, according to the source, were to be foolish enough to risk entering into a war it would be blown back to the Stone Age: "Every strike on an airport will be answered with a strike on an airport and train stations [in Israel]; every strike on a power station will be answered with a strike on the [Israeli] infrastructure; every strike on a seaport will be answered in such a fashion that the new missiles will paralyze Israel's military and commercial naval movements in the Mediterranean Sea. Thus both we and our enemy will simultaneously return to the Stone Age" (Al-Ra'i TV, Kuwait, May 24, 2013)

8 In all the years of its existence Hezbollah has never carried out terrorist attacks through the Golan Heights, primarily because for 40 years it has been Syrian policy to preserve quiet along the border with Israel and Hezbollah's preference for using proxies on other fronts. Nasrallah's declaration of his willingness to participate in attacks in the Golan Heights was met with immediate criticism from the Arab and Lebanese media opposing Iran and Hezbollah. For example, the popular London-based Arab newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat wrote that "Hezbollah fighters are entering a new campaign which cannot be expected to succeed, for many reasons, from the geographical nature of the terrain where they are planning to fight, to the lack of popular support in the [Golan Heights] region for the Assad regime, ending with Hezbollah's lack of means and the expected Israeli response" (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, May 11, 2013).

9 For further information about the Qods Force, see the August 7, 2012 bulletin "The Qods Force, an elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, spearheads Iran's global terrorist campaign."
at a meeting in Qom, ISNA, January 19, 2012). However, in our assessment, the weakening of the Syrian regime may lead to disillusioning the leaders of the Iranian regime who may understand they should change their emphasis from supporting the regime to organizing for the morning after its collapse.

9. Iran supports the Syrian regime with military advice, weapons, political and propaganda backup, and economic aid. Senior Iranians meet with their Syrian counterparts to coordinate positions regarding both political strategy and at the military-operative level. The figure prominent in directing Iranian support for the Syrian regime is Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Qods Force.

10. Most of Iran's military aid to the Syrian regime is manifested by large quantities of weapon, flown from Iran to Syria in Iranian transport planes, mostly through Iraqi air space. It was also reported that arms, goods and military equipment for the Syrian regime were flown from Iran to the international airport in Beirut. In addition, members of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IIRG) were in Syria as advisors and instructors for the Syrian security forces. Iran is also helping Syria establish a popular army of Syrian Shi'ites and Alawites using Hezbollah as its subcontractor (See below.). In addition, Iran gives Syria political, propaganda and financial support.

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10 On a number of occasions in 2012, the American media revealed that Iran was flying cargoes of weapons through Iraqi air space. On March 16, 2012, the Washington Post reported that Iranian planes had flown 30 tons of arms to Syria with manifests indicating they were "agricultural equipment." On September 5, 2012 The New York Times reported that in July 2012 Iran had renewed its shipments of arms to Syria through Iraqi air space. According to another report, based on "Western intelligence services," the Iranians were making daily flights to Syria through Iraqi air space on planes carrying members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards and tens of tons of weapons and ammunition (Reuters, September 19, 2012).

11 The Internet news site Al-Watan Al-Arabi reported that Beirut's airport had long since become a depot for merchandise, arms and military equipment sent by Iran to Hezbollah and the Syrian regime. Iran, according to the report, used planes belonging to Iran Air and Mahan Air, flying over Iraq and Turkey (Al-Watan Al-Arabi, May 3, 2013).

12 The governor of the Central Syrian Bank, Adib Mayala, said that Tehran had opened a line of credit of $1 billion of which Syria had already withdrawn more than half. He added that Syria expected more help from friendly countries, from Iran, Russia and possibly others (Reuters, Damascus, April 24, 2013).
11. IIRG commander Mahmoud Ali Jaafari publicly admitted that Iran was supporting the Syrian regime. At a press conference in Tehran on September 16, 2012, he said that "We are proud to defend Syria, which is a cornerstone of the struggle against Israel. We are contributing advice and our experience." He also admitted that Iran was giving Syria financial support. He denied, however, that Iran had a military presence in Syria, but threatened that Iran would change its policies if Syria were attacked (Al-Hayat, Al-Jazeera, the Free-syria.net website, September 17, 2012). In May 2012 General Ismail Qaani, deputy commander of the Qods Force, admitted that there were Iranian soldiers in Syria supporting Bashar Assad's regime. He said their objective was to help defend the Syrian people and regime from the rebels, and that "If the Islamic Republic were not in Syria, twice as many Syrians would be slaughtered" (ISNA, Iran, May 27, 2012).

12. In our assessment, IIRG soldiers maintain a limited presence in Syria. So far the Iranians have not put organic military units into action against the Syrian rebels and in general they have not been involved in the fighting (although they have occasionally been killed in the crossfire). On the other hand, in recent months Iranian proxy Hezbollah has increased its involvement in Syria and sent units to participate in fighting on the side of the regime (See below.).

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13. According to the Syrian and Arab media, several IIRG soldiers have been killed in the fighting in Syria. The rebels have also taken some prisoner. The bodies of those IIRG soldiers killed in the Damascus region were flown to Iran in an Iranian transport plane which had brought the Syrian regime weapons and ammunition (Al-Mukhtasar, Arabic news website, October 1, 2012).
The grave of Raed Muham Turk, an IIRG officer killed in Damascus during a firefight with the rebels. His grave, in Iran, reads "Born 1/10/1357 (year of the Hegira, i.e., March 30, 1979), died 29/10/1390 (year of the Hegira, i.e., January 19, 2012). Died in Damascus" (Al-Arabiya TV, September 19, 2012).

Iran, Hezbollah and Syria Coordinate Positions

13. Determining a joint strategy, and if necessary redefining it in view of military and political changes, demands frequent coordination between the Iranian leadership and Hezbollah, and between both of them and the leaders of the Syrian regime. According to the Arab and Lebanese media, they occasionally consult with one another:

1) On April 19, 2013, the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Ra'i reported that earlier that month Hassan Nasrallah had visited Tehran. While there he met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Qods Force commander Qassem Suleimani and other senior Iranian figures. The reason for his visit was Iran's decision to put its full support behind the Syrian regime. According to the Lebanese newspaper Al-Nahar on April 21, 2013, "sources close to Hezbollah" confirmed that Nasrallah had in fact visited Iran during the first half of April 2013.

2) On March 12, 2013, the Lebanese daily newspaper Al-Shira'a reported that Qods Force commander Qassem Suleimani had visited Syria at the end of February 2013. Returning to Tehran, he presented the Iranian leadership with a fairly bleak picture of the situation of the Syrian regime's military and strategic situation. As a response to Syria's difficulties he suggested increasing the size of the "people's army" by sending Shi'ite volunteers to Syria to make up for the lack of Alawite fighting manpower.
Hassan Nasrallah meets with Khamenei in Tehran (Hezbollah website, April 15, 2013). The picture was published in the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Ra'i in the article about Nasrallah's visit; it may not have been taken during the visit.
Overview

14. Hezbollah has been giving the Syrian regime increasing amounts of military support as the civil war drags on and the dangers to the regime's survival grow. The support is mainly expressed by sending Hezbollah military-terrorist operatives to fight in Syria, in our assessment several thousand so far. Their presence was important in the campaign that led to the takeover of Al-Qusayr, south of Homs, and in protecting the grave of Al-Set Zaynab, a Shi'ite holy site south of Damascus. Hezbollah also provides the Syrian regime with intelligence and training, and participates in establishing Shi'ite and Alawite armed militias (“the popular army”) in preparation for the morning after the possible collapse of the Syrian regime. Hezbollah also struggles against the Syrian regime's opponents inside Lebanon and conducts a pro-Syrian propaganda campaign.

Direct Hezbollah Participation in the Fighting

15. During the first year of the Syrian civil war Hezbollah was careful to keep a low profile in the fighting. In 2012 a limited number of Hezbollah operatives were sent to Syria and served mainly in advisory and security capacities and were not massively involved in the actual fighting. That apparently changed during the first half of 2013, as Iran and Hezbollah realized that the survival of the Syrian regime was seriously endangered, as were their own interests (their military assets and religious-sectarian interests). The change included sending Hezbollah forces to the campaign in
Al-Qusayr, which fell into the hands of the Syrian army after heavy fighting with the rebels.

16. According to head of Israel military intelligence General Aviv Cochavi (March 2013), Hezbollah sent several hundred fighters from its special units to Syria. According to media reports, the numbers grew and as of May 2012 there were several thousand.\(^{14}\) Hezbollah’s fighting in Al-Qusayr symbolized its being sucked deeper into the Syrian morass despite the price it had to pay in the internal Lebanese arena, in the Arab-Muslim world and in its faceoff with Israel (See below.).\(^{15}\) In our assessment, it is liable to be sucked deeper into the Syrian civil war as the Assad regime loses the ability to govern and Iran and Hezbollah’s concerns grow regarding a collapse of the regime and possible damage to their vital interests.

17. However, so far Hezbollah’s direct involvement in the fighting has not extended to the main battle sites and it cannot tip the scales in the war. Its activities have focused on locations where it has religious-sectarian interests (Al-Qusayr, the grave of Al-Set Zaynab).\(^{16}\) According to a May 4, 2013 article in the Lebanese newspaper Al-Safir, Hezbollah’s involvement in the fighting in Syria is still local and its goals are narrow. Hezbollah has not yet brought all its weight to bear, an option it may choose if the conflict becomes broader and if more elements hostile to the Assad regime join the war.

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\(^{14}\) On April 18, 2013, the All4Syria website, affiliated the Syrian opposition reported that 700 armed fighters had been sent to the Al-Qusayr region. On April 14, 2013, the Saudi Arabian website Al-Watan reported that 1,200 Hezbollah fighters had been sent by sea to the Syrian port of Tartus. On May 19, 2013, the Lebanese newspaper Al-Hayat reported that “knowledgeable French sources” said that France had “definite information” that 1,500 Hezbollah fighters were fighting for the Syrian regime. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said that the French estimated that 3,000-4,000 Hezbollah operatives were involved in the fighting in Syria (Agence France-Presse, May 29, 2013).

\(^{15}\) Hezbollah’s being sucked into the Syrian civil war is in contrast to the caution various foreign countries (the United States, Iran, Turkey) have shown so far.

\(^{16}\) So far the number of Hezbollah operatives is Syria is far smaller than those of the rebels as well as global jihad operatives. According to the speech given by General Aviv Cochavi, head of Israeli military intelligence, in March 2013, there are about 100,000 opposition fighters, and about 10,000 global jihad-affiliated operatives. Hezbollah, in ITIC assessment, has a few thousand operatives (as of May 2013).
Other Areas of Hezbollah Support

Hassan Nasrallah and Bashar Assad (Hawamir forum website, Saudi Arabia, July 22, 2012).

18. In addition to sending operatives, Hezbollah provides Syria with military, security and propaganda support:

1) **Training**: Hezbollah trains the military and special forces loyal to Assad in guerilla warfare skills, where it has operational experience: urban warfare, sabotage, sniping, etc. According to an article in the French newspaper Le Figaro, Hezbollah and the Iranians’ main support is in training Bashar Assad's forces (*Le Figaro*, August 17, 2012). According to Colonel 'Arif Hamoud of the free Syrian army, Hezbollah's involvement in Syria began with the training of Assad's forces in guerilla tactics (*Usatoday.com*, March 5, 2013).

2) **Intelligence**: According to the Lebanese newspaper Al-Shira'a, Hezbollah sent groups of its military operatives to Syria to help Syrian intelligence (Al-Shira'a, July 11, 2011). According to Israel's military intelligence head, both Iran and Hezbollah provide the Syrian regime with intelligence.

3) **Securing the Syrian-Lebanese border**: Hezbollah carries out preventive activities in the Beq'a Valley along Lebanon's border with Syria. The border is traditionally porous and both Lebanese and Syrian government control over it is weak. Hezbollah's secures the logistic network from Lebanon to Syria and prevents the passage of Lebanese operatives and weapons for the rebels.

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17 In the lecture given in March 2013.
(Hezbollah repeatedly accuses its Lebanese opponents of supporting the Syrian rebels.)

4) **Preemptive activities in the internal Lebanese arena**: Hezbollah makes it difficult for the Syrian opposition in Lebanon to take action through harassment, threats, detentions and handing wanted Syrians over to Syrian regime.

5) **Propaganda**: Hezbollah disseminates pro-Syrian propaganda using its own media, and Lebanese and Arab media. Hezbollah represents the Syrian regime as consistently supporting the Palestinians by supporting the anti-Israeli “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] and as a main element in the anti-Israeli "axis of resistance and rejection." The opponents of the Syrian regime, on the other hand, are represented as servants of a Western-Arab "conspiracy" or as "terrorists" (the organizations affiliated Al-Qaeda and the global jihad are referred to as *takfirs*) who go to Syria to topple the regime and incite a religious-sectarian civil war.

**Hezbollah Support for the Syria Regime**

Hezbollah activists in Lebanon demonstrate in support of the Assad regime (Ilaf website, from All4Syria, July 2012).

The world media blindfolds itself not to have to see the events taking place in Syria (Hezbollah’s Al-Intiqad website).

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18 **Sheikh Naim Qassem**, Hassan Nasrallah’s second in command, told a Kuwaiti newspaper that the March 14 Camp sent weapons and money to the rebels in Syria and gave them a safe haven. He claimed that more than 20 men had been killed (implying they were Lebanese who had fought alongside the rebels) in the northern border region of Talkalah when they confronted the Syrian army (Al-Anbaa, Kuwait, April 29, 2013).
There are an estimated 400,000-450,000 Shi'ites in Syria, almost 2% of the total Syrian population. Most of them live in the regions around Damascus, Homs and its outlying areas and in the outskirts of Aleppo and Idlib. There are also small Shi'ite communities in Daraa', eastern Syria and on the coast. Most of the Shi'ites are Syrian by birth but there is also a minority of Iraqi Shi'ites who sought asylum.

During the Syrian civil war the circumstances of the Shi'ites have worsened because of their proximity to the regime and because they live within Sunni areas (such as Idlib and the outskirts of Aleppo and Homs). As the fighting escalated and the Syrian regime's ability to govern weakened (especially after the middle of 2012) attacks on Shi'ites escalated and there were increasing numbers of murders, abductions and attacks on clerics. The harassment and increasingly religious-sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict led to concern among the Syrian Shi'ites that the fall of the Assad regime would lead to a large-scale settling of accounts and that their actual physical existence would be in danger. Their concerns are shared by the ruling Alawites, who

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19 According to the center of religious studies in Qom, Iran, there are 400,000 Shi'ites in Syria (AQAED website, Iran, October 31, 2012). According to Wikipedia regarding the March 14 Camp, the Shi'ites make up 2% of the total Syrian population. According to another estimation, there are about 300,000 Shi'ites in Syria, to whom can be added tens of thousands of Iraqi Shi'ites who fled to Syria.
are centered mainly along a strip of coastline in Syria's west and are considered Shi'ites by Iran and Hezbollah.

21. Thus, as part of preparing for the morning after the fall of the Assad regime, Iran and Hezbollah support and aid the Shi'ites and Alawites in Syrian regime in their preparations to defend themselves from possible Sunni attacks. They are concerned that after the fall the Shi'ite-Alawite population will be exposed to acts of revenge from the Sunni opposition and the Sunni networks affiliated with Al-Qaeda (especially the Al-Nusra Front) which are important components of the rebel forces fighting Assad.

22. In preparation for the possible collapse of the Syrian regime, in the summer of 2012 Iran and Hezbollah began organizing a Shi'ite-Alawite "popular army." According to the lecture given by General Aviv Cochavi (March 2013), it had about 50,000 men. They are trained by Hezbollah and financed by Iran, and include "popular committees" and networks for self defense established in Shi'ite and possibly Alawite towns and villages. On August 14, 2012, American Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said Iran was organizing and training a militia to support the Syrian regime (Telegraph.co.uk and Military.com websites, August 15, 2012). While he did not specifically mention Hezbollah, in our assessment it can be assumed that the militia in question is Shi'ite-Alawite and was being set up by Iran and Hezbollah.

23. The Lebanese media reported that according to "a Hezbollah source" young Syrian Shi'ites were being given military training in Hezbollah camps in the Lebanese Beqa'a Valley to be able to defend their villages from the Sunnis (Al-Shira'a, Issue 127, early July 2012). According to a report based on a Syrian opposition source, Hezbollah operatives took over a number of villages with Shi'ite majorities along the Syrian coast in preparation for the creation of "an Alawite canton" (Okaz, Saudi Arabia, October 17, 2012).

20 The Alawite community, designated by orthodox Muslims as infidels, is regarded as Shi'ite by Iran and Hezbollah. That began in the early 1970s when the young Syrian regime tried to appease middle class Sunni Muslims and soften their opposition to an Alawite president. That was done by representing Hafez Assad as a devout Muslim and the Alawites as Shi'ites. The Syrians were supported by the Shi'ite Imam Musa Sadr who in 1973 confirmed that the Alawites were Shi'ites. At the beginning of July 1973 Musa Sadr participated in a ceremony in Tripoli where Ali Mansour was appointed as the new Shi'ite Mufti and was supposed to serve both Shi'ites and Alawites. At the ceremony, which was attended by an Alawite delegation from Syria, Musa Sadr stated that the Alawites were Shi'ites and condemned those who wanted to claim ownership of Islam. The religious legitimacy he provided has been the basis for the close collaboration between the Shi'ites in Lebanon and the Syrian Alawite regime from the time of Hafez Assad to the present day.

21 According to the Lebanese newspaper Al-Hayat, the popular army currently has 67,000 fighters, trained by Tehran in urban warfare (Walid al-Shukeir, "After Al-Qusayr. What Next," Al-Hayat, Lebanon, June 7, 2013).

22 The same modus operandi used by Iran in Iraq is evident in Syria: Iran used Hezbollah as its subcontractor to set up Shi'ite militias, arm them and train them to fight the American and Western forces (until they withdrew from the country). Iran exploited Hezbollah's proven subversive and terrorist capabilities and the Lebanese Shi'ites' religious and cultural ties with the Shi'ites in Iraq (valid for the Shi'ites in Syria as well). An example was the affair of Ali Daqduq, a senior Hezbollah military-terrorist operative who was sent to Iran and Iraq to form and train Shi'ite militias based on the Lebanese format and financed by Iran. On March 20, 2007, he was captured by the Americans and held prisoner but released by the Iraqi administration after the American forces withdrew from Iraq.
24. The Lebanese daily newspaper Al-Shira'a reported the deployment of a popular army and that Iran intended to increase the number of its fighters (March 12, 2013):

1) According to the report, the popular army was being established in the coastal region of Latakia and at the grave of Al-Set Zaynab south of Damascus (See below.). It was also deployed in the region of Al-Zabadani (northwest of Damascus near the Lebanese border) where it collaborates with the IIRG forces which have been stationed there for many years. Iran also intended to assign popular army forces to defend the Shi'ite villages near the Syrian-Lebanese border in the northern Beqa'a Valley (i.e., the region of Al-Qusayr).

2) Qods Force commander Qassem Suleimani formulated a plan to increase the size of the popular army after his visit to Lebanon at the end of February 2013. According to the plan it will consist of 150,000 armed men and in addition to Syrians, it will include Shi'ite volunteers from the various countries in the region (Iran, Lebanon, Iraq).
The Main Campaign: Al-Qusayr (South of Homs)

Background

25. During the first half of 2013 the Syrian city of Al-Qusayr and its environs were the main scene of Hezbollah’s fighting in Syria. The fighting in the region began at the beginning of 2012, worsened in 2013 and was decided on June 5, 2013, when Hezbollah and Syrian army forces conquered the city.

26. Al-Qusayr is located 35 kilometers (or almost 22 miles) south of Homs and 15 kilometers (or nine miles) from the Lebanese border. It was home to an estimated 40,000 Syrians, most of them Sunnis, who fled the city during the heavy fighting. There is also a small Catholic minority (about 10% of the population) and several hundred Alawites. The city is a vibrant commercial and agricultural center with commercial relations with Lebanon. According to Hezbollah, 30,000 Lebanese live in Al-Qusayr's environs in 23 towns and villages (Assafir.com website).

Al-Qusayr's Importance to Hezbollah

27. Geographically, Al-Qusayr and its villages have military importance for both the Syrian regime and the rebels: the main road from Damascus to Homs runs nearby and from there north to Hamah and west to the Alawite stronghold on the coast (See map, above). Because of its geographic importance the rebels used it as a base
from which to block the main route from Damascus to the sea and thus cut off the Syrian regime's forces and their supply lines.

28. For Hezbollah as well, Al-Qusayr had great military importance because of its proximity to Lebanon and because it commands the road leading from Homs to the northern Beqa'a Valley (the Hermel region). From there the road leads to Baalbek and along the Beqa'a Valley where the Shi'ites live and where Hezbollah has its strongholds. The road leading from Syria to the northern Beqa'a Valley is used by Hezbollah to transport weapons from Syria to Lebanon and to send its fighters and weapons to Syria, and vice-versa, the rebels may also use the Al-Qusayr region to receive supplies and reinforcements from their supporters in Lebanon, especially from around the city of Tripoli.

29. Al-Qusayr's strategic military importance was the subject of an Al-Manar report on May 21, 2013, following the major attack on the city. Entitled "The mother of all battles – why Al-Qusayr?" it described Al-Qusayr as "a strategic point located at a main crossroads linking Damascus, Homs and the Syrian coast." It is also important because of its proximity to Lebanon and its long history as an important commercial center between Lebanon and Syria. Brigadier General (Ret.) Elias Hana told Al-Manar that if the Syrian regime controlled Al-Qusayr it could guarantee the existence of a security zone from Damascus to Homs and from there to the coast. According to Brigadier General (Ret.) Amin Hatit, control of the Al-Qusayr region would prevent supplies from reaching the rebels from their supporters in Tripoli.

30. However, for Hezbollah the importance of Al-Qusayr went beyond the military-strategic because it is the home of a large Shi'ite population (30,000, according to Hezbollah) living alongside the Sunnis. Hezbollah feels religious-sectarian solidarity with the Shi'ite population, which has close contacts with the Shi'ites in Lebanon. The weakening of the Syrian regime in Al-Qusayr led, according to Hezbollah, to harassment of the local Shi'ite population and made it imperative for Hezbollah to come to their aid.

31. In a speech given on April 30, 2013, which in our assessment prepared the ground for the major offensive on Al-Qusayr, Hassan Nasrallah described at length the situation in Al-Qusayr after the fighting intensified (Al-Manar, April 30, 2013):

23 The control of the central Lebanese government in the Beqa'a Valley has traditionally been weak and Hezbollah is the genuine ruler of its Shi'ite population.
24 Saddam Hussein called the First Gulf War "the mother of all battles" after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991.
"I have already spoken about the environs of Al-Qusayr and said that there are more than 30,000 Lebanese living in a number towns, among them Muslims and Christians, and they do not all belong to one sect. I said that they had become a target and were exposed to burning, their houses were burned, some of the villages were occupied, there were killings, there were abductions and they were prevented from going to work and tilling their fields. They are threatened because they happen to live in the same villages...[and] the dangers have increased in recent months because of the events on the ground [in Syria] when the Syrian army was forced to evacuate a number of areas. Thus [the Shi'ites] living in the environs of Al-Qusayr came face to face with the armed groups...It was only natural that the [regular] Syrian army and the popular forces supporting it and the local residents received the proper aid and support...to be able to cope with the threat. Events occurred in recent weeks around Al-Qusayr and nothing has been settled yet. That is because those villages and areas are still exposed to acts of aggression, snipings, shellings and attacks...25

32. Sheikh Naim Qassem, Nasrallah's second in command, gave a more detailed description of Hezbollah's involvement in the fighting around Al-Qusayr. He said Hezbollah had come to the aid of the 30,000 Shi'ites living in the Syrian villages in the region of the [northern] Beqa'a Valley after armed men had taken over two of the villages and there was concern that the villagers would flee to Lebanon. He said that Hezbollah had given the villagers training, armed them and helped them defend themselves. He claimed Hezbollah was not meddling in Syria's internal affairs and it had even complained to the Lebanese government that it was not helping Lebanese citizens living in Syria (Al-Anbaa', Kuwait, April 29, 2013).

The Campaign in Al-Qusayr

33. The campaign for the city of Al-Qusayr and its environs began more than a year ago. During the first months of 2013, especially beginning on May 19, the battles in the region intensified until the Syrian army and Hezbollah forces conquered it on June 5, 2013. Hezbollah's military involvement in the campaign was prominent and in our assessment played a major role in the fighting.

34. The Syrian army, aided by Hezbollah and local militias, fought the so-called "free Syrian army" forces. In our assessment, several thousand Hezbollah operatives

25 Free Syrian army spokesman Louay al-Miqdad completely rejected Nasrallah's statement. He said that Nasrallah's claims of attacks, murder and expulsion from the Syrian villages in the Al-Qusayr regions were baseless (Al-Ra'i TV, Kuwait, May 2, 2013).
fought in the Al-Qusayr campaign, some of them arriving on the eve of the May 19 offensive. One picture taken at the time showed them armed with tanks (See below.).

The free Syrian army was headed by a military council subordinate to headquarters in Homs (All4Syria website quoting the free Syrian army commander of the Homs front).

In addition, operatives from the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Nusra Front fighting the Syrian army reported that in the spring of 2013 its men had entered the region of the villages where Sunnis live.26

35. The fighting in Al-Qusayr and its environs – general description.27

1) During the past year there was heavy fighting in the city of Al-Qusayr. It included small arms, IEDs, artillery shells and Syrian army aerial attacks. Both sides tried to increase their territorial holdings in the various neighborhoods, especially in those with key buildings and installations (the intelligence building, municipality, main checkpoints). It was reported that a large number of local residents fled and extensive damage was done to Al-Qusayr's residential structures. However, before the May 19 offensive, an estimated 25,000 local residents still lived in the city (Agence France-Presse, May 10, 2013). In our assessment most of them later fled.

2) On May 19, 2013, a large Syrian army force attacked, supported by thousands of Hezbollah operatives, intending to reach the city center and take control. The offensive included aerial attacks and artillery fire. According to media reports Hezbollah operatives reached the center of the city where Al-Nusra Front fighters (perceived by Hezbollah as the main enemy) were located28 (Al-monitor website, June 1, 2013).

3) On June 5, 2013, after two and a half weeks of heavy fighting, the Syrian army and Hezbollah forces conquered the city of Al-Qusayr. The Syrian opposition issued a statement saying that its fighters had been forced to withdraw because of the regime's superior military force, the shortage of supplies

26 Lebanese newspapers also reported that radical Sunni operatives, supporters of Sheikh Ahmed al-Assir from Sidon, were involved in the fighting at Al-Qusayr. Al-Assir is a Salafist Sunni sheikh and a fierce opponent of Hezbollah. In one Friday sermon he said he had visited Al-Qusayr to become apprised of the condition of the fighters and to give them moral support. He called on his followers in Sidon to establish the "Free Resistance Battalions" to help the Syrian revolution (Al-Nahar and Al-Akhban, Lebanon, May 4, 2013). A spokesman for the Syrian rebels in Homs said that the sheikh had arrived in the Al-Qusayr region on the night of April 30, 2013, but claimed that the visit had "done damage to the revolution" and was nothing more than "noise in the media" (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, May 2, 2013).

27 Some of the reports issued about the battle for Al-Qusayr are biased and should be read with a certain degree of skepticism. Thus we have provided a general picture of the fighting.

28 According to the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Ra’i, quoting two Hezbollah operatives on the ground in Syria, the Al-Nusra Front is composed of fighters of many different nationalities, including Europeans, Arabs, Kazakhs and Chechens. According to one of the operatives, 41 of the Al-Nusra Front operatives were taken captive, including one from Chechnya (Al-Ra‘i, Kuwait, May 27, 2013).
and Hezbollah’s involvement (BBC in Arabic, June 5, 2013). Shi’ites in Lebanon celebrated the victory, in which Hezbollah played a major role.

36. In addition to the battle for Al-Qusayr, there was fighting in other zones:

1) **There were extensive confrontations in dozens of villages in the environs of Al-Qusayr where Syrian army and Hezbollah forces fought the rebels.** Hezbollah sent its forces to help the local Shi’ite residents and to advance toward the city itself to support the Syrian army soldiers. There was sporadic fighting in the area around Al-Qusayr (firefights, IEDs) which occasionally turned into attempts to take over villages. In our assessment, after the fall of Al-Qusayr, Hezbollah and the Syrian army will now complete their cleansing of the villages in its environs.

2) **The rebels occasionally shelled the city of Hermel** (in the northern Beqa’a Valley in Lebanon) in response to Hezbollah’s direct involvement in the fighting and to ease the pressure on them. The Lebanese media reported that a number of Lebanese civilians had been injured in the shelling, which also disrupted the daily lives of the local residents in the Hermel area. **The rebels threatened to extend the shelling to other Shi’ite locations in the Beqa’a Valley and southern Beirut** (where Hezbollah has its stronghold). With the fall of Al-Qusayr, 18 rockets were fired from Syria into the regions of Baalbek and Hermel by the rebels. It can be assumed that they will continue their attempts to harm Hezbollah in Lebanon.
Pictures from the Campaign in Al-Qusayr and Its Environs

Rebels fight Hezbollah operatives (Facebook.com)

Syrian planes attack rebel targets in Al-Qusayr, May 6, 2013 (Facebook.com). Videos were uploaded to the Internet documenting the Syrian air force attacks on targets in the city.

Rebels fight Hezbollah operatives (Facebook.com)
Hezbollah Operatives in the City of Al-Qusayr and Its Environs

Damage done to the Al-Rahman mosque in Al-Qusayr by Syrian air force planes on May 5, 2013 (Facebook.com)

Damage inflicted on the city of Al-Qusayr (Facebook.com)

Hezbollah operatives in the region of Al-Qusayr (Pictures from the Facebook page of the Campaign for Defense of the Grave of Al-Set Zaynab)
Hezbollah operatives in Al-Qusayr (Pictures from the Facebook page of the Campaign for Defense of the Grave of Al-Set Zaynab, May 14, 2013)

From the Facebook page of Hezbollah operative Muhammad Khalil Nasr al-Din, killed in the fighting: "Hezbollah is with you, we have arrived in Al-Qusayr" (May 19, 2013).

A Hezbollah operative in Al-Qusayr puts his foot on the back of a rebel captive (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 19, 2013).
Background

37. There are dozens of sites in Syria sacred to the Shi'ites, the most important of which is the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (or Al-Sayyidah Zaynab), the daughter of the Imam
Ali bin Abu Taleb, the founder of Shi'a and the grandson of the prophet Muhammad. The grave is a Shi'ite holy site and site for Shi'ite pilgrims from all over the world, especially from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, the Gulf States, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

38. The grave of Al-Set Zaynab is located in the heart of a Sunni region about ten kilometers (or about six miles) south of Damascus, on the road leading northward to the Damascus international airport and southward to the city of Al-Suwayda. A large tourist industry has grown up around the site to serve the Shi'ite pilgrims (See pictures), with the city of Al-Sayyidah Zaynab at its center. Administratively it belongs to the Rif Dimashq Governorate and is home to an estimated 150,000 residents (Wikipedia).

39. The mosque over Zaynab's grave, with its famous dome, is an imposing site decorated with gold and built in the Shi'ite architectural style, and is considered one of the Shi'ites' most important religious structures. It has two entrances, one in the north and one in the west opening onto the city's main market. Various institutions for religious studies are located around the mosque.

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29 There are historians who claim that the grave of Al-Set Zaynab is in Egypt and others who claim it is in northern Iraq. It is generally accepted that she died in Damascus and was buried south of the city.
Attacks on the Grave Compound

40. During the second half of 2012, when the Syrian civil war went into high gear, opponents of the Assad regime initiated attacks on the compound around the grave. On May 5, 2012, a mortar shell reportedly fell inside the compound, apparently fired by operatives affiliated the global jihad (Tabanak.ir website). On June 14, 2012, a booby-trapped car driven by a suicide bomber exploded in the parking lot. The suicide bomber apparently broke through the barrier to the lot and was shot in the chest but still managed to detonate the bomb. No organization claimed responsibility for the attack (Aksalser.com and Alnour.com.lb websites). On October 31, 2012, an IED on a motorcycle exploded near the grave. At least eight people were killed and dozens were wounded. The site of the explosion was close to a hotel frequented by pilgrims (Almasyaloum.com website).
During the first half of 2013 Salafist networks specifically called for the destruction of the mosque over the grave. For example, on his Facebook page (April 4, 2013) and using Twitter, the Salafist sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Dimashqiah called for the structure above the grave of Al-Set Zaynab to be destroyed (Afadak.com website). In February 2013 there were posts on the Internet claiming that free Syrian army fighters had called for the destruction of the grave of Al-Set

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Abd al-Rahman al-Dimashqiah is an influential Salafist Sunni cleric and preacher of Lebanese origin. He lives in Plymouth, Britain and is the imam of its Al-Taqwa mosque. He studied at the Al-Imam Ibn Saud mosque in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and has a PhD. His doctoral dissertation was on Shi'a in Saudi Arabia. He is hostile to the Shi'ites and often confronts them in the so-called “academic” lectures he gives in British universities.
Zaynab. On **July 26, 2012**, the Saudi Arabian Wahabi channel Safa appealed to the free Syrian army to destroy the grave (Iraqcenter.net website).

42. **During the first half of 2013 the harassment at the grave of Al-Set Zaynab worsened, apparently because of the incitement to destroy it.** In January 2013, operatives of the Al-Nusra Front attacked it. On February 13, 2013 jihadi Salafists attempted to enter the compound and blow up the mosque. According to a report from April 2, 2013, Al-Nusra Front operatives took control of a neighborhood close to the grave. They then captured the commander of the Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade, a Shi'ite militia network formed to protect the site (Alksalser.com website).31

43. On **April 18, 2013**, according to reports, a group of Hezbollah operatives in the compound was attacked by Al-Nusra Front operatives and suffered heavy losses. Hezbollah lost control of territories around the compound but counterattacked to recover them. The free Syrian army was also involved in the fighting. According to a free Syrian army announcement on April 19, 2013, its operatives attacked a vehicle carrying Hezbollah operatives to the compound and killed several of them (Alwatan.com website).

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31 *Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas* was the son of the Imam Ali, a Shi'ite holy man. He and his brother Hussein led the fighting in the battle of Karbala against the Umayyads (680 AD). The battle ended with the massacre of most of Ali's family and supporters and became a symbol of Shi'ite martyrdom and Abu al-Faisal al-Abbas became a symbol of heroism.
Shi'ite Militia Network Formed to Defend the Grave of Al-Set Zaynab

44. At the end of 2012 – beginning of 2013 the various Shi'ite networks involved in defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab formed a framework of Shi'ite militias called the Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade. Their objective is to defend the compound of the grave of Al-Set Zaynab from global jihad attacks. The Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade reportedly has operatives from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan (Al-Arabiya TV, April 5, 2013). The militia network was commanded by Maher Ajeeb Jatha (Abu al-Ajeeb) from the village of Nubl in the environs of Aleppo, who was captured (and killed, according to another version) by the Al-Nusra Front. Shi'ite militiamen operating in the region are supported by operatives from the Shabiha, a security entity that does not belong to the regular Syrian army suppressing the rebellion.32

"Abu Ajeeb," nickname of the commander of the Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade captured (and possibly killed) by the Al-Nusra Front (Alsalser.com website).

45. The Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade has a significantly large number of operatives from Iraq,33 estimated by the Washington Post at 200 (Washington Post, May 25, 2013). Prominent among them are operatives from the Asae'b al-Haq wal-Jaish al-Mahdi, two Iraqi Shi'ite militias formed and handled by the Qods Force to fight

32 Shabiha means “ghost” in Arabic. It is the nickname of a security network which does not belong to the regular Syrian army but is operated by the Syrian regime to oppress the revolution. Its operatives have become targets for elimination by the rebels, who accuse them of the murder, rape and harassment of Syrian civilians.

33 The Iraqi media published names of several operatives killed in the fighting in Syria. On May 6, 2013, according to the Iraqi media, an Iraqi named Dhiaa al-Issawi was killed in Syria while defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab. Signs were also issued for the deaths of two operatives of Hezbollah battalions (Kaldaya.net website).
the American forces (with Lebanese Hezbollah support) (Elaph.com website). At the beginning of May 2013 it was reported that there was a campaign in the Shi‘ite districts of Iraq to enlist Shi‘ite volunteers to fight in Syria. They reportedly had 30,000 volunteers. Prominent among them are operatives from the Asae‘b al-Haq and Hezbollah battalions. According to the Internet, Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Qods Force, instructed the militias that fought in Iraq at Iran’s behest to send men to Syria to support Assad’s forces (Faceiraq.com website, April 28, 2013). The volunteers were supposed to reinforce the Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade forces as well as a new Shi‘ite network called the Al-Taff Brigade34 (Al-Mustaqbal, May 8, 2013).

Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade uniforms: the shoulder patch reads "The servants of Al-Set Zaynab, Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade, may peace be upon them" (Firstpost.com website)

34 Al-Taff was where the battle of Karbala took place in 680 AD, where the supporters of the Imam Ali were slaughtered. It was a formative event in the Shi‘ite ethos.
46. Abu al-Fadhel al-Abbas Brigade fighting focused on the region of the grave of Al-Set Zaynab but also reportedly fought in other locations. They waged several determined battles against jihadist Salafists near the grave and reportedly prevented them from entering the compound (Shia-news.com website). Pictures from the location:
Hezbollah Fighting at the Compound of the Grave of Al-Set Zaynab

47. During the second half of 2012, in light of the attacks on the compound, Hezbollah sent operatives to support the defenders. They participated in the battles waged at the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013. The Syrian rebels captured a Hezbollah fighter named Hassan al-Miqdad who claimed he belonged to a group of 250 operatives stationed at the grave of Al-Set Zaynab.

48. In our assessment, at least 20 Hezbollah operatives were killed in the battles around the grave, most of them from south Lebanon. Their bodies were returned to Lebanon shortly after their deaths and they were buried in their villages. In some instances they were declared to have been killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab and in some instances photographed at the site. A list of the 20 operatives killed was posted on the Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon (May 14, 2013) (See below.).
Announcement of the death of Hezbollah operative Yassin al-Habaj. According to the text he was killed “defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab” (Facebook, October 11, 2012)

The Defense of the Grave of Al-Set Zaynab in the Speech Given by Hassan Nasrallah and Reaction to It
49. On April 30, 2013, Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech in which he claimed that armed groups, especially the groups of takfirs\footnote{\textit{Juma'at takfiriyah} in Arabic, is the expression Nasrallah uses to describe the jihadi Salafist groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad. He does not call them jihadist organizations because jihad is a religious duty in Islam and as far as Nasrallah is concerned, Hezbollah wages jihad in fighting Israel. \textit{Takfir} refers to calling an individual or group infidels because they have not adopted the radical interpretation of Islam. It means the blood of the individual or persons in question may be spilled, that is, they can be killed. Calling them infidels is a very serious accusation. One example of a takfir network is \textit{Al-takfir wal-hijra} in Egypt, established in 1971 and active mainly in the 1970s and early 1980s. Sunni jihadist networks, mainly Al-Qaeda, consider Shi'ites in general and Hezbollah in particular as infidels.} [i.e., those affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad], threatened to take over the city and grave of Al-Set Zaynab. He said that they might damage the grave and that they had no ideological or religious inhibitions in that respect. Proof, he said, was the damage they had done to the holy sites and graves in other countries (giving as examples Iraq, Mali, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt).

50. He threatened that damage done to the grave of Al-Set Zaynab might lead to a sectarian civil war between Sunnis and Shi'ites, adding that "if the fundamentalist groups blow up or destroy the grave there will be very serious consequences which will create a situation no one will be able to control..." He hinted that Hezbollah operatives would fight to defend the grave, saying that if necessary "the noble jihad fighters [i.e., Hezbollah operatives] will prevent the fall of the city of Al-Sayyidah Zaynab and the grave of Al-Set Zaynab..."

51. In response to the speech the free Syrian army said that for some time it had been a mere 100 meters from the grave compound. According to the
announcement it could have damaged the grave compound several months ago but did not do so because it protected holy places (All4Syria.info website).

### The Price Hezbollah Pays for Supporting the Syrian Regime

**Cartoon lampooning the Hezbollah logo: Bashar Assad is in one of the pans of the scales and “occupied Palestine” is in the other. The text reads “May you be blessed, Bashar!” i.e., the support Hezbollah gives Syria comes at the expense of the campaign for the “liberation of occupied Palestine” (Al-Mustaqbal, May 1, 2013).**

52. The ongoing Syrian civil war and Hezbollah’s being drawn into it clearly radiate into the internal Lebanese arena. As far as Hezbollah and its opponents are concerned, weighed in the balance are not only the survival of the Syrian regime but Lebanese political and social equilibrium as well as Hezbollah’s position of superiority in Lebanon. While Hezbollah is concerned that the fall of the Syrian regime will harm its dominance in Lebanon, its opponents regard the weakening of the Syrian regime as an opportunity to change the inter-sectarian relationships imposed on Lebanon by the Syrian takeover at the end of the civil war and the founding of the "Syrian order."

53. Being drawn into the Syrian civil war forced Hezbollah to pay both a political price and a price to its image in the internal Lebanese arena and the Arab-Muslim world, and in confronting Israel:
1) Hezbollah's position against Israel was weakened: Hezbollah was forced to transfer a large number of operatives from Lebanon to Syria, and is being drawn further into the Syrian morass. In our assessment, at least temporarily, that weakens its military preparedness against Israel to a certain degree and forces it to be cautious in its relations with Israel.

2) Hezbollah and Iran's opponents in Lebanon and the Arab world have become bolder: Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war has been met with extensive objections from the Sunnis not only in Lebanon but in the entire Arab-Muslim world and has weakened Hezbollah politically and damaged its image. That was reflected in a sermon given by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the most important Sunni Muslim religious authority, in which he strongly attacked Hezbollah, calling it "the party of Satan" (May 31, 2013). Its critics include Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, who claimed that the fighting was liable to complicate the "resistance" in Syria and the Golan Heights and called on Hassan Nasrallah to return his forces to Lebanon (Suleiman interviewed by FTV, May 30, 2013). In the foreground to Hezbollah's increasing involvement in the Syrian civil war there are the loss of the primacy Syria had in Lebanon and the upcoming Lebanese parliamentary elections, which by themselves have worsened sectarian tensions in Lebanon.

3) Possible harm to Hezbollah's position among the Shi'ites in Lebanon: Its more than 100 operatives killed in Syria have still not led to significant criticism of Hezbollah by the Shi'ites in Lebanon, although the potential exists. The deeper Hezbollah is sucked into the Syrian swamp and the more deaths it incurs, the more its prestige among the Lebanese Shi'ites may weaken and criticism may increase because they did not die as part of the "resistance" campaign against Israel.

Severe Lebanese anti-Hezbollah criticism was expressed by Sa'ad al-Hariri, who leads the March 14 Camp that opposes Hezbollah (May 1, 2013). It came in response to Nasrallah's April 30 speech in which he spoke at length about Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war (ITIC emphasis):

"Hassan Nasrallah is erasing Lebanon from the political map and turning Hezbollah into a alternative for the state and its constitutional, security and military institutions. [Nasrallah] alone, who heads Hezbollah, is authorized to issue fatwas about fighting the Syrians in their own country. He is the only one who is allowed to humiliate Lebanon and its army and to expose its
inability to defend the Lebanese from Israel. In effect Nasrallah has declared the establishment of a Shi'ite defense army to defend Lebanese Shi'ites regionally and in the world, as if Shi'ites were his own private property. He allows himself to extend Hezbollah activity from south Lebanon to Al-Qusayr and the grave of Al-Set Zaynab. Nothing keeps him from turning Lebanon, at any moment, into a front line in the war alongside the Iranian regime in the name of defending religious sites...the country is captive in the hands of Hezbollah, and with it other Lebanese groups and sects. All that in the name of pleasing Bashar Assad and implementing fatwas originating in Tehran...Hezbollah is playing with Lebanese fate, and as its secretary general [Nasrallah] says, he is not lighting the fire in Syria alone, but threatening to bring the fire into the heart of Lebanon..."

Analysis of Hezbollah Operatives Killed in the Fighting in Syria

Cartoon of Hezbollah operatives entering Al-Qusayr to fight and exiting in coffins (Facebook page of the Syrian opposition, May 21, 2013)

55. In our assessment, so far more than 100 Hezbollah operatives have been killed in the fighting in Syria and several hundred have been wounded, most of them in the Al-Qusayr campaign. The estimate is based on our having located the names of 96 operatives who were killed (65 of them with pictures and in some instances with pictures of their funerals). The information was posted on various Hezbollah, Shi'ite and Lebanese websites. We also used lists of names of Hezbollah operatives killed issued by the Syrian rebels (See the Appendix for a table of names and pictures).
56. In our assessment, in addition to the 96 names listed so far, other Hezbollah operatives have been killed but either their names were unknown (at the time this document was issued) or their bodies were not returned to Lebanon. The number of Hezbollah operatives killed, 96, was updated on May 22, 2013, but since then, in our assessment, it has risen by several dozen.

57. The following conclusions can be drawn from the names and information about the 96 Hezbollah operatives killed:

1) Hezbollah is being sucked deeper into Lebanon. That can be seen by the sharp increase in the number of its operatives killed in May.

   A. With the exception of one operative killed in August 2011, in 2011 and the first half of 2012 Hezbollah incurred no losses in Syria. In the second half of 2012 seven operatives were killed, most of them in our assessment, in the region of Al-Qusayr and near the grave of Al-Set Zaynab.

   B. Hezbollah began incurring significant losses during the first months of 2013. Half of them occurred in April and May during the defense of the grave of Al-Set Zaynab and the fighting in Al-Qusayr. Before the major attack of May 19, 2013, almost 50 Hezbollah operatives had been killed in Syria.

   C. The number of deaths increased sharply with the attack on Al-Qusayr which began on May 19, 2013 and ended on June 5, 2013. During the first days of the attack we counted more than 50 Hezbollah operatives' deaths. According to media reports, the total number of deaths during the first days of the attack was between 50 and 74. Thus as noted above, as of May 22, 2013, in our assessment the overall number of deaths was more than 100.

2) The circumstances of the deaths: Most of the Hezbollah operatives (an estimated 63) were killed during the heavy fighting around Al-Qusayr (as of May 22, 2013). In defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab 22 were killed. Two operatives were killed in an exchange of fire at other locations. As for eight

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36 The Hezbollah ground commander (nicknamed Abu Mustafa) told an Al-Ra'i correspondent that Hezbollah had lost 50 fighters in the battles in Al-Qusayr beginning on May 19 (Al-Ra'i, May 22, 2013). On May 24 BBC Radio, relying on Syrian opposition sources, reported that there had been more than 70 deaths at Al-Qusayr. A similar number was mentioned by the Lebanese daily newspaper Al-Mustaqbal, which published a list of 74 names of Hezbollah operatives who had been killed, most of them in the battles at Al-Qusayr which began on the morning of May 19, 2013 (Al-Mustaqbal, May 25, 2013). By the end of the takeover of Al-Qusayr, several dozen deaths could be added to the above numbers.
others, no location for their deaths was noted but in our assessment some of them were killed in the battles at Al-Qusayr.]

*Sukaina was the daughter of Hussein Ibn Ali, the second grandson of the prophet Muhammad. She died in Damascus when she was four years old and was buried there. Her grave is the third most important site for Shi'ites in Syria. It is located in the city of Daraya in the Damascus district. In recent months there has been heavy fighting at the site between rebel forces and the Syrian army, during which the dome of the mosque of the grave of Sukaina was damaged.

Poster with the pictures of 20 Hezbollah operatives killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab near Damascus (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 14, 2013).
3) **Where the operatives came from** (assuming that most of them were buried where they lived):

   A. **More than half of the operatives whose names we identified came from south Lebanon** (53 of the 96). **Almost of a third of them came from the Beqa'a Valley** (33). Only a few came from the **southern suburb of Beirut** and **northern Lebanon**. In our assessment, that is an indication of the general composition of the Hezbollah units sent to fight in Syria.

   B. **Conspicuous is the large number of Shi'ite villages in south Lebanon from which the Hezbollah operatives came**. It may indicate a **deliberate recruitment policy** aimed at preventing a buildup of deaths in any one particular town or village. On the other hand, it increases the feeling (among the Shi'ites in particular and Lebanon in general) that Hezbollah has sustained many losses in the fighting in Syria.

   C. **Relatively speaking, few urban residents have been killed**. Only 16 of the 96 came from cities: three from Beirut, nine from Baalbek, three from Nabatieh and one from Sidon.

**Distribution of Hezbollah Losses according to Place of Origin**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of Hezbollah losses by place of origin](chart)

4) **Announcements regarding the circumstances of the deaths**: During the first stages of its involvement in Lebanon Hezbollah hid the circumstances of the deaths of its operatives and issued only laconic statements of operatives killed "while engaged in carrying out their duty to jihad." As time passed and Hezbollah's involvement in Syria deepened and its losses grew, among them the
deaths of senior operatives, it became increasingly difficult to deny their deaths or be vague about the circumstances. Moreover, because of the many losses at Al-Qusayr in May – early June, and the information which began to be made public by sources hostile to Hezbollah, **the organization was forced to issue the place and circumstances of the deaths of its operatives, although the announcements still remained laconic**. Some of the information was posted on websites affiliated with Hezbollah and on Shi‘ite sites and Facebook pages (See table.).

5) **The deaths of senior Hezbollah operatives**: Among those killed were several senior Hezbollah operatives and some sons of senior operatives:

   A. **Ali Hussein Nasif** was a senior Hezbollah operative, apparently killed in Al-Qusayr. He was buried in the village of Buday in the Beqa‘a Valley on October 3, 2012. According to Syrian opposition sources, as he was driving in the direction of Al-Qusayr an IED exploded near his vehicle. It is unclear if he was killed in the explosion or shot.

   B. **Fadi Muhammad al-Jazar** was of Palestinian origin (born in Acre). He was imprisoned in Israel for 14 years and released in a prisoner exchange deal along with Dirani and Sheikh Ubeid (2004). While in jail he converted to Shi‘a. After his release he joined the ranks of Hezbollah and lived in Beirut, where he was buried.

   C. **Muhammad Khalil Shahrour** ("Haj Sajed"), killed in Al-Qusayr, was responsible for Hezbollah security services in Baalbek.

   D. **Ahmed Muhammad Badah**, senior Hezbollah operative, was killed during the battles in the region the grave of Al-Set Zaynab. He was buried in the village of Beit Lif in south Lebanon.

   E. **Ali Hussein Sa‘ad** ("Kazem") was a senior Hezbollah operative. Haj Khalil, Nasrallah’s personal aide, attended the funeral. He was killed in a battle at the grave of Al-Set Zaynab and buried in Beirut.

   F. **Hatem Hussein** was killed in Al-Qusayr. He was the mukhtar of the town of Tufahiya, in south Lebanon. His son Ali Hussein was also a Hezbollah operative, killed several years ago.
G. Hassan Feisal Shaker was the son of Feisal Shaker who was responsible for Hezbollah culture in the Beqa'a Valley Hezbollah. He was killed in Al-Qusayr and buried in name, in the Beqa'a Valley.

H. Hussein Haitham al-Budani was killed in the region of the grave of Al-Set Zaynab. He was buried in Ali al-Nahari in the Beqa'a Valley. His father, Haitham al-Budani, is the aide of Jisham Safi al-Din, head of Hezbollah's political council.
Appendix

List and Pictures of Hezbollah Operatives Killed in Syria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name and information</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Site and circumstances of death</th>
<th>Origin and place of funeral</th>
<th>Source of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Muhammad Kataya</td>
<td>21/5/1</td>
<td>Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad, In our assessment in Al-Qusayr.</td>
<td>Baalbek, Beqa'a Valley. Buried there on May 22, 2013.</td>
<td>Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 22, 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 The table is updated to May 22, 2013. In our assessment, names of several dozen Hezbollah operatives who died in Syria may be added.

38 Question marks indicate Hezbollah operatives who died in the attack on Al-Qusayr which began on May 19, 2013. According to Islam in general and Shi'a in particular, anyone who dies must be buried as soon as possible (similar to Judaism). The assumption of this study is that there is generally a gap of 24 hours between the date of death and the date issued for the death of an operative who was killed and/or his funeral. There may be discrepancies of one or two days between the date of the death was announced and the date of the funeral.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Khalil Nasrallah</td>
<td>21/5/13</td>
<td>Killied in Qlaile', south Lebanon.</td>
<td>Facebook page of the</td>
<td>Facebook page of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Burial Location</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ali Hassan</td>
<td>21/5/13</td>
<td>Killed in Dir al-Zahrani,</td>
<td>Free Syrian army website,</td>
<td>Free Syrian army website,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Ali Matar</td>
<td>21/5/1</td>
<td>Al-Qusayr.</td>
<td>From Ansar, the Beqa'a Valley</td>
<td>Free Syrian army website, May 22, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Sa'ada Ali Mahmoud Labaya</td>
<td>21/5/1</td>
<td>Al-Qusayr.</td>
<td>From Ansar, the Beqa'a Valley</td>
<td>Free Syrian army website, May 22, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Place of Death</td>
<td>Relation to Islamic Resistance</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Cause of Death</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Hassan Feisal Shaker, son of Feisal Shaker who was responsible for Hezbollah culture in the Beqa'a Valley</td>
<td>19/5/13</td>
<td>Killed in Al-Qusayr.</td>
<td>Buried in Nabi Chit, Beqa'a Valley, on May 20, 2013</td>
<td>Facebook page of We are all the Free Dr. Bab al-Amru Muhammad Muhammad, May 20, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date of Death</td>
<td>Cause of Death</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Source</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Ahed Muhammad Sa'ada (&quot;Abu Ra'ed&quot;)</td>
<td>1/5/13 (?)</td>
<td>Killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab.</td>
<td>Arab Salim, south Lebanon.</td>
<td>Town of Jibshit website, May 2, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Mahdi Nasser</td>
<td>30/4/13 (?)</td>
<td>Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad.</td>
<td>Buried in the Beq'a Valley on May 1, 2013</td>
<td>Al-Manar TV, May 1, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Ibrahim Jawdat Qansu</td>
<td>15/4/13</td>
<td>(?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Buried in Dweir, south Lebanon, on April 16, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Abbas Rihan</td>
<td>15/4/13</td>
<td>(?)</td>
<td>Killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab.</td>
<td>Buried in Maaroub, south Lebanon, on April 13, 2013.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 The grave of Sayyida Sukain is the third most important Shiite site in Syria. It is located in the city of Daraya in the Damascus district. Sukain was the daughter of the Imam Hussein, the son of Ali Ibn Abu Taleb. In recent months there were fierce battles between rebel forces and those of the Assad regime. The site was damaged during the recent events, especially the dome, which incurred severe damage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place of Death</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(His father, Haitham al-Budani, is the aide of Hashem Safi al-Din, head of Hezbollah's political council.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Haidar Muhammad Sufan</td>
<td>17/2/13 3 (?)</td>
<td>Buried in Beirut on February 18, 2013</td>
<td>Town of Jibshit website, February 18, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Hussein Muhammad Munzer</td>
<td>1/2/13 (?)</td>
<td>Buried in Arab Salim on February 2, 2013</td>
<td>Naharnet.com website, February 2, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad.)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Abbas Ahmed Ahmed</td>
<td>26/11/12 (?)</td>
<td>Buried in Hzarta, Beqa'a Valley, on November 26, 2012</td>
<td>Website of the Lebanese resistance, November 26, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad.)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Haidar Mahmoud Zin al-Din</td>
<td>31/10/12 (?)</td>
<td>Buried in Nabatieh, south Lebanon, on November 1, 2012</td>
<td>MTV, the Middle East, November 2, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Ahmed Mahdi Yassin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Buried in Younine, south Lebanon, on November 1, 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Killed while engaged in carrying out his duty of jihad.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Hussein Abd al-Ghani Nimr</td>
<td>7/10/12 (?)</td>
<td>Buried in Ansar, Beqa'a Valley on October 8, 2012</td>
<td>Balad News, October 8, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Killed in Al-Qusayr.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Ali Hussein Nasif</td>
<td>2/10/12 (?)</td>
<td>Buried in Buday, Beqa'a Valley on October 3, 2012</td>
<td>Albawaba.com website, Syria, oct 3, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&quot;Abu Abbas&quot;). Senior Hezbollah operative.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Details</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Musa Ali Sh'haimi</td>
<td>7/8/12</td>
<td>Killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab.</td>
<td>Facebook page of the shaheed Musa Sh'haimi, May 5, 2013.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hezbollah Operatives Who Died in Syria and Their Funerals

Muhammad Kataya (No. 1), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 22, 2013)

Saleh Ahmed al-Sabagh (No. 2), killed in Al-Qusayr (Youkal website, May 22, 2013)

The numbers in parentheses refer to the operative's number in the table.
Ali Ahmed Mazloum (No. 3), killed in Al-Qusayr (Youkal website, May 22, 2013)

Hussein Muhammad Hamed (“Abu Mustafa”) (No. 4), killed in Al-Qusayr (Bint Jbeil and Youkal websites, May 22, 2013)

Hussein Ahmed Abu al-Hassan (“Al-Sa’id Abu Zaynab”) (No. 5), from the village of Tebnine, killed in Al-Qusayr (Bint Jbeil website, May 2013).
Hussein Ahmed Mustrah ("Murtada") (No. 6), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the martyrs of the Islamic resistance, May 22, 2013)

Muhammad al-Sabalani (No. 7), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 22, 2013)

Abdallah Adnan al-Haidari ("Al-Sa'id Khybar") (No. 8), killed in Al-Qusayr (Bint Jbeil website, May 21, 2013)
Mihsen Samir Beru (No. 13) from the village of Al-Sharqia, killed in Al-Qusayr (Town of Jibshit website, May 22, 2013)

Muhammad Hussein Barakat (No. 14), killed in Al-Qusayr (Youkal website, May 20, 2013)

[Picture] [Caption] The funeral held in the town of Aadloun for Muhammad Hassan Sh'hadi, (No. 15), killed in Al-Qusayr (Jibshit website, May 23, 2013)
Muhammad Khader Burjekali ("Karbala") (No.16), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the martyrs of the Islamic resistance, May 22, 2013)

Muhammad Jihad Yusuf (No.18), killed in Al-Qusayr (Bint Jbeil website, May 22, 2013)

Khalil Nasrallah (No. 22), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the martyrs of the Islamic resistance, May 22, 2013)
Khalil Yusuf Muzhar ("Haj Bilal") (No. 23), killed in Al-Qusayr (Youkal website, May 22, 2013)

Mustafa Wahabi (No. 24), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of the shaheed Muhammad Khalil Nasser al-Din, May 20, 2013)

Muhammad Ali Assad Bakri (No. 25), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the liberators of Syria and the Gulf, May 19, 2013)
The funeral held in the southern suburb of Beirut for Fadi Muhammad al-Jazar ("Abu Zaynab") (No. 26), killed in Al-Qusayr (Town of Jibshit website, May 20, 2013)

The funeral held in Al-Kheraib, south Lebanon, for Ali Abbas Dahini ("Abu Ghaleb") (No. 30), killed in Al-Qusayr (Yasour.org website, May 23, 2013).

Ali Muhammad Faqi' (No. 32), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the martyrs of the Islamic resistance, May 26, 2013)
The funeral held in the town of Jibshit for Abd Issa ("Abu Ali") (No. 35), killed in Al-Qusayr (Town of Jibshit website, May 22, 2013).

Talal Qassem Jezini ("Abu Saleh") (No. 36), killed in Al-Qusayr (Youkal website, May 22, 2013).

Haj Ahmed Wa'el Ra'ad (No. 44), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the Abu Bakr al-Sadiq Brigade, May 24, 2013).
Ahmed Kamel Khreis ("Abu Ali") (No. 46), killed in Al-Qusayr (Youkal website, May 22, 2013)

The funeral held in Kafr Hata for Ashraf Hassan Iyad (No. 47), killed in Al-Qusayr (Bint Jbeil website, May 22, 2013)

Ali Qassem al-Atar (No. 48), killed in Al-Qusayr (Alkhabarpress website, May 21, 2013)
Haj Radwan Qassem al-Atar No. 49), killed in Al-Qusayr (Alkhabarpress website, May 21, 2013)

Hatim Hussein (No.50), killed in Al-Qusayr, (Yasour.org website, May 19, 2013)

Abbas Muhammad Uthman (No. 57), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the Islamic resistance, May 19, 2013)
Muhammad Salman al-Khalil (No. 58), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of the shaheed Muhammad Khalil Nasser al-Din, May 20, 2013)

Muhammad Fuad Rabah (No. 59), killed in Al-Qusayr Facebook pages of the Islamic resistance, May 19, 2013)
Hassan Feisal Shaker (No. 60), killed in Al-Qusayr (Facebook page of We are all the Free Dr. Bab al-Amru Muhammad Muhammad, May 20, 2013)\textsuperscript{41}

The funeral held in Nabatieh for Hassan Ali Milham Shahrour (No. 61), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 18, 2013)

Ali Rafat Alaa’ al-Din (“Zayin al-Abdin”) (No. 62), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 11, 2013)

\textsuperscript{41} Bab Amru is a neighborhood in the Syrian city of Homs.
The funeral held in the village of Beit Lif for Ahmed Muhammad Badah (No. 63), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Sawt el-Farah Radio, Tyre, May 10, 2013)

Hussein al-Haj Abd al-Munem Jaradi (No. 64), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, May 7, 2013)

The funeral held in the town of Jibshit for Hassan Mahmoud Nasr al-Din (No. 65), killed while engaged in jihad (Town of Jibshit website, May 4, 2013)
The funeral held in Baalbek, Beqa'a Valley for Mahdi al-Rafai' (No. 66), killed while engaged in jihad (Website of the Islamic resistance in Lebanon, May 4, 2013)

Hussein Abd al-Latif Munis (No. 67), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Bint Jbeil website, May 2, 2013).

Ahed Muhammad Sa'ada ("Abu Ra'ed") (No. 68), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Bint Jbeil website, May 2, 2013)
The funeral held in Beirut for Ali Hussein Sa'ad ("Kazem") (No. 70), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Al-Ahed, April 30, 2013).

Mahdi al-Musawi (No. 71), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Town of Jibshit website, April 30, 2013)

Haidar Muhammad Ayoub ("Sajed") (No. 72), killed in a firefight with the free Syrian army (Bint Jbeil website, April 27, 2013)
Hussein Hassan Barakat (No. 73), killed in an exchange of fire with the free Syrian army (Bint Jbeil website, April 27, 2013)

The funeral held in the village of Bafliyeh for Muhammad Jawad Nasif al-Zin (No. 74), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Al-Zrariehwebsite, Al-Wadi forum, April 23, 2013)

The funeral held in Nabatieh for Haidar Ahmed al-Haj Ali (No. 75), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Alhadathnews.net website, April 16, 2013).
Muhammad Assad Ali (No. 76), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab, (Forum of the shaheeds killed in the battle at the grave of Al-Set Zaynab, April 16, 2013)

The funeral held in the village of Dweir for Ibrahim Jawdat Qansu (No. 77), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Yasour.org website, May 16, 2013)

The funeral held in the village of Nabatieh for Hussein al-Juni (No. 78), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Jaber Bulushi forum, April 16, 2013).
Abbas Rihan (No. 79), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Forum of the shaheeds killed in the battle at the grave of Al-Set Zaynab, April 16, 2013)

The funeral held in Al-Ghbeireh for Hamzeh Ibrahim Ghamloush (No. 81), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Alhadathnews.org website, April 8, 2013)

Muhammad Khalil Nasser al-Din (No. 82), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of shaheed Muhammad Khalil Nasser al-Din, May 20, 2013)
The funeral held in the village of Koutariyet al-Said for Mahdi Nazi' Abbas (No. 83), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of the admirers of Hassan Nasrallah, April 3, 2013)

The funeral held in the village of Jouaiya for Haj Ali Jamal Jishi ("Haidar") (No. 84), killed defending the grave of Sukaina (Facebook page of the residents of south Lebanon, April 3, 2013; Sawt el-Farah Radio, Tyre, April 6, 2013)

The funeral held in the village of Meiss al-Jabal for Hassan Nimr Shartouni (No. 85), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (SOURIB website, March 18, 2013)
Hussein Haitham al-Budani (No. 86), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Syrianarmyfree forum website, May 4, 2013).

Haidar Muhammad Sufan (No. 87), killed while engaged in jihad (Town of Jibshit website, February 18, 2013)

The funeral held in Arab Salim for Hussein Muhammad Munzer (No. 88), killed while engaged in jihad (Bint Jbeil website, February 3, 2013)
The funeral held in the village of Hzarta for Abbas Ahmed Ahmed (No. 90), killed while engaged in jihad (Shafaqna website, November 26, 2012).

The funeral held in Nabatieh for Haidar Mahmoud Zin al-Din (No. 91), killed while engaged in jihad (Al-Manar, Lebanon, November 1, 2012, MTV, the Middle East, November 2, 2012)

The funeral held in the village of Younine for Ahmed Mahdi Yassin (No. 92), killed while engaged in jihad (Al-Manar, Lebanon, November 1, 2012)
Hussein Abd al-Ghani Nimr (No. 93), killed in Al-Qusayr (Bint Jbeil website, October 8, 2012).

The funeral held in the town of Buday for Ali Hussein Nasif ("Abu Abbas") (No. 94), killed in Al-Qusayr (Al-Arabiya TV, October 3, 2012)

Musa Ali Sh'haimi (No. 95), killed defending the grave of Al-Set Zaynab (Facebook page of the shaheed Musa Sh'haimi, May 5, 2013)
Hassan Ali Samaha ("Karar") (No. 96), killed while engaged in jihad (Blog of the town of Karak, September 16, 2011)