



HEZBOLLAH AND BOKO HARAM – COOPERATION OR IMITATION?

*János BESENYŐ, PhD**

*Vivien KERESZTES***

Hezbollah is one of the greatest threats to Africa, especially to Nigeria, not because they are planning to attack targeted regions of the continent, but they are also liable to give support to dangerous extremist groups. In this article, we mainly focus on suicide bombers of Hezbollah and Boko Haram. Furthermore, we examine the relationship and possible cooperation between these two terrorist groups.

Keywords: *Boko Haram, Hezbollah, IMN, martyrdom, Nigeria, suicide attacks, terrorist networks.*

Motivation towards Suicide Attacks

Managing to find disillusioned and/or impressionable people who are vulnerable to extremist ideologies and religious dogmas is crucial for the training of suicide attackers. According to different studies related to suicide attackers, the recruitment and training methods are mainly successful when the terrorists choose such soldiers or martyrs. Between 2000 and 2010 the number of suicide attackers increased significantly, approximately by 300%.¹ A dramatic change occurred in this regard from

¹ Adam Lankford, *The Myth of Martyrdom: What Really Drives Suicide Bombers, Rampage Shooters, and Other Self-Destructive Killers*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, available at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/249/html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

2000 and more than 3,000 suicide bombings took place during the last 15 years. Without doubt, the attack against the World Trade Center played a significant role and gave an example to follow for terrorist organizations ideologically identified with al-Qaeda.

These organizations carried out more than 85% of suicide bombings and 95% of other suicide actions in 2013. Suicide attacks have more effective public impact due to the greater number of fatalities and their effect on morale (see Figure 1.).

Psychologist Noam Shpancer noted that those who kill themselves in this violent way have a special relation with brutality, conformism and distortion. Taking² into consideration their social circumstances (which includes their religion, affecting their identity and influencing their personality remarkably), it is an important aspect of being a suicide bomber that they must have an unshakeable belief that their group has the final and exclusive truth. Poverty, exclusion, aggression, anger, frustration and isolation are key-factors which make a great part of the population vulnerable to fanaticism.

² Noam Shpancer, "Understanding the Suicide Bomber", *Psychology Today*, 2010, available at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/insight-therapy/201009/understanding-the-suicide-bomber>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

** Colonel János BESENYŐ, PhD is the Head of the Science Department of the Military Staff of the Hungarian Defence Forces. E-mail: besenyo.janos@gmail.com*

*** Vivien KERESZTES is an MSc student in International Relations at the University of Szeged, Hungary. E-mail: perszephonex@gmail.com*



Shpancer argues that young members of terrorist groups who grow up in bad circumstances tend to believe desperately in the ideas that welfare and happiness is available for them also, with the provision that they must die for their religion.³

Ivan Sasha Sheehan cites an Israeli psychologist, Ariel Merari, who has never met a suicide attacker who had psychotic disease.⁵ Merari has been studying suicide attackers for

Participation in terror attacks against non-combatant targets may be highly context specific and in this article, we mainly focus on suicide bombers of Hezbollah and Boko Haram. Furthermore, we examine the relationship and possible cooperation between these two terrorist groups. Hezbollah introduced suicide attacks first against Israeli military bases in Southern Lebanon and later against Western soldiers in Beirut. Hezbollah supports the radical Palestinian

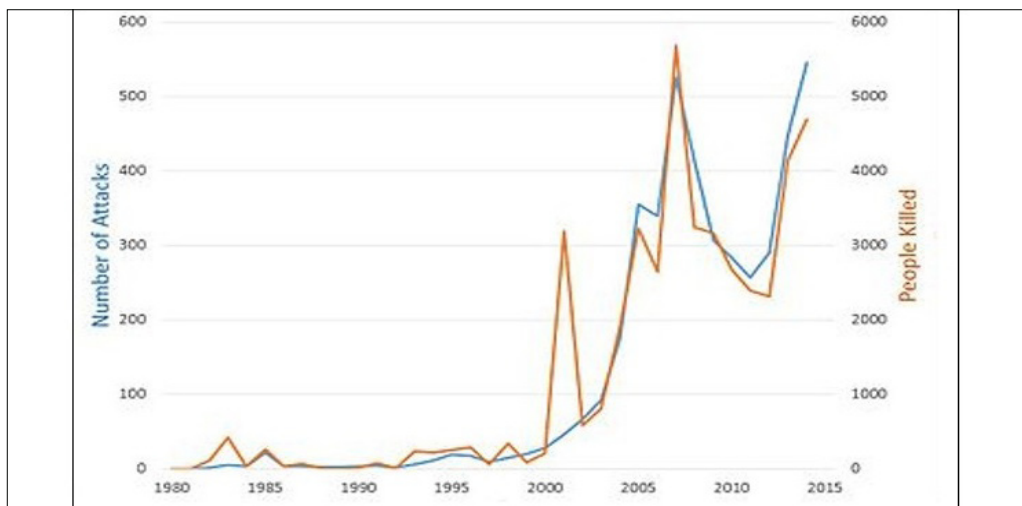


Figure no. 1: Suicide attacks worldwide⁴

the last 18 years in the Near-East. According to his studies, the only abnormality is the absence of fear of death in their behaviour. However, there are some features in their character which make people particularly impressionable to violent behaviour.^{6,7}

³ Noam Shpancer, "Understanding the Suicide Bomber", *Psychology Today*, 2010, available at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/insight-therapy/201009/understanding-the-suicide-bomber>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

⁴ Source: *Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism*, The University of Chicago, <https://cpost.uchicago.edu/>.

⁵ Ivan Sascha Sheehan, "Are Suicide Terrorists Suicidal? A Critical Assessment of the Evidence Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience", in *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, 2014, 11/9-10, pp. 81–92, available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4267802/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

⁶ Ariel Merari, "Personality characteristics of suicide bombers and organizers of suicide attacks", in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2009, 22/1, pp. 87-101.

⁷ Anat Berko, *The Path to Paradise – The inner world of suicide bombers and their dispatchers*. London: Praeger

movements, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in their campaign against Israel.⁸ They traditionally provided their allies with suicide bombers, and training experts, to support all those combatant organizations that fight against their common enemies. There are some sources suggesting that Hezbollah provides Boko Haram with expertise related to the training of suicide bombers.

The Emergence of Hezbollah

Hezbollah was founded after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and was mainly created to strengthen the resistance against Israeli activities. The number of suicide bombings, carried out by Hezbollah in Lebanon were some 200 from the early 1980s until the beginning of the 21st century and it was not motivated

Security International, 2007.

⁸ Shaul Shay, *The Shahids – Islam and suicide attacks*, The Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, 2004.



by religious reasons in most of the cases.⁹ The movement was strongly supported by Muslim religious leaders. The commanders of the group were followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, and its armed forces were trained and equipped by a contingent of 1,500 Iranian Revolutionary Guards that arrived from Iran with permission from the Syrian government.¹⁰

In the 80's, Israel took over a territory in the south part of Lebanon. The South Lebanon Army (SLA) supported by Israel exercised power over this area. Hezbollah engaged in a guerrilla crusade against the SLA. Israel withdrew in 2000 and the SLA had collapsed. Described as a "state within a state"¹¹ Hezbollah has become a strong association, having participants in the Lebanese government, too. Hezbollah maintains strong support among Lebanon's Shia population. The Hezbollah possesses fighters not just in the Near-East, but all around the globe. Hezbollah, from 1997 till today, is considered a terrorist organization by the United States of America (US Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism), while the European Union (European Council) designated only the Shia Islamist group's military wing (not its political institution) as a terrorist organization.¹²

The United Nations is permanently adopting resolutions related to terrorist organisations

⁹ Yotam Rosner, Einav Yogev, and Yoram Schweitzer, "A Report on Suicide Bombings in 2013", *INSS Insight*, no. 507, 2014, available at <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/No.%20507%20-%20Yotam,%20Einav,%20and%20Yoram%20for%20web.pdf>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

¹⁰ Adam Shatz, "In search of Hezbollah", *The New York Review of Books*, 2014, available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2004/apr/29/in-search-of-hezbollah/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

¹¹ Defense Industry Daily, "Iran-Syria vs. Israel, Round 1: Assessments & Lessons Learned", 13 September 2012. available at <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/iransyria-vs-israel-round-1-assessments-lessons-learned-02558/#more-2558>, accessed on 21.11.2016.

¹² Alessandria Masi, "US Imposes Sanctions On Members Of Hezbollah's Nigeria-Based 'Foreign Relations Department'", *International Business Times*, 2015, available at <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-imposes-sanctions-members-hezbollahs-nigeria-based-foreign-relations-department-1830882>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

and their homicidal attacks.¹³ Although both of Saudi Arabia¹⁴ and Israel¹⁵ asked the U.N. Security Council in 2014 to add Hezbollah to its list of "terrorist organizations", this request was not addressed till today. The UN is repeatedly giving calls for Hezbollah to disarm and some resolutions are definitely accusing the group for the destabilization of several regions in Lebanon. Hezbollah is also considered to be one of the richest groups because of its rich financial assets.^{16,17} Hezbollah has operated in at least 45 nations, 11 of them are in Africa.¹⁸

Hezbollah's Presence in Nigeria

The stressing of cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts has resulted in destabilisation of several regions in Africa. The Muslim population of Nigeria's certain regions allow Islamic movements to position themselves in these areas.

Hezbollah is one of the greatest threats to Africa, especially to Nigeria, not because they are planning to attack these regions but they are liable to give financial, military and training support to dangerous extremist groups like Boko Haram. Their aim is definitely to gain notable

¹³ UN Security Council, Counter-Terrorism Committee, *Resolutions*, available at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/resources/res-sc.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

¹⁴ YaLibnan, "Saudi Arabia urges UN to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group", November 20, 2014, available at <http://yalibnan.com/2014/11/20/saudi-arabia-urges-un-to-designate-hezbollah-as-a-terrorist-group/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

¹⁵ Tzvi Ben-Gedalyahu, "Israel-wants-un-to-recognize-amas-as-a-terrorist-organization", *JewishPress.com*, 2014, available at <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/israel-wants-un-to-recognize-amas-as-a-terrorist-organization/2014/10/28/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

¹⁶ Doug Philippon, "Hezbollah: The organization and its Finances", in Freeman, M. (ed.). *Financing Terrorism: Case Studies*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013, pp. 49-62.

¹⁷ Colin P. Clarke, *Terrorism, Inc.: The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare*, ABC-CLIO, 2016.

¹⁸ NOW, "ISIS vs Hezbollah in numbers", 22 September 2014, available at <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/specialreports/564076-hezbollah-in-numbers>, accessed on 20.11.2016.



auxiliaries to broaden their international network in Africa. With the help of their sophisticated and extremely fanatic training processes they are able to promote terror organisations so that they become regional powers.

Hezbollah is widely known for their special suicide attack training. There are signs that they are providing their allies like Abu Bakr Shekau's militias with training professionals that, with the help of their own experts, the affiliates are able to become powerful and notable. We know that Hezbollah has several cells in Africa but mostly we don't have reliable information about the factual details and operations of these collaborations. Contrary to this ambiguous and questionable cooperation with foreign cells, Hezbollah has well-known ties in Nigeria with a quite active establishment, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN).

The Jihadist Influence of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN)

The Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) is a jihadist organization supported by an estimated 5 million Shia Muslims living in Nigeria. It gets support from Iran.¹⁹ Actually, the roots of the IMN can be traced back to the occurrences of the 1979 Iranian revolution, when Nigerian students belonging to the Muslim Student Society travelled to the Islamic Republic and were trained to establish an Iranian-style revolution in Nigeria.²⁰

Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky was the head of the branch formed by Nigerian students. He was first influenced by the ideological system of Sayyid Qutb, an ideologist of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (his theoretical conceptions are parts from the basis of al Qaeda's principles, too). It is remarkable that Zakzaky changed his religion and became an adherent to Shia Islam.

¹⁹ Jacob Zenn, "The Islamic Movement and Iranian Intelligence Activities in Nigeria", Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2013, available at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-movement-and-iranian-intelligence-activities-in-nigeria>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

²⁰ Dawit Giorgis, "Nigeria's Hezbollah problem", Global Public Square, 2013, available at <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/06/14/nigerias-hezbollah-problem/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

It seems unequivocal that, in return for this act, he expected financial assets and expertise from Iran. Former Iranian diplomat Adel Assadinia confirmed that the IMN is operating with the financial support of the Iranian government and is modelled after the Lebanese Hezbollah.²¹

In the past, Zakzaky had several conflicts with the Nigerian government, he was even imprisoned for years. He stated publicly that he accepts only the laws of the Islam and the instructions of the Quran.²² Nowadays, Zakzaky is one of the most important religious mentors in Nigeria. He is an emblematic character for the Shiite population, just like Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was in Iran. When he speaks to his followers, Zakzaky usually sits under a big portrait of Ayatollah Khomeini and he uses the special rhetoric manners which are frequent in the speeches of Hassan Nasrallah, a Hezbollah leader. It is not surprising that he often awakens aggression towards Jews and Israel. In the context of Nigerian people's poverty, he also talks about the importance of social justice in Nigeria and building support for Iranian policies in Africa.²³

There is a reason to believe that Hezbollah gives religious and military support to this group. It is not surprising that they are supporting Zakzaky's Nigerian organisation, being that Shiites have the same religious beliefs as they do. Nowadays, Zakzaky still leads Nigeria's main Shia movement, seen as being largely peaceful recently, and has campaigned for a government with stricter adherence to Sharia law.²⁴

²¹ Christopher Okonkwo, "Iran's Nuclear Deal: Threat to Nigeria's Security", The African Executive, 2015, available at <http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?article=8402>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

²² Dawit Giorgis, "Nigeria's Hezbollah problem", Global Public Square, 2013, available at <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/06/14/nigerias-hezbollah-problem/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

²³ Dawit Giorgis, "Nigeria's Hezbollah problem", Global Public Square, 2013, available at <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/06/14/nigerias-hezbollah-problem/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

²⁴ Al Jazeera, "Nigeria arrests trio over 'Hezbollah cell'", 31 May 2013, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201353175149437728.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.



According to current reports and intelligences, the military wing of Hezbollah operates successfully with its affiliates despite the fact that there are hundreds of kilometres separating them. Hezbollah's ambition to enhance its presence and their influence on other continents has become successful. These allies represent a significant threat to the international community and its activities all around the world raise several questions concerning security issues.

The Uprising of Boko Haram

As we mentioned before, Hezbollah definitely maintains its presence in Nigeria. The Shiite extremist organization, based in Lebanon, appears to be able to provide its allies with weapons, expertise and financial backup. Recently, several reports and news disclosed the presumption that Hezbollah has links to the Nigerian terrorist group who is responsible for 6,644 deaths in 2014 and displaced persons even much more.²⁵ Since the extremely violent terrorist group, Boko Haram's increasing radicalization led to uncontrollable uprising, extremist organisations have the chance to expand their influence in West-Africa.

Boko Haram militants gained control of large areas in their home state of Borno, estimated at 50,000 square kilometres in January 2015.²⁶ Boko Haram is the deadliest terrorist group in the world, according to *The Global Terrorism Index 2015* released in 18 November 2015²⁷. The group is even worse than the Islamic State (IS), which

was responsible for 6,073 deaths.²⁸ Boko Haram became the IS' "West African Province," although the factual collaboration between the groups is ambiguous. Boko Haram pledged allegiance to IS in the beginning of the year,²⁹ but analysts say that the act was just another effort to create fear and false image about their power. Till now, there are no signs for cooperation.

Although we have no serious claims yet that Boko Haram and the Islamic State conduct practical collaboration, we have some evidence that Hezbollah supports Boko Haram in various fields, as mentioned previously. The allegation that Shiite Hezbollah is giving assistance to the Sunni Boko Haram seems quite implausible since the relationship of the two forms of Islam has been undoubtedly turbulent.

Exceptional Cooperation – the Link between Hezbollah and Boko Haram

There are pieces of ambiguous information about a union between Boko Haram leaders and Hezbollah. The possibility of the collaboration of these two groups seems improbable, since it is very rare that original Shia and Sunni groups would cooperate with each other. Even so, there are some occurrences we must examine to draw adequate conclusions related to these information.

In 2013, Nigerian police forces jailed three Lebanese citizens in northern Nigeria on suspicion of being members of the Lebanese movement Hezbollah. Soldiers uncovered a secret storehouse of arms that Nigerian government forces consider belonging to members of the Shia political party's armed group. The three suspects were arrested in Kano, reported Captain Ikedichi Iweha in his written

²⁵ Dionne Searcey and Marc Santora, "Boko Haram Ranked Ahead of ISIS for Deadliest Terror Group", *New York Times*, 2015, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/africa/boko-haram-ranked-ahead-of-isis-for-deadliest-terror-group.html?_r=0, accessed on 27.11.2016.

²⁶ David Blair, "Boko Haram is now a mini-Islamic State, with its own territory", *The Telegraph*, 2015, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/11337722/Boko-Haram-is-now-a-mini-Islamic-State-with-its-own-territory.html>, accessed on 27.11.2016.

²⁷ *Global Terrorism Index*, Institute for Economics and Peace, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>.

²⁸ Laurel Raymond, "The World's Deadliest Terrorist Group Has Killed 40 People in the Last 48 Hours. It's Not ISIS", *Think Progress*, 19 November 2015, available at <http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/11/19/3724000/worst-terrorist-group-isnt-isis/>, accessed on 27.11.2016.

²⁹ Laurel Raymond, "The World's Deadliest Terrorist Group Has Killed 40 People in the Last 48 Hours. It's Not ISIS", *Think Progress*, 19 November 2015, available at <http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/11/19/3724000/worst-terrorist-group-isnt-isis/>, accessed on 27.11.2016.



statement. According to the reports, the jailed suspects confessed to be members of Hezbollah. The government verified that the armament and ammunition would target at facilities in relation with Israeli and Western interests in Nigeria.³⁰ Nigerian troops belonging to Kano's Joint Task Forces claimed that investigations related to properties and the discovery of some local arm storage entities owned by Lebanese foreign citizens in Kano proves that Boko Haram extremist militants maintain connections with the Lebanon-based Hezbollah.

The fact that the Hezbollah endeavours to strengthen its presence in Nigeria is not enough to claim that they are intending to build practical collaboration with Boko Haram. We have to mention that Boko Haram is widely condemned by the Islamic population, especially since the extremist organisation committed attacks against Muslims. Many imams excommunicated the terrorist organisation, labelling them as un-Islamic. Contrary to this, Hezbollah is highly supported by Lebanese and other Arabic nations both openly and secretly.

Hezbollah is not against western education; their members often graduated while Boko Haram soldiers are barely educated and widely criticize western education. Moreover, Hezbollah does not kill their own citizens while the Boko Haram crisis has hit everyone in Nigeria, Muslims and Christians equally. In addition to these facts, Boko Haram operates mostly in Northern-Nigeria, where 90% of the population are Muslims. Up to this point, Boko Haram has killed more Muslims than Christians.³¹

Despite these facts, some sources are telling us that there is a link between Hezbollah and Boko Haram related to the recruitment and training of young innocent girls as potential suicide bombers for use in parts of northern Nigeria. The

³⁰ Al Jazeera, "Nigeria arrests trio over 'Hezbollah cell'", 31 May 2013, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201353175149437728.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

³¹ Premium Times, "Boko Haram has killed more Muslims than Christians, says Mohammed Haruna", available at http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/93481boko_haram_has_killed_more_muslims_than_christians_says_mohammed.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

cooperation and partnership between the Near-Eastern jihadist group and the Nigerian extremist organisation reportedly have been successful in recruiting and training over 177 young girls under the ages of 15.³² The possibility of a link with Nigerian group Boko Haram was being investigated, said Captain Iweha.³³

In addition to these occurrences, Nigerian military forces have found an underground bunker where they discovered different kinds of weapons. Spokesman announced that all of the arrested people have admitted to have undergone Hezbollah terrorist training. Bassey Etang, the Kano State director of State Security Service, confirmed that the explored Hezbollah cell in Nigeria means an unquestionable hazard for the West African country.³⁴ Before Iweha's announcement that the link between Hezbollah and Boko Haram had been investigated, intelligence services never revealed any evidence of a link between Shia Hezbollah and Sunni Boko Haram.

The predominant population of Muslims in Nigeria are Sunni, but there are a few millions of Shia Nigerians too, as I mentioned in the first part of the paper, in relation with the Iranian-supported Islamic Movement in Nigeria. Iweha declined to say if there is any connection of the incident to IMN. Otherwise according to IMN's leader Zakzaky's public speech, he condemns Boko Haram because of the group's attacks against Muslim targets (For instance in the north eastern Nigerian city of Potiskum, a Boko Haram suicide bomber attacked a Shiite Muslim procession. The attack resulted in the death of 20

³² 247 U Reports, "We Have 75 Female Suicide Bombers.' – Boko Haram Source", 247 U Reports – Impartial Observers, 2014, available at <http://247ureports.com/we-have-75-female-suicide-bombers-boko-haram-source/>, accessed on 27.11.2016.

³³ Al Jazeera, "Nigeria arrests trio over 'Hezbollah cell'", 31 May 2013, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201353175149437728.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

³⁴ Al Jazeera, "Nigeria arrests trio over 'Hezbollah cell'", 31 May 2013, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201353175149437728.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.



victims according to reports).³⁵ The country has a significant Lebanese population, but this was the first factual clue which led the Nigerian security bodies to report that Hezbollah has ongoing interest in Nigeria, related to Boko Haram.³⁶

Suicide Bombers, Engaged with Hezbollah

Hezbollah committed several military and terrorist actions over the past twenty years. These include attacks against citizens of Western states; they carried out a series of kidnappings, the suicide bombings against US Marine barracks in 1983 in Beirut, in which 200 Marines lost their lives. In 1985 they hijacked an airplane, and in 1987 they carried out an action against the Hungarian embassy in Beirut, which forced the security forces to evacuate the embassy.

Since the death of Hussein, and the constant persecutions in connection with the fight against oppression, martyrdom was every time present in Shiite Islam. This ideological background which emphasizes that martyrdom is one of the reasons why it was quite easy to make their sympathizers to accept their violent way of fighting, especially the suicide attacks. In modern times, Hezbollah was the first organization which identified suicide attacks as legal ways of fighting for freedom, and they used this technic related to their military operations commonly.

The first suicide attack took place in Tyre against the Israeli army headquarters. This initial strike was followed by more than two dozens of similar attacks.³⁷ Khomeini's reinterpreted doctrine of martyrdom means that suicide attacks are the highest levels of self-sacrificing for Islam.

³⁵ Center for Security Policy, "Will Sunni-Shia tensions spread to Nigeria?", 3 November 2014, available at <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2014/11/03/will-sunni-shia-tensions-spread-to-nigeria/>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

³⁶ Al Jazeera. "Nigeria arrests trio over 'Hezbollah cell'", 31 May 2013, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201353175149437728.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

³⁷ Shabak, *The Tyre HQ Bombing – First Suicide Attack against Israel* (1983), Israeli Security Agency, available at <https://www.shabak.gov.il/English/History/Affairs/Pages/TheTyreHQBombing.aspx>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

This theory behind their intentions has made their approach appealing to Sunni extremists, too.

The links between the Shia and Sunni interpretation are oppression by other ethnic or religious groups, the fight against tyranny and occupation, but in this case these elements only represent a demagogic and empty ideology. Hezbollah uses these dogmas during the training of their suicide attackers. Palestinian Islamist extremists, for example members of Hamas were participants of these training camps on many occasions. These kinds of collaboration and assistance provided results in many Palestinian suicide attacks against Israel.³⁸

It is an important aspect of these acts that the Sunnis who apply these Shia ideologies to recruit, train and commit suicide attacks, only take these ideologies as an instrument to give a religious background to their aims, not taking over the idealism of Hussein's martyrdom. They often take advantages of the Shia technics because they can deepen radical influence on their fighters. The fighters trained by Hezbollah are international terrorists and they are strengthening the global threat of political violence by recruiting more and more foreign fighters to widen their presence all around the world.

Increasing Frequency of Boko Haram's Suicide Bombings

Since the emergence of Boko Haram in the '90s, the terrorist organisation operates at an exceptionally high level of violence. Nigerian authorities struggled to establish a new security framework to protect the population and to fight successfully against Boko Haram. Their efforts proved little in terms of results, Abu Bakr Shekau and his militias have carried out numerous deadly attacks against the civil population. Recently, they often committed these crimes with the help of suicide bombers. Apparently the Islamic jihadist group has adopted the Hezbollah's model of Jihadism in its usage of children as suicide

³⁸ Shaul Shay, *The Shahids – Islam and suicide attacks*. The Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, 2004.



attackers in crowded places full of civilian targets.³⁹

Since Boko Haram uses female suicide bombers to terrorize Nigeria, the deadly suicide attacks by Nigerian terrorists make headlines nearly every week. The group has launched its suicide attacks in the past years and their new tactic involves girls and women to cover their attacks even more efficiently. Boko Haram carried out its first suicide bombing in 2011.⁴⁰ It was an important step for the terrorist group, an extremely harmful development. Elizabeth Pearson, a gender and radicalization researcher who is also a member of the Nigeria Security Network stated in an interview by *The World Post* that Nigeria does not have a history of suicide bombing and suicide is not culturally accepted. They committed their first female suicide bombing in the summer of 2014, when a woman blew herself up at army barracks in Gombe, northeast Nigeria. This was the initial attack of a wave of suicide bombing by women and girls in Nigeria.⁴¹

Since November 2014 there have been numerous attacks killing many innocent civilians by female suicide bombers each month. In total, 27 women and girls have reportedly been involved in suicide attacks in the country.⁴² Several media are deeply concerned with the fact that there is a great chance that Boko Haram soldiers will use Chibok schoolgirls as suicide bombers. The

reason why these fears emerged is that the first wave of female martyrs came only a few months after Boko Haram abducted the schoolgirls in April 2014.⁴³ Since committing martyrdom is a privilege according to the Islamic extremists and martyrs are going to Paradise, this theory seems implausible because the kidnapped girls are sinners in the eyes of Boko Haram soldiers thus it would not be logical to give the advantage to them. Notwithstanding many acts committed by Boko Haram are completely opposed to Islam. Even so, there's no evidence of using the Chibok girls as suicide bombers. The great amount of female martyrs does not mean that there are no suicide bombings by men. Several researchers interpreted that female suicide attacks are signs of collaboration between Boko Haram and other Islamic militant groups. Woman on the battlefield are not advocated widely between Islamic groups, but Hezbollah has often used females as martyrs since its existence.

In 2014, 85% of all female suicide bombers blew themselves up in Nigeria.⁴⁴ It is questionable whether we can even call the children suicide attackers or terrorists. Female suicide bombers may be mainly under pressure, but we have to admit that there are some women willing to engage in these deadly attacks. The international coalition launched joint forces to fight against terrorists, and the African Union plans a 7,500-strong military force, named the Multinational Joint Task Force, and staffed by Nigerian, Cameroonian, Chadian and Beninese troops.⁴⁵ However, Boko Haram did not seem desperate. Their campaign has only grown in intensity. We

³⁹ 247 U Reports, "We Have 75 Female Suicide Bombers." – Boko Haram Source", 247 U Reports – Impartial Observers, 2014, available at <http://247ureports.com/we-have-75-female-suicide-bombers-boko-haram-source/>, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴⁰ Charlotte Alfred, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers To Terrorize Nigeria", *The World Post*, 2015, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴¹ Charlotte Alfred, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers To Terrorize Nigeria", *The World Post*, 2015, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴² Charlotte Alfred, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers to Terrorize Nigeria", *The World Post*, 2015, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴³ Charlotte Alfred, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers to Terrorize Nigeria", *The World Post*, 2015, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴⁴ Charlotte Alfred, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers To Terrorize Nigeria", *The World Post*, 2015, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴⁵ Peter Dörrie, "The African Union Readies an Army to Fight Boko Haram", 2015, available at <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/the-african-union-readies-an-army-to-beat-boko-haram-694150ba6ebb#.4ft1nimh>, accessed on 27.11.2016.



do not see the group facing a shortage of recruits. They pay or force people to fight through threats and kidnappings, and they also have a support base. They only need more people as their ambition has grown.⁴⁶

In the beginning of 2015, United States government imposed sanctions on Hezbollah members in Nigeria, showing the transnational reach of the Iranian, Lebanon-based group. They jailed the suspects; they were arrested for being part of the Hezbollah's "Foreign Relations Department" in the Nigerian capital Abuja. They reportedly gave Nigerian officials names of several other Hezbollah members based in the country. But according to the statement announcing U.S. sanctions, they are running a Hezbollah front. The arrested people are members of a foreign Hezbollah cell and they constantly enforce recruitment, training and generally support African allies of Hezbollah. The U.S. Treasury statement has not talked about any cooperation between the Shiite Hezbollah branch and Sunni Boko Haram.⁴⁷

Hezbollah seeks not just to extend its impact in other countries, but they are also searching for new financial backers, to secure permanently the financial background of their operations. Hezbollah owns approximately 500 million USD in financial assets.⁴⁸ In addition, it does not seem that the international community would have a concrete strategy which could be effective against Hezbollah. The group knows this very well, in fact they are so confident, they widely communicate that the foreign operations against them are unsuccessful. Hassan

Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah sent video message from his hidden shelter for the anniversary of the 2006 Lebanon war. "Israel has no strategy for defeating Hezbollah" boasted the terrorist leader.⁴⁹ Hassan Nasrallah proudly declared that the lack of real military concept reflects that the Israeli army's new military strategy is a great failure of the Israeli army chief of staff, Gadi Eisenkot. He believes that Israel alone cannot defeat Hezbollah's fighters. Israel, neither by air nor by land can be effective against Hezbollah, which strengthens their influence in other regions.⁵⁰

In respect to Hezbollah's international dimension, an establishment of professional actions with the responsibility of security and management developments across the countries where its interests have become vital. The affected countries should bring forward proposals in relation with the successful investigation of Hezbollah cells and put the initiatives into action as soon as possible.

The African Union has to investigate the possible supporters of Boko Haram, to bring an effective combat into effect against the terrorist group. Information gained from allied Intelligence Agencies is a useful base for current measurements facing Boko Haram insurgency.

Conclusions

The evidences presented in this article suggest some possible connections between Hezbollah and Boko Haram. Having in mind the facts that Nigeria is tackling poverty, religious and ethnic conflicts and, as a result of these factors, a great part of the population is vulnerable to extremist ideologies, we have to say that the society of the

⁴⁶ Charlotte Alfred, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers to Terrorize Nigeria", *The World Post*, 2015, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html, accessed on 27.11.2016.

⁴⁷ Alessandria Masi, "US Imposes Sanctions On Members Of Hezbollah's Nigeria-Based 'Foreign Relations Department'", *International Business Times*, 2015, available at <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-imposes-sanctions-members-hezbollahs-nigeria-based-foreign-relations-department-1830882>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

⁴⁸ Johnlee Varghese, "Forbes Israel: ISIS is World's Richest Terrorist Organisation in History", *International Business Times*, 2014, available at <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/forbes-israel-isis-worlds-richest-terrorist-organisation-history-613806>, accessed on 20.11.2016.

⁴⁹ Bihari Anna, "Izraelnek nincs stratégiája a Hezbollah legyőzésére", *Kitekintő*, 2015, available at http://kitekinto.hu/iszlam/2015/08/18/izraelnek_nincs_strategiaja_a_hezbollah_legyzesere/#.VIGHuHYvfiU, accessed on 20.11.2016.

⁵⁰ Bihari Anna, "Izraelnek nincs stratégiája a Hezbollah legyőzésére", *Kitekintő*, 2015, available at http://kitekinto.hu/iszlam/2015/08/18/izraelnek_nincs_strategiaja_a_hezbollah_legyzesere/#.VIGHuHYvfiU, accessed on 20.11.2016.



country represents a proper environment for the recruitment of suicide attackers.

The fact that Hezbollah is constantly struggling to extend its influence all over the world constitutes an indisputable effort by the group to establish partnerships between Muslim populations on other continents, too.

As the relations between Sunnis and Shias are undoubtedly confrontational, this questions the potential cooperation among Shia Hezbollah and Sunni Boko Haram. In addition to this, while it seems quite evident that Hezbollah's expertise would be a major and extensive asset to Boko Haram, it is therefore not entirely clear what significant benefits could be gained from the supporting operations to Boko Haram on the part of Hezbollah. Since we have no official evidence with one exception (discussed in detail earlier in this article) we can't talk about factual Hezbollah and Boko Haram cooperation, however, it is fair to state that Boko Haram tries to model successful training techniques of other terrorist organizations. Since Hezbollah waged a victorious war using suicide attacks and is one of the most active terrorist organisations in the world, their recruiting mechanism and training methods are examples followed by other violent groups.

The fact that Boko Haram started to use young girls as suicide bombers carries their brutality to a further stage. According to the research of Mausi Segun, Human Rights Watch researcher in Abuja, it is doubtful that Boko Haram would be willing to use the youth they have abducted, because the line of the suicide bomber is martyrdom. The reward for the completion of the task is theoretically paradise. According to their warped interpretation, women and girls who have been abducted would not deserve this "valuable" reward.

We cannot be sure whether Hezbollah is giving assistance to the Boko Haram training effort or Boko Haram has only copied the model of Hezbollah's Shiite suicide attacker strategy. Some intelligence reports announced that suicide bombers are on the way to the country and that

plenty have already arrived in Nigeria.⁵¹ One thing is sure: Nigerian intelligence services and armed forces have to investigate the possible links, and with governmental support, local authorities must attribute special importance to alterations of these alliances in the times of uncertainty.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. 247 U Reports, "We Have 75 Female Suicide Bombers." – Boko Haram Source", 247 U Reports – Impartial Observers, 2014, <http://247ureports.com/we-have-75-female-suicide-bombers-boko-haram-source/>.
2. Al Jazeera, "Nigeria arrests trio over 'Hezbollah cell'", 31 May 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201353175149437728.html>.
3. ALFRED, Charlotte, "How Boko Haram Uses Female Suicide Bombers to Terrorize Nigeria", The World Post, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/28/boko-haram-female-suicide-bombers_n_6763386.html.
4. BEN-GEDALYAHU, Tzvi, "Israel wants un-to-recognize-amas-as-a-terrorist-organization", JewishPress.com, 2014, <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/israel-wants-un-to-recognize-amas-as-a-terrorist-organization/2014/10/28>.
5. BERKO, Anat, *The Path to Paradise – The inner world of suicide bombers and their dispatchers*. London: Praeger Security International, 2007.
6. BIHARI, Anna, "Izraelnek nincs stratégiája a Hezbollah legyőzésére", Kitekintő, 2015, http://kitekinto.hu/izslam/2015/08/18/izraelnek_nincs_strategiaja_a_hezbollah_legyzesere/#.VIGHuHYvfiU
7. BLAIR, David, "Boko Haram is now a mini-Islamic State, with its own territory", The Telegraph, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/11337722/Boko-Haram-is-now-a-mini-Islamic-State-with-its-own-territory.html>.

⁵¹ 247 U Reports, "We Have 75 Female Suicide Bombers." – Boko Haram Source", 247 U Reports – Impartial Observers, 2014, available at <http://247ureports.com/we-have-75-female-suicide-bombers-boko-haram-source/>, accessed on 27.11.2016.



8. Center for Security Policy, “Will Sunni-Shia tensions spread to Nigeria?”, 3 November 2014, <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2014/11/03/will-sunni-shia-tensions-spread-to-nigeria>
9. CLARKE, Colin P., *Terrorism, Inc.: The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare*, ABC-CLIO, 2015.
10. DÖRRIE, Peter, “The African Union Readies an Army to Fight Boko Haram”, 2015, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/the-african-union-readies-an-army-to-beat-boko-haram-694150ba6ebb#.4frt1nimh>.
11. Defense Industry Daily, “Iran-Syria vs. Israel, Round 1: Assessments & Lessons Learned”. 13 September 2012. <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/iransyria-vs-israel-round-1-assessments-lessons-learned-02558/#more-2558>
12. GIORGIS, Dawit, “Nigeria’s Hezbollah problem”, Global Public Square, 2013, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/06/14/nigerias-hezbollah-problem/>.
13. LANKFORD, Adam, “The Myth of Martyrdom: What Really Drives Suicide Bombers, Rampage Shooters, and Other Self-Destructive Killers”, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/249/html>.
14. MASI, Alessandria, “US Imposes Sanctions on Members of Hezbollah’s Nigeria-Based ‘Foreign Relations Department’”, International Business Times, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-imposes-sanctions-members-hezbollahs-nigeria-based-foreign-relations-department-1830882>.
15. MERARI, Ariel, “Personality characteristics of suicide bombers and organizers of suicide attacks”, in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2009, 22/1, pp. 87-101.
16. NOW, “ISIS vs Hezbollah in numbers”, 22 September 2014, <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/specialreports/564076-hezbollah-in-numbers>.
17. OKONKWO, Christopher, “Iran’s Nuclear Deal: Threat to Nigeria’s Security”, The African Executive, 2015, <http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?Article=8402>.
18. PHILIPPONE, Doug, “Hezbollah: The organization and its Finances”, in FREEMAN, M. (ed.). *Financing Terrorism: Case Studies*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013, pp. 49-62.
19. Premium Times, “Boko Haram has killed more Muslims than Christians, says Mohammed Haruna”, http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/93481boko_haram_has_killed_more_muslims_than_christians_says_mohammed.html.
20. RAYMOND, Laurel. “The World’s Deadliest Terrorist Group Has Killed 40 People in the Last 48 Hours. It’s Not ISIS”, *Think Progress*, 19 November 2015. <http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/11/19/3724000/worst-terrorist-group-isnt-isis>.
21. ROSNER, Yotam; YOGEV, Einav; SCHWEITZER, Yoram, “A Report on Suicide Bombings in 2013”, INSS Insight, No. 507, 2014, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/No.%20507%20-%20Yotam,%20Einav,%20and%20Yoram%20for%20web.pdf>.
22. SEARCEY, Dionne; SANTORA, Marc, “Boko Haram Ranked Ahead of ISIS for Deadliest Terror Group”, New York Times, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/africa/boko-haram-ranked-ahead-of-isis-for-deadliest-terror-group.html?_r=0.
23. SHABAK, “The Tyre HQ Bombing – First Suicide Attack against Israel (1983)”. Israeli Security Agency, <https://www.shabak.gov.il/English/History/Affairs/Pages/TheTyreHQBombing.aspx>.
24. SHATZ, Adam, “In search of Hezbollah”, in *The New York Review of Books*, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2004/apr/29/in-search-of-hezbollah/>.
25. SHAY, Shaul, *The Shahids – Islam and suicide attacks*, The Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, 2004.
26. SHEEHAN, Ivan Sascha, “Are Suicide Terrorists Suicidal? A Critical Assessment of the Evidence Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience”, in *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, 2014, 11/9-10, pp. 81-92, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4267802>.



28. SHPANCER, Noam, “Understanding the Suicide Bomber”, *Psychology Today*, 2010, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/insight-therapy/201009/understanding-the-suicide-bomber>.
29. UN Security Council, Counter-Terrorism Committee, *Resolutions*, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/resources/res-sc.html>.
30. VARGHESE, Johnlee, “Forbes Israel: ISIS is World’s Richest Terrorist Organisation in History”. *International Business Times*, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/forbes-israel-isis-worlds-richest-terrorist-organisation-history-613806>.
31. YALIBNAN, “Saudi Arabia urges UN to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group”, November 20, 2014, <http://yalibnan.com/2014/11/20/saudi-arabia-urges-un-to-designate-hezbollah-as-a-terrorist-group/>.
32. ZENN, Jacob, “The Islamic Movement and Iranian Intelligence Activities in Nigeria”, *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 2013, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-movement-and-iranian-intelligence-activities-in-nigeria>.