



Spotlight on Terrorism : Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria May 15 - 28, 2022

Overview

- ▶ The American Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Lebanese businessmen and their companies for helping to fund Hezbollah.
- ▶ Hezbollah regards the results of the elections in Lebanon as a success. Hezbollah and Amal called on their supporters to show restraint in their celebrations.
- ▶ Hezbollah's civilian institutions marked "Resistance" and Liberation Day (the day the IDF withdrew from south Lebanon) with a series of events, some of them attended by the Lebanese minister of culture. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech in which he warned of the consequences of Flag Day on May 29, 2022, the day Israel celebrates the unification of Jerusalem.
- ▶ Schools belonging to the al-Imdad Association have begun integrating into Hezbollah's al-Mahdi school network.
- ▶ Palestinians in Lebanon and Syria marked Nakba Day with a variety of activities.
- ▶ Opponents of the Syrian regime reported that for the first time, one of the attacks targeting Damascus hit very close to the Shi'ite shrine of al-Sayyida Zaynab.
- ▶ The Jordanian army killed drug smugglers on the Jordanian-Syrian border, accusing Iran of attacking Jordan's national security.

Hezbollah and Lebanon

The American Treasury Department outlawed a number of Lebanese businessmen and companies

- ▶ As part of America's war on terrorist financing, the Treasury Department announced it had added the names of Lebanese businessmen and businesses to its Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (the SDN list). They included Lebanese businessman **Ahmed Jalal Rida Abdallah** and his businesses in Lebanon and Iraq, as well as four of his partners. According to the Treasury Department, light was shed on Hezbollah's financial activities, which are camouflaged as legitimate business transactions to generate income and

increase its investments in the commercial sector to fund the organization's activities. According to the announcement, Abdallah is a senior figure in Hezbollah and an active member of the organization's international financial network, which has supported Hezbollah for years and manages vast commercial activities in many countries, whose profits are funneled into Hezbollah's coffers. Among the companies sanctioned were United General Holding, United General Contracting Company SARL, United General Offshore, United General Services, Al Moukhtar Products Co. SARL, Focus Media Company SAL Offshore and United International (the Janoubia website and the website of the American Treasury Department, May 19, 2022).

► In response, **Rizag Allah Sheikh**, who holds power of attorney for United General Holding and the companies belonging to it, said the Treasury Department's publication was a collection of accusations, false claims and lies which had no legal explanation, but were rather part of the attack on Lebanon's economy. He said the companies had been founded more than 20 years ago and that his client and his companies operated according to the law. He also said the company was planning to disprove the false accusations (al-Ahad, May 20, 2022).

Election Day in Lebanon

► On May 15, 2022, election day, Hezbollah continued encouraging its supporters to exercise their voting rights, using videos of shaheed family members and pictures of wounded operatives, Hezbollah members of Parliament and Shi'ite clerics going to vote. Hezbollah's Islamic Health Organization helped the aged reach the polls (Twitter accounts of Ali Shoeib and the Shaheed Foundation, May 15, 2022).



Right: Islamic Health Organization workers take the aged to polling places. Left: The mother of shaheed Mustapha Bader al-Din (Twitter accounts of Ali Shoeib and Ali M. Bader al-Din, May 15, 2022)

- ▶ There were a number of clashes, especially in the Beqa'a Valley, between supporters of the Lebanese Forces party and supporters of Hezbollah and Amal (al-Nashra, May 15, 2022).
- ▶ According to the media, **41.1% of eligible voters participated in the election** (al-Ahad, May 15, 2022), a decline from the 49.7% who voted in the 2018 elections (according to the elections website of the Lebanese ministry of the interior), and from the 54% who voted in the 2009 elections (al-Hura, May 6, 2018). The decline was probably caused the population's waning trust, especially the younger population's, in the political system and its ability to change the situation in Lebanon under the current regime.
- ▶ The sectarian and political camp distributions of votes were the following:¹
 - ◆ **Sunnis:** The Sunni camp is split, so there is no central political power and the independent slates could tip the balance. The main Sunni party, the Future Movement, did not participate in the elections, but rather supported other parties.
 - ◆ **Shi'ites:** Hezbollah and its allies had absolute control over the Shi'ite vote, and took 100% of it. According to various Lebanese sources, the "resistance group," which customarily unites around military action, proved its cohesion, stability, withstanding external influences (i.e., economic and media pressure), even though Hezbollah has not seen active combat in Syria for more than two years (Sarqab, February 2020). That probably indicates the organization's awareness of the need to preserve its support based on the activity of its civilian institutions.

¹ For a numerical breakdown of the voting results, see the Appendix.

◆ **Hezbollah's largest ally became weaker:** The National Freedom Party (Aoun/Bassil) split the vote with the Shi'ite Hezbollah opposition party, the Lebanese Forces (Geagea). Here as well the independent slates could tip the scales. The other Christian parties were equal and again, the independents could tip the scales.

◆ **Druze:** Walid Jumblatt scored a significant achievement, especially since his most formidable rivals, which are in alliance with Hezbollah (Wahhab, Arslan) did not receive enough votes for even one seat.

◆ Generally speaking, the March 8 camp (Hezbollah's supporters) continued gaining power, while the March 14 camp (Hezbollah's opponents) continues to weaken. The independents retained the same number of seats, but in effect their power seems to have grown because of the changes in the composition of the Parliament and the number of parties which ran and received enough votes to win seats.

Hezbollah and its supporters' reaction to the election results

► Hezbollah regarded the results as a **success**. The Loyalty to the Resistance faction (which directly supports Hezbollah and not the other camps) received 335,466 votes, 55,461 more than in 2018. Hezbollah and its allies received 367,827 "favorite" votes,² 33,064 more than in 2018. Thus there has been a certain increase in support for Hezbollah in areas important to the organization.

► On the social networks, Hezbollah supporters exploited the fact that the final results would be published on May 17, 2022, the anniversary of the signing of the 1983 agreement to end the fighting and regularize relations between Israel and Lebanon, to begin a campaign to congratulate Hezbollah and Nasrallah on their achievements in the elections. In light of the election results they also proposed the composition of a possible government of the Hezbollah-supporting March 8 camp (Hezbollah supporters' Twitter account). **Note:** To form a government, a majority in the Lebanese Parliament is necessary, and Hezbollah and its allies have to recruit 10 of 13 potential allies. Close to the time of this writing a Hezbollah delegation was sent to woo votes from among the unaligned from the Sidon region (Ali Shoeib's Twitter account, May 18, 2022).

► Hezbollah Parliament representatives committed themselves to keeping the promise of the organization's election slogan, "To build and defend," i.e., to defend Lebanon from internal

² According to the Lebanese electoral system, voters cast their ballots for both a slate and a specific candidate for the limited area in which they are registered.

and external enemies, to develop the country's natural resources and to strengthen the sectors of health and education (al-Ahad, May 17, 2022).

► Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech devoted entirely to the election results of. His main points were the following (“Resistance” forum Twitter account, May 18, 2022):

- ◆ He **thanked** Hezbollah's supporters and praised them for providing the political, parliamentary and popular security net necessary for the “resistance” and its weapons in the face of clear and openly-stated attempts to attack it.

- ◆ He **listed** the problems facing Lebanon, which were electricity, water and fuel, and claimed the worst catastrophe to be visited upon Lebanon in recent years was the limitations imposed on the withdrawal of funds deposited by Lebanese in most banks, because of Lebanon's financial distress. He said hundreds of thousands of families had been harmed and were starving as a result.

- ◆ He related to the broad enlistment of Hezbollah supporters in public demonstrations of support during the campaign and on election day. He said that in many instances when supporters were interviewed, they asked, “Will Nasrallah hear this?” Yes, he said, he heard and saw them and was impressed. He called Hezbollah supporters “the most noble, generous and pure people [who exist],” the same phrase he used to begin his “victory” speech at the end of the Second Lebanon War. He also claimed that the supporters' presence was a response to all the threats made against the organization, after three years of daily efforts by the media to blacken the name of the “resistance” and its allies, in addition to economic and financial pressures.

- ◆ He argued that the Lebanese Parliament would now be composed of varied blocs, including independents, so that no one could claim a majority. He said that now everyone was responsible for the situation and no one could avoid responsibility.

- ◆ He mentioned the religious ban on firing weapons as a sign of joy, because it caused a disturbance and damaged people and property. He said that recently there had been convoys allegedly composed of Hezbollah and Amal operatives, but those firing guns were masked and had exploited the demonstrations, infiltrating them to fire their weapons.

- ◆ He said he hoped that in the future Lebanon would have a proportional election law without sectarian limitations, where the entire country would be considered one

voting district and Lebanese 18 years of age or more could vote. He said such a law would make it possible to express the Lebanese people's genuine choices.

► Hezbollah's election campaign issued flyers thanking all the Shi'ite villages by name, with the number and percentage of voters (Zaharaa Israa Twitter account, May 17, 2022). Hezbollah and Amal called on their supporters not to celebrate with motorcycle convoys, to prevent friction with political rivals, which would cast a cloud over the achievement (al-Ahad, May 18, 2022).

Provocations along the Israeli-Lebanese border following the posting of the elections results

► On **May 17, 2022**, Hezbollah operatives took pictures of themselves near an IDF post at Har Dov,³ waving inked fingers [Lebanese fingerprint their ballots rather than signing them, and Hezbollah supporters sometimes wave inked fingers during Nasrallah's speeches]. Two of them wore Hezbollah campaign hats (Twitter account of Thaer Aldar, May 17, 2022).

► On **May 18, 2022**, residents of the south Lebanese village of Ayta al-Shaab hung a sign across from an IDF post along with Hezbollah and Hezbollah campaign flags. According to the sign, 66% of the residents voted in 2018 and 70% in 2022, and it said, "Our votes and missiles are precise," in both Hebrew and Arabic (Ali Shoeib's Twitter account, May 18, 2022).



Right: Hezbollah operatives have their picture taken near an IDF post at Har Dov (Muhatadi Bahmad's Twitter account, May 17, 2022). Left: The sign hung by the residents of Ayta al-Shaab across from an IDF post (RaniaKD's Twitter account, May 18, 2022)

► In light of calls from both Amal and Hezbollah to their supporters not to provoke their opponents in Lebanon, provoking Israelis was apparently a way of allowing them to let off steam and celebrate the election results.

Events Marking the Anniversary of the IDF Withdrawal from South Lebanon

³ In northern Israel, the triangle where the borders of Israel, Syria and Lebanon meet..

► On **May 18, 2022**, (the day the IDF withdrew from south Lebanon) the logo of “Resistance” and Liberation Day, 2022, was revealed, with the slogan, “May, the symbol of victory” (The Voice of “Resistance” Twitter account, May 18, 2022), apparently an attempt to join electoral and military “victories.” Various Lebanese sources issued their congratulations for “Resistance” and Liberation Day, among them the Arab Parties’ Committee, the Muslim Scholars’ Authority in Beirut, Parliamentary representatives from various parties, the Islamic Activity Front and the High Shi’ite Islamic Council (al-Alam, May 24, 2022). Hezbollah’s “resistance” partners, such as Hamas and the Houthi Ansar Allah, congratulated the Lebanese (al-Alam, May 25, 2022). A delegation of representatives from the Palestinian organizations in Lebanon met with Muhammad Raad, chairman of the Loyalty to the Resistance party, and congratulated him as well (al-Ahad, May 26, 2022).



**The logo of the “Resistance” and Liberation Day, 2022
(The Voice of “Resistance” Twitter account, May 18, 2022)**

► Motorcycle groups met in Adaisseh, a south Lebanese village on the Israeli-Lebanese border, for a ride and an event to mark the day. Exceptionally, no Hezbollah flags were seen, while Lebanese and Palestinian flags were waved (Ali Shoeib's Twitter account, May 22, 2022).

► Convoys of vehicles and motorcycles also rode along the Israeli-Lebanese border in the region of Metulla in northern Israel, waving Hezbollah, Amal and Shi’ite flags, along with pictures of Hassan Nasrallah, and playing Shi’ite “resistance” songs on loudspeakers. Other convoys reenacted the entrance of Shi’ite forces into the village of al-Qantara when the IDF and the South Lebanese army withdrew. They burned Israeli flags and waved Hezbollah flags and pictures of shaheeds (Ali Shoeib's Twitter account, May 25, 2022).



Right: Convoy of Lebanese vehicles across from Metulla. Left: Reenactment of Lebanese entry into al-Qantara (Ali Shoeib's Twitter account, May 25, 2022)

► Hezbollah’s civilian institutions held activities for the holiday:

- ◆ The Jihad al-Bina Association invited the public to the south Lebanon zaatar⁴ festival, held on May 21, 2022 in the village of Derdghaya. The goal was to encourage the cultivation of zaatar in south Lebanon (Jihad al-Bina Association Telegram channel, May 20, 2022). The festival opened with a speech by Hassan Izz al-Din, a representative in the Lebanese Parliament from the Loyalty to the “Resistance” party, which represents Hezbollah. He promised the faction would implement its election plan, and thanked Hezbollah supporters who voted for him (al-Ahad, May 21, 2022).
- ◆ Fawj Saida Sakina members of Hezbollah’s Imam al-Mahdi scouts from al-Khiam in south Lebanon visited the al-Khiam prison.⁵ They brought flowers, met with former prisoners and visited the memorial to prisoners who were killed while incarcerated (Fawj Saida Sakina scouts’ Facebook page, May 22, 2022).
- ◆ The al-Mustafa Baharat Harik high school held student-teacher sports competitions (Facebook page of the al-Mustafa school network, May 24, 2022).
- ◆ The al-Mahdi high school in al-Nabi Chit in the Beqa'a Valley held a handicrafts workshop in collaboration with the Jihad al-Bina Association. Participants saw a video of “resistance” victories, received instructions about how to start a vegetable garden and were given packages of seeds and seedlings (Jihad al-Bina Association Telegram channel, May 25, 2022).
- ◆ Hezbollah’s Islamic Health Organization hospital in the village of Sohmor held a “free health day” of medical services and examinations (al-Ahad, May 26, 2022).

► **Muhammad Bassam Murtadha**, the Lebanese minister of culture, visited Hezbollah’s Garden of the Two Shaheeds in the Dahia, in southern Shi'ite suburb of Beirut,⁶ accompanied

⁴ A variety of oregano.

⁵ For further information, see the October 7, 2019 bulletin, “Jihadi tourism: visits to battle legacy sites and shahid tombs as an indoctrination tool for spreading Hezbollah’s ideology.”

⁶ Ibid.

by al-Ghabiri, head of the local council, and city council members, senior Hezbollah figures. He placed a wreath on the graves of Imad Mughnieh and his son, and later visited the Iranian Garden in the village of Maroun al-Ras, on the Israeli-Lebanese border, where he met with Afif Bazi, the mayor, and read Qur'an verses for the souls of “resistance” shaheeds (al-Ahad website, May 25 and 26, 2022).



Right: The Lebanese minister of culture places a wreath on the graves of Imad Mughnieh (Nasrallah’s second in command) and his son. Left: The Lebanese minister of culture reviews a formation of Hezbollah operatives (al-Ahad, May 25 and 26, 2022)

► Hezbollah leaders **Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech** for “Resistance” and Liberation Day, and related to the following points (“Resistance” forum Twitter account, May 25, 2022).

- ◆ He praised al-Manar TV and Radio al-Nur for their coverage of the IDF’s withdrawal from Lebanon and the assimilation of its legacy by the Lebanese. He related to the “great influence” his “spider web”⁷ speech had [allegedly] had on the Israeli psyche.
- ◆ He thanked all those who collaborated in the liberation of south Lebanon in 2000, the organizations and sects for their contribution to the “resistance,” the shaheeds and their families, the wounded and prisoners, the Lebanese leadership, the Lebanese army, Syria and Iran.
- ◆ He noted the importance of marking the Israeli withdrawal close to the date of the Lebanese Parliamentary elections, to remind the Lebanese how much they had suffered under the [so-called Israeli] “occupation,” the shelling and the roadblocks and the prisons. The Lebanese, he said, should know the real face of Israel and be able to identify the true supporters of Lebanese sovereignty.
- ◆ He listed the achievements of the “liberation” of south Lebanon: shattering the image of the IDF as an invincible army, giving the Palestinians hope of liberation and

⁷ Nasrallah gave a speech in the south Lebanon town of Bint Jbeil where he claimed Israel was “as fragile as a spider web.” **Note:** A spider web has a tensile strength greater than steel.

preventing the implementation of the plan for a “greater Israel” from the Nile to the Euphrates.

◆ He claimed that in 2005, Europe expected that if Hezbollah entered the government it would abandon the “resistance” and lay down its arms. Europe was wrong, because the “resistance” and the regime are only means to an end, the goal is more exalted.

◆ He said that since 1982 [when it began], Hezbollah had never been stronger, with regard to its military, security, political, popular, material and moral capabilities, in Lebanon and in the Middle East. Hezbollah’s internal and regional conditions have never better than they are today. Hezbollah is stronger than what it expected and confident of itself and its power.

◆ He again called on Hezbollah’s political rivals for cooperation, claiming he was speaking from a position of power and ability, a position unprecedented in Hezbollah’s history. He stressed the need to discuss a strategy for the defense of Lebanon as a response to his opponents, who claimed he wanted a monopoly over decisions regarding war and peace.

◆ Regarding the Israeli Jerusalem Day Flag March on May 29, 2022, he warned the regional states, especially Lebanon and the [great] powers of the consequences of the march, and said he was concerned lest the marchers enter al-Aqsa mosque or even destroy the Dome of the Rock. He added that all the Palestinian organizations unanimously agreed to respond if that happened, saying that any attack on al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock would detonate the Middle East.

Other Hezbollah Anniversaries

► On May 20, 2022, Nasrallah gave a speech for the anniversary of the death of Mustafa Bader al-Din, noting the following (“Resistance” forum, May 29, 2022;.

◆ He related to **Bader al-Din’s** many years of activity in Hezbollah, from the first battles in Khalde during the First Lebanon War in 1982, Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996, the Ansariya ambush of a special Israeli naval force in 1997, the dismantling of Israeli spy networks in Lebanon, to the Syrian Civil War. Bader al-Din, he said, was worthy of every possible commendation: he was a jihad fighter, wounded, exiled, a prisoner and a shaheed.

◆ **The beginning of Hezbollah’s military activity:** If, in 1982, the Lebanese had waited for the international community or the Arab states, its fate would have been like that of the Palestinian nakba. He said many forces participated in the first battles: the Amal movement, the Syrian army, the Palestinian “resistance,” the national forces and several young believers who later turned into Hezbollah.

◆ **The May 17, 1983 agreement:** Nasrallah used the agreement signed in May 1983, ending the fighting and regulating relations between Israel and Lebanon, as an example of a case in which the Parliament, with a vast majority, confirmed the agreement despite the fact that the Lebanese people and Muslim scholars rejected it out of hand, and Syria and Iran also opposed it.

◆ **Israeli espionage networks in Lebanon:** He demanded that the country’s leaders support the security forces which were determined to dismantle espionage networks. In addition, he claimed, in light of Hezbollah’s capabilities, the Israelis needed a large number of spies and they were recruited unprofessionally.

◆ **Hezbollah’s identity:** He stressed Hezbollah’s Lebanese identity (“We were born here and we’ll be buried here”), saying Hezbollah would never give up its people, not because of a war and not because of an international conspiracy.

◆ **Natural gas production:** He claimed Lebanon had no time to waste, and needed an emergency program and had to be open to the East and the West. He said Lebanese had a historic opportunity to produce oil and gas, and no one should worry about the Americans when it came to that opportunity.

► Hezbollah supporters on the social networks noted the anniversary of the battle of al-Qusayr (May 19, 2013), one of the first battles in the Syrian Civil War, where relatively large number of Hezbollah operatives were killed. Pictures and videos from the fighting were uploaded as well as pictures of shaheeds who fell during the fighting (The Association for the Revival of Resistance Legacy’s⁸ Telegram channel, May 19, 2022).

Hezbollah’s Social-Organizational Activity

► Hezbollah has begun the process of integrating schools belonging to the al-Imdad charitable association into its network of al-Mahdi schools. So far, four schools from Beirut and north Lebanon have joined the network (al-Mahdi school network website, May 27, 2022).

⁸ For further information, see the March 12, 2020 bulletin, “The Association for the Revival of Resistance Legacy: A Hezbollah foundation intended to inculcate jihad and the shaheed culture within Shiite society in Lebanon.

Until now the al-Mahdi network was limited to areas with a Shi'ite population, such as south Lebanon, the Beqa'a Valley and the Dahia in Beirut, but the newly integrated schools are located in areas of Beirut which are not Hezbollah power centers, as well as in north Lebanon, where the Shi'ites are the minority. According to the center for research and development of the Lebanese ministry of education for the 2017-2018 school year (the last year for which full data were published), the student population at all four aforementioned schools was 1,400,⁹ including kindergarten, elementary school and junior high school students, and about 80 teachers and administrators (center for research and development of the Lebanese ministry of education guide for the 2017-2018 school year).

► The “Help One Another” mutual aid association published initial data about expanding its activities.¹⁰ During the first ten days, it found 150 jobs for young Lebanese in the Dahia, and announced it would soon expand its activities to all of Lebanon (Afif Shuman’s Twitter account, May 20, 2022).

► Hezbollah held a military funeral in Baalbek for an operative named Hassan Ali al-Laqqis, who died of a heart attack. He received the title, “jihad and ‘resistance’ martyr” and his funeral was attended by Sheikh Muhammad Yazbak, chairman of Hezbollah’s religious law authority, Ibrahim Amin al-Sayid, chairman of the political council, Hezbollah members of Parliament for the Beqa'a Valley and other dignitaries (al-Ahad, May 23, 2022).

Palestinians in Lebanon and Syria

► Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, sent Michel Aoun, the president of Lebanon, Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, and Naguib Mikati, the Lebanese prime minister, telegrams congratulating them on the completion of the elections. He praised the voting process, which he said had been conducted easily despite the situation in Lebanon. He added he hoped the new Parliament would pass laws that would be acceptable to the Palestinians in Lebanon and give them rights, especially the right to work and the right to own property (Hamas website, May 18, 2022).

► An organization uniting Palestinian abroad held its fifth conference in Damascus under the aegis of Syrian president Bashar Assad. The theme of the conference was “Commitment and

⁹ Given the school’s physical capabilities, they can accommodate 4,800 students (al-Imad Association website).

¹⁰ For further information, see the May 14, 2022, bulletin, “Spotlight on Terrorism – Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria.”

promise to liberate the land.” Speeches were given by member of the Baath party, the organization holding the conference and representatives of the Palestinian organizations. They all stressed the commitment of the Palestinians in the dispersal to the idea of the return to “Palestine” and the destruction of the “Zionist entity” (al-Ahad, May 23, 2022).

► Hezbollah’s Islamic Health Organization, in collaboration with the action committees in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Sidon region, organized a “free health day” for “Resistance” and Liberation Day. Children and adults were examined for free and medicines and baby formula were distributed (Facebook page of the civilian infrastructure, May 27, 2022). A similar activity was held in the Palestinian refugee camps in north Lebanon (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine website, May 27, 2022).

►The “Joint Palestinian Activity Network,” a network of Palestinian organizations inside and outside the PLO, called on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to participate in marches in support of the residents of “occupied Palestine” and al-Aqsa mosque on Sunday, May 29, 2022, at the same time as the Flag March (Palestinian refugees’ portal, May 28, 2022).

Nakba Day

►Activities were held in the Palestinian refugee camps to mark Nakba Day. A rally was held in the Burj al-Barajneh refugee camp, attended representatives of the Palestinian organizations and institutions in Lebanon. They waved Palestinian flags and pictures of Shireen Abu Akleh, the reported killed in Jenin, and shouted slogans praising the firm stance of the Palestinians in “occupied Palestine.” There was also a display of artwork on the theme, “the return is the sacred right of all Palestinians.” A similar event was held in the Shatila refugee camp. In the al-Baz refugee camp there was an international campaign for the preservation of Palestinian identity. There was a ceremony in honor of the family of a shaheed from a camp killed by IDF fire on the Israeli-Lebanese border during the return march in 2011 (Palestinian refugees’ portal, May 17, 2022). In the Burj al-Shamali refugee camp in south Lebanon the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine organized a ceremony where Hussein Jashi, a representative of the Loyalty to the “Resistance” faction, gave a speech (al-Ahad, May 21, 2022).



“The key to the ‘return,’ “ an exhibit in the display held in Burj al-Barajneh refugee camp (Palestinian refugees’ portal, May 17, 2022)

►The Global Campaign for the Return to “Palestine” organized a festival called “We are returning, it is a necessity,” to mark Nakba Day, the first anniversary of Operation Guardian of the Walls, and the anniversary of the withdrawal of the IDF from south Lebanon. In the village of Adaiseh a large monument was erected in the shape of a map of “Palestine” into which the “Key of the return” was integrated. A speech was given by Sheikh Yusuf Abbas, the campaign’s general coordinator. A similar monument was erected in the Gaza Strip. In the village of Kila men on horseback carried Palestinian flags along the wall marking the Israeli-Lebanese border (Twitter account of the Global Campaign for the Return to “Palestine,” May 21, 2022).



**Right: A rider carrying a Palestinian flag follows the wall marking the Israeli-Lebanese border.
Left: The “Key of the ‘Return’ “ monument (Twitter account of the Global Campaign for the Return to “Palestine,” May 21, 2022)**

Iranian Activity in Syria

► According to reports from opponents of the Syrian regime,

◆ Many residents of the al-Suwayda district in south Syria condemned the visit of a delegation of Russian military police to the town of Dibin in the southwestern part of the district. The objective of the visit was to provide humanitarian assistance and to find out about the residents' economic condition. Regional sources reported that such visits stopped when the war in Ukraine began, and the local residents opposed Russian infiltration into the area in the guise of providing humanitarian assistance. They blamed the Assad regime for their failing economic condition and for "turning Syria over to Russian occupation" (orient.net website, May 18, 2022). It is possible that some of the objections are the result of the struggle between Russia and Iran for influence in the various Syrian districts. Should that be the case, it might indicate an increase in Iranian influence in the al-Suwayda district.

◆ One of the targets of the attack carried out in Damascus on the night of May 20, 2022 (attributed to Israel) was, for the first time, a center for Iranian militias at a distance of about 100 meters from the Shi'ite shrine of al-Sayyida Zaynab. Also attacked were the airport in Damascus, a Syrian army aerial defense post in the al-Kuswa area and the region around the center for scientific research in western Damascus (orient.net website, May 21, 2022).

◆ Syrian National Defense, which belongs to the Assad regime, called on the Iranian militias deployed in the al-Suwayda district to prepare for an attack on the Syrian al-Liwa party, which is active in the district and opposes the regime. The call was made on the grounds that American military reinforcements had arrived and the activities of the international coalition forces in the al-Tanf military base had escalated, along with escalation in military action against Iranian interests in south Syria in light of the Russian withdrawal (Nida post website, May 22, 2022).

◆ Russia stopped paying the salaries of the 5th Corps operating under its aegis in the regions controlled by the Syrian regime. Reportedly, they have not been paid for three months [since the beginning of the war in Ukraine]. In the meantime, they receive a "symbolic" salary from the Assad regime (orient.net website, May 23, 2022).

►The Jordanian army military information administration accused Iranian organizations of attacking Jordanian national security on the Jordanian-Syrian border by smuggling drugs to finance the militias operating in the region. The report was made after an incident on the border in which the Jordanian army killed four drug smugglers and wounded others (al-Medan, May 24, 2022).

►After a short round of negotiations, another Iranian university received permission to operate in Syria. It is one of the largest universities in Iran, established in 1988 and subordinate to the Iranian ministry of science, research and technology. It is the sixth Iranian university to receive authorization to operate in Syria (huria.net, May 17, 2022).

Appendix

Elections to the Lebanese Parliament – Final Results

►The following are the results of the Lebanese elections by sectarian distribution and Parliament seats (elections website of the Lebanese ministry of the interior):

Sect	Slate	No. of seats	
Sunnis (27 seats)	Independents	8	
	Future Movement	4	
	Hezbollah and Amal	4	
	Siniora	3	
	Usama Saad	2	
	Jumblatt	1	
	Islamic Jumaa	1	
	National Freedom Movement	1	
	Miqati	1	
	Rifi	1	
	Makhzoumi	1	
	Shi'ites (27 seats)	Hezbollah and Amal	26
		National Freedom Movement	1
Maronites (34 seats)	National Freedom Movement	8	
	The Lebanese Forces	8	
	Independents	5	
	Hezbollah and Amal	3	
	Jumblatt	2	
	The Giants	2	
	The Phalanges	2	
	Rifi	2	
	Shamoun	2	
Other Christians (29 seats)	National Freedom Movement	6	
	The Lebanese Forces	6	
	Hezbollah and Amal	4	

	Independents	3
	Jumblatt	2
	Syrian Nation	2
	Siniora	2
	Rifi	2
	Future Movement	1
	Communists	1
Druze (8 seats)	Jumblatt	4
	Siniora	1
	Independents	1
	Communists	1
	Shamoun	1
Alawites (2 seats)	Future Movement	1
	Islamic Jumaa	1
Minorities (1 seat)	Independents	1

► The following table compares the election outcomes

Slate	2022 elections	2018 elections	2009 elections
Hezbollah and Amal	37	29	26
National Freedom Movement	16	19	20
Independents	18	18	7
The Lebanese Forces	14	15	8
Jumblatt	9	9	7
Future Movement	6	20	35
Siniora	6	Unaligned	
Rifi	5	Unaligned	
Shamoun	3	Unaligned	
Usama Saad	2	Unaligned	
Islamic Jumaa	2	Unaligned	
The Giants	2	3	3
Syrian Nation	2	2	2

Phalanges	2	3	5
Communists	2	Unaligned	
Miqati	1	4	2
Makhzoumi	1	Unaligned	

► The following table gives the results according to political camp and compares election outcomes

Camp	2022 elections	2018 elections	2009 elections ¹¹
March 8 (Hezbollah supporters)	57	54	50
March 14 (Hezbollah opponents)	48	51	57
Independents and unaligned	23	23	12

¹¹ The seats missing in 2009 are those of parties which won seats in 2009 and not in 2018.