

<p><i>Alternate names:</i> Lebanese Hizballah Party of God</p>	<p><i>Control Map:</i></p> 
<p><i>Flag:</i></p> 	

Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shiite military, religious, and political group that is fighting in Syria in support of the Assad regime. Sometimes referred to as “a state within a state,” Hezbollah governs a large swathe of southern and eastern Lebanon and parts of Beirut, it dominates Lebanese politics, and its military strength exceeds that of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Traditionally guided by [its goals](#) of resistance to Israel and the West, Hezbollah’s full-fledged intervention in the war in Syria is a notable shift in the group’s priorities and signals a new phase in its evolution. [Hassan Nasrallah](#) has served as Secretary-General of Hezbollah since 1992.

Hezbollah serves as a proxy of Iran, which has trained, funded, and armed the group since its foundation in 1982. The Syrian government is a close ally of Hezbollah, allowing Iranian support to be flown into Damascus and shipped across the border into Lebanon. The U.S. and many other Western nations have designated Hezbollah as a [terrorist organization](#). Hezbollah and its operatives face sanctions not only for involvement in the Syrian war, but also for terror attacks, kidnappings, and global [criminal activities](#).

Hezbollah has played a covert role in the Syrian conflict almost from its beginning in 2011, enforcing the Lebanese border against opposition forces and sending a contingent to the south of Damascus city near the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zeinab. The battle of [Qusayr](#) in April 2013 marked a turning point, as it was the first time that the group deployed fighters to Syria in significant numbers, leading Syrian Army forces to a brutal defeat of the Free Syrian Army. During the month long battle, Nasrallah publicly acknowledged Hezbollah’s presence in Syria for the first time in a [televised speech](#), stating that “Syria has real friends, in the region and the world, who will not let it fall in the hands of America, Israel, and Takfiri groups.” This escalation in Hezbollah’s engagement in Syria was [coordinated](#) with a simultaneous escalation in strategic and materiel support from Iran to the Assad regime.

Since 2013 Hezbollah has steadily increased the size and scope of its forces in Syria. While the largest concentration of Hezbollah fighters is still in the west of the country near the Lebanese border, there are reports of Hezbollah deployments as far away as [Hasakah and Deir Ezzor](#), supporting the regime’s war efforts. Estimates put the numbers of Hezbollah forces in Syria [as high as 10,000](#). Hezbollah along with [Iranian IRGC](#) commanders have played an important role in developing the Assad government’s strategy and in training local and foreign militias to augment the ailing Syrian military. In [May 2015](#), Nasrallah justified Hezbollah’s role in Syria by claiming that they were in an existential battle against ISIS.

Hezbollah’s ever-deepening engagement in Syria has contributed to increased [sectarian tensions](#) in Lebanon, sparking violence between Lebanese sects that support and oppose the Syrian government. There have also been a number of violent [reprisal attacks](#) in Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon by extremist groups fighting in Syria.

Despite battlefield losses, it is estimated that Hezbollah is larger and stronger than before it entered Syria. It has used the deepening crisis as a recruitment tool, and its fighters gain valuable battlefield experience during their rotations. Additionally, Iran has increased its support to Hezbollah and the group is now better armed than even before. Israel has conducted numerous airstrikes inside of Syria in the past four years against convoys believed to be carrying advanced weaponry to Hezbollah.

Moving forward, all signs indicate that Hezbollah will continue to increase its strength in Syria and has no plans to abandon the Assad regime. With Iran expected to experience an economic windfall of \$100 billion+ due to the lifting of sanctions laid out in the July 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Hezbollah can expect to receive even greater financial and military backing. Indeed Nasrallah has expressed support for the nuclear deal, stating that a richer Iran will be more influential in the Middle East and will [reinforce the position of its allies](#).”