



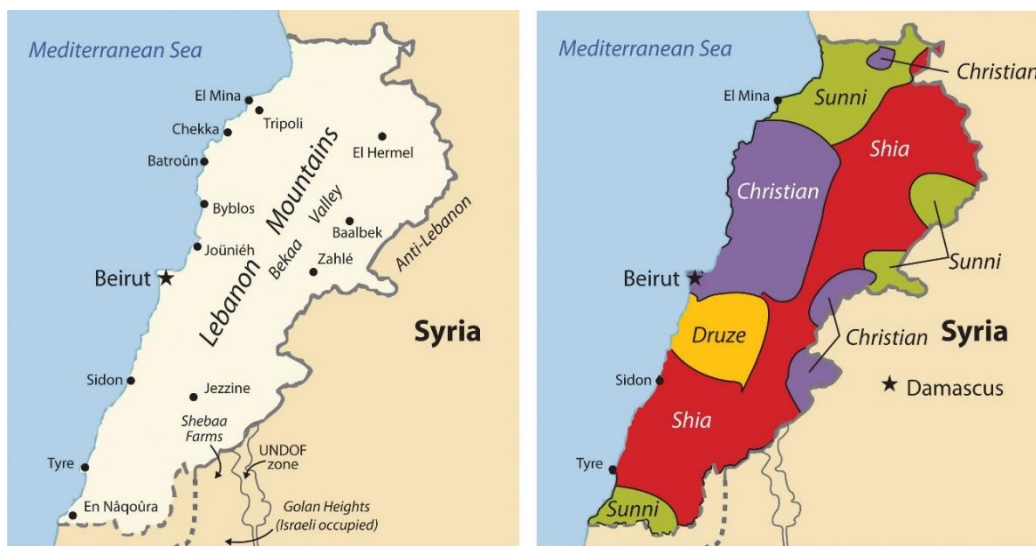
Lebanon & Hezbollah Fact Sheet

Government

Lebanon is a largely non-functioning Republic, where three prominent offices are divided amongst the different religious groups. The President must be a Christian, the Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the National Assembly is a Shia Muslim. There is a unicameral National Assembly, with 128 seats and members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by majority vote. Assembly members serve 4-year terms and seats are apportioned among the Christian and Muslim denominations. In February of 2014, the current Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, a Sunni Muslim, was chosen; he is also acting President, since the Assembly has been unable to select a President.

Population

Lebanon's population [totals](#) 6.1 million (including refugees). It is 54% Muslim (roughly evenly divided between Sunni and Shia), 40.5% Christian (broken down further into 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic, 6.5% other Christian), 5.6 % Druze, and other.



Maps courtesy of CIA World Factbook

The total amount of refugees in Lebanon are about 1.8 million. There are [450,000](#) Palestinian refugees and [1,300,000](#) Syrian refugees.

The Modern History of Lebanon

In the 1920's, the French carved off the nation now called Lebanon from Syria to create a Christian majority Arab nation. However, because of emigration and higher birthrates, Muslim Lebanese now make up a solid majority. (The Shia in particular had a higher birthrate.) Post-1948, a large group of Palestinian Arabs – mostly Sunni Arab – also moved to Lebanon, further upsetting the balance. In 1975, a full-scale civil war

broke out in Lebanon, as various Christian, Muslim and Druze groups pushed for greater power within the nation. This civil war lasted until 1990. Both Syria and Israel intervened, with Israel at one point setting up its own zone in Southern Lebanon, and Syria eventually becoming the occupying power over the entire country. After 1990, all of the various militia groups were disarmed, except for the most powerful militia, Hezbollah. Post-2005, the Cedars Revolution, a series of popular demonstrations for Lebanese independence from Syria and favoring more democracy, resulted in Syrian troops leaving the nation. However, since the revolution, Hezbollah has come to exercise power over the entire country, essentially as “a state within a state.”

Hezbollah

The Hezbollah – or “Hizbullah”, meaning “The Party of God,” and sometimes [using](#) the cover name of “Islamic Jihad” – militia [has](#) effectively taken over the Lebanese government.” Hezbollah is a Shiite Islamist political party, militant group and designated terrorist organization, which was founded in the 1980’s by Iran. It was originally created to oppose Israel and the West. Hezbollah is [funded](#) by Iran, with an [estimated](#) \$100-200 million annually. Hezbollah maintains an extensive security apparatus, political organization, and health and social services network in Lebanon. Hezbollah’s Islamic Health Unit [has more](#) than three hospitals and 12 health centers. Hezbollah’s schools serve around 15,000 students, many of whom receive financial assistance and scholarships. Hezbollah controls the Lebanese Satellite television network *Al-Manar TV*, whose [budget](#) alone is at least \$15 million per year. *Al-Manar* was [designated](#) by the U.S. Department of Treasury as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity” in 2006. Hezbollah holds many seats in the Lebanese National Assembly, dominating the Shia majority areas. [Hassan Nasrallah](#) has led Hezbollah as general secretary since 1992, although the Iranian Supreme Leader, now Ayatollah Khamenei, [serves](#) as Hezbollah’s ultimate source of religious, political, and ideological guidance and authority.

Hezbollah has long been an effective proxy for Iranian foreign policy. Iran has sent Hezbollah fighters to [Iran](#), [Iraq](#), Syria, and [Yemen](#). Hezbollah [has](#) “40,000 and 45,000 armed members divided evenly between conscripts and reservists,” *The Jerusalem Post* reports. When its fighters are killed, Hezbollah’s Martyrs’ Foundation [provides](#) financial assistance and health and social services to the families of the “martyrs.” For each “martyr,” Hezbollah pays his family between \$25,000 and \$45,000. Also the Foundation for the Wounded provides assistance to those who have been injured during combat.

Hezbollah Involvement in Syria

Hezbollah has as many as [9,000 fighters](#) in Syria, where they are working to defend the Assad regime. Hezbollah’s involvement in the Syrian civil war has alienated some of its [Lebanese Shia constituents](#) and [Sunni Muslims](#) in Lebanon and across the Middle East. It is [estimated](#) that Hezbollah has lost 1500 – 1600 fighters in Syria, and suffered 5000 – 6000 wounded. Most of the casualties [come from](#) the elite forces, and have included dozens of high-ranking commanders, which has greatly hurt morale. In addition to fighting in Syria, Hezbollah has also been tasked with training an Alawite militia and other pro-Assad forces. Hezbollah has been [forced](#) to offer financial inducements, ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, to Lebanese youths from impoverished areas in return for their signing up to fight in Syria.

However, because of Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria, it has been [transformed](#) from a terror group to a full-fledged army, especially since Russia intervened in Syria. Hezbollah fighters have become familiar with advanced Russian weaponry and Russian military strategies.

In response to Hezbollah involvement in Syria, both Sunni Islamist groups ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra have conducted cross border assaults into Lebanon. These groups [have been](#) responsible for abductions of Lebanese soldiers and civilians, attacks against Lebanese personnel and local policemen, and suicide bombings in civilian areas.

The Hezbollah Threat to Israel

Hezbollah, which most recently fought Israel in 2006 during the Second Lebanon War, continues to prepare for another war with the Jewish State. It has [moved](#) the bulk of its military infrastructure into the Shiite villages in southern Lebanon and has a “vast network of advanced tunnels” along the border. Journalist Ron Ben-Yishai has [written](#) that Hezbollah has promised to assist poor Shiite villagers “on the condition that at least one rocket launcher would be placed in one of the house’s rooms or in the basement, along with a number of rockets, which will be fired at predetermined targets in Israel when the order is given.” Hezbollah has [approximately](#) 150,000 rockets that can strike targets in northern Israel, thousands of rockets capable of hitting Tel Aviv, and several hundred that can reach anywhere in the country.

However, [as long as](#) Hezbollah is bogged down in Syria it is unlikely to initiate a conflict with Israel. The exception would be if Israel attacked Iranian nuclear sites and Hezbollah was ordered to respond. In July, 2016, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu [declared](#) that Hezbollah will face an “iron fist” if it attacks Israel.

Hezbollah’s Terrorism

The U.S. State Department [designated](#) Hezbollah a Foreign Terrorist Organization in Oct. 1997. It has conducted terror attacks all over the world. Hezbollah has murdered more Americans than any other terror group than al-Qaeda. Some prominent examples:

- 1983: [U.S. Embassy bombing](#): This bombing in Beirut killed 63 people, mostly embassy and CIA staff members, several soldiers and 1 Marine. 17 of the dead were Americans.
- 1983: [Marine barracks bombing](#): This bombing killed 241 U.S. marines and 6 civilians at the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut.
 - On May 30, 2003, Judge Royce Lamberth [found](#) Iran legally responsible for providing Hezbollah with financial and logistical support that helped them carry out the attack.
- 1984: [U.S. Embassy Annex bombing](#): Following the earlier Embassy attack, the embassy was moved to a supposedly more secure location in East Beirut. However, on September 20, 1984, another car bomb exploded at this embassy annex, killing 20 Lebanese and 2 U.S. soldiers.
- 1996: [Khobar Towers bombing](#): This bombing, which occurred in Saudi Arabia, resulted in the deaths of 17 U.S. servicemen.
- 2000’s: [Hezbollah Training of Iraqi & Afghani Terror Attacks](#): Hezbollah provided training and EFP’s to both Shia and Sunni insurgents against U.S. troops during the 2003 Iraq War and the Afghani War. This resulted in more than 1000 U.S. deaths, and thousands of injuries.

Hezbollah’s Criminal Activities

“Hezbollah operatives [run](#) one of the largest and most sophisticated global criminal operations in the world” to raise money for terrorism. It has been involved in global money-laundering, drug-trafficking operations, arms smuggling, cigarette smuggling and counterfeiting of currency.

In 2001, international intelligence sources identified Lebanese residents operating for Hezbollah in South America’s tri-border area ([Argentina](#), [Paraguay](#) and [Brazil](#)). That area has come to be a major source of funding for Hezbollah’s terror activities.

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