Overview

Hezbollah maintains an extensive network of social foundations in the Shiite community in Lebanon. These foundations deal with healthcare, education, finance, welfare, and communications. They serve as supportive foundations for Hezbollah’s military infrastructure, as well as a means of disseminating Hezbollah’s ideology and strengthening its position among the Shiite community and in Lebanon in general. They provide the Shiite community with large-scale services that are generally provided by the state, while exploiting the weakness of the Lebanese administration and its long-standing neglect of the Shiite community. Thus, these foundations enable Hezbollah to maintain a “state within a state” in large parts of Lebanon inhabited by the Shiite population and to place its military infrastructure among the residents.

The Jihad al-Bina Association (hereinafter: Jihad al-Bina) was established in 1988 as a branch of the Iranian Jihad al-Bina organization. Basically, Jihad al-Bina was engaged in reconstruction of buildings both in the wake of current military events and following large-scale confrontations. In routine daily life, Jihad al-Bina maintains varied activities among the Shiite community in Lebanon in agriculture, industry, education, health and welfare. As part of these activities, it carries out large-scale projects, operates development and training centers and vocational training centers, and runs civil projects. Jihad al-Bina’s extensive activity requires high costs (in the ITIC’s assessment, tens of millions of dollars a year). In the ITIC’s assessment, the main source of funding for Jihad al-Bina’s activities is financial support transferred from Iran to Hezbollah, which also finances Hezbollah’s civilian infrastructure. The American administration, which imposed sanctions on Jihad al-Bina, is also of the same opinion. In addition, secondary sources of funding of Jihad al-Bina are donations, aid by the Lebanese government, the operation of commercial companies, and possibly also criminal activity.
In April 2016, the US Department of the Treasury included Jihad al-Bina on the list of sanctioned Hezbollah foundations (based on the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015). Jihad al-Bina was also included in the new sanctions law bill in September 2017 (US Department of the Treasury website, April 15, 2016; February 20, 2017). As a result, it was reported that in March 2017, the US administration imposed a fine on the American University in Beirut on charges that it was assisting entities belonging to Hezbollah: the Al-Manar Channel (Hezbollah’s TV channel), Radio Al-Nour (Hezbollah’s radio station), and the Jihad al-Bina Association (Janoubia, March 25, 2017).

The structure of the study

This study includes the following sections:

- Jihad al-Bina’s organizational structure
- Jihad al-Bina’s areas of activity
- The ties between Jihad al-Bina and other Hezbollah social foundations
- The ties between Jihad al-Bina and the Lebanese government
- Iranian role
- Jihad al-Bina’s funding sources

Jihad al-Bina’s establishment and organizational structure

The need to establish the Association arose in 1982 following the entry of the IDF into Lebanon and the continuation of the civil war in the country, especially in light of the traditional neglect of the areas inhabited by the Shiite population (the Bekaa Valley, southern

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1The Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015 was approved by the Senate and signed by the President of the United States in December 2015. In the wake of the law, businesses, companies, associations and individuals affiliated with Hezbollah in Lebanon were placed on the sanctions list.
Lebanon, southern Beirut, and northern Lebanon). Jihad al-Bina began operating in 1985, when it was involved in rebuilding and repairing the damage caused by the explosion in the Bir al-Abed neighborhood in southern Beirut. The damage was caused during an attempt on the life of Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (Hezbollah’s spiritual leader). Later, Jihad al-Bina operated in a similar format of damage repair and reconstruction of buildings in the wake of Operation Law and Order in the village of Meidoun (May 1988), Operation Accountability (July 1993), Operation Grapes of Wrath (April 1996), and the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon (May 2000). Jihad al-Bina carried out extensive activity following the Second Lebanon War (July 2006) (Jihad al-Bina website).

Jihad al-Bina is directly subordinate to Hezbollah’s Executive Council (Janoubia, April 22, 2015). When it was established, the Association included seven departments, in accordance with its declared areas of activity: construction, water, roads, agriculture, industry, environmental protection, and a technical department. The director general of the Association (updated as at January 2018) is engineer Mohammad Al-Hajj (Jihad al-Bina website, January 23, 2018). The professional departments and geographical regions (southern Lebanon, Beirut, and the Bekaa Valley) are subordinate to the director general. One of the professional departments is the Department of Development and Cooperative Societies. The Department of Agriculture and Environment Protection is also subordinate to the director general, and it can be assumed that there are additional professional departments.

Jihad al-Bina operates three development and training centers subordinate to the Department of Agriculture and Environment Protection. The development centers are located in the Bekaa Valley, southern Lebanon, and Hermel. The Sayyid Abbas Al-Mussawi Center, which was established in 1999, is located in Dawras, Baalbek, in the Bekaa Valley; The Al-Jawad Center, which was also established in 1999, is located in Hermel; and the Abu Dhar al-Ghafari Center, which was established in 2004, is located in Derdghaya, in southern Lebanon. In addition to these three centers, the Association operates vocational training centers in Harat Hreik and Bourj El-Barajneh in Beirut.

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Jihad al-Bina’s areas of activity

Jihad al-Bina is an important foundation in the civilian infrastructure established by Hezbollah among the Shiite community in Lebanon as part of the establishment of the “Resistance Society.” The Association operates in eight main areas:

◆ Construction:

• Construction is Jihad al-Bina’s basic area of activity and the raison d’être for its existence, but due to the lull with Israel in recent years, virtually no activity has been carried out in this area (in effect, the Association’s last significant construction activity took place in 2013, when it was engaged in renovating buildings damaged by a global jihad bombing in the Al-Ruwais neighborhood of the southern (Shiite) suburb of Beirut (Jihad al-Bina website, August 27, 2013).

Workers and tractors of Jihad al-Bina repairing the damage caused by the blast in the Al-Ruwais neighborhood of southern Beirut. The flag and hats bearing the emblem of Jihad al-Bina are clearly evident and intended to increase support for Hezbollah among the residents (Jihad al-Bina website, August 27, 2013)

• In the wake of incidents where extensive destruction is caused, the Association operates through volunteers, both laborers and engineers. During the rehabilitation after the Second Lebanon War, more than 3,000 people volunteered, including 650 engineers. The Association’s mode of operation is as follows: The first stage is the collection and preparation of preliminary information about the scope of the destruction and the preparation of a work plan for rehabilitation. The next stage is to remove the rubble and open roads in
order to enable refugees and displaced persons to return to the villages. Subsequently, the Association pays the victims one year’s rent (which varies according to the area)\(^3\). The next stage is to assess the damage, building by building, in preparation for payment of full compensation and the beginning of reconstruction. At this stage, **the Lebanese government and private companies employed by the Association may also participate.** In the final stage, the Association pays the victims the difference between the amount of compensation decided on by the state and the actual amount necessary for the reconstruction of the building, following which the process of rebuilding begins (Jihad al-Bina website).

**Development of the agricultural sector:** as stated, the Association operates **three development and training centers in the agricultural sector in the Bekaa Valley, southern Lebanon, and Hermel.** These centers offer tours of agricultural areas, subsidized (or free) veterinary examinations, seminars and courses, distribution of aid to farmers, and vaccination of animals. According to the Association, in an average year, its staff vaccinates 115,000 animals, offers 120 seminars and 165 courses, carries out 5,350 field visits, 2,350 visits by veterinarians, three exhibitions, and two workshops.

![A manual on growing apricots, published by the European Union, distributed by Jihad al-Bina](image)

\(^3\) During the rehabilitation period following the Second Lebanon War, the Association paid compensation to about 12,000 households, with the compensation ranging from $10,000 (southern Lebanon) to $12,000 (Beirut). **The compensation for the Shiite residents was intended to provide an initial solution for those who remained homeless, to prevent humanitarian activity by other elements among the residents, and to prevent resentment against Hezbollah.**
Distribution of drinking water: Since 1988, on a daily basis, the Association has filled water storage tanks in the Shiite southern suburb of Beirut, Hezbollah’s stronghold. There are 135 tanks with a capacity of 20 barrels each. The water is supplied by the Association in its tankers from Beirut’s main water source in the Bourj Abi Haidar neighborhood. The Association subsidizes the price of the water, transportation and maintenance of the tanks in full and water is supplied to the residents free of charge (Jihad al-Bina website).

Support for cooperative societies: The Association is engaged in the development of cooperative activities in Lebanon among the Shiite population. As part of this activity, the Association provides loans to small businesses incorporated in cooperative societies, provides legal and professional guidance on the establishment and operation of cooperative societies, holds orientation meetings and workshops for cooperative societies and assists manufacturing societies in marketing their products. In 2014, the Association sponsored 210 cooperative societies of various types (in the areas of agriculture, consumerism, housing, artisans, industry, manufacturing and trade).

Marketing agricultural produce and handicrafts: Since 2007, the Association has maintained an open market in Beirut for marketing agricultural produce and handicrafts, with the participation of sellers from all over Lebanon. The event is held under the auspices of Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, and similar events are held throughout Lebanon. These exhibitions are held not only to
help farmers and craftsmen market their produce and products, but also as a source of income for the Association.

**Promoting small businesses:** Since 1998, the Association has worked to improve small businesses, by providing vocational training and loans for opening businesses. The aim of this activity is to combat unemployment and the desire to create an autarkic economy. The training can be attended by men and women aged 16 and above, and the courses are concentrated and concise (no more than 80 hours), focusing on practical training. The training is fully subsidized.

**Planting:** Since 1992, the Association has been active in combating desertification, mainly through the planting project (along with increasing awareness, promoting organic agriculture, training farmers, etc.). As part of this project, the Association receives donations of forest and fruit tree seedlings (mainly from the Syrian regime) and distributes them to be planted by various groups and entities (in the ITIC’s assessment, mainly Shiites) such as municipalities, civic and cooperative societies, schoolchildren and college students, youth movement members etc. In 1992-2015, more than nine million seedlings were distributed. In 2010, Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah announced a project to plant one million trees a year, and he himself planted the one millionth tree (Jihad al-Bina website).
UNIFIL soldiers during a Jihad al-Bina planting project (Jihad al-Bina website)

**Environmental protection:** The basis in Islamic law for engaging in this area is the recognition of the fact that nature was created by Allah and therefore must be protected. The most prominent types of activity in this area are Environmental Protection Day at schools, firefighting training, planting projects, and pesticide spraying projects (Jihad al-Bina website).

| These types of activity are of a governmental nature and ought to be carried out by the state. However, they are carried out by Hezbollah among the Shiite population in order to increase its support for Hezbollah and to establish the “state within a state.” Activities intended for the Shiite population are provided either for free or at subsidized prices exploited for propaganda activity so that beneficiaries of the aid will be grateful to Hezbollah and support it. Thus, for example, planting projects are held on the anniversary of the death of a shahid; at Hezbollah events: on the Day of the Fallen Commanders (February 16) and on the Day of Liberation and Resistance (May 25). |
Right: Monument to the shahids killed in the global jihad attacks in Bourj el-Barajneh. The monument was built by Jihad al-Bina and the Municipality of Bourj el-Barajneh and inaugurated at a ceremony under the auspices of Hezbollah MP Hajj Ali Amar of the Hezbollah faction in Parliament (“Loyalty to Resistance Bloc”) (Jihad al-Bina website). Left: Planting project organized by Jihad al-Bina with the participation of fathers of the shahids (photographed wearing yellow Hezbollah scarves and holding pictures of their fallen sons). The project was held in honor of the Day of the Fallen Commanders in the Al-Qassemiyah area in southern Lebanon (Jihad al-Bina website, February 22, 2017).

The ties between Jihad al-Bina and other Hezbollah social foundations

Hezbollah’s political, social and economic institutions maintain a mutual relationship between them and operate as a uniform system controlled by Hezbollah. Jihad al-Bina maintains close relations and cooperation with other Hezbollah institutions. For instance, the Emdad Association (charitable society operated by Hezbollah), the Al-Mahdi schools, the Education Mobilization, the Imam Al-Mahdi Scouts, the Municipal Activity Department, the Foundation for the Wounded (Al-Jarha Foundation), the “Palestinian Portfolio”, the Religious Preaching Department, the Martyrs Foundation, and the women’s organizations. The Association also maintains relations with Hezbollah’s Executive Council and with the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament (“Loyalty to Resistance Bloc”). Hezbollah’s social foundations often take part in planting projects of the Association, in arranging for vocational training, assistance to their target audience in setting up a business or in agriculture.

One of the entities with which the Association cooperated is the organization Green without Borders. This organization participated in several planting campaigns of Jihad al-Bina in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa in 2014 (Jihad al-Bina website, January 18, 2014; January 22, 2014; February 5, 2014; February 18, 2014; February 27, 2014).
Tree planted by Jihad al-Bina on the occasion of the Palestinian Land Day, at a ceremony held under the auspices of the person in charge of the “Palestinian Portfolio” in Hezbollah, PM Hassan Hobballah (Jihad al-Bina website, April 2, 2015)

The NGO Green without Borders, with which Jihad al-Bina cooperated, is an environmental protection organization which assisted Hezbollah in hiding its illicit activity near the Israeli border. On June 21, 2017, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations sent a letter to the chairman of the UN Security Council, with the report that during recent months, Hezbollah set up surveillance posts under the cover of an environmental protection NGO named Green without Borders, as a façade for Hezbollah. A map showing Hezbollah posts under the cover of Green without Borders was attached to the letter. The letter stressed that Hezbollah’s activity near the border runs counter to the UN Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 (website of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 22, 2017).

The ties between Jihad al-Bina and the Lebanese government

- Jihad al-Bina maintains close relations with many entities in the Lebanese government. Thus, for instance, there is ongoing cooperation with the local government, municipalities and municipality unions regarding planting projects and the arrangement for training and assistance for farmers; The Lebanese Agriculture Ministry assists the Association in animal vaccination projects and providing training for farmers, and sometimes provided loans to the farmers through the Association; Representatives of the Lebanese army sometimes participate in events of the Association and are supposed to assist it in future construction and rehabilitation projects; The Lebanese Labor Ministry signed a cooperation agreement with the Association (Jihad al-Bina website, 2012-2018).
Invitation to veterinary seminars on cattle breeding in the Bekaa Valley, in cooperation with the Lebanese Agriculture Ministry (Facebook page of Jihad al-Bina, April 30, 2019)

**Iranian role**

- Jihad al-Bina in Lebanon **was established as a branch of the Iranian Jihad al-Bina organization**, which was established in Iran on the order of Imam Khomeini. This organization set itself the goal of recruiting volunteers to help in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of buildings which were ruined in Iran as well as in the development and improvement of infrastructure in the Iranian remote areas (Imam Khomeini’s website in Arabic).

- Based on the model of the Iranian Jihad al-Bina, **similar organizations were established in the countries of the Axis of Resistance as part of the assistance provided by Iran to its proxies**. As part of the above:
  
  - In **Syria**, a branch of the Iranian Jihad al-Bina has been operating at least since 2018 and assists in the rehabilitation of areas prioritized by the Syrian regime and Iran: the **Albukamal** area near the border crossing between Syria and Iraq; the **Set Zaynab area south of Damascus**, which is a Shiite pilgrimage site, and the **Syrian coast**, where the Alawite population is concentrated. The organization in Lebanon denies connection with Iran, **but does not deny receiving donations from Iranian philanthropists** (website of the Mujahedin Khalq organization, May 16, 2018; Araby 21 news website, May 17, 2018; the blog of Ayman Jawad al-Tamimi, January 4, 2019).
In Iraq, The Housing Fund for Families of Popular Mobilization Shahids is operating (the Popular Mobilization consists of Shiite militias operating mostly under Iranian sponsorship). The fund collects donations for the construction of houses for families of shahids who were killed in the ranks of the Shiite militias (in the past, they fought against the US and the Coalition countries, while in recent years they have been handled in the fighting against ISIS in Iraq and Syria). In March 2018, it was reported that the fund had delivered the 95th house out of 100 which were built for families of shahids at the price of up to 10,000 dinars a house. The fund has 4,000 subscribers who donate the funds for building the houses (Facebook page of the Housing Fund for Families of the Popular Mobilization Shahids; Popular Mobilization website, March 11, 2018).
In Yemen, the Iranian-affiliated Jihad al-Bina Foundation of the Houthi rebels (Ansar Allah) has been operating. The Foundation assists farmers in digging wells, ameliorating land and the provision of agricultural equipment and tools with the declared purpose of enabling farmers to earn a respectful living from agriculture, while supplying their own needs and avoiding dependency in external assistance (YouTube channel of Saddam Abd al-Wudud al-Qashar al-Qashar, July 20, 2013).

In the ITIC’s assessment, Iran provides a considerable part of the annual budget necessary for maintaining the activity of the Lebanese Jihad al-Bina Association. The Association maintains close contacts with Iran and other countries in the Iranian-led Axis of Resistance. Following are several examples:

- The project of distribution of drinking water in Beirut’s Shiite southern suburb, which has been run by Jihad al-Bina in Lebanon since 1988, started as the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Jihad al-Bina website).
- The Jihad al-Bina Association in Lebanon is a signatory to cooperation agreements with the Iranian Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare (the Iranian ministry in charge of the activity of the cooperative associations in Iran) (Jihad al-Bina website).
In 2012, Jihad al-Bina sent seven Lebanese trainees to a fishing course held by the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture in the Bushehr Province in Iran (Jihad al-Bina website, January 19, 2012).

In 2013, Jihad al-Bina in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley hosted a delegation of the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. The delegation was accompanied by the advisor of the Lebanese agriculture minister (Jihad al-Bina website, December 5, 2013).

In 2015, a Jihad al-Bina delegation visited the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and thanked it for the donation of 200,000 seedlings of fruit and forest trees to Lebanon (Jihad al-Bina website, March 20, 2015).

In 2016, Jihad al-Bina distributed 12,000 seedlings of fruit trees in southern Lebanon. The project was carried out in cooperation with the Syrian Agriculture Ministry, the Lebanese Agriculture Ministry and local municipal entities (Jihad al-Bina website, March 1, 2016).

In 2017, Jihad al-Bina sent Lebanese trainees to a course on the subject of cultivating seedlings, which was provided by the Syrian Agriculture Ministry in Latakia (Jihad al-Bina website, August 8, 2017).

In 2018, Jihad al-Bina in Lebanon inaugurated its annual planting projects at a ceremony held under the auspices of Sheikh Mohammad Yazbak, the religious (Shiite) representative of Imam Khamenei in Lebanon. The ceremony was also attended by a representative of the Lebanese agriculture minister, Dr. Akram al-Hindi (Jihad al-Bina website, January 23, 2018).
Jihad al-Bina’s funding sources

Jihad al-Bina’s extensive activity, the projects that it carries out (for example, distribution of drinking water to the residents of Beirut’s southern suburb) and the infrastructure institutions operated by it (development and training centers, vocational training centers), all these require high costs (in the ITIC’s assessment, tens of millions of dollars a year). In the ITIC’s assessment, the main funding comes from Iran, as part of the Iranian financial support for Hezbollah (which is also provided to Hezbollah’s civilian foundations). It is possible that some of the aid to the Association is also given by Iranian government ministries or by Iranian funds and organizations, with which Jihad al-Bina cooperates. Also according to the US Department of the Treasury, Jihad al-Bina is funded by Iran. When Jihad al-Bina was included in the list of Hezbollah foundations on which sanctions were imposed, the US Department of the Treasury noted: “Jihad al-Bina receives direct funding from Iran, is run by Hizballah members, and is overseen by Hizballah’s Shura Council, at the head of which sits Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah” (US Department of the Treasury website, April 20, 2019).

The ITIC believes that the Iranian financial support for Hezbollah, which is estimated at hundreds of millions of US dollars a year, is the only source of funding used to cover the high costs of Hezbollah’s civilian infrastructure, including Jihad al-Bina. In a speech delivered on June 24, 2016, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah confirmed that Hezbollah’s budget was provided by Iran: “Hezbollah’s budget, salaries, funds, food, drink [and] weapons all come from Iran… As long as Iran has money, we have money” (Al-Ahed, July 24, 2016).4

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4 See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from July 10, 2016, “Nasrallah’s Speech: Hezbollah’s Budget is Entirely Funded by Iran, Including Weapons and Operatives’ Salaries Analysis of Significance and Implications”
Hezbollah’s Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in his speech on June 24, 2016: As long as Iran has money, we have money” (Al-Ahed, June 24, 2016)

In addition to the Iranian support which, as stated before, is the main budgetary source of Jihad al-Bina, the Association also has secondary sources of funding of lesser importance (in view of the Association’s large expenses). Following are some of them:

- **Cash donations or donations in kind:** The ITIC believes that the Association enjoys the support of various elements both inside and outside Lebanon. Part of the support is given by providing the Association with means which it requires (such as agricultural equipment, seedlings of forest and fruit trees etc.). Sometimes, financial donations were funneled through the Association as loans for farmers or for small businesses. Thus, for instance, in 2017, the Syrian regime donated to the Association seedlings of forest and fruit trees. Since 1992, the Syrian regime donated more than 40 million such seedlings (Jihad al-Bina website).

- **Assistance by the Lebanese government:** The ITIC believes that the Association avails itself of various entities in the Lebanese government with which it is connected. It is the ITIC’s impression that the main entity with which the Association cooperates is the Lebanese Agriculture Ministry. The political background inside Lebanon allows cooperation between the Agriculture Ministry and the Association. For most of the past 15 years, the Agriculture Ministry was in the hands of Shiite ministers from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement (the minister of agriculture today is Hassan al-Laquis, a Shiite who belongs to the Amal Movement).
Lebanese Agriculture Minister Hossein al-Hajj Hassan (Hezbollah) at the ceremony of opening the forestry projects of Jihad al-Bina for 2012 (Jihad al-Bina website)

Revenues from profits of commercial companies and criminal activity:

- **Arch Consulting**: This company engaged in building hospitals, schools and religious sites in areas under Hezbollah’s control in Beirut, southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. In addition, the company engaged in tourism, infrastructure and water projects, both in Lebanon and abroad (for instance, the construction of an Islamic cultural center in Abidjan, Ivory Coast). The company registered in 2005. Previously, it operated under the name of “The Jihad al-Bina Research institute” and was an integral part of Hezbollah’s Jihad al-Bina Association. The company’s senior officials are Walid Ali Jaber (CEO and co-founder, owning 40% of the company), Jafar Moussa (co-founder, owns 30% of the company), Mohammad Haydar Qanso (co-founder, owns 30% of the company), and Osama Abbas Rimal (attorney) (Al-Hurrah Channel website, January 9, 2019; website of SOAS University of London, 2015). The ITIC does not possess up-to-date information on the company and reports from Lebanese sources on its activity).

- According to a report by the American Al-Hurrah Channel (January 10, 2019), ties were formerly found between Arch Consulting and Sultan Khalifa As’ad, the CEO of Compu House (a technology company affiliated with Hezbollah).\(^5\) Sultan Khalifa As’ad was formerly the Jihad al-Bina director general.

- In March-April 2019, allegations were made by Hezbollah opponents on the smuggling of Iranian iron in huge quantities to Lebanon, and “flooding” the

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\(^5\) **Compu House** is a technology company affiliated with Hezbollah. The company founder, Sultan Khalifa As’ad, was formerly deputy chairman of Hezbollah’s Executive Council, head of Hezbollah’s Finance Unit and director general of the Jihad al-Bina Association (Neno’s Place forum, January 10, 2019). The company sells computers and software and also imports technological devices (OSN Law’s website, July 10, 2014).
market with smuggled iron, sold only by elements close to Hezbollah (Janoubia; Orient News; Al-Ittihad Press, March-April, 2019). It is also possible that other items necessary for the activity of Jihad al-Bina are also smuggled to Lebanon.

The establishment of commercial companies and promotion of economic projects is a familiar modus operandi of Hezbollah's social and economic foundations. Thus, for instance, Hezbollah’s Martyrs Foundation established Atlas Holding, which specializes in running companies and projects in the areas of medicine and fuel (it owns at least four companies).  

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6 For further details, see the ITIC’s study from March 11, 2019, “Hezbollah’s Martyrs Foundation: Purpose, mode of operation and funding methods”