



## Art and culture used by Hezbollah as instruments of indoctrination

### Overview

► **Hezbollah constructs a Shiite “mini-state” among the Shiite community in Lebanon, a mini-state which caters for the needs of Shiite inhabitants in all spheres of life.** For this purpose, Hezbollah, supported by Iran, is engaged in establishing a civilian system, which operates alongside its military wing, in the spheres of education, culture, health, welfare, finance, sports, construction, agriculture, and more. The social institutions which were established by Hezbollah, as well as the extensive civilian activity, provide Shiite residents with a wide variety of services of the sort which is usually provided by the state (while taking advantage of the weakness of the Lebanese central government and the long-time neglect of the Shiite community). **All this is used to create among the Shiites a “resistance society” supporting Hezbollah’s struggle against Israel.**<sup>1</sup>

One of the civilian spheres of activity to which Hezbollah dedicates much attention is **art and culture**. Hezbollah’s activity in this field includes, among other things, **lectures to Hezbollah operatives and supporters** given by clerics, MPs, academics and military operatives; **organization of painting exhibitions and “jihadi exhibitions”** (displaying weapons used by Hezbollah and belongings of shahids); **production of films, plays, and concerts** (including an extensive import of culture products from Iran); **and the publication of books** on Shiite Islam, with an emphasis on support of Hezbollah and the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Hezbollah’s cultural and artistic activity is partly managed by **the Cultural Unit** (also referred to as the **Preaching and Cultural Activity Unit**). In addition, other social institutions in Hezbollah also engage in the direction and inculcation of artistic and cultural activity (for example, the Educational Mobilization,<sup>2</sup> the Al-Mahdi School network<sup>3</sup> and the women’s

<sup>1</sup> **Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hassan Nasrallah’s deputy**, described Hezbollah’s social concept as follows: **“Resistance, on our part, is a social worldview with all its aspects: military, cultural, political, and media-related resistance”** (Naim Qassem, “Resistance Society: The Will of Shahada and the Creation of Victory,” Dar Al-Maaref al-Hikmiyah, 2008, p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin, “Hezbollah’s Education Mobilization: An institution engaged in the indoctrination of Shiite students in Lebanon’s state and private educational systems, in preparation for their joining Hezbollah upon graduation” (July 2019).

organizations<sup>4</sup>). Thus, the cultural and artistic activity is decentralized and the various spheres of activity are divided among various Hezbollah institutions.



Sayyid Ali Fahs, the official in charge of Hezbollah’s Preaching and Cultural Activity Unit, delivering a speech at a coming of age ceremony for girls in the Al-Mahdi school in Nabi Chit in the Bekaa Valley (Wadi Press, April 4, 2018)

► Hezbollah mobilizes its cultural and artistic activity to inculcate its ideology and the ideology of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the Shiite community, especially the younger generation. In the spheres of culture and art, outstanding values are support of Hezbollah (“the resistance”) and jihad (holy war) against Israel; nurturing Hezbollah’s cult of shahids and the glorification of shahada (heroic death of the sake of Allah). Other main values are supporting the Islamic Revolution in Iran and nurture the personality cult of Imam Khomeini, the father of the Islamic Revolution, and Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

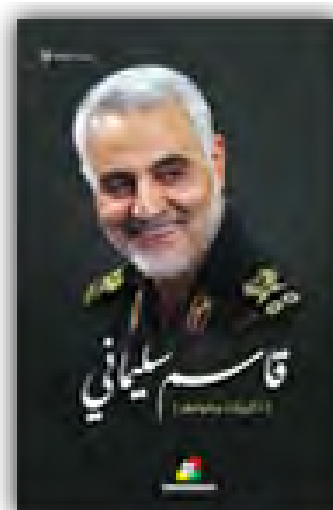
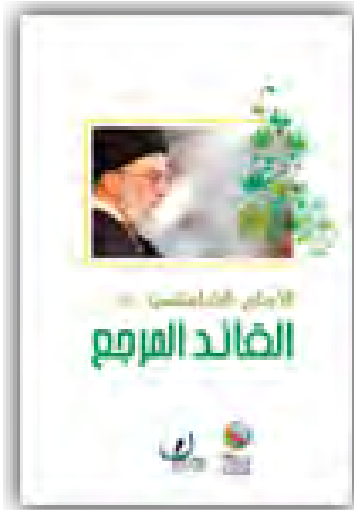
<sup>3</sup> See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin, “Hezbollah operates networks of private schools indoctrinating the Shiite community in Lebanon with the ideology of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and with loyalty to Hezbollah and the path of terrorism” (July 2019).

<sup>4</sup> See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin, “Hezbollah’s Women’s Organizations Unit” (August 2019).



**Paintings on the value of shahada**

**Glorification of shahids in Hezbollah’s mobilized art. Right: Painting of a mobilized artist in which a relative of a shahid is seen laying flowers on his grave, while his soul ascends to heaven in the background (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page). Left: Portrait of the shahid Hadi Nasrallah, son of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in a clash with an IDF force in southern Lebanon in September 1997 (Ahmad Abdallah’s Facebook page)**



**Right: Cover of the book “Qassem Soleimani – Memories and Reflections,” on the experiences of the IRGC’s Qods Force commander in the Iran-Iraq War (Al-Maaref Association’s website). Left: Cover of the book “Imam Khamenei: The Leader and Source of Authority.” Issued in 2014 by the Al-Maaref Association publishing house, the book includes recognition of Khamenei by senior clerics as a source of religious authority (Al-Maaref Association’s website)**

► Apparently, the United States has not imposed sanctions on Hezbollah’s Cultural Unit and other cultural and artistic institutions which are used for the indoctrination of Hezbollah operatives and the Shiite community in general (such as the Risalat Association or the Al-Maaref Association). Senior Hezbollah officials running Hezbollah’s cultural and artistic institutions were also not included in the US sanctions list.

## Structure of the study

► The study will examine Hezbollah's activity in four different spheres:

- ◆ Hezbollah's Cultural Unit
- ◆ The Lebanese Arts Association – Risalat, mainly engaging the performing arts
- ◆ Al-Maaref Islamic Cultural Association, mainly engaging in publishing books and publications
- ◆ Ahmad Abdallah, mobilized artist engaging in visual arts
- ◆ "Popular art:" Organized graffiti on the wall erected by the IDF on the Israeli-Lebanese border
- ◆ Funding the cultural and artistic activity
- ◆ **Appendix:** The ITIC's publications on Hezbollah's civilian infrastructure

## Hezbollah's Cultural Unit

Hezbollah's **Cultural Unit**, which is also referred to as **the Preaching and Cultural Activity Unit**, coordinates and directs some of Hezbollah's cultural activities. The unit is headed by **Sayyid Ali Fahs**. Apparently, the Cultural Unit mainly focuses on Shiite religious contents, while other types of culture and art are managed by other institutions (see below).



Sheikh Ali Salim, a senior Lebanese Shiite cleric affiliated with Hezbollah, wearing uniform (Gharib al-Maydani Facebook page; Twitter account of Muhtadi Bahmad, July 22, 2019). The Sheikh wears a unit badge on his arm with silhouettes of fighters passing under a copy of the Quran (an Iranian custom, a traveler's prayer of sorts). The text underneath reads, "Jihadi cultural preaching." It might be the emblem of Hezbollah's Cultural Unit. The text attached to the photo reads, "The jihad fighting Sheikh."

► **The center of the Cultural Unit is situated in Beirut’s southern suburb.** It has branches among Shiite population centers in Lebanon. The official in charge of culture **in the first region of southern Lebanon** (south of the Litani River) is Sheikh Hisham Sherri (Araby Press, May 27, 2019); the official in charge of culture **in the second region of southern Lebanon** (north of the Litani River) is Sheikh Muhammad Jum’ah (website of the Al-Mahdi Schools, June 3, 2019); and the official in charge of culture **in the Bekaa Valley** is Faisal Shukr (website of the Lebanese Forces, May 20, 2013).

## Lebanese Arts Association – Risalat

**The Lebanese Arts Association – Risalat** started to operate with the permission of the Lebanese Interior Ministry in April 2007. Its registered address is in Harat Hreik (in Beirut’s southern suburb), in a building owned by Sultan Khalifa As’ad.<sup>5</sup> Its founders were **Dargham Omar Ghattas** (conductor), **Shadi Nakhleh Asbar** (oud player and teacher at the Higher National Music Institute in Lebanon), **Sarah Ali Qusair** (director, actress, and storyteller), **Mohkles Imad al-Din Nu’ma** (sheikh) and **Muhammad Kamal al-Din Kawtharani** (engineer), who served as director general of the Association at least until 2016 (Lebanese Gazette, December 27, 2007; Baqiyyatullah, issue No. 231, December 2010; Al-Akhbar, June 25, 2012; Nabatieh news network website, January 21, 2013; the Bint Jbeil website, May 6, 2016). **The main center of the Association is currently in the neighborhood of Bi’r Hassan, in Beirut’s southern suburb** (Facebook page of the Risalat Association).



**Right: Emblem of the Risalat Association (Facebook page of the Risalat Association, October 9, 2017). Left: Muhammad Kawtharani, director general of the Risalat Association (Al-Akhbar, August 4, 2010)**

<sup>5</sup> Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council for Municipal Activity, former head of Hezbollah’s Finance Unit and director of the Jihad al-Bina Association (Al-Hurrah Channel, January 10, 2019).

►The Association’s declared purpose is **presenting the teachings, culture, values and experience of the “resistance” and the “resistance society” (i.e., the Shiite society supporting Hezbollah) to the Lebanese and Arab public in an “attractive, objective and common language.”** The types of art handled by the Association are **music, theater, films, video clips, literature, and painting.** One of the Association’s main fields of activity is **running campaigns on issues relating to Shiite Islam, Hezbollah, and Iran** (for instance, Ashura, the Anniversary of the Second Lebanon War, and the global Jerusalem Day initiated by Iran to be commemorated annually).

►In addition, the Association encourages **writing of books** and assists in publishing them. It also organizes many shows and concerts: **Festival of the Resistance Poetry**, which takes place at least twice a year, around the Shahid Leaders Day and the anniversary of the Second Lebanon War; **festivals and concentrated arts days** on “resistance”<sup>6</sup>; **courses and workshops** (photography, film review, theater, writing stories, basics of playing, calligraphy and more); **screening films, putting on plays and producing TV series** (website of the Risalat Association; Al-Akhbar, June 25, 2012; Nabatieh news network website, October 25, 2014).



**Right: A scene from the play “When shall we see you?” about the wait for Imam Al-Mahdi (Risalat Association website, September 27, 2008). Left: Photo from the shooting of “The Most Precious Thing,” the first film produced by the Association in collaboration with the Iranian Radio and Television Authority. The film tells the story of a farmer in southern Lebanon during the Israeli occupation. The IDF turned his home into a military camp, which is eventually attacked by Hezbollah fighters (website of the Risalat Association, February 29, 2012; Al-Manar Channel, March 1, 2012).**

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<sup>6</sup> In a competition held by the Risalat Association on the occasion of the festival of “Resistance films” in 2016, the Association awarded prizes amounting to USD 31,000 to outstanding filmmakers (Facebook page of the Risalat Association, May 31, 2016).

## Contents of the cultural events organized by Risalat

► In order to characterize **the Risalat Association's contents and patterns of activity**, the ITIC found and documented **72 cultural events held by it in 2007 – 2019**. On the whole, one cannot find a consistent increase in the number of annual events or decrease in that number. Especially outstanding are **2012** (twenty events), **2015** (twelve events) and the first seven months of **2019** (ten events). As for the type of events, the most common is **films** (31 events, i.e., about 43%) followed by **poetry reading** (16 events, i.e., about 22%), **concerts** (12 events, i.e., about 16.5%) and **theater plays** (nine events, i.e., about 12.5%). In addition, two video clips were produced, as well as an evening of dance performance and an evening of storytellers.

► In these events, especially outstanding were **Shiite religious contents** (18 events, i.e., about 25%), **jihadi contents** (16 events, i.e., about 22%; for instance, a film from 2012 about a shell-shocked fighter and films from 2015-2016 about mothers waiting for the return of their sons from the front). In addition, other noteworthy contents are related to **the Islamic Revolution in Iran**, with an emphasis on **the Iran-Iraq War** (10 events, i.e., about 14%; for example, a film entitled The Straits of Abu Ghraib, about a major attack which took place in this region in July 1988 as part of the Iran-Iraq War). Other important topics are **solidarity between the "axis" countries** (seven events, i.e., about 9.5%; for example, films about the Shiite uprising in Bahrain and the war in Syria); **society and the state in Lebanon** (seven events, i.e., about 9.5%) and general events of art per se (seven events, i.e., about 9.5%; mainly traditional Iranian music). **The motifs of glorification of shahids and nurturing shahada were also present** (five events, i.e., about 7%; these came into expression in films and plays about the lives of shahids, for example, the suicide bomber Ali Ashmar<sup>7</sup>). Starting in 2019, there were also **contents for children** (two events, i.e., about 2.5%).

## Covering the costs of the events

► According to a report on the Risalat Association on Al-Akhbar in **2012**, all the events organized by the Association are offered to the public **free of charge** (Al-Akhbar newspaper, June 25, 2012). Starting in **2016**, some of the events also included **the prices of the tickets** (mostly LBP 5,000 – 7,000, i.e., about USD 3.3 – 4.5) **and the prices of the ride to the events** (LBP 15,000, i.e., about USD 10) (website of the Risalat Association, April 27, 2016; Facebook

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<sup>7</sup> A suicide bomber who blew himself up against an IDF convoy at the Adeiseh-Rabb al-Thalatheen junction on March 20, 1996 (Hezbollah's official website).

page of the Risalat Association, May 18, 2016, August 20 and 27, 2016, September 13, 2016, December 29, 2016, April 18, 2018, and July 25, 2018). This may **indicate a certain lack of funds necessary to finance Risalat’s activity.**

## Al-Maaref Islamic Cultural Association

**The Al-Maaref Islamic Cultural Association** was founded in 1996 as a cultural association engaged in the enhancement and development of **the spirit of faith and jihad**, increase of the cultural level, dissemination of values and traditional culture, as inspired by the path of **Imam Khomeini**. The Association’s main center is in Al-Ma’mourah, Beirut. The Association is headed by **Sheikh Dr. Akram Barakat** (Facebook page of Sheikh Dr. Akram Barakat, December 15, 2018), formerly in charge of Hezbollah’s Cultural Unit.

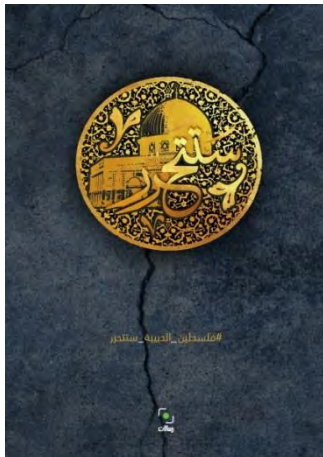


**Right: Emblem of the Al-Maaref Association (website of the Al-Maaref Association). Left: Sheikh Dr. Akram Barakat, chairman of the Al-Maaref Association (official website of Sheikh Dr. Akram Barakat)**

►The Association operates through associations related to it and centers subordinate to it, including:

- ◆**The Al-Mahdi Institute for Cultural Courses**, which specializes in Islamic studies and engages in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge (i.e., Shiite Islamic knowledge) to various sectors of society.
- ◆**The Noun Center for Writing and Translation and the Al-Maaref Publishing House**, engaging in writing, translation and publishing of books and publications.
- ◆**Baqiyyatullah**, a cultural monthly engaging in topics related to Shiite Islam, the “resistance,” and the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The monthly also includes battle legacy stories and biographies of Hezbollah shahids.
- ◆**The Electronic Al-Maaref Islamic Network for the Dissemination of Islamic Knowledge**, which operates in three languages: Arabic, English, and French.

- ◆ **Imam Khomeini Centers**, which engage in preserving and disseminating the path of Imam Khomeini.
- ◆ **Al-Nour Association**, which teaches reading and writing and works to eradicate illiteracy.
- ◆ **Al-Mi'raj Association**, which engages in **teachings related to prayer**, explaining its meanings and strengthening its status among the younger generation.
- ◆ **Women's Cultural Institutes – the Sayyidat Nisa' al-Alamin<sup>8</sup> Institute**, which engage in cultural and religious indoctrination for women.
- ◆ **The Soft War Study Center**, which engages in research studies related to psychological warfare, seeking to strengthen society in coping with it (Al-Maaref Association website).



**Right: Emblem designed by the Al-Maaref Association for the occasion of Shahid Leaders Day in 2015. It shows the three Shahid Leaders, three senior Hezbollah figures killed in the fighting against Israel: Hajj Imad Mughniyeh, Sayyid Abbas Mussawi, and Sheikh Ragheb Harb. The text reads, “Our Shahid Leaders are the title of our resoluteness and victory – February 16 – Shahid Leaders Day – 2015” (Tahawolat, February 17, 2015). Left: Emblem designed by the Association as part of the protest of the Iranian Axis of Resistance against President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The emblem shows the Dome of the Rock with the word “[will be] liberated” and underneath it the text, “Beloved Palestine will be liberated” (Twitter account of Baqer Karaki, December 21, 2017).**

## Contents of publications disseminated by the Al-Maaref Association

► In order to characterize **the contents** which the Association seeks to inculcate in its readership, the ITIC found and documented **all 536 publications** that were published by the Association throughout its existence (all the publications are available for browsing and downloading on the Association’s website free of charge). Following are the main findings:

<sup>8</sup> Sayyidat Nisa' al-Alamin – a title of Sayyida Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad’s daughter and wife of Imam Ali.

- ◆ Most widely covered are **Shiite religious contents** – 372 publications (about 70%) dealing with all the aspects of the Shiite faith, from writings of leading Shiite clerics to practical Shiite religious laws relevant for handling daily life (religious laws of the mosque, religious laws of social media, etc.).
- ◆ Other main topics are **the Islamic Revolution in Iran** (including the Iran-Iraq War; 44 publications, i.e., about 8%) **and jihadi contents** (44 publications, i.e., about 8%). **Shahada** is also present here, with 32 publications (about 6%), including **biographies of shahids** (see details below).
- ◆ Other topics are **the status of women** (19 publications, i.e., about 3.5%) and **coping with psychological warfare** (nine publications, i.e., about 1.5%).
- ◆ In addition, the Association issued six books on learning skills and educational staff development, four books on the humanities (mainly general philosophy and religions), three books dealing with **the Palestinian issue**, and three books on **the Arabic language** (website of the Al-Maaref Association).

### Books issued by the Al-Maaref Association



**Right: Cover of the book “Qassem Soleimani – Memories and Reflections,” on the experiences of the IRGC’s Qods Force commander in the Iran-Iraq War. Left: Cover of the book entitled “Victory in the Teachings of Imam Khomeini,” on the definition of victory, how it should be maintained, the relations between shahada and victory, etc. (website of the Al-Maaref Association)**



**Left:** The book entitled “Imam Khamenei: The Leader and Source of Authority.” Issued in 2014, the book includes recognition of Khamenei by senior clerics as a source of religious authority. **Right:** The book entitled “The Woman and Family in the Teachings of Imam Khamenei.” Issued in 2017, the book includes Khamenei’s views on women’s status (website of the Al-Maaref Association)

### The book entitled “The Hezbollah Ghost” a case study of embedded messages in Hezbollah’s books

The book “The Hezbollah Ghost” (96 pages), published by the Al-Maaref Association in July 2009, tells the story of the **life and death of the shahid Mohammad Qanso**. The author of the book is Ibrahim Mansour, who wrote it for a **story competition about shahids killed in the Second Lebanon War**, which was sponsored by the municipality of the city of Al-Hermel (Al-Maaref Association website; Islamic Sources website). In the ITIC’s assessment, the book can be seen as a **case study** of messages embedded by Hezbollah in books distributed by the Al-Maaref Association.



Cover of the book “The Hezbollah Ghost”  
(Al-Maaref Association website)

The shahid Mohammad Qanso was killed in the Second Lebanon War and was **one of the three most senior Hezbollah operatives killed in this war**. Qanso was born on **August 20, 1966**, to a family of seven children, **enlisted in Hezbollah in 1983 and began his military activity in 1985**. He took part in many attacks before the IDF’s withdrawal from Lebanon. **In 2005, he commanded the attack in Ghajar, and in 2006, he was called upon to participate in the abduction of the soldiers, which triggered the start of the Second Lebanon War**. During the war itself, he served as **commander of the Special Forces** and commanded the Hezbollah forces in Tyre, Bint Jbeil and Beit Yahoun, where he was **killed on August 8 or 11, 2006**. **He received several commendations from Hezbollah’s Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah**. He left a wife and three children (Dar al-Wilayah Website for Culture and Information, June 30, 2008; Ahl al-Beit Forum, July 30, 2010; Al-Akhbar, July 12, 2018).

► In Chapter 1, the author briefly describes **Qanso’s parents**, who came from the town of Al-Duweir in southern Lebanon. His father served in the Lebanese army and his mother was a housewife. They led a simple life in a modest home. His mother spent long periods on her own because his father served at a remote base. This description is intended to portray the **shahid as a figure that many members of Shiite society (the “Resistance Society”) will be able to identify with, due to the composition of this society** (rural, southern, poor).

► Chapter 2 begins with the family’s return to the town of Al-Duweir in southern Lebanon, with the start of the **civil war in 1975**. The author then extensively describes the **rural environment** where Qanso was raised and **his great love of nature**. The author describes

Qanso as having **delved deeply into his religious studies** at Al-Duweir State School. The climax of the chapter is the description of the **turning point in Qanso's life**, when he first attended Friday prayers **at Jebchit High School, led by Sheikh Ragheb Harb, a senior Hezbollah figure in southern Lebanon during the First Lebanon War**<sup>9</sup>. The encounter with the Sheikh led him to leave school in 1985 **and take part in the war against Israel**.

►Chapter 4, **“The Young Boy... Man of the Resistance!”** The chapter begins by describing Qanso's **first steps in anti-Israel activities, as advocated by Sheikh Ragheb Harb: putting up signs** against the Israeli occupation, **blocking roads** with burning tires, and **planting dummy IEDs**. The author describes how Qanso quickly adopted covert patterns of activity. Chapter 5 describes a number of attacks in which Qanso participated, emphasizing his courage and commitment to the mission. Thus, for example, **he put himself in grave danger** in order to seize weapons **and to retrieve the body of a shahid**, actions that were praised by his commanders and for which he received a commendation. **The retrieval of the shahid's body, also mentioned later in the book, is part of a permanent trend in Hezbollah's indoctrination, intended to give the future fighter (who is, in fact, a potential shahid) peace of mind, knowing that if he is wounded or killed in battle, he will not be abandoned on the ground.**

►In Chapter 6, “The Dream of Imam Al-Mahdi,” the author goes on to review various **attacks in which Qanso participated**. In addition, the author emphasizes a number of Qanso's outstanding characteristics: courageous, bold, the first to break into an outpost and last to withdraw from it, one who takes care of the wounded and attaches paramount importance to rescuing them – **and unusually devout**. Chapter 7, “A Woman of Valor,” is devoted to **Qanso's family life**. The chapter begins with his engagement and marriage and later the author describes Qanso **as not neglecting his wife and children despite his many absences and his activity at the forefront of the fighting against Israel**. The chapter also describes **a visit by him and his wife to the holy sites in Iraq and Iran and their pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca**.

►Chapter 9 begins by stating that **Qanso participated in every showcase attack carried out by Hezbollah from 1987 to 2006**, and then lists the names of places where the attacks that

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<sup>9</sup> A Shiite cleric who studied in Najaf and served as the Imam of the village of Jebchit, Hezbollah's stronghold in southern Lebanon. Sheikh Ragheb Harb was the head of Hezbollah's activities during the First Lebanon War. After his death in February 1984, he became the symbol of the resistance to the IDF and the symbol of Hezbollah's struggle.

he participated in were carried out. The author goes on to describe **Qanso's routine military activity during these years** and emphasizes some of his characteristics, including uncompromising adherence to the task and risking his life to an extraordinary degree, **for example in order to retrieve bodies**. In Chapter 10, "On the Verge of Death," the author continues his description of Qanso's routine military activity, in which he was wounded in battle.



Hezbollah operatives under the command of Mohammad Qanso pass under the Quran that he is holding before going into battle (Haydar Jahami Twitter account, September 23, 2014). This is an Iranian custom (a traveler's prayer of sorts) that has been adopted by Hezbollah operatives.



Right: Hezbollah operatives meeting with Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah. Mohammad Qanso is on the right (Our Shahids Are Alive Facebook page, October 11, 2015). Left: Mohammad Qanso receiving a certificate (possibly a commendation) from Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah (Dina Qanso's Facebook page, July 7, 2019).

► Chapter 15 is devoted to a description of **Qanso's experiences during the Second Lebanon War**. The author notes that Qanso was involved in all the important battles **in the Bint Jbeil area**. The author goes on to describe **targeted psychological warfare** waged by the IDF against Qanso by reading his name on the communications network and loudspeakers and spreading rumors about his death – actions that did not affect him in the least (coping with psychological warfare is a central motif in Hezbollah's indoctrination). Another incident

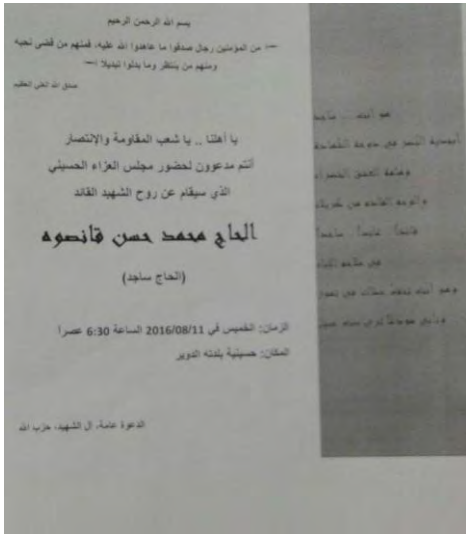
described in this chapter at length is the deterioration of Qanso's health, which forced him to be hospitalized during the war at Salah Gandour Hospital in Bint Jbeil. However, **Qanso continued to command the fighting from the hospital** and eventually left it in order to continue fighting. This chapter describes how Qanso was moved to tears when he heard the **public message conveyed by Nasrallah to the organization's fighters in his speech on July 30, 2006**<sup>10</sup>.

► Later, Qanso was called upon **to command the fighting in Beit Yahoun**. In this context, the chapter **describes two miracles** that occurred shortly before his death: He accurately predicted the day of the end of the war and he managed to infiltrate among hundreds of Israeli soldiers en route from Bint Jbeil to Beit Yahoun. At the end of the chapter, there is a description of **the incident in which Qanso was killed**: the house where he was staying with other fighters was bombed and he remained to treat the wounded and was mortally wounded when the house was bombed a second time. The chapter ends with a description of Qanso's **last words**, which included a will, a request for forgiveness, and **an order not to allow the enemy to take possession of his body**. Chapter 16 ends with a description of a **gesture by Hezbollah's MP Mohammad Raad**, who asked to kiss the shahid's feet a moment before his body was lowered to the grave.

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<sup>10</sup> In his speech, Nasrallah paid tribute to Hezbollah operatives, stressing that they were protecting Lebanon as a whole and not just Hezbollah. Nasrallah once again encouraged and praised Hezbollah operatives: "Your feet, which are planted on the ground, are not shaken and do not move, even if the mountains move ...," "You are the leaders, you are the glory, the glory of the nation and the people of Allah, with whom we will win ..."

## Glorification of the shahid Mohammad Qanso



**Right: Hezbollah checkpoint named after Mohammad Qanso: his picture is displayed at the checkpoint next to the Hezbollah flag (Facebook group of the shahid Mohammad Hassan Qanso, May 23, 2016). Left: Invitation to a gathering of mourners for the shahid Mohammad Qanso in the village of Al-Duweir. The invitation is signed by family members of the shahid and by Hezbollah (Al-Duweir Ahlan Wasahlan Facebook page, August 10, 2016).**



**Right: The grave of Mohammad Qanso in the cemetery of the village of Al-Duweir in southern Lebanon (Ya Sour website, August 13, 2013). Left: Mohammad Qanso's family and friends at the memorial service on the seventh anniversary of his death (Ya Sour website, August 13, 2013).**



**A crew from the Al-Manar Channel (photographer Mohammad Oleiq and reporter Ali Shueib) filming a news item near the place where Mohammad Qanso died, in August 2018 (Mohammad Oleiq's Facebook page, August 11, 2018)**

## Summary

The main motif in the book **is the glorification of the shahids and their transformation into role models**. On the one hand, the book presents the shahid as a figure that is very easy for Shiite society to identify with (born in southern Lebanon, a villager, from a poor family, religious, a family man, etc.). On the other hand, **he is portrayed as a courageous man with a fighting spirit who is prepared to sacrifice himself for a great cause, i.e., who is prepared to sacrifice himself in the ranks of Hezbollah**. The book describes how the military activity and family life of young Shiite first-generation Hezbollah operatives are intertwined. **Mohammad Qanso, who embodies this generation, developed in accordance with the development of Hezbollah:** He enlisted in Hezbollah when it was established, was involved in activity in southern Lebanon led by Sheikh Ragheb Harb, switched to military activity until the climax of the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon, experienced a lull in military activity following the withdrawal and later participated in the Second Lebanon War.

►Another feature that stands out in the book is **the construction of the representation of an ideal family that supports the Hezbollah fighter:** His wife does not complain about his many absences, his family accepts the news of his death with restraint (at least outwardly), and his wife promises him to continue raising their children the way he would have wanted and denies any suspicion of a grudge that she might bear against Hezbollah in the wake of her husband's death. In addition, throughout the book, there are links and hints at important events in the history of Islam as well as **supernatural characteristics of the shahid** (he knew that he was about to die, he predicted the end of war, he infiltrated into Beit Hanoun without being discovered – like a ghost, according to the book – and appeared in the dreams of his family and his friends).

## Ahmad Abdallah, a mobilized artist engaged in visual arts

► **The artist Ahmad Abdallah** was born in 1968 in the village of Zawtar al-Sharqiyah in southern Lebanon and lives in Baabda (Beirut). He was trained as a painter and sculptor, participated in many exhibitions and workshops on the visual arts and won many prizes. According to him, he was influenced by the classical-realistic school and the Renaissance painters.

► Ahmad Abdallah **considers himself a mobilized artist** and believes that his artistic talent is first and foremost a means to serve the “resistance” and support it: **“The art of resistance is the duty of every artist – directing their brushes so that they support the resistance, as the jihad fighter aims his rifle at the enemy.”** He sees himself as someone who has to convey by his brush “the oppression of nations” which is reflected in the “Zionist occupation” of Arab land and the killing of the Palestinians (Shujun Arabiya, March 27, 2017; Al-Khiyam website, July 14, 2018; Ahmad Abdallah’s Facebook page).

Abdallah **is employed by Hezbollah** and institutions affiliated with it (such as municipalities). They commission **paintings and sculptures** depicting **some of the main issues in the core messages which Hezbollah seeks to inculcate: jihad** (emphasizing Hezbollah’s fighting against the IDF in the security zone), **the “Palestinian resistance”** and Nakba, the Second Lebanon War, the value of shahada, and **religious Shiite themes and solidarity with the “Iranian axis.”** In addition, his works also portray country life in Lebanon and include landscape paintings. Thus, Abdallah provides an important contribution to the preservation of Hezbollah’s **battle legacy, glorification** of the images and actions of **shahids**, and the encouragement of a sentiment of **solidarity** towards other Shiite communities in the axis of resistance (such as Bahrain and Yemen). Following are several examples of his work.



#### Works on jihad.

**Right: Painting depicting the scene of waving the flag on the IDF's "Dlaa outpost"<sup>11</sup> during Hezbollah's attack in October 1994 (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page). Left: Painting of a helmet and a diver's fin riddled with bullet holes and an Israeli flag on fire. It may have been painted in the wake of the Israeli naval commando disaster in September 1997 (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page).**



#### Works on the Second Lebanon War.

**Right: Painting of Imad Mughniyeh watching characteristic scenes of the war (tanks on fire, a crashing helicopter, rockets landing in Israeli communities) (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page). Left: Cardboard model of an Israeli Merkava tank. It was used at the ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the Second Lebanon War held by Hezbollah in Marj Ayoun in August 2018. During the ceremony, a flare was fired at the model (simulating an antitank missile) and set it on fire (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page).**

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<sup>11</sup> An IDF outpost east of Nabatieh, southern Lebanon, before Israel left the security zone in southern Lebanon.



**Works on solidarity with other countries.**

**Right: Portrait of Sheikh Ali Salman, a Shiite cleric imprisoned by the Bahraini regime (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page). Left: Graffiti of a child trying to escape from the attacks of the Saudi coalition in Yemen (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page)**



**Works on the value of shahada.**

**Right: Painting in which a relative of a shahid is seen laying flowers on his grave, while his soul ascends to heaven in the background (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page). Left: Portrait of the shahid Hadi Nasrallah, son of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in a clash with an IDF force in southern Lebanon in September 1997 (Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page)**



Ahmad Abdallah near one of his paintings showing a scene of the Iran-Iraq War  
(Ahmad Abdallah's Facebook page)

## “Popular art:” Organized graffiti on the wall erected by the IDF on the Israeli border with Lebanon<sup>12</sup>

Starting at least in 2016, every once in a while there are concentrated days of **painting graffiti on the concrete wall erected by the IDF on the Israeli-Lebanese border, near the village of Kafr Kila, west of the Israeli town of Metula**. Such days occurred in August 2016, on the anniversary of the Second Lebanon War, and in December 2017, in protest of President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Such activity, which is presented **as an initiative or spontaneous act** of residents and artists, **is sometimes organized by Hezbollah in order to disseminate its messages through graffiti**.

► Thus, for example, signatures found in the graffiti on the wall belonged to **the Educational Mobilization, the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts, and the Al-Mahdi School network**, three important Hezbollah civilian foundations (Facebook page of Kafr Kila). When asked why they chose to paint on the wall, of all places, several artists replied that “they [the Israelis] construct a wall and we regard that as an opportunity to express our talent after the July War [the Second Lebanon War]. We show them that **we don't give a damn – let them build a wall and we will paint**” (Ali Shueib's Twitter account, July 28, 2019). In this case, graffiti is used **as yet another means of Hezbollah to convey a message that belittles the importance of a concrete wall along the Lebanese-Israeli border** (a message disseminated by Hezbollah following the construction of the wall by Israel).

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<sup>12</sup> The ITIC wishes to thank the Israeli Alma Center in the Galilee for its assistance in the writing of this section.



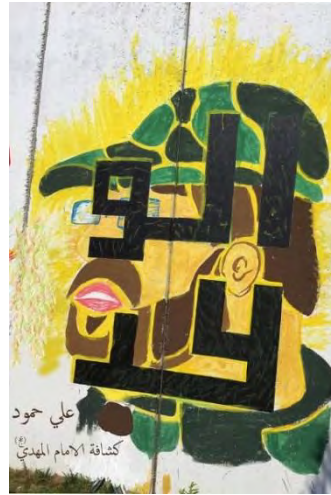
**Right: Signature of the Educational Mobilization – Al-Khiyam sector, underneath graffiti reading, “The people, the army and the resistance are the shield of the homeland” – a slogan which Hezbollah is striving to inculcate in the Lebanese public (Facebook page of Kafr Kila). Left: Signature and emblem of the Al-Mahdi School network – Al-Ahmadiyah, on graffiti of Hezbollah fighters and the Dome of the Rock (Facebook page of Kafr Kila)**

► In order to characterize and draw conclusions on the contents, the ITIC found and documented inscriptions and paintings sprayed on the wall on five occasions: three in 2016 (the last one in August, on the anniversary of the Second Lebanon War), one in December 2017 (in protest of President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel) and another one in July 2019 (on the anniversary of the Second Lebanon War). Three main themes can be found in the paintings and the inscriptions: **the Palestinian issue (with an emphasis on Jerusalem), the Second Lebanon War, and the personality cult of Hezbollah’s senior figures.** Following are several examples:



**The Second Lebanon War.**

**Right: Painting showing a destroyed Israeli tank and a soldier buried under a helmet riddled with bullet holes with the Star of David (Facebook page of Kafr Kila). Left: Israeli soldiers buried under a helmet riddled with bullet holes with the Star of David (Facebook page of Kafr Kila)**



### Admiration of senior Hezbollah figures

**Right:** Portrait of Imad Mughniyeh combined with the word “Loyalty.” A signature of Ali Hamoud, of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts, is visible underneath the painting (Facebook page of Kafr Kila).

**Left:** Portrait of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (Ali Shueib's Twitter account, July 28, 2019)



### The Palestinian issue and Jerusalem

**Right:** Painting showing people breaking through the border fence and a journey towards the Dome of the Rock. The people who broke through wave a yellow flag with the inscription “The party of Allah [i.e., Hezbollah] – they will be the predominant”<sup>13</sup> (Facebook page of Kafr Kila).

**Left:** Palestinian child holding a slingshot and making the victory sign, with the Palestinian flag in the background (Facebook page of Kafr Kila)

<sup>13</sup> Part of Verse 56 in the fifth chapter of the Quran (Al-Maeda), which also appears in Hezbollah’s official emblem.

## Funding the cultural and artistic activity

Hezbollah holds extensive cultural and artistic activity, which includes the production of films, issuing of books and magazines, and organization of events. **This activity involves considerable expenses.** The products of Hezbollah's art and culture are mostly provided free of charge or in subsidized prices which cannot cover the costs. In most cases, Hezbollah does not publish official information on the overall costs of these activities and the sources of its funding (similarly to the lack of information on Hezbollah's other civilian activities). **In the ITIC's assessment, most of the expenses for the extensive artistic and cultural activities are funded by Iran, similarly to the funding of most of the expenses of Hezbollah's civilian infrastructure.**

# Appendix

## The ITIC's publications on Hezbollah's civilian infrastructure (February-August 2019)

►The ITIC is engaged in a research project whose aim is to map and elaborate on Hezbollah's civilian infrastructure. **The following nine publications have been issued as part of this project:**

- ◆“Hezbollah launched a campaign to raise money for military purposes using the **Islamic Resistance Support Association**” (February 2019).
- ◆“**Hezbollah's Martyrs Foundation:** purpose, mode of operation and funding methods” (April 2019)
- ◆“**Hezbollah's Foundation for the Wounded:** purpose, modus operandi and funding methods” (May 2019)
- ◆“Hezbollah's socioeconomic foundations: **Al-Qard al-Hasan**, a quasi-bank that provides interest-free loans, mainly to members of the Shiite community” (June 2019)
- ◆“**Jihad al-Bina Association in Lebanon:** A Hezbollah social foundation engaged in construction and social projects among the Shiite community, being a major component in Hezbollah's civilian infrastructure” (June 2019)
- ◆“**The Imam al-Mahdi Scouts Association:** Hezbollah's youth movement which indoctrinates youth with Iranian radical Shiite Islam and serves as a source of youngsters who join Hezbollah” (July 2019)
- ◆“Hezbollah operates **networks of private schools** indoctrinating the Shiite community in Lebanon with the ideology of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and with loyalty to Hezbollah and the path of terrorism” (July 2019)
- ◆“**Hezbollah's Education Mobilization:** An institution engaged in the indoctrination of Shiite students in Lebanon's state and private educational systems, in preparation for their joining Hezbollah upon graduation” (July 2019)
- ◆“Sports in the service of terrorism: **Hezbollah's Sports Mobilization** conducts extensive sports activity, using it for indoctrinating and preparing youth to join the ranks of Hezbollah” (July 2019)

◆ **“The Islamic Health Organization:** Hezbollah institution providing health services to Hezbollah operatives and the Shiite population in general as a means for gaining influence and creating a Shiite mini-state within Lebanon” (August 2019)