

TEACHING ANTISEMITISM AND TERRORISM IN HEZBOLLAH SCHOOLS



A coming-of-age ceremony for Mahdi and Emdad school students at which the Vice Chair of Hezbollah's Executive Council gave a speech extolling Hezbollah's Secretary General, "the gentleman of the Arabs... Hassan Nasrallah," and "the sacrifices of the mujahideen and martyrs." The event included Mahdi Scouts playing Hezbollah's anthem and the Lebanese national anthem, a Hezbollah flag, a microphone for Hezbollah's al-Manar TV station, and was held in a school auditorium named after a teenage suicide bomber.¹

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the extensive attention already paid to intolerant textbooks and other educational materials in many Middle Eastern countries, comparatively little analysis has been conducted on the ideological materials used to indoctrinate children in schools linked to the notorious terrorist organization Hezbollah. This report seeks to address that important gap, documenting the systematic and egregious incitement to antisemitism and support for terrorism that is propagated in numerous such educational institutions inside Lebanon.

Hezbollah arguably wields greater power over the Lebanese state today than during any time in its past. And to the extent to which school children are learning at all during the current pandemic, these educational materials remain equally if not more important, particularly now that Hezbollah has new incentives to scapegoat Jews, Israel, the United States, and other countries and to shift the blame for its mismanagement.

This report begins with an accounting of which schools and other educational institutions in Lebanon have been accused of being controlled by Hezbollah, supportive of Hezbollah, or otherwise connected to its orbit. These institutions appear to include the Mustafa schools, the Mahdi schools, the Murtadha school complex, the Emdad schools, the Mahdi Scouts, and Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit. These educational institutions and their umbrella organizations appear to reach over 100,000 children annually in one way or another, no small share of Lebanon's Shiite young people given the country's small overall population.²

This report goes on to expose egregious antisemitism in lessons on subject matter from ancient times to modern times in two elementary school textbooks that are published for use in the Mustafa schools and other institutions. We then look at each of these sets of educational institutions, examining the evidence on the extent to which they each appear to systematically encourage antisemitism. These are the two sections that will be of greatest interest to those readers who are primarily interested in learning the extent to which educational institutions in Hezbollah's orbit spread antisemitism and the means they use to do so.

Next, this report reviews the extent to which each of these educational institutions also appears to play a role in facilitating Hezbollah's efforts to encourage support for terrorism or potential terrorist recruitment. Finally, this report turns to policy recommendations, explaining the ways in which many of these particular educational institutions in Lebanon could be subject to existing or new counterterrorism sanctions. It concludes by explaining how such counterterrorism sanctions by the U.S. and by other national governments could meaningfully push back against Hezbollah's conveyor belt for indoctrinating children with antisemitism and terrorist recruitment. These three sections may therefore be of greatest interest to counterterrorism officials in the U.S. or other governments, since they explain why national intelligence agencies should urgently assess whether these schools are involved in illicit conduct that could warrant counterterrorism sanctions.

Our Mission:

To stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.

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The IA staff helps raise these international issues with the U.S. and foreign governments and works with partners around the world to provide research and analysis, programs and resources to fight antisemitism, extremism, hate crimes and cyberhate. With a seasoned staff of international affairs experts, ADL's IA division is one of the world's foremost authorities in combatting all forms of hate globally.

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INTRODUCTION

For the first time in Lebanon's history, a parliamentary coalition led by the U.S.-designated terrorist group Hezbollah now wields exclusive control over the country's government. The fact that this state of affairs is being administered by a cabinet of technocrats, led by former Minister of Education and Higher Education, Hassan Diab, in the post of prime minister, provides little more than a fig leaf for Hezbollah's new political might.³ Not only does Prime Minister Diab not possess any serious power base outside of Hezbollah's favor, but Lebanon's new Minister of Education and Higher Education, Tarek al-Majzoub, was also one of Diab's few personal nominations to the cabinet.⁴ Hezbollah now wields greater influence over a broad range of Lebanese government policies than ever before, to some degree presumably including its national educational policies and procedures.

As such, ADL has decided to examine the state of antisemitic incitement that is propagated out of those educational institutions in Lebanon that Hezbollah already controls, most notably what appears to be Hezbollah's networks of private schools. In recent years ADL has stepped up its monitoring of antisemitic and other intolerant content in educational resources across the Middle East, including in the form of a comprehensive monograph on Saudi state textbooks for the 2018-2019 academic year.⁵ At a later date, we may also choose to examine Lebanon's public school textbooks, but Lebanon is unusual for the region in that only about 30% of Lebanese schoolchildren belong to public schools.⁶

Further, Hezbollah's textbooks are undoubtedly the ones inside Lebanon in which incitement to antisemitic hatred and violence is the most egregious and pervasive. Without significant outside action, there is now also a danger that Hezbollah's school textbooks could be a bellwether for the future direction of other educational materials throughout Lebanon – as well as in other parts of the region where Iran increasingly relies on Hezbollah to spread its military, ideological, and media influence.⁷

Do Textbooks Matter Since the Pandemic?

Like much of the world, Lebanon's public and private schools have shifted to a distance learning model in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, its approach to distance learning emphasizes three tracks. First and foremost is to encourage school directors to send traditional educational materials to students' homes in printed format. Only after that are electronic platforms and television broadcasts emphasized in the country's distance learning framework, which some students have trouble using due to choppy Internet coverage and intermittent electricity.⁸ For example, the Mahdi schools profiled in this report have maintained a centralized approach to generating and distributing educational content during the pandemic.⁹ The Mustafa schools profiled in this report claim that their prior integration of technology has decreased the disruptions to content delivery as they adapt to distance learning and social distancing.¹⁰

Of course, students around the world are often learning less overall as a result of this pandemic.¹¹ But to the extent to which educational materials matter at all, textbooks may matter as much as ever, if not more. Additionally, aside from textbooks, this report documents that many of the online materials maintained by the schools in Hezbollah's orbit are another frequent source of antisemitic incitement.

The incitement in Hezbollah's textbooks and on the websites of its educational institutions also matters more now because it creates a convenient available framework for slandering Jews, Israel, Western countries, and moderate Arab governments as scapegoats for the current crisis. Public criticism of Hezbollah has spiked

because its extensive interactions with Iran appear to have served as a major vector for spreading the novel coronavirus into Lebanon.¹² Thus, Hezbollah's desire to lash out at Jews and other scapegoats is only likely to increase as a result of the health crisis.

Why Hezbollah's Incitement Matters

This report bolsters the existing evidence that Hezbollah's ideology is suffused with hatred toward the Jewish people and Jewish religion, as well as toward Zionism and the State of Israel.¹³ The educational institutions that it examines consistently demonize the Jewish people, including but in no way limited to the demonization of Zionists. Likewise, they indoctrinate children with anti-Jewish messages even in lessons about ancient times, not only the modern era. Further, these negative messages are often premised on explicit claims about the immutable nature of Jewish people or hateful caricatures of their religion.

Many of Hezbollah's senior leaders venerated by these schools have also set the tone by personally inciting antisemitism from Hezbollah's top echelons. For example, Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah has said that Jews are "the enemies of God" and are "renowned for breaching covenants," that God "imprinted blasphemy" on their hearts, that "the Jews invented the legend of the Nazi atrocities," and that "if we search the entire globe for a more cowardly, lowly, weak, and frail individual in his spirit, mind, ideology, and religion, we will never find anyone like the Jew – and I am not saying the Israeli."¹⁴ His deputy, Naim Qassem, who is discussed in greater detail in relation to these schools below, has similarly proclaimed that "The history of Jews has proven that, regardless of the Zionist proposal, they are a people who are evil in their ideas."¹⁵

These educational institutions linked to Hezbollah also consistently demonize the U.S. and its other allies, and they encourage children to support Hezbollah's terrorist activities, its organizational strength, and its broader culture of fanatical resistance and martyrdom. Left unchecked, Hezbollah's incitement through these and other mechanisms could continue to fuel murderous terrorism toward Israel and the Jewish people, as well as against the United States, Britain, and Saudi Arabia, which have also been longstanding targets for Hezbollah's ire. The group is responsible for several all-out wars of terrorism targeting Israeli civilians, systematic repression against the Syrian people,¹⁶ and acts of global terrorism from Beirut to Baku, Bangkok, Berlin, Buenos Aires, and Bulgaria.¹⁷ Hezbollah perpetrated the single worst act of terrorism specifically targeting a Jewish communal institution anywhere in the world, killing 85 victims and wounding more than 300 others at Argentina's AMIA Jewish community center in 1994. Until 9/11 Hezbollah was also responsible for more U.S. deaths than any other terrorist group.¹⁸

When antisemitism is propagated in textbooks by American allies such as Qatar or Saudi Arabia, ADL has advocated for Washington to use existing high-level channels to strenuously elevate such concerns and to push for change. But in the case of Hezbollah, such educational incitement is being propagated by an American enemy and terrorist group that is backed by Iran, so relying on diplomatic channels would obviously be insufficient for tackling the problem. However, this does not mean that Washington lacks strong policy tools against this threat.



[Aftermath of Hezbollah's 1994 bombing against the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people and injured hundreds]¹⁹

Indeed, several of Hezbollah's educational institutions could be ripe targets for international sanctions because of their clear role in Hezbollah's system of terrorist recruitment, as a sort of conveyor belt for generating future members, combatants, and leaders. Such sanctions could be surprisingly effective in this case, in part because of a new American law passed by Congress in 2018 with ADL's encouragement that provides the U.S. government with added authorities to deter foreign transactions that benefit Hezbollah.²⁰

Organization of this Report

The content of this report is structured as follows. First, it provides an overview of those educational institutions in Lebanon that appear to be subject to direct control, indirect control, or other considerable influence by Hezbollah. Second, it provides a deep dive into antisemitic incitement in two elementary school textbooks, acquired by ADL from concerned activists, that were generated by a Hezbollah-linked educational institution for use at private and public schools in Shi'ite majority locales. In particular, these books are generated by the publishing arm of a foundation that runs Lebanon's private network of Mustafa schools. Because these schools are the most sophisticated and prestigious within Hezbollah's circle of influence, the students who are taught antisemitism and turned out by these schools are also well positioned to become top leaders and educators in these communities for shaping the next generation.

Third, this report documents many other ways in which the various educational institutions linked to Hezbollah incite antisemitism, including in the classroom, at school events, and on their websites. Fourth, it demonstrates the ways in which many of these institutions also appear to incite terrorism or recruitment to Hezbollah's membership and broader support base.

Fifth, this report turns to policy recommendations, explaining why many of Hezbollah's educational institutions may be vulnerable to existing U.S. counterterrorism authorities. Finally, it concludes by explaining how counterterrorism sanctions by the U.S. or other countries could meaningfully push back against Hezbollah's system for indoctrinating children with antisemitic attitudes and terrorist recruitment.

WHICH SCHOOLS ARE HEZBOLLAH'S?

Although Hezbollah includes an education division as part of its official organizational structure, that Educational Mobilization unit does not formally claim to administer any public or private schools. Instead, the Educational Mobilization unit's overt activities are focused on cultivating Hezbollah's ideological and political influence in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, and it has separate divisions for conducting Hezbollah's outreach to teachers, public high schools, private high schools, and higher education.²¹

However, Hezbollah's control over several complementary networks of private schools in Lebanon is widely recognized by journalists, academics, and local activists. Two of these networks, the Mustafa and Mahdi schools, appear particularly focused on indoctrination and recruitment, with Mustafa schools serving wealthy Shi'ite communities and the children of Hezbollah apparatchiks, while the Mahdi schools are targeted more at the country's Shi'ite middle class and the children of Hezbollah's rank and file.²² When the Mahdi and Mustafa schools' umbrella foundations launched a joint family studies curriculum in 2019, Lebanon's state news wire reported that they "put on a party for the launching of the family studies curriculum" with Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit and "in response to the call of Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah."²³ The party was sponsored by a Hezbollah Executive Council official and included Hezbollah's logo, anthem, and flag.²⁴

The Mustafa Schools

The New York Times has described the Mustafa schools as “a national network of schools affiliated with” Hezbollah, where “teachers pray for Hezbollah’s fighters” and Iran’s supreme leader.²⁵ David Schenker, the current U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, has previously written that the Mustafa schools were founded in 1974 by Naim Qassem, Hezbollah’s current Deputy Secretary General, who has infamously declared that Hezbollah makes no distinction between its military and political wings.²⁶ Qassem is reported by French academics to have headed the Mustafa schools’ umbrella organization, the Association for Islamic Religious Education, from 1974 to 1988, and to have “maintained a supervisory role over al-Mustafa schools” since then.²⁷ Harvard University Professor Melani Cammett wrote in 2014 that Qassem still continues to run the Mustafa schools informally.²⁸ A master’s thesis written for the American University of Beirut’s Education Department by Sabah Dakroub identifies both the Mustafa and the Mahdi schools as the main private school networks that firmly belong in the category of “Hezbollah Educational Institutions.”²⁹ Naim Qassem’s own website says in his English (but not Arabic) biography that he “took part in establishing and launching the Islamic Religious Teaching in Lebanon in 1977 and in building modern Islamic schools.”³⁰ Qassem is personally under counterterrorism sanctions by the United States and all six Gulf monarchies.³¹

The Mahdi Schools

Hezbollah’s *al-Ahed* news site described the Mahdi schools in April 2020 as “one of the educational associations associated with Hezbollah in Lebanon.”³² Likewise, the Qatari-owned Arabic news outlet *al-Araby al-Jadeed* reported in 2019 that Hezbollah’s own media relations office confirmed “that the schools of Hezbollah are the Mahdi schools.”³³ Cammett has called the Mahdi schools “the major Hezbollah school system.”³⁴ The U.S. government’s *al-Hurra*, the German government’s *Qantara* (a project of *Deutsche Welle*), and the Saudi government’s *al-Arabiya* have each identified the Mahdi schools as affiliated with or founded by Hezbollah.³⁵ *The Financial Times* has reported that portraits of Hezbollah’s Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and Iran’s previous Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini hang in every Mahdi school and that schools’ tuition revenues and donor gifts are supplemented by “subsidies from Hezbollah and the Iranian government.”³⁶ A Mahdi school teacher that it interviewed put it bluntly: “these schools are for Hezbollah.”³⁷ For decades, the foundation that runs the Mahdi schools was chaired by Sheikh Mustafa al-Ameli, a member of Hezbollah’s central committee.³⁸



[Students at a Mahdi school holding pictures of Iran’s Supreme Leader that say “The Leader Ayatollah Imam Sayyid Ali Khamenei”]³⁹

The Murtadha Schools

Beyond the Mahdi and Mustafa school networks, another notable educational institution is the Murtadha primary and secondary school complex in Lebanon's Baalbek region. A list of schools from the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education for the academic year 2015-16 lists Sheikh Muhammad Yazbak as the owner of both schools, and a Lebanese activist interviewed for this project indicated that Yazbak is widely known to run the school today.⁴⁰ Yazbak routinely addresses events such as graduation ceremonies for the schools.

Yazbak is no ordinary cleric, however. He is the head of Hezbollah's Judiciary Council, one of just seven publicly-identified members of Hezbollah's Shura Council, and one of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei's two personal religious representatives in Lebanon, the other being Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah.⁴¹ Like Hassan Nasrallah and Naim Qassem, Yazbak is also personally under counterterrorism sanctions by the United States and all six Gulf monarchies.⁴²

The Emdad Schools

Another relevant network of private schools in Lebanon is focused more on poor families, as well as children who have special needs, have dropped out of school, or are focused on obtaining a technical education: the Emdad schools. According to Dakroub, like the Mahdi and Mustafa networks the Emdad schools are a core element of what constitutes the "Hezbollah Educational Institutions," and they also receive some degree of Iranian funding.⁴³ Cammett points out that unlike the Mustafa and Mahdi schools, the Emdad schools are publicly recognized by Hezbollah itself as "officially linked to other Hezbollah institutions."⁴⁴ In particular, they are a project of the Islamic Charitable Emdad Committee's Lebanon Branch, also known as the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee's Lebanon branch, which is designated under U.S. counterterrorism sanctions for being "a Hizballah social service organization that was created by the Government of Iran in the 1980s and is directed and run by Hizballah members or cadre."⁴⁵

The Mahdi Scouts

Finally, this report also examines the antisemitism incited by Hezbollah's Mahdi Scouts, an extracurricular youth movement that has a strong educational indoctrination dimension in addition to its encouragement of quasi-military maneuvers. *The New York Times* has referred to them as the "Hezbollah Mahdi Scouts" and called them "the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement."⁴⁶ As of March 2020, the scouts' homepage included pictures of scout cadres receiving a lecture from the head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, as well as photographs of Hassan Nasrallah.⁴⁷ Mahdi scouts often participate in militarized marches organized by Hezbollah, including holding Hezbollah flags.⁴⁸



[Mahdi Scouts marching with Hezbollah flags as well as carrying signs with Hezbollah's logo and a portrait of Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah]⁴⁹

Limitations

This study does not examine other Shi'ite private school systems in Lebanon, such as those controlled by the Hezbollah-allied Amal Movement, despite the extreme antisemitism propagated by Amal's chairman, Nabih Berri.⁵⁰ Nor does it systematically examine the Mabarrat schools founded by Ayatollah Muhammad Fadlallah, whom the U.S. sanctioned as a terrorist on charges of being a spiritual mentor to Hezbollah until his death.⁵¹ Although ADL has identified instances of antisemitism at Mabarrat schools,⁵² as well as outside allegations of Hezbollah propaganda at some Mabarrat schools⁵³, they are not widely accused of being under the group's control.

It also does not systematically examine Lebanon's public school system or the state's formal guidelines for private school curricula, although it is of course disappointing to observe that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's guidelines for national and civic education curricula require elementary school lessons on "Arab solidarity in confronting the common enemy: Israel."⁵⁴ This is despite the fact that USAID pledged \$90 million in 2019 for a second five-year American plan to "help the Government of Lebanon deliver quality national-level education" and "provide technical and administrative support to Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Center for Educational Research and Development to improve national service delivery and modernize the national curriculum."⁵⁵ Lebanon's government declared this pledge "an expression of American confidence in the performance of the Ministry of Education and its affiliated institutions."⁵⁶

ANTISEMITIC TEXTBOOKS IN HEZBOLLAH SCHOOLS

One of the most important ways in which Hezbollah spreads its message through select schools in Lebanon is by means of the textbooks developed by the Mustafa schools' associated publishing arm, the Mustafa Generation Publishing House, particularly its series of textbooks for Islamic education titled *Islam is our Message*. According to the German state broadcaster's *Qantara* website, in Lebanon this book in particular "has become the most common in schools belonging to the Shia sect as well as in non-religious schools located in Shia-dominant areas. There are no equivalent books in schools belonging to other Muslim sects."⁵⁷ Likewise, a Lebanese activist interviewed for this project indicated to ADL that this textbook is one of the main methods by which Hezbollah influences the content of religious education in many public schools in areas controlled by the organization.⁵⁸

For the purposes of this study, ADL closely examined two elementary school textbooks by Mustafa Generation Publishing House. These included a sixth-grade edition of this religious education textbook, *Islam is our Message*, as well as a sixth-grade edition of an ancient history textbook, entitled *Us and History*. Viewed together, these books provide a consistently hateful depiction of the Jewish people, stretching from ancient times up to the present day.⁵⁹

The ancient history textbook ADL examined is divided into chapters surveying various ancient civilizations of the Eastern Mediterranean with a rather notable exception: the Jewish people. Instead, the Jews are only discussed in chapters of this book about other civilizations in situations framed as confrontational in nature, and the Jews are presented in ways that exaggerate their purported collective negative traits.

For example, the book's chapter on Roman history describes the rise of Christianity as a response to moral failings of both Judaism and the Roman pagan religion.⁶⁰ It claims that Judaism teaches its adherents they are "the masters of the world and the emperors of the universe, which nobody is entitled to belong to, no matter his station" and that "this is what made them hated and outcast, and perhaps what intensified people's aversion to them: their unjustness, their arrogance, their greed, and their monopolizing."⁶¹

واليهودية، ديانة محصورة باليهود، أسياد العالم وأباطرة الكون،
ولا يحق لأحد الانتماء إليها، مهما كانت مكانته... وهذا ما جعلهم
مكروهين منبوذين، ولعل ما شدد من نفور الناس منهم: ظلمهم
وكبريائهم وطمعهم واحتكارهم.

[Textbook passage that defines Judaism as "a religion confined to the Jews, the masters of the world and the emperors of the universe, which nobody is entitled to belong to, no matter his station... [sic] and this is what made them hated and outcast, and perhaps what intensified people's aversion to them: their unjustness, their arrogance, their greed, and their monopolizing."]⁶²

In comparison to this negative caricature, this book teaches that Christianity arose "to correct the perversion of the Jews," including their supposed "greed, avarice, and monopolizing" and to teach "love and equality among humankind" in place of the Jews' supposed haughty clannishness.⁶³

The book's chapter also teaches that, while Judaism had its origins as a divine religion, in time the Jews "perverted the Torah, added texts distorting the image of the prophets, and made the Jews God's chosen people, and the rest of humanity slaves and servants."⁶⁴ It added that the Jews specifically await a messiah "to establish the Jewish state in the world."⁶⁵

Although this lesson teaches that Jesus arose from the land of Palestine and southern Lebanon,⁶⁶ the book makes no mention of the Jewish presence in that part of the Roman Empire until a different chapter. Instead, this chapter on the Roman Empire just proclaims that "the Jews resorted to conspiring upon his [Jesus's] life, so they incited the Roman ruler [Pontius] Pilate the Nabatean to crucify him."⁶⁷ One of the main discussion questions for consideration after the lesson focuses on this in particular, asking students to answer: "How did the Jews conspire upon the life of the Prophet Jesus?"⁶⁸

The chapter concludes with a particular selection of passages from the Quran that especially emphasize positive aspects of Christians and Christianity while emphasizing a negative perception of Jews.⁶⁹ For example, the chapter's conclusion particularly emphasizes *Sura al-Ma'idah*, verse 82, which states:

“You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah; and you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers those who say, ‘We are Christians.’ That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant.”⁷⁰

A later chapter of the same textbook does note that the Jews were in Palestine and that some fled to the Arabian Peninsula due to Roman persecution,⁷¹ but it only does so in order to tell a stylized story of Jewish betrayal there against the Prophet Muhammad.

Indeed, rather than teaching the full complexity of both positive and negative interactions that the Quran and Hadith relate between the Prophet Muhammad and the Jews of Arabia, it selects just one of the most egregious accounts of conflict: the Siege of Medina, also known as the Battle of the Trench or the Battle of the Parties.

The Mustafa textbook emphasizes that because the Prophet’s enemies “allied with the Jews and some associated tribes,” after the battle “the Muslims wanted to curtail the unruliness of the Jews, who broke the pact” that Muslims had with them “and stirred up strife and participated in the war... [sic] so they [the Muslims] expelled them from Medina and stormed their citadels in Khaybar until they finished all their resisting.”⁷²

The Present Day

Moving on to the contemporary era, the Mustafa schools’ curriculum then uses this selective historical lesson as a guidepost for behavior in the modern era. The sixth-grade religion textbook called *Islam is our Message* is particularly instructive in this regard. For example, a lesson from *Islam is our Message* about the Jews and Muslims of Medina opens with the same Quranic verse about the “animosity” of “the Jews,” number 82 from *Sura al-Ma’idah*, that was cited selectively by the history textbook discussed above.⁷³

However, this religion textbook then jumps to the present day, telling of a family watching the news on television about “the crimes of the Zionists in Palestine” when “the grandfather raised his hands and called to God Almighty to save the Muslims from their evil as he saved them [the Muslims] from them [the Zionists] in the time of the Prophet.”⁷⁴ He then explains to his grandson Ahmad that, although the Prophet Muhammad made a pact with three Jewish tribes around Medina, “the Jews of Medina turned against the Prophet [Muhammad] (PBUH), as is their custom.”⁷⁵ Among the explicit goals of this particular lesson, the book identifies “to show zeal to confront the Zionists in the present” and “to participate in a campaign to support the resistance.”⁷⁶

The boy’s grandfather proceeds to tell of the treachery of these three Jewish tribes in particular detail. The lesson teaches what he describes as “enmity and malice” of the Jewish Banu Qaynuqa tribe, adding that Muslim forces pillaged the neighborhood of this “traitorous enemy” and expelled them to the Levant.⁷⁷ It teaches that the Jewish Banu Nadhir tribe “began plotting to betray the prophet and assassinate him,” and that they were also expelled to the Levant.⁷⁸ And it teaches that the Jewish Banu Qurayza tribe broke its pact through a secret alliance against the Muslims, and that for their “treason and betrayal” this tribe’s “treasonous leaders” were killed and their followers were deported.⁷⁹

Upon the conclusion of this narration by his grandfather, the boy Ahmad declares “Praise God who relieved the Prophet (PBUH) from the evil of the Jews of Medina.”⁸⁰ His grandfather then replies “and, inshallah Almighty, may he rescue the Islamic ummah from their evils with the jihad of the *mujahideen* resisters.”⁸¹



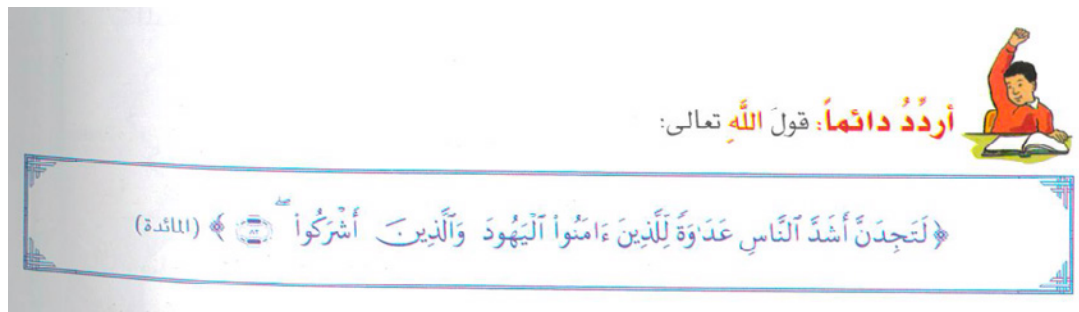
[Textbook passage in which a boy declares "Praise God who relieved the Prophet (PBUH) from the evil of the Jews of Medina," and his grandfather replies "and, inshallah Almighty, may he rescue the Islamic ummah from their evils with the jihad of the mujahideen resisters."]⁸²

He then elaborates, "so let us take the lesson and the instruction.. [sic] for the Zionists are the enemies of humanity in the past, present, and future because of their attributes: deceit, treason, treachery, and breaking pacts."⁸³ It is particularly striking to see the descriptor "Zionists" used in this derogatory manner to describe even Jews during ancient times, but this is far from the only time the labels "Jewish" and "Zionist" are used by these schools in a rather interchangeable – and extremely negative – way.

For added emphasis, the lesson then asks the student reader to recite a stylized summary of this story, including the same selected Quranic passage (*Sura al-Ma'idah*, verse 82) about the "animosity" of "the Jews."⁸⁴ The student is then instructed to declare "I am a Muslim: I keep pacts I make with others, and I wage war against the enemies of humanity who stir up strife."⁸⁵

For extra measure, the textbook then teaches yet another narrative to emphasize an evil image of Jewish people. It writes that "the Jews of Medina were stirrers of hatreds and strife, and among their conspiracies against Islam, exploitation, and stirring hidden hatreds" from the pre-Islamic era was also the tale of Shas bin Qays, who it says "was a Jew intense in challenge to the Muslims."⁸⁶ It teaches that he therefore sat among two tribes of Medina and maliciously sought to turn them against each other by reminding them of their prior rivalries from before converting to Islam. The textbook then teaches that "this, which Shas bin Qays did, the enemies of the Muslims always do, and the Zionists do currently."⁸⁷

Finally, the textbook ends this lesson with an even more intensive repetition of language from *Sura al-Ma'idah*, verse 82. It shows a picture of a school child raising his arm, with the instruction "always echo the saying of God Almighty: 'You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah.'"⁸⁸



[Textbook passage that instructs "always echo the saying of God Almighty: 'You will Surely find the most intense of people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah.' (al-Mai'da, 82)"]⁸⁹

INSTITUTIONAL ANTISEMITIC INCITEMENT

Putting a virulently antisemitic terrorist movement in a position of influence over educational institutions predictably results in systematic indoctrination of school children against the Jewish people, Judaism, and the Jewish state. Indeed, the two textbooks described above are by no means the only mechanism by which these schools propagate antisemitism to their students and beyond.

The Mustafa Schools

The fact that the Mustafa school textbooks examined by this study were so antisemitic is particularly worrisome because the Mustafa schools are the most rigorous and elite of Hezbollah's youth-oriented educational institutions.⁹⁰ For example, its students are prepared to be competitive for application to a range of prestigious universities, even those chartered and accredited in the U.S. such as the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University.⁹¹

The umbrella organization that administers the Mustafa schools, the Association for Islamic Religious Education, did not begin its operations by running its own schools. Rather, it began first and foremost as a revolutionary institution for training radical teachers of religion and only launched the Mustafa schools a decade later.⁹² To this day, the ideology taught in the Mustafa schools is also propagated to other private and public schools in parts of Lebanon by teachers who are trained by this institution.

A 2018 news item on the Association's webpage explains what appears to be the fundamental message of these lessons, in remarks that Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem gave to an annual gathering of religion teachers. In his speech about "the pillars of effective educational discourse," Qassem's number one point was that Muslims should learn to "terrify the enemies of God" and that, according to Iran's former Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini, the "enemies of God" refers particularly to Israel.⁹³ Qassem also gave a 2014 address carried on the Mustafa schools' website in which he declared that "we fight Israel for it to cease to exist," hoping "to strike Israel and relieve this region from its evil."⁹⁴ A 2017 news item from the Association's website is entitled "embedding the divine promise of Israel's demise in the souls and minds of Mustafa high school students."⁹⁵ This intolerant messaging with regard to Israel is laced with classic antisemitic stereotypes, is used to demonize and encourage aggression against the Jewish state, and is particularly worrisome when viewed in light of the egregious antisemitic content already documented above from textbooks published for use in the Mustafa school system and beyond.

The Mahdi Schools

In 2002, Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah gave speech at a Mahdi School proclaiming that "this Israeli state exists and gathers the Jews from all the world to occupied Palestine, but not for their Antichrist Messiah to rule the world. Rather, glorified and almighty God wants to save you from going after them all over the world, for they will gather in one place, and the battle will be decisive and conclusive."⁹⁶ Nasrallah's speech at this Mahdi school was also suffused with numerous other antisemitic messages, including claiming that Jews seek world domination through a world government, collectively blaming them for killing Jesus, accusing them of falsifying Biblical history, and having a "perverted Torahic Jewish mind" in which "killing women and children... is at the heart of the Talmudic doctrine."⁹⁷

Materials available on the Mahdi schools' website reveal the antisemitism that is still encouraged at such institutions today. For example, the website's *Teachers Corner* section includes numerous materials that encourage hatred of the Jewish people.

A poem on the Mahdi schools *Teachers Corner* decries “the malice of the Jews, including killing, taking captives, and violating prohibitions.”⁹⁸ A creative writing entry from the Teachers Corner laments the suffering of children in Yemen, concluding that “a Jew robbed him of his right to life” by “controlling his medicine and food.” It mournfully proclaims that “from the treachery of the ages it has been upon us to be controlled by the House of Saud Jews.”⁹⁹

The school website also notes a graduation address given to a Mahdi school by an MP from Hezbollah’s bloc in the Lebanese parliament, quoting him saying that “the *takfiris* and the enemies of Islam are charged by the Zionists to distort Islam” with “the misleading media.” He added that “our battle with the enemies of God is a long and open battle” until Judgment Day.¹⁰⁰



[One of several instances in which Mahdi schools have promoted signs and flags with the motto of Yemen’s Houthi militia, which includes the phrase “Death to America, Death to Israel, Damn the Jews”]¹⁰²

Another news item from the Mahdi schools’ website states that “a report was shown [to students] on the barbarism of the Zionist enemy to illuminate the mentality, dangers, and behavior of this enemy” and that this enemy allegedly brainwashes Jewish children, “broadcasting feelings of malice and hate toward Arab children in their hearts.” The news item clarified that this lesson was “based on the words of His Excellency Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah,” Hezbollah’s Secretary General.¹⁰¹

The Murtadha Schools

Sheikh Muhammad Yazbak’s Murtadha school complex in the Baalbek region is believed to rely on educational materials from other Hezbollah institutions and from Iran.¹⁰³ In 2017, Yazbak gave a speech in which he decried “the seeking by the Jews since the era of the most honorable Prophet to stir up strife, and their treachery and breaching of covenants and pacts, they are still until today working to stir up strife and damage the world through all means. They are the germ of corruption in this corruption.”¹⁰⁴ Yazbak added that “all the problems that have happened in our region since 1948, look for the role of the Jews in fabricating and standing behind them,” because “all the disasters and calamities and tampering with the security of our societies are the manufacturing of the Jews,” to prevent Muslims from having “the power for us to confront the enemies of God and the forces of global arrogance.”¹⁰⁵

The Emdad Schools

The vice president of Hezbollah’s Executive Council reportedly addressed a graduating group of students from two Emdad middle schools in 2017, following the Hezbollah anthem and in front of a Hezbollah flag.¹⁰⁶ While there, he apparently propagated the antisemitic conspiracy theory that Jews or the Jewish state are pulling the strings behind all sources of evil, baselessly claiming that Israel made a “wager on ISIS and *takfiri* terrorist groups [that] failed” against Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah.¹⁰⁷

Educational Mobilization

Hezbollah's official Educational Mobilization unit promotes on its website an Arabic-language guide for teachers on Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei's jurisprudence rulings about education. It teaches that educators need to convey "the necessity of knowing the enemies," who are waging a "war" of cultural invasion to replace the fundamentals of Islam.¹⁰⁸ The unit also carries religious lessons on its website that tell the story of "the Jew who always harmed" the Prophet Muhammad¹⁰⁹ and that emphasize an anti-Jewish teaching that God turned disobedient Jews into apes and pigs.¹¹⁰ The unit's website has a February 2020 news item praising Iran's role as a "nursemaid" for "fighting the cancerous Zionist entity."¹¹¹ Likewise, its website reports organizing an educational event about Jerusalem and "the history of the plots of the Jews against it."¹¹²

The Mobilization unit also states on its website that "Israel is the center of tyranny, corruption, and corrupting, and there will be no rest in the Arab and Islamic region as long as it exists on the map."¹¹³ It elaborates that Israel's creation was "not only to solve the so-called Jewish problem" but rather "as an advanced military base for Western colonialism, and a way to drain the energies of Arabs and Muslims, plunder their wealth and prevent their unity."¹¹⁴

Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit emphasizes the words of Khomeini alleging that Baha'is are "the agents of the Jews" as "enemies of Islam,"¹¹⁵ as well as the words of Nasrallah pushing the antisemitic conspiracy theory that Israel today conspires to conquer all of the land from the Nile to the Euphrates¹¹⁶. It also pushes Nasrallah's claim that if Jesus "returns to the world" it could simply be "for the Jews to plot against him again."¹¹⁷ Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit also propagates Nasrallah's antisemitic teaching that "the Jews said 'God is poor, and we are rich'."¹¹⁸

The Mahdi Scouts

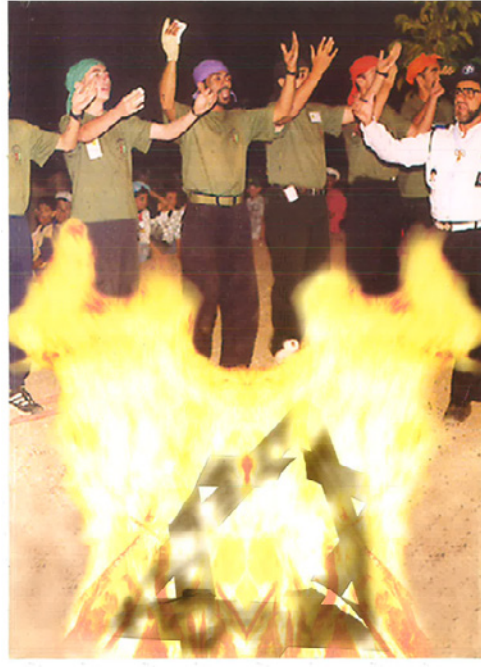
According to a 2008 report on the Mahdi Scouts by the *New York Times*, the scouting group's internal curriculum included a section called "Facts about Jews" in which "Jews are described as cruel, corrupt, cowardly and deceitful, and they are called the killers of prophets." *The Times* also reported that this curriculum asserted "their Talmud says those outside the Jewish religion are animals."¹¹⁹

ADL can confirm that antisemitic content remains in the Mahdi Scouts' official curriculum as of today. For example, a Mahdi Scouts lesson plan currently posted online decries "the injustice, grievance, and bewitching where the fictitious claim of the Jews about the presence of the Temple of Solomon under its [Jerusalem's] mosque, and their ongoing attempts to destroy the mosque according to this claim."¹²¹ With regard to Israel in particular, it teaches that "the root of its existence is evil, and there is no cure for it except its eradication."¹²²

Likewise, the final lesson in the group's scouting manuals available online for boys teaches that jihad against "the remnants of the Zionist occupiers" is justified as "a response to harm done to the Muslims and plotting and malicious conspiracies against our Islamic society" and is the proper way to defeat "Satan and his followers."¹²³



[Mahdi Scouts at a Global al-Quds Day March, Holding a Display of a Spider in a Web with a Star of David]¹²⁰



[Front and back covers of a scouting manual published by the Mahdi Scouts, in which the back cover includes the burning of a Star of David]¹²⁴

In 2019 the Mahdi Scouts' periodical for children, *Mahdi Magazine*, displayed remarkably contrasting messages regarding, for example, "our friends the animals" and "the Zionist enemy." This was from the magazine's edition for children ages four to seven.¹²⁵ In recent years the magazine's edition for teenagers has propagated the baseless conspiracy that Israel is the power behind al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Syria,¹²⁶ and an older issue of the magazine aimed at teens also shows a Jewish star being shattered on its cover.¹²⁷

TEACHING TERRORISM

In addition to teaching antisemitism, the schools in many of these institutions also appear to encourage terrorism and recruitment to Hezbollah's cause. Such messages are sometimes even discernable in how these institutions describe their own missions. For example, the Mustafa schools identify themselves as an instructional environment for "educating learners on the path of jihad, resistance, and citizenship."¹²⁸ The Mahdi schools' foundation says that among its top goals is to "prepare a person who possesses the true spirit of faith, jihad, and citizenship."¹²⁹ Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit identifies itself as "an industrious movement to join knowledge and jihad... to serve the resistance and the nation."¹³⁰ The militarized graphic on its homepage shows Hezbollah's logo of a hand raising an assault rifle, with the words Educational Mobilization added onto it.¹³¹

The Mustafa Schools

Mustafa schools reportedly allow the children of Hezbollah martyrs to attend free of charge.¹³² The website of the schools' umbrella organization, the Association for Islamic Religious Education, also promotes the 2018 remarks on "the pillars of effective educational discourse" by Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem to an annual gathering of religion teachers. In it, he proclaimed that "authentic" Islam means "the Islam of jihad and martyrdom," and, as noted above, called for Muslims to learn to "terrify the enemies of God."¹³³ Likewise, during a 2018 ceremony for high achieving Mustafa school students, the Mustafa network's director general praised "the *mujahideen*" against "the Zionist enemy" in a speech in the presence of Naim Qassem to students, families, teachers, and administrators¹³⁴.

In 2017 the Mustafa school for girls, al-Batoul, hosted a speech on the religious holiday of Ashoura by a preacher who emphasized the importance of "throwing horror into the hearts of the enemy" for the resistance

to succeed. The preacher in question was Akram Barakat, whom Hezbollah watcher Emanuele Ottolenghi has identified as “a member of Hezbollah’s executive council and the second in command at Hezbollah’s global finance department.”¹³⁵ Al-Batoul apparently also hosted lectures by Akram Barakat several other years as well, including in 2015 when he lectured second- and third-graders about family values, and the children were given sweets.¹³⁶

The sixth-grade textbook published by Mustafa Generation Publishing House entitled Islam is our Message also encourages violence against Israel and the West. It proclaims that the present and future meaning of jihad necessitate that “we arm ourselves for jihad in deed and behavior, so we exert [our] effort, self, and money for us to expel the usurping occupier and resist the aggression of the oppressor arrogant ones.”¹³⁷ The latter is a common euphemism by Iran and its proxies that refers to Western powers, particularly the United States and Great Britain. That same page of the textbook then glorifies such violence with a divine blessing, overlaying an image of a fighter aiming an assault rifle with light shining down from heaven and a Quranic passage that reads “you did not shoot, when you shot, but [it was] God [who] shot.”¹³⁸ The page concludes with a directive for students to always remember that God prefers those who wage jihad over people who do not, and that the former will meet with “a great reward.”¹³⁹

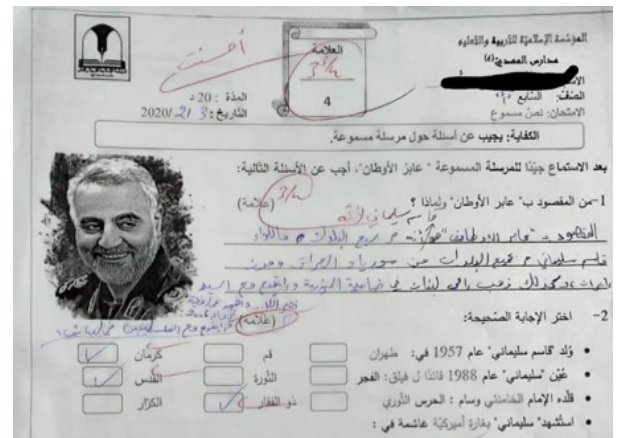


[Textbook graphic that overlays an image of a fighter aiming an assault rifle with light shining down from heaven and a Quranic passage that reads “you did not shoot, when you shot, but [it was] God [who] shot”]¹⁴⁰

The Mahdi Schools

The Mahdi schools attracted international attention for reportedly giving a quiz to seventh-graders in early 2020 glorifying the life of recently-assassinated IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani that asked them about “his character.”¹⁴¹

Likewise, an article on the Mahdi schools’ online *Teachers Corner* proclaimed that Soleimani’s death “washed our hearts immersed in the salts of sorrows.”¹⁴³ The alumni page for the Mahdi school is replete with martyrdom announcements and currently has as its profile graphic a picture of Hassan Nasrallah.¹⁴⁴ The Mahdi schools themselves as well as the schools’ chairman also seem to have glorified alumni killed while fighting for Hezbollah as martyrs.¹⁴⁵ A Mahdi school news item on a 2019 classroom activity for fifth-graders about Britain’s 1917 Balfour Declaration reports that “then everybody raised their hands high and their throats chanted ‘Death to America’ ‘Death to Israel’.”¹⁴⁶ Another activity at a Mahdi school included chants



[Reported image from a seventh-grade Mahdi school quiz portraying Iranian terrorism chief Qassem Soleimani in a positive light]¹⁴²

of “Death to America,” “Death to Israel,” “Jerusalem, we are coming,” and “America, you are the Great Satan.”¹⁴⁷

Children as young as the kindergarten level are evidently taught at Mahdi schools to revere Hezbollah martyrs, Hezbollah leaders, and key Iranian clerics. For example, a news item from a Mahdi school kindergarten classroom showed the children posing in front of portraits of Hezbollah’s late terror chief Imad Mughniyeh, Hezbollah’s previous Secretary General Abbas Moussawi, and Hezbollah forefather Ragheb Harb as well as wearing sashes with smaller photos of the three men. The news item says that the kindergarteners took up the three deceased leaders’ oath that they would not rest as long as “the Zionist enemy” exists “in our region.”¹⁴⁸ Likewise, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center in Israel identifies a photograph from a Mahdi school puppet show where the young children in the audience wore hats with pictures of Mughniyeh, Moussawi, and Harb while holding up signs with pictures of Khomeini on them.¹⁴⁹



[Kindergarteners from a Mahdi school posing in front of portraits of Hezbollah’s late terror chief Imad Mughniyeh, Hezbollah’s previous Secretary General Abbas Moussawi, and Hezbollah forefather Ragheb Harb, as well as wearing sashes with smaller photos of the three men]¹⁵⁰

Additional examples were recently shared with the Saudi-owned news outlet *al-Arabiya* by Mona Fayad, Professor of Psychology at Lebanese University, who claimed that students in Mahdi schools call roll by shouting “martyr” instead of “present.” According to Fayad, the Mahdi schools direct students to participate in skirmishes that include military-style ambushes and allow underage minors to attend Hezbollah training camps. She also is cited claiming that the fifth-grade chemistry lessons at Mahdi schools emphasize explosives and how to make them.¹⁵¹

The Murtadha Schools

Senior Hezbollah leader Muhammad Yazbak, who is closely associated with the Murtadha school complex in the Baalbek region, has frequently encouraged terrorism in his remarks at programs for schoolchildren. For example, during a graduation ceremony for the Murtadha school, Yazbak praised the role of teachers “in educating our resistance society” and commended that “from this resistance edifice graduated both scholars of religion and martyrs.”¹⁵² At a girls’ graduation ceremony for a Mahdi school in Baalbek, he called America “the Great Satan” and proclaimed “yes we had terrorized the enemies of Allah, and this so-called ‘terrorism’ is a medal we proudly sport on our breast.”¹⁵³ He has also been accused by Hezbollah’s critics of declaring that “we want to plant under every tree in the Beqaa region a partisan of Hezbollah.”¹⁵⁴

The Emdad Schools

As for Hezbollah’s Emdad schools, the Islamic Charitable Emdad Committee’s Lebanon Branch that administers these schools as part of its program of social services is already specifically under U.S. counterterrorism sanctions. When the U.S. issued these sanctions in 2010, it revealed that this charity “has helped fund and operate Hizballah youth training camps, which have been used to recruit future Hizballah members and operatives.”¹⁵⁵ Hezbollah’s Naim Qassem spoke at a joint coming-of-age ceremony for female students with Emdad and Mahdi schools in 2018 at which he emphasized the importance of “education and jihad in this blessed field.”¹⁵⁶

At another girls' coming-of-age ceremony with Emdad and Mahdi schools the following year, the deputy chairman of Hezbollah's executive council reportedly addressed the girls as tomorrow's "mothers of *mujahideen*, wives of *mujahideen*, mothers of martyrs, and sisters of martyrs."¹⁵⁸ Separately, *al-Jazeera* reports that one of the Emdad schools' branches in Beirut participated in a protest against Israel during which Emdad students held up model rockets with the words "let the weapon be tireless."¹⁵⁹

Educational Mobilization

As for Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit, its teachers' union held a training for kindergarten instructors on classroom management skills, which carried the discordant title of "the martyrs of the second liberation."¹⁶⁰ According to Israel's Meir Amit Center, one of the Educational unit's branches posted fliers on its Facebook page glorifying the lifecycle for a Hezbollah recruit, from infancy, to being a school child, to being an armed fighter, to martyrdom in a coffin with Hezbollah's logo on it.¹⁶¹

The Mahdi Scouts

The Mahdi Scouts are particularly militarized, given their role as an extracurricular institution for mental and physical education that bridges the formal schooling system and Hezbollah's terrorist combatant ranks. For example, the *New York Times* has reported that the Mahdi Scouts "get visits from Hezbollah fighters, wearing camouflage and toting AK-47s, who talk about fighting Israel," and that the Scouts' summer camp teaches a mock battle game called "Americans and the Resistance."¹⁶³

The Mahdi Scouts' written curriculum is also still deeply problematic in this regard. The final lesson of its two-volume scouting guide online for boys stresses the particular importance of "our waging jihad against the enemies of Islam," including "the remnants of the Zionist occupiers."¹⁶⁴ It says that the purpose of the lesson is "to plant love of martyrdom in the hearts of the scout."¹⁶⁵

Additionally, the cartoons in the edition of *Mahdi Magazine* aimed at eight- to twelve-year-olds depict a youth participating in a suicide bombing, a cute gun-toting anti-Israel fighter, and a starstruck child chanting to Hezbollah's secretary general, "I am at your service, oh Nasrallah."¹⁶⁶ The magazine's edition aimed at teenagers has a recurring comic strip in which the protagonists are heroic Hezbollah fighters, who engage in such activities as planting bombs, followed in one instance just a page later encouraging children to learn to use firearms.¹⁶⁷



[Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem dispensing gifts at a coming-of-age ceremony for female students from Emdad and Mahdi schools in 2018]¹⁵⁷



[A purported graphic from Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit that glorifies the lifecycle for a Hezbollah recruit, from infancy, to being a school child, to being an armed fighter, to martyrdom in a coffin with Hezbollah's logo on it]¹⁶²



Frames from a Mahdi Scout magazine, showing a scout meeting Hezbollah's secretary general. The child proclaims, "save us, Nasrallah!" and "I am at your service, oh Nasrallah!"¹⁶⁸

Mahdi Magazine also emphasizes to children remarks by Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei that Hezbollah is the pride of all Lebanon and that it is a religious "obligation" to support "the Lebanese resistance" against Israel and other U.S. allies; it goes on to cite Khamenei calling the resistance "blessed in its jihad, bravery, and the blood of its sons... especially the fervent youth."¹⁶⁹ A news item on the Mahdi Scouts' website indicates that a group of Mahdi girl scouts visited the tomb of Hezbollah's founding secretary general, Abbas Moussawi, as "a pledge of jihad," where they watched a documentary about "the heroism and loyalty of the leader martyrs."¹⁷⁰

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Hezbollah has been designated by the U.S. State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization since 1997 and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist since 2001.¹⁷¹ As such, any element of that organization is technically already subject to strict counterterrorism sanctions, including certain prohibitions against material support. Therefore, many of the institutions examined by this study could already be subject to American sanctions, but the public would not know it without more explicit U.S. action.

For this reason, the U.S. government often finds it beneficial to issue explanatory notes or additional sanctions to make clear when particular problematic institutions are actually a subsidiary, agent, or front for a terrorist organization. This informs civil society, businesses, and governments that such an institution is indeed complicit in the activities of a terrorist organization, and it warns them to steer clear at risk of penalties.

The U.S. has explicitly designated numerous Hezbollah institutions and actors before, including over 50 individuals and institutions from 2017 through 2019 alone.¹⁷² Many of Hezbollah's sanctioned institutions are clearly enmeshed with these schooling systems. For example, the U.S. has sanctioned Hezbollah's Jihad al-Binaa construction arm that has helped build numerous Mahdi schools.¹⁷³ The U.S. has sanctioned the Islamic Charitable Emdad Committee's Lebanon Branch that administers all of the Emdad schools.¹⁷⁴ And the U.S. has sanctioned Hezbollah's al-Manar television channel, which advertises the activities of many of these schooling networks.¹⁷⁵

When a pan-Arab satellite network stopped broadcasting al-Manar in 2015 for incitement and breach of contract,¹⁷⁶ the director general of the Mustafa schools' umbrella organization even paid a visit to al-Manar's

offices to announce that “in my name and in the name of the Association of Islamic Religious Education and the Mustafa schools, we salute the positions of al-Manar Channel, the channel of the resistance and the honorable channel, and we announce our solidarity with it, affirming that it has colonized [our] minds and hearts.”¹⁷⁷

The U.S. and six Gulf monarchies have also all imposed counterterrorism sanctions on members of Hezbollah’s top decision-making body, its Shura Council, which according to the U.S., also oversees Hezbollah’s terrorist operations.¹⁷⁸ Nearly all of the members of this council have participated in programs by the Mahdi schools, including Hassan Nasrallah, Naim Qassem, Muhammad Yazbak, Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, Hisham Safieddine, and Muhammad Raad.¹⁷⁹ Other programs by the Mahdi schools have been attended by family members of Mustafa Badreddine, the U.S.-designated head of Hezbollah’s terrorist operations who was killed in 2016.¹⁸⁰

In addition to playing a general leadership role for Hezbollah, many of these individuals have been personally identified by the U.S. government as playing a role in directing terrorist operations,¹⁸¹ human rights abuses in Syria,¹⁸² or other criminal acts.¹⁸³ Engaging with these individuals could itself be a sanctionable action.

More broadly, there is also the fundamental question for intelligence agencies to evaluate: whether or not these educational institutions have played a willing role in Hezbollah’s efforts at recruitment of future members or operatives. That would presumably be a sufficient basis for U.S. counterterrorism designations all on its own, and for at least some of the educational institutions profiled above in this report, it would strain credulity if the answer were to be no. For example, the UK’s *Daily Mail* reported in February of this year that “Intelligence sources claim more than 200 former members of the Al-Mahdi Scouts have died fighting against Israel and in the civil war in Syria.”¹⁸⁴

How Sanctions Could Help

If intelligence findings confirm the allegations that many of these institutions are in fact controlled by Hezbollah or complicit in providing it with substantial material support, then counterterrorism sanctions against them by the United States and other national governments could have a helpful impact in several key regards.

Such sanctions could deter certain third-party actors in Lebanon from conducting business as usual with educational entities that benefit Hezbollah. Such sanctions could send an important signal to governments around the world that Hezbollah’s so-called social services network is intimately bound up in advancing its terrorist agenda and operations. Such sanctions could encourage major social media companies to take further measures to protect young people from Hezbollah propaganda on their platforms. And such sanctions could encourage governments and corporations around the world to do a better job of due diligence to ensure that their aid and assistance does not indirectly go to terrorists.

For example, a recent instructive episode involves the prestigious and important American University of Beirut. In 2017, the university paid a \$700,000 fine and agreed to change its policies in response to a U.S. lawsuit alleging that it had provided material support to several sanctioned entities associated with Hezbollah, allowing journalists from Hezbollah’s al-Manar TV and al-Nour Radio to benefit from AUB media trainings and allowing Jihad al-Binaa, Hezbollah’s construction arm, to recruit student volunteers via a campus database of NGOs.¹⁸⁵ As a result of this settlement, AUB also agreed to put in place additional precautions to ensure that such violations may not happen again.¹⁸⁶

That case highlights the utility of U.S. sanctions for deterring third-party actors in Lebanon or beyond from conducting business with entities that carry out illicit activities for Hezbollah. For law-abiding institutions of higher education in particular, such as AUB, it could be especially impactful for their decision-making process if the United States were to explicitly designate primary and secondary schools that are part of Hezbollah's recruitment apparatus or complicit in its activities and that seek to send graduates to AUB. It is also worth pointing out that, according to Hezbollah's al-Nour Radio, as of 2019 Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit reportedly still has maintained a representative at AUB.¹⁸⁷

In the legal case involving AUB that was settled in early 2017, the U.S. had unusual leverage because the university had allegedly signed several inaccurate certifications as a condition of receiving certain U.S. aid that it would not provide services to any entity under American sanctions. But thanks to a new law that ADL endorsed in September 2017 and that Congress passed in October of the following year, called the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Amendments Act, the U.S. government now has additional authorities for using sanctions to deter other third-party actors from activities that involve Hezbollah educational institutions.

¹⁸⁸

One of this law's most important provisions is that it significantly expands the authority of American officials to impose what are called "secondary sanctions" to deter support for Hezbollah. Notably, it directs the U.S. president to block the available assets and impose travel sanctions on any foreign actor that "knowingly provides significant financial, material, or technological support for or to... a foreign [individual or entity] determined by the President to be engaged in fundraising or recruitment activities for Hizballah."¹⁸⁹ As such, U.S. sanctions on Hezbollah's educational institutions for their role in its terrorist recruitment activities could now have a stronger deterrent effect on mainstream third-party actors in Lebanon or around the world as a result of this new U.S. authority to follow them up with secondary sanctions.

Imposing U.S. sanctions against Hezbollah educational institutions would also send an important signal to decision makers in regions where Hezbollah conducts other logistical or recruitment operations – such as in certain parts of Europe, Latin America, East and South Asia, or West Africa – that even the group's so-called social service activities are intimately bound up in the terrorist activities of its military wing. Such governments should also be encouraged to impose their own counterterrorism sanctions on Hezbollah educational institutions to better deter their own citizens and firms from strengthening these dangerous institutions.

A second important provision of the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Amendments Act directed the Secretary of State to boost diplomatic initiatives to convince foreign governments to list Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization.¹⁹⁰ With ADL's endorsement, Congress also passed House Resolution H. Res. 359 in October 2017, which urged European Union members in particular to finally designate all of Hezbollah.¹⁹¹

Since then, numerous national governments have done so as a result of encouragement from the State Department, Congress, and Jewish community groups in the U.S. and abroad. This action has since been taken by the governments of Germany, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Honduras, and Kosovo, and it is being considered by Brazil.

U.S. sanctions specifically targeting Hezbollah's educational institutions could also help protect youth in Lebanon and beyond by constraining Hezbollah's propaganda presence aimed at young people on mainstream social media platforms. For example, an estimated 97 percent of Lebanese youth reported having access to

the Internet and using social media, according to a 2019 poll by the Arab Barometer.¹⁹² Although sanctions against a foreign educational institution exploited by terrorists would of course involve potential humanitarian costs as well as benefits, the U.S. has concluded before that such sanctions are appropriate.¹⁹³

In response to pressure from a group of bipartisan Members of Congress, Twitter recently shut down some of the main accounts associated with Hezbollah on its platform,¹⁹⁴ though others still remain. Explicitly imposing U.S. sanctions on the educational institutions associated with Hezbollah could therefore increase pressure on the major social media companies to block accounts associated with these entities as well. For example, the Mahdi schools apparently already had their YouTube channel shut down for violating YouTube's Community Guidelines,¹⁹⁵ but their account on Twitter remains operational through 2020.¹⁹⁶ The association for the Mustafa schools still has accounts on both platforms.¹⁹⁷ The Hezbollah charity that runs the Emdad schools (the Islamic Charitable Emdad Committee's Lebanon Branch) is already under U.S. sanctions,¹⁹⁸ and yet it is still has operational accounts on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.¹⁹⁹ As of May 2020, this Twitter account was even engaging in a Ramadan fundraising appeal, posting fliers with the image and words of Hassan Nasrallah commending the fund, along with phone numbers for making donations to the Islamic Charitable Emdad Committee's Lebanon Branch in cash or in kind.²⁰⁰

ADL has long encouraged social media companies to curtail the propaganda that terrorist organizations issue on their platforms in violation of terms of service or applicable laws.²⁰²

Sanctions are also important to impose on Hezbollah's educational institutions because of the international spillover that these institutions can have. For example, Hezbollah expert Emanuele Ottolenghi alleges that the Mahdi schools and Mahdi Scouts each appear to have counterparts in Brazil that may be of concern to Brazilian authorities.²⁰³

A senior leader of Yemen's Houthi rebels, who served as the extremist group's special envoy to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, is reported to have been engaged in trying to establish a Yemeni branch of Lebanon's Mustafa schools at the time of his death in 2015.²⁰⁴ Similarly, Mahdi school teachers have been presented to Yemeni audiences as role models on the Houthis' al-Maseera TV channel, which is based in Beirut and receives technical support from Hezbollah.²⁰⁵ Hezbollah's Educational Mobilization unit also appears to have offshoots, counterparts, or activities in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, and according to the *New York Times* its Mahdi Scouts created a Syrian branch.²⁰⁶ Although Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps appear to be the main source of educational incitement propagated to radical Shi'ite factions in the Middle East and beyond, Hezbollah is consistently Iran's most important additional partner through which such incitement is spread.²⁰⁷



[Flier posted on May 7th, 2020 to Twitter for the Islamic Charitable Emdad Committee's Lebanon Branch, making a Ramadan fundraising appeal quoting Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah commending the fund]²⁰¹

In recent years groups of students from boys' and girls' Mustafa schools have reportedly even traveled to Germany to participate in a technology invention fair in Nuremberg that lists among its event partners the German Patent and Trademark Office, a federal government agency.²⁰⁸ According to Lebanon's state news wire, a delegation of students from the Mustafa system's elite girls' school, al-Batoul,²⁰⁹ won gold medals from this event in Germany in both 2018 and 2019.²¹⁰ The students won these awards for projects on rather worrisome sounding topics given Hezbollah's terrorist nature: on an "Anti-Infrared and Thermo Military Suit" in 2018 and on "Pesticides: Alternatives and Effectiveness" in 2019.²¹¹ The Batoul delegation's military suit reportedly garnered investment requests at the fair from companies from Germany, France, and New Zealand,²¹² as well as an invitation from a French group to visit France and the United Arab Emirates.²¹³



[Lebanon's Minister of Industry in 2018, who also happened to be a senior Hezbollah official, congratulating students for their award-winning "Anti-Infrared and Thermo Military Suit"]²¹⁸

Upon their return from Germany to Lebanon, the girls received congratulatory visits for their award-winning military suit from Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a senior Hezbollah official who was serving then as Lebanon's Minister of Industry,²¹⁴ from senior Iranian diplomats,²¹⁵ and from a major Hezbollah fundraising apparatus named the Islamic Resistance Support Organization.²¹⁶ According to the U.S. Treasury Department, the Islamic Resistance Support Organization "has identified itself to prospective

donors as one and the same as Hizballah," and its fundraising materials "present donors with the option of sending funds to equip Hizballah fighters or to purchase rockets that Hizballah uses to target civilian populations."²¹⁷

Finally, in light of Hezbollah's increased influence over Lebanese state institutions, sanctions on Hezbollah schools can help ensure that international actors take necessary precautions to ensure that their aid and loans do not benefit terrorist recruitment and antisemitic incitement. For example, Lebanon expert Tony Badran reports that "in 2017, the Ministry of Social Affairs awarded Hezbollah's Mahdi Scouts, a youth organization, grant money provided by the World Bank's State and Peace Building Fund."²¹⁹ The Meir Amit Center reports that regional and global scouting associations have at times allowed their funding or programming to benefit the Mahdi Scouts.²²⁰ According to a *Daily Mail* report in February 2020, the World Scouting Movement recognizes the Mahdi Scouts but is now looking into allegations made against the Mahdi Scouts by the paper.²²¹ As for the Mahdi schools, Dakroub wrote that the schools' umbrella organization has "receive[d] financial assistance from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs as a subsidy to support its free of charge sections."²²²

Likewise, Hezbollah educational institutions are granted meetings with senior Lebanese government officials, including cabinet members



[Facebook picture exposed by the Daily Mail that appears to show Mahdi Scouts holding guns and posing with a Hezbollah fighter]²²³

and even Lebanon's President, Michel Aoun.²²⁴ President Aoun even sponsored a Mahdi schools education conference in 2017 at Beirut's UNESCO Palace, which is under the authority of Lebanon's Ministry of Culture.²²⁵ The Embassy of France reportedly sent a representative and gave remarks expressing thanks to the Mahdi schools' umbrella organization.²²⁶ The logo of the French government's Institut Français even appears to have been used on the stage's backdrop for this Mahdi school conference, along with other participating or sponsoring organizations.²²⁷ Years before becoming Lebanon's president, Michel Aoun personally attended another event hosted by the Mahdi schools' umbrella organization under the patronage of the Chairman of Hezbollah's Political Council to celebrate the schools' 21st anniversary, directly reaching tens of thousands of students per year, served by "more than 1,800 *mujahideen*."²²⁸

CONCLUSION

ADL has a long tradition of supporting freedom of speech. Usually, when ADL identifies instances of educational antisemitism abroad, such as in Arabic-language textbooks in the Gulf, it focuses on engaging policymakers to encourage revisions that would remove the problematic passages and add more tolerant content. However, in the case of Hezbollah schools in Lebanon, such incitement is not likely to be removed, and certainly not with mere encouragement.

On the other hand, at least some of the schools engaged in propagating horrific antisemitism in this case appear to be vulnerable to U.S. counterterrorism sanctions because of their role in Hezbollah's comprehensive system for youth indoctrination and terrorist recruitment. And because of Congressional legislation that was passed into law in 2018 with ADL's support, such sanctions can now better help constrain the capabilities of these dangerous institutions, deterring outside actors from enabling them. Furthermore, such sanctions by the U.S. and other governments would have another important effect: they would expose and condemn the role of these schools in fueling hatred and violence. They would make clear that the antisemitic myths that Hezbollah teaches to children are wrong, both factually and morally. And they would help emphasize to the international community that even Hezbollah's so-called social service activities are intimately used in the ultimate service of terrorism.

Therefore, we call on the United States and other national governments around the world – particularly those countries in Europe, Latin America, East and South Asia, and West Africa where Hezbollah's logistical or recruitment networks are strongest– to swiftly assess which of the educational institutions profiled in the body of this report are indeed complicit in sanctionable activity involving Hezbollah. Of course, such sanctions would also have to be carefully assessed with an eye toward minimizing the humanitarian impact on the Lebanese people. But as this report has extensively documented, there is already horrific and systematic indoctrination to antisemitism and support for terrorism taking place in many of these institutions, poisoning young minds to sacrifice themselves in service of a violent, fanatical, and Jew-hating agenda.

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