

Lebanese scouts group investigated over Hezbollah link

Author:

Mon, 2020-02-17 03:15

LONDON: Famous for their fleur-de-lis symbol, nonpolitical education and focus on outdoor adventure, scouting groups have been established all over the world.

But Britain's Mail on Sunday newspaper has reported that the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) is investigating a Lebanese scouting outfit for alleged links with terror group Hezbollah.

The Imam Al-Mahdi Scouts, which has 45,000 young male and female members, stands accused of training young Lebanese to become terrorists.

The Lebanese group has adopted the world-famous fleur-de-lis symbol, which was introduced by Robert Baden-Powell, a lieutenant general in the British Army in the early 20th century. The young scouts also wear the movement's traditional scarves and uniforms.

But they differ from other scouting organizations by being the youth wing of Hezbollah, which has carried out terror attacks throughout the Middle East. Hezbollah was last year proscribed "in its entirety" by the British government, having previously only faced legal sanctions for its military wing.

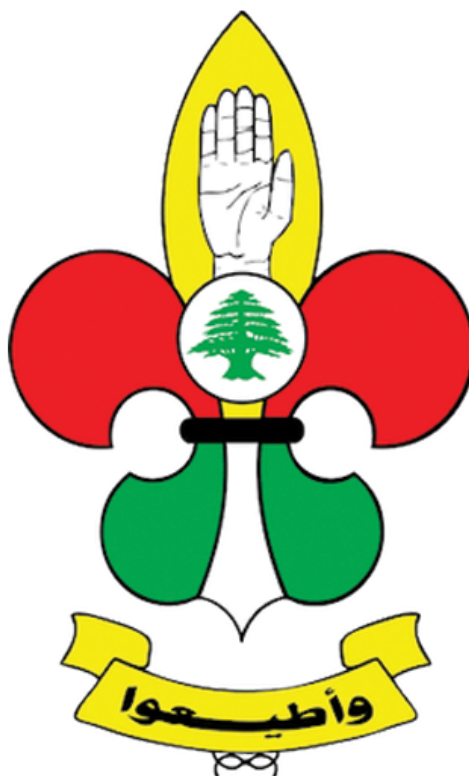
An investigation by the Mail on Sunday appears to show that young recruits to the Imam Al-Mahdi Scouts are indoctrinated from the age of four to become fighters for Hezbollah, which receives Iranian financial and military backing. Iran has been banned from World Scouting since 1999.

The Lebanese scouts have provided "honor guards" for the funerals of known Hezbollah terrorists, while photos show scouts posing with armed fighters. Despite the strictly nonpolitical nature of the scouting world, some of the photographed youngsters are seen wearing military uniforms.

Despite the revelations, the Imam Al-Mahdi Scouts remain an official member of the Lebanese Scouting Federation and the WOSM.

Membership of the group is limited to Shiite Muslims in Hezbollah's heartlands in southern Lebanon, Beirut and the Beqaa Valley.

On Saturday, the WOSM said it had launched an investigation into the group. Spokesman David Venn said: "WOSM disapproves of any practices that misuse the Scout program to involve children and youth in political recruitment or in using the Scout program for affiliation with any political party."



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Hezbollah slammed for unveiling Soleimani monument in Lebanon Iranian-backed Hezbollah stepping in to guide Iraqi militias after death of Qassem Soleimani

[Hezbollah slammed for unveiling Soleimani monument in Lebanon](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-02-17 03:01

BEIRUT: Hezbollah on Saturday unveiled a monument to Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a US drone strike on Jan. 3.

The monument, on a hill in the southern Lebanese border town of Maroun Al-Ras, has been widely criticized on social media and by Lebanese politicians opposed to Hezbollah. "Are we in Lebanon or Iran? Why insist on changing the identity of Lebanon," tweeted May Chidiac, former minister for administrative development.

"Every day, Hezbollah asserts that it is a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards ... not (a) Lebanese (party)."

Former Justice Minister Ashraf Rifi said: "The establishment of the Soleimani Monument in the south has nothing to do with the confrontation with Israel,

but rather with the assertion of Iran's mandate over Lebanon." He added: "The (Iranian) Quds Forces did not fight

HIGHLIGHT

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani arrived in Beirut to meet with senior Lebanese leaders.

for Jerusalem, but rather destroyed Syria and Iraq and transformed Lebanon into a failed state." Meanwhile, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on Sunday called for a boycott of American goods and for "resistance" throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. His remarks came as Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani arrived in Beirut to meet with senior Lebanese leaders.

Larijani had come from Syria, where he met with President Bashar Assad and reiterated Tehran's support for Damascus.

Nasrallah appeared on a screen at a gathering that Hezbollah had organized in southern Beirut to mark 40 days since the US drone strike that killed Soleimani and the deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis.



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Iran militias assassinated Lebanon's Rafik Hariri: Saudi Deputy Defense

Turkey tells Russia: Syria regime attacks on Idlib must stop

Author:

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Sun, 2020-02-16 15:03

ANKARA: Turkey's foreign minister said on Sunday he has told his Russian counterpart that the Damascus regime's attacks on the last rebel-held bastion in Syria must stop.

Backed by Russian air power, Syrian President Bashar Assad has been intensifying his assault on the holdout northwestern province of Idlib. And tensions have been running high between Ankara and Moscow after 14 Turks were killed in shelling by Syrian government forces in the region.

"I stressed that the attacks in Idlib must stop and it was necessary to establish a lasting cease-fire that would not be violated," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told journalists in Germany.

Cavusoglu met Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Saturday during the Munich Security Conference.

Turkey has 12 observation posts in Idlib as part of a 2018 deal reached between Ankara and Moscow in the Russian resort of Sochi to prevent a regime offensive.

But despite the agreement, Syrian regime forces, backed by Russian air strikes, have pressed ahead with an assault to retake the province, killing hundreds of people.

Four of the Turkish posts are believed to be encircled by Syrian forces, and Ankara has threatened to attack Damascus if they do not retreat by the end of February.

A Turkish delegation will head to Moscow on Monday, after Russian officials visited Ankara last weekend but no concrete agreement emerged.

Rebel supporter Turkey and Damascus ally Russia have worked closely on Syria in recent years despite being on opposing sides of the nine-year conflict.



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Car bomb kills two in Turkish-controlled Syrian town

[Car bomb kills two in Turkish-controlled Syrian town](#)

Sun, 2020-02-16 19:41

ANKARA: A car bomb attack Sunday killed two people in a Syrian border town controlled by Turkish forces, Turkey's defense ministry said. The explosion occurred in Tal Abyad, held by Turkish forces and Syrian proxies after Ankara launched a military operation against a Kurdish militia in October 2019.

Five other people were injured, the Turkish ministry said on Twitter. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing. But the ministry blamed the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara sees as a "terrorist" offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

“The terrorist responsible for the attack and a terrorist who arrived in the area with another car containing bombs for a second attack were caught alive,” it added.

The PKK is blacklisted as a terrorist organization by Ankara and its Western allies.

But the West worked closely with the YPG in the fight against Daesh in Syria. Since Turkey’s offensive, there have been multiple car bombings blamed by Ankara on the YPG in which several civilians and Turkish soldiers have been killed.



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Turkey met responsibilities over Syria’s Idlib in Russia deal: vice president
Turkish-backed rebels down Syrian helicopter in Idlib

[Egypt, France find first cases of China virus](#)

Sun, 2020-02-16 01:21

CAIRO: Egypt has identified its first case of coronavirus, according to the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and the World Health Organization

(WHO).

The virus was discovered in a foreigner whose identity and nationality have not been officially disclosed. However, a source suggested that the individual was from China.

Meanwhile, France also reported the first fatality from the new coronavirus outside Asia on Saturday, as the death toll from the outbreak jumped past 1,500 in China. More than 66,000 people have now been infected in China from a virus that emerged in central Hubei province in December before spreading across the country and some two dozen countries.

Egypt, however, took all preventive measures in cooperation with WHO, said Media Adviser to Minister of Health Khaled Mugahed and added that the WHO was informed immediately of the case, as the patient was taken to hospital where he is in isolation and is having constant checkups. Mugahed said the patient had not shown any signs of deterioration and was "completely stable."

He said the ministry had adopted strict preventive measures for those who came in contact with the patient by conducting the necessary tests, which came back negative.

People who came in contact with the patient were quarantined in their homes for 14 days as a precautionary measure.

Those in isolation are being checked every eight hours and given instructions regarding their health. Among the preventive measures was the disinfection of the building in which the residents were living.

Mugahed said that the foreign patient tested positive for coronavirus even though he failed to show symptoms.

A source from the MOHP told Arab News that the foreign carrier of the virus is Chinese and was monitored during the past few days using periodic follow-up cards that are given to passengers at airports coming from abroad. The source said the carrier of the virus was transferred to Al-Nujaila Hospital by ambulance. The carrier then went through further medical examinations.

A team from WHO is monitoring the patient's condition. Official sources at the Ministry of Aviation confirmed that all precautionary measures have been taken at Cairo Airport.

John Gabor, a WHO representative in Egypt, praised the speed and transparency of the Egyptian government in dealing with the situation as well as its keenness to inform the organization of the patient as soon as it was suspected.

HIGHLIGHT

More than 66,000 people have now been infected in China from a virus that emerged in central Hubei province in December before spreading across the country and some two dozen countries.

Gabor stressed that Egypt was one of the first countries to develop a good preventive plan to address the emerging coronavirus and deal with infected cases once they are discovered.

Egypt's Health Minister Hala Zayed held a meeting with the ministry's leaders to follow up the implementation of the ministry's plan to deal with the

coronavirus.

Zayed added that results will be known after the 14-day incubation period of the virus.

WHO confirmed that a coronavirus carrier cannot be infected as long as the person does not show symptoms of the disease because it is possible that his immunity will overcome the virus before infection.

Zayed said the problem is not that a person is infected with the coronavirus and does not know it, but in the inability to manage the crisis in a way that prevents the spread of infection.

The minister said Egypt was fully prepared to deal with the epidemic and prevent its spread, and that there are other countries that are, up until now, not as well equipped.

The death toll from the virus has neared 1,400 cases, almost exclusively in China where it was first identified. It has infected more than 64,000 people globally.



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