

1 The Long War Journal: Abdullah Azzam Brigades leader calls on Lebanese people to attack Hezbollah

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Sirajeddine Zurayqat has called on Sunnis in Lebanon to fight Hezbollah. This image, along with his call to arms, was posted on Zurayqat's official Twitter feed.

The leader of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades (AAB), an al Qaeda-linked group, has called on Sunnis in Lebanon to attack Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed terrorist organization.

Sirajeddine Zurayqat, who has been [reportedly named the new emir](#) of the AAB, called for the anti-Hezbollah attacks in a series of posts on his official Twitter feed on Oct. 13. The tweets have also been [collected into a single statement](#) from the AAB leader.

Zurayqat addresses "our youth in Tripoli," saying they should strike Hezbollah fighters and positions, not the Lebanese Army. Hezbollah is the "puppet master" behind the Army and Lebanon's security services, Zurayqat writes, and it is Hezbollah that has turned the government against the nation's Sunnis.

"Therefore, strike the puppet master and do not get preoccupied with the tools. If the head is broken, the hands become paralyzed," Zurayqat argues in a tweet translated by [The Daily Star](#). "You have [Hezbollah's] centers, checkpoints, supply lines, leaders and members across Lebanon. Kill them and avenge the children of Lebanon and Syria."

The AAB leader also argues that Hezbollah has been Israel's "loyal guard" since 1996. He attempts to recast the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel as "nothing more than breaking the rules of engagement." By failing to continue with the war, Zurayqat says, Hezbollah has provided international legitimacy for Israel's existence.

Zurayqat's words are intended to undermine public perceptions of Hezbollah as an effective anti-Israeli fighting force. Ironically, Iran and other allied groups have done more to fight Israel than the AAB or any other al Qaeda-backed group. But the AAB and other al Qaeda-allied groups have claimed responsibility for smaller attacks on Israel, including [during the conflict this past summer](#).

Zurayqat's call to fight Hezbollah is consistent with the [anti-Iranian propaganda campaign being waged by the Al Nusra Front](#), al Qaeda's official branch in Syria. Al Nusra operates in Lebanon and has called upon Sunnis in the country to rise up against the Lebanese government, Hezbollah and their Iranian-backers.

Both Al Nusra and the Islamic State, a former branch of al Qaeda, have fought against Lebanese forces and Hezbollah. There are even [persistent reports](#) indicating that Al Nusra and the Islamic State have conducted joint operations in Lebanon despite their bitter rivalry in Syria.

In August, Al Nusra and the Islamic State took a number of Lebanese servicemen hostage, killing several of them after the negotiations to free them stalled. The Al Nusra Front has blamed Hezbollah and Iran for the failure to reach a deal that would free the captives. And Al Nusra has [used its hostages in videos](#) that are intended to sway public opinion in Lebanon against the government and Hezbollah.

In September, Zurayqat [addressed the Lebanese hostages in an audio recording](#) that was released online. He blamed the men for joining the Lebanese Army, saying "if you fight the Sunnis there is nothing between you and us except the sword." According to [Al Akhbar](#), Zurayqat threatened, "The mujahideen took Iraq in days, and in days they can be in the center of Beirut too."

The AAB has conducted attacks against Iranian interests in Lebanon. In November 2013, the group [claimed credit for twin suicide attacks outside of the Iranian embassy](#) in Beirut. Nearly two dozen people, including an Iranian cultural attache, were killed and more than 150 others were wounded in the blasts.