

# SUDDEN SUCCESSION

*Examining the Impact of Abrupt Change in the Middle East*



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## *Lebanon: Future Leadership of the State and the State Within*

*In a region brimming with Arab authoritarian governments, Lebanon is considered a democracy. It is not, however, a Western-style democracy but instead one infiltrated at every level by sectarianism. Lebanon is also a small, poor country that has for decades been burdened by corruption, internal conflict, and foreign interference.*



In 1991, the Taif Accord ended fifteen years of civil war in Lebanon and transformed most of the country's warlords and militia leaders into politicians. Almost three decades later, these erstwhile military figures still dominate Lebanese politics. The two most prominent examples are Lebanese president Michel Aoun and parliament speaker Nabih Berri. Prior to his election as president, Aoun had been leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, a Maronite Christian party. Berri remains leader of Amal, a Shia party and militia from which Hezbollah emerged. Both men are over eighty years old and in poor health.

Hezbollah entered the Lebanese political scene in the early 1980s from outside the country's existing war dynamics. But the organization had an army and an agenda that shook the status quo, eventually moving Lebanon from the Syrian to the Iranian umbrella. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah is fifty-eight years old and not known to be in poor health.<sup>1</sup> But his tone, charisma, animosity toward Israel and the West, and Hezbollah's legacy of regional and international terrorism have made him a likely target for assassination. Indeed, Israel killed Nasrallah's predecessor, Abbas Musawi, in 1992. Therefore, considering succession scenarios in Lebanon applies to Nasrallah as much as it does to Aoun and Berri. To be sure, Hezbollah has considered various succession scenarios.

The departure, then, of either Aoun, Berri, or Nasrallah would lead to serious political shifts in Lebanon. And the outcome of any of the three cases is not easy to predict. As a starting point, Aoun does not have a son, Berri's son is not popular, and hereditary succession is irrelevant in the case of Nasrallah. Neither Iran's succession tradition nor the Hezbollah bylaws prioritize family members.

Taif also stipulates that the president be a Maronite, the prime minister be a Sunni, and the parliament speaker be a Shia. Despite this clear-cut division, the succession process in Lebanon will be complicated and competitive and will likely result in some surprises. On the positive side, the demise of longtime political elites may create opportunities to encourage a new political class that could move beyond the traditional sectarian rhetoric and stagnant politics that have crippled Lebanon since the end of the civil war.

This study omits an extended discussion of Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri, largely because he is the least controversial and least likely to pass away of the country's three national leaders. In recent elections, Hariri, who is forty-nine, lost a third of his parliamentary bloc.<sup>2</sup> This is in part because his base resents the compromises he has made to accommodate Hezbollah, and in part because the Saudis have stopped supporting him both politically and financially. Hezbollah, understandably, prefers a weak Hariri whom the group can control to an alternative prime minister who could challenge its hegemony. Given the absence of a different Sunni leader for Saudi Arabia to get behind, Hariri will most likely remain in place, allowing Hezbollah to direct his actions and infiltrate his fragile constituency.

### *President Michel Aoun*

What was once a quiet concern over President Aoun's health became an open topic of discussion in late 2018, after the Lebanese leader experienced an embarrassing slip of the tongue during his Army Day speech. While honoring forces that had defeated the Islamic State along the Syria-Lebanon border, he referred to the famed battalion as "Fajr al-Qurood" (Dawn of the Monkeys), rather than by its rightful name, "Fajr al-Jouroud" (Dawn of the Barren Ridges).

Since that day, speculation in Lebanon has focused on whether Aoun will be capable of completing his term, which ends in 2022. While Lebanese officials front that the president is in good health, rumors suggest otherwise. According to reports and leaks from the presidential palace, Aoun only works about two hours per day. Those scheduled to meet with him often end up seeing his aides instead.

This is not the first time Aoun's health has been an issue. In 2013, the president reportedly suffered a stroke. And in 2017, he tripped and fell during the photo op at the Arab Summit in Jordan. Aoun has suffered from various illnesses since his youth as a military cadet and later routinely underwent medical treatment at French hospitals during his lengthy exile in Paris, which lasted from 1990 to 2005. This exile was sparked when Syrian forces invaded Aoun's

strongholds, including the presidential palace in Baabda. After fleeing to the French embassy in Beirut, he was later granted asylum in France.

Should Aoun die before his term ends—an outcome many observers believe is highly likely—succession could play out in any of numerous complicated scenarios. Since Lebanon, like Iraq and Syria, has no vice president, parliament would urgently convene to elect a successor. In the case of a dissolved parliament, choosing a replacement would fall to a quickly established election body.

Before Aoun's election, it bears noting, Lebanon's president typically was not a controversial figure in domestic politics, including among civil war participants. This leader had to be approved by external parties with interests in Lebanon, a role long reserved for the Syrian regime and, to a certain extent, Saudi Arabia. Today, the decision lies increasingly with Iran. But Aoun has broken the tradition of a presidency immune to political jockeying. As a result, today other former militia leaders and civil war participants believe they too can serve as president, including most notably Lebanon's second-most prominent Christian leader, Samir Geagea, who heads the political party known as the "Lebanese Forces."

Yet even while Geagea polls second in the Maronite field, he is an unlikely successor to Aoun. Hezbollah and its allies hold the majority in parliament and oppose Geagea, a longtime critic of the organization, Iran, and Syria's Assad regime.

More likely, Hezbollah would favor Gebran Bassil, Lebanon's minister of foreign affairs, Aoun's son-in-law, and a very close ally of the Shia power broker. Given Aoun's diminished acuity, many observers believe Bassil is actually calling the shots in the presidential palace.

To be sure, Bassil is ambitious and determined to succeed Aoun as president, just as he has already succeeded his father-in-law as leader of the Free Patriotic Movement.<sup>3</sup> And although allied with Hezbollah, Bassil has been reaching out to new potential partners, both at home and abroad, marketing himself as the president-in-waiting. Overseas, he has been fostering lobbies in the West, the United States and France especially, promoting himself as a Christian leader

and downplaying his relationship with Hezbollah as a necessary and temporary alliance.

If and when Aoun departs the scene—and assuming Hezbollah still dominates Lebanon's political and security decisionmaking—Bassil will likely emerge as president, making Hezbollah stronger than ever. Ultimately, what Hezbollah wants is greater de jure power in Lebanon's parliament to match its predominant de facto military power in the state. Aoun, who fashions himself a Christian nationalist, would not consider reopening the Taif Accord and reallocating parliamentary seats from the current 50/50 configuration for Christians and Muslims (Sunni and Shia) to a three-way split among Christians, Sunnis, and Shia. Put simply, Aoun would never agree to a further diminution of Christian power in Lebanon. Bassil—on the other hand—might be more pragmatic.

Another leading contender to succeed Aoun is Marada Movement party chief Sleiman Frangieh, whose political strength at home derives from his close relationship abroad with Syria's President Bashar al-Assad. Frangieh was nominated for the position back in 2016, but soon after was abandoned by the pro-Syria, Hezbollah-led March 8 coalition in favor of Aoun. Since then, he has been in a bitter feud with the Free Patriotic Movement and specifically with Bassil. Frangieh is not as popular as either Aoun or Geagea, but he has a strong local base of support in his hometown of Zgharta, and holds some appeal with Hezbollah. His chances would improve if Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Europe targeted Bassil with diplomatic pressure due to his close ties with Iran and his alleged prodigious corruption. Given the limited choices, Western and Gulf countries might prefer to work with an Assad proxy rather than an Iranian one as Lebanon's chief executive.

### *Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri*

Since 1992, Amal Party leader Nabih Berri has been elected speaker of parliament seven consecutive times. Over this almost three-decade period, he has cleverly navigated shifting tides to maintain both his popularity within the Shia community and his tight grip on the speakership.

Although Berri has fashioned himself a mediator among Lebanon's divided political factions during times of national conflict and stress, he has remained firmly allied with Hezbollah. Critics describe Berri as a "devious fox" who runs his political party the same way he ran his militia—packing government posts with his own constituents. His patronage politics, and his distribution of extensive government funding to allies via the quasi-governmental Council of the South, has earned him a reputation as one of the most corrupt politicians in Lebanon—no mean feat.

Berri is eighty-one years old, but he has no heir apparent in Amal. Most of the competitive candidates to replace him hail from Berri's own family. Lately, Berri's son Abdallah has been rumored to be a prospect. But Abdallah has little credibility within the party or Shia community, and he has problematic relations with Hezbollah, due to his close ties with the United Arab Emirates, an opponent of Iran.

Additionally, because Berri exercises highly centralized command of the party, it may well collapse following his departure. Nor has the concentration of power prevented several factions from forming within Amal, all competing to inherit the leadership. Some are very close to Hezbollah; one in particular is opposed to the "Party of God" and its adherence to *velayat-e faqih*, the doctrine granting Iran's Supreme Leader his authority. Berri has been trying to manage the conflicts among these disparate wings. Absent Berri and a credible successor, Hezbollah will probably take over management of Amal.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a significant portion of Amal members are not predisposed to back Hezbollah. These include Shia businesspeople, tribes from the Beqa Valley, and large families from the south, all of which constitute a challenge for Hezbollah's control of the organization.

But the fragmentation of the post-Berri Amal movement will also mean more power for Hezbollah in terms of Shia political representation. Some observers believe Hezbollah could increase its seats in parliament from thirteen to twenty-seven, while boosting Shia cabinet numbers from three to six. Hezbollah will also be able to assume control over Lebanon's Supreme Islamic Shia Council and appoint Hezbollah affiliates to run it. This takeover will give Hezbollah

more access to the council's funds and to affiliated local religious and family leaders.

Hezbollah's increased influence at Amal's expense will also allow the group to choose the next parliament speaker. It's possible, if unlikely, that Hezbollah will opt to replace Berri not with another Amal leader but instead with someone closer to Hezbollah and less independent. To this end, a figure like the current director of General Security, Abbas Ibrahim—who also has strong ties to Qatar—may be under consideration.

Another top candidate in Hezbollah's assessment would be former General Security chief Jamil al-Sayyed. Now a member of parliament, Sayyed was arrested in 2005 for his alleged involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri. He is known for his ruthlessness and his close ties to the Assad regime, and Hezbollah supported him heavily during his successful election campaign in 2018. Whether with Ibrahim or Sayyed, Hezbollah would have a staunch supporter at the head of parliament.

### *Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah*

The Hezbollah leader's tenure can be broken down into roughly three phases, from its outset in 1992 until the present day.

#### **Phase 1: 1992–2006**

Hassan Nasrallah was born August 31, 1960, in Dahiya, East Beirut, with his family hailing from the southern Lebanese district of Bazourieh. In his youth, he joined Harakat al-Mahrumin (Movement of the Dispossessed), an Amal predecessor led by the Lebanese-Iranian Shia cleric Sadr al-Musa. In 1976, Nasrallah traveled to the Shia holy city of Najaf, Iraq, to study at seminary. Three years later, he returned to Lebanon and rejoined Amal, but soon left the organization in protest over the growing power of its secular members. He joined the recently founded Hezbollah in 1985, and was placed in charge of the group's activities in Beirut. Two years later, he was appointed head of Hezbollah's shura council. Nasrallah, having

held high Hezbollah positions from a young age, surpassed the organization's number-two official, Naim Qassem, when he was named secretary-general after the 1992 assassination of Abbas al-Musawi.

Among a plurality of Lebanese Shia, as the charismatic leader of a populist movement, Nasrallah enjoys personal appeal, and is widely considered to have integrity. These perceived traits have derived from Nasrallah's many successes as leader of the organization. But Nasrallah has also, through his rhetorical prowess and careful image management, built a cult of personality casting himself as "hero" and leader of "the resistance" against Israel.

In 1997, a few years after Nasrallah was appointed secretary-general, his eighteen-year-old son, Hadi, was killed during a military operation against Israel in southern Lebanon. Hadi's death highlighted Nasrallah's personal sacrifice, and helped establish him as one of the most credible, accessible, yet sacred leaders the Lebanese had encountered. Three years later, in 2000, Nasrallah established himself as a paragon in the Arab world after liberating southern Lebanon from Israeli occupation. But only in 2006 did he acquire celestial status, when, in the aftermath of a disastrous and costly war with Israel, he described the outcome as a "divine victory." Despite all the losses on the ground, according to Nasrallah's narrative, Hezbollah, and he, had achieved omnipotence.

Thereafter, the Hezbollah brand and Nasrallah's were inseparable. The secretary-general became a celebrity. Unprecedented polling revealed Nasrallah—a member of the minority Shia sect—to be the most popular Arab leader in the majority-Sunni region. Among his achievements was fabricating a sense of intimacy with the masses while other elites stayed at a far remove. No doubt, his son's status as a "martyr" quietly informed this transformation. Nasrallah's engaging communication style, equaled by very few other Lebanese or Hezbollah leaders, also played into his continued success. As an orator, he was and remains extremely effective, and often quite humorous.

According to Lina al-Khatib and her coauthors, Hezbollah's larger communications effort is based on a twofold strategy: political marketing and a culturally

sensitive mode of mobilization relying on particular symbols, images, and language.<sup>5</sup> This strategy has helped transform Nasrallah from a devout religious authority to Hezbollah's first populist symbol. It has also transformed him from an overall military chief to the main leader of the war against Israel.

To summarize, in his first fourteen years as Hezbollah secretary-general, Nasrallah excelled on all levels pertaining to his public persona: his image cultivation as a leader; his engaging, unconventional way of addressing the public; his actions and interactions; his unique vision in pursuit of attainable goals; the perceived audacity and tragedy in his own personal story; and his displays of confidence and expertise on military matters.

## Phase 2: 2006–11

Nasrallah's followers were energized by Hezbollah's declared victory after the summer 2006 war against Israel, following upon the earlier sense of achievement from the 2000 withdrawal. Meanwhile, the group capitalized on Nasrallah's image as victor and savior. Its al-Manar television station produced a documentary, *al-Abaya* (The Cloak), focused on an ordinary Lebanese Shia woman named Reem Haidar, who—interviewed while walking to a Beirut café two days into the war—expressed her reverence for Nasrallah:

I want from Sayyed Hassan, when this mess is over, his cloak, which he sweated in while he was defending me and my children, my siblings, and my land. I want it so that I can roll around in its sweat, and roll my children around in its sweat. Maybe its pieces can be distributed to people so that they can acquire some of its generosity, honor, and dignity.

Showing his inimitable touch, Nasrallah responded after the war by sending Reem Haidar one of his cloaks. Despite living in an undisclosed location and seldom appearing in public, this is how he upholds his reputation for accessibility. At the same time, his followers are sure to view his cloak as sacred, reinforcing the sense of him as unapproachable, divine.

In the immediate post-2006 era, many Shia believed Nasrallah was the Imam al-Mahdi, a figure

thought to have vanished in the tenth century and regarded as the last Shia Imam. Twelver Shia believe he will return to redeem Islam and save humankind.

The initial such challenge came on May 7, 2008, when Hezbollah—for the first time—employed its weapons against other Lebanese, killing nearly a hundred innocent people. The deployment of troops in Beirut and throughout the country was meant as a display against certain government decisions the group opposed. But Hezbollah's main goal, it turned out, was to pressure the March 14 government, which was created in early 2005 and united by its opposition to Syrian influence in Lebanese internal affairs, into bowing to a compact known as the Doha agreement. This deal was designed to reshape the government so that Hezbollah would have one-third representation, enough to obstruct legislation it disliked.<sup>6</sup> But the resultant killings exacerbated existing hostilities between Hezbollah and Lebanon's Sunni and Druze, whose members suffered most in the assault. According to many in those communities, Nasrallah had forfeited his heroic image in Lebanon and the Arab world.

### Phase 3: 2011–Present

The events of spring 2008 may have caused problems for Nasrallah and his group, but the image consequences were far worse from Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war. In that conflict, the secretary-general deployed his troops in great numbers on behalf of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and against a popular revolt. The group's main objectives were to protect its Iranian sponsor's interests in Syria and safeguard the channel between Tehran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Other Shia militias sent by Iran helped in this mission. In the end, Hezbollah and its allies managed to keep the most significant parts of Syria in the regime's sphere—Damascus and its suburbs, the country's south, the area between Deir al-Zour and the Iraqi border, and borderlands between Syria and Lebanon. But numerous Syrian civilians, not to mention anti-Assad troops, died as a result of Hezbollah's intervention in support of a strongman regime.<sup>7</sup>

Nasrallah's past achievements continue to buoy his popularity, but economic and political problems are dimming Hezbollah's glow as a political party. On the economic front, a crisis has resulted from reim-

posed U.S. sanctions on Iran, while politically the Shia community has grown restive over the group's lack of "resistance" activities, including a failure to retaliate for Israeli strikes in Syria. Moreover, Shia constituents are no longer blind to the corruption levels in Hezbollah's ranks, thereby challenging the group's credibility.<sup>8</sup> Still, many Shia maintain a certain level of respect for Nasrallah, if only because of his track record and symbolic resonance.

Keeping all this in mind, if Nasrallah were for whatever reason to vacate his position as secretary-general, the group—and its Iranian sponsor—would face challenges on various fronts, such as the following:

- ▶ **Branding.** Hezbollah's self-image as a victorious, sacred entity is linked inextricably to Nasrallah, so a new brand would need to be created.
- ▶ **Charismatic leadership.** No one in the group's senior ranks possesses the magnetism of the current leader, which has been intrinsic to its success. Replacing Nasrallah with a figure who commands attention, not to say reverence, will be a challenge.
- ▶ **Party image.** Current obstacles faced by Hezbollah include fallout from its involvement in the Syrian war—namely, the loss of many elite commanders and fighters, the depletion of financial resources, and the effective suspension of the anti-Israel resistance. The next leader will have to address these challenges, without being able to draw on the public goodwill accumulated by Nasrallah. One way of ginning up support might be engaging militarily, even if prematurely, with Israel. Such action could help stave off the narrative of a group in decline, or damaged by defeats, and establish the new leader's "resistance" credentials.
- ▶ **Ties with Iran.** Nasrallah is Iran's star in the Arab sky. Identifying, creating, and propping up a new star is a task the Islamic regime—and the Hezbollah leadership—would prefer to avoid. Undertaking it would require much diligence, with no guarantee of success.

Hezbollah, of course, is not a one-man show. The party has a meticulous communications strategy designed to continuously create heroes and their

associated narratives. This strategy will inevitably be applied to the next leader, but the process will be complicated, given the enmeshment of Nasrallah with the Hezbollah brand.

None of this means Hezbollah hasn't been considering a successor. Two particular candidates have been groomed at different times, both tested and publicized, as happened with Nasrallah before he became secretary-general. Others may be in the wings, but Naim Qassem, still the group's second-in-command, and Hashem Safieddine, who heads its executive council, are today the two key prospects.

### *Qassem and Safieddine*

When former members of Amal founded Hezbollah in the early 1980s, **NAIM QASSEM** joined their ranks but did not become an active member until 1989. Under Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli, Hezbollah's first secretary-general, Qassem served as deputy president of the group's executive council. When Abbas al-Musawi became secretary-general in 1984, Qassem, then in his early thirties, was chosen as his number-two man.

When Israel killed Musawi in 1992, Nasrallah assumed the secretary-generalship at age thirty-two. Some believe the decision to bypass Qassem in the younger man's favor owed to Nasrallah's potentially pivotal connections to Tehran.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to his political position, Qassem is seen as the "Hezbollah intellectual," in acknowledgment of the numerous books and articles he has authored on the movement. His most prominent volume, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, was published in Arabic in 2004 and in English translation the next year by London-based Saqi Books. Qassem claims to read many books on education and psychology, but to prefer newspapers and other media outlets for his content on politics.<sup>10</sup> Nasrallah, by comparison, says he spends his free time reading Israeli-authored political books, mainly biographies and autobiographies of its political and military leaders.<sup>11</sup>

All in all, Qassem can boast a lengthy senior-level tenure with Hezbollah, along with a high profile with the media, but he is not known to be particularly charismatic, lacks anything approaching Nasrallah's

popularity, and has no military experience, either on the battlefield or as a commander—the latter area being where Nasrallah's experience lies.

**HASHEM SAFIEDDINE**, meanwhile, is responsible for overseeing Hezbollah's political, social, cultural, and educational activities. He heads the group's executive council, which is part of its ruling shura council, on which he serves as one of seven elected members. Reports suggest he is officially next in line to lead Hezbollah.

Safieddine has been a part of Hezbollah's hierarchy since the group's inception in 1982. Later in the 1980s, he reportedly received leadership training in Iran and in 1992 took over the executive council, succeeding Nasrallah, to whom he is related as a cousin. Safieddine's brother, Abdallah, is Hezbollah's representative in Tehran. In May 2017, Safieddine was designated as a terrorist by the United States and Saudi Arabia.<sup>12</sup>

### *Hezbollah Succession: Final Thoughts*

Both Qassem and Safieddine are well regarded in Iranian circles and among Lebanese Shia. But both have a serious charisma deficit, often speaking in *fus'ha* (classical Arabic), whereas Nasrallah is comfortable discoursing in Lebanese dialect, venturing beyond conventional conversational modes. Both also lack general popularity and are considered too ideological by many Shia, who do not necessarily relate to *velayat-e faqih* even as they support Nasrallah's leadership.

Qassem and Safieddine are serious candidates, but as this discussion has made clear, neither will be able to fill Nasrallah's shoes. The challenge goes beyond personal magnetism. Hezbollah faces an increasingly disgruntled constituency, a burgeoning financial crisis, and enormous future military difficulties vis à vis Israel. Any successor will strain to deal with these daunting tasks.

Charles de Gaulle is said to have quipped that the world's graveyards are filled with indispensable men. But for Hezbollah, over nearly the past three decades, Nasrallah has proved indispensable. There is little doubt that the post-Nasrallah phase will not be pleasant for the "Party of God."

## Notes

1. For several months in late 2018, Nasrallah did not appear on TV or in person, sparking rumors that Hezbollah's secretary-general had fallen ill. The organization denied the reports, and Nasrallah reemerged publicly in mid-January 2019.
2. See Ben Hubbard and Hwaida Saad, "Lebanon Elections Boost Hezbollah's Clout," *New York Times*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/07/world/middleeast/lebanon-election-hezbollah.html>.
3. Interestingly, Bassil was appointed by Aoun as leader of the Free Patriotic Movement in violation of the party's bylaws, which stipulate that open elections be held for the position. The appointment was apparently made because Bassil didn't have sufficient support in the party.
4. Firas Hamiyeh, "What's After Mr. Nabih Berri?" (in Arabic), *Ultra Sout*, Nov. 17, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2M0W5Eo>.
5. Lina Khatib, Dina Matar, and Atef Alshaer, *The Hizbullah Phenomenon: Politics and Communication* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the--hizbullah--phenomenon-9780199384402?q=The%20Hizbullah%20Phenomenon&lang=en&cc=us>.
6. Robert F. Worth and Nada Bakri, "Deal for Lebanese Factions Leaves Hezbollah Stronger," *New York Times*, May 22, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/middleeast/22lebanon.html>.
7. Hanin Ghaddar, "Iran and Hezbollah in Syria: U.S. Policy Options," testimony to the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, Sept. 27, 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-and-hezbollah-in-syria-u.s.-policy-options>.
8. Hanin Ghaddar, "U.S. Sanctions Are Hurting Hezbollah," PolicyWatch 3090 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Mar. 6, 2019), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/u.s.-sanctions-are-hurting-hezbollah>.
9. "Deputy Leader of Hizbullah Naim Qassem: Hizbullah Is Ready to Participate in Fighting in Golan," Special Dispatch 5325 (Middle East Media Research Institute, June 2, 2013), <https://www.memri.org/tv/deputy-leader-hizbullah-naim-qassem-hizbullah-ready-participate-fighting-golan>.
10. Sami Moubayed, "The Man in Nasrallah's Shadow: A Profile of Sheikh Naim Qasim," *Terrorism Focus* 3, no. 33 (Jamestown Foundation, Aug. 2006), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-man-in-nasrallahs-shadow-a-profile-of-sheikh-naim-qasim/>.
11. Ibid.
12. U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury and the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center Partner Together to Sanction Hizballah's Senior Leadership," press release, May 16, 2018, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0387>; "U.S., Gulf Nations Hit Iranian Ally Hizballah with New Sanctions," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, May 16, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/u-s-gulf-allies-hit-lebanon-s-iran-backed-hizballah-with-new-sanctions/29230806.html>.

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