



## Estimate of Hezbollah's fatalities during the Syrian civil war and the conclusions arising from the analysis of their identity By Ran Elkayam

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### Main findings of the study<sup>1</sup>

As part of a study on the fatalities (shahids) of Hezbollah in Syria, the names of **1,139 operatives**, killed in 2011-2018, were identified. To this number, the ITIC believes that we can add a possible deviation range of 10% of fatalities whose names were not found due to various reasons. Thus, the number of Hezbollah fatalities in Syria **may reach about 1,250** (updated to late December 2018). The study is based on dozens of sources, mostly Facebook pages and Internet websites affiliated with Hezbollah and dedicated to commemorate the organization's fatalities. The sources include basic information on the fatalities, their resumes, family status, education, specializations and photos.

► **Following are the main findings of the study:**

- ◆ **Place of origin of those killed:** Most of the fatalities (662) originate from **southern Lebanon**, a region which was and remains Hezbollah's major and most significant support base. The second largest power base is **the Bekaa Valley**, with half as many fatalities as southern Lebanon. The relatively large number of fatalities in the Bekaa Valley is especially outstanding in view of difficulties encountered by Hezbollah in the relations with the local Shiite population. On the other hand, conspicuously small is the number of fatalities **from the Beirut area** (mainly the Shiite southern suburb of the city), **from the northern Bekaa Valley, and from northern Lebanon.**
- ◆ **Number of Hezbollah fatalities by year:** Most of the Hezbollah fatalities were killed in the years 2013-2015, when the Syrian regime was fighting for survival. Since the end of 2015, following the Russian involvement alongside the Assad regime, **the number of Hezbollah fatalities gradually decreased every year**, until 2018, which was outstanding in the small number of Hezbollah fatalities (25, compared to 313 in 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> The study was written by Ran Elkayam and coordinated with the ITIC. The writer served in one of the IDF intelligence units. Currently, he is engaged in research and translation, and has conducted extensive research on Hezbollah.

◆ **Percentage of commanders and holders of senior positions:** About 10% of the total number of fatalities were either commanders or holders of senior positions in Hezbollah, most of them from southern Lebanon. Outstanding among the fatalities were the commander of Hezbollah's rocket battalion in Syria; the commander in charge of Hezbollah's sapper unit in southern Syria; the operative in charge of the "Aziz Unit;" commander in Hezbollah's Special Forces; and a senior commander who operated in the Homs region. Indeed, Hezbollah acquired **quite considerable combat experience** in the fighting in Syria. However, on the other hand, the large number of commanders and holders of senior positions who had been killed **has been detrimental to the military know-how accumulated in Hezbollah.**

◆ **Place where Hezbollah operatives were killed:** About half of the Hezbollah operatives were killed **in fighting zones along the Syrian-Lebanese border** (Al-Zabadani, the Qalamoun Mountains, and Al-Qusayr). The fact that about half of the Hezbollah operatives were killed near the Syrian-Lebanese border attempting to prevent the "spillover" of jihadi terrorism assisted in acquiring Lebanese legitimacy for Hezbollah's involvement in the fighting in Syria. In addition, it also increased the motivation of the Hezbollah operatives (and became an important source of legitimacy for Hezbollah's involvement in the fighting in Syria). On the other hand, only a fraction of the fatalities (about 4%) met their death defending the Shrine of Set Zaynab, which was the preliminary source of legitimacy for Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war. In second and third places (respectively) are **the Aleppo region and eastern Syria**. The rest of the Hezbollah operatives were killed in fighting zones **in northern and southern Syria**. In these regions, Hezbollah fought to promote interests of the Syrian regime and Iran.

◆ **Previous military experience of those killed:** Among the fatalities, there is an outstanding percentage of operatives in their early twenties **who were sent to Syria without prior combat experience** (about 43%). On the other hand, among the fatalities there is a considerable percentage of **veteran operatives who had fought against the IDF while it was operating in Lebanon (about 28%). There are also those who were recruited to Hezbollah in the years preceding the Second Lebanon War (about 23%).** About 10% of those killed had participated in the Second Lebanon War. Some of the veterans had taken part in battles which entered Hezbollah's heroic

battle narratives. The death of the veterans represents **experience and long-standing military knowhow of fighting against Israel which were lost due to Hezbollah's involvement in the fighting in Syria.**

◆ **Education and status of the families of those killed:** The study examined the argument that Hezbollah chose to send to the war in Syria residents of disadvantaged regions. **The findings question the validity of this argument.** The study found dozens of names of operatives closely associated to Hezbollah's senior leaders, including two family members of the wife of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Some of the fatalities are officials in the municipal hierarchy or sons of wealthy families. Many dozens of the fatalities are graduates of universities and institutes, mostly in the exact sciences (and only a small portion of them in the humanities or medical sciences). The findings suggest the possibility that in some of the universities and institutes (mainly the Lebanese university, 15 fatalities), recruitment and indoctrination activity takes place on behalf of Hezbollah.

◆ **Hezbollah as a proxy of Iran:** Some of the fatalities were killed in battles in northern, southern and eastern Syria, in battles which clearly served Iranian interests (rather than Lebanese or Shiite interests, such as preventing the spillover of jihadi terrorism or defending the Shrine of Set Zaynab). Furthermore, some of the Hezbollah operatives who were killed in Syria were engaged in **training and establishing Shiite militias handled by Iran in various fighting zones.** In some of the photos, Hezbollah operatives can be seen **wearing two shoulder badges: the Hezbollah badge and that of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.**



**Hezbollah as a proxy of Iran: The photo shows Hatem Kamel Khalil (Abu Turab) from southern Lebanon, who was killed in the Aleppo area. He is wearing two shoulder badges on his uniform: on the right, a Hezbollah badge (clearly seen on the left photo). The other, on the right, is a shoulder badge of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (clearly seen on the right photo) (Facebook)**

## Methodological notes

### Estimates of the number of Hezbollah fatalities published by research institutions and the media

- ▶ In recent years, there were several researchers who were engaged in assessing the number of fatalities which Hezbollah sustained while standing alongside the Syrian regime. Several research institutes, mainly in the USA, and some news outlets published various estimates on this issue, based on various sources and different methodologies. Therefore, the conclusions of those articles as to the number of Hezbollah fatalities vary from one study to another, and sometimes there are considerable discrepancies between them.
- ▶ Following are four estimates of Hezbollah fatalities, which were published during 2018:
  - ◆ The magazine **Small Wars Journal** claimed in January 2018 that the number of fatalities was **900**, based on a news website affiliated with Hezbollah.
  - ◆ The Turkish news channel **TRT World** claimed in July 2018 that the number was **over 1,200**, based on an independent analysis.
  - ◆ The research institute **Brookings Institution** claimed in September 2018 that the number was **at least 1,400** (without referring to sources).
  - ◆ **The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington** claimed in October 2018 that the number of fatalities was **1,233**, based on a variety of public media sources.
- ▶ The considerable discrepancies between the different numbers of Hezbollah fatalities may stem from several reasons:

- ◆ The articles are based on general assessments. No attempt has been made in any of them **to trace the names of each of the fatalities in a detailed manner**, based on a variety of sources affiliated with Hezbollah.
- ◆ Some of the estimates **make use of sources originating in the Syrian rebel organizations**. These sources, in their reports on Hezbollah fatalities, **tend to exaggerate the numbers and even publish the name of the same fatality several times**, sometimes with a small change in the spelling of the name (among other reasons, from the desire to enhance their achievements on the battlefield and raise the morale of their operatives). Therefore, these sources are not considered reliable enough. In the current study, however, such sources have been used only with relation to tracing the place of death of some of the fatalities (meaning that a fatality whose name appeared in the sources of the opposition but not in sources affiliated with Hezbollah was not included in the database of the current study).
- ◆ **Some estimates of the fatalities include Hezbollah operatives who were killed during the war in Syria, but not as a result of the fighting**. There are many dozens of operatives who were killed in 2011–2018 in terrorist attacks of Salafist-jihadi organizations in Lebanon, in traffic accidents, as a result of accidental discharge, of illnesses etc. In addition, several Hezbollah operatives were killed in Iraq. The current study deals only with Hezbollah operatives who were killed fighting in the war in Syria.
- ◆ The Hezbollah operatives fought and were killed **as part of local forces in Syria or other Iranian-affiliated Shiite militias** (as part of the missions which Hezbollah carried out for Iran). It is possible that fatalities of these forces, who are not Hezbollah operatives, were mistakenly included in the list of Hezbollah fatalities, alongside the organization operatives who fought with them. It is also possible that fatalities whose place of burial is unknown were included twice in some of the cases (first when they were proclaimed dead and again when the place of their burial was published).

## Methodology of the current study

- ▶ **The study enumerated the names of 1,139 Hezbollah operatives who were killed in Syria**, including **114 who were designated as commanders**. The determination of the number of fatalities and the analysis of their identity are based on **a detailed examination conducted with regard to each of the fatalities**. In the ITIC's assessment, a **10% possible**

**deviation range may be added** to the number received, so that the number of the Hezbollah fatalities in Syria **may reach up to 1,250** (updated to late December 2018).

► **The database of the study is based on dozens of sources affiliated with Hezbollah.** In few cases use was made of sources affiliated with the Syrian rebel organizations or news websites. The sources used include **20 Facebook pages and five websites**, mainly such that **are dedicated to commemorate Hezbollah fatalities.** The database includes only operatives **killed during the fighting in Syria** (and does not include those who died as a result of traffic accidents, illnesses etc.).

► **These Facebook pages and the relevant websites contain several kinds of publications which were the basis for the study data:**

- ◆ **Death notice:** Such publications usually include very basic details, such as the fatality's date of death and village of origin.
- ◆ **Basic information about those killed:** Publications which include basic information on the fatalities, such as the place of death, date of birth, marital status, and military specialization.
- ◆ **“The fatality's life story:”** Such publications include, in addition to basic information, extensive biographical details on the fatality: his childhood, coming of age, the time and circumstances of joining Hezbollah, his positions, economic situation etc.
- ◆ **Photos:** Facebook pages set up in memory of the fatalities offer verbal as well as visual information. **Use was made of about 24,000 photos identified during the writing of this study.**

## **Death notices on the Hezbollah fatalities as an important source of information**

► **The death notices on Hezbollah fatalities in Syria served as an important source of information for the study.** The death notices, which were published on a systematic manner, included several standard parts:

- ◆ Title, mostly in a standard wording: “The village (i.e., village of origin) announces the death of [title] [full name] [nom de guerre].”
- ◆ Date of publication
- ◆ Photo of the fatality
- ◆ Quranic verse

- ◆ Content of the announcement
  - ◆ Date of the funeral
  - ◆ The opening surah (chapter) of the Quran
- ▶ Based on this information, it is possible to distinguish between an operative killed in Syria and a Hezbollah operative who was killed in other circumstances. When the operative was killed in the war in Syria, in most cases he is referred to as **“the Zaynabi shahid”** (i.e., the one killed while defending the Shrine of Set Zaynab, the granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad). In earlier stages of the war in Syria, an operative killed is referred to as “the jihad fighting shahid.” On the other hand, operatives killed in circumstances which are not related to the fighting are referred to as **“fatality of the resistance and jihad.”**
- ▶ The Quranic verse opening the announcement is **a standard one** when referring to a shahid **of the war in Syria**: “Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah. Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow [to the death], and among them is he who awaits [his chance]. And they did not alter [the terms of their commitment] by any alteration” (Quran, Surah 33:23, Sahih International translation). However, death notices for operatives who were **killed in other circumstances** include **this Quranic verse and others**.
- ▶ **It is extremely unusual** to find reference to the **circumstances of death** of a shahid of **the war in Syria** in his death notice (it is necessary to rely on other sources for that purpose). However, **in relatively many cases** of operatives **killed in other circumstances**, their circumstances of death **are mentioned in the notice**.

## The structure of the study

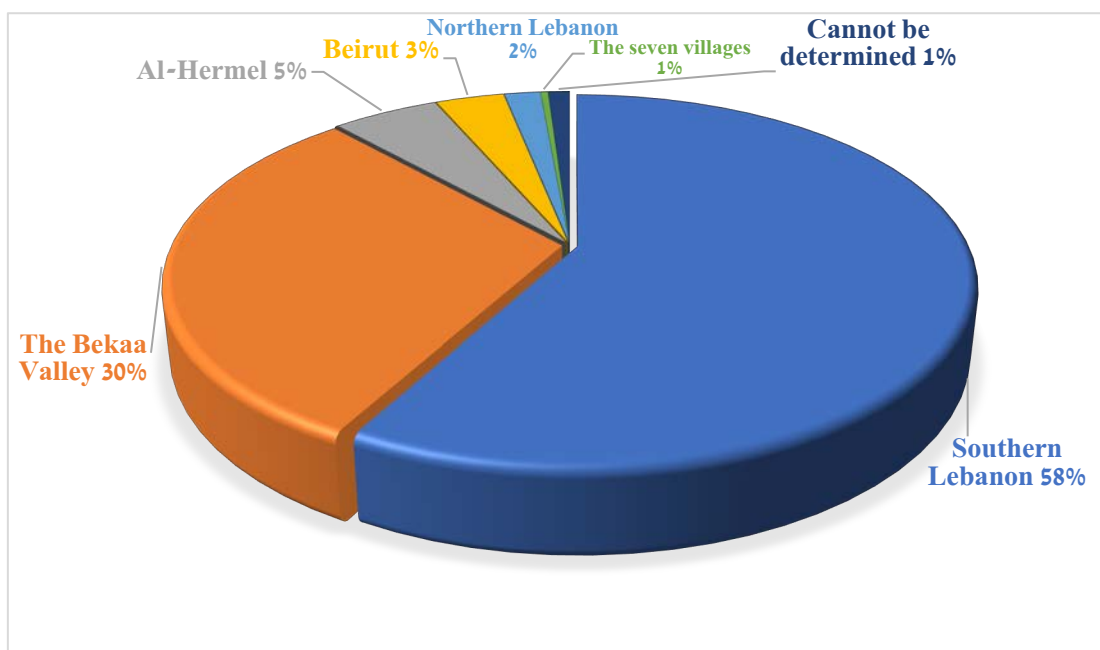
- ▶ **The analysis of the Hezbollah fatalities was carried out according to the following breakdowns:**
- ◆ Place of residence
  - ◆ Significance arising from the analysis of the place of residence
  - ◆ Years in which Hezbollah operatives were killed
  - ◆ Commanders and senior officials
  - ◆ Sites and battles in which Hezbollah operatives were killed
  - ◆ Purpose of the fighting in Syria
  - ◆ Ages of the fatalities
  - ◆ Marital status of the fatalities
  - ◆ Military specialization

- ◆ Number of years the fatality served in Hezbollah
- ◆ Families of the fatalities and the fatalities' occupations
- ◆ Education and civilian profession
- ◆ Prominent battles in which some of the fatalities took part
- ◆ Training Iranian-affiliated Shiite militias

## Analysis of the names of Hezbollah fatalities

### Place of Residence

► **A total of 1,139 fatalities in 2011-2018 were identified.** Of the fatalities, 662 (58%) were from **southern Lebanon**, 346 (30%) from **the Bekaa Valley**, 59 (5%) from **the Al-Hermel area**, 38 (3.3%) from **Beirut** and 20 (1.7%) from **northern Lebanon**. Four of the fatalities (0.3%) were reportedly **from one of the “seven villages”** (Shiite villages which were south of the Israeli-Lebanese international border, whose residents fled to Lebanon during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence).



► **Of the fatalities, 662 were from southern Lebanon.** The fatalities in the south come from 343 families and from 171 villages. The most prominent families are the Salman family of Majdal Zoun (6 fatalities) and the Tarhini family from Aabba (6 fatalities). The most prominent villages (10 or more fatalities per village) are: Jebchit (10 fatalities), Ain Qana (13 fatalities), Chakra (10 fatalities), Al-Shehabiya (12 fatalities), Haruf (12 fatalities), Majdel Selm (13

fatalities), Majdal Zoun (14 fatalities), Aabba (14 fatalities), Ayta ash-Shab (14 fatalities), Beit Leif (16 fatalities), Meiss el-Jabal (16 fatalities) and the city of Nabatieh (27 fatalities). Based on these figures, it may be concluded that in southern Lebanon, **recruitment to Hezbollah is a local practice at the village level rather than a family tradition.**

► **A total of 346 fatalities are from the Beqaa Valley.** The fatalities are from 174 families and 80 villages. The most prominent families are Al-Mussawi (22 fatalities), Amhaz (10 fatalities), Al-Bazzal (9 fatalities), Al-Hajj Hassan (9 fatalities), Al-Miqdad (8 fatalities) and Abbas (6 fatalities). The most prominent villages (10 or more fatalities per village) are Al-Nabi Shith (22 fatalities), Brital (19 fatalities), Machghara (14 fatalities), Shamstar (14 fatalities), Younine (12 fatalities), Al-Khreibe (11 fatalities), Ali El-Nahri (11 fatalities), Suhmur (10 fatalities), Al-Bazzalia (10 fatalities) and the city of Baalbek (51 fatalities). Based on the structure of the society in the Bekaa Valley, which is a tribal society, it can be said that **in this region there is a combination of a family tradition of recruitment and a local practice at the village level.** An examination of the fatalities from a perspective of the accepted division into two “super-tribes” (Chamas and Zuaiter) reveals a clearer picture: Only **14 fatalities** were from the prominent families of the **Chamas Tribe** (Chamas, Alwa, Dandash, Alam, Awad, Nasser al-Din and Alaa al-Din), whereas **48 fatalities** were from the prominent families of the **Zuaiter Tribe** (Zuaiter, Ja’far, Nun, Amhaz, Al-Miqdad, Al-Hajj Hassan, Sharif and Rabah).

► **The relatively small number of fatalities in the Beirut area is striking:** only 38 operatives from this area were killed, most of them from the southern suburb of Beirut (the Dahiya, 22 fatalities). No prominent families were found among the fatalities in Beirut. Fifty-nine of the fatalities came from **the Al-Hermel area, in the northern Bekaa Valley.** The fatalities from this area came from 42 families and 14 villages. None of them were from prominent families. Most of the fatalities (29) came from the city of Al-Hermel. **Twenty fatalities came from northern Lebanon.** The most prominent villages are Karha (5 fatalities) and Lasa (4 fatalities), and there are no prominent families among the fatalities.

### **The conclusions arising from an analysis of the place of residence of the fatalities**

► An analysis of the place of residence of the fatalities shows that **Hezbollah’s biggest and most significant support base was and remains the southern Lebanon region.** The large number of fatalities among of operatives from this region is a **constant and stable** figure, which has not changed over the years. This is evidence of the **considerable support** of the

population in the region and **great readiness to sacrifice for Hezbollah**. It can be assessed that this stems from the fact that most of the population in southern Lebanon is Shiite, affiliated with Hezbollah and its political ally, the Amal movement, and perceives them as representing their interests. Hezbollah's formative narratives are well assimilated among the residents of the south, mainly the liberation of southern Lebanon from the control of the IDF (1982-2000). In addition, southern Lebanon is where the formative events in Hezbollah's jihadi tradition have taken place since its establishment, including during the Second Lebanon War.

► **The second largest support base is the Bekaa Valley.** The number of fatalities from this area is also high, **although it is only half the number of fatalities in the south**. In contrast to the number of fatalities in the south, the number of fatalities in the Bekaa Valley varies from year to year: **in 2013** around 30% of the fatalities were from this region; **in 2014** around 40%; **in 2015-2016** around 22%, whereas **in 2017**, around 35% of the fatalities were from this region. The support on the part of the Shiites in the Bekaa Valley seems to stem partly from the feeling that the residents of the Bekaa Valley are under a tangible threat from the jihadi rebels operating near the Syrian-Lebanese border (2013 – significant fighting in the area of Al-Qusayr, on the Syrian-Lebanese border; 2014 – significant fighting on the mountain ranges along the Syrian-Lebanese border, and a large number of terrorist attacks in Lebanese territory; 2017 – significant fighting on the mountain ranges along the Syrian-Lebanese border).

► The relatively large number of Hezbollah operatives from the Bekaa Valley is particularly prominent in view of the difficulties in the relations between the local residents of the Bekaa Valley and Hezbollah. These difficulties are reflected in the residents' allegation that Hezbollah does not invest sufficient resources and attention to day-to-day issues (concern for appropriate infrastructure and the welfare of the residents). In response to this allegation, Hezbollah invested considerable effort in the election campaign in the Bekaa Valley, stressing the considerable funds invested in the infrastructure and the major importance that the organization attaches to the region's residents, and implying that the organization was actually established in the Bekaa Valley and by its residents<sup>2</sup>.

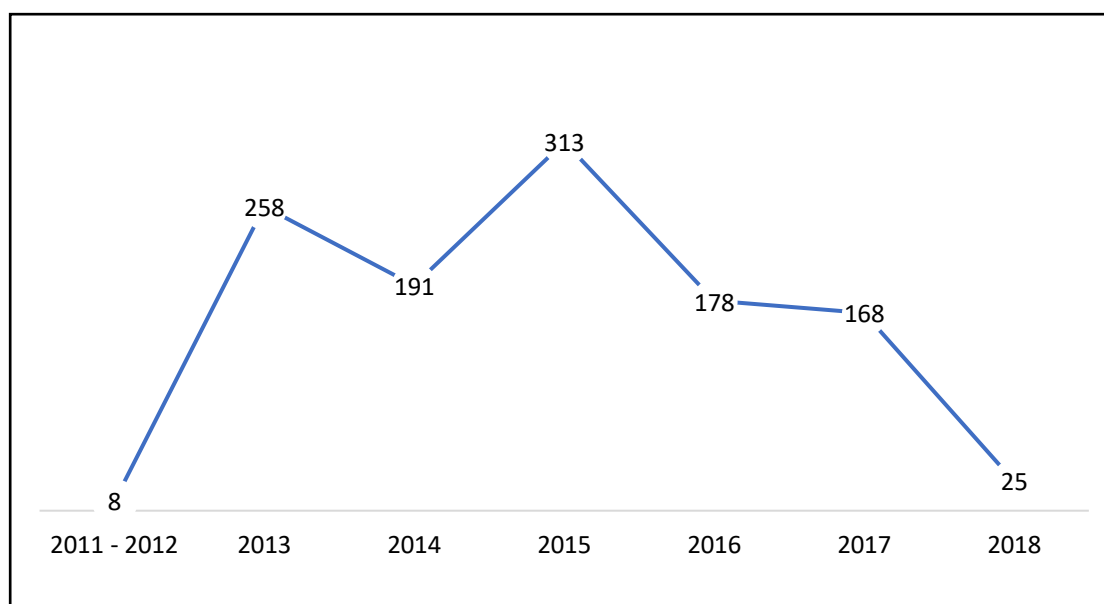
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<sup>2</sup> **All four clerics who founded the organization came from the Bekaa Valley:** Sayyid Abbas Mussawi (Al-Nabi Shith), Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli (Brital), Sayyid Ibrahim al-Amin (Nabi Ila) and Sheikh Mohammad Yazbek (Baalbek). Shimon Shapira, "Hezbollah between Iran and Lebanon" – Tel Aviv University and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, fourth edition (2006) (Heb.), pp. 110-114, 117.

## The years in which the Hezbollah operatives were killed

**Most of the Hezbollah operatives were killed in 2013-2014.** The peak year in terms of the number of fatalities was **2015** (313 fatalities). During these years, prior to Russia's involvement in the civil war in Syria (which was a turning point), extremely intensive fighting took place and Hezbollah suffered heavy losses. Only a few operatives (8) were killed in 2011-2012 (the first years of involvement). The year in which the number of Hezbollah fatalities reached its peak **was 2015, and Russian involvement in Syria began towards the end of that year** (September 30, 2015). **Since then, the number of Hezbollah fatalities has dropped, concurrently with the Syrian regime's successful establishment of its rule in the north, the Damascus region, and southern Syria.**

### The Number of Hezbollah Fatalities by Year



► **In 2013**, a total of 258 (22.6%) Hezbollah operatives were killed. Of the fatalities, 134 (52%) were from southern Lebanon, 86 (33%) from the Bekaa Valley, 15 (5.8%) from Al-Hermel, 10 (3.8%) from Beirut, and 2 (0.7%) from northern Lebanon. With regard to 11 (4.2%) fatalities, it was impossible to determine where they were from. Of these fatalities, 38 were designated as commanders, constituting 33% of all the commanders who were killed. **In 2014**, a total of 191 (16.7%) Hezbollah operatives were killed. Of the fatalities, 95 (49.7%) were from southern Lebanon, 76 (39.7%) from the Bekaa Valley, 7 (3.6%) from Beirut, 6 (3.1%) from the Al-Hermel area, 5 (2.6%) from northern Lebanon, and 1 (0.5%) from the “seven villages.” It was

impossible to determine where one of the fatalities was from. Of these fatalities, 20 were designated as commanders, constituting 17.5% of all the commanders who were killed.

► **In 2015**, a total of 313 (27.4%) Hezbollah operatives were killed. Of the fatalities, 208 (66.4%) were from southern Lebanon, 73 (23.3%) from the Bekaa Valley, 15 (4.8%) from Al-Hermel, 9 (2.8%) from Beirut, 6 (1.9%) from northern Lebanon, and 2 (0.6%) from the “seven villages.” Of these fatalities, 16 were designated as commanders, constituting 14% of all the commanders who were killed. **In 2016**, a total of 178 (15.6%) Hezbollah operatives were killed. Of the fatalities, 121 (68%) were from southern Lebanon, 38 (21.3%) from the Bekaa Valley, 10 (5.6%) from Al-Hermel, 6 (3.3%) from Beirut, 2 (1.1%) from northern Lebanon, and 1 (0.5%) from the “seven villages.” Of these fatalities, 16 were designated as commanders, constituting 14% of all the commanders who were killed. **In 2017**, a total of 168 (14.7%) Hezbollah operatives were killed. Of the fatalities, 90 (53.5%) were from southern Lebanon, 57 (34%) from the Bekaa Valley, 11 (6.5%) from Al-Hermel, 5 (3%) from Beirut, and 5 (3%) from northern Lebanon. Of these fatalities, 16 were designated as commanders, constituting 14% of all the commanders who were killed.

### Commanders and Senior Officials

► **114 of the Hezbollah fatalities in Syria (9.9%) are commanders or senior officials.** Of the fatalities, 67 (58.7%) were from southern Lebanon, 39 (34.2%) from the Bekaa Valley, 4 (3.5%) from Beirut, 3 (2.6%) from Al-Hermel, and 1 (0.8%) from northern Lebanon. **In 2013**, 37 (32.4%) senior officials were killed, **in 2014**, 20 (17.5%), **in 2015** and **2016**, 16 each year (14%), **in 2017**, 17 (14.9%) and **in 2018**, 8 (7%).

► **As part of this study, data was gathered on the areas where 105 of the senior officials were killed.** A total of 32 of them (30.4%) were killed in battles whose purpose was to contain the war in Syria and prevent it from spilling over into Lebanon; 29 (27.6%) were killed in battles whose purpose was to ensure the survival of the Syrian regime; 23 (21.9%) were killed in battles which served Iranian interests, and 21 (20%) were killed defending Shiites holy places. **Defending the Shiite holy places in Syria, and especially the Shrine of Set Zaynab south of Damascus, was the pretext and source of legitimacy for Hezbollah’s involvement in the fighting in Syria. In practice, however, only a minority of the fatalities among the commanders died fighting for this cause.**

## Photos of senior Hezbollah commanders killed in Syria



**Nasser Jamil Hudruj, commander of the Hezbollah rocket battalion in Syria. Killed in an ISIS attack in Albukamal (June 7, 2018) (Twitter account of Sayyid Adam, June 8, 2018)**



**Right: Ali Ahmad Fayad (Alaa al-Bousna), commander of Hezbollah's Special Forces. Left: Hassan Mohammad al-Hajj (Hajj Maher), commander of the "Aziz Unit"**



Right: Ali Hassan Tarhini (Sayyid Jaber), commander of the sapper unit in southern Lebanon.  
Left: Ali Fawzi Taha (Hajj Jawad), commander of the Rida forces (Shiite militia force operating in the Homs area)



Right: Ali Mohammad Biz (Abu Hassan Baz), commander of Region 4 in Homs and operations commander in the Homs rural area. Left: Ghassan Hussein Faqih (Sajed al-Tiri), company commander in the Radwan Battalion (Hezbollah's elite force)

► Following are the names of the Hezbollah commanders and senior officials killed in Syria and details of their positions

Name	Nom de guerre	Commanding post
1. Mohammad Ahmad Issa	Abu Issa al-Iqlim	
2. Badi' Jamil Hamih	Jawad	
3. Hussein Ibrahim Amhaz	Jihad Tura	
4. Hajj Bassem Ahmad al-Khatib	Abu Mahdi	
5. Ali Hassan Tarhini	Sayyid Jaber	In charge of the sapper unit in southern Syria
6. Hajj Tareq Ibrahim Haidar	Abu Ali Jawad	

7. Ahmad Mohammad al-Shi'ar	Abd al-Karim	
8. Ali Fawzi Taha	Hajj Jawad	Commander of the Al-Rida force <sup>3</sup>
9. Bilal Nadhir Khayr al-Din	Abu Ja'far	
10. Mahdi Qays Khudur	Sajed Sayda	
11. Fadi Ahmad Shaouri	Mahdi al-Duweir	
12. Ali al-Hadi al-Asheq	Hajj Abbas	
13. Samer Ali Salloum	Malaak	
14. Hajj Mohammad Hussein al-Hawi	Zuheir	
15. Ahmad Fawwaz Medlej	Baqer	
16. Adnan Abbas Qmeiha	Sadeq al-Hakim	
17. Ali Shehadah Harb	Sheikh Ragheb	
18. Hajj Mahmoud Hassan Jubaili	Abu Hassan	
19. Hajj Mundhir Diab Amhaz	Abu Ali	
20. Hajj Mohammad Sadeq Sharaf al-Din	Abu al-Hoda	
21. Hajj Nasser Jamil Hudruj	Abu Hussein, Abu Ali Sadeq	Commander of Hezbollah's rocket battalion in Lebanon <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A force of Shiite militias composed of residents of the Homs area, mostly consisting of Shiite residents of the area.

<sup>4</sup> Hajj Nader Jamil Hudruj was killed in an ISIS attack against Albukamal (June 7, 2018). Two operatives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and a Syrian officer in the rank of major general were also killed in the ISIS attack.

<b>22. Mohammad Sa'id Sa'id</b>	<b>Samir Ahmad</b>	
<b>23. Mohammad Mahmoud Zidan</b>	<b>Mortada Jibshit</b>	
<b>24. Nimr Mohammad Ismail</b>	<b>Ali</b>	
<b>25. Hussam Ali Nisr</b>	<b>Ayman</b>	
<b>26. Sayyid Wissam Mohsen Sharaf al-Din</b>	<b>Sayyid Nasrallah</b>	
<b>27. Khudur Ahmad Matar</b>	<b>Tha'er</b>	
<b>28. Sayyid Ali Hussein Mortada</b>	<b>Sayyid Haydar</b>	
<b>29. Ali Imad Shuman</b>	<b>Maymoun, Ahmad Mostafa</b>	
<b>30. Ali Hussein Iskandar</b>	<b>Ali Akbar</b>	
<b>31. Samir al-Quntar</b>		
<b>32. Issam Adnan Zahwa</b>		<b>Operative of the militia of the Sayyida Ruqayya Brigade<sup>5</sup></b>
<b>33. Hussein Abd al-Latif Munes</b>	<b>Baqer</b>	
<b>34. Ahed Mohammad Sa'adah</b>		
<b>35. Hajj Ahmad Habib Salloum</b>	<b>Abu Ali Mahdi</b>	
<b>36. Bassel Mohammad Haydar Ahmad</b>	<b>Hadi, Abd al-Rasul</b>	

<sup>5</sup> Shiite militia affiliated with Iran. Took part in the battles of Al-Zabadani alongside Hezbollah and subsequently carried on fighting in eastern Syria.

<b>37. Hassan Abd al-Jalil Yassin</b>	<b>Abu Hashem, Sadeq</b>	
<b>38. Qusay Ali Amru</b>	<b>Haydar</b>	
<b>39. Hajj Bassam Mohammad Tabajah</b>	<b>Dhu al-Fiqar, Abu Mostafa</b>	
<b>40. Mostafa Badr al-Din</b>	<b>Sayyid Dhu al-Fiqar</b>	
<b>41. Jamil Hussein Hamoud Faqih</b>	<b>Abu Abdallah, Abu Yasser</b>	<b>Field commander, in charge of the case of the besieged Shiite villages of Al-Fu'ah and Kafraya (northern Syria)</b>
<b>42. Ali Ahmad Sabra</b>	<b>Abu Hassan</b>	<b>Platoon commander in Hezbollah's rocket unit. Company commander in the "Popular Committees" subordinate to Hezbollah<sup>6</sup></b>
<b>43. Haydar Freiz Marei</b>	<b>Hamid</b>	
<b>44. Hajj Hassan Mohammad al-Hajj</b>	<b>Hajj Maher</b>	<b>In charge of the "Aziz unit," commander of operations in the Al-Ghab Plain (southwest of Idlib)</b>
<b>45. Hassan Mohammad Marei</b>	<b>Hajj rabi'</b>	
<b>46. Hassan Mohammad Na'ame</b>	<b>Baqer</b>	
<b>47. Akram Sadeq</b>	<b>Sadeq</b>	

<sup>6</sup> Syrian regime militias comprising mainly Christians and Shiite Alawites. These militias were engaged in curbing the spread of Sunni rebel organizations to areas controlled by the regime.

<b>Hawrani</b>		
<b>48. Hussein Musa Barakat</b>	<b>Abu Hamza</b>	
<b>49. Ali Abbas Yassin</b>	<b>Abu Zahraa, Hussam</b>	
<b>50. Ali Subhi Haydar</b>	<b>Siraj</b>	
<b>51. Kamal Ali Hudruj</b>	<b>Ja'far, Baqer</b>	
<b>52. Mohammad Ali Abu Hamad</b>	<b>Abu Zaynab</b>	<b>Regional commander</b>
<b>53. Hajj Abbas Haydar Riyya</b>	<b>Abu al-Fadl</b>	
<b>54. Sayyid Hassan Ali Fahs</b>	<b>Abu al-Fadl</b>	
<b>55. Mohammad Qassem Abdallah Ghamloush</b>	<b>Hajj Hadi Ghamloush</b>	<b>Field commander</b>
<b>56. Mohammad Abd al-Rahman al-Atrash</b>	<b>Abu Khudur</b>	
<b>57. Musa Mahmoud Hamdan</b>	<b>Abbas</b>	
<b>58. Ali Hussein Hamad Balhas</b>	<b>Hajj Jawad, Hajj Ali Kawkab, Abu Hussein Balhas</b>	
<b>59. Hussein Mohammad Younes</b>	<b>Abu al-Fadl</b>	
<b>60. Ali Ahmad Fayad</b>	<b>Alaa al-Bousna</b>	<b>Commander of Hezbollah's Special Forces</b>
<b>61. Sayyid Khalil Ali al-Sayyid Hassan</b>		

<b>62. Kamal Hassan Biz</b>	<b>Gharib</b>	<b>Commander in the Al-Abbass Brigade<sup>7</sup></b>
<b>63. Mohyi al-Din Mohammad al-Dimassi</b>	<b>Hajj Samir</b>	
<b>64. Ramzi Ali Mughniya</b>	<b>Tha'er</b>	
<b>65. Samir Ali Awadah</b>	<b>Abu Ali al-Naqib</b>	
<b>66. Hassan Mohammad Musa Abd Ali</b>	<b>Abu Ali Malek</b>	
<b>67. Hatem Adib Hamadah</b>	<b>Hajj Alaa</b>	
<b>68. Bilal Ali As'ad Sindian</b>	<b>Jawad</b>	
<b>69. Mahdi Hassan Ubayd</b>	<b>Hajj Abu Rida</b>	
<b>70. Hamza Ibrahim Haydar</b>	<b>Abu Mostafa</b>	
<b>71. Hussein Sami Rashid</b>	<b>Hajj Baqer</b>	
<b>72. Ali Mohammad Biz</b>	<b>Abu Hassan Baz, Bilal Sherri, Mirza</b>	<b>Commander of Region 4 in Homs and in charge of operations in the Homs rural area</b>
<b>73. Khattar Tawfiq Abdallah</b>	<b>Hajj Walaa</b>	
<b>74. Hussein Khalil Ali Mansour</b>	<b>Haydar Ayta</b>	
<b>75. Mohammad Mahmoud Odah</b>	<b>Hajj Mohammad</b>	
<b>76. Hajj Hussein Salah</b>	<b>Abu Ali Rida</b>	

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<sup>7</sup> The Shiite militia Abu al-Fadl al-Abbass, handled by Iran in Syria.

<b>Habib</b>		
<b>77. Hassan Hariri</b>		
<b>78. Rida al-Sha'er</b>		
<b>79. Sayyid Hassan Faisal Shukr</b>	<b>Sayyid Sajed, Sajed al-Hashemi</b>	
<b>80. Mohammad Hassan Shahadi</b>	<b>Abd al-Zahraa</b>	<b>Field commander</b>
<b>81. Mohammad Hassan Hamadah</b>	<b>Hajj Bashar</b>	
<b>82. Sayyid Khudur Nasrallah Nasrallah</b>	<b>Rida al-Dakroub</b>	
<b>83. Hussein Talal Shalhoub</b>	<b>Abd al-Rasul</b>	
<b>84. Hassan Khalil Mohyi al-Din Malak</b>	<b>Sajed</b>	
<b>85. Ali Hussein Bazzi</b>	<b>Sajed</b>	
<b>86. Hussein Abd al- Karim Yassin</b>	<b>Raouf</b>	
<b>87. Ali Dargham Fares</b>	<b>Abu Alaa, Tha'er</b>	
<b>88. Abbas Ali Shuman</b>	<b>Ali Haydar</b>	
<b>89. Mazen Diab Shukr</b>	<b>Sayyid Nour</b>	
<b>90. Hassan Ali Khalil Yassin</b>	<b>Alaa</b>	
<b>91. Ayman Abd al- Hussein Muslimani</b>	<b>Yasser</b>	
<b>92. Mohammad Abd al- Karim Muntesh</b>	<b>Abu Ja'far</b>	
<b>93. Hassan Mansour</b>	<b>Abu Ali Maytham</b>	
<b>94. Hajj Fawzi Ayyoub</b>	<b>Abu Abbas</b>	
<b>95. Mahmoud Mohammad Hayek</b>	<b>Bahaa</b>	

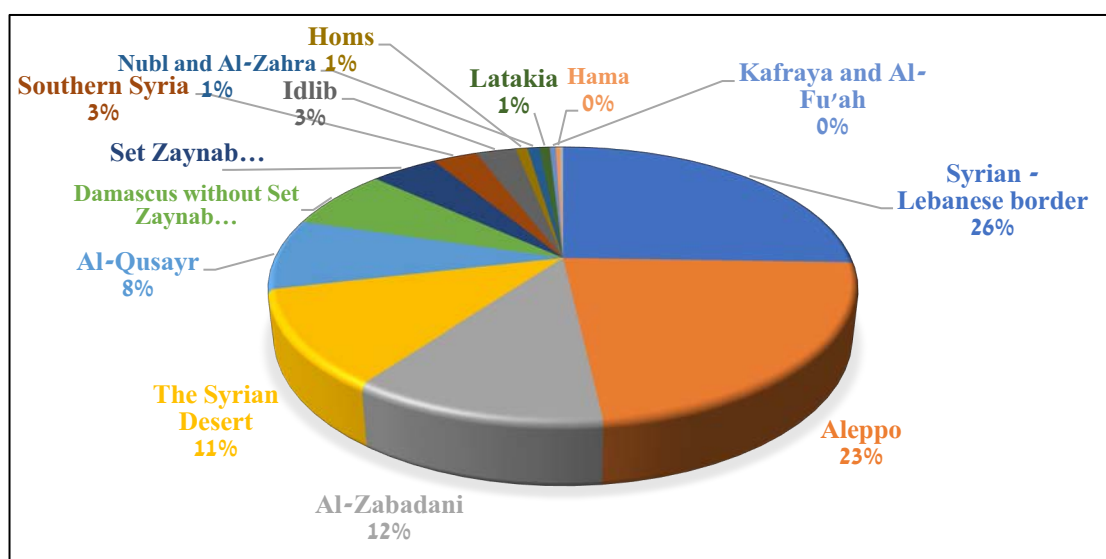
96. Mahmoud Mazloum	Ali	Jawad, Hajj Alaa	
97. Hussein Shukr	Qassem	Sayyid Nour	
98. Sayyid Mortada	Adnan		
99. Ghassan Faqih	Hussein	Sajed al-Tiri	Company commander in the Radwan Battalion (Hezbollah's elite force)
100. Hassan Taleb	Arafat	Abu Ja'far	
101. Mahmoud Diab	Hassan	Baqer	
102. Dandash	Ali Dandash	Hajj Nazih	
103. Hassan al-Hajj Diab	Hamza	Abu Abbas	
104. al-Mun'im Jarradi	Hassan Abd	Fallah	
105. Abbas Younes	Mohammad	Fidaa	
106. Mahmoud Nasser al-Din	Hassan		
107. Khalil Abbas	Hussein		
108. Jarradi	Musa Ali	Haydar	
109. Mohammad Hassan Nour al-Din	Sayyid		

110.	Mohammad Saleh	Asakri	
111.	Imad Ghazi Ghazla	Ayman	
112.	Nizar Ahmad Tarraf		
113.	Taleb al-Zayn	Abu Ali	

### Fighting zones and battles in which Hezbollah operatives were killed

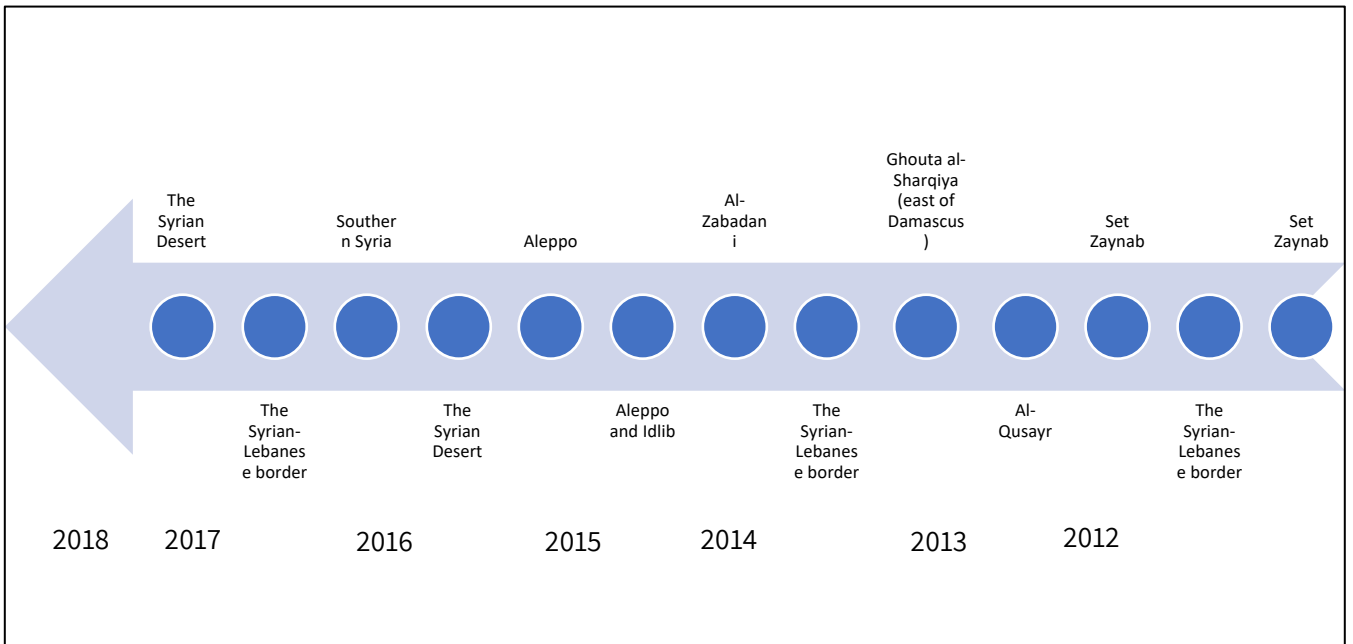
► For **1,019 fatalities** (89% of all the fatalities), information was found about the location in Syria where they were killed. In order to examine the significance, the names of the places were divided into **15 areas**: the Syrian-Lebanese border (260 fatalities), Aleppo (231 fatalities), Al-Zabadani (121 fatalities), the Syrian Desert (115 fatalities), Al-Qusayr (85 fatalities), the Damascus area (73 fatalities), the Shrine of Set Zaynab complex south of Damascus (45 fatalities), southern Syria (30 fatalities), Idlib (27 fatalities), Homs (8 fatalities), the two Shiite villages of Nubl and Al-Zahra in northern Syria (8 fatalities), Latakia (7 fatalities), the Shiite villages of Kafraya and Al-Fu'ah in northern Syria (4 fatalities), and Hama (3 fatalities).

### Segmentation of the Hezbollah fatalities by place of death



- ▶ An examination of the areas where the fatalities were killed, based on the dates of publication of the death notices, provides a good picture of the sites of Hezbollah's intensive military activity in Syria over the years: In the relatively early stages of the civil war, beginning in early **2012**, Hezbollah operatives were killed in **the Shrine of Set Zaynab compound**, south of Damascus. Starting in October 2012, Hezbollah began to sustain losses **in the area of the Syrian-Lebanese border as well**, near the city of Al-Qusayr in the northern Bekaa Valley. Most of those killed in the first half of **2013** were killed in and around **Al-Qusayr**. In the second half of 2013, the emphasis again shifted to **defending the Shrine of Set Zaynab** and the nearby neighborhoods. Defending the Shrine of Set Zaynab was, as aforesaid, the initial source of legitimacy for Hezbollah's involvement in Syria, but only a few (4% of all the fatalities) were killed while defending it.
- ▶ In **2014**, Hezbollah centered its efforts on defending **the Syrian-Lebanese border**. The vast majority of the fatalities (126 out of 153 for whom data is available) were killed in this area, mainly in the **Al-Qalamoun Mountains**. In **2015**, Hezbollah clearly stepped up its involvement in the civil war in Syria. This is evident from **the high number of fatalities** (313 fatalities, which is the highest number since the beginning of the civil war in Syria) and from the fact that the organization's operatives were killed in battles that took place in **11 different areas throughout the country**. The figures indicate that throughout the year operatives were killed in the area of the Syrian-Lebanese border, many of them in May and June. From July until the end of the summer (September), the emphasis shifted to fighting in the area of **Al-Zabadani**. During the last quarter of the year, most of the fatalities met their death in the area of **Aleppo** and **Idlib**.
- ▶ In **2016**, Hezbollah operatives continued to participate in battles **throughout Syria**, in accordance with the various campaigns fought by the Syrian army. The vast majority of the fatalities in that year (147 out of 178 for whom data is available) were killed in **Aleppo and its environs**, in battles that continued throughout the year; however, there were also fatalities in the **Syrian Desert** (eastern Syria). In the spring of **2017**, special emphasis was placed on the area of **southern Syria**. During the course of 2017, the organization operated in two main areas: **the Syrian-Lebanese border** (the battles of the Al-Qalamoun Mountains) **and the Syrian Desert (eastern Syria)**. The emphasis on these two areas continued in **2018** as well.

## Timeline of prominent battles in which Hezbollah participated



## Fighting zones in Syria where Hezbollah operatives were killed



Right: Fatality Qassem Abd al-Raouf Alu (Yasser) near the entrance sign to Al-Qusayr (Facebook).

Left: Fatality Hussein Hassan Madi (Baharan) near a road sign in the deserts of eastern Syria (from the Facebook page in his memory)



**Right: Fatality Ali Hassan Hamdan (Nader) against the background of the Shrine of Set Zaynab, south of Damascus (Facebook). Left: Commendation given to fatality Ali Hossein Marei (Karbala) for his participation in the battles of Aleppo, May 2016. In the upper part of the photo, pictures of Imam Khomeini (right) and Iranian Leader Khamenei (left) are visible. It can be assumed that the Iranians were involved in awarding the commendation (Facebook).**



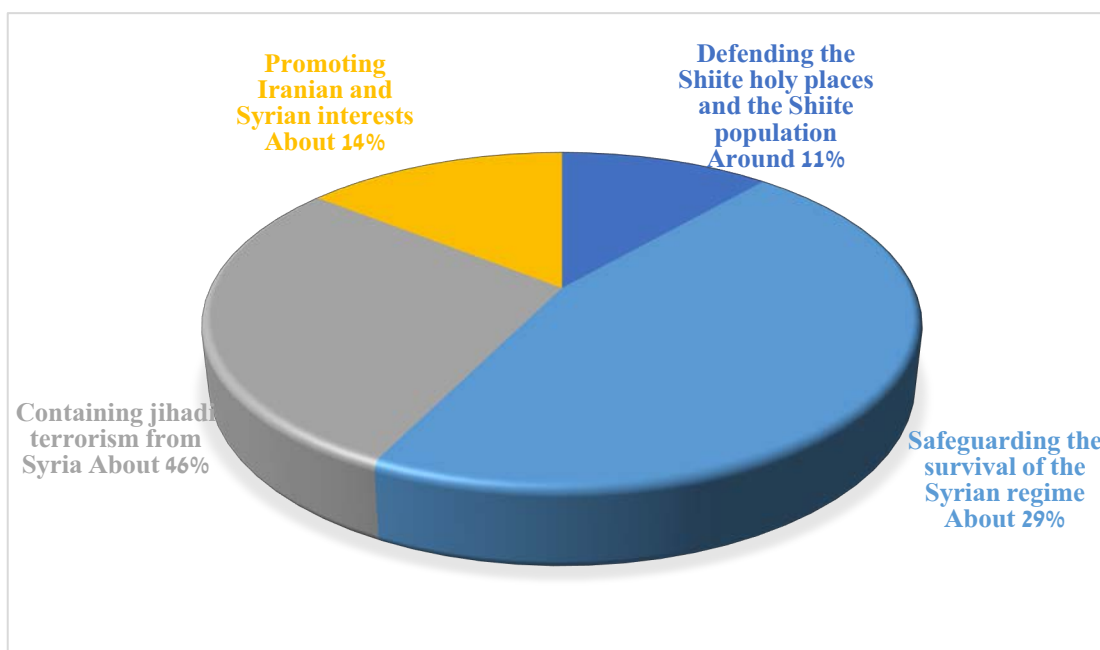
**Relative of the fatality Hussein Zuheir Assaf (Nour) visiting the monument in his memory, which was set up at the site of his death in the Al-Qalamoun Mountains (Facebook)**

## The purpose of Hezbollah's fighting in Syria

As stated, the formal justification for the beginning of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria was to **defend the Shiite holy places**. Subsequently, **the goal of containing the threat of jihadi terrorism from Syria and preventing it from spilling over into Lebanon was added**. To these goals, designed for Lebanese consumption, **undeclared political and ethnic goals were added: defending the Syrian regime, promoting Iranian interests, and defending Shiite villages and towns in northern Syria whose Shiite population faced a siege and annihilation (Nubl and Al-Zahra, Kafraza and Al-Fu'ah).**

► A total of 468 operatives (46%) were killed in battles **whose objective was to contain the jihadi threat from Syria** (Al-Qusayr, the Syrian-Lebanese border, Al-Zabadani). Out of a sample of 1,019 operatives who were killed, 290 (28.5%) were killed in the areas relevant to **maintaining the survival of the regime** (Idlib, Latakia, Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs); and 145 (14.2%) were killed in areas relevant to **promoting Syrian and Iranian interests** (southern Syria, the Syrian desert). A total of 116 operatives (11.3%) were killed **defending Shiite villages**.

### The purpose of the fighting of Hezbollah operatives killed in Syria



Hence, the figures indicate that Hezbollah's fatalities were killed in battles with **four principal goals** (which overlap to a great degree): preventing the spilling over of jihadi terror into Lebanon (around 46%), aiding the survival of the Syrian regime (around 29%), promoting Iranian and Syrian interests (around 14%), and promoting Shiite/ethnic interests (about 11%).

### The ages of the fatalities

► A report on the year of birth was found for **716 fatalities** (62.7% of all those killed). The **oldest** killed was Lutfi Ali al-Ali, born in 1949, who was killed in 2017 at the age of 68. The **youngest** of those killed were Hassan Ali Idris (born in 1997, killed in 2013), Ali Rida Fu'ad al-Hajj Hassan (born in 1997, killed in 2013), Amar Mustafa Assaf (born in 1998, killed in 2014), Abbas Muhammad Hayek (born in 1999, killed in 2015) and Muhammad Abbas al-Mussawi

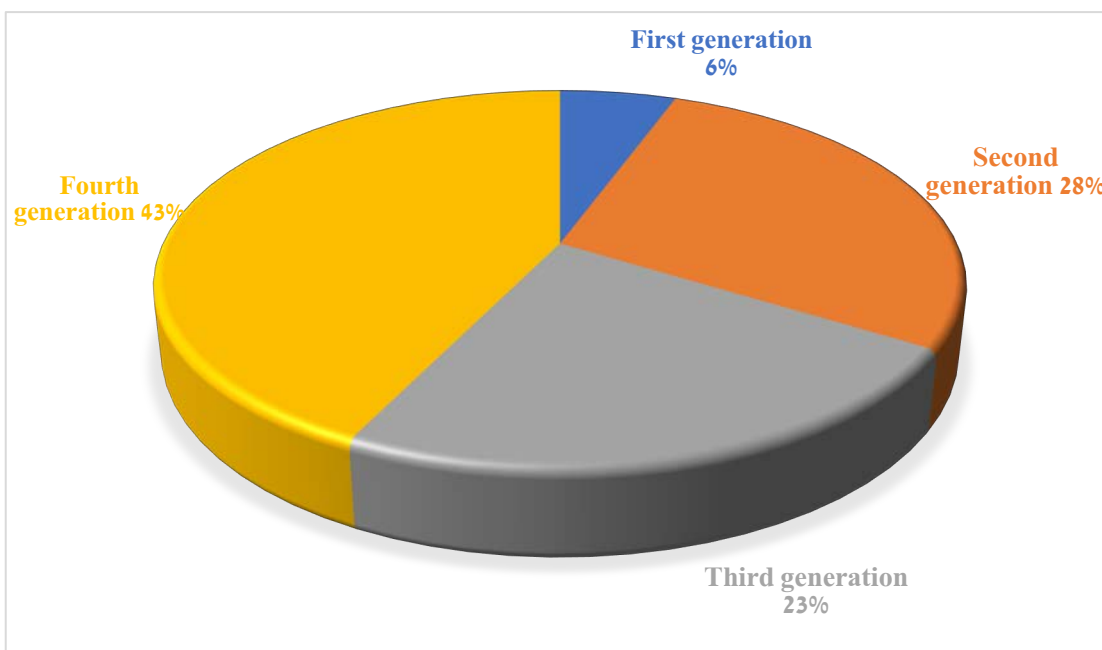
(born in 1999, killed in 2015), who were 16 years old at the time of their death. **The average age of those killed is 27 and 8 months, a fairly high age.**

► In order to examine the significance of these figures, a **four-generation distribution of Hezbollah operatives** was adopted, as was suggested by Lebanese journalist Ali Shihab in his article in the (Hezbollah-affiliated) newspaper Al-Akhbar from November 2009, entitled “The Soft War and Hezbollah’s Memory:”

- ◆ **The first generation:** The operatives who participated in the establishment of the organization, until the end of the 1980s. In practice, these are operatives born in 1960-1970, i.e., those who were in their mid-teens or older when the organization was established (1982-1985).
- ◆ **The second generation:** “The members of the golden age of the resistance.” These are operatives born in 1971-1985 (who fought against the IDF in Lebanon).
- ◆ **The third generation:** “From the liberation [of southern Lebanon] in 2000 until July 2006.” These are operatives born in 1986-1990 (who fought against the IDF in the Second Lebanon War).
- ◆ **The fourth generation:** “The generation that got to know Hezbollah after the July 2006 war.” In practice, these are operatives born in 1991 and thereafter.

According to this distribution, **members of the first generation** comprised 5.5% of the sample (40 killed, half of them commanders), **members of the second generation** 28.2% (202 killed), **members of the third generation** 23.4% (168 killed), and **members of the fourth generation** 42.7% (306 killed). Among the fatalities, **particularly prominent is the weight of the operatives in their early twenties is (nearly half) who were sent to Syria without previous combat experience (and acquired their military experience there).**

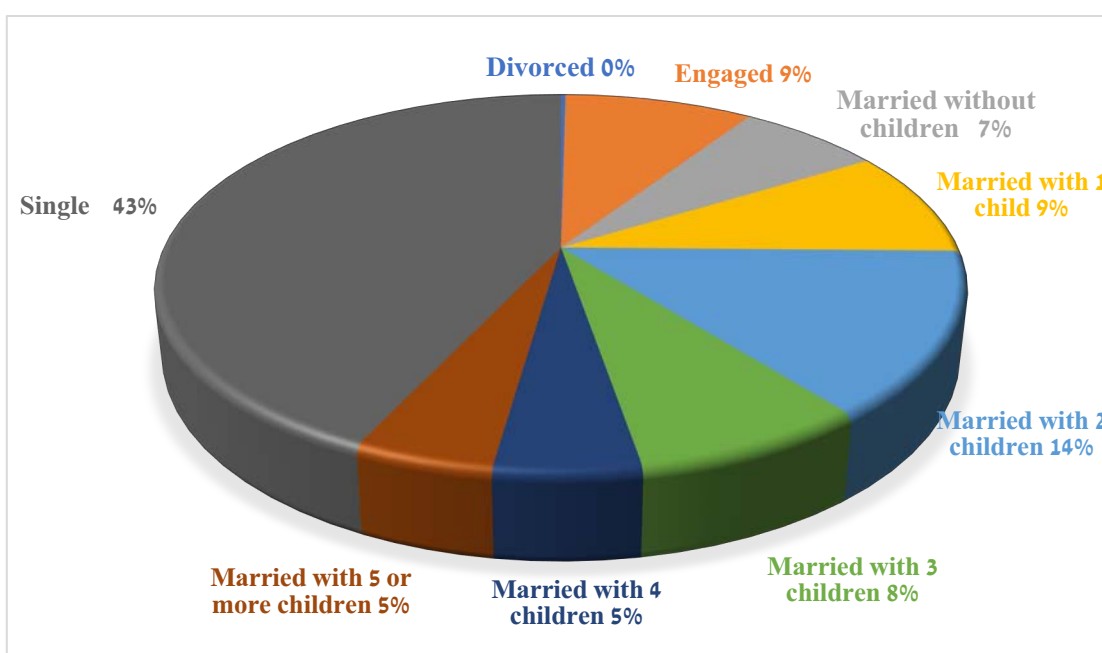
### The ages of Hezbollah's dead



### The family status of those killed

► Reports on family status were found **for 463 fatalities** (45.5% of all those killed). Of these, one (0.21%) was divorced, 42 (9%) were engaged, 32 (7%) were married without children, 42 (9%) were married with one child, 65 (14%) were married with two children, 37 (8%) were married with three children, 23 (5%) were married with four children, 22 (4.7%) were married with more than four children, and 199 (43%) were single.

### The family status of those killed



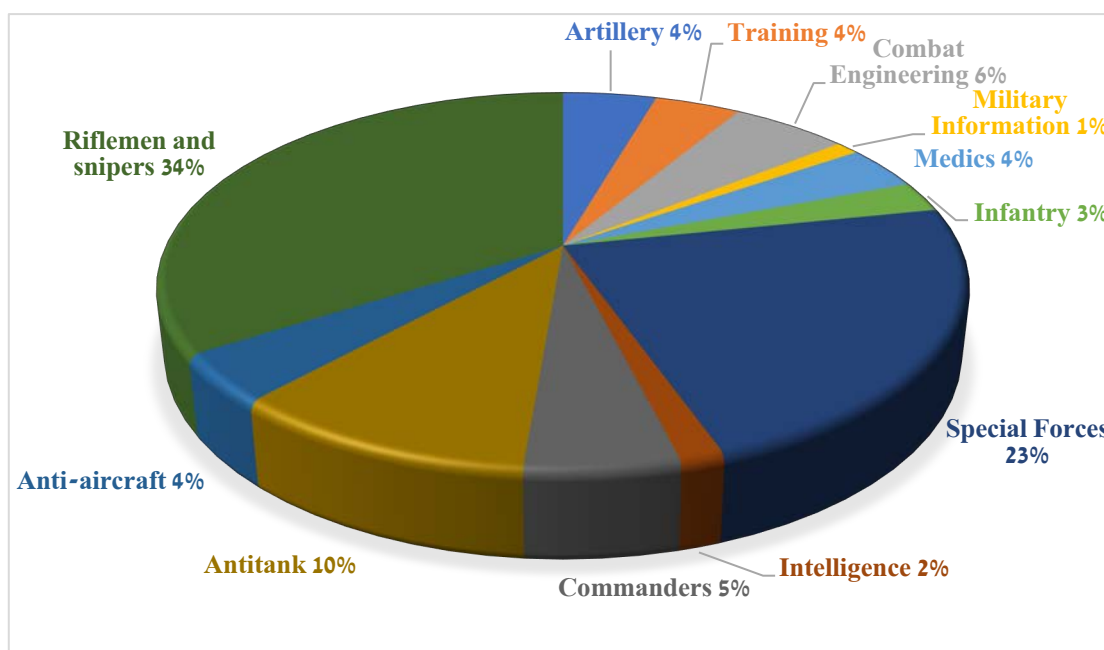
► According to the information gathered for this study, this partial sample (nearly half of all those killed) indicates that **around 40% of the fatalities left 485 orphans**, including 42 who were born after or around the time of their father's death. Issue 326 (November 2018) of the Hezbollah-affiliated Baqiyyat Allah magazine reviews **various plans for donating to the Shahid Institution**, the entity responsible for assisting the families of those killed after their deaths, including material assistance to orphans until they achieve a financial independence. According to these plans, the full cost of financing an orphan is estimated at 1.5 million Lebanese liras (around \$1,000) per month; financing university tuition for an orphan costs 300,000 Lebanese liras (around \$200) per month; and financing wedding expenses and building a home for an orphan costs 225,000 Lebanese liras (around \$150) per month.

Multiplying these sums by the number of orphans, even if only some of them will receive funding from birth, indicates that Hezbollah will require **significant sums to pay the families of those killed in the war in Syria**. For example, the 42 orphans who were born around the time of their father's death will receive funding at least until the age of 18; This funding alone will cost the organization around \$9 million, and these are only around 8.5% of the known orphans. This figure is a factor that **increases the economic pressure on the organization, especially the Shahid Institution, which assists families of the dead**.

### The military specialization of the fatalities

► Reports on military specialization were found **for 268 operatives** (23.4% of all those killed). Although this is a relatively small sample, it can serve as an indication of certain areas that were affected more than others. Of the sample, the military specialization of 12 (4.4%) was **artillery**, 11 (4.1%) were **instructors**, 15 (5.6%) came from **combat engineering**, three (1.1%) were from **Military Information**, 10 (3.7%) were **medics**, 7 (2.6%) were **infantrymen**, 61 (22.7%) were from the **Special Forces** of the organization, 4 (1.5%) were **intelligence personnel**, 14 (5.2%) were simply defined as **commanders** without mention of their area of specialization, 28 (10.4%) were **anti-tank** personnel, 11 (4.1%) were **anti-aircraft** personnel, and 91 of those killed (34%) were **riflemen or snipers**.

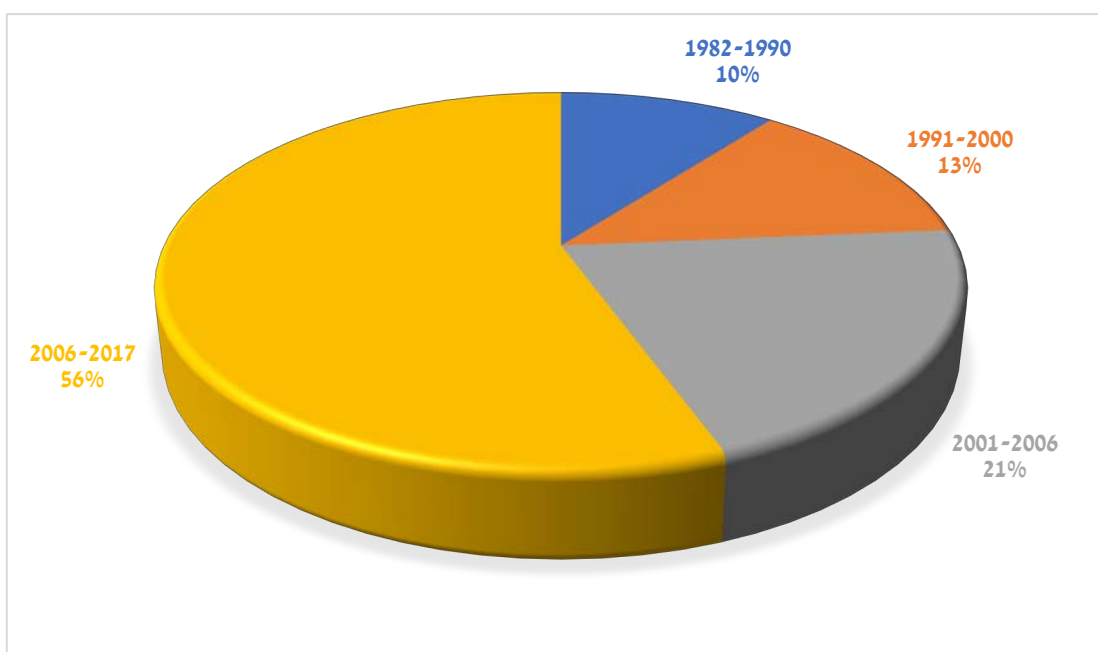
## Fatalities by military specialization



## Years of military service of Hezbollah's fatalities

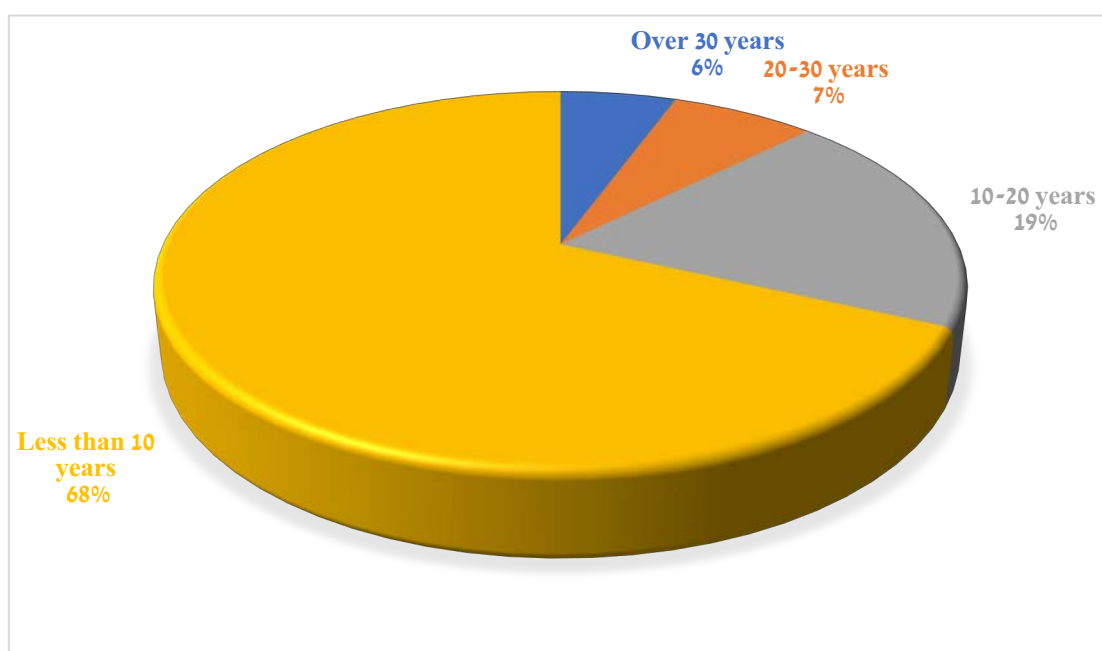
- ▶ Reports on the year of commencement of military activity were found **for 144 operatives** (12.5% of all those killed). Although this is a relatively small sample, it can serve as an indication of the average enlistment age for military activity and the years of military service of the operatives at the time of their death. According to these figures, **the average age for the start of military activity by the Hezbollah operatives who were killed in Syria is 18 and 4 months**. The figures also indicate that the operatives who were sent to Syria (and were in their early twenties) **served in Hezbollah for several years before being sent to Syria**.
- ▶ In order to examine the age at the time of enlistment, the distribution into generations was adopted here as well (as presented above). According to this distribution, 15 of the casualties (10.4% of the sample) began their military activity in the organization during the first generation period, i.e., from the moment of its establishment until the end of the 1980s, which makes them members of the founding generation; 19 (13.2% of the sample) are members of the second generation, i.e., they began their military activity during the 1990s; 30 (20.8% of the sample) are members of the third generation, i.e., between the IDF's withdrawal and the Second Lebanon War; **and the majority (80) of those killed (55.5% of the sample) began their military activity only after the Second Lebanon War**.

### Hezbollah fatalities by year of start of military activity



- Since the year of death is known for all of the fatalities, knowing the age at which they began their military activity makes it possible to calculate **the years of military service of the fatalities**. Thus, only eight of those killed (5.5% of the sample) had served in the organization for over 30 years at the time of their death; 10 (7% of the sample) had served between 20 and 30 years; 28 (19.4% of the sample) had served between 10 and 20 years; and **the majority (98) of those killed (68% of the sample) had served less than 10 years at the time of their death** (four of them were killed before completing their first year of military service in the organization). **These figures indicate that while Hezbollah did acquire combat experience in Syria, it suffered from a great loss of military experience which was accumulated by some of the fatalities.**

## Fatalities by years of military service



- ▶ A similar sample (154 operatives) provided information on the circumstances in which the operatives were recruited for military activity in the organization and on their service in the organization before starting their military activity. These figures indicate that 76 of the fatalities (**49.3%** of the sample) were **members of the Hezbollah youth movement, the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts**. This figure indicates that the youth movement excels in its job, i.e., indoctrinating and directing its members to engage in military activity (or other activity) in Hezbollah.

### The families and occupations of the fatalities

The study examined the families and the occupations of the fatalities in order to examine the allegation that Hezbollah chooses to send members of poor and disadvantaged areas to fight in Syria<sup>8</sup>. An analysis of the names of the fatalities **gives rise to questions regarding the validity of this allegation.**

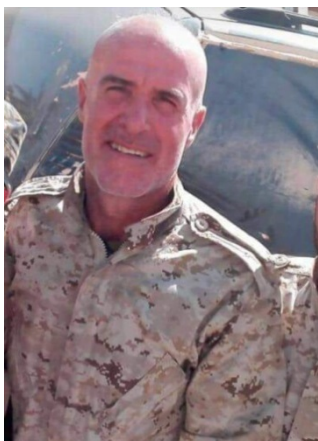
- ▶ For the purpose of the study, information was collected on the family background of various fatalities as well as indications of their standard of living prior to their death. In addition, the researcher compiled a list of prominent Shiite families throughout Lebanon and

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<sup>8</sup> See the article by Kendall Bianchi published in the periodical Small Wars Journal in January 2018: "Shifts in the Demographic Profile of Hezbollah's Combat Fatalities: What Do They Mean"

a list of families of clerics and other senior members of Hezbollah from its establishment to the present. On this basis, the names of Hezbollah operatives killed in Syria were examined.

► Explicit details of the family background of **23 of the fatalities** were provided. A number of noteworthy fatalities: a senior commander who was reported to have been close to Hassan Nasrallah, two relatives of **Hassan Nasrallah's wife** (fatalities Hamza Ibrahim Haydar and Hamza Ali Yassin); brothers, sons and nephews of **prominent clerics and prominent Hezbollah officials** (for example, the son of Sheikh Fu'ad Hanjul, who is in charge of municipal activity in the first region; and the nephew of Hezbollah minister Hussein al-Hajj Hassan). One of the fatalities was also related to the family of **Sheikh Ragheb Harb**, one of the organization's founders and one of the three senior Hezbollah operatives who were killed (the fallen leaders). An examination of the last names of the fatalities taking into account the villages of origin and compared with the list of the families of Shiite dignitaries and families of senior members of the organization yielded **81 matches, most of whom (67) are members of senior Hezbollah families in the past and present** (for example, the Al-Mussawi family from Al-Nabi Shith, the family of former Secretary General Abbas Al-Mussawi, whose ranks included 19 fatalities).



**Right: Nasser Jamil Hudruj, former commander of Hezbollah's rocket battalion in Syria, shaking hands with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (Twitter, June 10, 2018). Left: Nasser Jamil Hudruj (Sayyid Adam's Twitter account, June 8, 2018)**



**Nasser Jamil Hudruj's coffin being carried by Hezbollah fighters in the town of Al-Ghassaniyah in southern Lebanon (website of the village of Tir Daba, June 9, 2018). Senior Hezbollah figures attended the funeral, including the head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, Muhammad Ra'ed, the mayor of Al-Ghassaniyah and clerics (Al-Ahed website, June 9, 2018). On June 12, 2018, Hezbollah held a memorial service for him in Al-Ghassaniyah, attended by Hassan Nasrallah's representative, Sheikh Ali Jaber, and the head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, Muhammad Ra'ed (Al-Ahed website, June 12, 2018). Senior Hezbollah figures regularly attend funerals of Hezbollah fatalities in Syria.**

► With regard to the **occupations of the fatalities**, one of them (Hatem Ibrahim Hussein) was the **mukhtar** of the village of Al-Nafakhiya; another fatality (Isma'il Nayef Halawi) was a **member of the city council** in the village of Kila and other operatives were **business owners** (one prominent business owner was Ahmad Rabi'a Nabih al-Hajj, who owned a travel agency, gas station and generators for electricity subscribers). **Other fatalities were the sons of wealthy families** (for example, Muhammad Ali Abd al-Rida Nour al-Din, whose father is a rich Shiite who divides his time between Africa and London).

► The study examined the question of **whether there were other fatalities in the family of the operatives killed in Syria**. Regarding 92 fatalities, it was reported that there were other fatalities in their families; Of these, in 51 cases the other fatality or fatalities were first degree relatives, i.e., a brother or father. This may indicate that the **death of a family member** during the course of his activity in Hezbollah **does not make the family hostile to the organization**, and that in many cases it even **encourages other relatives to enlist and fight in the ranks of the organization**.

### **Education and civilian profession**

► Regarding 128 of the fatalities, data was found on their academic field of study and/or civilian profession. Of these, **19 studied the humanities** (Arabic literature, religious philosophy, law, etc.); **33 were employed in various services or attended vocational**

**schools** (electricity, aluminum, the hotel industry, etc.); 58 studied exact sciences that included engineering, accounting, business administration, etc., and 12 practiced or studied **medical professions** (mainly nurses and pharmacists).

► Regarding 84 of the fatalities for whom information about their field of study is available, the name of the **institution** that they attended was also provided. The most prominent institutions of higher learning include the **Lebanese University** (15 fatalities), the **American University of Culture and Education (AUCE)** (five fatalities), the **Lebanese International University (LIU)** (eight fatalities), the **Islamic University in Khaldeh** (three fatalities), the **Amjad Institute** (four fatalities), the **Al-Afaq Academic Institute** (six fatalities) and the **Al-Rasul Al-A'zam Technological Institute** (five fatalities). A preliminary examination of **photos of shahids' belongings**<sup>9</sup> revealed, among other things, diplomas or certificates of merit from **AUCE** and the **Lebanese University**. It can be assumed that at some of the universities and institutes (especially the Lebanese University), **recruitment and indoctrination activity on behalf of Hezbollah is conducted.**

### Hezbollah's activity at the Lebanese University

► Among Hezbollah's fatalities in Syria, **the large number of those who attended the Lebanese University (15 fatalities) is noteworthy.** According to opponents of Hezbollah, Hezbollah's student cells at this university (which was founded in 1951), and especially at the main campus in the Al-Laylakii- Al-Hadath area in southern Beirut, are more active than cells of other parties and more active than the organization's cells at other institutions of higher education in Lebanon. There are two reasons for this: the physical proximity of the campus to the Shiite southern suburb of Beirut, Hezbollah's stronghold, which led to the fact that in June 2015, **more than half of the students on the campus were Shiites**; And the fact that in the sectarian division of public posts in Lebanon, the **post of rector at the Lebanese University is reserved for the Shiites** (Janoubia, June 16, 2015).

◆ Following are some examples of the activities of Hezbollah's student cells at this university (according to the Janoubia website):

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<sup>9</sup>A widespread form of commemoration in Hezbollah, in which the shahid's family keeps many of his personal belongings and displays them in a prominent place in the home, and sometimes also at exhibitions outside the home.

- On the anniversary of the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon (May 25) in 2015, Hezbollah flags were hoisted on the main campus and posters of shahids from the organization were hung.
- In December 2016, Hezbollah’s student cell at the Faculty of Engineering banned the playing in public of songs by famous Lebanese female singers such as Fairuz and Julia Boutros, on the pretext of “respect for others.”
- In December 2018, the Hezbollah student cell on the main campus posted an invitation to participate in a “jihadi overnight” in one of the organization’s camps, including a firing range, an evening of Shiite mourning songs and a meeting with a Hezbollah fighter.



**Right: Business Administration diploma of the fatality Yasser Ayman Shams (Adam al-Sheikh) from AUCE (American University of Culture and Education) (Facebook). Left: Sciences diploma of the fatality Ali Mohammad Nun (Abdallah) from AUST (American University of Science and Technology) (Facebook)**



On the right: Entrance card of the fatality Mustafa Hamza Shahadi (Rahel) to the medical center at AUB (the American University of Beirut) (Facebook). Left: On the right, a portrait of the fatality Hussein Ahmed Akhdar (Adam) on the wall of appreciation for outstanding students at the Lebanese University, Faculty of Engineering (Facebook)

- Of the fatalities for whom there is information with regard to their civilian occupation, **17 worked in the civilian wing of the organization concurrently with their military activity.** They include an inspector in the municipality of Haret Hreik, a player on the youth team of the **Al-Ahed Football Club**, volunteers in the **Islamic Health Organization** and **educational recruitment** operatives. The fact that operatives working concurrently in the civilian wing and the military wing of Hezbollah fell in Syria indicates that the distinction between Hezbollah's military wing and its civilian wing does not always apply.



**Fatality Qassem Muhammad Suleiman. Right: Wearing a Hezbollah military uniform. Left: Wearing the uniform of the Islamic Health Organization.**



**Fatality Musa Ahmed Saqr. Right: Wearing a Hezbollah military uniform next to a Syrian APC. Left: Wearing the uniform of the Islamic Health Organization.**

## Operatives who took part in Hezbollah's heroic battle narratives

Many of the fatalities took part in Hezbollah's most prominent battles before, during and after the Second Lebanon War, which became part of the organization's heroic battle narratives. **Their death during the fighting in Syria is another expression of the loss of unique military experience accumulated over many years.**

► For many of the fatalities, **prominent incidents** in which they participated were mentioned, with an emphasis on symbolic incidents in the struggle between Hezbollah and Israel since the organization's establishment. Thirty-nine of the fatalities **fought in the security zone**. One of the most prominent incidents that were mentioned with regard to this period was the **attack on the Pumpkin Outpost during the IDF's stay in the security zone**

in October 1994 (the fatalities who were mentioned: Ahmad Habib Saloum, who planted the flag on the battery of the outpost in the famous picture; Ali Ahmad Fayyad, who participated in the planning and execution of the attack; and Hassan Najib Medlej, who was involved in artillery fire). Additional battles include **Operation Law and Order in the village of Maydoun in May 1988** (fatality Ali Mohammad Biz); **the killing of Israel’s Lebanon Liaison Unit Commander Brigadier General Erez Gerstein and the clash in which paratrooper commando unit commander Eitan Balahsan was killed** (fatality Ibrahim Mahmoud al-Hajj).

► Seven of the fatalities participated in incidents between the Israeli withdrawal in 2000 and the Second Lebanon War in 2006. The most prominent incidents during this period were the **abduction in October 2000** (fatalities Ali Shabib Mahmud, Hassan Mohammad al-Hajj and Hassan Najib Medlej); and the Ghajar attack in November 2005 (fatalities Mohammad Khalil Nasser al-Din, Hussein Hassib Jaffal, Hassan Najib Medlej and Ali al-Hadi al-Asheq).

► **A total of 109 of Hezbollah’s fatalities in Syria (close to 10% of the organization’s fatalities) participated in the Second Lebanon War.** Some of them took part in prominent incidents:

- ◆ **The abduction of IDF soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev on July 12, 2006** (10 operatives who participated in the abduction were killed in the fighting in Syria, including terrorist squad commander Hamza Ibrahim Haydar and a number of operatives who participated in various cover forces).
- ◆ **The attack on Israel Navy missile boat “Hanit” on July 14, 2006** (fatality Adel Abdallah Hamada).
- ◆ **The Battle of Maroun al-Ras on July 19-20, 2006** (fatalities Hamza Ibrahim Haydar and Ahmad Abd al-Qaher al-Bazzal).
- ◆ **The Battle of Marjayoun, which began on August 10, 2006<sup>10</sup>** (fatalities Mohammad Ahmad Badah, Hamza Ibrahim Haydar, Hussam Mohammad Ali and Ali Shabib Mahmud).
- ◆ **The downing of a transport helicopter on August 12, 2006<sup>11</sup>** (fatalities Hatem Adib Hamada and Abbas Haydar Riyya).

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<sup>10</sup> The battle of the IDF “Path of Fire” Division during Operation Change of Direction 11 in the eastern sector in southern Lebanon.

<sup>11</sup> The aircraft was shot down during an IDF airlift deep into Lebanese territory, after it had unloaded the fighters and was flying back to Israeli territory.

- ◆ For three of the fatalities, it was mentioned that **they had taken part in firing rockets at the Israeli home front** (fatalities Jamil Hussein Hamoud Faqih, Hussein Mahmoud Jaber and Hassan Najib Medlej).

### Hezbollah as an Iranian proxy: Training Iranian-affiliated Shiite militias fighting in Syria<sup>12</sup>

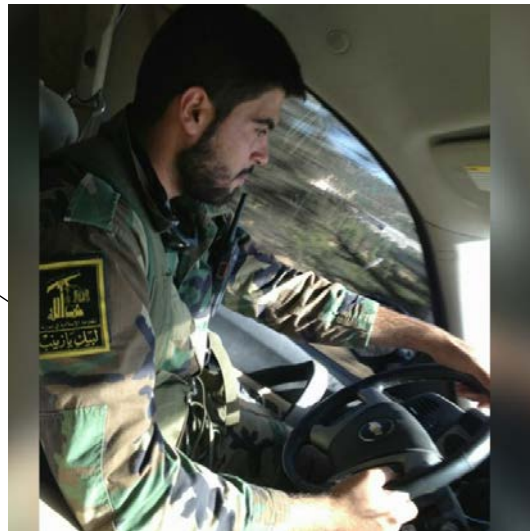
- ▶ Some of the operatives killed in Syria **were involved in training the Iran-backed Shiite militias participating in the fighting in Syria and handled by Iran.** Three of the fatalities (Hamza Ibrahim Haydar, Hassan Najib Medlej and Ali Fawzi Taha) **were involved in the establishment and training of the Al-Rida Force militia** in the Homs area (a local militia comprising Shiite residents of the Homs area); two fatalities (Kamal Hassan Biz and Rifat Mohammad Ja'far) were described as **operatives of the Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Brigade militia** (an Iran-backed Iraqi Shiite militia operating in Syria); Hussein Hassib Jaffal, who was killed in Syria, **trained the Popular Mobilization in Iraq** (Iraqi Shiite militias, some of which are backed by Iran); two other fatalities (Hassan Muhammad Nasrallah and Adnan Issam Zahwa) were operatives of Iran-backed Shiite militias called the **Al-Salam Brigade** and the **Sayyida Ruqayya Brigade**; fatality Ahmad Abd al-Qaher al-Bazzal was reportedly killed during an attempt **to evacuate Iranian bodies in Palmyra.**

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<sup>12</sup> See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from July 9, 2018: "Hezbollah and Iran-handled Shiite militias are integrated into the Syrian army in its campaign to take control of south Syria;" See also the ITIC's Information Bulletin from July 20, 2017: "Iran's interests and intent in Iraq and Syria reflected in statements by senior commanders of the Popular Mobilization Committee, the umbrella organization of the Shiite militias in Iraq handled by the Iranian Qods Force."



**Fatality Hussein Hassib Jaffal, a Hezbollah operative killed in Syria, shown in an Iraqi helicopter (left) and next to an Iraqi army tank (right) from the period when he trained Iranian-affiliated Shiite militias in Iraq.**



**Hezbollah insignia badge with the inscription “The Islamic Resistance in Syria” (instead of the “Islamic Resistance in Lebanon,” which appears on the original Hezbollah badge). It should be noted that this badge is relatively rare (it appears in 10 out of 1,167 photos showing operatives with the Hezbollah insignia badge). According to the Al-Raqib website (April 2018), “The Islamic Resistance in Syria” is a term adopted by Shiite militias in Syria handled by Iran and supported by Hezbollah.**



**Right: Hezbollah operative holding a photo of fatality Ahmed Nabih al-Hajj (Abu Ali Noh). The operative has a badge with the Hezbollah insignia on his right arm and a badge with the insignia of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on his left arm. Left: Operative holding a sign wishing the Christian community a Merry Christmas. The operative has a badge with the Hezbollah insignia on his right arm and a badge with the insignia of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on his left arm.**



**Operative carrying the Hezbollah flag (left) next to an operative (right) carrying a flag of the Zaynabiyyoun Brigade. Zaynabiyyoun is a Shiite militia fighting in Syria, established by Iran on the basis of fighters from Pakistan.**