



## Spotlight on Terrorism : Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria April 6-20, 2023

### Overview

- ▶ During the past two weeks the leadership of the "resistance axis" exploited the riots on the Temple Mount, Ramadan and World Jerusalem Day<sup>1</sup> to increase their threats against Israel.
- ▶ In Lebanon, Hezbollah and terrorist organizations' leadership threatened Israel during interviews and at meetings and rallies, **some of them calling for the destruction of Israel**. The calls were accompanied by hate propaganda posted to the social networks, some in Hebrew, intended to menace the Israeli public and lower morale.
- ▶ In addition to threats, during the Passover holiday Israel was attacked with rocket fire from south Lebanon, southern Syria and the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ The Israeli Security Agency reported the recent exposure of Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Qods Force and Hezbollah activity to recruit Israeli Arabs and Palestinians to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel.

### Lebanon

#### Hezbollah threatens Israel for World Jerusalem Day

- ▶ The speeches delivered by Hezbollah leaders in Lebanon for World Jerusalem Day expressed their determination to join the "struggle" against Israel, which would be soon in light of the strengthening of the "resistance axis" [Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations] and Israel's alleged internal weakness.
- ▶ **Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah** gave a speech claiming that this year the "resistance axis" felt strength and pride, while Israel felt anxiety. He said he hoped for the eradication of Israel and claimed the country's deep internal division exposed rifts which could lead to bloodshed. Not in all its 75 years, he claimed, had the "Zionist entity" undergone so serious a

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about World Jerusalem Day, invented by the Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, see the April 19, 2023 report, "World Jerusalem Day: again a platform for incitement, threats, and the defamation and demonizing of Israel and the United States."

crisis. He also claimed that in light of the current situation Israel would not last until its 80<sup>th</sup> year. He warned Israel that its responses or "foolish actions" in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon or Syria could drag the entire Middle East into war, and promised Hezbollah would respond to any attack on Lebanon (Spot Shot Video, April 15, 2023).



**Hassan Nasrallah delivering his speech (Spot Shot Video, April 15, 2023).**

► **Deputy Hezbollah leader Na'im Qasim** gave a speech at the "West Bank, Shield of Jerusalem" rally in Sibliin, north of Sidon. He said Hezbollah stood with the "Palestinian jihad fighters" [terrorist operatives] and the path to liberate "Palestine" through "resistance" [terrorist activities], martyrs' deaths and [financial] support. He added the weakness and disintegration of the "occupying entity" were obvious. Also present at the rally was **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, who said that World Jerusalem Day was special this year because the "resistance axis" had united for the sake of Jerusalem and had overcome [sic] Israel (al-Manar, April 16, 2023).



**Na'im Qasim delivering his speech (al-Manar, April 16, 2023)**

► **Nabil Qaouq, a member of the Hezbollah leadership**, claimed Israel's [alleged] "continuing attacks" were "unbearable." He said Hezbollah was in the forefront of supporting the Palestinian people and the "resistance" and would remain until the end without hesitation because threats did not weaken its determination. He said Israel weighed its

actions carefully before it thought to begin a war against Lebanon, which had become the country the most "immune" to an Israeli threat (al-Manar, April 9 and 17, 2023).



**Nabil Qaouq (al-Manar, April 17, 2023).**

► **Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council**, claimed the "[resistance] axis" had united the "resistance" and that **the objective remained the same, to destroy the State of Israel**. He said their capabilities were becoming strong and every order given by [Israeli Prime Minister] Netanyahu would be responded to by all the fronts (al-Manar, April 12, 2023).



**Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council (al-Manar, April 12, 2023).**

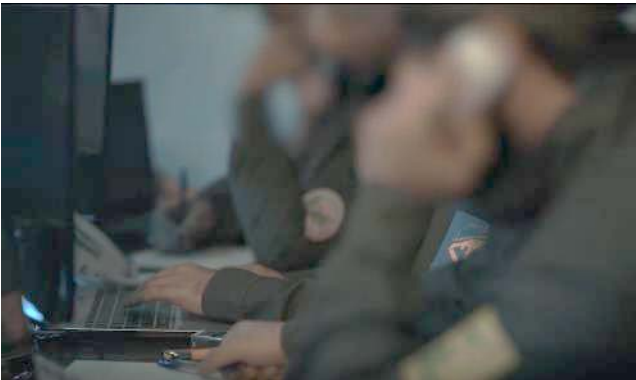
### Activity on the social networks

- In preparation for World Jerusalem Day, over the several weeks preceding it Hezbollah conducted a campaign on the social networks called "The spider's house" about Israel's [alleged] weakness and the possibility of a civil war that could cause it to collapse.
- Several Arabic hashtags were started by groups affiliated with the "resistance axis." The three most prominent were # "The West Bank, shield of Jerusalem," # "We will hold the final Ramadan fast-breaking meal in Jerusalem," and # "World Jerusalem Day." They all claimed defiance and optimism for a showdown in the immediate future.



**World Jerusalem Day logo. The Arabic reads, "Shield of Jerusalem" (Dara al-Quds)**

► On April 13, 2023, a video was issued on the media platforms of Hezbollah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and others with the title, "Prepared." The video was in Arabic and Hebrew and showed the joint operations room of all the terrorist organizations, including those belonging to the "resistance axis." Among them were the IRGC, the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias, the Houthi Shi'ites in Yemen, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, Hezbollah and the pro-Iranian Afghan Shi'ite Fatemiyoun Brigade. The video ended with a picture marking the Kirya in Tel Aviv as a target, with the caption "The promise of Judgment Day." (The "promise" refers to the destruction of the Jews, a reference to a Verse 7 Qur'an Surah 17, often quoted by radical Islamists.)



**Inside the joint operations room: operatives with Hamas, the Fatemiyoun Brigades and Hezbollah patches on their sleeves (Telegram, April 13, 2023).**



**Right: A map of the Kirya in Tel Aviv, the seat of the Israeli defense establishment. The Arabic reads, "The promise of Judgment Day." Left: The end of the video, reading "Prepared" in Arabic and Hebrew (Telegram, April 13, 2023).**

## Palestinians in South Lebanon

► On April 6, during the Passover holiday, 34 rockets were fired at Israel from south Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> Two civilians were wounded by shrapnel, property was damaged and fires broke out. The rockets were fired almost simultaneously with rockets fired from the Gaza Strip and southern Syria. At the time of the attack Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, was in Lebanon to meet with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. The IDF spokesman reported Hamas was responsible for the rocket fire (IDF spokesman, April 6, 2023). Hassan Nasrallah related to the events later, in a speech delivered for World Jerusalem Day. He called the simultaneous rocket fire "very important" and World Jerusalem Day compared with the situation in 2006 [the year the of the Second Lebanon War]. He said he had not spoken previously because he needed to study the situation and consult. He added that when dealing with Israel, Hezbollah had to be vague because that determined the balance of deterrence, and claimed Hezbollah would respond to any attack on Lebanon (al-Mayadeen, April 14, 2023).

► **Na'im Qassem** warned that if Israel attacked Lebanon they would respond. There was now, he said, a new "equation" of deterrence that related to all of Lebanon. Asked about Hezbollah's role along the borders with Israel, including the Syrian Golan, he said Hezbollah was in Lebanon and its "resistance" began from Lebanon. However, the opposition to "the temporary Israeli entity" came from the Palestinian people and the other forces in "Palestine." He said Hezbollah did not conceal its support for anyone who opposed Israel, wherever they were. He added that before discussing the rockets launched from Lebanon or anywhere else, Israel's [alleged] "aggression" against Jerusalem and the Palestinians had to

<sup>2</sup> For further information see the April 17, 2023, report, "Rocket Fire Targeting Israel – Summary."

be discussed, and the question that had to be asked was why the world did not stop Israel's attacks against al-Aqsa and not where the rockets were launched from (al-'Ahad, April 9, 2023).

► On April 16, 2023, according to a report, there was increasing concern in Lebanon that Israel would attack Hamas operatives (to whom Israel attributed the rocket fire) in the Palestinian refugee camps and south Lebanon because of the attack from south Lebanon on April 6, 2023. According to the report, despite the fact that the Lebanese security forces had not yet determined who was responsible, fingers were being pointed at Hamas (al-Sharq al-Awsat, April 16, 2023).

## Palestinians

► On April 9, 2023, Hassan Nasrallah met in Lebanon with a delegation of the Hamas leadership led by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau. They discussed recent developments related to the Palestinians, among them the events in al-Aqsa mosque and the situation in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. They also discussed regional political developments and the readiness of the "resistance axis" to cooperate with "every aspect of the various developments and events" (Hezbollah website, April 9, 2023).

## Iran-Hezbollah Recruitment Activity in Israel Exposed

► The Israeli Security Agency exposed Hezbollah and IRGC Qods Force attempts to recruit Palestinians from Judea and Samaria to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel.

► In recent months two Palestinians from Judea and Samaria were detained and during interrogation revealed that Hezbollah operatives contacted them using the social networks. They agreed to smuggle weapons into Judea and Samaria and to sell them with the help of criminal elements from Israel. They revealed that they had agreed to the Hezbollah request that one of them collect information about IDF activity in Judea, Samaria and Israel, and that they also recruit other operatives to carry out terrorist attacks. They also admitted Hezbollah had paid them on a number of occasions.

► The interrogation revealed that to secure communications they encrypted their messages and used a designated email address. According to intelligence information, their handlers, Muhammad Bashir and Huda Muhannah, were known IRGC Qods Force unit operatives. The unit is headed by Sa'id Izdi and responsible for helping the Palestinian terrorist organizations