Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah threatened revenge for the killing of Imad Moughnieh by declaring an “open war” on Israel, that is, a war without borders, not limited by time or place. While Iran openly supports and identifies with Hezbollah, Syria is trying to play down its connection to Moughnieh’s killing.¹

¹ Follow up to our February 13 Bulletin entitled “Imad Fayez Moughnieh, No. 2 at Hezbollah and responsible for its military and terrorist operations in Lebanon and abroad, died when his car exploded in Damascus,” which can be found at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_130208e.htm.
Overview

1. The funeral of Imad Moughnieh was held in the southern suburb of Beirut and was attended by hundreds of thousands. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah delivered a bellicose speech before the funeral procession set out, declaring an “open war” on Israel, that is, a war without borders, beyond the Lebanese-Israeli arena, unlimited by time or location. In our assessment he was threatening to take attacks on Israeli targets beyond the Middle East, similar to those of the 1990s, when alongside intensive activities in Lebanon, the organization, with Iranian support, carried out two mass-casualty suicide bombing attacks in Buenos Aires, one against the Israeli Embassy and the other against the Jewish Community Center (the AMIA building).

2. Imad Moughnieh’s death in Damascus, and the items in the Arab media stating he had met with important Syrian figure before his death, exposed the bond between Syria and an international terrorist mastermind. One result is that the Syrian-controlled media have adopted the policy of playing down Syria’s connection to the incident. Therefore, Syria was quick to deny its collaboration with Iran and Hezbollah in investigating the event, noting that it would carry out the investigation alone.

Hezbollah

2. On the afternoon of February 14 Imad Moughnieh’s funeral was held in the southern suburb of Beirut, attended by hundreds of thousands. Hezbollah activists stood on a stage holding flags in front of pictures of Imad Moughnieh and verses praising him. Among those present were Iranian foreign minister Mamuchehr Mottaki, who stood at the head of the Iranian foreign ministry’s delegation, the resigning Lebanese foreign minister Fawzi Salloukh, Hezbollah’s deputy secretary general Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan, Nabil Beri’s political advisor Al-Hajj Hassan Khalil and senior Hezbollah figures. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was not present, preferring to have his speech broadcast on a giant screen and deliver it...
from a hiding place. There is no information available regarding the presence of official Syrian representation at the ceremony, part of Syria’s policy of playing down its connection to the event.

4. Before the funeral procession began Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah delivered a bellicose speech broadcast on a giant screen. He accused the “Zionists” of killing Moughnieh, claiming that when Israel killed Moughnieh in Damascus it did so “beyond the natural battlefield,” i.e., beyond the Lebanese-Israeli arena. He therefore passionately warned that if the Zionists wanted an “open war” then there would be an “open war,” that is, a war that crossed borders.2 He also warned that in any future war Israel would face the tens of thousands of well-trained and equipped fighters Moughnieh left behind, members of Hezbollah and ready to die the deaths of martyrs.

5. Nasrallah claimed that the death of Imad Moughnieh heralded the end of the State of Israel, which he called “an artificial entity” and “cancerous.” He even claimed that Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, allegedly said that the State of Israel would collapse after its first defeat in war. He claimed that Israel lost the second Lebanon war and therefore, “according to the laws of history and the promise of its founder, [Israel] is destined to collapse, and with the help of Allah, it

2 Sources close to Nasrallah told a correspondent from the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Rai that the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in retaliation for the death of Abbas Musawi was a “modest” response compared with what can be expected in response to the killing of Imad Moughnieh (Al-Rai, February 14).
will.” His remarks echoed those made by the upper echelons of the Iranian regime regarding the destruction of the State of Israel.

Hezbollah activists at the reception. From left to right: Hassan Nasrallah’s political advisor, Hussein al-Halil; Chairman of the operational council, Hashem Safi al-Din; Shura Council member Muhammad Yazbak (Al-Intiqad, February 14).

**Lebanon**

6. The Lebanese government and Hezbollah’s opposition tried to play down Nasrallah’s bellicose speech regarding the “open war” against Israel, because the implication might be turning Lebanon into a focal point for terrorist attacks around the globe. Lebanese prime minister Fuad Siniora said that Lebanese had no interest in war with Israel, and that Nasrallah’s remarks about an open war with Israel had not been properly interpreted (Naharnet Website, February 16). Lebanese Forces’ chairman Samir Jaja claimed that “only the government has the right to declare war” (Naharnet Website, February 16).

**Syria**

7. At a press conference held by the Syrian foreign minister Walid al-Mualem and the Iranian foreign minister Mottaki at the end of his visit to Damascus, al-Mualem hinted that Israel was behind Moughnieh’s death and said that Syria would bring irrefutable evidence to prove it (Al-Safir, February 15; Syrian News Agency, February 15).

8. The Arab media have given contradictory versions of the details of the event and the reason for Imad Moughnieh’s presence in Damascus. “Iranian and Syrian sources” told a pan-Arab daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat correspondent that Moughnieh had met with “a prominent Syrian security figure” shortly before his death (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, February 14). In another article, an “Iranian source” related that Moughnieh had met with Palestinian leaders in Damascus and was supposed of meet with Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas’s political bureau. According to the same source,
“Moughnieh coordinated relations between Iran and Hezbollah on the one hand and with the Palestinian factions on the other” (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, February 16).

9. The Syrian regime, not wanting to reveal its close ties with an international terrorist, has made a point of playing down its connection to the affair and is trying to conduct its own investigation. A “well-informed source” claimed that the Syrian security forces were not aware that Moughnieh was in the country and therefore could not ensure his safety (Syrian daily Al-Watan, February 17). A “highly place Syrian information source” denied that a joint Syrian-Iranian-Hezbollah investigation committee had been set up, making it clear that Syria alone was conducting the investigation (Saudi Arabian daily Okaz, February 15).

Iran

10. Iranian president Ahmadinejad sent a letter to the Hezbollah leadership which was read by Mamuchehr Mottaki during the funeral service. Mottaki headed the delegation of the Iranian foreign ministry to the funeral. Ahmadinejad expressed his condolences for the death of Imad Moughnieh, saying that his killing was a mark of shame for “the Zionist regime.” In his opinion it was weakness [for the Zionist] to descend to the level of carrying out terrorist attacks (IRNA, February 14).³

[Photo: Iranian foreign minister Mottaki speaking at Moughnieh’s funeral (Al-Intiqad, February 14).]

11. Acting Iranian foreign minister Ali Rida Sheikh Attar announced the establishment of a joint Iranian-Syrian investigation committee which would examine the details of the killing. He said that the decision to do so had been made following discussions between Iranian foreign minister Mamuchehr Mottaki and senior Syrian figures. He said the committee would investigate the killing

³ It should be remembered that Imad Moughnieh, together with the upper echelons of the Iranian regime, were behind the suicide bombing attack which blew up the AMIA building in Buenos Aires in 1994, as revealed by the Argentinean District Attorney’s report.
and its implications (‘Asr Website in Iran, February 15). The Syrians, as noted above, have denied participation in such a committee.

12. The Iranian elite have accused Israel of killing Imad Moughnieh, claiming his death will strengthen Hezbollah:

1) Iranian leader Khamenei wrote a letter of condolence to Hassan Nasrallah which said that “the blood-thirsty Zionist criminals should know that the pure blood of shaheeds like Moughnieh will create thousands like him and swell the resistance [i.e., terrorism].”

2) Chairman of the Assembly of Experts and the Expediency Council Hashemi Rafsanjani sent a letter of condolence to Hasral lah and the Lebanese people saying that Moughnieh’s death would raise Hezbollah’s spirits (IRNA, February 15).

3) Head of the Armed Forces Firozabadi claimed that the killing was carried out by Israel in retaliation following the second Lebanon war. He said that inspired by Moughnieh, thousands of shaheeds would rise and continue the “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] in Palestine and Lebanon, until Israel’s total destruction (Iranian daily Kayhan, February 16).

13. Memorial services for Imad Moughnieh and rallies were held throughout Iran. After the Friday prayer in Tehran worshippers held protest rallies and shouted “Death to the United States” and “Death to Israel,” and condemned the killing (Fars News Agency, February 15). The Hezbollah offices in Tehran announced that a ceremony would be held to mourn Imad Moughnieh on February 17 (Mehr News Agency, February 15). The special headquarters of the so-called Global Islamic Movement’s for Commemorating Shaheeds decided to erect a monument in Tehran on the seventh day of his interment (Tabnak Website, February 15).

The Palestinian Terrorist Organizations

14. The Palestinian terrorist organizations sent their condolences to Hezbollah on the death of Moughnieh and promised to retaliate against Israel. A rally in honor of Moughnieh was held at the Arab club in the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria attended by the heads of the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in Syria. Hezbollah was represented by a member of the organization’s political bureau, Hassan Khadraj.
15. Head of Hamas's political bureau, Khaled Mashal, said that Imad Moughnieh's death was “a crime of the [Israeli] occupation” and would only strengthen the resistance [i.e., terrorist] organizations to adhere to their path” (Palestine-info Website, February 15). He sent a letter of condolence to Hassan Nasrallah, saying that Moughnieh had courageously finished “the long journey of an arduous jihad.” He expressed his faith in Hezbollah's ability under Nasrallah's leadership to overcome Moughnieh's death and that the response would be painful (Palestine-info Website, February 14).

16. Palestinian Islamic Jihad secretary-general Ramadan Abdallah Shalah adapted himself to Hassan Nasrallah's message that Moughnieh’s death spelled the destruction of the State of Israel. He said Moughnieh’s death meant that there was now a new account to settle with Israel, which would “bring the end of Israel closer.” He added that Moughnieh's death had opened a new era and initiated new types of confrontations with Israel which would “bring the end of the Zionist entity closer” (Pal-today Website, February 15).