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Media and Mobilisation

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Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam

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Hezbollah in Europe: Media and Mobilisation

In December 2024, the German Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) had telecom companies block the homepages of the Hezbollah TV channel Al-Manar TV,[1] both in English and Arabic.[2] The European Union had banned the satellite channel from EU satellites already in 2005,[3] and some countries generally prohibited the satellite broadcast of Al-Manar TV, among them Germany in 2008.[4] Nonetheless, after these legal steps were taken, the channel and its contents were still available online and could be livestreamed, even by a German server. This caused some media outrage at the end of 2023,[5] and eventually led to the decision of KJM in December 2024. The bans against Al-Manar TV demonstrate that European countries have identified the channel as a source of problematic content. As Al-Manar was accessible for over 15 years after its ban in Germany, and continues to be available in other European countries, such as Austria and Switzerland, a closer look at Hezbollah's media outlet and their coverage of events in the German-speaking world seems warranted.

Since the November 2024 ceasefire – which was largely upheld in early 2025 despite some infringements from both sides – German-language media largely stopped covering Hezbollah and their role in the Middle East conflict. Instead, it focussed on organisations still actively connected to the war in Gaza and on hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah's ally Iran.[6] Waning media attention does not automatically result in less activity or importance, however. Hezbollah still operates in Lebanon and is also still active in Europe as well, but its organisational structures there can be hard to identify. This is illustrated by Germany's 2020 decision to prohibit Hezbollah's activities rather than impose a formal organisational ban.

To provide an introduction to the organisation itself and to situate the differing and diverse perceptions of this entity, we will, in the following, first address Hezbollah's emergence, leadership structure and current status. The second section deals with the group's reported activities in Germany,

[1] Al-Manar can be translated as "the lighthouse" or "the beacon".
[2] Kommission für Jugendschutz (18.12.2024): „Medienanstalten gehen entschieden gegen Propaganda-Kanal der Hisbollah vor: Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz (KJM) beschließt Sperrverfügung gegen Al-Manar", *Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz*, https://www.kjm-online.de/pressemitteilungen/vorgehen-al-manar/ [27.03.2025].
[3] European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security (21.09.2005): *Mitteilung der Kommission an das Europäische Parlament und den Rat – Rekrutierung von Terroristen – Bekämpfung der Ursachen von Radikalisierung und Gewaltbereitschaft /* KOM/2005/0313 endg. */*, Document 52005DC0313, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0313 [15.05.2025].
[4] Bundesanzeiger (11.11.2008): „Bekanntmachung der Verbotsverfügung", *Bundesanzeiger* no. 171, p. 4060, quoted in Oberverwaltungsgericht der Freien Hansestadt Bremen (15.11.2022): *Urteil* (OVG: 1 D 87/22), https://www.oberverwaltungsgericht.bremen.de/sixcms/media.php/13/1_D_87_22_Urteil_Entscheidungsmodul.pdf [23.05.2025], p. 12.
[5] E.g., Report München (28.11.2023): „Firma aus Hessen hostete Hisbollah-TV", *Das Erste*, https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/report-muenchen/firma-aus-hessen-hostete-hisbollah-tv/das-erste/Y3JpZDovL2JyLmRlL3ZpZGVvLzhmYmExY2RkLTJhZGMtNDQ3MS1iNjc1LTMzMmEwYjQxZDJkYg [27.03.2025].
[6] The cut-off point for this paper was early July 2025. Events since then as well as ensuing media coverage have not been included in this analysis.

Austria and Switzerland in detail. This serves a two-fold purpose. First, the chapter shows the importance of the topic in this area, as a Hezbollah presence can be traced there since the first half of the 1980s. Second, the section shows that research on Hezbollah is pertinent not only because of the war in the Middle East, but also because of its manifold activities in German-speaking countries. Through a chronological approach, we can examine the breadth of the group's activities, and likewise begin to gauge the impact which the activity ban had in Germany in 2020.[7] In addition, the segment presents the stances which various institutions are taking towards Hezbollah now.

After establishing the presence of Hezbollah in this geographical area and demonstrating its importance as a research topic, we examine the various media outlets which Hezbollah created and explore how these outlets have grown and changed over time, as well as how they have at times served as tools of psychological warfare. We particularly focus on Al-Manar, a publicly accessible Hezbollah media outlet in Europe, allowing for an analysis of its content relevant to Hezbollah with regard to Europe as well as an assessment of Hezbollah pursuits in reaching out to European adherents and sympathisers based on events in Europe. In view of the recent digital ban on Hezbollah activities in Germany at the end of 2024, we include a case study of Hezbollah's reaction to the original German ban. This illustrates how Hezbollah works to establish counter-narratives that are in line with their self-representation as a resistance movement and with their interpretation of events. Moreover, it shows how Hezbollah allies declared their allegiance to the group in the ban's aftermath, presenting Hezbollah as essentially a pan-Arab movement that is successfully challenging hegemonic powers and receives broad support from other resistance groups. This case study is embedded in a larger analysis of topics in the German-speaking area which the news outlet covered, and how these topics and the intensity of Al-Manar's reporting – if there was any – has changed over time. Through an examination of the media coverage of events on Al-Manar, we can trace different approaches and possible changes in its reporting and, consequently, Hezbollah's media strategy. The weakening of the organisation in the aftermath of 7 October 2023 is likely to have played a role. However, it can be shown that despite these changes, Hezbollah has in no way lost interest in reaching out to its sympathisers in Europe.

[7] It also serves as a foil against which to read Hezbollah's reaction to this ban, as it claimed to have no activities in Europe, see in detail below.

History of the organisation and current status

Hezbollah (*Ḥizb Allāh*, "Party of God") was founded in 1982 in South Lebanon. Today, it is a tripartite organisation encompassing a military arm, a political party, and social and cultural activities.[8] The latter includes the group's media network, but also features parastatal qualities. For instance, Hezbollah's hospitals and pharmacies have completely replaced the state health sector in southern Lebanon.[9] The vast majority of Hezbollah's high-ranking officials are clerics, which in turn dominate all three organisational sections.[10] Hezbollah maintains close ties to Iran, from which it receives ample funding, and for which it is an important ally.[11]

Hezbollah emerged during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) with ties to political and clerical figures from Iraq in Lebanon. An important predecessor of the organisation was Ḥarakat Afwāj al-Muqāwama al-Lubnānīya ("Movement of the Lebanese Resistance Detachments"), also known as AMAL, founded in 1974 by Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr (1928–likely 1978). After aṣ-Ṣadr's disappearance and presumed assassination in Libya in 1978, Beirut resident and Iraqi-born Ayatollah Ḥusain Faḍlallāh (1935–2010) took over as Lebanon's leading cleric. He acted as official representative of the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini (Rūḥollāh Mūsawī Khomeinī, 1902–1989) in Lebanon and gathered former AMAL members, political clerics, former political activists from Iraq and members of militant organisations to create a new organisation under the name Hezbollah.[12]

In 1985, Hezbollah issued its founding document, which declared three ideological pillars: belief in Islam (*īmān*), militancy (*jihād*), and the so-called "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist" (Persian: *velāyat-e faqīh*).[13] The latter relates to the state doctrine that the Islamic revolution in Iran had developed under the spiritual authority of Khomeini a few years earlier.[14] After Khomeini passed away, his

[8] Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2022): *Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia: Marǧaʿīya, transregionale Netzwerke und die Herrschaft des Rechtsgelehrten*, Grundlagenbericht 06, Wien, https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/fileadmin/dpi/publikationen/DPI_GB_Zwoelferschia.pdf [20.05.2025], pp. 72–77.
[9] Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh (2004): *In the Path of Hizbullah*, New York, pp. 54–61; Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2022): Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia, p. 74. This helps Hezbollah to obtain and maintain a support base, see Renad Mansour, Hayder Al-Shakeri, Haid Haid (06.03.2025): *The Shape-Shifting 'Axis of Resistance': How Iran and Its Networks Adapt to External Pressures*, Chatham House, Research Paper, London, https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Public/en-GB/DownloadImageFile.ashx?objectId=11043&ownerType=0&ownerId=206443 [10.12.2025], pp. 27 et seq.
[10] Hamzeh (2004): In the Path of Hizbullah, p. 45.
[11] Steinberg, Guido (2021): *The 'Axis of Resistance': Iran's Expansion in the Middle East Is Hitting a Wall*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Research Paper 6, Berlin, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2021RP06_Axis_of_Resistance.pdf [10.12.2025], pp. 12 et seq.
[12] Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2022): Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia, p. 73; Hamzeh (2004): In the Path of Hizbullah, pp. 20, 23 et seq.; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, Malek Abisaab (2014): *The Shiʿites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, New York, pp. 128, 130.
[13] Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2022): Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia, p. 73.
[14] Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2022): Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia, pp. 46–48.

successor as supreme leader, Ali Khamenei (‘Alī Khāmene’ī, b. 1939) became Hezbollah’s supreme religious and political authority. Already in the early 1980s, Khomenei tasked Khamenei with building Hezbollah.[15] Khamenei’s instructions to the organisation are binding insofar as his power is specifically invoked when internal differences arise.[16] In 1992, the cleric Ḥasan Naṣrallāh (1960–2024) assumed direct leadership of Hezbollah and became its general secretary. Although theoretically speaking, the General Assembly (Arabic: *muʾtamar ʿāmm*) elects the general secretary for at most two terms of three years each, Nasrallah remained in power for more than three decades with Khamenei’s[17] support until he was ultimately killed in an Israeli airstrike in September 2024. He was central to Hezbollah and a charismatic cleric and political leader.[18] Naʿīm Qāsim, Nasrallah’s former deputy, succeeded him in October 2024.

Since Hezbollah’s beginning, Iran — in particular through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) — has been a major financial source for the organisation, supporting them with money, goods and knowledge. Following the Lebanon War in 2006, Iran increased its backing of Hezbollah even further – with funds allocated for reconstructing areas affected by the war, in particular in the south of Lebanon.[19] Following 2009, sanctions weakened Iran’s capacity to fund Hezbollah. Further pressure on Iran from 2018 onward caused another decline in Hezbollah’s financing. The organisation itself was also affected by sanctions.[20] The group diversified its sources of income to include organised crime such as narcotics trafficking and money laundering,[21] though these activities were hardly new.[22] In addition, Hezbollah draws on state and non-state sources of income, formal and informal alike, often in cooperation or coordination with Iran and with other states and non-state actors supported by Tehran. Hezbollah is also involved in Iran’s oil trade and transport, therein undermining restrictions and sanctions. In 2021, the organisation used this connection to ease energy shortages in Lebanon, benefitting financially from the whole process[23].

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[15] Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2022): Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia, p. 74.
[16] Hamzeh (2004): In the Path of Hizbullah, p. 48.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Steinberg (2021): The ‘Axis of Resistance’.
[19] Steinberg (2021): The ‘Axis of Resistance’, pp. 12 et seq.; The International Institute for Strategic Studies (ed.) (2019): *Iran’s Network of Influence in the Middle East*, London, p. 66.
[20] Lina Khatib (2021): *How Hezbollah Holds Sway over The Lebanese State*, Chatham House, Research Paper, London, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-30-how-hezbollah-holds-sway-over-the-lebanese-state-khatib.pdf [30.06.2025], pp. 9, 14; Steinberg (2021): The ‘Axis of Resistance’, p. 13.
[21] Matthew Levitt (02.12.2022): “Hezbollah Turns 40: Implications of the Group’s Internal, Regional, and Strategic Shifts”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hezbollah-turns-40-implications-groups-internal-regional-and-strategic-shifts [10.12.2025].
[22] Matthew Levitt (13.02.2005): “Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God”*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hezbollah-finances-funding-party-god [22.05.2025].
[23] Mansour, Al-Shakeri, Haid (06.03.2025): The Shape-Shifting ‘Axis of Resistance’, pp. 18–21, 23 et seq. See also Khatib (2021): How Hezbollah Holds Sway over The Lebanese State, pp. 6–11, 13–17, 19–22, 27 et seq. The involvement in state structures can also be of use with regard to illegal activities such as drug trafficking, see eadem, p. 8.

Hezbollah's overall prestige is strongly linked to their actions on the ground in the Middle East. The organisation played an important role in Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, and again in the 34-day long Lebanon War against Israel in 2006. Hezbollah's popular status shifted in 2011, however, when they sided with the Syrian government's violent crackdown on anti-regime protests in spite of their claim of supporting all resistance movements. In 2019, the organisation lost much of its popularity in Lebanon, as Hezbollah did not side with anti-government protesters. Moreover, whilst Hezbollah did not participate in the massacre of 7 October 2023, they nevertheless fell right into line on the following day as fellow participants in the fight against Israel. Hezbollah militants mainly fired rockets and drones on the north of Israel, but in some instances reached as far south as Tel Aviv.[24] Their actions led to another spike in Hezbollah popularity in Lebanon, particularly among non-Shiites.[25] After air strikes and targeted attacks on Hezbollah operatives in September 2024, Israel launched a ground incursion into Lebanon in October supported by aerial bombardment, ultimately ending in a ceasefire brokered by the end of November. Meanwhile, across the way, in December 2024, Hezbollah's ally, Bashar al-Assad, was ousted from Syria, cutting the supply lines between Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, further weakening the organisation. After the resulting political deadlock was resolved in early 2025, Lebanon stated that it aimed to ensure that the Lebanese army was the sole carrier of weapons in the country. This statement was primarily aimed at Hezbollah, the only political group that did not dissolve its military wing once the civil war in Lebanon had ended in 1990. Municipal and mayoral election results in Lebanon in May 2025 demonstrated that Hezbollah's political party held its ground and has not lost its support due to the war against Israel, although voter turnout was markedly lower than in previous years.[26]

Although Hezbollah, in its function as a political party, is part of the Lebanese parliament and government, several countries have designated or treated Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist

[24] E.g., CNN (25.09.2024): "Israel Intercepts Hezbollah Ballistic Missile near Tel Aviv in First Such Attack", *CNN*, https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/25/middleeast/israel-rocket-lebanon-tel-aviv-intl-hnk/index.html [27.05.2025]; Reuters (12.10.2024): "Lebanon's Hezbollah Says It Attacked Outskirts of Tel Aviv with Drones on Friday", *Reuters*, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-says-it-attacked-outskirts-tel-aviv-with-drones-friday-2024-10-12/ [27.05.2024]; Die Presse (14.10.2024): „Geschosse aus dem Libanon: Erneut Raketenalarm im Großraum Tel Aviv", *Die Presse*, https://www.diepresse.com/18966998/geschosse-aus-dem-libanon-erneut-raketenalarm-im-grossraum-tel-aviv [27.05.2025]; Agence France-Press (24.11.2024): "Israel Records 250 Launches from Lebanon as Hezbollah Targets Tel Aviv, South", *France 24*, https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20241124-israel-records-250-launches-from-lebanon-as-hezbollah-targets-tel-aviv-south [27.05.2025].

[25] MaryClare Roche, Michael Robbins (12.07.2024): "What the Lebanese People Really Think of Hezbollah", *Foreign Affairs*, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/what-lebanese-people-really-think-hezbollah [20.05.2025].

[26] L'Orient Today (25.05.2025): "Hezbollah Victory in Several Villages in Southern Lebanon", *L'Orient Today*, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1461724/hezbollah-victory-in-several-villages-in-southern-lebanon.html [30.06.2025]; Heiko Wimmen (26.05.2025): "Municipal Polls Show Lebanese Politics Still Stuck after Punishing War", *International Crisis Group*, https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/east-mediterranean-mena/lebanon/municipal-polls-show-lebanese-politics-still-stuck-after-punishing-war [30.06.2025]; David Daoud (04.06.2025): "What Lebanon's Municipal Election Results Mean for Hezbollah", *Atlantic Council*, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/lebanon-elections-hezbollah/ [30.06.2025]. Hezbollah's involvement in municipalities is also a source of resources and influence, cf. Khatib (2021): How Hezbollah Holds Sway over The Lebanese State, p. 11.

organisation, in particular in the last few years, for instance, the United States (since 1997),[27] the Netherlands (since 2004),[28] Argentina (since 2019),[29] Paraguay (since 2019),[30] the United Kingdom (since 2019),[31] Colombia (since 2020),[32] Honduras (since 2020), [33] Kosovo (since 2020),[34] Slovenia (since 2020),[35] Australia (since 2021),[36] and New Zealand (since 2024)[37]. The Arab League considered Hezbollah a terrorist organisation in 2016, but refrained from labelling it as such in 2024 for the purpose of restoring dialogue.[38] For its part, the European Union only includes Hezbollah's military wing in its list of terrorist individuals, organisations and entities.[39] Germany issued a ban on Hezbollah activities in 2020,[40] and Austria banned symbols by the military wing of Hezbollah in 2019 and then banned symbols of the entire organisation in 2021.[41] In the aftermath of 7 October 2023, Switzerland

[27] U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Counterterrorism (12.12.2024): *Country Reports on Terrorism 2023*, https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2023/ [19.05.2025].
[28] General Intelligence and Security Service – Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (28.05.2004): *Annual Report 2004*, https://english.aivd.nl/publications/annual-report/2005/05/28/annual-report-2004 [19.05.2025].
[29] BBC (18.07.2019): "Argentina designates Hezbollah as Terrorist Organisation", *BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49030561 [02.07.2025]. See also note 30.
[30] Universidad de Navarra (2020): «La designación de Hezbolá como terrorista a lo largo del Hemisferio Occidental aúna estrategias», *Universidad de Navarra*, https://www.unav.edu/web/global-affairs/detalle/-/blogs/la-designacion-de-hezbola-como-terrorista-a-lo-largo-del-hemisferio-occidental-auna-estrategias [02.07.2025].
[31] UK Home Office (27.02.2025): "Hizballah (Party of God)", *Policy Paper: Proscribed Terrorist Groups or Organisations*, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version#:~:text=The%20UK%20government%20proscribed%20Hizballah's,the%20units%20reporting%20to%20it [19.05.2025].
[32] See note 30.
[33] See note 30.
[34] Avdullah Hoti [@Avdullah] (23.06.2020): "The Government of Kosovo", *X*, https://x.com/i/web/status/1275494532688351232 [02.07.2025].
[35] ORF (02.12.2020): „SLO: gesamte Hisbollah Terrororganisation", *ORF*, https://volksgruppen.orf.at/slovenci/meldungen/stories/3078653/ [28.05.2025].
[36] Australian National Security (03.10.2024): "Hizballah", *Listed Terrorist Organisations*, https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/what-australia-is-doing/terrorist-organisations/listed-terrorist-organisations/hizballah [19.05.2025].
[37] New Zealand Police (2025): "Lists associated with Resolution 1373", *Designated Terrorist Entities*, https://www.police.govt.nz/advice/personal-community/counterterrorism/designated-entities/lists-associated-with-resolution-1373 [19.05.2025].
[38] BBC (11.03.2016): "Arab League Brands Hezbollah a Terrorist Organisation", *BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35789303 [02.07.2025]; L'Orient Today (02.07.2024): "The Arab League Clarifies Its Stance on Hezbollah", *L'Orient Today*, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1419032/the-arab-league-clarifies-its-stance-on-hezbollah.html [02.07.2025].
[39] Council of the European Union (01.02.2025): *Consolidated Text: Council Common Position of 27 December 2001 on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism (2001/931/CFSP)*, Document 02001E0931-20250201, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02001E0931-20250201 [19.05.2024]. For the designation as of 2013, see European Parliament (11.11.2020), *E-004762/2020, E-004996/2020: Answer Given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell on Behalf of the European Commission*, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-004762-ASW_EN.html#ref1 [19.05.2025].
[40] Bundesministerium des Innern (30.04.2020): „Betätigungsverbot für Terrororganisation ‚Hizb Allah' in Deutschland", *Bundesministerium des Innern*, https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2020/04/betaetigungsverbot-hizb-allah.html [19.05.2025].
[41] Symbole-Gesetz §1, see Parlament Österreich (n.d.): „Symbole-Gesetz (109/BNR)", *Parlament Österreich*, https://www.parlament.gv.at/gegenstand/XXVI/BNR/109 [19.05.2025]; Rechtsinformationssystem des

has, after intense discussion and given divergent standpoints between various legislating sections, decided to draft a law banning Hezbollah in December 2024[42]. It had previously turned down a 2020 initiative in parliament to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, with formal procedures not to pursue this issue finalised as late as June 2023.[43]

Bundes (18.06.2025): „Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift für Symbole-Gesetz, Fassung vom 18.06.2025“, *Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes*, https://ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20009040 [18.06.2025].

[42] Die Bundesversammlung – Das Schweizer Parlament (21.10.2024): *24.4263 Motion: Die Hisbollah verbieten*, https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20244263 [19.05.2025]; Die Bundesversammlung – Das Schweizer Parlament (11.10.2024): *24.4255 Motion: Die Hisbollah verbieten*, https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20244255 [27.06.2025].

[43] Bundesrat der Schweizer Eidgenossenschaft (03.11.2022): *Die Hisbollah und die Schweiz. Bericht des Bundesrates in Erfüllung der Postulate 20.3650 Binder-Keller und 20.3824 Pfister*, https://www.parlament.ch/centers/eparl/curia/2020/20203824/Bericht%20BR%20D.pdf [19.05.2025]; Die Bundesversammlung – Das Schweizer Parlament (17.06.2020): *20.3650 Postulat: Bericht über die Aktivitäten der schiitisch-islamistischen Hisbollah in der Schweiz*, https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20203650 [19.05.2025].

Activities in German-speaking countries: Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Germany

Hezbollah activities in Germany go as far back as 1984, early on in the organisation's history. In that year, the CIA claimed Hezbollah was responsible for the hijacking of Air France Flight 747, which had departed from Frankfurt and was diverted to Tehran[44]. Since then, a range of events has garnered media attention. For instance, in 1989, a Hezbollah operative from Lebanon studying in Germany had plotted to attack Israeli, Jewish and American targets there[45]. Several men who conducted the so-called Mykonos assassinations ("Mykonos-Attentat") in Berlin in 1992 were adherents of Hezbollah,[46] although Iran and its secret service, *not* Hezbollah, were the ones ultimately responsible for the attack in which four people associated with the Kurdish opposition in Iran were assassinated.[47] Five years later, a German convert, Steven Smyrek, was arrested in Israel. He had joined Hezbollah and had surveyed targets for a suicide attack in Israel. He came into contact with Hezbollah in Braunschweig, Germany, and did training in weapon handling and explosives in a terrorist training camp in Lebanon. He was originally sentenced to ten years in prison, but returned to Germany after several years as he was released as part of a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hezbollah facilitated by Germany.[48] Shortly after his arrest, German Neo-Nazis called for solidarity with Smyrek.[49]

The 2000s also witnessed Hezbollah activity in Germany. In 2005, a court in Düsseldorf decided that a member of Hezbollah, who had been living in Germany for two decades, had to leave the country—at a time when Hezbollah had not yet been banned there[50]. Three years later, Israeli authorities

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[44] Directorate of Intelligence (31.07.1985): "Radical Shia Terrorism in Western Europe", *CIA*, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP87T00434R000200150027-1.pdf [13.06.2025].
[45] Matthew Levitt (2013): *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*. Washington, pp. 62 et seq.; Matthew Levitt (2013): "Hezbollah's Organized Criminal Enterprises in Europe", *Perspectives on Terrorism 7/4*, pp. 27–40, https://pt.icct.nl/sites/default/files/import/pdf/hezbollah%E2%80%99s-organized-criminal-enterprises-in-europe--matthew-levitt.pdf [22.05.2025], p. 27.
[46] TAZ (15.09.1995): „‚Anhänger der Hisbollah'", *TAZ*, https://taz.de/!1259537/ [27.05.2025].
[47] Kammergericht (10.04.1997): „Geschäftsnummer 2 StE 2/93 (19/93)", *Internet Archive / Kammergericht*, https://web.archive.org/web/20071008112848/http://kammergericht.de/entscheidungen/Strafsenate/1_StE_19-93.pdf [27.05.2025]; Bundesgerichtshof (09.12.1998): „Bundesgerichtshof bestätigt ‚Mykonos'-Urteil", *Mitteilung der Pressestelle*, https://juris.bundesgerichtshof.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bgh&Art=pm&sid=cc15912a60ec22ff2916bd4981c810da&Sort=1&nr=13704&pos=22&anz=3984&Blank=1 [10.12.2025].
[48] Georg Bönisch, Michael Fröhlingsdorf, Gunther Latsch et al. (23.09.2001): „Angriff auf den Staat im Staate", *Spiegel online*, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/angriff-auf-den-staat-im-staate-a-eb8b478b-0002-0001-0000-000020184254 [19.05.2025]; Der Spiegel (30.01.2004): „Smyrek ist in Deutschland untergetaucht", *Spiegel online*, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/deutscher-hisbollah-kaempfer-smyrek-ist-in-deutschland-untergetaucht-a-284241.html [19.05.2025].
[49] Anton Maegerle, Heribert Schiedel (2001): „Krude Allianz: Das arabisch-islamistische Bündnis mit deutschen und österreichischen Rechtsextremisten", *Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, https://www.doew.at/cms/download/b3cc7/re_maegerle_schiedel_allianz.pdf [11.06.2025].
[50] Agence France-Presse (05.01.2005): "Lebanese Hezbollah Official Forced to Leave Germany", quoted in Levitt (2013): Hezbollah's Organized Criminal Enterprises in Europe, p. 28.

arrested Khalid Kashkoush, an Israeli Arab medical student studying in Germany who was recruited by a Hezbollah member based in Germany to collect information on Israelis studying abroad.[51] By the end of the same year, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior issued a ban on activities by the television channel Al-Manar, which had previously been broadcasted by satellite, citing its anti-Semitic content, glorification of martyrdom, and promotion of armed struggle against Israel.[52] On the other hand, for its part, the French government had already banned the channel in 2004.

More recent examples of Hezbollah activity have also surfaced in the media. From 2012 to 2016, Hezbollah members used a haulage company in southern Germany as a storage base for ammonium nitrate, a substance used to produce explosives. The substance was reportedly removed from Germany in 2016.[53] This was not the only instance when Hezbollah deposited this ammonium nitrate in Germany, however. In 2020, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior Hans-Georg Engelke confirmed that Germany had seized a considerable amount of the chemical in a raid in Southern Germany carried out before the ban on Hezbollah, and had observed numerous attempts to procure explosive substances.[54] In 2014, Germany banned the Essen-based Orphaned Children Project–Lebanon ("Waisenkinderprojekt Libanon e.V."), which had raised over 3 million Euros in donations for Hezbollah's Martyrs Foundation[55]. The head of its German branch had previously recruited the aforementioned medical student Khalid Kashkoush for Hezbollah.[56] In the following year, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated two German nationals as *specially designated narcotics traffickers.*[57] Judicial authorities in the US, Germany and France, among others, conducted a crackdown in 2016 on an organised criminal group suspected of financing terrorism through Hezbollah.[58] Its members had travelled through Europe to collect profits from cocaine sales and used them to buy luxury items to send to Lebanon. Some of the proceeds were

[51] Matthew Levitt (2020): "The Lebanese Hizbullah Financing Threat in Europe", *Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies*, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/603 [27.01.2023], p. 4 et seq.
[52] Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport [Berlin] (2009): *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2008*, Berlin, https://www.parlament-berlin.de/ados/16/VerfSch/vorgang/vfs16-0043-v.pdf [27.01.2023].
[53] Ibrahim Naber (06.08.2020): „Lagerte die Hisbollah Ammoniumnitrat in Deutschland?", *Welt*, https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article213053838/Ammoniumnitrat-Lagerte-die-Hisbollah-den-explosiven-Stoff-in-Deutschland.html [27.05.2025]. The report cites an official stating that Germany was not able to seize a considerable amount of ammonium nitrate, but an article by jungle world around the same time quotes the State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior.
[54] The State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior provided this information during an online event in September 2020: American Jewish Committee (17.09.2020): "Enough Is Enough: The Case for Banning Hezbollah – AJC Advocacy Anywhere", *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IpRMYSh7AZY&ab_channel=AmericanJewishCommittee [02.07.2025] [starting at ca. 33:19 and esp. after ca. 34:18].
[55] Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (08.04.2014): „Deutscher Unterstützerverein der Hizbullah verboten", *FAZ*, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/razzia-gegen-islamisten-deutscher-unterstuetzerverein-der-hizbullah-verboten-12885502.html [27.05.2025].
[56] Varinia Bernau (17.05.2010): „Göttinger Student als Hisbollah-Spion angeklagt", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/spitzelverdacht-goettinger-student-als-hisbollah-spion-angeklagt-1.600526 [27.05.2025].
[57] Press Center (06.11.2020): "Treasury Sanctions Maritime Network Tied to Joumaa Criminal Organization", *U.S. Department of the Treasury*, https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jl0196 [21.05.2025].
[58] Financial Intelligence Group (2017): "From Suspicion to Action", *Europol*, https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/ql-01-17-932-en-c_pf_final.pdf [27.01.2023], p. 16.

used to arm fighters backing the Assad regime in Syria.[59] A key person involved was Düsseldorf-based car trader Hassan Trabulsi, purportedly a nephew of the long-serving general secretary of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah. Trabulsi was arrested as part of Operation Cedar,[60] which targeted criminal activities in Europe, South America and the Middle East that generated revenue and operational support for Hezbollah[61]. In 2018, Germany's Federal Public Prosecutor General at the Federal Supreme Court opened 36 investigations against individuals with suspected ties to Hezbollah[62]. In connection with the German ban of Hezbollah, a number of premises were raided, including the association and community centre Al-Mustafa Gemeinschaft e. V. (AMG), where donations for the Orphaned Children Project–Lebanon had been collected. According to court records, Al-Manar had reported on an AMG Ashura-celebration in 2018[63]. The Senator for the Interior of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen banned AMG in March 2022[64] (legally confirmed in November 2022[65]).

On 30 April 2020, Germany's Federal Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer announced the ban of Hezbollah activities in Germany and swiftly began enforcement. On the same day, security forces conducted searches of potential sub-organisations of Hezbollah in Germany in the federate states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Bremen and Berlin. Searched premises included four mosque associations. The ban prohibits the use of Hezbollah symbols in public, in assemblies and in visual or audio material that is distributed or intended for distribution. The symbols include Hezbollah's yellow-and-green emblem which features the group's name alongside a raised arm holding an AK-47, a Qur'an and a seven-leafed branch. The ban also extends to the symbol of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts, Hezbollah's youth movement. In addition, the ban allows for the confiscation of assets linked to Hezbollah.[66]

Since the ban, a considerable number of investigations has taken place against people and associations suspected of ties to Hezbollah. In 2021, the German federal interior ministry banned an

[59] Washington Institute [@WashingtonInstitute85] (16.03.2022): "Operation Cedar: Hezbollah Narco-Money Laundering", *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rW89td5KoK0 [27.01.2023].
[60] Washington Institute (16.03.2022): "Episode 6: Operation Cedar Hezbollah Narco-Money Laundering", *Washington Institute*, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/5452 [27.01.2023], p. 4.
[61] United States Drug Enforcement Administration (01.02.2016): "DEA And European Authorities Uncover Massive Hizballah Drug And Money Laundering Scheme", *DEA*, https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2016/02/01/dea-and-european-authorities-uncover-massive-hizballah-drug-and-money [03.02.2023].
[62] Deutscher Bundestag (05.04.2019): „Antwort der Bundesregierung: Drucksache 19/9163", *Deutscher Bundestag*, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/091/1909163.pdf [12.06.2025], p. 2.
[63] Oberverwaltungsgericht der Freien Hansestadt Bremen (15.11.2022): Urteil (OVG: 1 D 87/22), p. 4.
[64] Freie Hansestadt Bremen (17.03.2022): „Innenbehörde verbietet Unterstützerverein der ‚Hizb Allah' (Hisbollah)", *Pressestelle des Senats*, https://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/pressemitteilungen/innenbehoerde-verbietet-unterstuetzerverein-der-hizb-allah-hisbollah-380311 [10.12.2025].
[65] Freie Hansestadt Bremen (01.12.2022): „Oberverwaltungsgericht bestätigt Betätigungsverbot der ‚Al-Mustafa Gemeinschaft e.V.' vom 1. März 2022", *Pressestelle des Senats*, https://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/pressemitteilungen/oberverwaltungsgericht-bestaetigt-betaetigungsverbot-der-al-mustafa-gemeinschaft-e-v-vom-1-maerz-2022-411808 [19.05.2025]; Oberverwaltungsgericht der Freien Hansestadt Bremen (15.11.2022): „Verbot eines Vereins, der die Hizb Allah unterstützt, 1 D 87/22", *Freie Hansestadt Bremen*, https://www.oberverwaltungsgericht.bremen.de/gerichtsentscheidung-en/verbot-eines-vereins-der-die-hizb-allah-unterstuetzt-23163?asl=bremen72.c.11265.de [19.05.2025].
[66] Bundesministerium des Innern (30.04.2020): Betätigungsverbot.

additional three associations that had collected funds for Hezbollah[67]. A German-Iranian man was arrested for attempted arson on a synagogue in Bochum which ended up ultimately affecting a school instead in 2022. The man was sent to prison for two years and nine months, with courts stating that the attack had been carried out by order of Iran[68]. According to a media report, he was in possession of digital material indicating his sympathies for Hezbollah.[69] In the same year, the deputy chief of the Islamic Centre Hamburg (Islamisches Zentrum Hamburg, IZH) – an important Shiite organisation accused of functioning as an arm of the Iranian state promoting Iran's interests – was expelled from Germany because of his ties to Hezbollah[70]. On 16 November 2023, police searched more than 50 objects of the IZH and its branches in seven federal states. Nancy Faeser, then Federal Minister of the Interior, announced an outright ban on the organisation on 24 July 2024, mentioning, among other factors, IZH's support for Hezbollah.[71] Five weeks later, Germany expelled IZH's leader and prohibited him from entering or residing in Germany for 20 years. He voluntarily left Germany soon afterwards. Significantly, he was regarded as the most senior Shiite clerical authority in Europe outside Great Britain and was widely viewed as Ali Khamenei's de facto representative on the continent.[72] In the same month, a Lebanese citizen, Fadel Z., was arrested in Salzgitter, Lower Saxony, for membership in Hezbollah and obtaining parts for military UAVs earmarked for terrorist attacks against Israel.[73] At the same time, three suspected accomplices were arrested in Spain.[74]

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[67] Zeit Online (19.05.2021): „Bundesinnenministerium verbietet Vereine aus Umfeld der Hisbollah", *Zeit Online*, https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2021-05/terrorismus-horst-seehofer-spendensammel-vereine-hisbollah-libanon-verbot [10.12.2025].

[68] Westdeutscher Rundfunk (19.12.2023): „Haftstrafe für Brandanschlag in Bochum: Spur führt in den Iran", *WDR*, https://www1.wdr.de/nachrichten/ruhrgebiet/haftstrafe-fuer-brandanschlag-auf-bochumer-schule-brandsatz-war-eigentlich-fuer-synagoge-bestimmt-100.html [21.05.2025].

[69] Julian Feldmann (10.12.2024): „Warnung vor radikalen Einzeltätern", *Tagesschau*, https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/ndr/hisbollah-deutschland-einzeltaeter-100.html [21.05.2025].

[70] Gregory Dauber (02.11.2022): „Regimetreu und gefährlich: Hamburger Mullah droht Abschiebung", *hamburg.t-online*, https://hamburg.t-online.de/region/hamburg/id_100074274/hamburg-iranischer-regime-funktionaer-soll-abgeschoben-werden.html [21.05.2025]; Die Presse (29.08.2024): „Ex-Leiter des Islam-Zentrums Hamburg muss Deutschland verlassen", *Die Presse*, https://www.diepresse.com/18805789/ex-leiter-des-islam-zentrums-hamburg-muss-deutschland-verlassen [02.06.2025].

[71] Bundesministerium des Inneren und für Heimat (24.07.2024): „Bundesinnenministerin Faeser verbietet das ‚Islamische Zentrum Hamburg' und dessen Teilorganisationen", *Pressemitteilung*, https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/07/exekutive4.html [21.05.2025].

[72] ZDF (29.08.2024): „Früherer IZH-Leiter wird ausgewiesen", *ZDF*, https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/mofatteh-ausweisung-izh-islamisches-zentrum-hamburg-100.html [22.05.2025]; ZDF (11.09.2024): „IZH-Leiter hat Deutschland verlassen", *ZDF*, https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/izh-mofatteh-ausreise-hamburg-100.html [22.05.2025]; Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Hamburg (2024): *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2023*, Hamburg, https://www.hamburg.de/resource/blob/949508/58457a6baf44a0e339f6beb63edd379d/verfassungsschutzbericht-2023-pdf-data.pdf [22.05.2025].

[73] Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof (14.07.2024): „Festnahme eines mutmaßlichen Mitglieds der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung ‚Hizb Allah' (‚Hisbollah')", *Der Generalbundesanwalt*, https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/Pressemitteilung-vom-15-07-2024.html [23.05.2025].

[74] Panorama 3 (10.12.2024): „Hisbollah in Deutschland: Warnung vor radikalen Einzeltätern" [video], *NDR*, https://www.ndr.de/fernsehen/sendungen/panorama3/Hisbollah-in-Deutschland-Warnung-vor-radikalen-Einzeltaetern,panoramadrei4808.html [23.05.2025].

On the same day as the IZH expulsion, police searched approximately twenty locations across Lower Saxony in an investigation into five individuals and two associations suspected of links to Hezbollah.[75] A year later, one of the five, Fadel R., was arrested on charges of being a member of Hezbollah and engaging in activities on their behalf in Germany. Authorities allege that he maintained contact with senior Hezbollah members, worked as a correspondent for a Hezbollah media outlet,[76] and underwent training for a leadership position.[77] In December 2023, Ammar A., a Syrian suspected of membership in a Hezbollah-militia active in Syria in 2012 and 2013 was arrested in Baden-Württemberg and indicted in July 2024 for, among other offenses, suspected crimes against humanity and war crimes.[78] The trial is still ongoing. Another case surfaced around six months later. A court in Hamburg sentenced two Lebanese citizens, Abdul-Latif W. and Hassan M., to several years in prison for being members of Hezbollah in June 2024. Both men had close ties to IZH. The court determined they were both long-serving functionaries of the organisation. Abdul-Latif W. was part of an elite military arm of Hezbollah and was in Syria during the civil war. In Germany, he headed a now-banned association that supported Hezbollah and was active in youth work. Hassan M. served as a so-called "travel sheikh", acting as a link between Hezbollah and associations in Germany, where he also did work as a preacher and in youth outreach. One of the two men led a youth organisation that actually involved children in paramilitary training. The youth organisation was modelled after a Hezbollah organisation in Lebanon. This was the first trial verdict against members of Hezbollah in Germany as terrorists subsequent to the ban in 2020.[79] The verdict has since been confirmed.[80] The latest available number of Hezbollah supporters in Germany is estimated at 1250 people for 2023.[81]

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[75] Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof (16.11.2024): „Durchsuchungen bei mutmaßlichen Mitgliedern der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung ‚Hizb Allah' (‚Hisbollah')", *Der Generalbundesanwalt*, https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2023/Pressemitteilung-vom-16-11-2023.html [23.05.2025].

[76] Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof (03.12.2024): „Festnahme eines mutmaßlichen Mitglieds der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung ‚Hizb Allah'(‚Hisbollah')", *Der Generalbundesanwalt*, https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/Pressemitteilung-vom-03-12-2024.html [23.05.2025].

[77] Panorama 3 (10.12.2024): Hisbollah in Deutschland.

[78] Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof (24.07.2025): „Anklage gegen ein mutmaßliches Hisbollah-Mitglied wegen Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit und Kriegsverbrechen in Syrien erhoben", *Der Generalbundesanwalt*, https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/Pressemitteilung-vom-24-07-2024.html [23.05.2025].

[79] Norddeutscher Rundfunk (28.06.2024): „Hamburger Gericht verurteilt Hisbollah-Mitglieder zu Haftstrafen" [incl. video], *NDR*, https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Hamburger-Gericht-verurteilt-Hisbollah-Mitglieder-zu-Haftstrafen,prozess9104.html [23.05.2025]; Oberverwaltungsgericht der Freien Hansestadt Bremen (15.11.2022): Urteil (OVG: 1 D 87/22); Panorama 3 (10.12.2024): Hisbollah in Deutschland; Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof (15.12.2023): „Anklage gegen zwei mutmaßliche Mitglieder der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung ‚Hizb Allah'(‚Hisbollah') erhoben", *Der Generalbundesanwalt*, https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2023/Pressemitteilung-vom-15-12-2023-Nr-59.html [23.05.2025]; see also next note.

[80] Bundesgerichtshof (20.02.2025): „Verurteilung wegen mitgliedschaftlicher Beteiligung an der terroristischen Vereinigung Hizb Allah rechtskräftig", *Bundesgerichtshof*, https://www.bundesgerichtshof.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2025/2025039.html [23.05.2025].

[81] Bundesministerium des Inneren und für Heimat (2024): *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2023*, Berlin, https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2024-06-18-verfassungsschutzbericht-2023.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=17 [23.05.2025].

Austria

In Austria, the history of Hezbollah activities is less eventful. The first reported instance of a Hezbollah operative in Austria took place in 1996 when Lebanese national Hussein Mikdad flew from Damascus to Vienna before taking a train to Zurich. Mikdad's departure from Switzerland was supposed to facilitate his entry into Israel, where he accidently injured himself while assembling an explosive.[82] After a period of relative calm with no comparable case making international headlines, Hezbollah activities have become better documented in recent years. For instance, videos of a man posing with a Hezbollah flag at the Vienna airport circulated on social media in 2018.[83] Two years later, a Hezbollah member was sentenced to nine years in prison in Klagenfurt. The Lebanese national told state officials that he had joined Hezbollah in 2006 and had commanded a group of 60 men who fought at the Lebanese border to Syria. Moreover, he stated that he had trained fighters and had recruited around 250 people to join Hezbollah. In addition, the prosecutor charged the man with collecting donations for Hezbollah.[84] The verdict was later overturned, but some of the charges were brought to trial anew. The man was convicted for terrorist offenses again in 2021, receiving a six and a half year prison sentence.[85] Austria follows the EU list of terrorist individuals, organisations and entities which currently designates only the military branch of Hezbollah. The country banned the display, exhibition, and dissemination of symbols of this branch in 2019,[86] and those of Hezbollah in its entirety two years later.[87] In addition, Austria was mentioned in connection with other activities

[82] Douglas Frantz (10.11.1996): "The Accountant Is a Terrorist", *New York Times Magazine*, via *Gale Academia OneFile*: link.gale.com/apps/doc/A150432015/AONE?u=43wien&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=20d26660 [13.06.2025].
[83] Tilivizyōn Sūriyā [@syr_television] (10.12.2018): [*X*-post], *X*, https://x.com/syr_television/status/1072068406319308800 [12.06.2025].
[84] Kurier (26.08.2020): „Terror-Prozess in Klagenfurt: Neun Jahre Haft für Hisbollah-Mitglied", *Kurier*, https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/terror-prozess-in-klagenfurt-neun-jahre-haft-fuer-hisbollah-mitglied/401012018 [27.01.2023].
[85] APA (07.07.2021): „Terrorprozess in Klagenfurt: Sechs Jahre und neun Monate Haft", *Der Standard*, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000128019307/terrorprozess-in-klagenfurt-sechs-jahre-und-neun-monate-haft [27.05.2025]. The verdict has since been confirmed: Oberster Gerichtshof (01.12.2025): "15 Os 124/21f-4", *Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes*, https://ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/Justiz/JJT_20211201_OGH0002_0150OS00124_21F0000_000/JJT_20211201_OGH0002_0150OS00124_21F0000_000.pdf [10.06.2025].
[86] Symbole-Gesetz §1, see Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (14.01.2019): „Bundesrecht konsolidiert: Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift für Symbole-Gesetz, Fassung vom 05.03.2019", *Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes*, https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/NormDokument.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20009040&FassungVom=2019-03-05&Artikel=&Paragraf=1&Anlage=&Uebergangsrecht= [28.05.2025].
[87] Symbole-Gesetz §1, Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (12.06.2025): „Bundesrecht konsolidiert: Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift für Symbole-Gesetz, Fassung vom 12.06.2025", *Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes*, https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20009040 [12.06.2025].

directed against Hezbollah. That is, in the Israeli[88] pager attack against Hezbollah in September 2024, media initially reported links to Austria[89] and later to Switzerland.[90]

Switzerland

In Switzerland, Hezbollah activities can also be traced. For instance, in 1987, the Lebanese citizen Hussein Hariri, who was close to Hezbollah, hijacked an Air Afrique flight on its way from Brazzaville to Paris via Bangui and Rome, forcing it to land in Geneva for refuelling as he intended to take it to Beirut. He demanded the release of Hezbollah terrorists, including a man arrested at Frankfurt airport for bringing liquid explosives to Germany. The man assassinated a French hostage in the process. Airport staff were able to overpower him and Swiss security forces apprehended the hijacker.[91] He received a life sentence two years later and was released and deported to Lebanon in 2004. In his 17 years in prison, he broke out twice, and in one case was recaptured in Morocco.[92] In the early 2000s, leading Hezbollah figures travelled to European countries – particularly Germany and Switzerland – to bolster their political standing.[93] According to information provided by the then US State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism in 2020, ever since 2012, Hezbollah has moved ammonium nitrate across Europe to several European states, among them Switzerland, though the substance does not seem to have been stored there anymore as recently as 2018.[94] Provided in response to two postulates in the Swiss parliament in 2022, a report on Hezbollah states that Hezbollah is

[88] ORF (10.11.2024): „Netanjahu genehmigte Pager-Angriffe", *ORF*, https://orf.at/stories/3375578/ [28.05.2025].
[89] Jochen Stahnke (18.09.2024): „Pager-Hersteller: Explodierte Geräte sind nicht von uns", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/krieg-in-nahost/libanon-pager-stammen-offenbar-nicht-aus-taiwan-19991565.html [28.05.2025]; Kim Son Hoang; Krasen Nikolov (19.09.2024): „Kamen explodierende Hisbollah-Pager aus Bulgarien?", *Der Standard*, https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000237294/bulgarien-prueft-moegliche-verbindung-mit-pager-explosionen [28.05.2025].
[90] Anielle Peterhans, Bernhard Odehnal, Roland Gamp; Frederik Obermaier (07.10.2024): „Im Rätsel um die explodierten Pager taucht ein Schweizer Name auf", *Tages-Anzeiger*, https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/libanon-grosses-raetsel-um-pager-explosionen-fuehrt-in-die-schweiz-318174392041 [28.05.2025].
[91] Edward Cody (25.07.1987): "Hijacker Kills Plane Passenger: Gunman Captured by Crew in Geneva", *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/07/25/hijacker-kills-plane-passenger/73d7e074-da7a-42de-a60e-de4114d3270b/ [02.06.2025]; ORF (17.02.2014): „Einige endeten blutig", *ORF*, https://newsv2.orf.at/stories/2218691/ [02.06.2025]; The New York Times (25.02.1989): "Swiss Give Life Term To a Lebanese Man In a Fatal Hijacking", *The New York Times*, via *Gale Academic OneFile*: link.gale.com/apps/doc/A175636435/AONE?u=43wien&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=0c882a1e [13.06.2025], L.A. Times (24.07.1987): "Arab Gunman Hijacks African Jetliner, Kills French Passenger: Attacker in Geneva Drama Named as Hezbollah Member", *L.A. Times*, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-07-24-mn-3873-story.html [02.06.2025]; Paul Lewis (25.07.1987): "Jet Crew Members Capture Hijacker", *The New York Times*, via *Gale Academic OneFile*: link.gale.com/apps/doc/A176102780/AONE?u=43wien&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=6f992afa [13.06.2025].
[92] Swissinfo (17.10.2004): "Hijacker deported back to Lebanon", *Swissinfo*, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/aging-society/hijacker-deported-back-to-lebanon/4149160 [02.06.2025].
[93] Information according to an Israeli Intelligence report (n.d.): *Hizballah Leader's Visits to Europe*, quoted in Matthew Levitt (2013): Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God, pp. 218, 240 (endnote 78) and pp. 231, 243 (endnote 174).
[94] The then U.S. State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism provided this information during an online event in September 2020: American Jewish Committee (17.09.2020): Enough Is Enough: The Case for Banning Hezbollah [ca. 16:22].

intent on connecting with the Shiite diaspora in the country. It estimates several dozen people in Switzerland could actively support Hezbollah, though not all of them out of religious or political motivations. Imams from abroad who come to Switzerland for Shiite religious festivities, for example, often harbour links to Hezbollah. Associations do not organise public events such as Quds day,[95] but members can be actively involved in their organisation. The number of people participating is low, however. Suspicions of money laundering and financial transfers by Hezbollah sympathisers linger, but so far, transfers in Switzerland benefitting Hezbollah cannot be proven. According to the report, Switzerland has not detected community fundraising for Hezbollah in Lebanon. With regard to active involvement with Hezbollah, the report refers to several people suspected of involvement with the External Security Organisation of Hezbollah in the late 2000s, supposedly forming a cell in the region of Zurich to survey potential targets.[96] More recently, media reported on Polish investigations against Samer A., a person from Lebanon with Polish citizenship, for alleged ties to Hezbollah and in the framework of a financial audit. He was the CEO of a Swiss subsidiary firm of a large Eastern European energy company. During his time as CEO, 330 million Dollars disappeared in an oil trade. The mother company alleges that he maintained contacts with Hezbollah and participated in an earlier effort to circumvent sanctions against Iranian oil involving the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Samer A. denied any ties to Hezbollah. He has also been charged separately for financial crimes in Poland from 2008–2013. The UAE detained him early in 2025.[97]

[95] The Quds day is an annual day of action created by Khomeini in 1979 calling for the conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of Israel, see e.g., Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2024): *Transnationale Netzwerke. Der politische Islam der Zwölferschia in Österreich*, DPI Focus, Vienna, https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/fileadmin/dpi/publikationen/DPI-Focus_Transregionale-Netzwerke-IZIA.pdf [02.06.2025], p. 16.
[96] Der Bundesrat (02.11.2022): „Die Hisbollah und die Schweiz: Bericht des Bundesrates in Erfüllung der Postulate 20.3650 Binder-Keller und 20.3824 Pfister“, *Der Bundesrat*, https://www.newsd.admin.ch/newsd/message/attachments/73677.pdf [28.05.2025].
[97] Raphael Minder (01.05.2024): “Poland Probes State Oil Group’s Swiss Subsidiary for Alleged Hizbollah Links”, *Financial Times*, https://www.ft.com/content/495a8fbb-98c7-489c-93a0-63f634495ba0 [28.05.2025]; Sascha Buchbinder (09.10.2024): „Hisbollah-Verbindung: früherer CEO von Zuger Firma untergetaucht“, *SRF*, https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/verlust-von-330-millionen-hisbollah-verbindung-frueherer-ceo-von-zuger-firma-untergetaucht [28.05.2025]; Reuters (15.01.2025): “Former CEO of Orlen Swiss Trading Business Detained in UAE, Poland Says”, *Reuters*, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/former-ceo-orlen-swiss-trading-business-detained-uae-poland-says-2025-01-15/ [28.05.2025]; Euractiv with Reuters (01.05.2024): “Poland Probing Alleged Links between Orlen Unit’s ex-CEO and Hezbollah”, *EURACTIV*, https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence/news/poland-probing-alleged-links-between-orlen-units-ex-ceo-and-hezbollah/ [28.05.2025].

Media outlets, in particular Al-Manar

Hezbollah uses a number of platforms to disseminate its points of view on local and international affairs. These platforms include Hezbollah's own website,[98] as well as main media outlets Al-Manar TV,[99] at times referred to as Hezbollah's mouthpiece, and Al-Ahed News.[100] Both websites address a global audience, as they are accessible online in English, Arabic, Spanish and French.[101] In addition to providing news articles and updates, Al-Ahed uploads speeches by Ayatollah Khamenei, as does Al-Manar. In addition, the latter still shares recorded speeches by the late Hassan Nasrallah. In the 1990s, a number of prominent members of the Hezbollah parliamentary party in Lebanon worked as columnists or journalists at the newspaper *Al-Ahed*.[102]

Following the launch of the Al-Manar television channel in 1991, and the subsequent decline in *Al-Ahed*'s importance,[103] Hezbollah strategically deployed Al-Manar in the fight against the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon from 1996 to 2000.[104] Its 'resistance cameras' recorded instances of defeat of Israeli soldiers in 1998 and broadcasted them to discredit the Israeli military's denial that it had incurred any losses.[105] By producing their own media, moreover, Hezbollah disseminated their own version and interpretations of events. As the Lebanese-British expert Dr. Lina Khatib argues, "Through this claim of authority over the writing of history, Hizbullah placed itself as the sole legitimate narrator of the story of the war."[106] Continuous footage of Hezbollah victories served as a means of intimidation and ultimately weakened Israeli public morale. Video footage sent the message, "We can see you wherever you are."[107] By the end of the 20th century, Israeli media outlets and even a number of soldiers called for an Israeli retreat from Lebanon.[108] Al-Manar's coverage of the 2006 war "widened Hizbullah's network of audiences, and helped Hizbullah transform its image into that of a

[98] Moqawama (n.d.): [Start page], *Moqawama*, https://www.moqawama.org/ [27.01.2023].
[99] Al-Manar (n.d.): [Start page], *Al-Manar*, https://www.almanar.com.lb/ [27.01.2023].
[100] Al-Ahed News (n.d.): [Start page], *Al-Ahed News*, https://www.alahednews.com.lb/index.php [27.01.2023]. Its title has a broader semantic range, which is why pertinent literature varies in its translation. For instance, "the promise", "the covenant", "the commitment" and "the pledge" can be found.
[101] The articles Al-Manar provides in the four languages differ, with Arabic offering the largest selection of content. Articles provided in French, for instance, are not necessarily also found in English and Spanish.
[102] Bashir Saade (2016): *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance: Writing the Lebanese Nation*, Cambridge Middle East Studies, Cambridge, p. 33. Al-Ahed News started out as the newspaper Al-ʿAhd. In 2000, it was turned into Al-Intiqād ("the critique"). Ten years later, in the course of its conversion into an online media outlet, it returned to its original name; see ibid., p. 35.
[103] Saade (2016): Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance, pp. 35, 38.
[104] Zahera Harb (2009): "Aiming at Liberation: Al-Manar Media Campaigns against the Israeli Occupation of Southern Lebanon (1998–2000)", *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 2/1, p. 52.
[105] Harb (2009): Aiming at Liberation, p. 57.
[106] Lina Khatib (2012): *Hezbollah's Image Management Strategy*, CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy Paper 1, USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School, Los Angeles, https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u35361/2012%20Paper%201.pdf [12.06.2025], p. 25.
[107] Walid el Houri, Dima Saber (2010): "Filming Resistance: A Hezbollah Strategy", *Radical History Review 106*, 70–85, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2009-021, p. 82.
[108] Harb (2009): Aiming at Liberation, p. 66.

primarily *Arab* paramilitary group".[109] The station became one of the ten most watched television channels in the Arab world.[110] Spearheading this transformation, Nasrallah came to be regarded as a pan-Arab leader.[111] Hezbollah also marketed the war to an international audience by placing billboards about the group's achievements in French and English on the road from Beirut's international airport.[112] In the same year, the Israeli military attacked the headquarters of the self-described "first Arab establishment to stage an effective psychological warfare against the Zionist enemy," as previously stated on the Al-Manar website.[113] Lebanese journalists interpreted this attack as proof that the network's psychological warfare had been successful in posing a threat to Israel.[114]

Hezbollah launched the Al-Manar website in 2000 with the designated aim to "mold the Resistance ideology in a virtual form to reach everyone", expanding Al-Manar's audience beyond the Lebanese Shia community.[115] Hezbollah casts a wide net and aims to mobilise Muslims from different social and ethnic backgrounds, as the media outlet's Editor in Chief for France, Leila Mazboudi, explained in an interview:

> "Hezbollah's Islam advocates cultural and political diversity. 'Al-Manar' supports the resistance of all those who are oppressed in the world … For us, it is not ethnic issues which are at stake (Shiites against Sunnis, Christians against Muslims and so on), but the necessity to thwart foreign access to our riches and our region."[116]

The idea of Islamic resistance on behalf of oppressed groups is key to Hezbollah's ideology and activities, serving as an umbrella term combining a number of elements. As Hezbollah chief ideologue Hussein Fadlallah explained, "We strive to be an Islamic Muqawamah [Resistance, authors' note] in the Islamic world and among the wretched peoples of the Third World".[117] Hezbollah's focus on resistance by wretched people, which alludes to the work of anti-colonial philosopher Frantz Fanon,

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[109] Khatib (2012): Hezbollah's Image Management Strategy, p. 17, emphasis in the original.
[110] Albawaba (22.08.2006): "Dramatic Changes in Arab Television Ratings-'Al Manar' Climbs from Nowhere to the Top 10", *Albawaba*, https://www.albawaba.com/business/dramatic-changes-arab-television-ratings-%E2%80%98al-manar%E2%80%99-climbs-nowhere-top-10 [02.02.2023].
[111] Khatib (2012): Hezbollah's Image Management Strategy, p. 17.
[112] Khatib (2012): Hezbollah's Image Management Strategy, p. 21.
[113] Brian Todd (16.12.2004): "U.S. to name Hezbollah TV a terrorist organization", *CNN*, http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/12/15/hezbollah.tv/ [27.01.2023].
[114] Harb (2009): Aiming at Liberation, p. 69.
[115] Al-Manar (n.d.): [About page], *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/about [27.01.2023].
[116] Translation by one of the authors. The original reads, „Der Islam der Hisbollah tritt für die kulturelle und politische Unterschiedlichkeit ein. ‚Al Manar' unterstützt den Widerstand aller Unterdrückten der Welt […] Für uns stehen keine ethnischen Fragen auf dem Spiel (Schiiten gegen Sunniten, Christen gegen Moslems und so weiter), sondern die Notwendigkeit, einen ausländischen Zugriff auf unsere Reichtümer und auf unsere Region zu verhindern." See Geraldina Colotti (18.12.2007): „Interview mit der Chefredakteurin des Hisbollah-Senders ‚Al Manar', Leila Mazboudi, zur Lage im Libanon", *Scharf-Links*, https://www.scharf-links.de/suche/detail/interview-mit-der-chefredakteurin-des-hisbollah-senders-al-manar-leila-mazboudi-zur-lage-im-libanon?sword_list%5B0%5D=manar&no_cache=1 [10.06.2025].
[117] Quoted in Abed Kanaaneh (2018): "From Jihad to Muqawamah: The Case of Hizballah in Lebanon", *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions*, 6, pp. 38–59, p. 49, where it has been translated from Arabic from a quote in Jamal Sankari (2008): *A Journey of a Shiite Leader: Al-Sayyed Mohammad Husayn Fadlallah*, Beirut.

appeals to some leftist groups. Mazboudi's interview, for instance, was published by the German website Scharf Links – die Neue Linke Online Zeitung,[118] with the declared aim of providing a platform for counter-narratives that challenge so-called neoliberal media.[119] An Austrian case in point is Nicole Schöndorfer,[120] a leftist content creator with a strong pro-Hezbollah and pro-Hamas positions. She had promoted material from Al-Manar[121] and another Hezbollah-affiliated media outlet, Al-Mayadeen.[122] Among other things, she reposted an extract of Frantz Fanon's publication *The Wretched of the Earth* shortly after the Hamas massacre against Israel on 7 October 2023.[123] Similarly, the Austrian leftist association Dar al-Janub quoted Hassan Nasrallah[124] and Frantz Fanon on social media.[125] It also advertised their own discussion series entitled "The Wretched of Today".[126]

Beyond appealing to leftists, Hezbollah deploys the resistance narrative to improve its public image and to challenge the group's classification as a terrorist group by countries such as the United States. By contrast, the group presents itself as an ostracised outsider, punished for challenging hegemonic powers. As Nasrallah explained,

[118] Colotti (18.12.2007): Interview mit der Chefredakteurin.
[119] Scharf-Links (07.01.2023): „Neujahrsgruß der Redaktion ‚scharf-links'", *Scharf-Links*, https://www.scharf-links.de/suche/detail/neujahrsgruss-der-redaktion-scharf-links-1?sword_list%5B0%5D=Neujahrsgru%C3%9F&sword_list%5B1%5D=der&sword_list%5B2%5D=redaktion&sword_list%5B3%5D=%22scharf-links%22&no_cache=1 [11.06.2025].
[120] On her, cf. also Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2025): *Jahresbericht 2024*, Wien, https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/fileadmin/dpi/publikationen/DPI_Jahresbericht_2024.pdf [20.10.2025], pp. 129–132.
[121] Nicole Schöndorfer [@nicole.schoen] (10.12.2024): [Instagram story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/nicole.schoen/3520058230561021688/?hl=de [11.12.2024]; this despite the fact that Al-Manar does not have their own Social Media account on Instagram.
[122] E.g., Nicole Schöndorfer [@nicole.schoen] (17.09.2024): [Instagram story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/nicole.schoen/?hl=de [18.09.2024]; Nicole Schöndorfer [@nicole.schoen] (23.09.2024): [Instagram story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/nicole.schoen/3463578377409144899/?hl=de [24.09.2024]; Nicole Schöndorfer [@nicole.schoen] (12.09.2024): [Instagram story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/nicole.schoen/3455677725627842151/?hl=de [13.09.2024].
[123] Nicole Schöndorfer [@nicole.schoen] (08.10.2023): [Instagram story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/nicole.schoen/3209043383447358108/?hl=de [09.10.2023].
[124] Dar Al Janub [@dar_al_janub] (19.06.2024): [Instagram story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/dar_al_janub/3393992336168406776 [20.06.2024]; Verein Dar Al Janub (17.07.2022): [posting], *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=416173280549234&set=pb.100064696956255.-2207520000&type=3&locale=de_DE [25.06.2025].
[125] Dar Al Janub [@dar_al_janub] (06.12.2023): [Instagram Story], *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/stories/dar_al_janub/3251797264191127001/?hl=de [06.12.2023].
[126] Verein Dar al Janub (16.01.2022): "The Wretched of Today – Part I: Palestine", *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/events/411485693859326/?acontext=%7B%22ref%22%3A%2252%22%2C%22action_history%22%3A%22[%7B%5C%22surface%5C%22%3A%5C%22share_link%5C%22%2C%5C%22mechanism%5C%22%3A%5C%22share_link%5C%22%2C%5C%22extra_data%5C%22%3A%7B%5C%22invite_link_id%5C%22%3A282616183791258%7D%7D]%22%7D [25.06.2025]. On this association see Österreichischer Fonds zur Dokumentation von religiös motiviertem politischen Extremismus (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam) (ed.) (2023): *Politischer Islam von links? Der Verein Dar al Janub als Bindeglied zwischen Islamismus und radikaler Linken*, DPI Focus, Vienna, https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/fileadmin/dpi/publikationen/DPI_Focus_Dar-al-Janub.pdf [25.06.2025].

> "There is a war of image, of public image and public opinion. We are very cautious and we very much want to uncover the truth and we are also very much concerned, in waging this war of public opinion, to say that the resistance is subject to injustice."[127]

Hezbollah members have designed Al-Manar's website in such a way that it resembles international media outlets and signals that Hezbollah is observing current affairs across the globe. In addition to the option of viewing website content in four different languages, readers of the website's English version can choose between a number of news sections, including "Middle East", "Lebanon" and "World". Moreover, Al-Manar presents a story of the day, a section titled "What's New", and a timeline with live news updates. Recorded announcements by Hassan Nasrallah figure prominently under "Speeches" in the page's header, marked by an icon of Nasrallah's face, even months after his death,[128] right next to "Hezbollah Statements". While Nasrallah held all his speeches in Arabic, combining Modern Standard Arabic with Lebanese Arabic, translations of some of Nasrallah's speeches into English can be found on the left-hand side of his recorded speeches. If users scroll to the lower half of the non-Arabic website, they find recorded speeches by Ayatollah Khamenei under "Imam Khamenei Speeches", along with links to Al-Manar's social media profiles on Telegram and X (the icon still displays Twitter), as well as a section called "Focus on Zionists", suggesting that the group keeps an eye on its declared enemy. The English (@AlmanarEnglish), French (@AlmanarFrench) and Spanish-speaking (@AlmanarSpanish) X-accounts are currently suspended, with the account linked via a logo for X on the Arabic-speaking website, @TVManar1, which is currently being restricted in the EU for legal reasons. The Arabic website also provides links to WhatsApp and Telegram.

The Arabic version of the Al-Manar website underwent a major redesign during the writing of this paper in June 2025.[129] As of 17 June 2025, the new design has not (yet?) been implemented for the English, French and Spanish versions. The other language homepages follow the design outlined above. The change does not only extend to the aesthetic and content of the Arabic site, but likewise affects its multilingual content. That is, speeches by Hassan Nasrallah are still included in the new design of the Arabic webpage, but the archive on the English, French and Spanish websites is now defunct, and old links have stopped working. The archive for Arabic articles still exists, but was reorganised as it is displayed in a downsized manner. Old links to Arabic articles that can still be found on Google still work, however. It is unclear whether the changes occurred at the same time. The new

[127] Khatib (2012): Hezbollah's Image Management Strategy, p. 43.

[128] And are likely to remain there – the translations are addressed in a message by Al-Manar English Website staff to Nasrallah after his death: Al-Manar (29.09.2024): "A Message to Sayyed Nasrallah from Al-Manar English Website: We Shall Endure", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/2213290 [01.07.2025]. Subtitles are also an option, as is the case for a speech held by Nasrallah during a military exercise that was released posthumously with English subtitles on Al-Manar: Al-Manar (13.10.2024): "Even after Martyrdom, Sayyed Nasrallah's Words Resound Loudly with Hezbollah Fighters", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/2230802 [01.07.2025].

[129] According to data provided by the Internet Archive, the change was implemented on June 13, 2025 between 8 and 9 p.m. GMT, cf. https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/https://www.almanar.com.lb/ [17.06.2025]. Following the change, the initial page of the website included a poll asking how positive the redesign of the website was perceived, with results being displayed at least from June 14–17, 2025, with a falling percentage of extremely positive feedback in the course of these days.

Arabic website now contains speeches by the current general secretary, Naʿīm Qāsim, before listing those of Nasrallah. It now also prominently — next to links to Nasrallah's and Qāsim's speeches — features current and previous content from Al-Manar TV such as political programmes, documentaries, movies and series, though not all thumbnails currently link to a working episode of the content. A considerable number of videos focuses on religious topics, extending back several years to 2018. Archived news broadcasts are also available reaching back to 2018. The links to Al-Manar programmes on the bottom of the non-Arabic sites also link to this newly designed content.

Beyond intimidating opponents and appealing to its core constituency and beyond, Hezbollah media productions record and disseminate the group's point of view on current affairs. Houri and Saber emphasise the significance of the "the necessity for all dominated and resistance groups to write their own texts and narrate their alternative history as part of the process of resistance and as an inseparable aspect of their revolt against the dominant group/narrative".[130] Hezbollah is not alone in challenging dominant narratives. Source references reveal the cooperation between Al-Manar and media outlets of allies which cite each other's headlines and articles. A number of source references in Al-Manar articles lead to Sputnik, a media station and news portal by a Russian state-owned media company, and to RT/Russia Today, which were both suspended in the EU in 2022 because of disinformation campaigns about the war in Ukraine.[131] Al-Manar also frequently cites sources by Iranian state-affiliated media like Tasnim News Agency or PressTV, and it used to cite the state-run Syrian Arab News Agency. Some of their articles are entirely copy-pasted onto Al-Manar. For instance, one article titled "Iran's Top Security Official Raps German Blacklisting of Hezbollah"[132] constituted a verbatim reproduction of a Tasnim piece.[133] As Al-Manar writers select and replicate these sources, they illustrate the group's ties to the Iranian, Russian and the former Syrian government and media. While verbatim reproductions by media outlets are not uncommon, the selection of media outlets can be telling. Together, these platforms disseminate their own version of events and form a network of counter-narratives that challenge "mainstream" news reports. In addition, content from other suitable media outlets is used selectively as long as the input is deemed relevant by Al-Manar for its narrative or audience, as examples in the next section show.

[130] El Houri; Saber (2010): Filming Resistance, p. 73.
[131] Council of the European Union (02.03.2022): "Council Regulation (EU) 2022/350 of 1 March 2022 Amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 Concerning Restrictive Measures in View of Russia's Actions Destabilising the Situation in Ukraine", *Official Journal of the European Union L 65*, pp. 1–4, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2022.065.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A065%3ATOC [11.06.2025] (ELI: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/350/oj [11.06.2025].
[132] Al-Manar (02.05.2020): "Iran's Top Security Official Raps German Blacklisting of Hezbollah", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/1020032 [27.01.2023].
[133] Tasnim News Agency (02.05.2020): "Iran's Top Security Official Raps German Blacklisting of Hezbollah", *Tasnim*, https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2020/05/02/2255210/iran-s-top-security-official-raps-german-blacklisting-of-hezbollah [27.01.2023]; Al-Manar (02.05.2020): "Iran's Top Security Official Raps German Blacklisting of Hezbollah", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/1020032 [01.07.2025].

Reporting on Germany, Austria and Switzerland

In line with its ambition of becoming an internationally recognised media outlet, Al-Manar reports about events across the globe. Concerning Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the website and its archive contained at least a hundred articles on each country, covering various topics such as politics and the economy. A search through Al-Manar's Arabic online archive – prior to its re-organisation and downsizing – showed the earliest pieces dating back to 2011,[134] which is also when the first articles relating to Germany, Austria and Switzerland appeared on the website. Al-Manar covers diverse topics in the German-speaking area. For instance, the media outlet reports on particular events such as protests against Israel's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in Basel (Switzerland)[135] or the unique landslide of a glacier in Blatten (Switzerland),[136] both in May 2025. It also covers horrific actions which make international news, such as a school shooting in Graz (Austria) in June 2025[137] and an attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg (Germany) in December 2024.[138] Historically, an event related to Austria that has received particular attention are the negotiations that have taken place in Vienna concerning the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear programme.

Al-Manar also reports on matters relating to Muslim life around the globe. It takes a keen interest in regulations and discussions concerning religious clothing, for example. Although the content is often based on reports by other news agencies, among them Agence France-Press, Sky News, CNN, Sputnik and Russia Today/RT, the choice of topics and the reporting frequency is at Al-Manar's discretion and can inform us on its news focus and its interaction with its audience. Debates and policies regarding burqas, niqabs and hijabs in France seem to be of particular interest (with Arabic reporting, but also many articles in French and some in English), but other European states and countries around the world, i.a., Egypt, Tunisia, China, India and Canada, received coverage as well. The articles can be in various languages, with the non-Arabic texts serving as contributions of their own, not simply translations from Arabic content.

Meanwhile, controversies and policies on burqas, niqabs and hijabs in the German-speaking world also repeatedly made headlines on Al-Manar. For example, an Arabic article covered a suggested ban for pupils under the age of 14 for wearing the hijab in North Rhine-Westphalia as well as the ensuing

[134] Al-Manar: "Archive", *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/ [27.01.2023]
[135] Al-Manar (18.05.2025): «Eurovision: accrochage à Bâle entre policiers et manifestants pro-palestiniens. La chanteuse israélienne conspuée», *Al-Manar*, https://french.almanar.com.lb/3262679 [11.06.2025].
[136] Al-Manar (29.05.2025): «Swīsrā: Inhiyār nahr jalīdī hāʾil yadfin ajzāʾ wāsiʿa min qaryat Blātin [Massive glacier collapse buries large parts of village of Blatten]», *Al-Manar*, https://www.almanar.com.lb/13540936 [11.06.2025].
[137] Al-Manar (10.06.2025): «10 qatlā fī ḥādithat iṭlāq nār fī madrasa bi-n-Nimsā [10 dead in school shooting in Austria]», *Al-Manar*, https://www.almanar.com.lb/13588390 [11.06.2025].
[138] Al-Manar (21.12.2024): "Germany Christmas Market Attack Kills 5, Injures 200 Others", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/2295262 [11.06.2025].

public debate in Germany in 2018.[139] Another report in English focused on the German Minister of the Interior's proposal of a partial ban on wearing burqas in 2016.[140] Al-Manar likewise reported on the German Federal Constitutional Court's upholding of the ban of wearing a niqab while driving a car in 2018 in Arabic.[141] It also reported on the German Federal Labour Court's upholding of a compensation payout to a woman who applied for a teaching position but was turned down for wearing the niqab in Berlin in 2020.[142] The article, listing Sputnik as its source, wrongly states that the woman was suspended from her job for wearing the hijab, but correctly reports that the court also declared a state law categorically banning religious symbols and clothing in public schools as illegal in the process.[143] Similar reporting covered the ban on wearing a burqa or niqab enforced in a canton of Switzerland in 2016[144]. In addition, a short message in English consisting only of a headline — likely akin to breaking news — appeared on the website when another Swiss canton (St. Gallen, not specified by Al-Manar) voted for the introduction of a so-called "burqa ban" in 2018,[145] implemented as a general ban on face coverings.[146] A vote against such a ban in Glarus in 2017[147] was apparently not covered by an article written on Al-Manar.[148] Subsequently, another short message, this time in Arabic, addressed the vote for another ban on burqas and niqabs in 2021,[149] accompanied by an English article providing further details including the general ban on face coverings in public, with BBC listed as a source.[150] The prohibition became active roughly four years later, on 1 January 2025, as a general

[139] Al-Manar (10.04.2018): «Jadal fī Almāniyā baʿd iqtirāḥ bi-manʿ talmīdhāt min irtidāʾ al-ḥijāb [Controversy in Germany after suggested ban on hijab for schoolgirls]», *Internet Archive / Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/3618756 [17.06.2025].
[140] Al-Manar (19.08.2016): "German Interior Minister Calls for Partial Burqa Ban", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/11889 [17.06.2025].
[141] Al-Manar (20.03.2018): «al-Maḥkama ad-Dustūrīya al-Almānīya: An-Niqāb mamnūʿ athnāʾ qiyādat as-sayyāra [German Constitutional Court: The niqab is forbidden while driving a car]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/3521164 [17.06.2025].
[142] Deutsche Welle (28.08.2020): "Berlin's Teacher Headscarf Ban is Illegal, Rules Top Court", *Deutsche Welle*, https://www.dw.com/en/berlin-teacher-headscarf-ban-is-illegal-rules-top-court/a-54722770 [01.07.2025].
[143] Al-Manar (29.08.2020): «al-Qaḍāʾ al-Almānī yaḥkum bi-taʿwīḍ muʿallima ūqifat ʿan al-ʿamal bi-sabab al-ḥijāb [German judiciary adjudges compensation payment to female teacher suspended from job for wearing hijab]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/7156294 [01.07.2025].
[144] Al-Manar (08.07.2016): «Badʾ ḥaẓr an-niqāb bi-Swīsrā … wa-l-gharāma 10 ālāf dūlār [Start of the burqa ban … and the fine is 10,000 dollars]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/443980 [17.06.2025].
[145] Al-Manar (23.09.2018): "Swiss region overwhelmingly votes for 'burqa ban'", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/586852 [17.06.2025].
[146] Deutsche Welle (23.09.2018): „Neues Burka-Verbot in der Schweiz", *Deutsche Welle*, https://www.dw.com/de/neues-burka-verbot-in-der-schweiz/a-45608198 [27.06.2025]. According to this report, the ban from 2016 in practice primarily affected football fans.
[147] SRF (27.06.2018): „Gegenvorschlag des Bundesrats: Kein Verhüllungsverbot in der Verfassung, aber im Gesetz", *SRF*, https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/gegenvorschlag-des-bundesrats-kein-verhuellungsverbot-in-der-verfassung-aber-im-gesetz [27.06.2025].
[148] Some articles by Al-Manar cover positive developments with regard to the hijab, for instance, the changes to the uniforms of workers at British Airways to include a version with a hijab.
[149] Al-Manar (08.03.2021): «As-Swīsrīyūn yuʾaiyidūn fī stiftāʾ ḥaẓr aghṭiyat al-wajh wa-bainahā an-niqāb al-islāmī fī l-amākin al-ʿāmma [The Swiss vote for ban of face veiling such as the Islamic niqab in public places]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/7936359 [17.06.2025].
[150] Al-Manar (08.03.2021): "Swiss Voters Support Ban on Face Coverings in Public", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/1289092 [17.06.2025].

ban on face coverings in public in Switzerland,[151] apparently without receiving coverage by the news outlet. Publications on this topic in Germany and Switzerland were mostly in Arabic, with some in English. Articles covering the same topic in Austria were mostly published in Arabic, with some in French.

Austria's stance on the topic has at times occupied an unusual amount of Al-Manar's attention.[152] The news outlet published several news reports in 2017 regarding Austrian plans for a ban on burqas and niqabs, later enforced as a general ban on face coverings in public places and buildings.[153] The platform published five articles in Arabic and one short message in English on this subject, linking the law to previous, similar European legislation (France, Belgium, Switzerland).[154] Al-Manar released two articles on 30 and 31 January 2017, stating correctly that Austria planned to legislate this issue in the future.[155] The short message, based on the Russian agency Sputnik and also published on 31 January 2017, falsely claimed that the ban was already in place at the time, contradicting the other news pieces.[156] A third article in February covered a large demonstration in Vienna against the planed legislation,[157] and in June, a fourth piece reported on the (correct) starting date of the ban in October 2017.[158] In between, the news outlet published a French piece about the president of the Federal Republic of Austria calling for solidarity with women wearing the hijab.[159] In September, a fifth article followed, detailing the maximum fine and the (correct) starting date of the ban.[160] Al-Manar did not report on the face covering ban again when it entered into force, but it published an article in French two years later when a law aimed at preventing pupils in Austria up to the age of ten from wearing a

[151] Livia Middendorp, Matthias Baumer (25.11.2024): „Gesetz ab Januar 2025 in Kraft: Was bedeutet das Verhüllungsverbot für den Tourismus?", *SRF*, https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/gesetz-ab-januar-2025-in-kraft-was-bedeutet-das-verhuellungsverbot-fuer-den-tourismus#:~:text=Ab%20dem%201.,%2DTeilnehmer%2C%20die%20sich%20vermummen [27.06.2025].

[152] One dossier on this topic received almost as much attention as the Austrian case, the suggested and later implemented ban of face coverings including niqab and burqa in Denmark in 2018, with four articles in Arabic and one in French.

[153] Michael Simoner (21.09.2017): „Polizei wird Gesichtsverhüllungsgesetz ‚behutsam aber konsequent umsetzen'", *Der Standard*, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000064402369/polizei-wird-gesichtsverhuellungsgesetz-behutsam-aber-konsequent-umsetzen [26.06.2025]; Al-Manar (30.01.2017): «Al-Ḥukūma an-Nimsāwīya tasʿā ilā manʿ an-niqāb fī l-amākin al-ʿāmma [Austrian government plans niqab ban in public places]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/1443913 [17.06.2025].

[154] Al-Manar (31.01.2017): «An-Nimsā tukhaṭṭiṭ li-manʿ an-niqāb fī l-amākin al-ʿāmma [Austria plans niqab ban in public places]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/1445354 [17.06.2025].

[155] See the references to the two articles by *Al-Manar* in the two preceeding notes.

[156] Al-Manar (31.01.2017): «Le niqab et la burqa désormais interdits en Autriche (Sputnik)», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanartv.com.lb/224310 [26.06.2025].

[157] Al-Manar (08.02.2017): «Muẓāhara nisāʾīya ḍakhma fī Vīyannā ḍidd qarār ḥaẓr irtidāʾ an-niqāb [Large demonstration of women in Vienna against niqab ban]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/1490927 [17.06.2025].

[158] Al-Manar (10.06.2017): «Ḥaẓr an-niqāb fī n-Nimsā badʾan min Uktobar [Niqab ban in Austria from October on]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/2161872 [17.06.2025].

[159] Al-Manar (28.04.2017): «‹Toutes les femmes› invitées à porter le voile: le président autrichien fait polémique», *Al-Manar*, https://french.almanar.com.lb/377463 [10.12.2025].

[160] Al-Manar (22.09.2017): «an-Nimsā tastaʿidd li-taṭbīq ḥaẓr ʿalā taghṭiyat al-wajh sawāʾan bi-wāsiṭat niqāb au kimāma ṭibbīya [Austria preparing application of the ban on face coverings to both niqabs and medical masks]», *Al-Manar*, https://archive.almanar.com.lb/2644200 [01.07.2025].

hijab ultimately passed parliament.[161] After a lawsuit brought by both Sunni and Shiite parents and their young daughters, this piece of legislation was deemed unlawful by Austria's Constitutional Court in 2020 and was therefore lifted, an event also covered by Al-Manar in Arabic.[162]

In light of these reports on the topic in the German-speaking area and in Austria in particular, Al-Manar's silence on the planned ban by the new Austrian government, announced in the first months of 2025, seems noteworthy. In fact, reporting on this subject in German-speaking countries seems to have ended in 2021, but it nevertheless received coverage in other countries. For example, one report in French focussed on discussions about banning the hijab on school outings and at universities in France as recently as January 2025.[163]

Regarding Germany more generally, several articles cover its economy, statements by German politicians and diplomats, bilateral relations to EU countries and others such as — in particular — Russia, but also Turkey or the United States, for instance. While other seemingly relevant events in Austria and Switzerland (see also below) were not commented on by Al-Manar, recent instances which link back to Israel in the German speaking area were, however, covered rather quickly. One example is a French report by the news outlet on the activities of the Belgian Hind Rajab Foundation, an organisation which focuses on suing Israeli soldiers for war crimes in Gaza outside of Israel. It was founded in September 2024.[164] In January 2025, the foundation attracted media attention in Austria after 'wanted' posters featuring an Israeli soldier against whom the foundation had filed a legal complaint were distributed in various locations in Vienna.[165] A leftist pro-Palestinian account on social media posted the flyer together with an explanation of the legal actions taken by the foundation.[166] On 5 March, the Hind Rajab Foundation published online the text of a lawsuit it had filed against an Israeli citizen with the authorities in Munich, Germany. Less than 24 hours later — before German news outlets had picked up on this story — Al-Manar had already covered these activities, together with Press

[161] Al-Manar (16.05.2019): «Les députés autrichiens interdisent le port du voile islamique en primaire», *Al-Manar*, https://french.almanar.com.lb/1365894 [17.06.2025].
[162] Al-Manar (12.12.2020): «An-Nimsā tulghī qānun yaḥẓur ʿalā ṭullāb al-madāris al-ibtidāʾīya irtidāʾ al-ḥijāb [Austria quashing a law that was banning the hijab from primary school children]», *Al-Manar*, https://www.almanar.com.lb/7597636 [26.06.2025]. Unlike the Sunni plaintiffs, the Shi'ite plaintiffs argued before the Constitutional Court, i.a., in direct reference to their Islamic school of jurisprudence (which required their daughter to wear the hijab already before the age of nine), see Verfassungsgerichtshof (11.12.2020): *G4/2020-27*, Vienna, p. 10 (margin number 10), https://www.vfgh.gv.at/downloads/VfGH-Erkenntnis_G_4_2020_vom_11.12.2020.pdf [26.06.2025].
[163] Al-Manar (08.01.2025): «France: le gouvernement n'interdira pas le port du voile lors de sorties scolaires», *Al-Manar*, https://french.almanar.com.lb/3158069 [17.06.2025].
[164] Belgischer Föderaler Öffentlicher Dienst (11.09.2024): "The Hind Rajab Foundation", *Föderaler Öffentlicher Dienst Justiz*, https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/article.pl?language=de&naam=Hind+Rajab+Foundation&lg_txt=d&n_entree_search=&pd_search=&btw_search=1013306540&caller=list&=&view_numac=1013306540 [27.06.2025].
[165] OE24 (29.01.2025): „Aufregung um Steckbriefe von Israel-Soldaten in Wien", *oe24.at*, https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/aufregung-um-steckbriefe-von-israel-soldaten-in-wien/622011645 [20.03.2025].
[166] We write on walls [@wewriteonwalls] (27.01.2025): "Intifada, Vienna, Austria, Jan 27 2025", *Instagram*, https://www.instagram.com/p/DFU35Idt86n/?hl=de [28.01.2025].

TV, according to its source information.[167] At the time of the reporting, the foundation had made its legal steps public on its website, though not under the heading "news", but instead in the less obvious category of "legal action" and its sub-category "perpetrators".[168]

The quick news turnover, moreover, may be due to links between Hezbollah, Al-Manar and the Hind Rajab Foundation. Dyab Abou Jahjah (b. 1971), a scholar who can speak five languages and serves as the organisation's founder and current chair,[169] stated that he was part of Hezbollah and had received military training from them in a newspaper interview in 2003. He was also the founder of the now dissolved Arab European League, which he described as a civil rights movement for Muslims that sought "to polarize people".[170] The group's Dutch branch was found guilty of disseminating a cartoon that denied or trivialised the Shoah in 2010.[171] On the League's homepage, he denied being a member of Hezbollah in 2009, but presented himself as a sympathiser.[172] Meanwhile, Abou Jahjah had several brushes with the law. He was held in custody for a few days in 2002 as he was suspected of inciting riots, but was let go due to a lack of evidence,[173] and according to a post by him on X that has received 1.6 million views so far, police, on behalf of Interpol, asked him to delete a post on this social media platform in 2024.[174] According to another one of his posts on X, he organised meetings of important Hezbollah politicians with politicians in European countries in 2009, including a Hezbollah member of parliament meeting a British member of parliament in the UK in Abou Jahjah's presence. Shortly thereafter, Abou Jahjah was prohibited from re-entering the UK on the grounds of

[167] Rédaction (06.03.2025): «En Allemagne, la Fondation Hind Rajab porte plainte contre un soldat israélien pour crimes de guerre», *Al-Manar*, https://french.almanar.com.lb/3202146 [06.03.2025].
[168] The Hind Rajab Foundation (05.03.2025): "Hind Rajab Foundation Files Case in Germany against Israeli War Criminal Shy Friedman", *The Hind Rajab Foundation*, https://www.hindrajabfoundation.org/perpetrators/hind-rajab-foundation-files-case-in-germany-against-israeli-war-criminal-shay-friedman [11.06.2025].
[169] Belga News Agency (06.01.2025): "Belgian-Lebanese Activist to Take Legal Action after Israeli Minister's Threat", *Belga News Agency*, https://www.belganewsagency.eu/belgian-lebanese-activist-to-take-legal-action-after-israeli-ministers-threat [11.06.2025]; self-description in the profile of Dyab Abou Jahjah [@Aboujahjah] on *X* [27.06.2025].
[170] Marlise Simons (01.03.2003): "The Saturday Profile: An Outspoken Arab in Europe: Demon or Hero?", *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/01/world/the-saturday-profile-an-outspoken-arab-in-europe-demon-or-hero.html [20.03.2025].
[171] Reuters (19.08.2010): "Dutch Muslim Group Fined Over Holocaust Cartoon", *Reuters*, https://www.reuters.com/article/world/dutch-muslim-group-fined-over-holocaust-cartoon-idUSTRE67I3ZT/ [10.12.2025].
[172] Arab European League (05.04.2009): "Dyab Abou Jahjah: UK Denied Me Re-entry: Zionists Lose Badly", *Internet Archive* / *Arab European League*: https://web.archive.org/web/20091015211107/https://www.arabeuropean.org/english/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=54&Itemid=33 [27.06.2025].
[173] Simons (01.03.2003): The Saturday Profile.
[174] Dyab Abou Jahjah [@Aboujahjah] (25.02.2024): "At Noon Today, My Doorbell Rang", *X*, https://x.com/Aboujahjah/status/1761729901336367508 [01.07.2025], number of views as of July 1, 2025.

extremism.[175] In the same year, he was featured on Al-Manar television.[176] After Hassan Nasrallah was killed in September 2024, Abou Jahjah published a reverential obituary for him on X which also mentioned that he had met Hezbollah's leader personally in 2001,[177] indicating that he still has, at minimum, ideological ties to the organisation. This is also clear from a post on X in October 2024, where he explained the mindset of Hezbollah fighters and the inner mechanisms and strategies behind Hezbollah attacks.[178] Aside from these ideological and personal ties to Al-Manar, a Belgian connection for the article may also be suggested by French as the choice of language in which the article was published.

An event of particular interest to Al-Manar was the German government's ban on Hezbollah activities in Germany in 2020. It provoked national and international reactions from allies and foes. Hezbollah media outlets and those of its allies were quick to retell the story of the group's ban as one of resistance and defiance. A source at the former Syrian foreign ministry strongly condemned the move, stating that, "the German government decision frankly embodies its yielding to the dictates of world Zionism and its heinous subjection to US policies".[179] Al-Manar devoted considerable attention to the topic and published articles immediately. Within a short time span, 45 pieces appeared on the website, including 16 in Arabic, 10 in French and 18 in English. The message conveyed by these articles was multifaceted. Firstly, by reproducing statements of Arab governments and organisations that condemned the ban, the articles suggested that Hezbollah was part of a pan-Islamic allegiance that spans religious and geographic boundaries. Allies who spoke up for Hezbollah cited by Al-Manar include the Jaafari Islamic Movement in Pakistan, the Bahraini February 14 Revolution Youth Coalition, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ansar Allah in Yemen, as well as the Syrian and Iranian Foreign Ministries — predominantly Shiite, but also other organisations. Secondly, Al-Manar collected and uploaded statements that reinforced Hezbollah's self-presentation as a resistance movement. As the website reported, the 14 February Revolution Youth Coalition from Bahrain claimed that the reason for the ban was that Hezbollah "remained steadfast as a spearhead in fighting the takfiris and Zionists, and because it raised the heads of Arabs and Muslims with its successive victories in more than

[175] Dyab Abou Jahjah [@Aboujahjah] (25.09.2024): "When I Say Hezbollah Will Never Abandon Palestine", *X*, https://x.com/Aboujahjah/status/1838974772429848932 [27.06.2025]; Arab European League (05.04.2009): Dyab Abou Jahjah: UK Denied Me Re-entry; Rowena Mason, Frances Perraudin (19.08.2015): "Jeremy Corbyn Backtracks Over Claim He Had Never Met Lebanese Activist", *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/aug/19/jeremy-corbyn-backtracks-over-claim-he-had-never-met-lebanese-activist [27.06.2025].
[176] Arab European League (09.07.2009): "Abou Jahjah on Al Manar Television", *Internet Archive* / *Arab European League*: https://web.archive.org/web/20091015210322/http://www.arabeuropean.org/english/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=74&Itemid=36 [27.06.2025].
[177] Dyab Abou Jahjah [@Aboujahjah] (28.09.2024): "Sayed Hassan Nasrallah", *X*, https://x.com/Aboujahjah/status/1839992814492430848 [11.06.2025].
[178] Dyab Abou Jahjah [@Aboujahjah] (01.10.2024): "The Israelis Believed They Had Demoralized Hezbollah", *X*, https://x.com/Aboujahjah/status/1841046378790731804 [27.06.2025].
[179] Al-Manar (30.04.2020): "Syria Denounces Germany Designation of Hezbollah as a Terrorist Organization: Ministry", *Al-Manar*, https://english.almanar.com.lb/1017832 [11.06.2025], referring to the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) as a source.

one axis."[180] The statement presented Hezbollah as part of a greater movement, united by resistance to common enemies who try to denigrate them.

The most significant reaction to the ban came from the head of Hezbollah himself on 4 May 2020. Hassan Nasrallah began a speech — still available on Al-Manar — with his usual opening line, "I seek refuge in God from Satan, the accursed,"[181] after which he praised God and addressed the audience. He then condemned the police searches and described the ban as a "political decision" illustrating the German government's "submission to the American and Israeli will." Next, he argued that, "Hezbollah does not have any organisations in any European country or in any of the countries of the world".[182] An Al-Manar article reporting on the speech in French slightly changed the original wording and quoted Nasrallah as saying "Hezbollah does not possess any affiliated organisations, neither in Germany, nor in France, nor anywhere in the world."[183] The quote illustrates that Al-Manar journalists can adjust Nasrallah's statements so that they communicate the group's stance more clearly. Moreover, under the header "Psychological warfare" ("Une guerre psychologique"), the article expanded upon Nasrallah's words, stating that the ban was a measure of psychological warfare designed to "resserrer l'étau sur les mouvements de la Résistance dans la region," or to tighten the noose around the neck of regional resistance movements.[184] The accusation that the ban amounts to psychological warfare is somewhat surprising, as Al-Manar described itself as a tool of psychological warfare against the "Zionist enemy" in the early 2000s.

In the speech, Nasrallah also claimed that many people support the resistance, including Lebanese. He added that, "all those that are on the side of the resistance are not necessarily Hezbollah members". Later on, Nasrallah addressed "all those who are on the side of the resistance" and spoke to Lebanese diaspora members specifically by stating: "Today I would like to send a message to the Lebanese in Germany," reassuring them that any accusation could be challenged in court. The head of the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council, Sheikh Abd al-Amir Qabalan, made an even more specific appeal by stating, "we call on the German people and the Lebanese, Arab and Islamic communities in Germany and Europe to take action and object to the German decision and nullify its effects".[185] The

[180] Al-Manar (03.05.2020): «Iʾtilāf Shabāb Thaurat 14 Fibrāyir fī l-Baḥrain yastankir qarār Almāniyā bi-ḥaqq Ḥizb Allāh [Bahraini February 14 Revolution Youth Coalition Austria condemns German decision on Hezbollah]», *Al-Manar*, https://www.almanar.com.lb/6618438 [27.01.2023], translation by one of the authors. Takfiris here means salafi jihadists, Zionists refers to the state of Israel.
[181] With reference to Qur'ān 16:98.
[182] Hassan Nasrallah (04.05.2020): «Kalimat as-Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallāh – Kalimat al-amīn al-ʿāmm ʿabra qanāt al-Manār, 2020-05-04 [Speech of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah – Speech of the general secretary via al-Manar channel, 2020-05-04]», *Al-Manar*, https://program.almanar.com.lb/episode/109430 [11.06.2025].
[183] Translation by one of the authors. The original reads: «Le Hezbollah ne possède aucune organisation affiliée ni en Allemagne, ni en France, ni ailleurs dans le monde». See Rédaction du site (04.05.2020): «S. Nasrallah: Le Hezbollah n'a pas d'activité en Allemagne. Nous ne sommes pas contre le FMI mais…», *Al-Manar*, https://french.almanar.com.lb/1740730 [10.12.2025].
[184] Rédaction du site (04.05.2020): S. Nasrallah.
[185] Al-Manar (02.05.2020): «Ash-Shaikh Qabalān ṭālib al-ḥukūma al-Almānīya bi-t-tarājuʿ ʿan qarārihā ḍidd Hizb Allāh wa-daʿā al-jāliyāt li-l-iʿtirāḍ ʿalā l-qarār [Sheikh Qabalan appealing to German government to reconsider its decision against Hezbollah, calling on the diaspora groups to object the decision]», *Al-Manar*, https://www.almanar.com.lb/6620308 [27.01.2023].

speech and its media echo thus served as a rallying cry for mobilising Muslims in Germany and other countries that had banned Hezbollah at the same time that Hezbollah claimed that it had no presence whatsoever in these countries.

In retrospect, it appears that Hezbollah's reaction to the events in Germany was an attempt to shape public opinion in their favour and to challenge established (and predominantly, but not exclusively, Western) media narratives. It is a striking illustration of how Hezbollah uses the media as a tool of manipulation in an attempt to intimidate and discredit opponents in a war of public opinion. In fact, these outlets form part of a media network that works to establish counter-narratives by citing each other as sources, thus consolidating a certain narration of events. In doing so, Hezbollah is not least endeavouring to rehabilitate its public reputation as a legitimate resistance group rather than a terrorist entity.[186]

In this light, it may seem astonishing that the decision of the Swiss parliament to draft a law banning Hezbollah in the country in December 2024 has not received coverage by Al-Manar so far, in particular, as this decision followed an intense discussion in the Swiss parliament because of strongly diverging views in government and parliament. The idea of prohibiting Hezbollah stemmed from the previous parliamentary discussion of a ban of Hamas after 7 October 2023. This measure was indeed approved and the law came into effect in September 2024. Although the idea of banning Hezbollah was already circulating at the time, Switzerland, for its part, refrained from including Hezbollah in the proposed legislation on Hamas to ensure that this bill would pass Parliament, as Switzerland's position regarding Hezbollah was disputed. The Swiss Federal Council (Bundesrat) argued against the prohibition of Hezbollah on the grounds that Switzerland rarely prohibits any organisations outright. Swiss law, moreover, is marked by high standards and requirements for undertaking any such ban, among them a previous listing by the UN, which is specifically lacking in the case of Hezbollah.[187] The Council also stressed the country's politically neutral stance and its function as a diplomatic platform which would be compromised by the ban.[188] The bicameral Swiss Parliament, however, overruled the government's opposing stance. The Council of States (Ständerat) approved the motion on 10 December 2024, despite a proposition that aimed to postpone the motion in order to take the end of the Assad regime in Syria into account, and the National Council (Nationalrat) followed suit a week later. Subsequently, the Federal Council was tasked with drafting a law to ban Hezbollah which is still in progress at the time of this writing.[189]

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[186] Saade (2016): Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance, p. 11.

[187] See the references in note 42 for the statement of the Swiss Federal Council.

[188] Die Bundesversammlung – Das Schweizer Parlament (10.12.2024): „Ständerat will neben der Hamas auch die Hisbollah verbieten", *SDA-Meldung*, https://www.parlament.ch/de/services/news/Seiten/2024/20241210124039153194158159026_bsd099.aspx [17.03.2025].

[189] Cf. note 42 and Ständerat (10.12.2024): „24.4255 Motion SiK-S. Die Hisbollah verbieten / Motion CPS-E. Interdire le Hezbollah", *Amtliches Bulletin*, https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=66433 [10.12.2025]. See most recently on this matter Die Bundesversammlung – Das Schweizer Parlament (15.09.2025): „25.7780 Fragestunde. Fast ein Jahr Stillstand: Blockiert der Bundesrat das Hisbollah-Verbot?", *Amtliches Bulletin*, https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20257780 [10.12.2025].

This split stance, which ended with a vote in favour of the ban, may have offered Hezbollah a possible angle for another narrative in their favour. Taken together with Al-Manar's silence on other topics previously deemed relevant, such as regulations concerning the hijab, niqab or burqa, this seems to indicate that Hezbollah's focus currently lies in the Middle East. It is also possible that Al-Manar's resources are presently devoted to the rapidly changing circumstances in the Middle East, with the latest developments in June 2025 massively affecting one of Hezbollah's main allies and financial benefactor, Iran. One could even speculate that Hezbollah's operating media capacity, which was amply demonstrated by its reaction to the organisation's ban in Germany, is — after the intense conflict with Israel — currently diminished. The recent reports on activities by the Hind Rajab Foundation in Germany somewhat support this idea. While the incident took place in Germany, it nonetheless has implications for Israel and the multifaceted conflict in the Middle East. In this case, a personal tie to the association in question seems likely and could indicate that actors in Europe with at least historical ties to Hezbollah likewise play a role in shaping opinions on events in the Middle East for the large audiences of Al-Manar. Al-Manar's online redesign and reorganisation may argue against this hypothesis, but such changes are not necessarily implemented by the content creators themselves.

Conclusions

The examination of Hezbollah media undertaken here has revealed a number of contradictions. For instance, Hezbollah is keen to emphasise its sovereignty and independence from foreign interference. This becomes clear in its statements on foreign powers, such as the United States and Israel, where Hezbollah rejects any meddling in internal affairs. Nevertheless, Hezbollah press and allied media outlets speak of a global axis of pan-Arab resistance. Hezbollah does not mask their ties to the Russian and Iranian government. They did not hide Hezbollah links to the former Syrian government, and the organisation is ultimately loyal to Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei. Moreover, Hezbollah claimed that it has no activities in Europe or in other countries in response to the German ban, while advising Muslim diaspora communities to take action against the ban and to continue to support Hezbollah's cause. This stands in contrast to the activities in Germany which this paper traced chronologically. Finally, Hezbollah simultaneously presents itself as victim and victor. On the one hand, the group claims to face oppressors across the globe that defame the group by labelling it a terrorist organisation. On the other hand, Hezbollah claims to be part of a resistance movement that defies its opponents. Another contradiction is that Hezbollah accuses its enemies of psychological warfare when this is specifically what Al-Manar set out to do on its part in the first place.

These findings carry a number of implications for European countries. For one, Hezbollah is offering and disseminating an interpretation of events in Europe that echoes the opinions of its allies, in particular Iran and Russia, and questions the sovereignty of European governments. In the ban's aftermath, Hezbollah and its allies portrayed the German government as a puppet of US interests. This framing of the events attempts to tell to the Lebanese diaspora in Germany that the rule of law in Germany may be bent toward pleasing German allies.

In addition, Hezbollah media outlets possess mobilising potential as they appeal to diaspora communities to support the resistance cause from abroad. This mobilisation was also successful elsewhere, for instance, in the case of a US citizen who attacked author Salman Rushdie and admitted that Hezbollah inspired his actions. With its self-presentation in the media as a unifying actor against oppression and as a beacon of resistance, in particular against Israel, Hezbollah already demonstrates the potential in reaching groups and people beyond the narrow confines of Shiites in the European diaspora, in line with its non-sectarian approach outlined above. Meanwhile, Hezbollah reception by leftists is an example of how the organisation appeals to people beyond this narrow group. This makes Hezbollah's media relevant even for European countries where adherents or supporters of the organisation or its structures are hard to discern, among them Austria.

After Hezbollah's war with Israel and the loss of a land bridge to its ally, Iran, through the fall of Assad in Syria, the organisation is weakened and will need to find additional resources. As it has turned towards Europe in the past for this and is under pressure in the Middle East and even in Lebanon itself, e.g., through notions of disarmament, Hezbollah may well renew their focus on Europe. Al-Manar's silence on recent political developments in Austria regarding the debate on restricting religious clothing and in particular the planned ban of Hezbollah in Switzerland – topics it previously

covered extensively – may indicate that the organisation is currently focused on local structures in the Middle East before re-engaging with other regions. However, the fact that the news outlet still reports on specific events in Europe, like the actions of the Belgian Hind Rajab Foundation in Germany against an Israeli soldier, shows, on the one hand, the intricate links between Europe and the wars in the Middle East, and on the other hand, the importance of the European diaspora and sympathisers from various ideological backgrounds in Hezbollah's wider scope of activity and ideology.

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