

## **Lebanon: Behind the murder of Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyeh**

A leader of Hezbollah, **Imad Mughniyeh** was assassinated on 12.2.2008 in Damascus. A car massively loaded with explosives detonated exactly beside his car as this went by: In a very powerful explosion, he was instantaneously dead.

He was killed in an **incredibly difficult, precise, efficient and successful operation**, in spite of so many security measures taken to secure such a leader, who was travelling all the time secretly for Hezbollah through Lebanon, Syria, Iran and other countries. It must have been carried out by very professional people who managed to get very confidential information.

Three years ago, on 14.2.2005, the Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri had been assassinated in Beirut: A car massively loaded with explosives detonated exactly beside his car as this went by. In a very powerful explosion, he was instantaneously dead. He was killed in an **incredibly difficult, precise, efficient and successful operation**, in spite of many security measures taken to secure the Lebanese Head of state. It must have been carried out by very professional people who managed to get very confidential information.

After Hariri, many Lebanese politicians and high ranking army and police officers were killed by car bombs, like Hariri in spite of all security measures: **Incredibly precise and efficient operations**. They must have been carried out by very professional people who managed to get very confidential information. Nobody has a clue who it was.

Mostly, **Syria was blamed**: Immediately after the death of Hariri, the USA and the West blamed Syria. But the West had no proofs, so they required an investigation and the UN sent an expert, the German attorney Dieter **Mehlis**. Mehlis investigated for months then issued a thick report where he explained that Syria had obviously interest to kill Hariri. Describing the history of the last twenty years in Lebanon and Syria, he came to the conclusion that "it must be

Syria". **But he failed to show any proof.** The Lebanese Government had jailed four generals said to be suspected of being Syrian agents. But Mehlis (and anyone else) failed to find any proof for that. Cell phones were found and Mehlis hinted that these must have been bought or rented by Syrian agents, but he could not show any proof. After a year or so, he was replaced by a Belgian attorney, Serge Brammertz. Also Brammertz investigated further, but he also **could not show any proof.**

As Hariri was murdered in February 2005, Syria had troops in Lebanon and was under strong pressure to withdraw it. It wanted not. But after the murder, the pressure increased at such a level that **in April 2005, Syria had withdrawn all troops.** So the question is whether **Syria was so stupid as to kill Hariri without understanding what the consequences would be, or if somebody else had its hand in the murder - knowing very well that the consequence would be the forced withdrawal of the Syrians?** Should we not conclude, contrary to Mehlis, that obviously such a "somebody" had interest in the killing of Hariri, and not the Syrians?

And now, **Imad Mughnyieh is dead, killed in Syria by a car bomb.** Immediately after his death, the Olmert's office, the Israeli press and the US press stressed that he was an enemy of Israel. They exulted openly about his death - but said they had nothing to do with it.

My question is: **Who is able to carry out such difficult, precise, efficient and very similar operations in Beirut, Damascus and other places?** Of course, we have no proofs that it is Israel, no more proof than Bush, Mehlis or Brammerz have when they accuse Syria to have been behind the killing of Hariri and others. But what we have are brains. And my brain can hardly imagine any Arabic secret service interested in, and (first of all) **able to carry out efficiently such operations.** It tells me that **this perfect operation killing Mughnyeh was so strangely similar to the many perfect operations killing Lebanese politician...** So, please try to guess who could be behind such murders, such operations?

- Syria itself? As Israelis always speculate on twists between Syria, Iran and Hezbollah, "Haaretz" hinted immediately at such a possibility (see "*not just "who", but also "where?"*" by Shmuel Rosner, 14.2.2008). But I believe there is no point in trying to make Syria responsible for the death of Mughnyeh.
- Al Caida, Al Jund- or al Fatah-al-Islam or such? These groups have never worked so perfect and traceless, so I don't see they are behind this here murder.

Interestingly enough, in between the Israel press implicitly admitted what is obvious for all experts, even if they don't say or write it: **Mughnyeh was killed by Israel's Mossad** (see the "Haaretz" article "*the hit / not merely revenge*" by Hamos Harel (14.2.2008) or the Jerusalem Post article attached to this notice)

**If you still doubt that this infamous Zionist state- used to infiltrate the Palestinians movements, to send spies to all Arabic countries, to practice targeted killings in and outside the territories - is able to kill and murder not only Palestinians but also other humans - preferably Arabs - in foreign countries, including Head of States,**

**If you still doubt that they are interested in disorder and troubles in the neighbouring countries, and do not hesitate to commit any crime to this purpose,**

**If you still doubt that they may be not only behind Mughnyeh's death but also, directly or indirectly, behind many other political killings in the Middle East:**

**I do not!**

Laurent Vonwiller

[Laurent\\_vonwiller@hotmail.com](mailto:Laurent_vonwiller@hotmail.com)

PS: Please read the following lines, the first taken "Jerusalem Post" 15.2.2008, the second from Wikipedia and the third from an article from Yossi Melman "Operation targeted killings":

## 1. Security and Defense: Who was Imad Mughniyeh?

By [YAAKOV KATZ](#)

(...) it wasn't until 1992 that someone - in Israel or elsewhere - decided that "enough was enough." The chosen location was south **Beirut**, outside a store owned by **Mughniyeh's brother, Fuad**. According to the recently published book, *The Point of No Return* - which provides a comprehensive history of Hizbullah - **a car carrying a 50-kilogram bomb was set off at the entrance to the store, killing Fuad and three others. (Mughniyeh's other brother, Jihad, had been killed seven years earlier in an attempt on the life of Hizbullah spiritual leader Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, whom he was guarding.)**

Lebanon blamed the Mossad for the attack on Fuad. According to news reports, the Mossad had hoped Mughniyeh would attend his brother's funeral, and that there he would be killed. Imad stayed away. (...)

On Wednesday night, however, **Mughniyeh was killed in a meticulously executed car bombing in the heart of Damascus**. For years he had evaded capture and, according to some reports, never slept in the same bed twice.

**"Israel and other countries have watched him for years,"** former Mossad chief Danny Yatom told *The Jerusalem Post*. "He was very slippery. He never gave interviews, and there were only a few pictures of him... He had special capabilities - a satanic and creative mind, and he never left tracks behind him."

While his name was not as well known as that of Nasrallah, Yatom and other former Military Intelligence officers claimed this week that Mughniyeh was deadlier than al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden or his Hizbullah boss. In contrast to both, who also fill political roles, Mughniyeh was strictly involved in operations.

According to former intelligence officials, Mughniyeh was not only wanted by Israel and the US. It is possible, they say, that he was killed due to an internal Hizbullah power struggle, or a falling out with his Syrian or Iranian patrons.

DEFENSE MINISTER **Ehud Barak** is said to have a soft spot for assassinations from his days as a team leader in the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit (Sayeret Matkal) when, disguised as a woman, he infiltrated a PLO hideout in Beirut and killed three top operatives.

**In 1992, as chief of General Staff, he persuaded the government to approve the assassination of Nasrallah's predecessor at the helm of Hizbullah - Abbas Mussawi.** Although this was never carried out, when Barak became prime minister, he oversaw the training for the assassination of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, in retaliation for the 1991 Gulf War, and the Scud missiles fired on Ramat Gan. In other words, **the assessment is that if Israel was behind Mughniyeh's assassination, Barak no doubt played a key role in the operation.**

Whether or not Israel was behind this particular assassination, however, senior defense officials say that having good working relations between the Mossad and the IDF is necessary for carrying out operations of this nature. And Mossad chief Meir Dagan has indeed developed strong ties with the brass, particularly Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi and OC Air Force Maj.-Gen. Elazar Shkedy.

WHOEVER IS responsible for it, Mughniyeh's assassination is significant. His death is a blow to Hizbullah operations and a boost to Israel's security, since any large-scale attack he might have been planning - possibly in response to the alleged air strike in September on a nuclear facility in Syria - is now thwarted.

The assassins' success in infiltrating Mughniyeh's security also sends a clear message to every Hizbullah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist around the world, particularly to Khalad Mashaal, who lives not far from where Mughniyeh was assassinated.

More importantly, his assassination serves a major blow to the Iranian-Hizbullah-Syrian triangle which Mughniyeh coordinated and directed. It is also a blow to Hizbullah Unit 1800, which he set up in the late '80s, and was responsible for the terror group's overseas operations, including the assistance it provided to Palestinian terrorists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## 2. Eli Cohen

**Eli Cohen** ([Hebrew](#): אלי כהן) ([December 26, 1924](#) – [May 18, 1965](#)) was a celebrated [Israeli spy](#), and is recognized as one of the most successful spies of modern times. Born in [Egypt](#), Cohen contributed to pro-Israeli activities in Egypt during the [1950s](#), such as taking part in [Operation Goshen](#) although the Egyptian government could never provide proof of it. But the most important part of his career began when he was recruited into [Israeli military intelligence](#) in 1960. He was given a false identity as a [Syrian Arab](#) (...). Early (in 1962), he moved to [Damascus](#). For the next few years, (...) Cohen gained the confidence of many Syrian military and government officials, and sent intelligence to Israel by [radio](#), secret letters, and occasionally by visiting Israel in person. His most famous achievement was to tour the Syrian [fortifications](#) on the [Golan Heights](#). In [1964](#) his control was transferred to [Mossad](#) as part of an intelligence reorganization.

In January [1965](#), Soviet experts caught him in the act of sending a radio message (...). After a showcase trial, he was found guilty of [espionage](#). (...). He was publicly hanged by Syria on [May 18, 1965](#). (...).

("Elie Cohen" in Wikipedia, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

## 3. Operation 'Targeted Killings'

One of Israel's most controversial anti-terrorism tactics has been its **policy of targeted killings** (...). Since the start of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in the fall of 2000, dozens of members of the Palestinian groups such as Hamas, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Islamic Jihad have been assassinated by Israeli military and security forces. (...)

In 2003, then-Deputy Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (he is now the prime minister) revealed that Israel was considering a targeted killing of then-Palestinian leader **Yasir Arafat**. "In my eyes, from a moral point of view, this is no different than the eliminations of others who were involved in activating acts of terror," *The New York Times* quoted Olmert as saying. Since his death in 2004, Palestinian officials and

members of Arafat's family have publicly speculated that Israel might have been involved in Arafat's death, a charge Israel has denied.

In 2004, Hamas co-founder **Ahmed Ismail Yassin** was killed in Gaza by a missile fired from an Israeli helicopter. During the 2006 Lebanese war between Hezbollah and Israel, Israel tried to gather intelligence information pinpointing the whereabouts of **Hassan Nasrallah**, the secretary general of Hezbollah, and his top aides. In the early days of the war, Israeli aircraft attacked a bunker in southern **Beirut**, where it believed Hezbollah leaders were hiding, pounding it with what it described as 23 tons of bombs. (Hezbollah later said that none of its leaders were killed in the strike.)

(...) One important element of the tactic is that Israeli assassinations have been directed at foreigners, defined as "state enemies." (...)

The first known targeted killing occurred in 1956, when an Israeli agent gave a rigged parcel to Col. **Mustafa Hafez**, the director of Egyptian military intelligence in **Gaza**, which was then under Egyptian control. When Hafez opened the package, it exploded in his face, mortally wounding him (...)

About two dozen people — including both suspected Arab and Palestinian terrorists and agents suspected of double-crossing Israel — were assassinated in the 1960s and early 1970s, according to ICIJ interviews with members of Mossad and Shabak who spoke on the condition of anonymity. In some cases, the agents said, the double agents were tricked by their handlers into handling booby-trapped explosives, creating the illusion that they were killed in bomb-making accidents (...)

In 1974, Mossad killed a man in **Lillehammer, Norway**, it believed to be **Ali Hassan Salameh**, a senior officer with the Palestinian Liberation Organization's special operations and the reputed mastermind of the Munich attack. Instead, he turned out to be Ahmad Boushiki, an innocent waiter married to a Norwegian woman. Five Israeli agents were convicted by a Norwegian court and served short jail sentences related to their involvement in Boushiki's death (...)

.The targeted killings continued. In 1977, Mossad used a Palestinian collaborator to provide **Wadia Haddad**, an operative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, with poisoned chocolates. He died the following year from what appeared to be leukemia. A year later, an Israeli intelligence agent in **Beirut** triggered a car bomb that finally killed **Salameh**, the intended target of the Lillehammer operation.

In 1992, Israeli helicopters flew to **Lebanon** and used missiles to assassinate **Seyyed Abbas Musavi**, the Hezbollah secretary general. In 1995, Mossad agents in **Malta** shot to death Dr. **Fathi Shkaki**, leader of the Palestinian terrorist group Islamic Jihad (...).

In 1997, another Mossad poison plot in **Jordan** nearly killed Hamas leader **Khaled Mashaal**. And once again, a targeted killing attempt backfired. The plot was discovered by the Jordanian government, which then compelled the Israelis to provide Mashaal with an antidote. The incident damaged relations between Jordan and Israel, and then-Premier Benjamin Netanyahu had to agree to cooperate with a first-ever parliamentary inquiry into the secret Israeli policy of targeted killings.

Over the years, Israel's targeted killings policy has drawn widespread international criticism. More recently, Israeli peace groups petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court to rule that targeted killings were illegal.

One reason targeted killing should be banned, critics say, is that innocent civilians often are killed in the attacks. In a 2006 letter to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Minister of Defense Amir Peretz, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem contended that **since 2000, assassination attempts against suspected Palestinian terrorists have killed 123 non-targeted civilians**. "When an assassination is carried out through the firing of missiles from the air on a car that is traveling during the day in a crowded residential area," the group wrote, "the chance that civilians will be harmed is almost certain."

(Yossi Melman, 30.5.2007) ([www.publiintegrity.org](http://www.publiintegrity.org))