



# KURDISH HIZBULLAH IN TURKEY

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ISLAMISM, VIOLENCE  
AND THE STATE

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MEHMET KURT

## Kurdish Hizbullah in Turkey

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# Preface to the English Translation

This book was first published in 2015 in Turkish by İletişim Publishing. It is the first ethnographic study written about the Kurdish Hizbullah. This study constitutes a sociological and historical analysis of the 35 year-long period from Hizbullah's emergence as an illegal underground organisation in 1979 until the time of writing, when Hizbullah had been legally active for ten years, represented by a legion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and its affiliated political party Hûda-Par. The data used in the book consist of in-depth interviews and oral history narratives gathered in 2013–14 during the field research I carried out at the Department of Sociology, Selçuk University.

Hizbullah emerged with the objective of overthrowing the regime in Turkey – which it considered non-Islamic and thus illegitimate – and establishing a Sharia-based Islamic state in its place. Despite that, Hizbullah has not once targeted the Turkish state since its establishment and even positioned itself as a paramilitary force alongside the Turkish state in the first half of the 1990s when the fighting between the PKK and the Turkish state was at its most intense. Hizbullah disintegrated after the death of its leader and seizure of its archive as a result of a police operation in a villa in Beykoz, Istanbul, on 17 January 2000.

Hûda-Par's programme featured many elements in common with that of Hizbullah's rival HDP/BDP vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue in Turkey. However, this was reversed as a result of the Kobanê protests in 2014, where Hizbullah and PKK supporters engaged in armed clashes and people from both parties were killed. The *Şeyh Said Seriyeleri* (Sheikh Said Brigades), the armed wing of 'civil' Hizbullah, emerged during this period.

As an organisation that emerged as a small provincial group of devotees before transforming into an organization that murdered its Kurdish opponents and rivals by horrific methods, and finally entering civil society by means of hundreds of associations and a political party, the case of Hizbullah offers valuable information concerning waves of violence based on religion, identity, power, and nation in the Middle East. I believe this book also constitutes a good entrance point in

forming an understanding of the patterns of similar organisations in the continuously destabilising Middle East.

The analyses of visual data, which comprise the last chapter of the Turkish edition of the book, have not been included in the English translation. The rest of the book remains unaltered in the present edition, except for footnotes added for the benefit of people who are not acquainted with Turkish politics or unfamiliar with Islamic terminology. Although developments following the Kobanê protests in 2014 offer much data supporting the main arguments put forward in this book, the period in question has not been incorporated into this study.

# Acknowledgements

This book was developed from my doctoral dissertation, 'Religion, Violence, and Belonging: A Sociological Study of Hizbullah in Turkey', at the Department of Sociology, Selçuk University. Many individuals offered assistance and support during the several years I spent writing my dissertation and, subsequently, this book.

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Thanks are due to all my informants, whose names I cannot divulge for security reasons, for opening up their worlds to me and making this study possible. Some analyses in the book may not correspond to the

opinions they expressed in our interviews. However, I am confident that they will see that I have used the information they provided within the framework of scientific ethics.

Mardin, 2016

# Introduction

Mehmet Kurt – You were *Hizbullahçı*,<sup>1</sup> then who were we? (*laughing*)

Sermest – You were punks (*berduş*)! (*laughing*)

Mehmet Kurt – So why were you going to fight the punks?

Sermest – There were tensions. We had received orders. They had said ‘tread on their dead bodies’. Even I had prepared myself. We tried to lure you into the school. But there was teacher X; because he was there you did not want to fight in the school. So the plan went like this. A group of us were in the schoolyard; it was only a few of us waiting there. Another group were in the backyard. The rest of the team were all in the halls. The incident was going to go down like this: those in the schoolyard were going to get into a fight with you. Then, pretending to be losing the fight, they were going to start running away toward the backyard of the halls. When you attacked them, the group in the backyard were going to come down from the top, the ones in the halls were going to come out and trap you at the stairs going down to the halls. Imagine this, they had said ‘no one can leave there alive.’ Tens of people!<sup>2</sup>

If what Sermest told me is true, then I could have been killed in a fight in the late 1990s when I was a student at the boarding Mardin İmam Hatip<sup>3</sup> high school, the reason for which I do not recall, by students who were members of Hizbullah.

Turkey is a country of *partial confrontations*.<sup>4</sup> Routinely experienced within many domains of society, such as daily life, politics, academia, and interpersonal relationships, these partial confrontations constitute an important impediment to the development of a healthy public perception about Turkey. Similarly, the idea of such partial confrontations in academia is the claim for objectivity borrowed from positivist thought. However, it is clear that the ideal of objectivity in the natural sciences cannot be achieved in the same way in the social sciences given that it is impossible for the individual carrying out the research to completely isolate himself from the influence of the history, language, and culture around him. Michel Foucault’s discussions (1994) of ‘subjectivity’, which

he positions antithetically to objectivity, and its relation to reality paved the way for in-depth investigations into the idea of 'absolute truth and reality' in social science research. This line of thought, which claims that absolute objectivity is, by its very nature, impossible to achieve in the social sciences, ensures that the researcher confronts his personal history and reveals his positionality, while recommending that potentially prohibitive or leading positions are excluded from analysis (Grbich, 2004, p. 83). Following the suggestion that knowledge is produced on a more accurate footing if the researcher is visible, I share my own history and positionality with the reader.

My confrontation with the fact that I could have been killed took place in the autumn of 2013 when I was carrying out fieldwork for this study. As an individual embedded within a family and a social environment marked by Islamic sensitivities, I had spent my high school years observing the violence unleashed by *Hizbullahçı* students and, on one or two occasions, being the target of such violence. The reasons violence had been turned on me on those occasions were my open dissatisfaction with the authoritarian and oppressive attitudes the Hizbullah students at school had adopted and my outspoken expression of discontent with practices that restricted my living environment. Life outside the school at the time was similarly marked by fighting between Hizbullah and the PKK and the climate of fear and polarisation that had developed on account of the frequent 'murders by unknown perpetrators' (*faili meçhul cinayetler*) in those years. I shared a room in the halls with someone whose *imam*<sup>5</sup> father had been killed by Hizbullah and in a neighbouring room there was another student whose elder brother, I later found out, had been one of the 'first martyrs' of Hizbullah. Being the only organised students at school, Hizbullah had the largest representation in the halls that housed 350 students and I remember being amazed at how easily these *Hizbullahçı* youngsters could find reasons to beat someone up. Approaching the end of my high school years, I was looking forward to leaving behind these dark times when everyone was woken up by *Hizbullahçı* students for morning prayers and those who refused could have been subjected to violence; when 'those who spoke with girls' were most certainly beaten up; when the TV set which had been newly brought into our canteen, resembling those in Turkish military bases, was smashed up by *Hizbullahçı* students on the premise that watching television was *haram*;<sup>6</sup> when the vice principal was attacked with iron rods and his arms broken by *Hizbullahçı* students in one of Mardin's

narrow *abbaras*<sup>7</sup> on account of their belief that he mistreated *Hizbullahçı* students and took disciplinary action against them; and finally, when a senior student aimed a Kalashnikov rifle at one of our teachers. My goal was to pass the university entrance exams, head off to do a course which would get me away from Hizbullah and help me reach my ‘secular aspirations’, and remove myself from the suffocating monotony of provincial life. But these last years in high school also coincided with a period in which a major confrontation took place between the Turkish military and the government, culminating in what is referred to as a post-modern coup on 28 February 1997. As a result, the Refah-Yol coalition government was forced to resign from power and amendments were made to the laws and regulations of higher education whereby those who graduated from occupational high schools (*meslek liseleri*) could apply for undergraduate courses only in their own area of specialty. These amendments were essentially to prevent graduates of İmam *Hatip* schools from applying for any course other than Religious Studies. Like my friends who continued at İmam *Hatip* high schools for the accommodation opportunities they offered and/or on account of the ‘decision’ made by their religious provincial families, I was not on either side of this social polarisation. Although some associations in western Turkey sent graduates of İmam *Hatip* schools abroad to study the courses they preferred, no one seemed concerned about students in the provincial İmam *Hatip* schools. In the end, as one of those ‘fortunate’ students who managed to pass the university entrance exams, I had no option but to apply for the Religious Studies course.

I spent my undergraduate years doing extensive reading in all areas of the discipline of Religious Studies and especially about religion as a social phenomenon. After graduation, I completed a Master’s degree in Sociology of Religion at Selçuk University where I focused on religion–state relations in Turkey and European Union countries within the context of secularism, cultural policy, and religious institutions and services. I continued my education at the Konya *Yüksek İhtisas Eğitim Merkezi*<sup>8</sup> where I received high-level religious training for three years. Here, I had the opportunity to study traditional religious approaches to contemporary issues as well as classical religious texts. Over these three years, my academic interests were focused on religious groups that I either observed in my own social surroundings or discovered through lectures, and the way their religious discourses were constructed. Although my insatiable scientific curiosity and inclination to question things led to

me being known as someone who at times ‘tried the lecturers’ patience’ or even ‘spoiled the faith’ of rather more traditional lecturers, I realised during this period that sociology as a discipline could provide me with the answers to my questions. This period of acculturation, in which I focused heavily on sociology and subsequently during my PhD on anthropology culminated in this book.

My return to high school, this time for academic research, was mainly motivated by curiosity to learn the mechanisms that produced the violence, which I found so hard to make sense of, and analyse them from a sociological/anthropological perspective. No analytical studies on Hizbullah had been carried out from such a perspective and I was the first to write a doctoral dissertation on the subject. I was sufficiently equipped to analyse religious literature from a sociological perspective. Lectures, workshops, and conferences attended and reading done over two years at Yale University’s Department of Anthropology as well as time spent at the Columbia Center for Oral History provided the necessary anthropological and ethnographic framework. The fact that I spoke Kurdish would make it easier for me to build rapport and dialogue with my informants. I could find my high school friends, whom I had not seen for years, and finally ask them the question ‘why’.

I had the advantages of a command of Islamic terminology and fluency in Kurdish. But with long hair and a goatee, not a look that members of Hizbullah were used to seeing in daily life, I was clearly an outsider to my informants (Agar, 1980). Despite my proximity to the *etic* perspective within the dichotomy of *emic/etic* often discussed in the literature, my approach was also inclusive of an *emic* perspective within my efforts to understand Hizbullah (Headland et al., 1990). For this reason, I told my informants that instead of considering the knowledge they shared with me as absolute truth, I would analyse this knowledge in a comparative framework as part of their discourse. As a result, I sometimes had to wait months to do an interview. I was initially hoping to discover the patterns of religious and ethnic belonging among members of Hizbullah, analyse the means by which it justified violence, and fill in the gaps in its known history while correcting misinformation therein through field research. However, I was provided with much more and discovered an area reaching far beyond my expectations. As accounts of many carrying out fieldwork confirm, in the field I had to reflect on what I previously knew and realised that the commonly shared public knowledge about Hizbullah was not adequate to understand the organisation. Public

knowledge about Hizbullah was fraught with partial considerations that were based on an Orientalist reading of violence. Today, with its more than 100,000 followers, Hizbullah is a social movement and should be investigated beyond a single focus on violence using the perspectives of sociology of religion and politics, anthropology of the state, social memory studies, discourse analysis, and visual anthropology.

The case of Sermet was certainly worth investigating from the perspectives of psychology and social psychology, sociology and anthropology. He said, 'I could not even tell myself the fact that I was in love for five years,' adding he 'still could not get over the negative effects of the past'. How could I explain the case of Azad, who after so many years still retained a vivid image of his 5 foot 7 inch tall, 25 year-old 'imaginary supervisor', Ahmet, whom he had manufactured to tell the police about in case he was arrested and tortured during interrogation? How can we account for the fact, from the perspective of religious and ethnic belonging, that the same Azad told me, 'I would like a Kurdish name' in a quiet voice when I asked him what alias he would prefer me to use for him in my dissertation given that he still 'makes a wide turn' when he walks into a street to see whether someone is following him and that he observed me for the whole duration of our interview in hesitant silence? One might find it ironic that I named this informant Azad, after the Kurdish word meaning 'free', given the image of his imaginary supervisor Ahmet is still strong in Azad's mind. What can we learn from the case of Mahmut, who was rebuked by the provincial representatives of the National Salvation Party on the grounds of being a nationalist after he chanted '*Azadî*' is in Islam' and who said, 'two things are forbidden in this country: Being Kurdish and being Muslim'? How can we make sense of the case of Kamuran, from the perspectives of gender segregation, daily life practices, and different forms of religiousness, who studied at two universities and was imprisoned several times, when he says in a regretful tone, 'now we've turned 30 years old; we could have made healthier choices' and the only women he interacts with are close relatives? How can we comparatively analyse the experiences of the informant who was a member of Hizbullah and stayed in the same room for three years for fear of getting caught and another who carried a gun for three years because of death threats from Hizbullah? How can we consider Ahmet's statement, in terms of Hizbullah's confrontation with the past, 'I swore not to talk about this subject until on the Day of Judgement in the presence of Allah' given that Ahmet used to receive

death threats from Hizbullah and some of his friends had been killed by it? What does the case of Yusuf tell us about theories of the state and state crime, when he responded to my enquiry about the link between the Turkish state and Hizbullah by saying, ‘if the state was protecting us, why did I suffer so much torture, spend so many years in prison?’ (Green and Ward, 2004)? And how can we interpret the case of the Turkish informant from the perspective of the relationship between religion and ethnicity who stated, ‘when you dig a bit below the surface of Turkish Islamists you find Turkish nationalism and Turkish Islamists carry the same venom?’

During my fieldwork, I met more Hizbullah members than those who eventually agreed to be interviewed by me. Like Yiğit, who still carried a razor blade scar across his face after getting involved in a fight with a group of young drug addicts for smoking marijuana in the mosque yard, many preferred to meet me and listen to what I had to say, but did not agree to an interview. Despite this, my observations from high school years chimed with observations of those who refused to give me an interview and are presented to the reader at various points in this study. In order to ensure the confidentiality and safety of those who agreed to talk to me under the condition that their identity should not be disclosed under any circumstance, I chose to present certain information in this study without any reference to its source. The literature (Felbab-Brown, 2014; Goldstein, 2014) shows that in the case of studies which take violence as a subject matter (Aras et al., 2013) such measures must be taken to ensure the safety of the researcher and his informants. Therefore, I have tried to take every precaution to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the informants who contributed valuable data to this study. In addition to two informants who allowed me to use their real identities as they gave interviews in their official capacity and on behalf of the institutions they worked for, I should express my gratitude to all my anonymous informants not only for the information they imparted but also for sharing their life stories and hence making this study possible.

After this long introduction, I may finally ask the main question the study aims to answer: What is Hizbullah and how can it be analysed as a form of belonging?

Hizbullah in Turkey is largely populated by Sunnis compared with Hizbullah in Lebanon, whose followers are mainly adherents of the Shiite sect of Islam, more specifically by Shafi'i Kurds. Public opinion concerning Hizbullah in Turkey and the literature on the group, with

the exception of a few works, are ridden with partial confrontations and operate on an Orientalist simplification that presents violence as unforeseeable and uncontrollable, and considers Islam to be the sole mechanism through which Hizbullah's violence is perpetrated. Even a quick search on Hizbullah in the print or visual media, on the Internet, or elsewhere reveals traces of these partial confrontations and social polarisation. Therefore, one is invariably stuck between the Hizbullah-affiliated media that present Hizbullah as proposing an ideal model of society and the majority of the rest of the media that uses the word Hizbullah almost synonymously with horror, atrocity, violence, and state, both of which display a considerable lack of analytical engagement with the subject. With the exceptions of Ruşen Çakır's *Derin Hizbullah* (*Deep Hizbullah*, 2011) and Gareth Jenkins's *Political Islam in Turkey* (2008), as well as a few other books, articles, and reviews, an overwhelming majority of the literature on Hizbullah is reluctant to look at it as a social phenomenon.

Furthermore, academic research into Hizbullah is similarly limited and a large part of the literature produced in Turkey is written in police academies and predominantly from a perspective prioritising security issues.

The available information, especially given its disproportionate engagement with violence and resulting one-dimensionality, is not sufficient to provide an understanding of Hizbullah. Besides, as mentioned earlier, a considerable proportion of such studies is inclined to present violence simply as unmanageable, unpredictable, and purposeless instead of focusing on the motivations that lead to the production of violence.

I embarked upon this study with the objective of analysing the violence that Hizbullah was both involved in and a perpetrator of, from a sociological and anthropological perspective and mainly with a qualitative focus. It acquired new dimensions with the onset of my fieldwork. The need for a theoretical and methodological framework that would reflect these new dimensions without subscribing to the reductiveness of violence-centred analyses led me to adopt Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in this study. Grounded Theory, which is widely used especially in European and North American sociology, suggests that instead of starting fieldwork from theoretical postulations, a theoretical abstraction may be performed by comparing the data produced in fieldwork and the categories that emerge from such comparison. In the first chapter where I describe the theoretical and methodological framework used in this study, I will explain why I chose to carry out a qualitative investigation (Berg,

2008) in addition to Grounded Theory and why I employed ethnographic methods (Agar, 1985), life histories (Atkinson, 1998), and oral history (Dunaway, 1996) in data collection.

No sociological phenomenon can be imagined outside the immediate historical conditions within which it is embedded and any study in the social sciences is inevitably written from a historical perspective. Therefore, following a brief explanation of the theoretical and methodological tools that I employ in this study, in the first chapter I turn to the historical and sociological conditions of the period, which witnessed the emergence of Hizbullah. Here I investigate Hizbullah's history in a chronological fashion on the basis of testimonies from my informants while correcting misinformation and providing new information where there are gaps in knowledge. This chapter is a first attempt to provide a socio-historiographical approach to the texts written on Hizbullah and introduce the organisation to various intersecting literatures such as the literature on Islamism, Islamic movements in the Middle East, Islamism within the Turkish state, and state crime in Turkey.

The second chapter is dedicated to a Grounded Theory-based analysis of the interviews I conducted with individual members of Hizbullah and presents summaries and analyses of their narratives produced across various thematic areas. The common themes that emerge from these narratives are used to provide the reader with information and analyses concerning daily life practices of Hizbullah members, (in)security generated by feelings of group belonging, and the psycho-social consequences of ceasing to feel part of a group. Moreover, in this chapter I give a detailed account of the stages of the transformation of violence perpetrated by Hizbullah from the level of discourse to that of action through the testimonies of my informants. Taking into account that Hizbullah's membership is predominantly Kurdish, the second chapter also presents an analysis of the ways in which religion and ethnicity are reconciled in Hizbullah as an organisation. The chapter thus aims to fill a lacuna in Kurdish studies and facilitate new studies on the subject.

The third chapter focuses on the role of stories and novels written by Hizbullah members in the construction of social memory and, through discourse analysis, traces common themes across these narratives, which are in essence non-fictional, 'autobiographical' accounts, with usually only the names of persons and places changed.

In the conclusion chapter I present a comparative summary of the data I examined in previous chapters and bring the findings together in an effort to reach general conclusions before offering suggestions for future research on Hizbullah.

# Historical Overview of Hizbullah

History is what hurts.

Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*

## THEORY, DATA, AND METHODOLOGY

A study into Hizbullah requires a multidimensional approach, ranging from the history of the organisation's name to its activities; its supporter base to its alleged connections with the Turkish state and the deep state in the 1990s; the Hizbullah-affiliated NGOs to the officially recognised Hüda-Par party; and from the *Kutlu Doğum* (Blessed Birth) celebration to the development of publishing activities. Despite the fact that Hizbullah appears in newspapers, features in political debates, and is relevant to both daily life and the agendas of other political organisations, information about it is scarce and often contradictory. This is because Hizbullah remained underground and was very careful not to publicise its activities until 2002. Although there was some change to the organisation's clandestine nature following its engagement with civil society (even forming a political party) Hizbullah continues to retain its almost secretive nature and there is reluctance by members to talk to outsiders about the inner workings of the organisation.

The qualitative methodologies employed in this study aim to reveal hidden or implicit sociological meanings, properties, and implications, facilitate layered interpretations, and render unheard 'voices' audible (Have, 2004, pp. 4–5). My motivation to adopt an ethnographic perspective within a qualitative research paradigm relates to the nature of the research topic. The most important advantage of using the ethnographic method is that the researcher, after some time in the field, 'becomes invisible' (Berg, 2001, p. 147). What I mean by becoming invisible is the minimising the influence of the researcher on the production of data by virtue of his 'presence' and position in interactions. It is crucial that the researcher spends sufficient time in the field to allow

rapport to be developed between the researcher and the informants. Only then can informants begin to trust the researcher.

In the search for appropriate methods for researching the secretive realm of Hizbullah, I realised that Grounded Theory responded well to my methodological considerations and challenges. The researcher uses Grounded Theory practises with the focused attention of a surgeon and runs a constant analysis of the concepts and signifiers emerging from the data. In studying a 'closed' organisation like Hizbullah it is crucial to provide more than just descriptive information. I wanted to move beyond external appearances, to grasp Hizbullah's organisational sense of itself, and the motivation of its members – beyond that superficiality offered by the media, public opinion, and the justice system. When using this method, one is not required to consider every piece of data as 'true'. As Ingersoll points out, researchers embark on a process of continuous comparison as they analyse the first field data; contrary to the other popularly used methodologies in social sciences, this process facilitates the integration of newly emerging, important information into the study in the ensuing phases of research. In that sense, Grounded Theory is in keeping with the essence of ethnography as it allows for continuous development of the research subject throughout fieldwork and a comprehensive analysis of the emergent concepts (Ingersoll and Ingersoll, 1987, pp. 93–7).

Having discussed the theoretical and methodological tools employed in this study, I would like to move on to the difficulty of problematising the history of a political and religious movement whose structure and past have been the subject of much debate. This difficulty is exacerbated by the constant repetition in the literature of incomplete or even false information and its presentation as historical data.

My aim in this chapter is to reveal the different stages that Hizbullah has undergone since its foundation using references to Hizbullah's own publications (books, theses, and other resources), the information published in the media on Hizbullah, and the interviews conducted with former or present members of the organisation who have personally witnessed various periods of Hizbullah's history.

In terms of sources and data selection I must emphasise that at times I had to select between contradictory information with a critical eye and using a complicated analytical process. In addition, a number of Master's theses on Hizbullah,<sup>1</sup> mostly written by students at police academies, have been used as resources in this study, albeit only rarely and after

much deliberation. These theses tend to examine Hizbullah from a limited security perspective, use resources that rely on data produced by the same institutions in which they were written, and suffer from ideological bias and questionable sources.<sup>3</sup>

Another problematic body of sources is what I found in police archives. The most important archive on the subject, the Hizbullah Archive, was seized by the police after Operation Beykoz on 17 January 2000 and still remains closed.<sup>3</sup> The security forces have allowed certain information to be released but largely for their own agenda and image-setting purposes. I was unable to access the police archives as a resource for this study because it is impossible to obtain any information other than what is already available to the public. However, some of the works I cite in this study use police archives as secondary sources.

Hizbullah members often emphasised in their public statements and during the series of trials following Operation Beykoz that the Hizbullah Archive should be opened to the general public. Being the compiler of the so-called Beykoz Archive, Hizbullah constitutes the only other party – in addition to Turkish security officials – that knows the contents of the archive. Thus, the information contained in the archive is available through Hizbullah members who participated in Hizbullah activities, prepared reports, or were involved in the creation of the archive.

If Hizbullah is willing to share the archive with the general public, then it is puzzling that Hizbullah members do not discuss issues relating to the archive publicly. Security officials claim that the archive is not made accessible to the general public because of its potential to cause public indignation due to the violent nature of the visual content. It is clear, however, that these same officials do not act so considerately with other groups such as the PKK. This naturally raises the widely suspected Hizbullah–‘deep state’ connection as potentially the main reason behind the continued closure of the archive. There is little doubt that it would be immensely useful both for researchers and the general public if the archive were accessible to them. While the archive remains closed there is the risk that the information it contains will be revealed selectively, by security officials, with the intention of manipulating public opinion.

Despite the fact that the Beykoz Archive could reveal much about Hizbullah’s perpetration of violent acts and the possible connection between Hizbullah and the deep state, it is not enough to analyse Hizbullah only using the Beykoz Archive. After moving into the legitimate sphere in the 2000s, Hizbullah and its affiliated organisations have

been transformed into a social movement. Therefore, the information that has been provided by first-hand witnesses constitutes the primary source used in this study. The significance of this study derives from the fact that it is based on in-depth interviews, life stories, and oral history narratives of Hizbullah members and people who witnessed various periods of Hizbullah's past and observations in the field. As such, this chapter is the first text investigating the history of Hizbullah by relying on social history.

#### THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF HIZBULLAH'S EMERGENCE

A movement cannot be investigated independently of the historical and sociological conditions of its emergence. It would be impossible to understand the mechanisms behind Hizbullah's past, the outcomes of its emergence, and the phases it has undergone without taking into account (a) the Islamic movements and thinkers which influenced Hizbullah's understanding of Islam; (b) Turkey's relationship with Islam and religious groups as a secular republic during the process of modernisation and urbanisation; (c) Turkey's approach to minorities and 'handling' of the Kurdish issue; and finally (d) the unique sociological and historical conditions of the Kurdish area in Turkey where Hizbullah emerged.

The concept of Islamism goes back as far as the formation of empires and the imposition of Western colonialism through the formation of nation-states (Kayalı, 1997). Almost all empires and states developed certain political reflexes as a result. Islamism can be considered to be one of these reflexes and was embraced as a political solution to varying degrees by the Ottoman Empire and many other countries (Kayalı, 1997). In the Islamic world, colonialism had not only been perceived as the loss of military and political power but also the humiliation of an Islamic lifestyle that was seen as superior.

The two ideologies that emerged out of these sentiments were Islamic modernism and secular nationalism. According to Demant (2006, pp. 91–5), save for a few exceptional countries, secular nationalism is on the brink of extinction, while from the 1950s onwards Islamic modernism became a very popular ideology in Muslim countries. In the Sunni world, Abul A'la Maududi (Pakistan) and Sayyid Qutb (Egypt),

and in the Shia world, Khomeini are considered pioneering figures developing the concepts of Islamism.<sup>4</sup>

Wiktorowicz defines Islamism much more broadly in order to encapsulate all the activities carried out within its realm. According to him, Islamist activism encompasses a broad spectrum of activities such as expansionist movements, terrorist activities, collective action associated with Islamic symbols and identities, the construction of a state governed by Islamic law, and the promotion of Islamic spiritualism in society (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 2).

Demant suggests that Islamism can be investigated in three stages. The first stage is the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*) in Egypt led by Sayyid Qutb. Writing in the twentieth century, according to Qutb, who was influenced by the ideas of Maududi, Muslim countries had been experiencing problems because they had moved away from Islam and these problems could be rectified by organising social and political life in accordance with Allah's orders as prescribed in Islamic law. Qutb interprets the state of the society at the time as a second *jahiliyah* (period of ignorance of divine guidance) and the only solution he offers is the construction of a world based on Islam (Demant, 2006, pp. 91–107). Naturally, the Muslim Brotherhood movement cannot be fully understood only by looking at Qutb's writings. Many other thinkers and texts influenced the Muslim Brotherhood, the first and foremost being the movement's founder Hassan al-Banna's *Kumpulan Risalah Dakwah*.

The Muslim Brotherhood movement spearheaded many debates in the Islamic world, including the organisation of law and daily life in secular systems that they described as *tağuti*<sup>5</sup>; whether worship practices such as the congregational Friday prayer can be viably carried out in *dar al-harb* countries, that is, countries that are not governed according to Islamic law; or whether taxes should be paid in these countries.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it should be emphasised that these debates have been actively carried out within many Islamist groups in Turkey, especially within Hizbullah, and that the diverging attitudes and opinions that exist with regard to these debates is one of the main reasons for the emergence of different Islamist fractions and approaches in Turkey.

According to Demant, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 marks the onset of the second stage of Islamism. The forced modernisation that began with the toppling of Mohammad Mosaddegh as a result of a CIA-supported coup and the reinstatement of the pro-Western Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to power in 1953 was met with much opposition from the Shia in Iran.

Consequently, Ruhollah Ayatollah Khomeini led the Islamic Revolution supported by many groups, mullahs, and intellectuals, with ideological support from the Sorbonne-educated Ali Shariati. Shariati is known as an eclectic thinker who brought together ideas from Marxism and Shia mysticism in his analyses, and has exerted great influence on the Iranian people (Demant, 2006, pp. 110–26).

The third phase in Islamism begins after the First Gulf War and is marked by the global prominence – and notoriety – of Islamist organisations (Demant, 2006, pp. 127–35). Although in some works<sup>7</sup> Hizbullah is treated in the same category as those groups which emerged in this third phase and which may or may not have global influence, I argue that Hizbullah resembles and is comparable to Ikhwan or Hamas in terms of its organisational structure and principles. I will discuss these issues in more detail below.

In order to understand Hizbullah, the second issue that calls for analysis is the process of modernisation in Turkey and the Turkish state's approach to Kurds and Islam. Having been founded on secular and nationalist principles, Turkey was governed by strictly modernist and secularist principles until the 1950s. Gareth Jenkins examines this period in his book *Political Islam in Turkey* and offers a detailed analysis of how Islam moved from the periphery to the centre in Turkey through urban migration during this period (2008, pp. 81–182). The *Milli Görüş* (National Vision) movement emerged as a result of this process of social mobilisation and set the historical and sociological scene from which the main Islamist parties in Turkey emerged, such as *Milli Nizam Partisi* (National Order Party), *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party), *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party), *Fazilet Partisi* (Virtue Party), *Saadet Partisi* (Felicity Party), and the AK Party (Justice and Development Party).

In her book *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey* (2002), Jenny White examines this period up to the mid 1990s within the context of the local administration policies of parties representative of *Milli Görüş* politics and in *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* (2013), she analyses the post-28 February 1997 period from the perspective of the prominent discourses of the AK Party era. In *Islam and Modernity in Turkey* (2011), Brian Silverstein focuses on how the modernist discourse, which emerged within the Ottoman Empire as a reaction to colonialism, transformed traditional Islamic discourses and understandings of Muslims in Turkey and, in contrast to many Muslim countries, how these discourses and

understandings underwent transformation through people's interaction with the secular state structure.

The modernist mindset of the Turkish state had always been met with reactions from people who led more traditional and religious lives. However, between 1950 and the establishment of the *Milli Nizam Partisi* on 26 January 1970, those with Islamist outlooks tended to be affiliated with central-right political parties. The momentum Islamist politics gained at the time continued to rise after the 1980 military coup. Although the secular elements within the Turkish state attempted a post-modern *coup d'état* on 28 February 1997 in order to clamp down on the rise of Islamist politics, the coup failed and Islamist politics evolved into a new kind of mass movement from the time of the *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party) to the founding of the AK Party.

The Turkish state's modernist and nationalist policies caused similar reactions in the country's predominantly Kurdish southeast. Since the Sheikh Said uprising in 1925<sup>8</sup> (Olson, 1989), over a dozen religiously or ethnically motivated Kurdish uprisings have taken place against the state. Turkey has responded to the evident discontent by adopting even harsher assimilationist policies (Üngör, 2011). The PKK emerged in the 1970s as one of a dozen Kurdish political factions (Marcus, 2007).<sup>9</sup> In time, the PKK was to distance itself from the Turkish left and in doing so became the most powerful Kurdish political force in Turkey through the assimilation, weakening, or elimination of other Kurdish organisations. As a result of the bloody war between the PKK and the Turkish state which started in 1984, thousands of civilians lost their lives, millions of Kurds have been displaced, and the atmosphere of violence in the Kurdish region of Turkey has had a serious impact on the sociological texture of the region. While Islamism has emerged as a public resistance movement in Turkey and managed to reach the centre using an Ikhwanist, that is, Muslim Brotherhood-influenced perspective, Kurdish political movements continued their activities, largely on the periphery, and violence became a common means employed by the actors involved.

Hizbullah was established in Batman<sup>10</sup> prior to the military coup on 12 September 1980, at a time when the Ikhwan influence was on the rise, the conservative *Milli Görüş* line was gaining traction, the Iranian Revolution had taken place, the conflict between the left and right in Turkey had reached a peak, and the PKK had emerged as a militant force. At the time of Hizbullah's emergence there were many left-wing organisations of various sizes as well as Islamic organisations and

groups operating in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Among the Islamic organisations that emerged during my interviews were *Partiya İslâmiya Kurdistan* (The Islamic Party of Kurdistan), *İslâmî Cemaat* (Islamic Cemaat) and/or *Hizbi İslâmî* (Islamic Sect), *Hareketa İslâmî*<sup>11</sup> (Islamic Movement), *Fedayîen İslâmî* (Guerrillas of Islam), *Batman Fecir* group,<sup>12</sup> *Menzil, Tevhid, Selam*,<sup>13</sup> *Vahdet*, and *İlim/Cemaata Ulemayên İslâmî*<sup>14</sup> (The Community of Islamic Scholars). Although these organisations often had theoretical references in common, they differed in terms of their goals and methods. For example, while some of them adopted violence as a method, others organised themselves around a bookshop or madrasa and pursued regular *tebliğ*<sup>15</sup> activities. In fact, the attitude towards violence stands out as the fundamental point of difference between these organisations. The fragmented state of Islamist politics in the Kurdish region of Turkey was eliminated by Hizbullah between 1980 and 1990 through means similar to those employed by the PKK in dealing with other Kurdish left-wing organisations in the area.<sup>16</sup>

IMAGINING THE *UMMAH*<sup>17</sup> FROM THE PROVINCES:  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIZBULLAH

The story of the leader of a political movement makes a good starting point from which to tell the story of the movement itself. In the case of Hizbullah, which is inherently a leader-centred organisation, Hüseyin Veliöğlü's life story offers many insights into understanding the movement he led. In fact, the story of Hizbullah from its establishment until Veliöğlü's death can be best understood by studying Veliöğlü's life story.

According to Hizbullah's official website, [www.huseynisevda.biz](http://www.huseynisevda.biz), Veliöğlü was born in 1952 in a village in Batman and lived in central Batman until high school. He finished high school in Mardin and headed to Ankara to study finance at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Ankara University, graduating in 1980.<sup>18</sup> He interrupted his studies during his first year for unknown reasons and returned to his village. There he spent his time reading Said-i Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* corpus in the mountains, where he would often go to retreat. The Hüseyin Sevda website talks about this period, quoting Veliöğlü's own words:

I picked up the *Risale-i Nur* corpus and headed to the village. For a whole year I read the *Risale* in the mountains surrounding the village.

When villagers saw me with my books headed to the mountains they would say '*Dişa kurê Mala Veli rahişte kitabên xwe û derket çiya*' ('the son of the Veli family'<sup>19</sup> is off to the mountains with his books again').<sup>20</sup>

Although it is not possible to know how thoroughly Veliöglü may have studied the *Risale-i Nur*, it is evident that the corpus subsequently became one of the fundamental ideological reference points of Hizbullah. This fact remains generally unacknowledged in Turkey, largely because other more powerful *Nur cemaats*,<sup>21</sup> especially the Gülen movement, have avoided discussing the ideological connection between Hizbullah and Said-i Nursi for fear of 'tainting' the image of these other *Nur cemaats* given Hizbullah's instrumental use of violence.<sup>22</sup> When I asked what kind of literature would ordinarily be kept in Hizbullah houses, most of my informants would name Said-i Nursi's *Risale* alongside works by intellectuals of the Ikhwan movement. Yusuf, who is a well-respected member in Hizbullah circles, quoted the *Risale-i Nur* as Hizbullah's main reference for 'the truths about the faith and trust in God' (*iman hakikatleri ve tevekkül*), the Iranian Revolution of 1978–79 for action strategies, and the Ikhwan movement for mobilisation. He reported Veliöglü saying, 'if the master (üstat) were still alive, he would have been the natural leader of the movement.'<sup>23</sup> I will explore Hizbullah's intellectual references in the coming chapters.

During his university studies, Hüseyin Veliöglü became a member of the *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (National Turkish Student Union, MTTB). According to Ruşen Çakır, Veliöglü's name appears in 1978 as the owner and the managing editor of an English language journal, *The Ummah: An Independent Monthly Muslim Critique*. At this time the journal was being published by Kayani, a follower of Maududi's *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan (Çakır, 2011, pp. 61–3). In the same year, Hüseyin Veliöglü changed his last name from Durmaz to Veliöglü, meaning a member of the Veli family. According to the Hüseyini Sevda website, Veliöglü's family was known as Mala Veli and that was why he had decided to change his last name. It is also claimed on the same website that the family was named after Veliöglü's grandfather Veli, who died fighting in the Russian front.<sup>24</sup> The fact that Veliöglü's grandfather fought and was martyred in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–88 offers valuable information in terms of Turkish official history and the 'our ancestors fought side by side' discourse employed by nationalistic Turks and Kurds alike. The emphasis placed on his grandfather should, I think, be interpreted as

an indication of Velioğlu's desired public image of Turkishness achieved through common participation in the Turkish War of Independence.

In 1979 Velioğlu ran for the presidency of *Batman Petrol-İş Sendikası* (Batman Petroleum Workers' Union) as the candidate of the conservative bloc. Although he polled a thousand votes, the candidate of the left-wing bloc won the election by a margin of a few hundred votes.<sup>25</sup> Velioğlu became increasingly popular among those involved in Islamic movements in Batman at the time and was respected enough to be nominated as a candidate for union president.

After graduating from the *Mülkiye*,<sup>26</sup> in 1980 Velioğlu took the *kaymakamlık* (district governorate) test but failed (Çakır, 2011, p. 64). This is not discussed on the Hüseyin Sevda website, arguably because Velioğlu's ambition to become a district governor (*kaymakam*) was regarded as inappropriate for the leader of a *cemaat*. His employment in a private company in Ankara in 1980, however, is discussed.<sup>27</sup> My informant Mücteba, who knew Velioğlu personally, relayed information about this company that does not appear on the website. The company was owned by Şevket Kazan, who was at one time the Minister of Justice in the *Refah Partisi* government. According to Mücteba, Velioğlu worked as a watchman during his student years at the *Ankara Yem Fabrikası* (Ankara Feed Plant) and he was also acquainted with Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Islamist *Milli Görüş* movement.<sup>28</sup>

According to Ruşen Çakır, there was only one other Islamist party, the Islamic Party of Kurdistan (*Partiya İslâmiya Kurdistan*), before the emergence of Hizbullah (Çakır, 2011, p. 60). However, in reality, the groups listed earlier all existed before Hizbullah and survived until the 1990s. Most of these groups are still active in the form of associations and continue organising *sohbet*<sup>29</sup> groups and religious lessons.

Many authors and researchers, including Çakır, claim that the establishment of Hizbullah corresponds to the period immediately following the 1980 military coup (Çakır, 2011, p. 58). According to my informants, however, Hizbullah was founded in 1979, following negotiations that had begun in 1978 or even earlier. Prior to Hizbullah's establishment, Hüseyin Velioğlu had meetings with many groups, *cemaats*, *seydas*,<sup>30</sup> and madrasas in the area and set the scene for the foundation of an Islamic *cemaat*. Among those identified in the literature as the founders of Hizbullah, only Hüseyin Velioğlu's name corresponds to my findings. As maintained by my informants, Hizbullah was founded by three madrasa-educated *seydas*, an engineer in the *Türkiye Petrolleri*

*Anonim Ortaklığı* (Turkish Petroleum, TPAO), and the *Mülkiye* graduate Velioğlu. These five resemble the union of religious and scientific figures epitomised in the union of Khomeini and Shariati, which resulted in the Iranian Revolution. The Hüseyini Sevda website emphasises that the union of these two bodies, which they refer to as the school-educated and madrasa-educated, has been critical for the ‘cause’ and that this fact should not be disregarded.<sup>31</sup> It is widely known that the Iranian Revolution came about as a result of the cooperation between madrasa-educated mullahs and professionals educated in modern schools and that Khomeini and Shariati, a traditional-educated ayatollah and a Sorbonne-educated sociologist, respectively, are the two main symbols of the revolution. Based on the example of the Iranian Revolution, Hizbullah argued that a revolution could be made only by cooperation between these two groups.

Mele Eminê Kinik, who was one of the founding *seydas* of Hizbullah, is dead.<sup>32</sup> The Turkish Petroleum engineer mentioned above is now known to be İsmail Altsoy, the elder brother of İsa Altsoy,<sup>33</sup> one of the leading figures in Hizbullah. During the period when Velioğlu worked in Ankara and when he was away doing his national service, İsmail Altsoy led Hizbullah and contributed to the organisation’s popularity among madrasa-educated *imams* by virtue of his personal connections and charisma. Despite his leading role in Hizbullah, İsmail Altsoy eventually distanced himself from the organisation, although he never criticised it ‘in order not to damage Hizbullah’. In an interview Mücteba<sup>34</sup> quoted İsmail Altsoy as saying, ‘We created this movement. We were going to create an Islamic state. We weren’t going to beat people up.’<sup>35</sup>

The Hüseyini Sevda website also confirms that İsmail Altsoy acted as the leader of Hizbullah when Velioğlu was not in Batman or Diyarbakır.<sup>36</sup> The two other founding *seydas* left Hizbullah in the 1980s, before the organisation adopted violent methods. As reported by my informants, these two *seydas* received death threats for years for speaking critically about Hizbullah after they left.

Before taking the name Hizbullah, the movement was known as *Cemaata Ulemayên İslâmî* (the Community of Islamic Scholars). Because members used the İlim Bookshop as the centre of their social activities, for a time it was known as the İlim group. The Hüseyini Sevda website reports that ‘The Union of Scholars’ (*Alimler Birliği*) or ‘The Union of Mullahs’ (*Mollalar Birliği*) were also debated as potential names among the members of the *cemaat*.<sup>37</sup> I have been told by informants that at some point the name ‘Community of Islamic Scholars’ was actively used by

Hizbullah members<sup>38</sup> and that this is why Hizbullah members refer to the organisation only as *Cemaat*.<sup>39</sup> According to my informant Mahmut, the name Hizbullah was initially used by non-members to refer to the movement and it came from Hizbullah members chanting 'Inshallah! Mashallah! Hizbullah!'<sup>40</sup> at wedding ceremonies they attended together.<sup>41</sup> Even though the information provided by Mahmut is anecdotal, it should be emphasised that Hizbullah wedding celebrations and the dances performed on these occasions constitute symbols for the group. In Velioglu's biography on the Hüseyini Sevda website, Velioglu is reported to have said, 'They have given us such a beautiful name. Inshallah we will be deserving of it.'<sup>42</sup>

It is often stated that during the foundational period of the Community of Islamic Scholars, Velioglu emphasised action rather than name, constitution, theory, and content.<sup>43</sup> According to the information gathered in the field, Hizbullah had no written manifesto during its foundational period. However, a manifesto was published on the Hüseyini Sevda website in the 2000s.<sup>44</sup> Considering the name of the Cemaat and its foundational period together with Velioglu's commitment to action, the influence of the Iranian Revolution on the organisation becomes evident. The Iranian Revolution was led by a union of scholars and mullahs and, in terms of the durability of its outcomes, provided momentum and motivation to many other Islamic movements that followed. Given the heated political atmosphere the party was founded in, it is not surprising that the Community of Islamic Scholars placed more emphasis on action rather than theory and debate; the 'reform' had to be implemented immediately. The Iranian Revolution gave hope to and provided a reference point for many Islamic movements. Importantly, the Iranian Revolution's influence on Hizbullah was stronger in the early period of the party's history, but gradually vanished in the 1990s.

After the 1980 military coup, Velioglu left Ankara, where he had worked, and returned to Batman. Until he went underground in the early 1990s, he travelled throughout the Kurdish region in Turkey, village by village, and talked to madrasa teachers, *seydas*, sheikhs, and other educated people about Hizbullah. His travels encompassed nearly all the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey and here he came into contact with almost all the prominent religious figures and groups in the area. Some of the places he visited were madrasas and *dergahs* (dervish lodges) known to belong to the Naqshbandi order (a Sufi order of Central Asian origin) and during these encounters he was at times accused of

being anti-Sufi (*anti-tasavvuf*). That said, many Ikhwan-influenced young *seydas* joined his movement in the first four to five years of its existence. At this time, Hizbullah's influence spread into areas such as Batman, Bismil, Diyarbakır, Silvan, Mardin, Nusaybin, Cizre, and Tatvan. The majority of the *seydas* who joined Hizbullah during this period eventually left the movement, after which both parties accused each other of being *münafıks*<sup>45</sup> (hypocrites).<sup>46</sup> Some were even attacked, wounded, or murdered for speaking negatively about Hizbullah. The departure of the *seydas* was motivated by various reasons, including a belief that a *Mülkiye*-educated person should not be leading a group by the name of the Community of Islamic Scholars; disapproval of violence as a method; and finally, as Jenkins points out, the Şura, that is, the movement's main administrative unit, did not operate effectively and Veliöğlü led the movement as he pleased (Jenkins, 2008, pp. 187–8).

After a short period of three to four years, Hizbullah moved the centre of its activities from Batman to Diyarbakır. This decision was taken after the *seydas* and other groups of Hizbullah members in Batman left the organisation and, according to my informant Mahmut, was motivated by the existence of various other rival Islamic groups in Batman at the time and Hizbullah's resultant failure to become organised as successfully as it wished. In fact, according to another of my informants, Veliöğlü preferred Diyarbakır even before the 1980 military coup because of its larger population and potential for young recruits. Batman, by contrast, was a small town of around 20,000 people, where everyone knew each other.

One misconception persistently repeated in the limited literature on Hizbullah is that initially it had a unified structure that encompassed groups such as İlim, Menzil, and Vahdet and the latter two subsequently broke off from Hizbullah (Jenkins, 2008, p. 186). The source of this misinformation is, I would suggest, the hastily prepared police reports and public prosecutors' indictments that were produced in the wake of the Hizbullah Operations. In reality, the group known as the Community of Islamic Scholars (later Hizbullah) in Batman and the Menzil group operating in Diyarbakır were separate organisations. Menzil is the name of an Islamist *cemaat* in Diyarbakır, named after the bookshop the group used. The Menzil group cooperated with Hizbullah for some time after Hizbullah moved its centre of activities from Batman to Diyarbakır in the early 1980s. Eventually, a conflict between the two groups emerged and the Menzil group lost its influence following the murder of its

leader. Vahdet is the name of a small Islamist group of former Hizbullah members organised around the Vahdet Bookshop. The Vahdet group subsequently yielded to pressures by Hizbullah and disbanded.

When Velioğlu decided to relocate the movement's centre to Diyarbakır, he had meetings with Fidan Güngör, one of the then leaders of the Menzil group, via intermediaries in order to solicit his help in opening space up for Hizbullah's activities. One of these intermediaries, who was neither a member of Hizbullah nor Menzil but chosen on account of his personal connections, told me that on a visit to Fidan Güngör, they had vouched for Velioğlu's group – not yet named Hizbullah – telling him that the group was sincere and devoted, and its ideas were similar to those of Menzil, perhaps with the exception of being somewhat sectarian (*hizipçi*), meaning fairly self-oriented. In the same way, Hizbullah members claim Fidan Güngör was himself sectarian and that he did not wish Hizbullah to become popular in Diyarbakır because of his own personal ambitions.<sup>47</sup>

My informant Mustafa explained that the developing relations with Iran in the 1980s brought opposing Islamic groups closer and, in that context, the Menzil group and an Islamist organisation called the Selam group merged into the İlim group, later to become Hizbullah. Based in Batman, the Selam group ceased all their activities when Hizbullah gained power in the early 1990s. Mustafa further stated that, in time, the İlim group separated from the others as a result of what he termed their 'self-opinionated disposition' and that part of the Menzil membership and their field of activities were also carried over into the İlim group. Although Velioğlu relocated the base of the group's operations to Diyarbakır in either 1980 or 1981, he continued living in Ankara because of his employment at the Ankara Feed Plant and then resided in Manisa until 1983 to finish his national service. Nevertheless, throughout this time he regularly visited the Kurdish region of Turkey in order to supervise the group's activities. From the early 1980s until the opening of the İlim Kitabevi (İlim Bookshop) in the autumn of 1983, the İlim and Menzil groups cooperated with each other in running student houses, organising *sohbets* and activities in mosques, and becoming organised in universities.<sup>48</sup> After Velioğlu opened the İlim Bookshop, however, the two groups separated from each other.<sup>49</sup>

It is not surprising that supporters of Hizbullah organised around mosques and worked to fulfil their 'ideals' through their activities in mosques. Mosques and mosque-centred activities have always been at

the centre of the agendas of many Islamist organisations, especially for the purposes of achieving social mobilisation, recruiting new members, and bringing about social transformation. The main historical reference for this is the use of the Madinah Masjid<sup>50</sup> for multiple purposes, such as the centre of governance and education. Furthermore, the use of places of worship for social purposes is not unique to Islam. In countries or regions such as the USA, Latin America, Burma, Australia, Canada, and so on churches have taken on various roles in human rights activities (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 10). In that sense, the use of mosques by Hizbullah and other Islamist groups as the centre of their activities should be seen as an extension of the parallels in the ideological orientation and action principles of Islamist ideologies. The founding ideologues of the Turkish Republic were also well aware of the importance of mosques in social mobilisation. Therefore, in order to ensure control over the operation of mosques, the state established *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency of Religious Affairs) just a few months after the proclamation of the Republic and designated it as the sole authority to govern places of worship.

Although the details of the cooperation between Hizbullah and the Menzil group are not well known, it may not be a coincidence that this period coincided with Velioglu's absences in Ankara and Manisa. It is clear that the period of autonomy for Hizbullah began after Velioglu returned to Diyarbakır and took full control of the organisation. After Hizbullah parted ways with the Menzil group and set up the İlim Kitabevi (İlim Bookshop) in 1983, the movement focused its organisational efforts around the bookshop.

It was quite common in this period in Turkey for Islamic groups to become organised around bookshops and publishing houses. For example, *Menzil Kitabevi* (Menzil Bookshop), around which the Menzil group subsequently formed, was established in 1978. Ercüment Özkan, a prominent figure in Turkish Islamist circles, named the bookshop himself.<sup>51</sup> This was a period when Islamist organisations in Kurdish cities still had relations with Turkish organisations such as the *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (National Turkish Student Union, MTTB), *Milli Gençlik Vakfı* (National Youth Foundation, MGV), *Akıncılar* (Raiders), and *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party, MSP). These organisations had, on the one hand, maintained relations with each other due to the influence of Iran, and were, on the other hand, still connected

with the Islamist organisations and parties operating in the western part of Turkey.<sup>52</sup>

İlim Bookshop gained popularity as a bookshop where one could find many of the key texts on Islamist ideology both in their original Arabic and in Turkish translation. The group that was organised around the bookshop ultimately acquired the name İlim (science). In Turkey it is common practice to refer to Islamic groups after the bookshops around which they have been organised.<sup>53</sup>

According to the information in the police archives quoted in many of the works on Hizbullah, the first record of the İlim group dates back to this period. While expecting to stay off the state's radar within the cosmopolitan confines of Diyarbakır, as opposed to the small provincial town of Batman, it must have quickly attracted the attention of the police and the intelligence service.

Diyarbakır effectively became Hizbullah's centre of operations between 1983 and 1991, after Veliöğlü took up residency there. During this eight-year period Hizbullah organised in high schools and universities and its membership increased to an unprecedented level. By recruiting members from all sections of the society, the organisation reached a high level of representative capacity. Aiding Hizbullah's efforts to become organised in mosques, the chaotic atmosphere of forced migration in the area during these years also facilitated the rapid expansion in the organisation's membership.<sup>54</sup>

Hizbullah had begun its recruitment activities in a handful of mosques, however, by the mid 1990s it was active in almost all the mosques in Diyarbakır.<sup>55</sup> Those *imams* who did not allow Hizbullah to recruit in their mosques were routinely threatened and subjected to violence. Such incidents created an atmosphere of fear among mosque officials and as a result they remained quiet and showed little resistance to Hizbullah's recruitment efforts. The emergence of the notorious Hizbullah violence, which eventually became the key characteristic of Hizbullah's public image, dates back to these years.

As reported by my informant Mustafa, Hizbullah had no tolerance for lengthy theoretical debates such as those taking place among *seydas* and other groups at the time, and instead focused on action, such as overthrowing the secular regime and establishing a Sharia-based state.<sup>56</sup> In this respect Hizbullah resembles some left-wing groups that similarly prioritise action over theory. This approach facilitated Hizbullah's recruitment efforts and motivated a large number of uneducated or

poorly educated young people to join the organisation.<sup>57</sup> Hizbullah's recruitment of young people, who were previously members of other Islamist groups, caused upset among these groups, especially the Menzil group, and many incidents of verbal and physical confrontation took place as a result, particularly in high schools and mosques. In time these confrontations took the form of violent machete fights and thus Hizbullah shifted its focus to eliminating these groups.<sup>58</sup>

It is widely known that in this period, the core members of Hizbullah received political and military training in Iran, and developed their plans to overthrow the existing regime and create a state based on Islamic law (Çakır, 2011, pp. 154–81). According to my informant Ahmet, there were three groups in the area with connections to Iran at the time: the Menzil group was connected with Iranian intelligence, the İlim group – later to be known as Hizbullah – with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a third group associated with the Revolutionary Guards. Ahmet described Iran's relationship with these groups as 'a dirty relationship' (*elaqayek gemar*).<sup>59</sup> As Jenkins pointed out, the Menzil group's relationship with Iran revolved around what the Islamic state model ought to be, while the İlim group retained their Ikhwanist principles on this matter (Jenkins, 2008, p. 187) but took Khomeini's personal qualities and methods and the Iranian Revolution as a model that needed adapting to this specific context.

The proximity of the Menzil group to Iran meant some of its members changing their denomination from Sunni Islam to Shia Islam. One informant, Mûcahit, who knew the Menzil group closely, claimed that even today there are people in Diyarbakır who became Ja'fari<sup>60</sup> but still keep it a secret.<sup>61</sup> This has parallels with Ahmet's previous description of Iran's relationship with these groups as 'a dirty relationship.' Ahmet, who is very knowledgeable about the issue, further explained that in interacting with these groups, Iran saw an opportunity to convert them to the Shia denomination and export the Iranian regime, rather than instruct these groups in the principles of revolution. In fact, Iran would insist that these groups convert to the Shia denomination and declare *tekfir*<sup>62</sup> against the Saudi regime.<sup>63</sup> Hence, my informant Yusuf, who is a Hizbullah member, reported that 'although Iran raised many important people such as Khomeini, they were sectarian and that caused Hizbullah to distance themselves from Iran.'<sup>64</sup>

The disputes between Islamist groups concerning Iran go back to 1982 when Iran gave support to Hafez al-Assad when he carried out a

massacre against Ikhwan supporters and other civilians in the largely Ikhwanist city of Hama in Syria. While some groups considered this course of action by Iran to be motivated by political obligation, others interpreted it as a sectarian reflex. Ultimately, however, for those groups who had become acquainted with the Ikhwan movement largely through Said Hawwa in Syria<sup>65</sup> and the Kurdish Ikhwanists in Iraq, the Hama massacre initiated a turning point.<sup>66</sup>

Organisations linked to Iran were closely monitored in Turkey in this period. The Egyptian Ikhwan, however, refrained from becoming organised in Turkey because they considered the National Vision movement an extension of Ikhwanist principles.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, while Hizbullah's relations with Iran came under heavy scrutiny, its Ikhwanist character was ignored by the police and the intelligence service. The relations Velioglu developed with Iran are well known now in the media. A photograph of him at Karbala attending a commemorative event, known in Persian as *taziyeh*, was published in the *Hürriyet* newspaper.<sup>68</sup> Hizbullah retained its close relations with Iran until the end of the 1980s. During this period Iran first tried to bring Islamist groups under one roof and, having failed to achieve this, due to fundamentally ideological differences, increased its support for those groups who showed allegiance to Iran, reducing relations with the rest to a minimum.

It is widely claimed that two main factors led to the emergence of the conflict between Hizbullah and the Menzil group: disputes over sharing the financial aid sent by Iran and the rivalry that unfolded between the two groups. Taking into account the two groups' common expansionist character, it may be argued that a conflict between the two groups was at any rate inevitable.

From the 1990s onwards, İlim's accusations evolved into the claim that the Menzil group were supporting the PKK. Some individuals and Islamic groups,<sup>69</sup> who realised that the tensions and physical confrontations were about to lead to a full-on conflict between the two groups, attempted to mediate the situation and held meetings with each party. Some of these groups even appealed to Iran to act as mediator. What evidence exists suggests that it was the İlim group who made the first attacks and that the Menzil group decided to retaliate by relying on Iran's support.<sup>70</sup>

The Hizbullah-Menzil conflict began in the first half of the 1990s when the conflict between Hizbullah and the PKK had already escalated. What is popularly known today as 'murders by unknown perpetrators'

(*faili meçhul cinayetler*) had become common occurrences in the Kurdish region of Turkey. The Menzil group dissolved in 1994 after Fidan Güngör was kidnapped and subsequently murdered.<sup>71</sup> Following his death, part of the group's membership joined Hizbullah. Molla Mansur Güzelsoy, the other leader of the Menzil group, died in Iran while being treated for cancer. During the conflict with Menzil, around 200 people from both sides were killed. Thus, as Ruşen Çakır points out, Hizbullah, whose ultimate goal was to overthrow the existing regime and establish an Islamic state in its place, never in fact took any action against the state but instead focused on eliminating a rival organisation (2011, pp. 66–77). The Hizbullah officials whom I asked about this matter through the Hüseyini Sevda website either refrained from discussing the subject or justified Hizbullah's actions as self-defence. Even though these justifications may be considered valid, Hizbullah's shift towards violence is not necessarily in contradiction with the organisation's fundamental principles.

As mentioned previously, Hizbullah's *raison d'être* was to initiate an Islamic revolution. To this end, members built a relationship with Iran, received military training, and constructed a discourse that justified violence via the use of religious terminology and employed it in their *sohbets* and lectures in mosques as well as other platforms. Moreover, they had incorporated the discourse of jihad and martyrdom (*shahada*), and the secretiveness of the Dar al-Arqaṃ<sup>72</sup> into their daily life practices. Seen from this perspective, it is clear that these understandings and discourses could lead Hizbullah to nothing other than violence. Hizbullah has, in fact, been very successful in creating a feeling of group belonging and instilling the notion of *the pursuit of a high ideal* among the less well-educated, socio-economically disadvantaged and dispossessed youth.

The profile of the young man who joins Hizbullah and devotes his life to a sacred cause has been described and sanctified in Hizbullah's recorded music series, such as the Şehitler Kervanı ('Train of Martyrs') (see below). After joining Hizbullah, these youths started committing violent acts on their own accord. The form their violence took ranged from beating up other youths from the neighbourhood with whom they once smoked marijuana, to throwing acid on women from their neighbourhood or strangling them because they dressed incorrectly or were thought to engage in 'prostitution'. These acts of violence were the products of a specific mindset, organisationally driven and not simply individual acts of violence.<sup>73</sup>

I now turn to the largely misconceived Vahdet group and their relation to Hizbullah. In addition to relevant information about the organisation that came up in various interviews, my main informant is Mûcahit, who held a senior position in the Vahdet group. Mûcahit had joined Hizbullah in the early 1980s and left in 1987 when he and a group of others decided to open the *Vahdet Kitabevi* (Vahdet Bookshop). According to Mûcahit, there were bigger differences between the Vahdet and İlim groups than between Menzil and İlim. Despite this, the conflict between Vahdet and İlim, which began a few months after the Vahdet group broke away from İlim, largely took the form of fights between high school students and did not go any further than a few cases of physical injuries.

The Vahdet group wielded far less influence and power than the İlim group as an organisation.<sup>74</sup> Hizbullah may never have regarded the Vahdet group as a threat, which may explain why the conflict never took the form of reciprocal assassinations. Nevertheless, as Mûcahit pointed out, Vahdet eventually decided to cease their activities. After Vahdet disappeared, some of their members joined Hizbullah.<sup>75</sup>

In this period, the membership of Islamist groups in the area was very fluid. This becomes especially clear in Ömer's statement: 'İlim was founded on the capital offered by the *seydas*. Many who had left the Cemaat could never retrieve their share in the bookshop'<sup>76</sup> or Mahmut's claim that 'in many places Hizbullah took over our student organisations and the houses that we rented and furnished'.<sup>77</sup> This level of fluidity shows that these groups shared largely similar ideological bases, despite the discourse of difference they emphasised in reference to each other.

Hizbullah's aggressive and violent approach eventually led to the assimilation of most other Islamist groups within the organisation either voluntarily or by means of *tebliğ* or varying degrees of violence. Naturally, this also led to an antipathy towards Hizbullah among those who refused to be assimilated. Although the Hizbullah members I interviewed emphasised that Hizbullah embraces *itidal* (moderation) and is not a *tekfirî*<sup>78</sup> organisation, Hizbullah's response to the fragmentation among Islamist groups was one of maligning its rivals. For instance, it has been claimed that Hizbullah referred to the Menzil group as *münafık* (hypocrite) and the Vahdet group as *Rabıtacı* (Rabita supporters). Furthermore, according to Dilgeş, Hizbullah used the Vahdet group's ideological proximity to Wahhabism as propaganda material against them on the grounds that the founder of the Wahhabist movement, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, was allegedly a British

agent, according to widespread rumours among Islamists. In fact, Dilgeç reported that Hizbullah frequently used an analogy in which the Vahdet group was associated with Rabita, and Rabita with Wahhabism and being British agents.<sup>79</sup>

Rabita is the abbreviation for the Saudi Arabia-based *Rābiṭat al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī* (Muslim World League), which is the organisation believed to have financed many Sunni and Wahhabist Islamic groups after the Iranian Revolution in order to counter the rise of Shia Islam. These claims were the subject of popular debate in the late 1980s and the Turkish investigative journalist Uğur Mumcu wrote the book *Rabita* (2007). Mumcu was subsequently assassinated and although the identity of those behind his murder remains unknown, there have been claims that his assassination was organised by an Islamist organisation. I have also come across similar claims about Rabita in the discourses of the Iranian-influenced Islamist groups. According to my informant Mücahit, the Vahdet group had no connection with Rabita and these allegations were intended purely to defame the group.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, Mücahit's previous involvement in the Vahdet group should be borne in mind when evaluating the credibility of this statement.

The expansion of the İlim group and the increase in acts of violence involving bodily harm continued until 1991 when Velioğlu moved Hizbullah's operational base from Diyarbakır to Mardin.<sup>81</sup> As Ruşen Çakır points out, referring to the book *Hizbullah in Its Own Words*<sup>82</sup> (*Kendi Dilinden Hizbullah*), it is claimed that the first phase of Hizbullah's history ended in 1991. According to Bagasi, Hizbullah was not involved in any violence in this period and had close and amicable relations with other Islamic groups (Bagasi, n.d., p. 35). But it is known that Hizbullah resorted to violence in the second half of the 1980s. Perhaps his claim is based on the fact that the incidents involving violence did not result in any deaths. However, violence resulting in death should be considered only one potential outcome of violence. Ömer reported in our interview that representatives from various Islamic groups in Turkey with connections to Iran had arranged a meeting with Iranian officials in 1989 and complained about Hizbullah, saying 'they are oppressing Muslims'.<sup>83</sup> Widely reported fights with machetes and knives, which were very common in the second half of the 1980s, are clear proof of the existence of violence at the time.

In addition to being the year when Hizbullah's operational base was relocated to Mardin, the year 1991 also marks the beginning of the

conflict between Hizbullah and the PKK. At the time, many attempts were being made to end the tensions between the PKK and Hizbullah. As claimed in *Hizbullah in Its Own Words* and further confirmed in my interviews, Hizbullah sought mediation by various individuals in order to resolve the issues it had with the PKK and at least two meetings between Hizbullah and the PKK were held for that purpose. The first of these meetings was arranged through a divided family, one son was in Hizbullah and the other in the PKK. However, this meeting did not yield any results. The second meeting took place in Idil where, according to *Hizbullah in Its Own Words*, the PKK put forward two possible solutions: Hizbullah should join the PKK and they should fight the Turkish state together, or Hizbullah should cease all activities in the area and move away. If it did neither, the PKK would destroy Hizbullah (Bagasi, n.d., pp. 81–92). Although it was not possible to gauge the credibility of this account, it is widely known that the PKK regarded Hizbullah as ‘a sub-contractor and collaborator of the Turkish state and an organisation which provoked children in the name of religion and set them against the Kurdish Movement’ (Çakır, 2011, pp. 67–70). This is made clear in the writings of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK (Çakır, 2011, pp. 67–70), although it is not clear whether this discourse emerged before or after the onset of the Hizbullah-PKK conflict. Nevertheless, what is certain is that both organisations eliminated various cohabiting groups using similar means and exhibited little tolerance for each other.

According to Ömer, it was not only Hizbullah that was trying to prevent a potential escalation in the conflict with the PKK. A committee of prominent *seydas* from the area attempted to mediate as tensions rose when the PKK levied high ‘taxes’ on a village located in the mountainous area between Mardin and Batman in which half the residents were Hizbullah and half PKK supporters. After a few unsuccessful attempts, the *seydas* decided to approach Sheikh Osman, the leader of *Hareketa Islami* (Islamic Movement), via the Kurdistan Regional Government, which was then based in the Kurdistan Province of Iran. Because Sheikh Osman was in London at the time, they instead had a meeting with his assistant Sheikh Ali and asked that their messages be delivered to the PKK based in Qandil. Afterwards they visited the cities of Qom and Tehran and met the chairman of the Assembly of Experts, Ali Meshkini, and Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi. The purpose of their visit was to convince Iran to intervene in Hizbullah and prevent a conflict from emerging. The members of the committee in question were not Hizbullah members.

After returning to Turkey, the committee began to prepare for a visit to the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon,<sup>84</sup> but they had to abandon their plans after the first fatal incident took place between the PKK and Hizbullah in May 1991.

#### TEN YEARS OF VIOLENCE

Hizbullah was ‘just a couple of *sofiks*’<sup>85</sup> to the PKK until 17 May 1991 when the PKK murdered Sabri and Hayriye Karaaslan, the parents of a Hizbullah member, in the town of Idil, Şırnak. Hizbullah used their funeral to make a show of force and on 3 December 1991 retaliated by assassinating Mikail Bayro, an Assyrian (*Süryani*) Christian man who was a high-ranking regional officer of the PKK. Muhammed Ata Zengin, one of Bayro’s assassins, was killed in a gun fight with the police following the assassination. In less than a month, 13 people had been killed from both sides (Çakır, 2011, pp. 67–9).

Between 1991 and 1995, over 700 hundred people were killed. According to official records, 500 were PKK members or sympathisers while the rest were from Hizbullah (Çakır, 2011, p. 70). According to my informants, however, the accurate number should rather be in the thousands. Hizbullah also operated as a subcontractor to the JITEM (Turkey’s Gendarmerie Intelligence and Anti-terror Organisation) in the 1990s and carried out a considerable number of the estimated 17,000 ‘murders by unknown perpetrators’ (*faili meçhul cinayetler*).<sup>86</sup>

Hizbullah’s alleged connection with elements of the deep state, such as JITEM, will be discussed in depth, however, first I would like to offer a tentative analysis of the potential motivations behind these murders. According to my informant Aziz, the discourse of martyrdom (*shahada*) was very strong in the Cemaat and all Hizbullah members aspired to be martyrs. Because, as often stated by Hizbullah members, death is martyrdom, being wounded is to become a *gazi* (war veteran), and prison is *Medrese-i Yusufiye* (The School of Joseph).<sup>87</sup> In fact the holiness of martyrdom and Hizbullah’s model ‘martyrs’ constitute the themes most commonly handled in the Şehitler Kervanı (‘Train of Martyrs’) and Seyfullah<sup>88</sup> recorded music series. For example, below are the lyrics of the song Şehid Ata (‘Ata the Martyr’) about the killing of Muhammed Ata, the Hizbullah member who assassinated Mihail Bayro, by security forces.



the violence increased. In the tapes published after the death of Hüseyin Velioglu in Operation Beykoz in 2000, the content of the lyrics turned into an explicit expression of anger and desire for revenge.<sup>90</sup> Martyrdom constitutes the main theme of the songs in the Şehitler Kervanı and Hizbullah's other recorded music series. The ideas that underlie martyrdom are those of losing one's life for the 'cause' and 'having the honour of being God's beloved subject'. As the song says, running away from Hizbullah's bullet is a dream. The two other themes that stand out in these songs are inviting one to be a martyr and that victory is near. The latter belief is evident in my informant Serмест's words:

Serмест: We used to say 'it's not long now; Sharia is coming'.

Mehmet Kurt: Did you really believe it?

Serмест: I am telling you I used to say 'it's soon now; it's coming' and you are still asking me whether I believed it?

Serмест had thought Sharia was imminent but after some time he could no longer cope and left Hizbullah, fleeing to the city of Antalya in south Turkey. In Antalya, he realised how 'remote' people's actual lives were to Sharia.<sup>91</sup> My informant Musab apparently had the same feeling of astonishment when he first went to Istanbul and realised how far from reality the Islamic revolution was.<sup>92</sup>

On 25 June 1992, the PKK raided a mosque in the Yolaç (in Kurdish *Susa*) village of Silvan, Diyarbakır, and killed ten Hizbullah members. Hizbullah considered this incident a turning point (Jenkins, 2008, p. 190) and, according to Çakır, decided to make it a rule to retaliate 'threefold' for each murdered Hizbullah member (2011, p. 70). Hizbullah's justification for its own fatal attacks was that they were solely employed as a means of self-defence. But, as Aslı Elitsoy points out, the imbalance between the numbers<sup>93</sup> killed by Hizbullah and by the PKK is an indication of the violent attitude of Hizbullah during this period (Elitsoy, 2013, p. 90). Moreover, the Islamic interpretations of these murders, supposedly committed for reasons of self-defence, often employ the idea of *kıyas* (retaliation in kind).

This imbalance between the numbers of murdered Hizbullah members and those killed by Hizbullah in acts of retaliation was interpreted by one informant, Aziz, in terms of war: Hizbullah was at war with the PKK and, according to Islamic law, in the event of war these kinds of

actions are considered legitimate.<sup>94</sup> However, those who were killed in the 1990s by Hizbullah were not only PKK members; among them were prominent *imams*, leaders and intellectuals of Islamist *cemaats*, people who were deemed to have strayed into a non-Islamic life, journalists and politicians, women who it was claimed engaged in prostitution, and even two boys who happened to stray onto the roof of a Hizbullah cell while looking for their birds. Musab explained:

I didn't know about the cells. There were rumours that the bodies were men the Cemaat killed and removed. These rumours became more prevalent at some point ... What bothered me the most was this: In all organised structures, the people who betray are punished. I consider that normal. For instance, I consider it normal that Iran can execute one of their men. Or the PKK ... But if they do it undeservedly, then it hurts me. For instance, there were the bodies of two bird fanciers there. Do you know the owner of the X? ... 13 bodies were found in his house. How do we answer for that as Muslims? I wonder how we will answer for that to Allah. For instance, Menzil may have made many mistakes and they ought to be punished for what they have done wrong. But you can't kill an innocent person. It was cruel what they did to Muslims. That was our only problem. If you go and kill an ordinary policeman, a night-watchman, we can't answer for that to Allah. In the verse Allah says the death of an innocent person is like the death of the universe. If this is what your creator tells you and you still go and kill an innocent person, then that is problematic. Let's say [the murders of] the night-watchman and the policeman are justifiable to some extent. But the two bird fanciers? For Allah's sake! What do they have to do with anything? They are just children. Their birds escape and they come to get their birds back. I think they see them on the rooftop and come and collect them. And they [Hizbullah members] see them. There is no name for this ... There were good men in Menzil. For instance, X ... He'd always talk of mercy ... There was that childish thing [that we'd say] 'there are things we don't know; they know better' or 'you don't know, but I do!'. That's what the Cemaat would say. I mean, we didn't question them. But when you get a bit older and start seeing things for what they are ... What is there that I can't understand! Your *imam* tells you that you wouldn't understand. A person dies there! Time is necessary for certain things to sink in.<sup>95</sup>

The feeling that becomes evident in Musab's statements is his surprise at how easily the Cemaat he tirelessly worked for could decide someone's death. This became evident after Operation Beykoz and it had a shocking effect on many Hizbullah members, including Musab. In fact, Musab, who joined Hizbullah in the 1990s at a very young age, left the organisation in 2003 or 2004 after Operation Beykoz because information and video footage concerning the murders committed by Hizbullah were released to the media. This was the first time many people realised the scale of Hizbullah's violence. The largest number of defections from Hizbullah occurred at this time.

Another issue that calls for investigation is whether there are other – possibly hidden – motivations behind these murders. If, as Anselm Strauss suggests, 'all is data', then almost everyone I spoke with said at least a few words about Hizbullah's acts of violence and the 'deep connections' behind them. In fact, this was such a widely shared sentiment that even many PKK sympathisers and powerful people expressed fear and reluctance at discussing Hizbullah. These feelings partly stemmed from popular rumours or the actual experience of the 1990s, and partly from the media. For instance, Gülay, who identifies herself as someone 'close to the Kurdish movement', told me that on her first day in high school she witnessed an argument in the school canteen. According to Gülay, the argument quickly turned into a fight and was then carried on outside the school. There someone known to be a Hizbullah member chased after another person with a machete and when he caught up with this person, he struck so hard with the machete that the blade came out from the man's chest. Gülay could not erase this image from her mind for years and the only explanation she could think of as to how Hizbullah could murder someone on one of the city's busiest streets in broad daylight was that the state must have been supporting them. During this period, there was a union of interests between the Turkish state and Hizbullah, and therefore the Turkish state turned a blind eye to Hizbullah's operations against PKK members and sympathisers. It is no coincidence that this period also features the most intense fighting between the Turkish state and the PKK. While the Turkish state used Hizbullah in their fight against the PKK, Hizbullah used its tacit impunity for its own agenda.

Gülay also told me of another incident where she saw hundreds of brand new machetes stacked up in an official prayer room on the bottom floor of the building where she worked. Upon seeing the machetes, she contacted her relatives, who in turn informed the police. However,

according to Gülay, the police did nothing about the machetes until someone was killed in the same building. When the police finally arrived, the machetes had been removed from the prayer room.<sup>96</sup>

What is the truth about the alleged links between Hizbullah and the Turkish state that have been the subject of so much debate? Hizbullah officials, whom I contacted through the Hüseyini Sevda website, refrained from answering my question as to why Hizbullah ‘had never targeted the state despite its agenda to topple the regime’ and instead referred me to the article series entitled, ‘The Subversive Methods of the Police and the JITEM’. Comprising 26 articles by 2 June 2014, this series is almost like tutorial material instructing Hizbullah members to be wary of the activities of the intelligence service. It is well known that the military wing of Hizbullah used similar interrogation and ‘torture tapes’ as tutorial material in the past.

The article series features extensive quotes by alleged informers under interrogation, and also possibly under ‘torture’, providing information regarding Hizbullah’s recruitment methods. When considered within the context of the question I posed earlier, however, it becomes evident that this series also implicitly comprises a confession. It is almost as if through these articles Hizbullah is making the statement: ‘We did not kill them, the agents who infiltrated us did.’<sup>97</sup> The Cemaat (Hizbullah) carried out internal executions in the period between the second half of the 1990s, when the conflicts with the PKK and Menzil came to an end, and the death of Velioglu in Operation Beykoz on 17 January 2000. Although exact numbers are unknown, Hizbullah executed hundreds of its own members during this period.

It is widely known that Hizbullah never admitted to cooperating with the Turkish state. I attempted to raise this issue with my informants, as much as it was permitted, by the direction our interviews took. In these interviews, no one ever accepted these allegations. When I asked Hizbullah officials through Hüseyini Sevda about Hizbullah’s connections with the state and whether they had benefited as a result, their reply was: ‘We are not aware of any substantial claims concerning a relationship of interest with the state. Forward evidence to us if you possess any tangible information in this regard.’<sup>98</sup> Similarly, when asked about the existence of any written or verbal proof, the informants who had claimed Hizbullah had cooperated with the deep state could only offer a few personal testimonies as evidence. One of my informants even thought my search for evidence was ridiculous and declared, ‘there is no

evidence of bribery!<sup>99</sup> He offered me this dictum popular in political circles in Turkey as counter evidence for the claim that Hizbullah had connections with the Turkish state, but naturally there was no document to prove it.

Only two of my informants could offer accounts of incriminating incidents regarding Hizbullah's alleged connections with underground state structures. However, in both cases my informants (Muhammed and Osman for simplicity's sake) were only indirect witnesses. One of Muhammed's friends, who was a Hizbullah member, told him that earlier that day he had been approached by a high-ranking Turkish military officer on duty in the area. The military officer had said to him, 'we are enabling you at every instance. Why don't you carry out an operation here? You be cool and we'll give you support.' Apparently Muhammed's friend was so worried that he quickly sold his business and fled the city. The second incident concerned a businessman friend of Osman, who had been relatively good friends with the then Chief of Police in Mardin. Long after the 1990s, Osman enquired about Hizbullah-state relations from his friend. The Chief of Police told Osman that they had in fact given support to Hizbullah members but the members were 'so stupid' that, despite repeated warnings, they made little effort to hide their connections with the police.

Apart from the testimonies of these two indirect witnesses, I could not obtain any direct information on Hizbullah-state relations during my fieldwork. However, as I have established, for most people in the area Hizbullah's connection with the Turkish state is beyond question although the extremely clandestine nature of that relationship makes it difficult to prove.

Comments by former politicians, military and intelligence officers, and bureaucrats on this subject can be found in various sources (Doğan, 2011). However, it is clear that certain state-affiliated organisations used the conflict between the PKK and Hizbullah to their advantage. This issue is discussed in the book *Hizbullah in Its Own Words* and confirmed by my informants. Admittedly, the various actors involved have their own arguments on the matter. According to my informant Yusuf, who had been imprisoned for being a member of Hizbullah, security forces had been monitoring Hizbullah since the early 1990s and some Hizbullah members had been imprisoned then. He further reported that he himself was subjected to human rights violations and torture in prison and expressed surprise at claims of a Hizbullah-state alliance,

arguing that if this were the case, would he not know about it and have benefited personally from such a connection? Yusuf's statements may specifically concern the period following the 2000s because the Turkish state stopped tolerating Hizbullah and it very quickly collapsed. During the previous decade, however, there are hundreds of testimonies that prove the relationship between Hizbullah and the Turkish state. Yusuf told me about a newspaper with links to the Kurdish movement that had published an article about two Hizbullah members who were allowed to walk outside the prison and 'could enter the police station through the front door and leave through the back'. Yusuf knew the prisoners in question, one of whom was in reality bed bound. Yusuf had even discussed this issue with the PKK officials in the same prison. Thus, according to Yusuf, the claims about Hizbullah collaborating with the Turkish state were part of a disinformation strategy concocted by the PKK.<sup>100</sup>

Continuing the issue of the connections between Hizbullah and the Turkish state, I would like to quote Ruşen Çakır's analysis based on the official figures he gathered from *Anadolu Ajansı* (Anatolian News Agency, AA). According to these figures, 1550 Hizbullah members were arrested during the four-year period between 1992 and 1996, when the most intense conflicts involving Hizbullah took place. This figure then increased to more than 6000 between 1997 and 2000. Çakır concludes that these figures strongly suggest that the Turkish state did not interfere with Hizbullah when it was in conflict with the PKK and other groups, and only expanded operations against Hizbullah when it started to reorganise. Çakır's analysis indicates that even though the Turkish state may not have actively collaborated with Hizbullah, they clearly permitted Hizbullah's acts of violence as long as they were in the state's interest (2011, pp. 86–90).

As mentioned earlier, the years 1995–2000 may be described as the 'years of internal executions' for Hizbullah. In 1995, Veliöğlü left Mardin for Adana and lived there until 1997. Then he made Konya his home for another two years until 1999. After that he moved to Istanbul, the last stop on his journey before he was killed by the police on 17 January 2000 during Operation Beykoz, launched after a tip-off.<sup>101</sup> Almost as if following the stages of Veliöğlü's life in reverse order, mass graves, torture chambers, and Islamist cells were discovered in Konya, Adana, Diyarbakır, and many other places.

In 1995, Hizbullah started to kidnap members suspected of spying and interrogated them in cells, sometimes torturing them to death. Veliöğlü

also began to order certain Hizbullah members to be sent to the military to do their national service. What I have gathered from the testimonies of Hizbullah members is that Hizbullah operated as meticulously as a professional intelligence service from the start and Hizbullah members were tasked with sketching the plans for state buildings, especially military stations and bases, where they worked. According to one informant, Velioglu one day put his hand on the fairly thick dossier of Hizbullah's building plans and said, 'now, it is your turn [to overthrow]!'. It is not certain whether Velioglu actually said this, but it is clear that no steps were taken as a result.

On the basis of the information the security forces gathered from the Hizbullah Archive seized in Operation Beykoz, thousands of Hizbullah members were arrested and imprisoned.<sup>102</sup> Hizbullah's acts of violence caused a public outcry after being publicised in the media. Following Operation Beykoz, Hizbullah went into a period of disintegration during which many members left the organisation. Some were arrested and imprisoned for being Hizbullah members when the police came across their names in the seized documents despite having left Hizbullah long before.

Public interest in Hizbullah dissipated but it had not disappeared. In the next section I will discuss the period in which Hizbullah reappeared on the public stage in the form of NGOs and a political party. Hizbullah had transformed itself into a social movement.

#### HIZBULLAH'S 'TRANSFORMATION' FROM ARMED ORGANISATION TO SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Following the seizure of the Hizbullah Archive, security forces carried out large-scale operations and hundreds of people were arrested on charges of murder, and thousands on charges of membership in Hizbullah. The majority of those detained or arrested at the time received sentences of between four to ten years, with a minimum term of four years. Of these, 950 were subsequently released following an amnesty issued for PKK members in 2003 (Uslu, 2007, p. 128).<sup>103</sup> According to Necat Özdemir, one of the lawyers involved in the Hizbullah trials, only around 300 Hizbullah members who received life sentences are still in prison.<sup>104</sup>

Several informants reported that Hizbullah members went into hiding in large numbers during this period. The general opinion among Hizbullah members about the operations leading to the mass arrests

is that those whose short biographies<sup>105</sup> were found in the Beykoz Archive were arrested and imprisoned. However, Çakır claims that the security forces had no intention of dissolving Hizbullah's organisational base and most of those members detailed in the archive were not even detained and that the security forces focused all their efforts to fight the PKK (2011, p. 247). Jenkins's analysis concurs. Among the 20,000 people whose short biographies were found in the Hizbullah Archive, a mere 4000 were eventually arrested. Jenkins thus claims that the Turkish state's main goal was to capture high-ranking Hizbullah officials, halt its mosque activities, and identify Hizbullah members who held state positions and terminate their employment (2008, p. 195). The information I gathered in my interviews confirms that Hizbullah held lectures in almost all the mosques in Diyarbakır prior to the operations and all mosque activities subsequently came to a halt following Beykoz. Moreover, some informants recalled that because of the atmosphere of panic surrounding the operations, many Hizbullah officials had gone underground, leaving the ordinary Hizbullah membership uninformed about developments.

According to Musab, who had stayed in hiding for a year, the Hizbullah Operations were a reflection of the 'classic state tradition' in Turkey and thousands were given prison sentences just for 'giving lectures in a mosque'.<sup>106</sup> Azad also told me that he left his house very rarely and with much caution during this period and that one of the methods he used to avoid ID checks by the police was to carry a pocket-size copy of Said-i Nursi's *Risale-i Nurs*.<sup>107</sup> Another informant, Kamuran, told me that the uncertainty became so unbearable that in order to know whether the police were looking for him, he checked into a hotel and waited to see if they would come to the hotel to arrest him. Although Kamuran was relieved to see that the police did not appear, he was subsequently detained when his short biography was discovered among some newly seized documents in the early 2000s and he was imprisoned for a number of years.<sup>108</sup>

In this period, an unprecedentedly high number of people left Hizbullah. Many members, who had only heard about the cells, the methods of torture and execution through 'hearsay', were shocked to discover this side of Hizbullah when it was publicised in the media. Although the question of why they had not previously given any credit to the 'rumours' and the extent of those rumours cannot be ignored.

According to Uslu, hundreds of senior Hizbullah officials fled to Europe, Syria, and Iraq in this period (Uslu, 2007, p. 128). Kamuran states, however, that those who illegally left Turkey were usually the ones given long prison sentences. Kamuran himself chose not to flee in order not to ‘become a permanent fugitive’.<sup>109</sup>

By the early 2000s popular opinion held that Hizbullah had ceased to exist. The reality was, however, that Hizbullah began to organise again in 2003 and many former Hizbullah members were contacted by high-ranking Hizbullah officials to send out the message that Hizbullah was reactivating. My informant Musab, for example, told me that he was asked to submit a short biography again in 2003 by a mid-level Hizbullah official, whom he ‘did not like personally and found too carefree’. Musab reported that he had thought at first, ‘I will oblige if it is the Cemaat asking’ but then he discovered from his friends that nobody else had been asked to submit such a biography and thus decided not to do so. Musab left the Cemaat (Hizbullah) shortly after.<sup>110</sup>

Operation Beykoz and the developments that followed surprised not only those outside Hizbullah but also most Hizbullah members who were equally shocked by what was being reported in the media. When Hizbullah started reorganising, it was Hizbullah members themselves who showed reluctance to re-join the return of Hizbullah as an underground organisation – an organisation now tainted with its violent past. Furthermore, as became evident in many interviews, Hizbullah could never again operate as a complete underground organisation following the confiscation of its archive by the police.<sup>111</sup>

It was in this atmosphere in 2004 that *Mustazaflarla Dayanışma Derneği*<sup>112</sup> (Association for Solidarity with the Oppressed), the first legitimate organisation connected to Hizbullah, was founded.<sup>113</sup> It is well known that the establishment of Mustazaflar caused upset and sparked debates among some Hizbullah members, especially those in prison. At the centre of the debates was the anti-state stance, which had been debated in Ikhwanist and Salafi ideology since the establishment of Hizbullah. Operating in a state governed by a regime regarded as ‘*tağuti*, thus rendering Turkey *dar al-harb*,<sup>114</sup> there has always been much debate around such issues as whether the congregational Friday prayer is viable in Turkey or whether tax should be paid to the Turkish state. Although in Hizbullah’s discourse a strict Salafist attitude, such as the one associated with Daesh (ISIS), cannot be observed, a similar kind of radicalism can be observed in the structure of Hizbullah and its various practices.

*Mustazaf* is an Arabic word meaning ‘the oppressed’.<sup>115</sup> In the Islamic literature, it is used to refer to people impoverished under the heel of an oppressive ruler and is opposite in meaning to *müstakbar* (haughty) (Gürbüz, 2013, p. 169). The word has been integrated into the Marxist lexicon via its use by Ali Shariati, who uses the word *mustazaf* to refer to the proletariat and *müstakbar* to refer to the bourgeoisie (Taheri, 2008, p. 217). Given that the Iranian Revolution was considered to be the revolution of the *mustazafs* against the *müstakbars*, we can plausibly argue for the continuing influence of the Iranian Revolution on Hizbullah, at least on a discursive level.

To avoid arousing unnecessary suspicion from the Turkish state, *Mustazaflar* was established by people who had not been involved in the Hizbullah Operations and the ensuing trials or had at no point appeared on the state’s radar.<sup>116</sup> The association has been involved in a number of activities ranging from offering lectures on various subjects, delivering door to door food aid assistance, and providing legal help to those who have been subjected to rights violations. When required, it cooperates with international institutions, mediates personal conflicts, and arranges funerals.<sup>117</sup> Since its foundation, *Mustazaflar* has organised eight conferences in Diyarbakır between 2004 and 2006 (Jenkins, 2008, p. 195). The event that drew the public’s attention to the association, however, was the *Peygambere Saygı* (Respect for the Prophet) rally in Diyarbakır, which *Mustazaflar* organised as a response to the cartoon controversy in Denmark in 2006.<sup>118</sup> Over 100,000 people attended the rally (Çakır, 2007, p. 13). Two months after the rally, in April 2006, *Mustazaflar* hosted an outdoor *Kutlu Doğum* (Blessed Birth) event entitled *Peygamber Sevdahıları* (The Lovers of the Prophet), this time with tens of thousands of attendees<sup>119</sup> (Jenkins, 2008, p. 195). These activities showed the new direction Hizbullah was taking in moving into legitimate operation.<sup>120</sup> It was trying to create legitimacy through widely accepted, and thus uncontested, themes such as respect for the Prophet. It was delivering a new message, through *Mustazaflar*, and a new Islamist discourse to the Turkish public.

*Mustazaflar* quickly expanded, branching out into cities in southeastern Turkey as well as western cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, and Konya. However, approximately one year after the events hosted by *Mustazaflar* in 2006, in February 2007, the police raided the Istanbul, Diyarbakır, and Batman branches of the association and arrested eight members on suspicion of Hizbullah membership (Jenkins, 2008, p. 195). *Mustazaflar*

itself remained active until it was closed down in 2012 on the grounds that it was furthering Hizbullah's agenda.<sup>121</sup>

Hizbullah took advantage of the opportunities offered by legitimate activity and in only a few years increased its public presence through allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated radio stations, publishing houses (*Dua Yayincılık*), television stations (*Rehber TV*), newspapers (*Doğru Haber Gazetesi*), news agencies (İlk-Ha Haber Ajansı), Kurdish and Turkish language magazines/journals (İnzar, Kelha Amed), by organising rallies and demonstrations, by operating *kuran kursus*,<sup>122</sup> in student halls and housing, and by investing in revenue-generating businesses such as running *dershanes*.<sup>123</sup> These venues have been commonly used by Islamist movements as a means to expand their bases and transform into a social movement.

Mustazaflar has also attracted public attention by organising or participating in protests in favour of the right of girls in primary education to wear headscarves (hijab).<sup>124</sup> The founders of Mustazaflar established various other associations in the following years. The great majority of these associations operated on the local level and hosted events in order to recruit new members and facilitate mobilisation among their membership, while the rest were involved in humanitarian help and human rights, and thus covered a range of activities. This may be construed as an indication of Hizbullah's foresight in believing that Mustazaflar would eventually be shut down and these associations were clear preparation to replace it. As Wiktorowicz states, such use of civil society is more common in politically closed systems and is often employed as a means to escape state pressure (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 12).

Following the closure of Mustazaflar, Hizbullah's efforts to form a political party gained momentum despite ongoing internal debates and strong opposition, especially from Hizbullah members in prison. As Yusuf put it, 'the baby that was due is born'.<sup>125</sup>

These debates resulted in an internal rupture not unlike that which took place in the 2000s, and as a result, some members with Salafi inclinations left Hizbullah in and after 2012.<sup>126</sup> Musab claims that some of those who left had Shia inclinations and some had even converted to the Jafari school of Shia Islam. Another claim is that a group of former Hizbullah members were joined by Salafi-inclined individuals and went to Syria to fight alongside the Al-Nusra Front or ISIS.<sup>127</sup> In fact, many young 'mujahideen' from eastern and southeastern Turkey have gone to Syria for 'jihad' and some of these youngsters have encountered

other Kurds in battle and have either killed or been killed by them. My interviews revealed that even in a small area like Bingöl, over 30 people had died fighting in Syria by the of 2014.<sup>128</sup> Using Bingöl as an example, we may be able to extrapolate the total number of southeastern ‘mujahideen’ fighting in Syria. On the basis of the evidence presented here, as well as Hizbullah gaining more prominence and power in legitimate operations, it becomes inevitable that groups which split from it start cooperating with more marginal groups. At a time when there is a high level of fluidity between the membership of Islamist groups, as in the 1970s and 1980s, those who are dissatisfied with Hizbullah’s activities join other groups or fractions. Debates within social movements over the framing of principles and methods may result in the sharpening of differences between groups and may even cause ruptures and splits within groups. In this sense, the way a group or a social movement frames its methods and principles constitutes crucial information in understanding that group (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp. 17–19).

Hizbullah’s transformation into a political party sparked debates not only among those who left Hizbullah but also between its members. Hizbullah members who spent time in prison viewed this transformation as a deviation from the ideals they fought for. Perhaps for that reason it is often emphasised that Hûda-Par, the political party alleged to be Hizbullah’s political arm, is a means of facilitating the goal of ‘promoting the Islamic cause and do *tebliğ*’.<sup>129</sup> This emerged both in personal conversation with informants and in the words of Zekeriya Yapıcıoğlu, the leader of the newly born Hizbullah-affiliated political party, Hûda-Par, in December 2012, who expressed the same idea in the party’s election campaign rally in Bingöl on 27 March 2014.

Hizbullah approaches the question of whether its fundamental principles have changed along with its new organisational structure and engagement in different fields of activities very cautiously, given that thousands were put on trial for Hizbullah membership and many members are still in prison. Therefore, in official speeches by Hizbullah officials or representatives of Hizbullah-affiliated associations, it is often stressed that Hizbullah has not changed and the only difference is that it is now operating according to the current socio-political conditions, where the former methods have become obsolete and the adoption of new ones indispensable. The motivation behind this assertion is to show those ‘who paid a price’ that this was not in vain and that the legitimate activities, which the movement once harshly rejected, are in

fact a continuation of Hizbullah's organisational philosophy. In personal conversation, though, Hizbullah members often stress how much Hizbullah has changed in reality.<sup>130</sup>

Due to the early closure of the Mustazaflar Association, Hüda-Par had to be launched much sooner than initially planned in 2012 – or picking up on Yusuf's baby metaphor, the baby was born prematurely. Issues such as removing the obstacles to freedom of faith and worship, tackling non-spirituality and moral corruption in society, providing a solution to the Kurdish problem, and preventing the Kurdish issue from being used for political self-interest were listed in the party programme. In Hüda-Par's programme a whole section was dedicated to the Kurdish issue, whereby the issue was described as emerging from the secularist and Turkish-nationalist policies of the İttihat ve Terakki Partisi (Committee of Union and Progress), which the party claimed have destroyed the harmonious relationship between the Muslim nations of the Ottoman Empire. In this respect, Hüda-Par suggests that it is not only Kurds but also Muslim Turks who have been suffering from Turkish secular nationalism. The many rebellions, most significantly the Sheikh Said uprising, are, according to the Hüda-Par programme, testimony against the policies of the Turkish state. According to the party programme, in solving the Kurdish issue, the state must issue an apology to the Kurds, constitutionally recognise the existence of the Kurds, acknowledge both Kurds and Turks as the founding nations of the country, declare Kurdish an official language in Turkey, and reinstate the original names of places that have been given Turkish names.<sup>131</sup>

Being Hüda-Par's most comprehensive statement on the Kurdish issue as well as its only official declaration of its stance vis-à-vis the issue, it is worthwhile citing the entire section of the party programme dedicated to Hüda-Par's recommendations for a solution to the Kurdish issue:

In order to achieve normalisation and for social peace to be instituted;

1. First of all, the state should issue a public apology for its acts of oppression, and pay compensation to the victims of oppression.
2. The official recognition of every person who is a citizen of the Turkish Republic as a Turk should be abandoned; the existence of Kurds in Turkey should be constitutionally recognised; and Turks and Kurds should be declared the principal founding nations of the country.

3. Kurdish should be recognised alongside Turkish as the second official language of Turkey and be adopted as an official language of education. In case of sufficient demand by citizens speaking other mother tongues, the opportunity for them to receive education in their mother tongue should be facilitated.
4. The practice of having students in primary education recite texts, such as the racist-laden 'Andımız' (Our Oath), should be abolished. Inscriptions such as 'happy is he who calls himself a Turk' should be removed and racist dictums such as 'one Turk is worth all the world' should be abandoned.<sup>132</sup>
5. The schools, military bases, roads, streets, and other places which are named after historical people known for their oppressive and discriminatory practices should immediately be given new names.
6. The exclusive and discriminatory discourse of Turkishness, which forms the basis of the definition of citizenship as well as the constitution and the official literature of the system in Turkey should be abandoned.
7. The former names of places, which have been given Turkish names, should be reinstated.
8. The village guard system, which has been causing wide-ranging problems in the area, should immediately be abolished, however without creating new victims or causing more suffering.<sup>133</sup>
9. The whereabouts of the thousands of missing people should be disclosed; investigations into murders with unknown perpetrators (*faili meçhul cinayetler*) should be run with serious concern and those responsible should be held accountable.
10. The burning down of villages and forced migration should be accounted for. The injustices committed by organisations such as Ergenekon and JITEM should be thoroughly investigated.<sup>134</sup>
11. The oppression of Kurdish scholars, particularly Sheikh Said, whom Kurds remember today with great respect, should be acknowledged and an official apology to their living relatives and the whole nation should be issued.
12. The graves of personalities such as Said-i Nursi, Sheikh Said, and Seyid Riza should be disclosed and the archives containing documents on İstiklal Mahkemeleri (Independence Tribunals) should be made accessible to the general public.<sup>135</sup>
13. Madrasas should be improved, their essential functions should be restored, and the qualification provided by madrasas should be recognised officially.

14. Investment should be made in the Kurdish region of Turkey, which has been left underdeveloped for years, so that the area reaches a welfare level comparable to that of the western part of Turkey. Positive discrimination should be done in this regard.

15. Regarding naturalisation procedures, Kurds of non-Turkish citizenship should be given the same facilities and privileges that people of Turkish origin from places such as western Thrace enjoy. Amnesty should be issued so that those who had to flee the country on account of legal proceedings or prison sentences against them for political reasons can return to their country and those who have been in prison for their political views can return to social life.

16. The strictly centrist approach to governance should be abandoned, local governments should be strengthened, and all local governors should be elected by the people.<sup>136</sup>

It is evident that some of these recommendations, particularly those relating to the Kurdish issue, are more progressive in nature than those offered by other conservative parties in Turkey. Issues such as mother tongue education and constitutional recognition, which are often understated because of public pressure and various political concerns, have found a place in Hüda-Par's programme. Hüda-Par's understanding of the Kurdish issue and its recommendations for a solution are not very different from those expressed today by the PKK or the People's Democratic Party (HDP). This is quite striking given the history of violent conflict between the two movements. Although the PKK and their affiliated political parties have long expressed these views and made similar recommendations, it is Hizbullah which has come a long way. As Azad points out, Hizbullah was averse to the idea of Kurdishness to the extent that even the mention of the word Kurd or Kurdish would immediately be labelled nationalistic.<sup>137</sup> But how could Hizbullah, an organisation allegedly committing murders on behalf of JITEM, find discursive common ground with the PKK, or in Hizbullah's description, 'the apostate (*mürtet*) organisation and its followers'? In my opinion, it is the movement's experience of *realpolitik* which has had a transformative effect on Hüda-Par's discourses. Just as the HDP has been constricting the discursive field for Hizbullah-affiliated organisations by hosting *Kutlu Doğum* (Blessed Birth) events, Hüda-Par is formulating policies to the same effect. Moreover, one of the main patterns to emerge from my interviews is the attitude of Hizbullah's political base towards the

Kurdish language. The Hizbullah base uses Kurdish almost exclusively in daily life and the music records that have been produced and published by Hizbullah are in Kurdish. Despite that, making reference to Kurdishness or discussing the Kurdish issue were considered a sign of nationalist sentiment and hence avoided in Hizbullah for many years. The remnants of this attitude can still be observed today as references to Kurdishness are acceptable if accompanied by religious references. As a result, the recommendations made in the party programme have not been emphasised to the same extent in the official Hûda-Par discourse and detailed policies addressing these recommendations have not been formulated. For example, Hûda-Par circles routinely hold street protests over incidents in Egypt and Palestine. However, when the victims are Kurdish, these circles do little more than issue a press statement or remain completely silent.

In 2014, Hûda-Par participated in local elections for the first time. Despite Hûda-Par's high expectations, the election results were disappointing. Nevertheless, the 92,000 votes they received demonstrated that Hizbullah still commanded a social base in cities such as Batman, Diyarbakır, and Bingöl that could be mobilised. According to Necat Özdemir, the former vice-chairman of Hûda-Par, the unexpectedly low number of votes they received was as much about it being their first election<sup>138</sup> as a result of the incidents of political conflict and tension popularly known as the 17–25 December operations.<sup>139</sup> As Özdemir claimed, it is likely that Hûda-Par's voter base shifted in part to the AK Party as a reaction to the 17 December operation.<sup>140</sup> Other informants mentioned a shift, particularly in Hûda-par's female voter base towards the AK Party. Nevertheless, Hûda-Par's statements may well be considered a reflection of an implicit anti-women sentiment.

I observed the Hûda-Par rallies held in Bingöl on 16 and 27 March 2014. These rallies were attended by Hizbullah followers in almost every city in the Kurdish region of Turkey and were a show of force highly reminiscent of Hizbullah weddings in the 1990s. My most immediate observation was that the party's discourse on approaching the Kurdish issue and formulating a solution was not featured as prominently in the campaign speeches as in the party programme. Although it may have been a result of the local nature of the elections, the 2014 elections were in fact no different in nature to general elections. The frequent references to the history of Islam and Islamic principles in the campaign speeches made it clear that these elections were not about municipal matters only.

The absence of the Kurdish issue from these speeches, however, can be explained by Hizbullah's lack of substantial critical engagement with its inherent Islamist impulses and hence inability to engage the masses on the issue.

Numerous factors point to the existence of a 'historical bloc' (in the Gramscian sense) in Hizbullah's discourse (Crehan, 2002). These include the fact that Hûda-Par rallies featured Quranic recitation followed by speeches in the Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects of Kurdish; the occasion when Hûda-Par leader Zekeriya Yapıcıoğlu described the party's cause as the continuation of that of Sheikh Said; that Hûda-Par uses the Turkish word *hür* (free) in the party's name as opposed to the Kurdish words *azad* (free) and *azadî* (freedom) favoured by the Kurdish movement; and, finally, that Hûda-Par uses the old-fashioned Arabic *inkılap* (revolution) as opposed to the Turkish word *devrim* (revolution), extremely popular in left-wing circles.

It is clear, however, that sharing the same discourse on the Kurdish issue has not brought Hûda-Par or the PKK and the BDP/HDP<sup>141</sup> closer or helped establish harmonious relations between them. On the contrary, as the Mustazaflar Association organised more events, renewed tensions emerged between Hizbullah and the PKK, both of which continued to refer to each other, respectively, as apostate (*mürtet*) or *Partiya Kâfirên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Heathens Party), and *Hizbulkontra*.<sup>142</sup> The tensions were realised in a range of incidents from the occasional stoning of each other's association and party offices to kidnapping, assault, and murder. The incidents that escalated the conflict to an alarming level were the murder of a Hûda-Par affiliate in Dargeçit, Mardin and the kidnapping of Hûda-Par's Dicle/Diyarbakır district president, during the 2014 local elections. The kidnapped district president was released after Hûda-Par leader Zekeriya Yapıcıoğlu made a statement referring to the incident as a declaration of war<sup>143</sup> and when eight NGOs, including the İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association, İHD) and Mazlum-Der, issued a call for his release.

Although the conflict was prevented from escalating by diligent conduct from both parties, it became apparent just how easily the old conflict could rekindle. Hence, during the Kobanê protests<sup>144</sup> on 6–8 October 2014, a group alleged to be members of the *Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi* (Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement, YDG-H), reputed to be a unit under the KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*, the Union of Kurdish Communities), raided the Hizbullah-affiliated KöyDer asso-

ciation's office in the Bağlar neighbourhood of Diyarbakır and murdered three KöyDer members. Between 28 September and 22 October 2014, other offices of Hüda-Par and related associations came under attack and finally, following a call made on Hüda-Par Diyarbakır office's Twitter account, many armed Hizbullah members went out onto the streets seeking retaliation. The gun fights between members of the two groups in Batman and the towns of Kızıltepe and Mazıdağı in Mardin resulted in over 20 deaths on each side. These clashes sparked great anxiety in the area and various NGOs attempted to mediate. The BDP MP and the *Demokratik Toplum Kongresi* (Democratic Society Congress) co-president Hatip Dicle's efforts, in particular, succeeded in calming the situation. However, Hizbullah issued a statement on the Hüseyini Sevda website warning that it would retaliate against any future attack. In fact, by not setting up *taziye*<sup>145</sup> tents for the Hüda-Par members killed in the attacks, Hizbullah was already sending the message that vengeance was being sought.<sup>146</sup>

The murders of the Hüda-Par members Cengiz Tiryaki in Karlıova,<sup>147</sup> Bingöl on 9 October 2014 and Fethi Yalçın on 21 October 2014 do not bear any resemblance to the murders committed during the incidents of 6–7 October and thus raise suspicion that these murders may have been committed by people outside the two groups and intended to provocatively escalate the conflict. In a written statement published on the day of Fethi Yalçın's murder, Hatip Dicle expressed his condolences to the family of the deceased man and reported that Abdullah Öcalan was disturbed by the situation and that the PKK/KCK did not consider Hizbullah and ISIS to be the same.<sup>148</sup>

Although comparison of Hizbullah with ISIS emerged during the time of the Kobanê protests, it cannot be considered outside the historical dynamics of the PKK-Hizbullah conflict. The frequency and form of the murders committed by Hizbullah in the 1990s caused widespread outrage amongst the PKK base. Since then, Hizbullah has been largely viewed as a JITEM/deep state-led organisation. The polarisation between the two groups becomes especially evident in times of crisis, thus making these situations vulnerable to external provocation and interference. Given the present sensitive political atmosphere due to the ongoing peace process between the PKK and the Turkish state, concrete steps must be taken to prevent external tampering. It does not make sense that the PKK would knowingly jeopardise the peace process by rekindling the conflict with Hizbullah after initiating peace negotiations with the Turkish state,

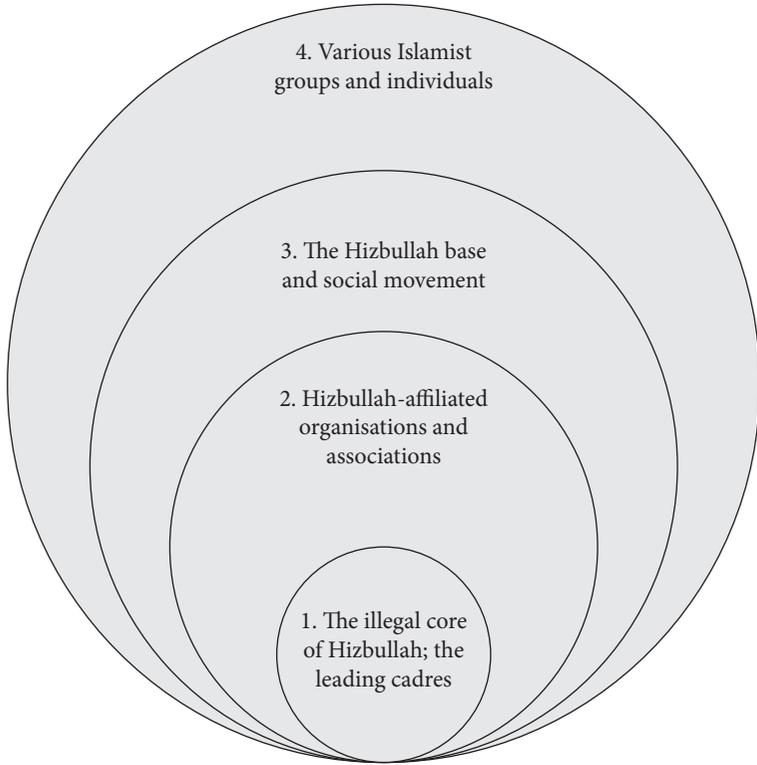
against whom they have been fighting for years. Moreover, it serves no practical purpose for the PKK not to recognise Hizbullah as a legitimate movement today, unlike in the 1990s, with a considerable following in the area.

Moving into legitimate operations has created significant opportunities for Hizbullah. As a result, it has a much larger following than ever before. This became possible only within a social and historical context in which it refrained from violence and instead prioritised legitimate activities. Hizbullah's discourse of justifying violence as a means of self-defence cannot now mobilise the Hizbullah base as it used to. Violent conflicts would likely cause further polarisation and hostility between Hizbullah and the PKK, as well as result in the flight of members who joined Hizbullah during its legitimate period and do not condone violence as a method. A re-escalation of the conflict might also lead to the violence-endorsing elements within Hizbullah to join more radical groups and/or encourage Hizbullah's return to the underground. In contrast to the 1990s, Hizbullah's base today is much more visible through legitimate associations and activities, and thus vulnerable to acts of violence. In fact, in the case of a conflict situation, these people will be first to be harmed. Therefore, it appears that a state of violence is no longer practically useful for Hizbullah as it might nullify the 'transformation' the movement has undergone since 2004.

State officials must take precautions against the risk of an increase in radicalisation. Moreover, they recognise that a permanent state of peace in Turkey can only be achieved by attaining a permanent state of peace between different Kurdish groups and that the Turkish state must take the initiative in this regard. A prospective plan as part of the Kurdish peace process was to bring all groups to the negotiating table, preferably as elements within the *Yüzleşme ve Hakikat Komisyonları* (Reconciliation and Truth Commissions). However, after the failure of the peace process, there is no chance of these commissions being established.

Although it is common knowledge that the conflict between Hizbullah and the PKK ended in the 1990s, there has been only a de facto ceasefire since that time. In fact, the de facto ceasefire has become quite fragile as a result of the failure of the peace process between the Turkish state and the PKK, the atmosphere of violence that has been prevalent since then, and the political polarisation caused by the attempted military coup on 15 July 2016.<sup>149</sup> It is certainly possible that existing tensions may develop into a full-blown conflict again.

Today, Hizbullah can be regarded as a social movement. What is meant by social movement here relates to networks formed by meanings shared, in a broad sense, through close personal relationships (Yavuz, 2003, p. 271). Although there are various theoretical approaches to understanding social movements, my preference is for an approach that prioritises functionality. This approach focuses on the psychological and structural consequences of mass mobilisation and defines a social movement, in its most basic sense, as the totality of the collective reactions delivered as a result of psychological discontent stemming from structural tensions. These tensions may spring from various sources such as industrialisation, modernisation, financial crises, social life, and external interference with one's general daily routines. The resultant feeling of discontent paves the way for the emergence of a social movement (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 6). These kinds of ideologies are evident in Hizbullah discourses concerning events in places such as Palestine, Egypt, Chechnya, and Iraq. However, it is not only religio-ideological arguments and an anti-Western attitude that facilitate the emergence of movements such as Hizbullah. It is widely understood that socio-economic circumstances and social change have been conducive to the emergence of Islamic resistance movements, waves of violence, and social movements around the world. Some of these movements are treated in the category of neo-fundamentalist movements and their emergence has largely been a reaction to the various aspects of the process of secularisation. For example, the Dakwah movement in Thailand, which shares much in common with Hizbullah, emerged as a result of such a process of secularisation (Scupin, 1987, pp. 84–5). Likewise, the processes of secularisation and modernisation in Turkey and Iran were met with various forms of resistance from Islamist groups (Karasipahi, 2009, p. 93) and in the case of Hizbullah this resistance, as we have seen, took the form of violence until the 2000s. Naturally, it cannot be claimed that Hizbullah emerged solely as a reaction to secularisation and modernisation. On the contrary, with its instrumental adoption of violence, Hizbullah is the result of its own historical and sociological circumstances. Thus, conceptualising Hizbullah solely as a state-led organisation, a movement with connections to Iran, or a manifestation of the state exploiting its power and committing crimes against PKK members and sympathisers would be an incomplete assessment of the organisation. Without minimising the influence of Hizbullah violence in the 1990s, a singular focus on that violence will result in the neglect of other crucial characteristics of Hizbullah.



*Figure 1.1* Levels of Hizbullah Affiliation

I would suggest that Hizbullah and its affiliates may be represented as shown in Figure 1.1 in terms of organisational structure, base, and social movement. My preference for concentric circles instead of a hierarchical diagram stems from the fluidity between these circles on various levels and the potential of different circles to influence each other in decision-making processes. However, there is an undeniable hierarchy between the first two circles. The possibility of mobilisation across these circles is determined by the internal conditions and circumstances of the period in question in the cases of structural change, however, sharp shifts between these circles may take place.

The circle at the centre of the diagram represents both the leading cadre of Hizbullah and those who have been active members since the 1980s or 1990s. Within this circle there is a strict hierarchical relationship and decision-making is governed by internal power relations. This circle

comprises the leading cadre of the organisation, members in prison, and people who once held administrative positions such as district or city representatives of Hizbullah. Although it is not possible to supply an exact number of these people, an educated estimate would range between 1000 to just over 2000; this is based on the number of high-ranking Hizbullah members who were arrested and imprisoned after Operation Beykoz.

The second circle consists of associations and individuals affiliated with Hizbullah, including various NGOs, Hûda-Par, educational institutions, and broadcasting and publishing groups. Although the people within this circle do not have much say in general decision-making processes, they are nonetheless in a closer relationship with the public operations given their active involvement in daily life and legitimate activities. Consequently, the second circle constitutes the mechanism whereby solutions to day-to-day life issues are often found. Although there is a hierarchical structure within the second circle, it is not nearly as strict as in the first circle.

The top cadre of the second circle comprises people who developed relations with Hizbullah in the 1980s and 1990s. However, as opposed to the first circle, they were much less involved in illegal activities and have little experience of arrest or prosecution. Some informants emphasised that to avoid potential run-ins with the state, individuals with clean records handled the legal procedures when associations were being established. These associations within the second circle have played an important role in Hizbullah becoming a legitimate social movement and in that regard they may be considered the public face of Hizbullah.

There is not much difference between the first and second circles in terms of ideology and mindset and they approach many issues in more or less the same way. Nevertheless, although the second circle seems wholly to embrace the discourse of the first circle, in personal dialogue those in the second circle are distinguished by their personal opinions and self-criticism on topics such as violence, connections with the state, and political disagreements. These personal ideas and self-criticisms are not expressed publicly in order to preserve the authority and charisma of those in the first circle. I believe a small number in the second circle simultaneously belong to the first circle. The estimated number of people in the second circle is around 10,000 or somewhat higher.<sup>150</sup>

Hizbullah becomes a social movement with the third circle. Within this circle differences become more pronounced and the control and influence of the leading cadre becomes minimal. Although the third

circle constitutes a proper base for Hizbullah, the membership of this circle (unlike those in the first or second circles) does not embrace Hizbullah's discourse in its entirety. In fact, my interviews revealed that the vast majority of those in the third circle express regret over Hizbullah violence. Considering that the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated Hüda-Par won around 92,000 votes in the 2014 local elections, the number of those within the third circle is likely to exceed 200,000. My estimation of this figure is based on the consideration of those under voting age as well as those who did not cast their votes or for various reasons voted for another party.

Although the third circle has no influence on Hizbullah ideology, strategy, or administration, members' social lives are shaped in accordance with the discourses produced by the first two circles. Moreover, on this level, belonging to Hizbullah extends beyond sharing common religious, conservative, and Islamist understandings and constitutes rather a network of relations that can be considered within the framework of political economy. Therefore, within the third circle, we can talk about the existence of financial capital and networks forming around it. I believe it is the capital formed by the allegedly Hizbullah-related legitimate organisations that gave way to this new form of mobilisation. Hizbullah constitutes a politico-economic reality through the thousands of business associations, and educational and aid institutions which are affiliated with it, and those in the third circle can take advantage of this economic field.

The move from the third circle to the second constitutes, to some extent, a reward mechanism for individuals who prioritise group identity and belonging. However, it is very unlikely for individuals in the third circle to move over into the first one. Even so, one can talk about the indirect influence of the third circle on the first as the general attitude of the third circle is taken into consideration in the decision-making processes of the leading cadre.

The fourth and widest circle on the diagram consists of various Islamist groups and individuals. Those in this circle have no organic or intellectual links with Hizbullah or related organisations, but they regularly attend events such as Blessed Birth, conferences, and charity sales organised by Hizbullah-affiliated organisations. The most intense criticism against Hizbullah is formulated within this circle. The fourth circle has no influence on Hizbullah's decision-making processes, nevertheless, it is clear that Hizbullah prefers to pull those in this circle

into the third. In that sense, if the third circle is the direct recipient of the discourses constructed by the first and second circles, then the fourth circle constitutes the indirect recipient of these discourses. What I mean here is that those in the third circle have a relatively closer relationship with Hizbullah. Those in the fourth circle, however, relate to Hizbullah through participation in certain events and hence cannot be considered core members of Hizbullah.

In conclusion, the most significant shift in Hizbullah membership takes place between the third and fourth circles via break-offs and mergers on these levels. To a lesser degree, shifts in membership from the second circle into the first must also take place from time to time. Nevertheless, the first circle is the least fluid circle of Hizbullah affiliation in terms of membership. Although forms of horizontal mobility such as certain transformations and exchange of tasks may take place within the second circle, I believe this occurs to a much lesser degree within the first.

In Figure 1.1 all four circles are predominantly populated by ethnic Kurds. However, it is very difficult to talk about the existence of a strong ethnicity-based discourse within any of these circles. The majority of the people in these four circles can be described as indifferent to issues of ethnic identity. For example, the events that these individuals organise or attend often display Islamist characteristics. Another common feature between these circles is their shared opposition to the PKK. Especially within the first three circles, the PKK is seen as anti-Islamic, insincere, and sometimes even heathen (*kâfir*) or apostate (*mürtet*).

# The 'Grounded' Dimensions of Hizbullah as Islamist Organisation and Social Movement

In this chapter, I outline major themes that emerge from my research data and situate the data within a theoretical framework. The ethnographic data consist mainly of audio recorded interviews and fieldnote observations. The chapter is organised around thematic categories alongside historical and theoretical analysis. In the concluding remarks, I bring together the overall findings of the chapter to develop theoretical abstractions.

## HIZBULLAH, THE INDIVIDUAL, AND DAILY LIFE

The first category to emerge from the Grounded Theory-based analysis concerns the socio-psychological profile and daily life practices of Hizbullah members. The main themes investigated in this section are the personal backgrounds of individual Hizbullah members, their life stories, motivations for joining Hizbullah, experience in Hizbullah, and, if they have left the organisation, their reasons for and experiences of leaving.

The informants whose life stories animate this chapter are meaningful only insofar as one considers their life trajectories, what brought them to join this underground organisation and the burdens they carry as a result. In addition to a sociological analysis of Hizbullah, this study is also the first to allow the voices to be heard of those who have been members of or in direct contact with the organisation. The member profiles described below are hidden to conceal the identities of the interviewees and protect their privacy. My goal is to provide a sociological description of the informants' place in society and so their profiles are not presented in their entirety, only selections are described based on their capacity to represent a general trend or experience.

*Joining Hizbullah and the profiles of new recruits*

The interviews I conducted indicate that in the period between the establishment of Hizbullah in 1979 up until the early 2000s, new recruits were predominantly under 18 years of age. Although it is impossible to confirm these estimates statistically, in this period it is mostly 13 to 18 year olds who joined Hizbullah in the cities of Diyarbakır, Batman, and Mardin. Additionally, a considerable number of middle-aged men (ages 40 to 60) joined Hizbullah until 1991 when it started being involved in lethal violence. Hizbullah membership is comprised predominantly of men. Although women's participation does occur, women members often join the organisation as an extension of their role in the family. Indeed, involvement in Hizbullah on the part of whole families appears to be the primary context for women's involvement as it is rare for women to join without a male relative as the primary entrance point. Mosque-centred activities carried out until the 2000s played a primary role in the recruitment of men into the organisation.

a. The poet and the Sufi: Serмест's journey from Sharia to truth (*hakikat*)

The story goes that a pupil of Rumi asks about the four doors (*şeriat*,<sup>1</sup> *tarikāt*,<sup>2</sup> *marifet*,<sup>3</sup> and *hakikat*<sup>4</sup>) often emphasised in Sufi thought. Rumi tells his pupil to slap each of the four people leaning over their wooden lecterns in the opposite madrasa on the back of their heads. The pupil does as he is told. He hits the first man, and receives a harder blow in return. The second person makes a move to hit the pupil back but changes his mind at the last minute. The third person turns around and looks at the person who hit him but does nothing. The fourth person does not even turn around to look. Rumi thereupon explains that the first person is yet at the door of *şeriat* (Sharia) and returned the slap on the basis of 'tit-for-tat'. The second person is at the door of *tarikāt* and decides not to hit back after remembering the principle 'respond kindly even to those who harm you'. The third person is at the door of *marifet* and knows that both good and evil originate from the creator himself. But he is curious about whom the creator has put on the path of evil and for that reason he turns around and looks at him. The fourth person is at the door of *hakikat* and he both knows the source behind good and evil and has no curiosity to know who is an instrument to them. (Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi)

Sermest's family moved from a village to the city in the early 1990s due to forced migration<sup>5</sup> and started living on the periphery of the city. In the village, they made their living as agriculturalists and from livestock. They experienced serious poverty when they first moved to the city. Before the move, Sermest's elder brother had been the first person to study outside the village and became involved in Hizbullah during this period. After the family moved to the city, they too became acquainted with Hizbullah through him. According to Sermest, his elder brother 'does not really want his family to be involved with Hizbullah and tries to prevent that in his own way'. Despite his efforts, with the exception of his father and two brothers, everyone else in the family quickly became active in Hizbullah's mosque and community activities. Sermest, who looked up to his elder brother, followed in his footsteps and joined Hizbullah during his secondary school years.\*

Hizbullah became Sermest's whole life and he remained devoted to it until he left the organisation just before starting high school. Sermest had not had relationships with anyone except Hizbullah members until that time. In fact, he realised he did not know anyone outside Hizbullah after he announced his departure from the organisation and found no Hizbullah member would talk to him anymore. My acquaintance with Sermest coincided with the time right after he left Hizbullah. Sermest and a friend of his had decided to publish a literary journal and I got to know him through my involvement in the project after a personal request by one of my teachers. Like many other such projects, the journal was never published. Shortly after meeting Sermest, he dropped out of school and fled 'far away'. As I found out later, the journal project was a scheme to 'get the bus fare from the teachers and flee'. Apparently, he fled to Malatya 'for no apparent reason' and afterwards went to Antalya, where he saw the sea for the first time. As İsmet Özel, one of Sermest's favourite poets put it, 'he puts his tongue in the sea before his feet'.

I saw Sermest again 14 years after he fled the insular community he was so committed to. We met in the small town where he worked as an *imam*. I was surprised that there was little semblance of the high school kid I had encountered over a decade before; instead, I found a devout Sufi in his thirties. Sermest had done a few different jobs before eventually settling into his role as a respected *imam* and husband. He became a Sufi by submitting<sup>6</sup> (*biat etmek*) to a Naqshbandi sheikh. I learned the story

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\* Secondary school (*orta okul*) in Turkey is the three-year period of education following five years at primary school and preceding three years in high school.

of how he became a Sufi when he took me to the mountain village where he had become a 'devotee' (*adanmış*) to visit the Naqshbandi sheikh who served as his spiritual guide into Naqshbandiyah teachings and practices. Sermet walked backwards on his knees when leaving the room to avoid turning his back to the sheikh and he spoke about feeling great peace when he kissed the hands of his sheikh, who was his age.

As I struggled with Sermet's subtly phrased yet persistent requests for me to submit to his sheikh, I managed to deflect them by asking whether he was feeling peaceful. His response was that he had finally found *haqiqa*<sup>7</sup> and proceeded to tell me the Rumi story recounted above. As far as I could observe, Sermet looked much happier than I had remembered him from years before.

When we sat down to catch up on his past 14 years on the evening we visited his sheikh, Sermet's first sentences were:

First, let me tell you this. The fact that this topic has come up again today still upsets me. I haven't quite gotten over these negative feelings yet and I'm still struggling to get rid of them.

#### b. The prison and the madrasa: the story of Yusuf

Like many of his peers, Yusuf joined Hizbullah at the age of 16. Since then he considered himself, as he puts it, a member of 'this Cemaat'. His first contact with Hizbullah took place at his local mosque where he attended lectures organised by it. His involvement in Hizbullah continued as a university student and he worked in Hizbullah's university homes. He witnessed the first 'encounters' between Hizbullah and the Menzil group. In comparison with other Hizbullah members that I know, Yusuf is better educated. In fact, knowing that he was well suited for intellectual endeavours Yusuf offered me guidance during my fieldwork. He helped me arrange interviews and shared his knowledge about Hizbullah in our detailed interviews.

Yusuf was detained by the police a few times on account of Hizbullah-related activities but he was never prosecuted. He was arrested shortly after his university graduation and sentenced to a few years in prison. My knowledge of Hizbullah's prison operations comes largely from interviews with Yusuf and Kamuran. Their prison testimonies, sometimes diametrically opposed to each other, reflect the divergent observations and feelings of two people. One, Yusuf, is still a Hizbullah

member while the other, Kamuran, left Hizbullah two years before his imprisonment.

The first in-depth interview I conducted with Yusuf took place in my house on 23 May 2014. After what I sensed to be him pondering over what he ought to talk about, the first thing Yusuf said was ‘people make mistakes’. He added that personal mistakes cannot be attributed to institutions or *cemaats* and that even the Prophet’s companions (*sahabah*) made mistakes but they were never attributed to Islam.

According to Yusuf, everything that was done in the name of Hizbullah was done for the sake of Allah. He explained to me by means of extensive references to the history of Islam and Islamic literature that there is no religious accountability for actions that are performed for the sake of Allah but miss the mark. By making reference to a Hadith on *içtihat*,<sup>8</sup> which states that if one hits the mark he gets two *sevaps* (blessings) while the one who misses gets one, Yusuf claimed that Hizbullah’s acts of violence in the past were all carried out for the purpose of self-defence. According to him, Hizbullah was under siege from three sides – by the state, the PKK, and the ‘*Rabitacılar*’ (Rabita supporters) – but despite that, Hizbullah did not carry out any mass killings and only killed people after thorough investigations had taken place and after ensuring those executed were ‘murderers and guilty’.

As Yusuf told me these things, my cats were meowing for attention and thus not allowing us to talk in peace. The cats scratched my hands drawing blood as I picked them up to take them out of the room. Thereupon Yusuf explained that the cats knew me, knew that I am the one who gives them food and water; however, they could still scratch me when I annoyed them. For him, Hizbullah had resorted to violence for the same reason my cats scratched me: it had been pushed into a corner and eventually paid the price.

After talking for a few hours, just before we ended our interview, I asked him whether he preferred any particular pseudonym for himself. His response was a quiet ‘Yusuf’. I could not help but compare his life to that of the Prophet Yusuf, whose life had started in a family home, continued in the slave markets and dungeons of Egypt, and progressed to the top of the state. Similarly, Yusuf had spent his early years in the home of his provincial family, then he was imprisoned for some years, suffering physical and psychological torture. Now he was standing before me, with a better-than-average education and better prospects for the future unlike most others in his position.

c. Anger, tranquillity, and surprise: the stories of Musab, Kamuran, Azad, and Ahmet

Musab is the oldest and most idiosyncratic Hizbullah member I have ever met. He is unique in that he openly discusses his participation in acts of violence orchestrated by Hizbullah. Like many others, he joined Hizbullah as a high school student in the 1990s. Before he joined, he had either dropped out of or been expelled from various high schools due to non-Hizbullah-related political issues. He was introduced to Hizbullah at the last high school he went to and became actively involved in its mosque operations for years.

The profiles of my informants are largely similar: quiet, modest, and introverted. They often did not like speaking about their own experiences. Instead, they would speak as if they were addressing an imaginary audience and responding to their accusations. With most of them, one could easily sense some anger towards the state and the PKK. The same anger was palpable also when discussing the image of Hizbullah created by the media. But when it came to their own experiences in Hizbullah they would become relatively quiet. The ones who had left Hizbullah would usually express their criticism in a tone of quiet resentment. Musab is the exception to this. Musab had sworn vengeance after Veliöğlü was killed in Operation Beykoz on 17 January 2000. However, he left Hizbullah upon realising he had too many unanswered questions and could not find a satisfactory explanation on 'how to answer for' Hizbullah's acts of violence.

Unlike other former Hizbullah members, who would discuss leaving the organisation using sophisticated and relatively theoretical criticism, Musab spoke with unconcealed anger. For a few years in high school I shared halls with several Hizbullah members and in their eyes I was a member of an insignificant and often despised 'minority' in front of which they did not hide their code names,<sup>9</sup> which were ordinarily kept confidential. This informant reminded me of a former İmam Hatip high school classmate, also a Hizbullah member, called Musab. This classmate was violent to me several times. A clear image of Musab came to mind whenever I encountered the informant and, hence, I assigned him the same name as a pseudonym.

In contrast to Musab, Kamuran is one of the quietest people I have known. He joined Hizbullah at the age of 16 or 17 and remained involved in mosque operations until leaving the organisation in the early 2000s. He was detained several times during his membership in Hizbullah and

spent a few years in prison in the 2000s on account of an investigation that had begun in the 1990s. Kamuran has apparently done serious reading in Islamism, social issues, and philosophy and thus his explanation for leaving Hizbullah was based on a criticism of structural issues rather than his personal experiences. His refusal to discuss personal matters emerged as one of the common themes of our interviews. The limited information he provided about his personal story subsequently became crucial for this study.

Azad had dropped out of primary school as a first-grader. A relative of his taught him how to perform the five-time daily prayers (*namaz*) before sending him for Quran lessons in a Hizbullah-affiliated mosque, where he was first introduced to Hizbullah. He joined the organisation afterwards and remained involved in its mosque operations until the early 2000s. Azad never went back to formal education. He learned to read and write in Hizbullah-led mosques and homes, and thus became acquainted with a large selection of Islamist literature available in Turkish. For Azad, Hizbullah was not only an organisation, it constituted his school and a social network. At the age of 15, when his parents moved to another city, Azad did not go with them and instead chose to stay in Hizbullah-run homes as ‘advised’ by the organisation. Azad never refrained from discussing the Kurdish issue or Kurds in our interviews and when I asked him whether there is a particular pseudonym he would like me to use for him, he said ‘I prefer a Kurdish name.’

Ahmet is considerably older than the other informants. Although his membership in Hizbullah lasted only a short time, he personally witnessed its important phases, albeit at times as a victim. Upon leaving, he started receiving threats and suffered much hardship as a result. At the end of our long conversation, I asked him whether he had forgiven Hizbullah or not. His reply was ‘this file won’t be reopened in this life, after [the death of] X and thousands of others ... This file won’t be reopened until Judgement Day.’<sup>10</sup>

#### d. İsmail and the knife: the sons of the Cemaat

The membership profiles described above were chosen because of their representative potential from within a larger body of informants. As far as I am aware, none of my informants belonged to the military wing of Hizbullah, which is commonly described as ‘the sons of the Cemaat’. When asked whether they knew anyone from Hizbullah’s military wing, the answer was usually negative. Often I could sense a general reluctance

to talk about the armed fighters, but it seemed that most had some idea about these people ‘they did not know’. According to Aziz, the people in the armed wing were specially selected who would not question Hizbullah’s authority and do as they were told.<sup>11</sup> A question that I regularly asked the informants was whether they thought there were noticeable differences between them and the people from the military wing. I gathered from their answers that they considered themselves better educated and more fortunate in their upbringing because their families were better informed about general matters. According to the informants, most members of the military wing came from uneducated families and had inadequate knowledge about religion. Some emphasised, however, that this generalisation was valid only for Hizbullah’s early period and as the organisation became stronger, relatively better educated members started moving into the military wing.

Yusuf and Kamuran are the only informants acquainted with prominent members of Hizbullah’s military wing while in prison. According to Yusuf, who still considers himself ‘a member of the Cemaat’, life in prison is as organised and disciplined for Hizbullah members as described in Hizbullah-affiliated novels, which I will investigate in the next chapter. Kamuran, however, pointed to a general and serious lack of morale, severe depression and schizophrenia especially among the Hizbullah members with long prison sentences. One of my informants reported a Hizbullah member in prison on a life sentence saying his family had left him, he had no hopes, and he had no one to turn to but the Cemaat anymore. Another informant told me that members of Hizbullah’s military wing sometimes did not leave the same house or room for months or even years and that a friend of his had remained in the same house for three years. According to this informant, people from Hizbullah’s armed wing, which he described as ‘those in a sensitive situation’, had to make this ‘sacrifice’ because they could put so many others in jeopardy should they leave the house and risk getting caught. When in hiding they would not even open the curtains for security reasons and their basic needs were provided by one or two people under strict security measures. For members of the armed wing, Hizbullah’s authority stands above all else. An informant of the armed wing, who had shot 30 people, was asked whether he had any regrets, to which he replied, ‘no, we did it for the cause. The Cemaat asked me and I did it. I’d do it again if I were asked.’ Contrary to this statement, Kamuran told me a great majority of the armed wing expressed regret over their past actions.

Hizbullah has complete control over the daily life of the fighters; it decides where fighters go, the things they do, or where they will hide following an 'operation'. To conceal their identities, fighters are not permitted to come face-to-face with other Hizbullah members.

Security concerns are paramount in every aspect of the fighters' lives. For instance, the request to take a trip for family reasons needs to be approved by a strict hierarchical chain of command. Many informants told me that anyone who approached Hizbullah fighters was suspected of being a police officer, spy, or PKK member and that the organisation continuously stressed this possibility. Because I have not had any contact with Hizbullah fighters during my fieldwork, I cannot give a general description of their profile. Nevertheless, judging from the statements of the informants, it is clear that Hizbullah fighters are considered to be 'making a great sacrifice' comparable to that of the Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) in contemplating the sacrifice of his son, Ismail.

*The daily life practices of Hizbullah members and family relations  
in Hizbullah membership*

You are what you do! C.G. Jung

An analysis of the daily life practices of Hizbullah members arose out of the need to observe how the 'idealist' nature of my informants' narratives is realised in such everyday practices.

The practices I investigate here constitute essential elements of daily life, particularly when mosques were at the centre of Hizbullah's activities. For instance, members assigned responsibility for a particular group of members, mosque, or mosques had duties far beyond teaching lessons in the Quran and the history of Islam and included, among others, monitoring mosque-goers' lecture attendance, investigating their reasons for absence and resolving any issues causing the absence, observing their families and social relations, as well as monitoring people in nearby shops and houses in the mosque neighbourhood. These members provided weekly reports about mosque activities to their superiors. Daily life might also involve attending periodic meetings where members are given directives, and other occasions where the 'affairs of the Cemaat' are discussed, religious and ideological training is given, security matters are reviewed, and training is given in the course of action to be taken when under threat.

The same practices and duties apply to those active in school operations. The main duty of Hizbullah members in school operations is to look after people referred to as *alaka*.<sup>12</sup> This consists of helping the *alaka* with any problems and isolating them from their social environment so they have no other social contacts beyond the Hizbullah circle they recently joined. After a certain period, when deemed ready, they are offered an 'invitation' and should they accept, are asked to provide a short biography and a photo 'taken in the last six months'.

Leaving aside the question of whether the requirement to submit a photo taken in the last six months is in fact true and, if so, the irony of the presence of bureaucracy in an illegal organisation, Hizbullah's school operations were carried out within a framework that closely controlled Hizbullah members and their social environment. In the short biographies, new recruits are requested not only to provide their life story but also give detailed information about their family and friends, and the political views of family members and other relatives. Another important routine is the weekly report written on pelure paper where Hizbullah members are expected to describe the incidents of the week. These reports are reviewed very carefully by higher Hizbullah members and if found to be inadequate returned to the reporter for revision. Other than the routine reports, additional reports concerning specific people or incidents may also be requested 'if found necessary'. What is meant by 'necessary' here is the request for comprehensive information on the particular person being investigated. Musab told me the following when I asked him about the reports he wrote:

Musab – We would write about what we were asked about, what took our attention ... even about our accommodation situation. Other than that, the neighbourhood where the mosque was located ... There was a small shop. They were from X. The kid there was called Mervan. The name Mervan is not often found in Sunni [circles]. I believe they were Alevi.<sup>13</sup> The name of another one of their kids was Nazım. I was on good terms with them. We'd have tea together, I'd chat with them. I'd even tell them 'if we have a run-in with each other, I don't know you and you don't know me'.<sup>14</sup> Apart from that I have been criticised. I have been given a slap on the wrist by the Cemaat.

Mehmet Kurt – In general, what kind of information was it [that was requested]?

Musab – Their opinions, what they are, how they view us. I didn't give a damn, really. I mean, I wouldn't give them detailed information.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to the 2000s, Hizbullah typically used every member as an intelligence agent and regularly asked them to gather information on people it was suspicious about. This practice had to be abandoned after Operation Beykoz when Hizbullah's archive was confiscated and it went into a period of disintegration.

An important aspect of daily life in Hizbullah concerns security and confidentiality. Hizbullah prioritises security above all else. All members are constantly reminded to be vigilant and alert to whether they are being followed, and they are taught certain security measures to be used in daily life. Examples of such measures include placing a flower pot in the window to signal whether a Hizbullah safe house is secure or not; taking a wide turn into a street to see whether one is being followed; and if one is to meet another Hizbullah member and he does not show up, routinely coming back and checking the rendezvous; then, after establishing that he is not coming, informing higher Hizbullah authorities about the situation and evacuating the houses he knew about or destroying the Hizbullah-related materials in these houses on the assumption that he has been caught.

When a member has been detained or arrested, or is being interrogated, all the houses that he knows about are evacuated and all the people he has been in contact with go into hiding for an indefinite period. For the Hizbullah member under interrogation, the main goal is not to talk and not to inform on his friends and group. For that reason, each Hizbullah member memorises the profile of an imaginary supervisor to give the police during interrogation. For example, Azad, who had left Hizbullah over ten years earlier, could still describe the profile of his imaginary supervisor in great detail and in a single breath. These precautionary measures became crucial for Hizbullah members to hide from the police especially after 1999 when the police increased their operations against it.

As evident, security and confidentiality are of vital importance in the daily lives of Hizbullah members. Hizbullah members are routinely warned that even the most ordinary person they come into contact with may easily be a member of the PKK, the security forces, the JITEM, or an intelligence officer, and as a result, members learn not to trust anyone but Hizbullah officials. It is not difficult to guess the feelings of fear, anxiety, and suspicion the permanent state of alertness must have engendered

in Hizbullah members. It is almost as if the fake profile manufactured for the police turns into an authority in charge of the daily life of the member. Taking into consideration the permanent state of alertness, one may even claim that this profile is almost real, or perhaps more effective than reality. The fact that Azad still retains a vivid image of his imaginary supervisor and that he unwittingly continues to take a wide turn into any street to see whether he is being followed support this claim. Azad changed the location and time of our meeting twice and ultimately preferred to meet me at a tea-house facing the street and with several points of exit.

In the 1990s, despite heavy security measures, it was still relatively easy to identify a Hizbullah member by their characteristic aesthetic choices of clothing such as *şalvar*<sup>16</sup>-type baggy trousers, and particular religious practices such as putting weight on one foot during *namaz* and joining the hands below the heart instead of on the abdomen.<sup>17</sup>

Family life among Hizbullah members offers valuable information in the analysis of their daily life practices. Individual members often experience tensions with their families and in some cases have been subjected to physical violence. A notable example is Ali, a 14 year-old boy, who was killed by his allegedly PKK-supporting father for being a Hizbullah member. Ali's murder occupies an important place in the social memory of Hizbullah in a way that strongly informs group belonging. The incident became the subject of a song in the seventh album of the recorded music series *Şehitler Kervanı*. The following are the lyrics to this song, sung to the accompaniment of gunshot noises:

My little Ali has not come today, my roses are in despair	<i>Küçük Alim gelmedi bugün güllerim yaşlı</i>
Dark-eyes where are you, your mother is in tears	<i>Kara gözlüm neredesin annenin gözü yaşlı</i>
Will our eyes shine in another spring Will our hearts see a father's bullet	<i>Bir başka baharda mı gülecek gözlerimiz Bir baba mermisi mi görecek yüreğimiz</i>
My rose-cheeked boy is 14, spring will come again	<i>On dördünde gül yüzlüm yine bahar gelecek</i>
You will see the good tidings ( <i>müjdeler</i> ) martyrdom ( <i>şehadet</i> ) will bring	<i>Göreceksin şehadet ne müjdeler verecek Can verdiği toprakta kim bilir ne</i>
In the soil you gave your life, how many roses,	<i>kadar gül Nice Fuat, Hanifi, Aliler can verecek</i>

How many Fuats, Hanifis, and Alis will bloom	<i>Bir başka baharda mı gülecek gözlerimiz Bir baba mermisi mi görecek yüreğimiz</i>
Will our eyes shine another spring	<i>Senin derdin başkadır dilin dönmüyor</i>
Will our hearts see a father's bullet	<i>Alim</i>
Your troubles are another, you can't say, my Ali	<i>Ellerim savaştadır öfkem dinmiyor Alim Bir baba mermisiyle İslâm için ölüme</i>
My hands are in war, my rage does not dwindle, my Ali	<i>Selam küçük şehidim lanet olsun zulüme</i>
Toward death for Islam with a father's bullet	<i>Bir başka baharda mı gülecek gözlerimiz Bir baba mermisi mi görecek yüreğimiz</i>
Greetings my little martyr, damned be cruelty	
Will our eyes shine in another spring	
Will our hearts see a father's bullet? <sup>18</sup>	

Although intra-family tensions are a common phenomenon among individual Hizbullah members, only a small number of these cases result in such tragic incidents. Among the reasons why families are averse to the idea of their children being Hizbullah members are concern for their children's safety, political reasons, and the belief that Hizbullah is a Shia organisation. Hizbullah justifies these tensions and conflicts by making reference to the life of the Prophet and his companions, especially Yasir ibn Amir, Ammar ibn Yasir, and Mus'ab bin Umeyr. These three figures were selected because of their shared experience of pressure, torture, and destitution due to their faith. Focusing on these figures is meant to increase one's motivation for self-sacrifice and to endure hardships. Dilgeç summarises Hizbullah's stance on the matter as

we experience these in the name of Islam, therefore we will resist, we will not capitulate. If there is an uprising against Allah (*hak*), then there is no obedience to [his] subjects (*kul*). We heed to the words of our mothers and fathers in worldly matters, but with regard to the Cemaat, we will not seek permission from our fathers. Their consent does not matter to us. The curses, the insults, and the beating only return to us as blessings.<sup>19</sup>

I have heard many stories during fieldwork about Hizbullah members who left the family home to live in Hizbullah homes because their families were opposed to them being Hizbullah members. Situated in the

back streets or on the periphery of the city, these safe homes were often sparsely furnished, allowing prompt evacuation in the case of a security breach. They were operated under a strict security protocol, including the collection of information about the neighbours by maintaining good relations with them.

According to Dilgeş, family membership in Hizbullah is rare. However, his observations mainly concern the period up to the early 1990s and family membership may have become more common in the ensuing period. Serмест's family is an example of an entire family who joined Hizbullah. According to Serмест, a typical Hizbullah family would always offer lodging to other Hizbullah members, allowing their houses to be used as a safe house for members under investigation or with an arrest warrant on their names. The Hizbullah member who goes into hiding in the house of a Hizbullah family would pretend to be a relative of the family and act according to a pre-prepared scenario in the case of a police raid. Serмест reported that at times up to 20–30 Hizbullah members would be staying in the family house.

In periods of increased violence and when Hizbullah was at the centre of police attention, members would carefully monitor daily life around the house and keep watch at all times. Mehmet Baran talks about rituals of keeping watch in his book *Yaşanmışların Hikâyesi (The Story of the Past, 2007)*. Even when all the family are Hizbullah members, they do not discuss matters concerning Hizbullah for security reasons. In that sense, responsibilities and loyalty to the organisation come before family and sometimes group belonging may require action against one's own family members, such as writing a report informing on another family member. Depending on the level of confidentiality and importance, the reports may be sent to Hizbullah's city administration.<sup>20</sup> These reports are not to be seen by anyone without the right authority and should be destroyed after being read.

As my interviews made evident, the daily life of a Hizbullah member is governed by a strict hierarchy and division of labour, where security and confidentiality concerns are central. The security and confidentiality measures in operation may – and often do – result in intense auto-control among family members whereby they abide by Hizbullah principles without the supervision of an external authority. In this sense, the hierarchical structure of Hizbullah resembles small underground and criminal organisations described in prominent sociological literature (Boyd, 1991; Gastil, 1993).

*Disengaging from Hizbullah: divergent motivations  
and the trauma of leaving*

The last concept investigated under the category of the profiles and daily life practices of Hizbullah members is the disengagement of members from the organisation. Members leave Hizbullah individually or in groups, and these two types of disengagement produce different outcomes. The cases of disengagement of individual members before and after Operation Beykoz differ from each other widely in terms of motivational bases and outcomes. Another factor that affects the process of disengagement is the position of the individual within Hizbullah.

Individual disengagement from Hizbullah is not immediate, often taking place over time. For example, in the case of Dilgeş, full disengagement took about a year and even then people he knew during the time he was a Hizbullah member enquired about his reasons for leaving and pressured him to re-join. According to Dilgeş, the reason for disengaging in stages is for self-protection and not to seem to be 'quickly adopting an adverse attitude'. Dilgeş left Hizbullah because he disapproved of its use of violence as early as the beginning of the 1990s, when the violence increased in intensity, and because of its anti-Kurdish discourse centred around the PKK. He did not experience any issues after leaving. Dilgeş's disengagement from Hizbullah may be summarised as a confluence of two factors: his concerns with the organisational structure and inability to shut off his critical thinking.

Structural and critical differences played a similarly prominent role in the disengagement of Serbest from Hizbullah. The process of Serbest's disengagement had begun when he started suspecting the sincerity of some people within Hizbullah – his reports were not delivered to the right authorities; the intermediaries pretended to deliver his reports and even manufactured fake responses to them. Moreover, Serbest was rebuked for not taking care of the *alakas* he was responsible for and reading classic novels, which the Cemaat did not approve of. Again, the intensification of violence made Serbest question his involvement in the organisation. I have previously mentioned when discussing Serbest's profile that he remembers his time in Hizbullah with regret; the negative psychological consequences remain with him still. In Serbest's case, disengagement from Hizbullah has been relatively more difficult in comparison with Dilgeş because Serbest's family is still involved in Hizbullah and Serbest left the organisation despite objections from them. What he did

not know at the time, however, was that his brother who encouraged his involvement in Hizbullah had already left the organisation with no one knowing about it. His brother had been pretending to be an active member until he graduated from school. That the two brothers did not tell each other about their respective disengagement from Hizbullah is evidence that disengagement and security concerns are closely related. The following extract is taken from an interview with Serмест, where he explains his leaving.

I told X that this didn't work for me anymore, that I'd like to quit. He said stuff like 'Look, if you do something like that, you will be dead to us.' I said it's over for me. They said, 'you'll face the consequences' and I said, 'don't hold anything back'. It was a Friday. We left. When I came back on Monday and greeted them, no one greeted me back. I looked around and realised I did not know anyone in school, anyone at all! (*laughing*). Anyone at all, not even a single person. And they do not greet me back. Let alone greet me back, they turned their faces away. They turn away [when they saw me]. Wow! I had endeavoured so much, put so much effort in [Hizbullah] ... I realised that they are cross [with me]. As if we'd never met before. I went outside and lit up a cigarette. All on my own, of course! It turns out I didn't know anyone!

...

We were involved in this. I mean, until the second year of high school, I don't think I had anything else in my life. It was at the centre. Friends were ready-made, it was all ready-made. Imagine, it's your first day in school and you already have friends in all grades! On the one hand it is an advantage, but on the other it has its drawbacks. I remember, for example, I had not listened to a single song until my second year in high school. Let alone a song, I had not even listened to a folk song (*türkü*). I fell in love and for five years I could not even tell myself the fact that I was in love. I thought falling in love was a betrayal of the cause. I suffered a lot from a bad conscience. Because it was ready-made, everything was ready-made!

...

My leaving Hizbullah shook the whole school. No one expected it. All the *alakas* they had made contact with turned into a fiasco. Everyone they looked after up to a certain point had left. And no one came near me. We had no relations with the others anyway. Then one of them started rumours about me. He claimed that I provoked the teacher

against them. I went up to him and said, 'what the hell are you talking about?'. I realised that he hadn't just turned against me, he was actually looking to spill my blood. I said, 'no way, who the hell are you? You go and let your master come' (*he is getting upset*). Anyway, X sent another order (*sipariş*), he said, 'let's have a talk'. We went somewhere outside the city. We talked. He said, 'you're doing [unspecific verb] to our boys' and I said, 'I've left your Cemaat, not Islam. Who are you? What are you? I mind my own business, you mind yours too.' I said, 'I wouldn't do the smallest thing against you and I wouldn't let anyone do anything [to me]'. I said, 'you don't know me'. He said, 'Well, I don't know. Cut your coat according to your cloth.' I said, 'don't hold anything back. Some coats are longer than the cloth.' He said 'it's your call'. Then I left. The school started boring me. I didn't take them seriously either. Because I knew what they were all like.

...

Anyway, then, the school became boring. Then X came. Then you came. You said something like 'you write poetry then?'. That's why you'd come. And we didn't take you seriously!

Mehmet Kurt – Why not? (*laughing*)

Sermest – We were in so much trouble and all you talked about was poetry. We were making plans to flee. We'd had enough; we weren't going to go to school anymore! There was nothing attractive about school anymore. Anyway, then we dropped out and left.

Mehmet Kurt – Where were you going to go?

Sermest – I don't know why, but I went to Malatya.

Mehmet Kurt – How did you go there?

Sermest – I booked a ticket and left. I said I was going home that night and instead I went there. Ah! (*surprised expression*). This is very important; we ripped people off. The money thing ... We ripped people off. We said we are going to publish a school newspaper, a school magazine.

Mehmet Kurt – And you wrote poetry!

Sermest – And we wrote poetry (*laughing*). Anyway, a bit of money from one teacher, a bit from another ... There were many people. Even from some shopkeepers. We'd told them [the same story] too. They supported us too. Then we thought we've got money now, let's go!

Mehmet Kurt – It was all planned then!

Sermest – Yes, of course it was planned! (*laughing*)

Mehmet Kurt – Why did X run away with you by the way?

Sermest – We were bored! We needed a change. X told me ‘you go, I’ll join you later’ and I left. I stayed one night in Malatya and realised there was nothing going on there. Then someone said I could find work in Kemer, Antalya. So I went to Antalya. I saw the sea for the first time. I tasted seawater; I learnt that it was salty. I said, ‘damn it, this water is not drinkable!’

Mehmet Kurt – There is so much of it and it can’t be drunk!

Sermest – Yes, I thought it was ridiculous (*laughing*). I mean we had not seen the world. So I ended up in Kemer, a holiday place. We’re working and we see that nobody has any faith (*iman*) or prudence (*izan*). They had no shame, you know! People take their trousers off in the middle of the road. I was shocked. They had no shame! I said tourists are really non-Muslim (*gavur*). Anyway, I stayed there for a month or so and then my brother came and took me back to school. So we started going to school again. This time I needed to come up with an excuse. We can’t just say we got bored and ran away. Then I blamed it all on Hizbullah. I said they did it. My brother gave them all a mouthful. He said, ‘he’s coming back to this school. If anything happens to him, I’ll come after you. Who do you think you are? You’re just born yesterday.’

Sermest’s account is indicative of how powerful the idea of loyalty and the sense of group belonging is among Hizbullah members. It further exemplifies the degree of social alienation that can be imposed on former members. Although Sermest says, ‘we blamed it all on Hizbullah’, the feeling of social alienation and loneliness that he experienced at school was also an important reason in his decision to run away. In addition, Sermest’s experiences in Antalya and his reactions to them are riddled with indications of his psycho-social state, especially his feeling of strangeness in an alien cultural environment, describing his class belonging and background as someone ‘not from around here’. He was shocked by this ‘new world’ that was completely different from the social environment of Hizbullah. The feelings of isolation and alienation after leaving Hizbullah are reflections of Sermest’s disengagement and trauma.

The same kind of trauma applies to other former Hizbullah members that I interviewed. As discussed in the previous chapter, Azad

experienced a similar shock when he first went to Istanbul and realised that the country they were devoted to bringing Sharia to was in fact very different from what they had imagined. Musab explains his experience of disengagement:

Mehmet Kurt – So, what was your reason for leaving?

Musab – There are many. It wouldn't be right to put it down to one reason. For instance, we were going to make a revolution. I mean that was our dream. Then I went to Istanbul and had the first disappointment when I saw the Tayyip-supporters.<sup>21</sup> I said to myself, 'oh, what are we doing?' What Islam? What revolution? What are you talking about? I am really annoyed by these Islamists. Most of them are ideological pricks (*laughing*). Again though, we thought the Cemaat had impunity. I mean, they'd won the war with the PKK. That's what we thought at the time. But I don't think that way anymore. At the time, it felt like victory to us. Then the second impact came in Beykoz. I mean the ordinary man is wise enough not to make such a mistake and you're making it as the leader of an organisation.<sup>22</sup> Hundreds of things like that. Of course we were shocked when that happened. Friends and I sat down. First, we swore to take revenge. We were like, 'we'll do this, we'll do that'. What was that? It fizzled out like a deflated balloon.<sup>23</sup>

Many like Musab left Hizbullah in the years following Operation Beykoz. Mass disengagement from Hizbullah caused serious rifts within the social fabric of certain sub-groups and the ensuing trauma experienced by those who decided to leave Hizbullah went beyond social and psychological alienation. Unlike individual disengagement, in the case of mass disengagement it brought about the death of one's leader, security operations and large-scale arrests, and media coverage of executions carried out by Hizbullah. Kamuran talks about the shock and 'psychological harm' that many experienced during this period.

I experienced a great ... a great difficulty, psychologically. They are your social circle; you've had all your hopes tied up to that; you've taken a lot of risks for them. It is not easy to disengage yourself. It initially caused me great psychological harm. And I could only get over it by ... I mean, by sharing it with my friends. I mean we had that ... we had that opportunity. We had people around us who thought

like us, who had once been with them but broke off from them later. It actually motivates you to share those emotions with others. You realise you're not alone; that there are others like you; and you find support there. Then you create your own personal thing anyway. You develop a certain self-confidence. But it's not the same with everyone. I mean, I know many who gave up their Islamic life. They became atheists. They became corrupt. Some started using drugs. Some gave up *namaz*. Some became *ulusalci* (secular nationalist).

Mehmet Kurt – Turkish *ulusalci*?

Kamuran – No, no! Kurdish *ulusalci*. There were some like that.

Mehmet Kurt – Do you know other similar examples? A friend of mine, for instance, says he saw two former Hizbullah members singing in the Protestant Church choir.

Kamuran – No, I haven't seen anything like that, but I saw many who became corrupt.

Mehmet Kurt – Do you ever say, 'I wish I had never got involved with them' or ...

Kamuran – Of course I do. I do say I wish I had never got involved. Why? Because you experience a great ... I mean, you are in your thirties and you feel old. You are worn out. I mean you are experiencing serious issues inside. You realise you can have a more sound, decent, and healthy social environment. You realise you can make better choices. I mean, one who cannot realise this hasn't learnt their lesson. Therefore I think it is not reasonable to still think 'for what it's worth, it was nice, it was good!'<sup>24</sup>

Kamuran was one of many who left Hizbullah after Operation Beykoz and therefore he did not experience social isolation as Serbest had. After going through a period of recovery in the years following Operation Beykoz, Hizbullah was no longer powerful enough to use pressure on former members.

According to Yusuf, not many who left Hizbullah experienced any issues resulting from their disengagement and those who did were subjected to interrogation and torture, or were identified as spies and betrayers. Yusuf claims that should the archives be opened to the public, it will be clear that these incidents underlie Hizbullah's internal executions. Yusuf is very confident about his opinion and claims many

people will start hating loved ones should the archive be opened. Yusuf admits to the shock experienced by many members after Operation Beykoz, saying many might not recover from it. What made it easier for Yusuf to recover from the shock was his realisation based on personal observation that Hizbullah's claims were partly true. Likewise, during the Hizbullah-Menzil conflict, Yusuf had a dream that convinced him that Hizbullah was right. In his dream, Yusuf sees a fire burning on the plain of Diyarbakır and feels great distress. The plain is brightly lit in the dead of the night by burning fires. Someone 'competent', whom Yusuf consults about his dream, tells him that his dream is an answer to the distress he has been experiencing. Yusuf says it is not right to act based on a dream, but the dream was a relief to him and cleared his doubts about Hizbullah.<sup>25</sup>

Despite Yusuf's claim that no ex-Hizbullah member experienced any issues after their disengagement, my research refutes his claims. In my opinion, although leaving Hizbullah may not cause any problems per se, this depends to a great extent on the position of the individual within Hizbullah and whether they speak out against it after their disengagement. For instance, a high-ranking Hizbullah official, who harshly criticised Hizbullah after leaving, received threats for years and eventually had a death warrant put out on him. There have been numerous others, especially *seydas*, who had to flee on account of threats from Hizbullah, or were subjected to violence, or murdered for speaking against it.

To summarise, individual disengagement from Hizbullah leads to social alienation and related psychological trauma. This is regarded as a matter of security for the organisation only if the individual has a high-ranking position within Hizbullah or if they express criticism about Hizbullah after their disengagement. Although I have mostly looked at cases of individual disengagement up to this point, there have been cases of mass disengagement from Hizbullah since the time of its establishment.

#### SOCIAL SEGREGATION, MINIMAL HOMOGENEITIES, AND THE LANGUAGE OF VIOLENCE

The concept of segregation is used in the social sciences to refer to the state of inequality favouring certain groups over others. The stratification of groups is determined by which group has more power to oppress or ghettoise 'other' groups. The concept is popularly used

in the political context of the USA to describe states of inequality between Black, Hispanic, and White Americans. However, beyond its use to refer to the unequal distribution of power or overall inequality between ethnic groups, the term is also used to refer to the general phenomena of inequality, in which one group is in a disadvantaged position in comparison to another group or groups (Jackson, 2001, pp. 1–17). Segregation is also used to refer to the social process describing separation, indicating the lack of interaction between certain individuals or groups (Marshall, 2009, p. 50). In this study, I employ the concept of segregation to refer specifically to the separation between Hizbullah and individuals or groups who are not necessarily separated racially but rather socially and politically based on religious affiliation and networks of protection. I examine how affiliation with Hizbullah, or lack thereof, leads to a disparity of power due to various factors including numerical advantage and protection in relation to the use of violence. The concept of segregation is also useful insofar as it describes the separation between Hizbullah and other cohabitant organisations, groups, and social movements. I believe, in the case of Hizbullah, segregation takes place on the level of space and ideology and leads to movement of membership between groups and social mobilisation.

### *Social segregation and mobilisation among Islamic groups*

In Chapter 1, I discussed the conflicts that emerged between Hizbullah and other groups, especially Menzil, starting in the mid 1980s. In this section I will analyse the perception of these ‘confrontations’ by Hizbullah members, how the conflicting parties describe themselves and each other.

First, it must be emphasised that Hizbullah and other organisations and movements in Turkey are perfect examples of separation and segregation in terms of their establishment and expansion. The most obvious example is the fact that the leaders and leading members of Islamist movements in the Kurdish region of Turkey were acculturated in organisations such as *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (National Turkish Student Union, MTTB), political parties affiliated with the *Milli Görüş* (National Vision) movement, and *Akıncılar* (Raiders). In this sense, the first instances of separation took place between Turkish and some Kurdish Islamist groups, albeit the separation was due to differences of opinion based on a pan-Islamist (ümmetçi) discourse rather than ethnic

differences. Although the ethnic element in these cases of separation often goes unacknowledged, we can certainly talk about the implicit role ethnic differences play in separating certain groups from others. For instance, one of my informants reported Veliöglu saying to him, ‘We can’t expect anything from the Islamism of these Turks, of Erbakan or the *Selamet* [meaning the National Salvation Party]. We, as Kurds, need to unite under Islam and establish a state.’ Considering that a Kurdish-centred political discourse had barely been present within Hizbullah before Hüseyin Veliöglu’s death, the separation from Turkish Islamism was arguably not only motivated by ethnic concerns but more so by cultural differences and the two groups’ divergent ideological approaches to Islamism. There have been various cases of separation between Kurdish and Turkish Islamist groups at different points in time and, I would argue, this is indicative of the existence of a fundamental discord in these pan-Islamist groups’ conceptualisation of *ummah*.

In the previous chapter, I noted the existence of many Islamist groups and movements in the Kurdish region of Turkey at the time of Hizbullah’s establishment and during its expansion. A Grounded Theory-based analysis of the data collected from former or current members of groups such as Menzil, Vahdet, Zehra, and two others<sup>26</sup> reveals similarities in the ideological approach of these groups but also differences in the strategic bases of their methods.

With the exception of Zehra,<sup>27</sup> the groups listed above all make regular reference to prominent authors of Islamist thought, such as Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Banna, and Said Hawwa. These authors describe the influence of the Syrian and Iraqi branches of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood on these groups. Another important influence these Islamist groups have in common is the Iranian Revolution and the leading figures involved in the revolution, such as Khomeini and Ali Shariati. One could argue that the first incidence of separation between the Islamist groups in question took place in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution whereby disagreements were around Iran’s ‘Shia conversionist policies’ and the support given to the Hafez al-Assad-led Baath regime in Syria during the Syrian military’s offensive against the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982. In this incident, widely known as the Hama Massacre, thousands of people died.<sup>28</sup> Iran’s support for Assad had stirred up much debate among Islamist groups in the Kurdish region of Turkey. While some groups endorsed Iran by justifying their action as a strategic move that

any state would have made, others took a position against Iran, blaming them for sectarian bigotry.<sup>29</sup>

The opposing positions taken by Islamist groups in the Kurdish region of Turkey led to a sharpening of the differences between them and, as a result, places such as tea-houses where members of these groups socialised became increasingly segregated and some were closed down to prevent clashes taking place.<sup>30</sup> The debates around the Hama Massacre may be claimed to have sped up the process of segregation between Islamist groups in the period after 1982. Hizbullah took a position in favour of Iran vis-à-vis these debates and started working to foster relations with them.

Another reason for increased segregation between Islamist groups in the Kurdish region of Turkey was tensions over organisational activities. A struggle for power between these groups emerged out of rivalry over which group was the 'official' representative of Iran in the area and this struggle led to conflict between them. For instance, Hizbullah and the Menzil group were parties to this power struggle and after disputes arose over organisational activities, these disputes turned into incidents of violent disengagement and separation. The disagreement led to various groups disengaging from Hizbullah and eventually joining ranks with Menzil.<sup>31</sup> In a similar vein, Hizbullah's organisational 'success' in Diyarbakır and the involvement in Hizbullah of a considerable section of the Islamist youth in the area caused upset among the Menzil group and led to mutual accusations and insults.<sup>32</sup> Despite the emphasis the two groups place on their differences, rapid shifts in membership between them point to the fact that each is not, in fact, so different from the other in principle. However, fluidity in membership, in this case, only involves Islamist groups. A movement of members from an Islamist group to the PKK, or vice versa, scarcely ever happens.

The Hizbullah-PKK conflict brought about new shifts between the memberships of different Islamist groups. While Hizbullah's violence towards oppositional *seydas* and groups, particularly Menzil and Vahdet, created an anti-Hizbullah atmosphere and pushed many groups away from Hizbullah, the conflict with the PKK led to a new kind of polarisation, which shifted the balance in favour of Hizbullah. Groups siding with the PKK, however, were those which had been subjected to violence by Hizbullah either before or during the conflict between Hizbullah and the PKK.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the conflict with the PKK led opposing Islamist groups to adopt new positions, albeit without this necessarily

being reflected in their organisational activities. Most of the Islamic groups, which already had an anti-PKK discourse, were satisfied with Hizbullah becoming a significant actor in the balance of power in the area and thus took its side against the PKK. The groups which took the side of the PKK in the conflict, despite ideologically being closer to Hizbullah, included Menzil and Vahdet that had been subjected to violence by Hizbullah.

Although the leading cadres of Islamist groups in the area have a background in Turkish Islamism, during the Hizbullah-PKK conflict they chose to ally with Kurdish pan-Islamists (*ümmetçi*) instead of moving towards Turkish Islamists. I believe this is an indication of the ongoing separation of Turkish and Kurdish Islamism at the time. The following extract from an interview with Mücahit, who was with the Vahdet group during the PKK-Hizbullah conflict, is informative regarding the development of the ethnic and/or Islamist discourse in the 1990s.

We were *Kurdistanî*.<sup>34</sup> Of course, our being *Kurdistanî* led to their [Hizbullah] claiming we were PKK supporters. I mean, they started doing that. Of course . . . the truth is . . . we wanted the PKK to win the war. Our hearts wanted that, we wished that, you know? Because their violence . . . we thought 'it doesn't matter who beats them [Hizbullah]'. But we didn't become PKK supporters. It was impossible for us [to become PKK supporters] anyway. We aimed to be *Kurdistanî*. Then there was 'are we supposed to be *Kurdistanî* or Ikhwanist?' This thing, this conflict between them . . . caused much debate. And as a result we left Vahdet.<sup>35</sup>

Mücahit's 'we were *Kurdistanî*' discourse concerns a fraction within the Vahdet group and not the whole movement. However, the Vahdet group's general anti-Hizbullah attitude might be better understood considering Vahdet dissolved and ceased all activities as a result of the conflict with Hizbullah. The conflict with the PKK may have made the *Kurdistanî* discourse more popular among some Islamist groups and individuals. It is possible that various cases of disengagement from Hizbullah stemmed from Hizbullah's understanding of the Kurdish issue and its anti-PKK discourse. Nevertheless, Mücahit's following statement may point to Hizbullah acting as a buffer 'against the PKK's anti-Islamic discourse':

I sometimes think, ‘Thank Allah, if they [Hizbullah] didn’t exist perhaps they [the PKK] would have come into mosques and banned Islam.’ I mean, they are that cruel. During these elections, I thought, ‘Thank Allah the Hizbullah-supporters had machetes.’<sup>36</sup>

Mücahit, who had wished that the PKK would be victorious over Hizbullah in the 1990s, was impressed by Hüda-Par for not using violent methods in the conflict with the PKK/HDP and as a result moved closer to the Hüda-Par line.

The emergence of the conflict with the Menzil group while the Hizbullah-PKK conflict was underway initiated a new process of separation within Hizbullah. Although Hizbullah had the support of many Islamist groups and parties in Turkey in its fight against the PKK, the conflict with Menzil resulted in these groups distancing themselves from Hizbullah, thus isolating it.<sup>37</sup> Hizbullah, in turn, responded to its marginalisation and isolation by prohibiting the sale of some popular Islamist journals from Diyarbakır in western Turkey and forcing the groups to cease their activities completely. Hizbullah’s boycott became so successful that some of the Islamist journals were subsequently discontinued.<sup>38</sup>

The period of conflict and increased (in)security between 1991 and the early 2000s resulted in the complete separation of Hizbullah from other groups. Mediation attempts, traditionally made at the early stages of a conflict, proved futile and, in time, these groups became spatially segregated from each other. The mutual accusations and allegations during the conflict caused a complete separation.<sup>39</sup>

Hizbullah’s relations with other groups was initially marked by ethnically based disintegration and in time evolved into ideological dissociation. This was followed by further dissociation and conflict because of differences in the methodologies and organisational strategies of these groups. During this process, incidents of dissociation, which I refer to as ‘the emergence of minimal homogeneities’,<sup>40</sup> took place. In fact, the period between the emergence of these conflicts and the 2000s can be considered the period of minimal homogeneities and dissociation between Islamist groups in the Kurdish region of Turkey. These minimal homogeneities are not stable or fixed and have the potential to shift due to division and integration as a result of outside influences.

*The transformation of Hizbullah's methodology  
and further disengagement from Hizbullah*

I have discussed the numerous cases of mass disengagement from Hizbullah in the years following Operation Beykoz. Hizbullah established the Mustazaflar Association in 2003 during a period of reorganisation with the aim of social transformation by becoming active legitimately. As reported by Kamuran, the decision to operate legitimately had been a subject of debate among Hizbullah members in prison and the plan was realised following the release of certain members. Naturally, such a transformation did not take place without dispute or tension. For example, a fraction within Hizbullah with Salafi inclinations opposed the idea of operating legitimately on the grounds that it is not right from the viewpoint of Islam to take advantage of the institutions and operate within a *tağuti*<sup>41</sup> state.<sup>42</sup>

The criticism voiced by Hizbullah members in prison against the transformation of the organisation's methods did not result in any incidents of mass disengagement. However, those members who had previously been sent to Arab countries, especially Egypt, to study Arabic and Islamic theology, and came under the influence of Salafi movements there, began to disengage from Hizbullah as a result. Eventually, others joined them and they collectively separated from Hizbullah to form a radical Salafi group. The group's separation became apparent when the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated associations started operating legitimately and was complete by the time Hüda-Par was established.

Another reason that played a role in the separation was the civil war in Syria. Because Hizbullah supported neither side in the Syrian war, some individuals and small groups with Salafi inclinations within Hizbullah declared *tekfir* against Hizbullah and left. According to two informants,<sup>43</sup> these Salafi splinter groups merged with other individuals and groups with Salafi tendencies and joined the fight in Syria alongside organisations such as the Al-Nusra Front, ISIS, and others. One informant exemplified the radical and *tefkirist* attitude of these groups by an anecdote where he says to one such individual, 'you are interfering with Hizbullah, they'll give you a good scolding' and the Salafi individual responds, 'they better not piss us off or we'll set off a bomb at the Blessed Birth events'. This statement is significant in that it shows how the violence of this new brand of Islamism can result in declaring *tekfir* against a radical Islamist organisation such as Hizbullah and a bomb being set off at an

event attended by hundreds of thousands of religious Muslim Kurds as a viable action.

One informant claimed that these groups bring weapons from Syria into Turkey. The possibility of these weapons being used in violent acts in the future demonstrates the sensitivity of the situation. The invasion of the city of Mosul by ISIS and many other areas, the kidnapping of dozens of Turkish citizens including personnel in the Turkish Embassy of Mosul in 2014, and the presence of many Turkish citizens in ISIS signal the potential outcome of the emergence of religiously based violence in Turkey in the future.

According to another informant, it was not only groups with Salafi tendencies that left Hizbullah, there were also people with Shia inclinations who left to join other sympathetic groups.<sup>44</sup>

It is clear that the change in Hizbullah's methods led to disengagement and the formation of new alliances. At times, this change became apparent in legal activities and politics and, at others, traditional Islamist methods were preferred. For example, the following extract is the explanation offered by one of my informants of the method adopted by a group that converted to Shia Islam:

For example, let's imagine that some of them are Ja'fari. Well, then come out and say it. Say you are Ja'fari! Say 'I believe what will take people to Allah's heaven is the Ja'fari denomination and Imam Ja'far'. Why don't you do it then? They think, 'you never know what'll happen, we might go back to the old days'. There's that fear. I mean, we couldn't get over that fear. For instance, the Islamic movements here, we are still experiencing the Cold War. That person, for instance, is still living those years, still living those fears. He hides himself. He runs lectures in private places; three-four people come together. Why do you do this? I mean, there is still that. I say to them 'what do you teach there?'. What you teach there is taught by *imams* to a *cemaat* in mosques. You don't need to hide that!

Operating legitimately is a new method for allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated organisations. Even though the method may be different, my informants who describe themselves as Hizbullah members often stress that there has been no change in the movement's ideological structure and goals. For instance, I asked Necat Özdemir, the former vice chairman of Hüda-Par, what kind of a change led to the establishment of Hüda-Par

and his response was Huda-Par operates according to Islamic principles and the party's approach and views can be seen in the party programme.<sup>45</sup> Yusuf claimed that the process of organising in associations and political parties is not a new development and Hizbullah had not engaged in legal activities in the past because of various pressures and security operations by the Turkish state between 1992 and 2004. According to Yusuf, Hizbullah had operated in the public domain prior to 1992 through weddings, bookshops, and picnics, and the lack of engagement in this domain may be accounted for by the absence of NGOs at the time. The political atmosphere today is more favourable for running these operations and opportunities ought to be seized to reach people as long as the means used do not contradict the Quran or the Sunna. According to Yusuf, as a movement that can mobilise hundreds of thousands of people, it would have been a mistake if Hizbullah had not created a legal political umbrella organisation to bring its supporters together. NGOs can only make recommendations, but when they form a political party, they can reach more people and achieve their goals.<sup>46</sup>

Yusuf's first argument is that the political atmosphere was more favourable for Hizbullah to operate legally. The significant increase in the number of NGOs in recent years confirms this. His second argument is that Hizbullah views NGO activities as political. Although NGOs essentially operate in the fields of humanitarian help and education, political groups in Turkey commonly use NGOs for political purposes.

Another theme that emerged out of my interviews is that Hizbullah attributes a negative meaning to the concept of change and views embarking on change as synonymous with amending a past mistake. It becomes evident from my observations and interviews that Hizbullah considers non-change to be a sign of stability. If what is meant by change is the ideological transformation of Hizbullah, such a transformation has not taken place. But Hizbullah has certainly changed in terms of its methodology. Since its establishment, it has had a pragmatic but also aggressive attitude as an organisation. Such pragmatism has allowed it to rearrange its alliances according to strategic goals rather than view them as based on permanent structural principles. In that sense, Hizbullah's pragmatism may be explained by Laclau's concepts of articulation and hegemony.

The concept of articulation, which addresses the encounter between two different entities and the resultant emergence of another entity in favour of the hegemony and power of the stronger entity, necessitates

change for both parties, although this change may be of an asymmetrical nature. In this formulation, the indicator of power is the ability to transform the encountered group's discourse into one's own (Smith, 1998, pp. 84–97). Seen from this perspective, it is clear that Hizbullah has been in constant transformation since its establishment, confirming Laclau's theory of articulation.

Hizbullah at times transformed around a more powerful hegemonic centre, such as in its relationship with Iran, and at other times transformed the methodology of smaller groups and eventually subsumed them. For example, Hizbullah's initial goal of starting an Islamic revolution with the cooperation of the traditional *ulema* (Muslim scholars) and people with modern education is clear evidence of the influence of the Iranian Revolution on it. As discussed earlier, the Iranian Revolution came about with the collaboration of ayatollahs and intellectuals. Hizbullah's similarly eclectic approach, featuring divergent references, discourses, and methods, can be seen in the 'changes' it has gone through. When we look at Hizbullah's publications during the illegal versus legal periods in its history, it becomes clear that the vision it proposed is closely linked to the political circumstances of the time and it developed opposing or conflicting ideas and attitudes in order to adapt to the changing times. This state of eclecticism and the contradictions contained therein are often justified through the concept of *içtihat*. In fact, Hizbullah's strategic repositioning of itself constitutes the main reason for its periodic transformation as an organisation.

Another feature of Hizbullah that confirms Laclau's theory of articulation is the hegemonic presence of violence. Factors such as the Turkish state's use of violence as a method in their approach to the Kurdish issue, the influence of the Iranian Revolution, and the fact that Hizbullah and the PKK operated in the same area made violence the inevitable outcome. In this regard, violence has been used by Hizbullah according to its sociological and historical circumstances and its supporter base.

Hizbullah's pragmatic attitude is often articulated by its members with an emphasis on Hüseyin Velioğlu's 'opportunistic' nature. According to Mücahit, Velioğlu took advantage of every opportunity to enable Hizbullah to achieve its goals. In Velioğlu's biography on the Hüseyini Sevda website, he is presented as prioritising action over theoretical debates.<sup>47</sup> According to Kamuran, however, these shifts stem from lack of method on the part of Hizbullah:

Lack of method ... I mean it is because they did not give their members any substantial religious education. I mean, they don't offer any substantial, systematic training. I mean, it is a system that has been compiled from here and there, and it only emphasises certain issues. I mean a lack of method is evident. Of course, politically, this drives one to some confusion as to when they are supposed to take sides and whose side to take, or with whom they should cooperate. This was obvious with them. With the Iranian Revolution, it started to ... it started to affect this area. I mean, it stems from their cooperation with Iran and somewhat from their 'we accept everyone', 'we can incorporate anyone' kind of attitude. Yet they couldn't keep themselves away from the state. Their cooperation with intelligence organisations there and here, and with other organisations stems from a lack of method rather than from pragmatism. I mean there was confusion regarding politics, Islam, and the faith (*itikat*).

Mehmet Kurt – Do you see this as one of the reasons for their shift into violence?

Kamuran – Yes. Lack of method in terms of politics itself leads to pragmatism. I mean, the immediate benefits and risks of your circumstances become significant. The context of the 1990s was somewhat related to this. I mean, if you don't have any substantial projects for the future, if you have not devised a method of politics or if unlawfulness is your method ... Because organised movements at large have this issue. When they have that secret dimension to their organisation, it allows for misconduct. I mean, the political calculations of those on the top may lead to cooperation with some others without the knowledge of the base. This may be a state or another organisation.

Mehmet Kurt – In your opinion, what kind of a relationship was developed in the 1990s with the state?

Kamuran – My personal opinion is that they thought they could use the state. To expand, to get more powerful. And the state tried to use them in some way.<sup>48</sup>

Kamuran's statements contain important data concerning Hizbullah's eclectic structure. The impression I gained from my observations and interviews is that this feature about Hizbullah is evident both in its Islamic references and methods. In conjunction with its attitude to prioritise action, Hizbullah's eclectic nature as an organisation and social

movement seems inevitable. In parallel with Kamuran's statements, for most Hizbullah members the organisation's simultaneous use of divergent references should be seen as a reflection of its unbiased and egalitarian attitude.<sup>49</sup> Mehmet Göktaş, the chief editor of the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated newspaper *Doğru Haber*, confirmed this understanding in an interview in the following words:

In no Islamic organisation today, Said-i Nursi and Khomeini are simultaneously studied. But Hizbullah does it. They read these and also Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Banna together. One time I was talking to a Turkish Islamist. He talked about Sayyid Qutb with hatred. Today after *Saadet Partisi* (Felicity Party), after Erbakan Hoca, there is a widespread hatred of the AKP. But Hûda-Par does not do that. Even if their votes were below what they expected, they are still pleased about the AKP's success.<sup>50</sup>

Hizbullah is clearly a pragmatic and eclectic organisation. As a result, it can make strategically based transformations to achieve its goals and mobilise its base to that end. As witnessed following Operation Beykoz, the groups within Hizbullah which show resistance to transformation eventually leave the organisation, allowing Hizbullah to turn inwards and for minimal homogeneities to emerge. What I refer to as minimal homogeneity here is Hizbullah's homogenisation as a result of the disengagement of groups within it or accession of external groups to it and the resultant feeling of sameness, which leads to increased action potential. Although Hizbullah claims it has always acted in accordance with the same set of principles, its constantly changing, eclectic nature is easily recognisable from its past.

But what does violence mean to Hizbullah? How and under what circumstances is violence justified in its discourse? How did the other groups, which came face-to-face with Hizbullah, construct their oppositional discourses?

### *The discourse and justification of violence*

In his book *Dinin Meşrulaştırma Gücü (The Justificatory Power of Religion)*, Okumuş (2005) talks about the active role religion plays in various domains ranging from politics to the justification of social injustices. For the study at hand, a process of justification, in the sense

that Okumuş argues for, may be said to have preceded Hizbullah violence. The category of violence may be investigated within the context of the formation of the conflict domain, disengagement and new encounters, the construction of a discourse justifying violence and its dissemination, intervention by intermediaries to prevent or stop the conflict, and the emergence of violence. These steps provide a linear framework not only for the sub-concepts that have been revealed in the previous sections by means of Grounded Theory analysis but also for the process of the emergence of violence. It has become evident from my interviews that a discourse of violence preceded violence itself and followed the steps delineated above in a linear fashion.

'Self-defence' is the primary element of the justification of violence in the discourses of Hizbullah and the groups it came into conflict with. The common justification used by those groups involved in violence is that they were forced to respond to the violence directed at them in order to protect themselves. For example, according to Yusuf, oppression by the PKK, the Turkish state, and the *Rabitacı*s,<sup>51</sup> and particularly the Menzil group, underlay the atmosphere of violence in the 1990s. He claims that Hizbullah has never changed its 'style' and always had *tebliğ* as its main method. For Yusuf, then, jihad ought not be rejected as it can be used as a method if deemed necessary.<sup>52</sup> Necat Özdemir, the former vice chairman of Hüda-Par, also told me that the Cemaat has the right to self-defence, although no other reason can justify violence. His justification for Hizbullah's involvement in violent acts in the past was similarly the organisation's self-defensive reflex.<sup>53</sup>

For Mücahit as well, the Vahdet group's main purpose in engaging in violent clashes with Hizbullah was self-defence.<sup>54</sup> According to Hamza from the Menzil group, there is no ideological difference between Hizbullah and Menzil, both groups view and relate to Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in the same way, and the only difference between them is in the methods they use. Hamza claims that Fidan Güngör, the leader of Menzil who was kidnapped and murdered, had been against the use of violence from the start and the group had resolved, in their congress meetings, not to respond to violence in kind. However, upon realising that they were faced with total destruction, they had to start defending themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Given that more than a thousand people died in the course of a decade when apparently no one 'made the first attack' and yet everyone was out to 'defend themselves', self-defence seems to be only a justificatory

argument rather than the actual basis for these groups' engagement in violence.

The second stage in the emergence of violence is the reinforcement and dissemination of the discourse justifying violence and increased polarisation via spatial segregation. It is clear that the disputing groups cooperated or were in dialogue with each other on the basis of strategic alliance and therefore their supporter bases had not initially been positioned sharply against one another. The discourse justifying violent action accelerated the process of segregation between different groups and, as a result, individuals who previously had not felt obliged to choose between the two groups had to declare their allegiance and support for a specific group. This stage corresponds to the actual onset of violence. Although there were concurrent attempts at preventing the emerging conflict, they fell short of achieving the desired goal because of intensifying violence. In their edited book, Deutsch et al. (2006) offer comprehensive information with regard to different types of conflict and stress that the methods of conflict resolution vary according to time and space. In the case of Hizbullah, conflict resolution processes take the form of traditional reconciliation that uses religious references. According to the interview data concerning processes of reconciliation, contrary to their discourse of self-defence, parties involved in a conflict are more readily prepared to attack each other. Thus, fights in schools and mosques, which quickly became commonplace in the area, turned into armed clashes resulting in mortalities, which in turn defeated the attempts at reconciliation.

In the period before the conflict's escalation into violence, the discourse justifying violence had become prevalent and the conflicting parties started to brand each other as their enemy. My informant Ahmet's persistent use of the word *Hizb*<sup>56</sup> to refer to Hizbullah exemplifies the most benign reflection of the polarisation between groups at the time.<sup>57</sup>

When we look at the way different groups refer to each other, it becomes clear that they do so according to specific ideological references and commonly in a fashion that justifies violent action against these groups. For example, Hizbullah refers to Menzil as the *nifak* (mischief-maker) group or the *münafıks* (hypocrites); the Vahdet group as the *Rabitacılar* (Rabita supporters) and describes them as Saudi-funded, and America and Israel supporters; the PKK as the *mürtet* organisation, and the state as the *tağuti* regime. Similarly the PKK refers to Hizbullah as *Hizbulkontra*<sup>58</sup> and describes it as a state-supported paramilitary organisation. The

Vahdet and Menzil groups refer to Hizbullah as Hizbuşşeytan,<sup>59</sup> meaning ‘the party of Satan’.

Accusations are not only exchanged between rival or opposition groups, they also often address secular lifestyles. In this regard, the conversation recounted below between İzzettin and a Hizbullah member is illuminating.

I mean, we know about the PKK's intolerance. I mean, it is not difficult to grasp that. They've accumulated power; they've mobilised a struggle that could not be mobilised for a hundred years, or seventy or sixty years; and they may wish to make contact with another organisation, who they think envies the struggle or has grown on account of it, using the discourse of the powerful or, I don't know, the authority. Well, I think that's not the reason that Hizbullah became driven towards violence; they were already inclined to it. Because martyrdom, jihad, taking action, replacing them [the PKK], and becoming like them all point to the potential of violence. Having the intention of using violence is more important than making up the excuse for justifying it. You can always come up with excuses. I, for instance, believe that Hizbullah or its affiliated-organisations are still inclined towards violence. Why? Because the discourse they've been using features arguments that will justify their course of action if they adopt violence in the future. If you're making such preparations, then you inevitably reveal your goal. You don't necessarily need to declare it publicly. Well, I sometimes have conversations with young people. On the eve of their [Hizbullah's] re-emergence, the public didn't know about it. It was in 2003. He said, ‘they've established that there are so and so many prostitutes in X and so and so many of them are licensed and the rest are not’. Actually this was an old story. It's one of those classic urban myths. I said to him, ‘it seems you lot are intending to discipline people again’. In order to be able to have that young man beat someone up for you, you first need to convince him that there is a situation, where beating someone is called for. So there is that too; ‘so, be prepared, you might be given a duty in the future’. However, if there is prostitution, then that is a problem in the system, in the regime. It is not the prostitutes who bring it about. There is a social order, a social reality. You are trying to convince someone by your ‘I will sort out this issue’ attitude without doing anything about the social reality. I mean, these may be remnants of old habits but, I believe, if someone wants to

interfere with it ... we're not experiencing that at the moment because the government is not creating any opportunity for that ... but we may experience the same consequences if an organisation that could take advantage of it, such as the Ergenekon,<sup>60</sup> gains power.<sup>61</sup>

As evident from the case İzzettin talked about, arguments justifying the use of violence must be developed prior to the emergence of violence. In that sense, lifestyle-related accusations were – and still are – used in the construction of a discourse justifying violence. For example, the hostile 'protests'<sup>62</sup> by allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated associations and Hüda-Par against beauty contests, concerts,<sup>63</sup> or conferences on homosexuality indicate that Hizbullah still considers violence as a valid method, although it does not use it at the present time.

The text of the written interview conducted with Hizbullah officials via the Hüseyini Sevda website offers important information concerning such topics as other Islamist groups, the PKK, jihad, and violence.<sup>64</sup>

Q: Being a Cemaat that takes Islam as its reference point, how do you view the issue of 'violence'?

A: We do not use armed propaganda. We have expressed our opinion on the matter on various occasions. To sum it up, we do not conceive of using brute force against anyone unless they try to prevent us from learning Islam, living according to it, organising people around it, and doing *tebliğ*, or unless someone attacks us posing a threat to our existence.

Q: What is your opinion about jihad?

A: The concept of jihad covers a broad range of meanings from advising to pursue *davet*, *tebliğ*, and benevolence, to refrain from evil, to *mukatele*, or in contemporary terms, armed action. If you are referring to *mukatele* when you say jihad, then we have already answered this question in the answer to your previous question.

...

Q: Could the tensions with the BDP<sup>65</sup> lead the Cemaat to engage in armed struggle again?

A: Despite the attacks by the PKK and their affiliates against Muslim people in the last ten years, we have been patient and we have done everything we can so that things do not go back to how they were in the 1990s. However, they [the PKK] have been continuing with their

attacks and provocations. Our position and patience are contingent on whether these attacks continue and, if they do, the form that they take. If the attacks become an obstacle for us to live our faith and pass it down to the next generations, then we will consider defending our cause and our Muslim brothers, and responding to these attacks as an Islamic duty and responsibility.

...

Q: Do you think the Cemaat of Hizbullah has had any faults in their system of thought or committed any mistakes in their actions?

A: Because Hizbullah adopted its system of thought from the Quran and the Sunna, we cannot talk about any mistakes. Our thinking is moderate [*wasat*] and tolerant [*mutedil*]. Because we take the Quran and Sunna as our fundamental sources of reference, we try to design ourselves accordingly. In terms of action, we have never knowingly or willingly done anything that goes against Islam. So there is nothing unislamic about the Cemaat's plans or the solutions they devised. However, there may have been unwanted errors in their application by individuals and these constitute exceptional situations.

As seen from the answers given to my questions, Hizbullah does not reject violence as a method and agrees that it can be used for defensive purposes. However, it is evident that the level of the violence in the 1990s went far beyond what could feasibly be justified as self-defence for all the actors involved. Hizbullah claims that the organisation did not commit any deliberate wrongdoings whereas individuals within Hizbullah may have. This understanding appears to be an extension of the common practice of attributing wrongdoings to individuals while considering good conduct to stem from principles.

It is clear that an accusatory discourse preceded violence itself, subsequently leading to increased polarisation, and the atmosphere of polarisation and violence, in turn, rendered the potential means for conflict resolution ineffective. In addition, the cumulative increase in cases of violence was used to justify and fuel further violence.

#### GROUP BELONGING, RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY, AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: DIFFERENT FORMS OF IDENTITY WITHIN HIZBULLAH

The last category that emerged from my interviews is different forms of identity within Hizbullah. In the case of Hizbullah members, these forms

of identity are discussed around three main themes that are organised in layers, each of which features different references, components, and types of reasoning. The first of these layers is belonging in Hizbullah, which substantially defines and affects the other two. The second is religion and the construction of religion as a transnational ideological form of identity. The third and last layer concerns ethnic identity and its justification within an Islamist ideological discourse through religious references.

*Authority and hegemony: group belonging in Hizbullah*

Zygmunt Bauman argues in his book *Liquid Modernity* that at the core of the idea of community lies the belief that everyone is the same and what makes allegiance to the community attractive is the feeling of comfort that this belief brings (2000, p. 99). Bauman's argument confirms my theory of the emergence of minimal homogeneities by establishing that the feeling of comfort in belonging to the community reinforces group belonging.

My interviews revealed that for Hizbullah members, belonging in Hizbullah constitutes the core of their three-layered form of identity:

It was a privilege to be with them, especially for young people. Because they [Hizbullah] spoke to them in the religious sense and they studied at a state school. So it is a system that is contrary to the religious tradition they know.

...

Their most prominent feature is that they give you a goal. Now, because they give you a goal, you directly move toward that goal. For instance, this goal is an apparent one. I mean, it doesn't rely on description, idealism, or a philosophical ideology. That's why it can be developed so quickly. So, the goal is 'we'll change the system'. A new system. It doesn't matter how it will be done and on what principles this goal will be achieved. This is what you learn in lectures in mosques anyway. After you learn the Quran, they teach you the life of the Prophet, the *siyer*.<sup>66</sup> But alongside that, they instil this thing against the system [in you]. It's not like 'be against the system'. It's more like the battle between true and false (*hak* and *batil*). Like it is the Habil and Qabil incident:<sup>67</sup> these are the Habil and these are the Qabil. The child can't help but

expect some imagery. 'So who are the Habil and who are the Qabil?' So they draw the lines very clearly and establish the boundaries.<sup>68</sup>

According to Serмест, being a Hizbullah member is a symbol of privilege, especially among the youth. Hizbullah's attraction for the youth stems both from its conformity to traditional forms of religiousness and because being a Hizbullah member provides one with a goal. Moreover, being a Hizbullah member gave the individual a feeling of confidence and power. For example, Musab and many other informants told me that until Operation Beykoz, they thought the Cemaat was invincible. Musab thought Hizbullah had won all the 'battles' it fought against the PKK and other groups.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the feeling of belonging in the victorious group strengthened the feelings of confidence and power among Hizbullah members.

In time, these feelings of power and authority originating from feelings of group belonging led Hizbullah members to take initiatives to 'remedy' the 'social issues' they encountered. For example, one informant told me that they fought another group in the neighbourhood for smoking marijuana or thieving and one person from the other group and two from theirs were wounded as a result. Because they carried out the operation without consent from the Cemaat, they subsequently received a 'dressing down' and faced serious punitive action. However, they were let off with a warning because they all told the truth about the incident during interrogation. Another informant reported that a Hizbullah member he knew had used violence against a woman, whom he observed 'to dress half naked and often have men in her house', without the consent of the Cemaat, and another informant informed me of a similar incident, which resulted in the murder of a woman by a Hizbullah member.

Until Operation Beykoz and Hizbullah's ensuing break-up, feelings of group belonging were very strong. The operations carried out on the initiative of Hizbullah members were investigated within its operational hierarchy and punitive measures were taken accordingly. In this period, feelings of group belonging were furthered strengthened by lectures in mosques, establishing '*alaka*' with potential recruits, carrying out various assignments within the Cemaat hierarchy, and by periodic reporting. This system, which is based on the close monitoring and control of individuals, resembles Durkheim's mechanical solidarity. Durkheim argues that this form of solidarity, which is found predominantly in pre-industrial societies, features limited division of labour while such

concepts as solidarity, the idea of sameness, and thus a collective identity are prevalent. Groups displaying mechanical solidarity emerge on the basis of a shared value system and moral code, and thus ‘crimes’ that are against group values may be severely punished (Aron, 2006, pp. 296–8). In the case of Hizbullah, group belonging resembles the mechanical solidarity model of society where there is a strong commitment to shared values and principles, and acts of non-conformance are punished.

The daily life practices analysed in the last section elevate group belonging in Hizbullah to a central place in an individual’s life, and all actions and understandings that contradict group belonging are pushed into a position of secondary importance. In that sense, the following extract from an interview with Azad offers important information concerning group belonging and the culture of dedication in Hizbullah.

For instance, there was this notion at the time. It was a famous quote by Ibn Taymiyyah: ‘What can my enemies do to me? For me, my death would be martyrdom (*şehadet*), my exile migration (*hegira*), and my imprisonment privacy (*halvet*).’ If you are in this mindset, your enemies cannot do anything to you. Even if they kill you, you become a martyr in the path of God. And naturally you have no other alternative. You always read about the troubles the prophet had to endure. You read about people who were tortured by their fathers, mothers, paternal uncles, maternal uncles, and other people.<sup>70</sup>

Sermest also reported that concerning matters of security and confidentiality, frequent reference was made in Hizbullah circles to the secret meetings and worship held in Dar al-Arqam during the period of hiding in the formative years of Islam. However, he complained about the degree of emphasis put on this historical analogy, saying, ‘as if the prophet’s life was all about the Dar al-Arqam.’<sup>71</sup> Considered in the light of my research data, it becomes evident that the issues concerning security and confidentiality, which emerged as sub-themes under the theme of daily life practices, reinforce group identity. In fact, feelings of group belonging are so strong among Hizbullah members that when the conflict with the PKK ended and Hizbullah turned inwards to identify the alleged spies, infiltrators, and police informers within it, Azad claims that many members voluntarily surrendered to Hizbullah.

The Cemaat had sent a message to all of its members. The message was ‘we have established the spies within us. Either these spies come and surrender to us or we will kill them. You have a month. Come and surrender. Those who surrender will not be harmed. We will only get information from them and then release them.’ Then people said that many surrendered within that month and told them [the Cemaat] that they had been pressured by the police.<sup>72</sup>

It is evident that group belonging is achieved via the design and close control of Hizbullah members’ daily life routines while Hizbullah members are taught the culture of self-sacrifice through examples from the early period of Islam. In that sense, ‘paying a price’, serving a prison sentence, or ‘becoming a martyr’ become – or rather they are made – desirable by Hizbullah members. According to Kamuran, in the first years of Hizbullah, serving a prison sentence for the Hizbullah ‘cause’ gained one significant kudos in society. However, staying in prison lost its status in the years following Operation Beykoz when thousands of Hizbullah members were imprisoned.<sup>73</sup> Group belonging in Hizbullah does not only take place on a voluntary basis and we can talk about strict auto-control and self-censorship that stem from control mechanisms operating within the group.

Within the context of group belonging and authority in Hizbullah, my interviews showed that authority was centred on personal motivation until the early 1990s when violence began intensifying; however, thereafter feelings of belonging were fostered by security and confidentiality principles.

The period of internal investigations that began in 1996 relied on the feeling of power rather than legitimate authority. Operation Beykoz was the point where authority collapsed and the sense of group belonging started to decay.

Azad – The official understanding of the Cemaat is that Hüseyin Velioglu was killed in an armed clash on 17 January 2000. They did not heed to any speculation that was going around. To be honest, this information has never been testified.<sup>74</sup> If it cannot be testified, then you have to consider this information to be true. But there are serious questions around the Beykoz Operation.

Mehmet Kurt – What kind of questions?

Azad – This kind of operation is very rare in Turkish history. I believe broadcasting a four-hour armed fight on live television is not very common anywhere in the world. I watched the operation at home on television from start to end.

Mehmet Kurt – How did you feel? What did you think? They say the police didn't know it [who was in that house] either.

Azad – We didn't know the operation was against Hüseyin Veliöğlü. Yes, they say the police didn't know that either. On the day of the operation, we heard they were conducting operations against high-ranking officials within the Cemaat. We all rushed back home and sat in front of the television. We watched it all and after the operation ended, media agencies reported that there was one fatality and two arrests. I think it was either on the same day or the next day that we heard that the fatality was Hüseyin Veliöğlü. I and my supervisor were at home. I didn't know Hüseyin Veliöğlü was a member of the Cemaat until that time. I asked my supervisor who Hüseyin Veliöğlü was and he said, 'he is probably one of the commanders of the Cemaat'. He didn't know him either. That's what I could gather from what he said. I thought, if he is a commander within the Cemaat, then he must be a prominent one, and there will be a harsh retaliation against the state for that. Of course the media kept saying he was the leader of the Cemaat and there were all these random people, who were making analyses about Hizbullah on television. Some were saying seriously ridiculous things. There were people from the intelligence, journalists ...

Mehmet Kurt – What were they saying?

Azad – They were discussing especially Hizbullah's connection with the state. They talked a lot about the conflict with the PKK. They were particularly bringing up the Gonca Kuriş issue.<sup>75</sup> They were talking a lot about the assassination of Ahmet Taner Kışlalı and Uğur Mumcu. They were claiming that radical Islamist organisations carried out these assassinations, which, if you ask me, is not the case. They were right about Gonca Kuriş. Hizbullah kidnapped and murdered her. But Hizbullah certainly has nothing to do with the murders of Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Uğur Mumcu, and Bahriye Üçok.<sup>76</sup> These supposed Hizbullah experts were claiming that Hizbullah had committed those murders and we were just laughing at them. Of course, we didn't imagine then that Hüseyin Veliöğlü could be the leader. When we woke up, we heard the news. It was confirmed that this Hüseyin

Velioğlu person, who was killed, was the leader of Hizbullah. Our whole world came crashing down. It was like our blood suddenly froze in our veins. We were horrified. I mean, we experienced some serious distress at that moment. Because, although we didn't know him, it was a movement founded by him that made it so far ... Because to us, the Hizbullah movement had become a serious power. They had fought the PKK and won. They had fought Menzil and won. They had fought Vahdet and won. We thought Hizbullah had become a serious authority in the Kurdistan region. They had brought the PKK to its knees when the state couldn't do it. People talked about Hizbullah's significant achievements. The movement that he created, he founded ... For that reason, it caused us a great shock that lasted two-three days. At the time all that our friends talked about was that the Cemaat would retaliate very harshly and it would either be against the prime minister, or the president, or the commander of the Turkish armed forces, or perhaps the head of the intelligence services. There was no other match for him. If it will be *kisas* (retaliation in kind), then this is how it has to be. If I'm not wrong they kept Hüseyin Velioğlu's body in forensics for 10–15 days. All of our friends were heading to Batman because his body was said to be taken there. They somehow wouldn't release his body and this had caused great fury among the Cemaat. At the same time, Cemaat members did not have the potential to carry out operations on their own. They would never act on their initiative without orders from their superiors.<sup>77</sup> So there was no action, only waiting. The waiting was the most difficult.<sup>78</sup>

For Azad and many other Hizbullah members Operation Beykoz was a turning point. Although, at first, the operation engendered feelings of rage and revenge in them, in time, this gave way to a disintegration of the feelings of group belonging for many. On account of their 'unanswered questions',<sup>79</sup> the perception of security and feelings of group belonging were seriously weakened or completely disappeared.

The psycho-social consequences of the loss of feelings of belonging both on the level of the individual and the group, the forms of disengagement from Hizbullah, and the trauma of disengagement have been discussed. To recap briefly, the decay of feelings of group belonging had a serious effect on other forms of belonging and, according to Kamuran, some 'became atheists, abandoned their Islamic life, or became [Kurdish] nationalists'<sup>80</sup> as a result.

In the next section I will look at religious belonging and its construction as an ideological argument.

*The ideological construction of Islamism  
and religious belonging in Hizbullah*

Thinking revolution (*inkılap*), thinking in a revolutionary (*devrimci*) way ... Actually we all had that feeling, that idea. 'We will start a revolution in Turkey one day.' 'We will establish an Islamic republic in Turkey.' Perhaps we didn't know Turkey very well. Actually if I consider my case ... Because there was only one place I knew. It was Diyarbakır. It was Bismil. It was Silvan. It was Mardin. It was Nusaybin. The surrounding cities and towns ...<sup>81</sup>

Being a group with religion as its main reference point, Hizbullah's religious discourse is closely related to its ideology. The notion of ideology has a significant place in Marxist theory, where Marx defined it as 'the system of ideas and designs that prevail in the mind' of an individual or a social group. According to the Marxist philosopher Althusser, ideology is 'a design of the imaginary relationships between individuals and their real circumstances' and ideologies refer to individuals as subjects and render them a part of the ideology by addressing the subject (Althusser, 2000, pp. 47, 51, 60–71). It is not surprising that Hizbullah's religious discourse displays the properties of an ideological discourse. In accordance with the nature of the concept of ideology, Islamism refers to the construction of Islam as a political fiction (Aktay, 2014).

Islamism as an ideology emerged as a response to Western colonialism in the historical and sociological context of the twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> The Islamism of Hizbullah, as well as many other predominantly Kurdish Islamist groups in Turkey, had its roots in the Turkish-Islamist discourse. Hizbullah's core members were acculturated in the Islamist discourse of the National Vision-affiliated parties, the MTTB, or the Raiders. Therefore, the Islamist political discourse used by Hizbullah is partially 'imported' from these groups.<sup>83</sup> For instance, according to Sinan, 'due to the influence of Turkish Islamism, Hizbullah was significantly alienated from the issue of Kurdistan and Kurdish identity'.<sup>84</sup>

My research data show that the religious discourse used by Hizbullah is constructed as an ideological argument within the framework delineated above. In that sense, Islamism, which constitutes the second

layer of identity within Hizbullah, is a form of belonging that is formed out of transnational references. As such, the awareness of various international issues, which this form of belonging raised among Hizbullah members, bears the traces of the Islamist basis of this identity. For example, according to Yusuf, Hizbullah's main focus is Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Sinan argues that Hizbullah's designation of the Palestine issue as its primary focus of engagement instead of the geographically, historically, and culturally more relevant Kurdish issue can be viewed as a reflection of 'Islamism's alienating effect from one's cultural and historical self'. The protests and marches organised by allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated organisations seem to confirm the validity of Sinan's argument. For example, while Hizbullah actively criticises the anti-democratic developments and acts of violence in countries such as Palestine and Egypt, it remains either silent about or displays very little reaction to similar events taking place within the context of the Kurdish issue. According to Dilgeç, the Hizbullah circles, who gathered in the İstasyon Square in Diyarbakır 'for flimsy reasons', did nothing when 'Kurdish blood was flowing in streams in Roboski, Kobanê, or Sinjar'. He further argues that it is reluctance or indifference on the part of Hizbullah that led the PKK to believe Hizbullah was no different than organisations such as ISIS.<sup>85</sup>

Hizbullah's eclectic nature as an organisation becomes evident in Yusuf's statement in which he identified Said-i Nursi, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Iranian Revolution as the three main reference points of Hizbullah.<sup>86</sup> Azad talks about the influence of the Iranian Revolution on Islamist circles as follows:

To the Islamic world, the Iranian Revolution was like a dead soul being resurrected. For instance, it was clear that Islamism was something that the Islamic circles had lost after the collapse of the Ottomans. Islamism could not even keep the Ottoman Empire up in the last years of the empire. The Iranian Islamic Revolution rekindled that fire and led to great dynamism in Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco, Kurdistan, Iraq, Syria, and naturally Iran became the centre of all Islamic circles. For Islamic movements, it was impossible to be indifferent to Iran. Because a revolution had taken place and it would not be reasonable to be indifferent to the revolution.<sup>87</sup>

The excitement caused by the Iranian Revolution among Islamist groups in the Kurdish region of Turkey is reflected in Dilgeş's argument that Hizbullah's emergence is a class phenomenon and that it shares a common discourse with many Islamist groups in Turkey and around the world concerning Zionism, Israel, the USA and imperialism.<sup>88</sup> In terms of its Islamic references, however, the biggest influences on Hizbullah were works by the Islamist ideologues of the twentieth century. According to Kamuran, Hizbullah was not engaged with the intellectual potential of these works, but made reference to them only to garner intellectual backing for its own action-oriented approach. In fact, he noted that, in addition to theoretical discussions, Hizbullah also finds 'the pursuit of worldly things unnecessary and prioritises receiving Allah's blessing through engaging in *cemaat* affairs and fulfilling the obligation to do *tebliğ*'.<sup>89</sup> A preference for action instead of theoretical analysis in performing *tebliğ* reveals the relationship between religious belonging and action in Hizbullah. According to Kamuran, Hizbullah's ideological apparatus takes place on the basis of what he refers to as 'provinciality' (*köylülük/gundîti*).

Kamuran – Hüseyin Veliöğlü properly reeked of provinciality. He didn't have a system of thought that was systematic in the sense that we understand it. There are four or five videos of him. Perhaps you've had the opportunity to see them. Just look at the kind of person he is. It is quite clear.

Mehmet Kurt – How do you define provinciality? For instance what does a villager do and what does a city person do?

Kamuran – The villager has absolute opinions. I mean, to him there is no consciousness in describing the world. He can only see black and white. Therefore the system he can come up with is a homogenising system. He doesn't consider differences; he is strict; he shows no tolerance. But on account of his sincerity, he blends compassion and honesty, he characterises them.<sup>90</sup>

Kamuran's words constitute a reference to the argument that as an organisation, Hizbullah is concerned most with action. In that sense, Hizbullah's approach to Islamism also originates from an understanding prioritising action. Azad's previous statement, 'there was only one place I knew', combined with his dreams of starting an Islamic revolution is

evidence of Hizbullah's alienation from the society from which it had emerged. This alienation offered Hizbullah members the hope of a world they did not quite know, but found worth fighting for.

In conclusion, religious belonging in Hizbullah is closely related to the discourse around group belonging, and the principles of religious belonging originate from a transnational Islamist discourse that is to a large extent parallel to that of Turkish Islamist circles, from which the leading cadre of Hizbullah emerged.

*'Bijî Îslâm! Bimre Koletî!'*<sup>91</sup>: ethnic identity and the perception  
of the Kurdish issue in Hizbullah

When I went to Sinan's well-furnished office for the first time to meet him and asked whether he would agree to talk to me about Hizbullah for my research, the first question he asked me was whether I would use the name Kurdistan in my dissertation or not. According to Sinan, being able to use the word Kurdistan in the studies about the Kurds was a sign of academic freedom. Although Sinan has never been a Hizbullah member, he is confident that he closely knows them and, according to him, Hizbullah is a *Kurdistanî* organisation.<sup>92</sup> My informant Mahmut, who identifies himself as an Islamist Kurd and, like Sinan, has never been a Hizbullah member, says that despite the mistakes it made in the past, Hizbullah is still *Kurdistanî* in nature.<sup>93</sup> While Mücahit chose to remain in the Vahdet group when they broke off from Hizbullah and he subsequently left them due to their *Kurdistanî* perspective, he did not hide his sympathy for the Islamic Party of Kurdistan.<sup>94</sup>

Many informants talked about being *Kurdistanî* in the context of Hizbullah.<sup>95</sup> But what is the exact meaning of being *Kurdistanî* for my informants who are or were Hizbullah members and those who got to know Hizbullah closely? My observation is that many Hizbullah members were personally engaged in the Kurdish issue: they had opinions about it and they were used to discussing it.

According to my Hizbullah member informants, most of whom speak fluent Kurdish and some 'especially prefer speaking Kurdish', Hizbullah has always been a 'Kurdish and Kurdistan-centred' organisation. For Hizbullah members, the three markers of Kurdishness are speaking Kurdish, upholding Kurdish traditions, and the religion of Islam.

Hizbullah's albums and recorded music series such as *Mizgîn*, *Şehit*, *Şehitler Kervanı*, *Hinariya Kur'an*, *Seyfullah*, *Mizgîna Îslâm*, *Miskîna*

*Jar*, and *Katliama Susa* demonstrate the prominence of the Kurdish language within Hizbullah and offer important insights concerning the construction of an ethnic religious discourse within the organisation. Kurdish is the primary language used in Hizbullah-affiliated music productions as well as in daily life. Kurdish traditions, which Mahmut and other informants considered the second element of Kurdishness, become meaningful when considered together with the socio-economic circumstances of Hizbullah membership. Most of my informants have an 'authentic' understanding of Kurdishness. This stems from their being from the provinces (villages, towns, and small cities), growing up in religious families, and, in the case of some, upholding traditional tribal understandings and family relations. For example, Mahmut reported that 'people who do not dress according to tradition or religion are referred to as Turks in small cities' and these signs of secular life are used synonymously with Turkishness.<sup>96</sup> In that sense, the cultural codes that are referred to as Kurdish traditions stem largely from an Islamic understanding and ethnic differences are established on the basis of religious and secular codes.

Considering that the leading cadre of Hizbullah was acculturated in the National Vision (*Milli Görüş*) movement of Islamism and influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian Revolution, Hizbullah's relation to Turkishness constitutes an important subject for the informants' understanding of Kurdishness. For example, Mahmut worked actively in a provincial office of the National Salvation Party and reported that when he and some others from the party chanted *Bijî Îslam! Bimre koletî!* (Long live Islam! Death to slavery!) and *Azadî Îslâmîda!* (Freedom is in Islam!) during a campaign, they were warned by party officials not to chant in Kurdish and not to use words like *azadî*<sup>97</sup> because 'they are communist jargon.' According to Mahmut, being Muslim and being Kurdish are the only two things that are forbidden in Turkey and although national parties and groups have Turkish names, they have always been Kurdish Islamists.<sup>98</sup>

The emphasis on Kurdishness in the personal narratives of Hizbullah members disappears when it comes to Hizbullah's organisational activities and presence in the public sphere. For example, according to Sermet, even the smallest reference to Kurdishness is considered nationalist and racist within Hizbullah and thus draws criticism.<sup>99</sup> Azad states that despite the prominence of Ikhwanist Kurdish authors in the ideology of Hizbullah, they did not even know that Said

Hawwa was Kurdish.<sup>100</sup> In fact, my interviews and observations show that Hizbullah has not adopted an ethnic discourse that prioritises religion, and Hizbullah members seen to adopt such discourses were reprimanded. When I asked Yusuf how he viewed Hizbullah's use of the Kurdish language in music recordings and in daily life, he responded that 'Hizbullah is a Kurdistan-centred *cemaat*, most of its members are Kurdish, and they have no problems with Kurdishness; but they operated from a pan-Islamist perspective' and therefore even published recordings of Islamic hymns in the Arabic variety of the Mihelmi minority in the Midyat area.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Yusuf accounted for the presence of only a very small number of Turks within the pan-Islamist Hizbullah by 'the feeling of being the "elder brother" and an "only we can lead" attitude that Turkish Islamists have had since the time of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Hizbullah's origins in Kurdistan render it difficult for Turkish Islamists to join Hizbullah because, even among Turkish Islamists, the word Kurdish connotes separatism.'<sup>102</sup> The chief editor of the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated newspaper *Doğru Haber*, Mehmet Göktaş, who is Turkish, offered the following answer to the same question:

Another point is that when you dig a bit below the surface of even the most radical Turkish Islamist, you find Turkish nationalism. I don't mean the *Ülkücüleor*<sup>103</sup> (Idealists). Islamists are like that. When I speak, they say to me 'perhaps you shouldn't use the word Kurdistan'. They get upset by Kurdish hymns (*ilahi*) and Kurdish tunes. For instance, during the preparations for the Kazlıçeşme rally,<sup>104</sup> they controlled all the music and removed all but two famous Kurdish *hymns*. Then one of them says, 'if Mehmet doesn't make Kurdistan propaganda, then no one would'. I believe Turkish Islamists have been greatly affected by racism. It is the poison of Kemalism. Also they do not want to be led by a Kurd. They belittle them [Kurds]. They'd rather that Kurds be occupied with *hurafes*<sup>105</sup> and *bidats*.<sup>106</sup> Turkish leftists feel that way too. Turkish Islamists and leftists are conformists and cannot engage with the people. They can't speak to their own bases. But Kurdish Islamists succeeded in doing that. Even the PKK succeeded in speaking to the people. They managed to communicate with the people. Some Turks wish to take advantage of that. I believe Allah has designated the Kurds as the flag-bearers of Islam. Attach a Turk to a polygraph and speak the words Arabia, Turkistan, Turkmenistan, Kurdistan, Azerbaijan to

them. As soon as you say Kurdistan, the machine will show a change. Turks are prejudiced in this regard.<sup>107</sup>

Most of my informants, who were or still are Hizbullah members, stress the nationalist component in Turkish Islamism. Most Kurdish Islamist groups mentioned in this study broke away from Turkish Islamism in the 1980s. Although these groups decided to establish their own organisations because they perceived themselves to be discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, they have adopted different positions vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue. Here, we are concerned only with Hizbullah's approach to Kurdish identity and the Kurdish issue. According to my research data, while Hizbullah does not give primary importance to ethnicity in reference to identity, it is de facto engaged in and connected with the Kurdish issue. Nevertheless, on account of Hizbullah's interpretation of various cultural codes as manifestations of nationalism, its relation with ethnicity is fairly measured. Moreover, Hizbullah makes extra effort to distance itself from PKK discourses. This attitude is underlain by Hizbullah's wish not to be perceived as a *Kürtçü* (Kurdist or pro-Kurdish) organisation by the Turkish state and to refrain from having common ground with an 'enemy' organisation, as the following extract from the written interview I conducted with Hizbullah officials confirms (see Appendix):

Q: What are your views about the Kurdish question?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: Being an organisation with a predominantly Kurdish membership, what are your suggestions for the resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey?

A: (No answer was given)

...

Q: Do you have a programme for the resolution of the Kurdish issue?

A: (No answer was given)

...

Q: What is your opinion of the *sivil cumas*<sup>108</sup>?

A: If your question concerns sermons being given in Kurdish, it is right. The sermon is part of the Friday prayer. Friday sermons mean the weekly gathering of Muslims and their being given in Kurdish is

the right way. However, it is clear that people, who have nothing to do with the *namaz* [five-time daily prayer] and do not spend their time performing the *namaz*, are organising them for political ends.

Q: What is your view about mother tongue education?

A: It is one's natural right to have their education in their mother tongue. The state ought to provide people with the opportunity to receive their education in their mother tongue. When demanded, even small ethnic groups ought to be given the opportunity by the state to have their education in their mother tongue.

Q: Although Hizbullah has had a pan-Islamist [ümmetçi] perspective, why has it not received the favour of non-Kurdish Muslims?

A: We do not agree with this statement. However, because our starting point is Kurdistan, it is natural that there has been more interest in this area [the Kurdish region of Turkey] in comparison to other areas.

Q: What is the percentage of non-Kurdish Muslim participation in Hizbullah?

A: Because our understanding is not based on nationalist thinking, we have not been concerned about percentages. However, we have brothers of all ethnic origins in Turkey.<sup>109</sup>

As seen from the above, the Hizbullah official responding to my questions skipped those about the Kurdish issue as he had done the questions concerning Hizbullah's conflicts with Menzil, Vahdet, and the PKK. As required within the social sciences, I had informed the informants that they were free to not respond to any question. Nevertheless, the reasons behind the silence of the Hizbullah official concerning questions about the Kurdish issue must be examined. On the one hand, as claimed by Yusuf, Hizbullah finds it futile to rehash past conflicts.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, it was evident from Hüda-Par's party programme that despite Hizbullah's efforts to devise a new discourse, it did not deviate much from the BDP-HDP or PKK line of politics when it came to making recommendations concerning the Kurdish issue. Issues concerning the Kurds, such as mother tongue education, the restoration of Kurdish place names, the designation of Kurds and Turks as the founding nations of Turkey, investigating the unlawful activities of secret organisations such as Ergenekon and JITEM in the Kurdish region of Turkey, and so on are either also recommended by

the PKK and/or would be agreeable to them. Kamuran states that he did not witness any such recommendations being discussed within Hizbullah and claims that this attitude may have emerged in the process of the establishment of Hüda-Par. According to him, it is the demands of the Hizbullah base that determine the party programme and force the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated organisations into transformation,<sup>111</sup> that is, in order to meet the expectations of its Kurdish base, Hizbullah had to go through change and is now developing new discourses accordingly. I agree with Kamuran's statements, but it is clear that this transformation has not yet reached the stage where these demands are being expressed with the same force as the Islamist discourse. In that sense, it is important to quote Mahmut's following statement: 'Islamism was at the centre for us, but our Kurdishness was for jokes (*şakacıktan*).'<sup>112</sup> My observations at the Hüda-Par rally in Bingöl before the general elections on 27 March 2014 offer important information in this regard:

Women and men sat separately and most women wore burkas and most men had beards. The crowd sang along with the chorus of a song, which went *serokê me Muhemmed e!*<sup>113</sup> (Our leader is Muhammad!) in excitement prior to the commencement of the speeches. The chants, the *tevhid*<sup>114</sup> and *rabia*<sup>115</sup> hand gestures being done together, the enthusiastic participation in the *tekbirs*,<sup>116</sup> and hundreds joining what is known as the Hizbullah dance (*Hizbullah halayı*) can all be seen as a product of a social psychology that leads people to demonstrate their existence in all its grandeur.

The announcer introduced the speeches in the Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects of Kurdish, and Turkish, and the campaign speeches started after *tilavet*<sup>117</sup> (Quranic recitation). Only at the beginning of the campaign speeches was it stated that Hüda-Par is a follower of the Sheikh Said uprising (*Şeyh Said kıyamı*) and the rest of the speeches were based on a religious discourse, where great emphasis was placed on the ever on-going battle between true and false (*hak* and *batıl*) and the Moseses and Pharaohs of this world. Hüda-Par chairman Zekeriya Yapıcıoğlu stated in his speech that they established Hüda-Par to practise İslam freely in a country where 99 per cent of the population is Muslim. He emphasised that they view all humans in a humane way and that humans did not originate from apes. Moreover, he expressed the party's stance against racism and gave the example of the companion Salman al-Farisi<sup>118</sup> to prove his point. It was easily seen

from the general tone of the speech that his main reference point in his statements was Islam.

As Kamuran also pointed out, the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated Hûda-Par's interest in the Kurdish issue has resulted from the expectations of and demands by their supporter base.<sup>119</sup> It would have been inconceivable for a party with a real political agenda not to develop such a discourse. Taking into consideration Hûda-Par's party programme and judging from the interviews she conducted with party officials, Elitsoy states that Hûda-Par has developed a different discourse than Hizbullah and justifies their attitude by saying Hûda-Par will not be able to win the confidence of the majority of the Kurds unless they remove the Kurds' doubts about Hizbullah by confronting their past. Furthermore, Elitsoy rightly points out that Hûda-Par may even win the favour of some BDP voters should they successfully combine the Kurdish ethnic identity and an Islamic ideological discourse (Elitsoy, 2013, pp. 105–9). However, I believe that despite being featured in their party programme and official statements, Hûda-Par is yet to develop an ethnicity-based discourse, and this situation stems from the cautious attitude of Hizbullah and Hizbullah-affiliated circles not to be viewed as adopting a discourse similar to that of the PKK. Considering the prolonged conflict between Hizbullah and the PKK, it is clear that these Islamist groups do not hold a positive image of the PKK. Thus, the prevalence of Kurdishness as a frequent theme in my interviews was counterbalanced by informants' expression of an anti-PKK discourse. As seen from the extract below from my interview with Azad, the main component of this discourse is the PKK's perceived attitude towards Islam and Muslims:

The circles that the PKK doesn't appeal to are often the Islamic ones. PKK could never appeal to the circles, which have a religious outlook. For instance, Öcalan refers to Sheikh Said as a traitor and a British spy in his interview with Yağın Küçük. He calls Bedüizzaman [meaning Said-i Nursi] a traitor; he calls Idris-i Bitlisi<sup>120</sup> a sell-out. Now if you curse and insult people who are highly esteemed in society, that society won't support you. Because the essence of the society of Kurdistan is Islam. It is a society with a 1500-year-long history of Islam. If you curse the religious values of that society whenever you get the chance, that society won't support you. The Muslim Kurds who support you are those without concern for religion. The individual with religious

knowledge in the political or intellectual sense wouldn't give much support to you.

... A Hizbullah member had hit my maternal uncle's son in the head with a machete as he was getting out of school and wounded him. He had to have 16 stitches and he also lost a finger. He lives in the USA at the moment. I developed rapport with him after I left Hizbullah; because we would often discuss the PKK's mistakes in our conversations. He didn't accept the PKK's mistakes though. He would often defend the PKK's actions as legitimate; he actually still does. And we'd tell him that they were not so. Because if we are talking about freedoms, then we also need to defend other people's freedoms. Because freedoms should not only be available to the PKK and PKK members. As a Muslim, I don't see myself as a PKK supporter. I won't be one at any point either. Or what freedoms can a Christian, an Assyrian, or a Chaldean have within the PKK? I mean, won't they have any rights if Kurdistan is founded?<sup>121</sup>

Azad's statements mirror the opinion of other informants who stress their Kurdish identity as individuals from an Islamic point of view while voicing their suspicions when the PKK is concerned.

In his interview, Sinan argued that it may not be a coincidence that the first PKK member killed by Hizbullah was Mikail Bayro, an Assyrian Christian man, suggesting that Hizbullah may have deliberately not murdered a Kurd and instead killed an Assyrian man they thought the PKK would not stand by. In fact, Sinan claimed that Hizbullah murdered around 50 Assyrians all told.<sup>122</sup> Taken together with the discourses of allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated organisations that target secular events,<sup>123</sup> it becomes evident that Azad's anti-PKK arguments are motivated by strategic concerns rather than support for minority rights, as he exploits the issue of minority rights as a strategic pressure tactic and a counter-argument against the PKK.

For Hizbullah, Kurdish ethnic identity is often stressed on the level of the individual but is significantly lacking in the discourses of the allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated organisations. Although Hûda-Par's party programme is an exception to this, the Kurdish issue's broad coverage in the programme can be easily explained by Hûda-Par's predominantly Kurdish voter base and the fact that the Kurdish issue is an undeniable social reality for them. However, the arguments and recommendations

in official documents do not feature much in Hûda-Par rallies and press statements, which instead focus almost exclusively on Islamic discourse.

To sum up, the forms of identity within Hizbullah, which I conceive as a layered structure, consist of three layers with group belonging in Hizbullah at the centre. The centre constitutes the densest and most powerful layer of this tripartite structure. The construction of Islam as an ideological discourse forms the second layer and is mainly determined by the religious acculturation and political discourse acquired within the first layer. Moreover, this second layer is not a theoretically based form of belonging and, instead, prioritises action. Lastly, ethnic identity and the understanding of the Kurdish issue comprise a 'loose' form of belonging that is often emphasised in individual discourses, while missing in those of the official institutions. It often takes the form of an ethnic discourse with religious references, as seen in its reference to religious historical figures such as Sheikh Said.

#### THEORETICAL ABSTRACTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I have used a Grounded Theory-based approach in this study to make a detailed analysis of data collected in the field, drawing comparisons between different data, and formulating theoretical abstractions.<sup>124</sup> The main purpose is to establish similarities and differences in the data in the form of categories and various concepts as their sub-themes (Lingard et al., 2008, pp. 459–60).

Three main categories emerged: the individual and daily life; minimal homogeneities developing in relation to social segregation and violence; and feelings of belonging.

In the first category, I investigated the dynamics of the daily life of a Hizbullah member. I established that membership in Hizbullah was highest among young, poor, and undereducated Kurdish men. Family membership in Hizbullah is possible but much less common than individual membership. I did not come across any women who became Hizbullah members without men in their family having also joined. In the period after 2000 when Hizbullah began operating legally, it was possible for women to join the organisation as individuals although there were few who did so.

Joining Hizbullah marks the beginning of a new period for members, and individuals and families reconstruct their lives around security concerns and their social relationships transform. For the individual

who reconstruct their life within the limited Islamist and/or Hizbullah social sphere, Hizbullah becomes a paradigm that eventually takes over life completely. On leaving Hizbullah, after years of living under the hegemony of such a paradigm, the individual is driven towards the trauma of disengagement. A large number of informants recalled experiencing long-term difficulty in establishing and maintaining social relationships; having feelings of loneliness, isolation, and without a goal or purpose in life; and disregarding many of their responsibilities and commitments, and suffering depression.

The daily life of a Hizbullah member is governed by a strict hierarchy, fixed routines, and concerns for security and safety. Intra-family tensions are commonly observed. Together with the determinative and transformative force of group belonging in Hizbullah, daily life practices constitute the main determinants of Hizbullah identity. In other words, group belonging in Hizbullah is achieved by the control and organisation of daily life. The end of group belonging, however, produces traumatic results as it marks a change in daily life practices and the disintegration of feelings of belonging, security, and comfort engendered by such practices.

The themes in the second category are ideological separation, spatial segregation and fluidity, break-ups as a result of the methodological transformation of Hizbullah, the discourse of violence, and the means used to justify violence. The second theme that emerged in the interviews concerns ideological dissociation and disengagement. Hizbullah, like other social movements, is in a continuous process of change. Most cases of change stem from disputes and conflicts in the process of recruitment and mobilisation as well as from differences in methodology. Disagreement and disengagement between groups contributed to the increased adoption of a discourse of violence. After being legitimised in discourse, violence eventually took the form of physical violence and steadily escalated in severity and form.

Violence is not an unmanageable, unpredictable, and purposeless phenomenon in Hizbullah. On the contrary, violence follows systematic and strategic lines: it first emerges in the form of a discourse justifying violence and, following a period of reconciliatory attempts, turns into physical violence. Violence is employed by Hizbullah as a strategic tool, and if deemed the most effective means of achieving an end, it could start using violence again.

The fact that Hizbullah does not employ violence at the present time is not because of a categorical opposition to violence. When found strategically feasible, Hizbullah may use violence as an applicable method by first constructing a justificatory discourse such as that of self-defence.

The process of segregation between Hizbullah and other groups follows a trajectory that begins with the differentiation of their discourses, moves on to the emergence of ideological differences and disagreements, and culminates in spatial segregation. Segregation often reinforces feelings of group belonging while deepening lines of separation between groups. This, in turn, leads to the emergence of minimal homogeneities and the belief in the sameness of members of a group.

In terms of revealing the main social processes in the context of Grounded Theory (Schreiber, 2001, pp. 71–2), minimal homogeneities facilitate Hizbullah's decision-making processes in the face of strategic transformation. However, minimal homogeneities are affected by the outcomes of these transformations themselves, that is, producing new areas of disagreement and conflict, and causing disintegration, thus leading to the production of more minimal homogeneities.

The themes in the third category focus on identity, the notion of belonging in Hizbullah, and the main reference points of these forms of belonging. I identified a three-layered perception of identity and the relationship between the different forms of belonging.

Self-understanding of Hizbullah members develops around group belonging, which constitutes the core layer and the densest form of belonging in Hizbullah. The trauma of disengagement affects feelings of belonging and the individual's understanding of themselves as well as their daily life practices. Put another way, when daily life practices, which reinforce feelings of group belonging among Hizbullah members, are abandoned, the individual starts experiencing a feeling of alienation and this affects the identity layers in question to various degrees. For example, the disengaged member may shift from an Islamist ideology to a secular lifestyle or their ethnic identity may take precedence over religious identity.

A stable process of division and homogenisation is an indication of the strength of the feelings of group belonging. When the process develops in accordance with security and confidentiality criteria, group belonging retains its strength and transformative potential. Thus, in the period following Hizbullah's move to operate legally, group belonging

in Hizbullah seems to have lost its determining power in the life of the individual Hizbullah member.

Identity and belonging in Hizbullah manifest as a layered, dynamic, and dialectic form. At the core of Hizbullah identity is group identity, which both contributes to the formation of the second layer, that is, religion as an ideological argument, and transforms the perception of ethnic identity through religious discourse, thus rendering it an acceptable form of belonging. The power and transformative effect of group belonging is closely related to how and to what extent daily life practices are organised.

## The Construction of Social Memory in the Stories and Novels of Hizbullah

### SOCIAL MEMORY, HISTORY, AND DISCOURSE

Hizbullah became active in publishing after its move to operate legally and its members produced dozens of stories and novels over the years. These literary works are examined in this chapter and the social memory constructed therein analysed. Most of the Hizbullah stories and novels can be considered autobiographical: they constitute a reconstruction of actual events from the perspective of Hizbullah and even the names of the places and persons involved may be left unchanged. They promote a specific representation of the organisation's enemies and rivals, while constructing a new image of Hizbullah for young members by excluding certain subjects such as Hizbullah violence from the content. The primary goal of the chapter is to analyse the main themes that emerge from these stories and novels.

After many years of operating underground, under a strict code of secrecy, Hizbullah became visible in the public sphere in the 2000s through its affiliate NGOs, the Hüda-Par political party, and the public events it began to organise. However, it still avoided discussing the past. The opinions expressed by Hüda-Par officials and the statements by Hizbullah lawyers are exceptions. In the previous chapters, I discussed the difficulties I experienced in making contact with Hizbullah members in the field, the reluctance of some to discuss particular subjects, and the reasons for their reluctance. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Hizbullah has become more active in print and social media, the public sphere, and the new discursive space which emerged out of Hizbullah's involvement in these fields calls for analysis.

While remaining reluctant to communicate with social scientists, the media, and the public, Hizbullah has become more open. New data have been published in Hizbullah's newspapers, magazines, and other publications. The medium of publishing is nevertheless an indirect

way by which Hizbullah communicates with the wider world. These publications are intended for those inside rather than outside Hizbullah. For this reason, the narrative forms used display concerns for 'privacy' (*mahremiyet*) and, as such, the medium of publishing constitutes an extension of Hizbullah's former privacy policies. Like any 'private' topic that is whispered into the ears of those willing to listen, this narrative form is also performed around a certain form of discourse. Consequently, the form of discourse used constitutes a social language. In Paul Gee's definition, social language refers to the diversity of language forming around a social identity and as an extension of it. In that sense, social languages emerge as both the totality of the things inherited culturally as well as a result of them. Examples are the language of literature, street gangs, medicine, law, or sociology (Gee, 2011 p. 156). Hizbullah's closed social identity inevitably requires the construction of an idiosyncratic social language.

As in all fields of language and discourse, the phenomenon of social language is also contingent on ideology. A text or discourse, by its nature, cannot be independent of ideology or, in the positivist sense, objective. In that regard, language should be considered a field from which ideology and belief emerge, rather than simply an aggregate formed out of grammatical formulations (Paltridge, 2006 p. 45). How can we analyse the inherently ideological social language that Hizbullah has constructed? What kind of texts would offer us the most relevant material for this kind of analysis? Using which theoretical or methodological approach(es) can such data be analysed?

I analyse the texts published by Hizbullah-affiliated individuals and organisations within the framework of Grounded Theory, discourse analysis, and social memory studies in this chapter. Newspapers, magazines, novels, stories, and other published material, as well as texts published on websites and social media constitute the main sources of data; they can be regarded as the products of Hizbullah's efforts to construct a social memory, to remember and reconstruct the past, and consequently establish/reinforce group belonging.

In recent years, social memory studies have become more popular in the social sciences. Social scientists suggest that the phenomenon of social memory should be investigated in addition to individual memory, which remains within the field of cognitive psychology. Here, I will briefly discuss social memory studies and discourse analysis before analysing Hizbullah stories and novels.

Memory itself is what creates social identity and history (Vincent, 1916, p. 250), and social memory plays a crucial role in a nation and/or group's historiography (Möckel-Rieke, 1998, p. 6). The way the past is remembered plays a defining role in what is being done in the present and what will happen in the future. Although individual memory plays an important role in the emergence of social memory, the latter cannot be reduced to an aggregate of the individual memories of the members of a group. Many other factors, such as religion, class, and family, have to be taken into consideration in order to understand social memory (Rodriguez and Fortier, 2007, p. 8).

For many years, memory was likened to an archive in which the past is preserved. However, current studies show that memory is not just an archive and the experience of the past cannot be remembered independently of variables pertinent to the present. Memory, which may be the only way to talk about experience, is itself largely contingent on how the present and the future is envisioned.

Moreover, remembering is not just a personal activity: it is a result of social processes (Rodriguez and Fortier, 2007, p. 8). *Recall* is not the only function memory performs; it plays an important role in other cognitive processes such as recognition, verification, establishing relationships, forming combinations, and evaluation (Fentress and Wickham, 1992, p. 26). Therefore, history itself can be defined as the way ostensibly true, bygone phenomena are remembered and transferred rather than an account of phenomena that objectively occurred (Rodriguez and Fortier, 2007, p. 11).

As social and political creatures, humans continuously reconstruct the past and transfer it into the field of discourse by producing relevant narratives under the influence of a particular social language. Social language is the language used in a specific social situation, status, and context. We all use various social languages depending on the circumstances, context, and other factors and shape our daily lives accordingly. As a result, a memory becomes part of social memory and acquires a place of its own in the social field (Fentress and Wickham, 1992, p. 47). Therefore, narratives are a part of sociality, or as Roland Barthes puts it, 'there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives' (Barthes, 1981).

In the modern world, the media constitutes both the main means by which these narratives emerge and the place where social memory narratives are mostly found. Media and publishing can be considered the

main carriers and architects of social memory in modern societies. For that reason, the phenomena of print/visual media and social memory are intertwined with each other and the media embodies the primary tool in the construction of social memory (Möckel-Rieke, 1998, p. 8). In addition to individual memories, social institutions and phenomena also play an important role in the construction of social memory. Social memory changes constantly and emerges at the intersection of the past and the present by means of social languages. The emergent discourse is not absolute and unvarying, and must be investigated in the context in which it arose. In this sense, discourse analysis is useful in examining the stories and novels written by Hizbullah members.

Textual or discourse analysis contribute a great deal to social studies. However, it requires the support of other theoretical and methodological tools. As Fairclough states, the textual or discourse analysis method should be viewed as a process rather than a self-standing and complete analytical framework, and should be substantiated by interdisciplinary debates and theories (2003, p. 16). Therefore, in this study, I use the method of textual and discourse analysis in parallel with Grounded Theory.

Discourse analysis focuses on language and its relationship with the sociality encompassing it. Moreover, discourse analysts also focus on the process whereby discourses are constructed. Here, both speech and text are considered to be embedded within social and cultural practices. The common goal behind discourse analysis is to reveal and analyse the semantic world beyond actual words (Paltridge, 2006, pp. 2–19). This includes meanings that the narrator leaves unsaid on the assumption that the audience will derive the meaning in question from the speech or text anyway. Our own texts or discourses occasionally do not reveal all the embedded layers of meaning contained in them without in-depth analysis (Gee, 2011, pp. 8–13).

Humans do not use language in the construction of a single unchanging identity. Rather, humans employ language in various ways to construct alternative identities to help themselves in different contexts. Everything can be associated with everything else through various forms and language constitutes the most important means for the construction and reconstruction of this connection for different purposes. Each word used in linguistic performance has a potential meaning (Gee, 2011, pp. 110–51) and we target our performances to engender one or a few of these potential meanings.

In linguistic performances, one can talk about the existence of established meanings and cultural models rather than an absolute meaning. Therefore, meaning is not fixed and unvarying but multi-layered in its use in different contexts. The emergence of meaning is closely related to the identity and social reality of the writer and audience (Gee, 1999, p. 40). However, social reality does not have absolute authority in establishing meaning either. Meaning itself is not universal and is more locally constituted (Gee, 1999, p. 61).

A written text is a continuation of a specific social phenomenon and invariably refers to other texts or meanings. The meaning in these texts can only be investigated by taking into account the concept of intertextuality. From the perspective of intertextuality, a text has a layered form comprising an external and an internal layer. In the external layer, social practices and institutions are considered the main elements that form the text and determine its meaning. Moreover, the relationship of the text with other texts and ideologies should be considered. The main elements within the text that need to be taken into account in the analysis of external textual elements are representations, actions, and how identities are constructed (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 26–36). What has been excluded from a text is as important for textual analysis as what has been included (Fairclough, 2003, p. 61).

Considered within the framework delineated above, a text is a product of social relations and phenomena and, when analysing it, it is crucial to remember that it has been constructed by means of a social language. Moreover, a text should be investigated from the perspective of intertextuality and attention should be paid to the elements that have been included and excluded from the text. In this way, the text can be analysed until it no longer reveals any further meaning and, thus, its hypothetical and situational meanings can be revealed.

In this chapter, I will analyse the stories and novels written by Hizbullah members from the theoretical perspective delineated above. Seen from that perspective, it becomes evident that no text is entirely fiction and even the most obviously fantastic texts, to some degree, constitute extensions and reflections of social reality.

Most of the texts that Hizbullah categorises as stories and novels are in fact reflections of real events. Yusuf insisted that the events described in these stories and novels are real events where only the names of people and places had been changed.<sup>1</sup> Hizbullah has always been interested in religious fictional texts. My personal observations were that Hizbullah

recruited new members by using religious novels and stories in the 1990s when they were quite active and powerful in the İmam Hatip high schools in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Hizbullah student members would lend religious novels and stories to new students or to those they 'considered worthy of *tebliğ*'. When the book was returned, Hizbullah student members would talk to potential recruits about the story in order to establish they had in fact read it. When rapport was established, members would begin to meet potential recruits during breaks who would then – have to – spend almost all of their time with an older Hizbullah student. In that way, the potential recruit would become isolated from their social surroundings and be introduced to a new social scene, such as invited to picnics, to play football, *namaz*, and *sohbets*. During this period, they would be given more religious storybooks and novels in order to ensure the formation of *tefekür*<sup>2</sup> in the potential recruit.

Hizbullah was not involved in publishing activities at the time and therefore used any Islamist propaganda text, such as novels, stories, collections, and magazines published in Turkey in its recruitment efforts. In Hizbullah circles, the novels by Emine Şenlikoğlu, Hekimoğlu İsmail, Şule Yüksel Şenler, and Hasan Nail Canat were especially popular. Hüseyin, who was active in Hizbullah in the 1990s, told me that the potential recruits who had read these books and passed the test would then be introduced to other activities and given further readings. He stated that these readings and activities were planned according to age and level of prior religious knowledge, and included books about the lives of the Prophet and the companions (*siyer*) as well as 'idea' books by authors such as Ali Shariati, Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Maududi, and Said-i Nursi. What Hüseyin referred to as 'idea' books were often reserved for older students. Apparently, there was no order in which books were given and in deciding on the book to give a student; the level of the student and the availability of the book were the main considerations.

As a result, the approved student would develop a kind of rapport with these people who looked after him. At that point, he would be offered to join Hizbullah and if he accepted the offer, then he would be asked to submit a biography. In his biography, he would be expected to give in-depth information about his life and his family. As a matter of fact, many had been taken to court or put into prison during the Hizbullah operations because of these biographies.<sup>3</sup>

Both what Hüseyin told me and my own observations demonstrate that novels and stories played a key role in Hizbullah's recruitment efforts. Naturally, not everyone who was lent books would eventually join Hizbullah. As Hüseyin put it, if the student who was being looked after for some time did not meet Hizbullah's expectations, he would be left to his own devices.

I know from personal experience that Hizbullah students would attack the friends of potential recruits if they tried to interfere in the recruitment process. I personally witnessed people who were not found *tebliğ* or *davet*-worthy by Hizbullah being attacked simply because they wanted to maintain their relationships with friends that Hizbullah considered prospective recruits. At the time, violence was not uncommon among Hizbullah students who would attack anyone who did not behave as they said, who opposed them, or, who, in their words, 'vagabonded about'.

The violent atmosphere of the 1990s came to an end and Hizbullah gradually lost its influence in schools. Meanwhile, its members started publishing their own novels and stories, and Hizbullah expanded its base in different directions, as demonstrated by members' novels, stories, and 'idea' and history books, which were typically published by Dua Publishing.

As discussed earlier in this section, social memory plays a key role in the construction of history and identity, and the transmission of an identity to future generations by means of a social language. Hizbullah members' increased involvement in publishing may be an indication of their awareness of the role of such social memory and their intention to construct a social memory of their own through publications. In this chapter, I reveal the sources that Hizbullah members use in the construction of social memory, the themes and events highlighted in this process, and identify the common features of the 'fictional' characters in these books.

#### UNCLE BEKIR, XALET, AND OTHERS: THE CULTURE OF DEVOTION AND THE *FEDAIS*<sup>4</sup> OF ISLAM

One of the most prominent themes in the stories and novels of Hizbullah is that of the character who is uncompromising, faithful, devoted, and wishes to become a martyr for their cause.

Mehmet Baran's *Yaşanmışların Hikâyesi* (*The Story of the Past*, 2007) focuses on the life stories of Hizbullah members in Silvan, Diyarbakır

through a retelling of significant events between the 1990s and today from the perspective of Hizbullah. Although Baran's book is presented as a collection of stories, as obvious from both its title and the real life events dealt with in the stories, it is not a work of fiction.

The first significant character in the book is Uncle Bekir (*Xalê Bekir*). In the story entitled *Yiğit İhtiyar* ('The Valiant Old Man'), Uncle Bekir is described as an old man with beetling brows and wrinkles (Baran, 2007, p. 72). However, when the narrative moves on to his actions, he is likened to the companion Amr bin Al-Jamoooh, an old and wealthy Medinite, whose family converted to Islam. Al-Jamoooh had volunteered to fight in the battle of Uhud despite his old age and disability, and lost his life in battle.<sup>5</sup>

In Baran's story, Uncle Bekir's prominence stems from his behaviour. Security forces prevented Hizbullah members from visiting the cemetery in the village of Susa (Yolaç) during Eid al-Fitr in 1999.<sup>6</sup> After three days, Uncle Bekir starts walking towards the cemetery in an act of defiance; or, as described in the story, 'Uncle Bekir moved forward, because he was a soldier of Islam' (Baran, 2007, p. 74). The police stop him and ask where he is headed. When he explains that he is going to the cemetery, the police tell him that it is forbidden and they start arguing. During the argument Uncle Bekir snaps at them saying, 'Are you not Muslim? What religion can order you to block a road to a visit during Eid?' The police officer then slaps him in the face and Uncle Bekir returns the slap, upon which other police officers attack the old man, and eventually take him to the police station. During his interrogation, he gives the police no information and even lies about his real name. But, as made clear in the book, his obstinacy is futile because the police have his ID card (Baran, 2007, pp. 75-8).

Uncle Bekir's accusatory question, 'are you not Muslim?' reveals his view of the security forces and stems from the understanding that a Muslim would not do such a thing. In this regard, Uncle Bekir acts in accordance with Hizbullah's principles concerning the form and performance of faith.

The second story I investigate is *Ve Xalet* ('And Xalet'), which is about Uncle Bekir's 'old lady'. We find out in this story that when Uncle Bekir performs his acts of defiance, his 'old lady', Xalet, and children are protesting in the field between Silvan and the village of Susa (Yolaç). Although the identity of Xalet is not fully disclosed, it may be easily surmised from the storyline that she is Uncle Bekir's wife. She helps an

old man lying on the ground by tending to his bleeding nose after a stone hits him during the clash with the police. She then asks for help from a stone-throwing young woman in a burka, who comes to her assistance after flinging stones at the police while chanting *tekbirs*.<sup>7</sup> The young woman throwing stones and hitting the police are compared in the story to Davut (David) throwing a stone at Calut (Goliath). Meanwhile, Xalet asks the young woman to lend her headscarf (hijab) to cover the old man's wound (Baran, 2007, pp. 85–90).

Then the young woman in burka walked up to the old woman. She was still chanting *tekbirs*.

– Auntie, I have avenged the old man.

She was panting and her eyes glowed in satisfaction. She continued.

– This man started jumping up and down in joy when he threw the stone and hit the old man. Then I pledged to spoil his joy. I approached him. I threw the stone, and my Lord hit the mark. Having accomplished my duty, I have come to you. I had actually heard you the first time you shouted to me.

– Well done, my girl. Now you remove your headscarf and let us stop the bleeding. You already have your burka on. (Baran, 2007, p. 86)

In the rest of the story, the old woman approaches a group of young men and encourages them to throw stones at the police. According to the author, while one might think that such incidents only occurred in Palestine, this one actually took place in Silvan: 'But neither was this place Palestine, nor were those encountered Jews(!)' (Baran, 2007, pp. 88–90).

The main themes that emerge from the story are courage and risk-taking, and heroisation, that is, the glorification or exaltation of a person on account of their behaviour and their reconstruction as a model to be followed by others. The representation of women in the stories and novels of Hizbullah is contrary to this image. The fact that the old woman is addressed as 'Uncle Bekir's old lady' instead of by her own name points to the presence of certain patriarchal codes in terms of gender and gender equality. Asking the young woman to remove her headscarf and saying, 'you already have your burka on' is intended to show that the obligation of a woman to cover her head in the presence of strange men is not being disregarded. The message is that a young woman ought to keep her head covered even in a situation like this. It is an indication of the extent to which Hizbullah members

consider women wearing a headscarf to be an obligation. The case of the women depicted in the story resembles Begona Aretxaga's arguments in her book *Shattering Silence* (1997) regarding political violence and gender in Ireland. Aretxaga maintains that regardless of the level of nationalist women's participation in the political struggle in Ireland, their actions become invisible and a male-dominant understanding of gender prevails. Despite the active participation of women in Hizbullah their position is constricted within a discursive field and their actions are depicted in a way that conforms with gender stereotypes and based on masculine ideals.

The last story I will discuss in this section is entitled *Başörtülü Değil mi?* ('She Wears a Headscarf, Doesn't She?'). The protagonist of the story is a seven or eight year-old girl who 'always wears a headscarf'. It is set during the Hizbullah-PKK conflict and begins with the young girl going to the shop to buy bread; her father cannot leave the house for fear of being murdered by the PKK. In the story, some men deduce from the young girl's headscarf that she is from a Hizbullah-supporting family and start following her. First, they verbally abuse her and then one of the men pulls out a gun. However, they turn around when they realise they are approaching her family house. After arriving home, the young girl tells her father of the incident, upon which he starts referring to her as 'my little *gazi* (war veteran)'. The author ends the story: 'She was now a little *gazi*. A little *gazi* with a beam on her face' (Baran, 2007, pp. 58–62).

At the end of the story, the young girl becomes a little *gazi* and receives her share of Hizbullah's discourse of martyrdom, becoming a veteran, and Hegira, by which the story aims to reinforce the young generation's feelings of group belonging. Leaving the house to buy bread, that is, legitimately entering the public space as a woman, is justified by her father's inability to do so. This situation confirms my previous reference to Aretxaga's argument that women's visibility in the public or political sphere takes place across patriarchal codes, whereby in the case of Hizbullah women can enter the public field only 'for a reason that is legitimate from the perspective of religion'.

In addition to the stories examined here, there are many others where the main themes constitute the idealisation of the *Hizbullahi* protagonists, their possession of unwavering faith based on the culture of devotion, and extraordinary sacrifices for their faith.

‘ŞEHADET (MARTYRDOM) IS A CALL TO THE GENERATIONS,  
TO THE AGES’: THE CULT OF MARTYRDOM IN THE  
DISCOURSE OF HIZBULLAH

Another key element within Hizbullah’s oral and written discourse is martyrdom (şehadet). While the concept of martyrdom is widespread in Islamic terminology, Hizbullah uses the concept in very distinctive ways. Its discourse of martyrdom is closer to the understanding of martyrdom in the Shia school of Islam rather than in Sunni Islam. In Shia Islam, martyrdom is considered to be one of the main principles of faith. Likewise, in the Hizbullah stories and novels, martyrdom corresponds to a form of honour that one yearns for and that brings the deceased high status. Naturally, the concept of martyrdom is not independent of the social circumstances and phenomena that I have discussed in the previous section: it is a construction with men and masculinity at its centre.

The first story is Mehmet Baran’s Şehid Hanımı (‘The Martyr’s Wife’, 2007). In the story, ‘a baby boy is born’ to a family with five girls. In Baran’s words, ‘at a time when Islam was a bed of nails’,<sup>8</sup> the father lies on this bed and becomes a ‘perfect human’ (*kamil insan*). It is a time when the ‘enemy-of-the-faith and *mürtet* organisation’ (meaning the PKK) is active and one day the father is ‘slain’ on his way to work. Following the martyrdom of the father, there is no peace at home. At this point, the story starts to focus on one of the young girls who has the idea that ‘martyrs can intercede on behalf of close relatives’ and decides to marry ‘one of her father’s comrades to become the wife of a martyr’. In so doing, she thinks, she can ‘come closer to receiving Allah’s blessing and forgiveness’. After she marries such a man, she gives birth to a baby boy. However, for fear of ‘her son becoming an orphan’, she starts praying to Allah that her husband does not become a ‘martyr’. At the end of the story, she realises that the father of her child has been spared, but the idea of becoming the wife of a martyr remains her ultimate desire (Baran, 2007, pp. 7–11).

*Melek Kardeşim* (‘My Angelic Sibling’) is the story of two siblings whose father left them and their mother. The story is told from the perspective of the girl and, thematically, can be considered as the continuation of the previous story. After their father’s departure, the boy becomes the head of the household and adopts the ‘cause’. However, after a while, he ‘becomes the target of those tyrants’, murderers’, and heathens’ bullets and becomes a martyr’. Early on in the story, the father and close relatives

blame the boy's death on the girl wearing 'the burka' and 'living in an Islamic way'. In an effort to escape the pressure from the family, the girl marries one of her brother's 'comrades'. Before the first anniversary of their marriage, the young girl's husband is also killed and she is widowed when five months pregnant. She prays to Allah to give her a boy and resists getting remarried. According to her, 'although she has not done the deeds (*amel*) that could carry her into heaven, she is still the sister of a martyr and the broken family will come together again in the afterlife through his intercession' (Baran, 2007, pp. 12–18).

The story of the same girl continues in another story entitled *Musibet* ('Calamity'). In it the widowed girl cannot cope with the pressures placed on her by her relatives and remarries. However, this time she has a peaceful and loving family, and she has two more children in her new marriage. The '*mürtet* organisation trouble' is prevalent in the area. The young girl remembers her 'martyred' brother's words, 'the battle between true and false will continue as long as the world exists.' After a while, the '*mürtet* organisation trouble' is over, but this time, 'the oppression of the *tağut*' begins, that is, the operations by the Turkish security forces. One day, as she is seeing her husband off, she becomes fearful and warns her husband to be careful. Her husband, however, chides her by saying, 'do you want me to run away from martyrdom!'. After some time, her husband is 'martyred by the oppressors' as her brother had been. In accounting for the tragic events narrated in the story, the author contends that 'the only fault of those who have been murdered is being Muslim' (Baran, 2007, pp. 19–22).

I have grouped these three stories together because they share some common themes. The first is the fact that the honour of martyrdom is a status that is almost exclusive to men. This is particularly evident in the story *The Martyr's Wife*. The girl seems to desire the martyrdom of the man she marries rather than her own. In the second story, it is the brother who dies. Close relatives, especially the absentee father, blame 'the burka' and 'Islamic life' for the boy's death.

The repeated themes of 'men's martyrdom and women's pain' stem from the roles attributed to men and women in society. These roles are internalised to such a degree that women, who lose their brother, husband, or father, feel happy about their death and wait to be reunited with them in the afterlife through their intercession. It is as though the family, which is broken 'for the sake of the cause', will come back together as a reward for 'becoming a martyr'. The meaning men ascribe

to martyrdom, however, is exemplified in the story 'Calamity', when the man scolds his wife by saying, 'do you want me to run away from martyrdom!'. His wife's concern for his safety and the wellbeing of his family constitute 'running away from martyrdom' for him.

Another feature that emerges in the three stories is the use of a discourse of victimhood despite the protagonists achieving the martyrdom they so desire. This becomes especially evident in such expressions as 'the oppression of the *tağut*' and 'the curse, trouble, and hate of the *mürtet* organisation.' The discourses of the sanctity of martyrdom and of oppression and victimisation go hand in hand in the stories.

#### MÜRTEK, TAĞUT, AND THE JEW: THE REPRESENTATION OF HIZBULLAH'S 'OTHERS' IN STORIES AND NOVELS

Analysing how Hizbullah's 'other' appears in its stories and novels is crucial in understanding its view of groups and ideologies.

In the stories and novels, PKK is described as *mürtet*. In Islamic terminology, *mürtet* refers to a person who used to be Muslim but who subsequently apostatised. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Islam, the punishment for being *mürtet* is death, albeit the form of death can vary. Some Islamic scholars, however, maintain that apostasy is not punishable by death (Esposito, 2003, p. 22). According to traditional Islamic law, a person who has never been Muslim has certain legal rights; unless they fight against Islam, there is no law that orders their killing. Nevertheless, in traditional Sharia, being *mürtet* is punishable by death. Seen from this perspective, it is clear that declaring PKK members and sympathisers *mürtet* legitimises acts of violence against them. This was Hizbullah's justification for the hundreds of people they killed in the 1990s.

The term *mürtet* has been used, arguably in a deliberate and planned way, in many stories to refer to the PKK. For example, in *The Story of the Past*, Baran frequently refers to the PKK as *mürtet*: 'the period of the anti-religious *mürtet* organisation in the area', 'when the *mürtet* organisation was terrorising the area', 'the cruel war the *mürtet* organisation waged against Muslims' (Baran, 2007). Likewise in Naşit Tutar's novel, 39. *Koğuş* (*The 39th Ward*), imprisoned PKK members are referred to as 'the members of the *mürtet* organisation' (Tutar, 2007a, pp. 222–42). Bilal Yazarlı, however, prefers to use the term *marksist*

(Marxist) to refer to PKK members in his book *Takip (The Chase)* (2012, pp. 15–22).

In Naşit Tutar's book *Hakikat Yolcuları (The Travellers of Truth)*, (2009), the village *imam* refers to the PKK as 'a non-Islamic organisation, which instils corrupt ideas in people and would do anything to prevent Islamic rule'. In the book, the PKK raids villages, kills people, kidnaps girls, takes them to the mountains, and forces them to fight alongside men.<sup>9</sup> The *imam* tells people that although the PKK may claim to be fighting to free their homeland from invaders, they themselves enslave people and cause considerable damage to the area. According to him, the only way to salvation is in Islam (Tutar, 2009, pp. 43–66).

Similarly, in Mehmet Baran's story, 'She Wears a Headscarf, Doesn't She?', the PKK sympathiser who pursues the young girl in the headscarf is described as 'the arrogant man [who] turned his gun toward the girl and, in a bellowing voice, he told her to stop' (Baran, 2007, p. 61). In Baran's *Ahiret Gelini* ('The Bride of the Hereafter'), the PKK members have 'fire ... spewing out of the murderers' eyes. Their faces looked as though the Satan has taken them. They looked as if they have just been with the Devil' (Baran, 2007, p. 66). Hizbullah members, however, are depicted as poor, long-suffering, and saintly devotees of Islam in the context of the war between good and bad, God and Satan, or those on the path of Allah (*Hizbullah*) and those on the path of Satan (*Hizbuşşeytan*).

In the discourse of Hizbullah, the Turkish Republic is described as a *tağuti* system. In the Islamic literature, *tağut* is the common name given to regimes not governed by Allah's law. In the Quran, in Surah Az-Zumar, verse 17, it states: 'For those who abstain from worshipping the *tağut* and turn to Allah instead, there is the glad tiding. Give, then, this glad tiding to my subjects!'<sup>10</sup> In Hizbullah's discourse, however, the term *tağut* corresponds to the opposite of 'truth' and is not used as frequently as the term *mürtet*, reflecting the fact that Hizbullah 'fought' against the PKK more than the '*tağuti*' Turkish state.

The term *tağut* is used in Mehmet Baran's 'The Bride of the Hereafter': 'just when we thought this trouble [the PKK] ended, the *tağut*'s oppression began' (2007, pp. 20–1). In the story, the '*tağut*' regime starts kidnapping and torturing Hizbullah members, and denies them basic human rights. According to the author, the JITEM is behind these kidnappings and they torture kidnapped Hizbullah members who refuse to become informers, occasionally even killing them (Tutar, İ., 2010). This is described in the novel, *The 39th Ward*:

This system has had a hostile attitude toward Islam since its establishment. Did they not hang our scholars, mullahs, and sheikhs? Was it not this system, which banned the Quran and turned our mosques into army barracks and stables? Was it not this system again, which most ruthlessly suppressed the uprising of Sheikh Said and his friends, hanged them, and then banned anything related to Islam? (Tutar, 2007a, pp. 41–60)

There are numerous other examples of the Turkish state represented as an enemy and oppressor in Hizbullah stories and novels.

Hizbullah's negative view of the Turkish state is supported by historical references, such as linking its historical and intellectual genealogy to Sheikh Said. Sheikh Said is a Kurdish sheikh who led an uprising against the Turkish state in 1925. Although debate is still ongoing as to whether the uprising had a religious or ethnic basis, Hizbullah considers the uprising to be religiously based and takes the uprising as a role model. Sheikh Said has also become a symbol for the PKK with the difference being that the PKK views the uprising as ethnically based rather than religiously motivated. Although Hizbullah and the PKK may represent opposing political realities, they have certain historical events and figures in common as their reference points. The conflict between these groups, however, has led them to reconstruct historical figures within their own ideologies in an anachronistic way.

Examples of an anti-Semitic discourse can also be found in Hizbullah's discourse regarding its 'others'. For instance, Turan's novel *Müteahhit* (*The Contractor*, 2009) tells the story of Hasan who, after being fired from his job for participation in the 'Islamic cause', becomes rich as a contractor in Istanbul and forgets about the 'cause'. When he justifies his resignation from the 'cause' to Ahmet, saying it is not the age of *cemaat* (community) anymore and today everyone is out for their personal interest, Ahmet, who later on becomes a successful contractor himself, maintains it is Jewish people's doing and that they intend to destroy cultural values.

Another kind of 'other' featured in Hizbullah's discourse is that of the secular type. This type is not necessarily secular in the political sense, but includes anyone who pursues a lifestyle described as *ladini* (non-religious). Anyone who does not pursue an Islamic lifestyle and does not conform with any of the three types of 'other' (the PKK, the Turkish state, or the Jewish people) is considered to belong to this category. The best example of the secular character is featured in Bilal Yazarlı's novel,

*Akıbet Cennet mi Cehennem mi?* (*Is the Fate Heaven or Hell?*, 2008). In the novel, with the exception of Orhan, a university student described as *Hizbullahî*, and his friend Mehmet, everyone else is judged on account of their non-Islamic opinions and lifestyle. The Islamic perspective is so narrow that anyone who does not share Hizbullah's specific viewpoint is presented as profane and a deviant in the novel.

The story is most likely set in Dicle University in Diyarbakır. There is evident polarisation among the students and Hizbullah's perception of the different groups of university students is clear from the author's descriptions of the characters. The students first take philosophy and then history and debate the source of true knowledge. The author employs Orhan's arguments to counter those of other students. While on an archaeological day trip for the history class all the students die in a car crash. Anyone who did not share Orhan's opinions fails the *kabir azabı*<sup>11</sup> (punishment of the grave) and *as-Sirat* (the bridge between heaven and hell), and is sent to hell. A large part of the book is dedicated to descriptions of the kind of torment each individual suffers, the reason for the kind of torment deemed appropriate for them, and the secular person's regret at holding secular opinions (Yararlı, 2008).

The political orientation of Yararlı, the author, is obvious from his choice of character names. For example, the character named Ruşen is depicted, by implication, as a materialist and a PKK supporter, who suffers the greatest torment. Another character, who is a 'pretend intellectual and holds opinions informed by Western philosophy', is named Tarık. The name of the 'nationalist Turkish' character is Atilla, whose ignorance the author emphasises at every instance.

In Tutar's *The Travellers of Truth*, the Yusuf character expresses his disgust at the 'half naked ladies' he sees on campus. Yusuf is moved, however, by a girl who is not allowed in class with her headscarf on and, refusing to take it off, cannot take her exam. He is particularly offended by 'ladies' who 'snuggled up' with men during registration and pretended that it was normal. Moreover, from his first day in halls, Yusuf develops an aversion to the non-religious men he sees around him because they wear shorts and 'speak in vulgar manner with each other'. In these situations, Yusuf finds refuge in the university's *mescit* (prayer room) and his mentor is the *imam* from his village (Tutar, 2009).

Hizbullah's discourse of its 'others' is especially evident in Bilal Yararlı and Naşit Tutar's novels. In these novels, these 'others' are depicted as degenerate, morally weak, deserving of the greatest of torments due to

their non-Islamic lifestyle, and enslaved by their small ‘worldly’ interests. In contrast, a Hizbullah member is long-suffering and dedicated to the ‘cause’, and depicted almost as a mixture of human and angel.

In the next section I will look at the representation of Hizbullah itself in stories and novels.

#### HIZBULLAH SELF-PERCEPTION AND SELF-REPRESENTATION IN STORIES AND NOVELS

An important component of Hizbullah’s perception of its ‘others’ is its self-perception and self-representation in stories and novels. It is clear that Hizbullah uses a positive discourse in relation to itself and an analysis of the representation of Hizbullah in this discourse should allow us to reach a more detailed understanding of Hizbullah’s patterns of thinking. Here, I will look not only at Hizbullah’s perception of its members but also the characteristics of the ideal model of society according to Hizbullah.

The first novel is İskender Tutar’s *Cemal’im* (*My Cemal*, 2010), which recounts the life of a Hizbullah member by the name Cemal Uçar. According to my informant Hüseyin, Cemal Uçar is from the town of Nusaybin, Mardin, and was one of the three or four people who were close to Hüseyin Velioglu for many years.<sup>12</sup> He studied mathematics at Dicle University, but dropped out in his third year.<sup>13</sup>

The protagonist of the novel, Cemal, is kidnapped by alleged JITEM members after talking about the Turkish state’s threats, raids, and operations in a house where he is a guest, and kept hostage by them for a long time. He is invited to become an informer, but refuses and is tortured as a result. In the end, he is put into prison and some Hizbullah informers kill him during a brawl in the prison warden’s office. His body is taken to his cell afterwards and his murder is covered up as a suicide (Tutar, İ., 2010).

A prominent narrative element in the novel is exemplified by Cemal’s response to his father, after he tells Cemal that he will perish on this path: ‘Father, Allah gave you wealth and children. Just try to consider me the *zekat*<sup>14</sup> of your other children’ (Tutar, İ., 2010, pp. 59–64). The Cemal character is patient, resilient, and prudent, he does not compromise his Islamic lifestyle and principles, and he refuses to become an informer. In contrast to Cemal, the two Hizbullah informers are depicted as weak in character, morally corrupt, and treacherous (Tutar, İ., 2010).

The Yusuf character in Naşit Tutar's *The Travellers of Truth* also constitutes a depiction of the ideal Hizbullah member: he has devoted himself to Islam; he believes religion cannot be experienced on one's own and thus intends to show other people the right path with the help of his Muslim brothers; he worked very hard to study medicine in order to help others; he has chosen the village *imam* as his mentor; and he finds refuge in the university's prayer room when he sees people 'half-naked and snuggled up' on campus (Tutar, N., 2009).

The same traits are found in the character of a man who writes letters to his son from prison in order to show him the right path in Mehmet Ali Gönül's novel, *Umuda Cemre Düştü* (*The Blossom of Hope*, 2007). In the beginning, the man tells his son the story of his imprisonment and Islamic understandings of struggle in a letter. Then he gives his son advice on many subjects such as neighbourhood and righteousness. The boy, who can only communicate with his father through letters, tries to observe the reflections of his father's advice in daily life throughout the book and become a worthy son by following his advice (Gönül, 2007). Similar traits can be found in the Orhan character in Yazarlı's *Is the Fate Heaven or Hell?* (2008). The Ziya character in Mehmet Ali Gönül's novel *Derviş* (*The Dervish*, 2010), however, is involved in 'immoral' behaviour until he starts participating in Hizbullah activities in mosques, where he finds the true path (*hidayete ermek*) and thus becomes an exemplary person. Although the police detain and interrogate him a few times because of his involvement in Hizbullah, he reveals nothing. Ziya tries to remove the television, which he believes is a source of evil, from his family house despite his parents' protests. At the end of the novel Ziya is killed in a clash with PKK members. A PKK member is also killed. As Ziya is dying, he chants *tekbirs* and thinks about his friend Süleyman, who is with him at the time. In contrast, the 'bushy-moustached commander of the [PKK] militia' orders the wounded 'PKK militant's' death so he does not slow them down (Gönül, 2010). Gönül represents Hizbullah and the others using two characters, one who is concerned about his friend even when he is about to die and another who would order the killing of his own friend as it benefits him.

In a similar vein to Ziya's story, in Hazan Sabaz's novel, *Can Laleler Solmasın* (*May the Young Tulips Not Wither*, 2009), the protagonist, Salih, is a thief and drug user before becoming involved in Hizbullah. He finds the true path by participating in Hizbullah's activities in mosques and, in time, becomes an exemplary person. Although Salih's family is at first

pleased with his transformation, after some time they start criticising him for some of his practices, which may at times contradict traditional Islamic understandings. In time, Salih gets involved in certain incidents, is detained, and witnesses the murder of another Hizbullah member. As in most Hizbullah stories, his family make great efforts to prevent their son from being subjected to violence by the Turkish state and become more religious themselves in the process (Sabaz, 2009).

As Fairclough suggests, it is important to investigate what is missing from these texts (2003, p. 61). What has been left unsaid in these stories and novels? Why are these characters depicted as superhuman, being fearless and having no familial or social concerns whatsoever? Why are the reasons for the conflicts between Hizbullah and other groups left unelaborated? Why is there no mention of the violence in which Hizbullah has been involved? Were those people really imprisoned 'only for being Muslim'; or were they imprisoned for involvement in a murder, kidnapping, or interrogation by torture; or was it just fate or pure coincidence? Is it because the answers would have to contradict the positive image of the protagonists intended for the readers? Although Hizbullah claims responsibility for its operations, it deliberately avoids discussing these issues in the stories, novels, and other historiographical texts which play an important role in the construction of social memory.

Male and female characters are endowed with different characteristics in these Hizbullah stories and novels. For instance, most women in Mehmet Baran's *The Story of the Past* are young women, small girls, wives, and mothers whose brother, father, husband, or son has been 'martyred'. Although these female characters also make sacrifices, their sacrifices differ from those made by men. For instance, women do not fight like men, are not subjected to interrogation or assassination, and do not leave the house unless they absolutely have to. The two exceptions to this generalisation are the young woman in the story *And Xalet*, who throws stones at the police, and the character of Ayşe in the story entitled *Küflü Çay* ('Mouldy Tea'), who does not allow the Hizbullah members, who are in hiding in the house, to keep watch at night and instead keeps watch alongside her husband (Baran, 2007).

In *May the Young Tulips Not Wither*, following her husband's imprisonment, the wife raises her children 'in accordance with the cause', attends religious lectures with women in the neighbourhood and continues her *tebliğ* activities (Sabaz, 2009). The same applies to Saliha, whose husband becomes rich through his contracting business

and ‘becomes morally corrupted’ as a result. Saliha is not discouraged by her husband’s moral corruption and continues participating in the lecture circle<sup>15</sup> (*ders halkası*) in her neighbourhood with other women. She is briefly detained by the police at one point. After becoming rich, Saliha’s husband wants to move into a villa, but Saliha rejects the idea on the grounds that it would disrupt her participation in the neighbourhood lecture circle (Turan, 2009). In Muhammed Müfit Yaray’s novel *Amine Sensin* (*You are Amine*, 2011), the protagonist Amine, who is a successful primary school student in İzmir, is touched by the life stories of the Prophet and the companions, which she hears in a *sohbet*,<sup>16</sup> and decides to start wearing the headscarf. In fact, the novel is based on Amine’s struggle to wear the headscarf. Again in Ömer Saruhan’s novel, *Yeter ki Kur’an Susmasın* (*As Long As the Quran Does Not Go Silent*, 2007), Hizbullah’s organisation in the 1990s is described in great detail through women’s activities.

In comparison with male characters in Hizbullah novels and stories, female characters participate in the public sphere to a lesser degree and are more active in religious lessons taught at home, *tebliğ* activities, and child-rearing. Despite their active participation, women’s activities in Hizbullah are circumscribed in narratives. In contrast, male characters are charged with the responsibility of ‘jihad’ and they are imprisoned, subjected to torture, and even die for their ‘cause’.

In a similar vein, Naşit Tutar, in his novel *İmana Susayan Gönüller* (*Souls Thirsty for Faith*, 2007), depicts a *Hizbullahî* village where there are no blood feuds or elopements and people live in equality and peace, thus presenting the *Hizbullahî* village like living in a golden age. That the ideal society in the novel is a village society, instead of an urban society, reflects the socio-economic circumstances and class position of most Hizbullah members who are predominantly from rural backgrounds.

#### MEDRESE-I YUSUFIYE: THE REPRESENTATION OF PRISON AND PRISON IDENTITY

From the early 1990s onwards, Hizbullah members were imprisoned for Hizbullah-related crimes. Tens of thousands of Hizbullah members were detained by the police between the mid 1990s and mid 2000s; 300 were given life sentences and around 10,000 were sentenced to four to ten years for involvement in Hizbullah’s mosque activities.<sup>17</sup> But what does prison mean to an organisation when tens of thousands of its members

have been imprisoned? How is life organised and how is Hizbullah ideology experienced in prison? My informant Kamuran, a former Hizbullah member, was imprisoned for several years for his participation in mosque activities. During his sentence, he stayed in Hizbullah members' wards in various prisons. According to him, there is a serious lack of morale, severe depression and despair among Hizbullah inmates, especially those who received long prison sentences and with little hope or expectations for the future.<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to Kamuran's statements, in Hizbullah's novels, prison is described as *Medrese-i Yusufiye*,<sup>19</sup> where Hizbullah members have created model wards and set an example to other inmates by their behaviour. Considering that tens of thousands of Hizbullah members who have been imprisoned, some serving life sentences, it is not surprising that novels and stories are used to boost morale and offer hope to imprisoned Hizbullah members. Naşit Tutar, who is an iconic novelist in Hizbullah circles, writes his novels in prison.

In this section, I will focus on the representation of prison in Hizbullah stories and novels, and the place of prison in the construction of Hizbullah identity. First, I look at Naşit Tutar's novel 39. *Koğuş* (*The 39th Ward*, 2007a). The name of the book comes from the ward that was reserved exclusively for Hizbullah members in the Diyarbakır D-type prison. The book begins with the events leading to the imprisonment of Selahattin Ürük, one of the leading members of Hizbullah, and four other Hizbullah members. According to the author, the police captain of the prison is impressed by Selahattin Ürük and realises that he is not an ordinary inmate. According to Selahattin, 'there is a reason for everything' and therefore their imprisonment cannot be in vain. These Hizbullah members act in unity from the first day and their behaviour sets them apart. One of the characters in the novel, Fuat, for instance, called for prayer (*ezan okumak*) for the first time in ten years. Following the Hadith, 'cleanliness is half the faith', the Hizbullah members clean up their ward and make it ready for worship. By the fourth chapter of the novel, they have adapted to daily life in prison. Although this 'small community of believers' is depicted in an ideal way, the families of some do not visit because, as exemplified in the character Hasan, they do not find 'his cause righteous'. In the fifth chapter, the Hizbullah members decide to keep watch at night for security reasons, reinforcing group belonging and identity. Keeping watch for security reasons was a common practice for these people before they went to prison. They

adopt the same practice in prison despite there being no real, that is, security-related, reason to do so. They believe that adopting the practice will reinforce feelings of group belonging.

In the seventh chapter, Hasan is released. Because he is the first Hizbullah member to be released, Selahattin tells him, 'you are our reflection outside prison. Therefore you need to mind your behaviour', thus taking a step in building the image of prison among Hizbullah members outside prison. In the later chapters of the novel, many other Hizbullah members are imprisoned and, in parallel, the prison administration is forced to accept the authority of Hizbullah inmates. In the ninth chapter, the author talks about the reputation of the 39th Ward and how people had joined Hizbullah and committed crimes so that they would be put into prison and meet the Hizbullah inmates in person! Such exaggerated glorification of the 39th Ward is clearly intended to maintain high morale among imprisoned Hizbullah members and can be construed as an important stage in the construction of Hizbullah's prison identity.

In the tenth chapter, Selahattin and his friends decide to hold a Hizbullah wedding (*Hizbullah düğünü*) every Monday and Thursday, when new inmates arrive. Hizbullah weddings were organised from Hizbullah's establishment until the mid 1990s and feature round dances (*halay*) performed, at times, by thousands of bearded men. They are a show of force by Hizbullah members and serve recruitment-related functions. Holding Hizbullah weddings in prison, when there is in fact no wedding to be celebrated, may seem absurd at first sight. However, their morale-boosting potential rendered them an effective strategy. At this point in the story, Hizbullah has created its own living spaces within the prison by hanging posters with Quranic verses and Islamic Hadith on the walls in its ward.

In the ensuing chapters, Selahattin is released from prison while other Hizbullah members are being imprisoned as a result of the organisation's operations. The author's focus on six Hizbullah members who are university students (four students doing courses at the faculty of education and two studying medicine) is a counterweight to the generally understood class composition of Hizbullah membership, suggesting that educated people do join Hizbullah as well as those that are less educated. In the twelfth chapter, the Hizbullah inmates carry out a protest in prison for the first time by refusing to answer roll call. Furthermore,

they appoint Hizbullah members to do *tebliğ*, albeit unsuccessfully, in other wards.

As the number of imprisoned Hizbullah members increases, different strata start forming and separate lecture groups are established for provincial, educated, newly imprisoned, and long-term inmates. As the number of Hizbullah members in prison reaches 60, the Hizbullah inmates start considering the idea of holding communal Friday prayers. According to the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam, a minimum of 40 people is required for communal Friday prayers; the number 60 may be evidence of Hizbullah's adoption of the Sunni-Shafi'i school of thought in its religious practices. Tutar states in the book that after the introduction of communal Friday prayers, the prison turned into a place of education and almost became like 'heaven with open doors' (Tutar, 2007a). Such depiction of the prison is intended to motivate Hizbullah members in prison and offer them hope.

Naşit Tutar's novel *Yusuflî Direniş* (*The Yusufî Resistance*, 2013) constitutes the historical continuation of *The 39th Ward*. The book focuses on the memories of Hizbullah members who served a prison sentence in Bingöl Prison, telling the stories of their 'yusuflî' resistance against the prison warden's intimidatory policies. Tutar's description of Bingöl Prison resembles the 39th Ward: 'everyone knows that prison has become *medrese-i yusuflîye*. Therefore, those who are released feel sorry, while those put into prison are happy as they know it is like going to a madrasa or university.' However, for those Hizbullah members who were in the Bingöl Prison, it is not a place to remember with fondness. In fact, the warden of Bingöl Prison is reputed to have been tasked specifically to destroy the morale and motivation of the Hizbullah members in prison, revealed both in my interviews and the novel. In the book, the author refers to the prison cells and wards as 'madrasas.' To sum up, the book tells the story of the prison warden's oppressive policies and the resulting protests of imprisoned Hizbullah members, which begin as passive resistance, such as refusing to answer roll call, and evolving into more active forms of resistance, such as blocking the entrance to the wards. In the book, these protests are known about outside the prison and the relatives of imprisoned Hizbullah members discuss the issue with the Bingöl city governor. In the end, however, the prison personnel carry out an operation to end a 15-day protest and resistance by Hizbullah members and, afterwards, the prisoners are transferred to different prisons (Tutar, 2013).

In İskender Tutar's novel *My Cemal*, prison is likened to Nimrod's fire, which cannot burn İbrahim (Abraham): 'Muslims' cannot be affected by prison conditions (Tutar, İ., 2010, pp. 126–44).

The following conclusions may be made with regard to Hizbullah's understanding of prison. First of all, in Hizbullah's discourse, prison is likened to a madrasa. Kamuran's statements are contrary to the prison conditions described in the novels. I do not know whether Kamuran was ever sent to the 39th Ward or Bingöl Prison and so cannot confirm whether his experiences in prison match those described in the novels. However, it is clear that Hizbullah intends to create an ideal type concerning prison and a prisoner identity. In its ideal type, prison constitutes a place of education for which those outside the prison yearn, and imprisonment does not affect Hizbullah members' 'pursuit of the cause' but only results in a change in their field of action. As Ruşen Çakır argues, such depictions of prison are not surprising considering that after the 2000s, so many members were imprisoned that Hizbullah was faced with the prospect of becoming a prison-based organisation (Çakır, 2011).

Prison became a key component of the process of Hizbullah's transformation from an underground organisation to a legitimate social movement as tens of thousands of people were imprisoned for participating in Hizbullah activities. Hizbullah preserved and reconstructed its identity in the prison context by such activities as keeping watch at night and holding wedding celebrations without a groom or bride.

In this chapter I have carried out a discourse analysis of Hizbullah stories and novels in the context of the construction of social memory. The following conclusions may be drawn from the analysis:

1. The narratives in Hizbullah stories and novels serve to reconstruct the past and the transmission of social memory to new generations.
2. The characters presented in the stories and novels constitute ideal types and abstractions. The villains are depicted as wild, remorseless, and immoral people while the heroes are depicted as extraordinary people who are almost a mixture of human and angel. The representation of one's 'others' as a symbol of evil and brutality is not unique to Hizbullah.
3. Although violence constitutes a major component of the public reputation of Hizbullah, this issue is hardly ever discussed in the stories and novels. The phenomenon of violence has been left out of

stories and novels arguably to facilitate the presentation of a positive image of Hizbullah.

4. Prison is likened to a madrasa in Hizbullah's representation of prison and the ideal society, which Hizbullah could not attain outside prison but claims is realised in prison. Hizbullah's adoption of such a discourse is understandable considering the psycho-social state of the Hizbullah members who remain in prison.

# Conclusion

Turkey being a country of *partial confrontations*, I believe the public and academia have not yet fully faced up to the reality of Hizbullah. The almost exclusive emphasis on Hizbullah violence in public opinion, whereby not even the motivations behind the production of such violence has been a subject of speculation, and the fact that the handful of academic studies have all been carried out in police academies and written from an exclusively security-oriented perspective, are examples of such *partial confrontations* in the context of Hizbullah. The few remaining studies, valuable though they may be, are not sufficient on their own to lead to a *full confrontation*. Moreover, these studies all suffer from a lack of primary data, which, given the nature of researching Hizbullah, is a natural consequence of the subject of inquiry. In that regard, the present study may help fill the lacuna in research on Hizbullah.

The reader may think that the voices of some people are missing from this book. This, however, stems from the nature of scientific work. For instance, a study that focused on the general population's perception of Hizbullah in the Kurdish region of Turkey would have brought to light other aspects of the subject. In this study, I chose to focus on the narratives of Hizbullah members and that necessarily required the voices of a certain group of people to be heard louder than others.

Every sociological phenomenon takes place in a time and space, and thus calls for a historical framework for its analysis. The first chapter is an attempt at understanding the history of Hizbullah via personal testimonies, written sources, and a sociological analysis of the time period and the society in which Hizbullah emerged. However, the chapter constitutes an investigation of the social history pertaining to Hizbullah, rather than a chronological record of events.

In terms of its historical and ideological sources, Hizbullah can be defined as an eclectic organisation. The Egyptian Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood) movement and Ikhwan-related authors such as Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb within the movement are the primary influences on Hizbullah. Said Hawwa from the Syrian branch of the Ikhwan movement was another significant influence. The other major

influence on Hizbullah was the Iranian Revolution. Personalities such as Ayatollah Khomeini and Ali Shariati played a significant role in its ideological development. The influence of the Iranian Revolution on Hizbullah was not limited to ideology but extended into military and ideological training through the connections established with Iran in the early 1980s.

The influence of Ikhwanist intellectuals on Islamist groups in Turkey dates back to the late 1960s, but became more widespread during the 1970s. In the polarised political atmosphere of the 1970s, a remarkable number of Islamist groups were active in the Kurdish region of Turkey. These groups were mostly influenced by the Ikhwan movement and had their roots in the National Vision movement and its affiliated political parties. The leading cadre of Hizbullah had similarly been acculturated in the National Vision movement and maintained organic ties with the movement until the end of the 1970s.

The political dynamism generated by the Iranian Revolution influenced, among other Islamist organisations, Hizbullah which was founded in the same year as the revolution. Hizbullah received organisational, ideological, and military training and support from Iran throughout the 1980s. In this period, many Islamist groups moved closer to each other and began forming strategic alliances. Hizbullah cooperated with the Menzil group and this cooperation lasted until Hizbullah broke its alliance due to inter-group rivalry and Hizbullah's pragmatic approach to the expansion of its base. It must be borne in mind, however, that another reason for the separation of the two groups was Iran's engagement with these groups on a one-to-one basis. Moreover, Iran demanded that the groups it supported convert to Shia Islam. It is known that Hizbullah showed little interest in the idea and preserved its Sunni and largely Shafi'i orientation, leading Iran to end its relations with Hizbullah and provide more support instead for the Menzil group.

Iran's support for the Hafez al-Assad-led Baath regime in Syria during the Syrian military offensive against the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982 stirred up much debate among Islamist groups in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Hizbullah, however, continued its relations with Iran even after the Hama massacre. It is not known exactly when the Hizbullah–Iran relations came to an end. Given that mediators approached Iran asking them to intervene in the Hizbullah-PKK conflict, the relations between Hizbullah and Iran may have continued until the early 1990s.

An important part of the discourse of Hizbullah concerns the Turkish state's 'anti-religious' practices. The Turkish state's secularist policies, which were formulated in the early years of the republic, constitute the main source of the anti-state discourses that many Islamist groups in Turkey have adopted over the years. The understanding that regimes which are not based on the law of Allah are not legitimate had been popularised in Islamist circles around the world by the Muslim Brotherhood. Hizbullah supported this view and, therefore, the reaction within certain sections of the society to the Turkish state's strict secularist policies and practices worked to Hizbullah's advantage. In that sense, it may be claimed that Hizbullah emerged as an answer to the society's religiously motivated reactions to the Turkish state. However, the progressiveness of this 'answer' is a matter of further debate.

That instances of religiously motivated reaction by the Kurds to the Turkish state had historically been, as in the case of Sheikh Said,<sup>1</sup> based on ethnic-religious references, helped provide fertile soil for organisations such as Hizbullah. Considering that Kurdish society is historically known to be religious and conservative, it is not surprising that Hizbullah found support among the Kurds. Hizbullah did not propose a system alien to Kurdish society. On the contrary, Hizbullah reframed Islamic understandings and practices, which have a central place in the daily lives of the people of the area, using a radical Islamist discourse. In other words, it reconstructed the religious devoutness prevalent in Kurdish society through an Islamist ideology.

The sociological state that resulted from the Turkish state's approach to the Kurdish issue played an important role in the development of Hizbullah. On the one hand, given the historical circumstances, it is evident that all forms of anti-state discourse can find support relatively easily among the Kurds. On the other hand, Turkish state violence created and reinforced a culture of violence in the area. Although this may not be the main instigator of Hizbullah violence, it clearly played an important role in normalising it.

Violence used by Hizbullah, which it justifies as a means of self-defence, constitutes a means for achieving its goals. Hizbullah utilised violence mainly in the context of its disputes with other groups in the area. As a result, Islamist groups either voluntarily dissolved, or joined Hizbullah, or were eliminated by Hizbullah. As a result of its aggressive organisational attitude and prioritisation of action over theory and argumentation, Hizbullah became the most powerful Islamist organisation

in the Kurdish region of Turkey in the 1990s. Despite being ideologically an Islamist organisation, given its eclectic nature Hizbullah followed the same path as some left-wing organisations in terms of its action strategy.

The methods used by Hizbullah against other Islamist groups exhibit similarities with those used by the PKK against left-wing organisations active in the Kurdish region of Turkey at the time of the PKK's emergence. The fact that these two ideologically divergent movements both had predominantly ethnic Kurdish following and membership made confrontation between them inevitable. The active violence which began in 1991 resulted in the death of over 500 PKK members<sup>2</sup> and over 200 Hizbullah members. The five-year period between 1991 and 1996 constitutes the darkest period in the history of Hizbullah. Acts of violence which were, on the one hand, justified by Hizbullah as 'acts of self-defence against a threat to its existence' and, on the other, committed by Hizbullah, allegedly founded or supported by the Turkish state as a paramilitary force to fight the PKK, resulted in an atmosphere of great fear and polarisation in Kurdish society.

Having been subjected to all forms of violence by the Turkish state, it is no surprise that the Kurds consider violence by Hizbullah another manifestation of state violence. However, the PKK's understanding of religion and long-standing attitude towards religion led many conservative Kurds to take the side of Hizbullah. Eventually, violence became part of daily life and resulted in what may be described as *social chaos*.

The claim that Hizbullah was founded and/or supported by the Turkish state cannot be easily validated or refuted. Taking into account, on the one hand, individuals' testimonies and the widespread belief that Hizbullah is linked to the Turkish state, and, on the other hand, Hûda-Par's adamant refusal of such links and the demand in its party programme that investigations are carried out into organisations such as the JITEM and Ergenekon, it becomes evident that there is no simple answer to this question. What Hizbullah has acknowledged, however, is that it told the PKK at the mediation meetings prior to the onset of the conflict that a Hizbullah-PKK conflict would mainly benefit the Turkish state. To claim that the two groups started fighting each other without any external influence would again be an incomplete assessment of the situation. It is evident that it was not only the Turkish state that benefited from the conflict but Hizbullah also grew more powerful as a result of it. The Turkish state carried out only a paltry number of operations against Hizbullah in the early 1990s, when the fighting between Hizbullah and

the PKK was at its most intense. Further adding to these suspicions are the increased operations by Turkish security forces against Hizbullah in the late 1990s after Hizbullah almost entirely abandoned violent methods and the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured, and the full-scale crackdown on Hizbullah following the death of Hüseyin Velioglu on 17 January 2000.

It must be emphasised, however, that the Turkish state is becoming more monolithic and authoritarian and comprises a conglomeration of, at times, contradictory or conflicting relationships. Bearing in mind that paramilitary groups and states often interact with each other in indirect and complex ways, it becomes evident that more research is needed into Hizbullah–Turkish state connections. Nevertheless, the fact that there is no evidence for such connections does not disprove the fact that Hizbullah's operations benefited the Turkish state. It must be borne in mind that claims about state–Hizbullah connections are not just voiced by PKK supporters; former Hizbullah members also express similar opinions.

Hizbullah disintegrated for a few years after Operation Beykoz. Around 2004, it re-emerged, this time legitimately through allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated NGOs, *dershanes*,<sup>3</sup> and *platforms*, and hosting rallies, demonstrations, and conferences. In this period, Hizbullah abandoned the use of violence as a method, albeit often implying that violence may again be resorted to if deemed necessary, and formulated a new strategy which entailed becoming a mass movement by means of engaging in legal activities, aid distribution, and organisational activities. In that regard, it can be claimed that, at the present time, Hizbullah commands a broader organisational network in comparison to the past, one that is held together by a weaker sense of group belonging. The organisational strategies Hizbullah employed during its move to operating legally can be compared to those of the Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Ikhwan movement. Furthermore, the expansion of Hizbullah's base can be accounted for by its meeting real social needs and demands, which the Turkish state fell short of satisfying.

The Kurdish issue, which received some coverage in Hüda-Par's party programme, points to the emergence of a new field of discourse, especially in view of Hizbullah's former aversion to ethnically informed opinions on the grounds that they constitute nationalistic thinking. The recommendations in the Hüda-Par programme concerning the Kurdish issue are proof of the validity of the claim that a movement's base can transform

the movement itself. However, the Kurdish issue is not given as much emphasis in the statements of party officials and Islamist references still prevail in Hûda-Par's political discourse. Given that Hûda-Par won only around 92,000 votes in the 2014 local elections, it would be reasonable to claim that, in its present state, the party's programme has not found widespread support among the Kurds. Nevertheless, I believe Hûda-Par has the potential to garner more support.

My assertion that Turkey is a country of partial confrontations similarly applies to Hizbullah. I believe Hizbullah could gain more support in the Kurdish community if it confronted the past in an open and honest way, and developed a more transparent discourse. Nevertheless, this would also depend on the degree of 'tolerance' Hizbullah might have towards different opinions that exist within the partly 'urbanised' and secularised Kurdish society. Taking into account the responsibility felt towards those who have been imprisoned for Hizbullah membership or for engagement in acts of violence and the strict character of the Islamist perspective adopted by Hizbullah, it is arguably very difficult for it to develop such tolerance.

The large attendance at Hizbullah-hosted public events and participation in legal activities of allegedly Hizbullah-affiliated organisations and associations indicate that Hizbullah has become a social movement. Although questions have been raised about Hizbullah's legitimacy, especially within the PKK base, I believe this only serves to cause further polarisation with Kurdish society. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that Hizbullah has a legitimate social base and that the movement continues to exist in response to a need within certain sections of the society.

The fact that there has been only a *de facto* ceasefire between the PKK and Hizbullah, and the widespread suspicions about the legitimacy of the Hizbullah-affiliated organisations and associations, have created new tensions concerning Hûda-Par's entrance into the political sphere. In fact, the growing tensions during the 2014 local elections resulted in various incidents such as the kidnapping of some Hûda-Par officials and the murder of a man claimed to be a Hûda-Par supporter. The attacks on Hizbullah-affiliated associations and organisations during the Kobanê protests on 6–8 October 2014 and the retaliation of the Hizbullah base raised concerns over the possibility of the tensions escalating to a full-on conflict as happened in the 1990s. The efforts made by the then BDP MP and the *Demokratik Toplum Kongresi* (Democratic Society Congress)

co-president Hatip Dicle as well as representatives of NGOs, such as Mazlum-Der and the İHD (Human Rights Association), and Hûda-Par's sensibility not to allow the situation to turn into a full-on conflict all contributed to the creation of a state of no conflict for the time being. The fragility of the situation at this time can be better appreciated if the then ongoing peace process and political developments in the Middle East are taken into consideration. The potential that a Hizbullah-PKK conflict has to destroy social equilibrium and the 'peace process' renders Hizbullah-PKK relations vulnerable to external provocation and interference. As much as there is a need for Hizbullah to confront the past, the PKK has to come to terms with Hizbullah's transformation into a social movement.

An analysis of Hizbullah based only on historical data would have been inadequate. I have therefore focused on subjects such as Hizbullah's self-perception and its construction of a social memory. I established that group belonging constitutes the main factor in Hizbullah's understanding of ethnic identity and religious discourse, and it is closely related to the organisation of daily life. The organisation of daily life practices according to security and confidentiality concerns has been observed to reinforce feelings of group belonging while leading to segregation from other groups on the levels of discourse and action. In the case of segregation on the discursive level, the groups in question have maintained a dialogue with one another to some extent. However, as the discourse justifying violence gained currency, segregation became more severe and feelings of group belonging reinforced, leading to the formation of minimal homogeneities. These minimal homogeneities resulting from disagreements and disputes for various reasons in turn led to polarisation and the cessation of shifts in membership between them. Groups that are homogenised on the basis of shared principles and a belief in the similarity of the group's membership were observed to have increased the potential for action and persuaded their membership of the necessity of going through strategic transformations. This is because, at this stage, feelings of group belonging become powerful and the discourse justifying violence become widespread enough that they allow for the exclusion of other lifestyles.

Hizbullah violence exhibits neither an unforeseeable nor uncontrollable character. As established in this study, the emergence of active violence was preceded by various preparatory stages, the most important of which was the construction and subsequent dissemina-

tion of a discourse justifying violence. In the case of Hizbullah, the main argument justifying violent action was the requirement for self-defence in the face of threats to its existence. The presence of this discourse in Hizbullah's stories and novels, which are aimed at the construction of a social memory and its transmission to the younger generations, confirms this assertion. The narratives used in these literary works are based on a discourse where Hizbullah's 'others' are depicted as evil characters in the form of ideal types while Hizbullah is presented as the embodiment of benevolence and perfection.

In Hizbullah stories and novels, violence has been shown not to constitute one of the main references used in the construction of social memory. Instead, it is only implied by the narratives concerning the culture of sacrifice and martyrdom. The prominence of the culture of sacrifice in Hizbullah can be better grasped by taking into account statements such as 'May Allah accept his martyrdom', which is in widespread use in Hizbullah-affiliated written and visual media, and 'May Allah make you a martyr', which is often used in conversation in the place of farewell expressions such as 'goodbye'. In the context of such a culture of sacrifice, exile equals 'Hegira', prison *Medrese-i Yusufiye*,<sup>4</sup> and death 'martyrdom'.

With Hizbullah's entrance into legal operations, security and confidentiality concerns ceased to be the main principles around which daily life is organised. Although this resulted in feelings of group belonging becoming looser compared with the past, Hizbullah's abandonment of violent methods facilitated the expansion of its base.

Group belonging constitutes the most powerful and transformative core of the three layers of identity among Hizbullah members. The second of these layers is the construction of religion as an ideological discourse and it is largely dependent on the discourses formulated in reference to group belonging. These discourses privilege action over theoretical debates and have more attraction among the youth.

In Hizbullah, ethnic identity accompanies daily life almost as a folkloric element. However, on account of the Islamist discourse adopted by Hizbullah, references to an ethnic identity ordinarily meet heavy criticism as manifestations of nationalistic thinking. There has been increased emphasis on Kurdish identity after Hizbullah's entrance into legal operations and there is more engagement in the Kurdish issue after the establishment of Hûda-Par, albeit only on a discursive level. Kurdishness finds more coverage in the discourses of individuals

within Hizbullah than in the official discourses of Hizbullah-affiliated organisations and associations.

In the discourse of Hizbullah, Kurdish identity is rendered more 'acceptable' via religious references. Taking into account that ethnic identity is brought into the field of discourse through personalities such as Sheikh Said and Selahaddin Eyyubi, Hizbullah's approach to ethnic identity may be described as a case of religious nationalism. In that regard, for Hizbullah, ethnic identity is acceptable as long as it does not contradict an Islamist worldview. The presence of the Kurdish identity on the level of discourse is possible only when it accompanies religious references.

# Appendix: The Text of the Written Interview with Hizbullah Officials

Below is the text of the written interview conducted with Hizbullah officials via Hüseyini Sevda, the alleged official website of Hizbullah. The Hizbullah officials exercised their right not to provide answers to any question of their choice and thus refrained from answering some of the interview questions.

*Bismihi,<sup>1</sup> subhanehu<sup>2</sup>  
Hamdele,<sup>3</sup> salvele<sup>4</sup>*

First of all, it is worth saying the following: You can find the answers to most of your questions in the book entitled *Savunmalar* [*The Defences*], Hizbullah's manifesto, *Hizbullah in Its Own Words*, and in the many published messages and interviews by the *Hizbullah Rehberi*<sup>5</sup> [*Hizbullah Guide*]. There is benefit in using these publications and messages for you.

Q: What kind of social and economic backgrounds do Hizbullah members generally come from?

A: The *cemaat* of Hizbullah embodies people from all layers of the society it originated from, however, it is comprised mostly of the oppressed [*mustazaf*] and the middle class members of society.

Q: What are the reasons underlying Hizbullah's 'success in winning the favour of' a considerable part of the Kurdish society in a short time?

A: It is natural for the *cemaat* of Hizbullah to win the favour of the society as Hizbullah takes its basis from the society's beliefs, traditions, and dispositions. As it is known, the area, where the *Hizbullahî* movement emerged, has been blessed with Islam for the past 1400 years. Our people are Muslim. In such a society, it is natural for the *cemaat* of Hizbullah to win the favour of the people.

Q: Being a Cemaat that takes Islam as its reference point, how do you view the issue of 'violence'?

A: We do not use armed propaganda. We have expressed our opinion on the matter on various occasions. To sum it up, we do not intend to use brute force against anyone unless they try to prevent us from learning Islam, living according to it, organising people around it, and doing *tebliğ*, or unless someone attacks us posing a threat to our existence.

Q: What is your opinion about jihad?

A: The concept of jihad has a broad range of meanings including advising the pursuit of *davet*, *tebliğ*, and benevolence, to refrain from evil, to *mukatele*, or in contemporary terms, to pursue armed action. If you are referring to *mukatele* when you say jihad, then we already answered your question in the answer to your previous question.

Q: What were the reasons for the conflicts that emerged between Hizbullah and other Islamic groups in the area?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What were the reasons for the conflict with the Menzil group?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What was the source of the issues you experienced with the Vahdet group?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What are your views on the Zehra group and what was the reason for the issue [you experienced] with the Zehra group?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What are your views on the Islamic groups and movements in western Turkey? Do you think the *cemaat* of Hizbullah suffered on account of their opinions and actions?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What are your views on the PKK?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: How did the conflict with the PKK begin and what do you think the reasons for the conflict were?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What are your views on the past conflict with the PKK?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: As an organisation, which aimed to topple the secular regime and found a government based on Sharia law in its place, how frequently did Hizbullah confront the [Turkish] state?

A: A detailed answer can be found in [the article entitled ‘The Methods of Subversion Used by the Police and the JITEM’ and in the other sources we previously mentioned.

Q: What are your views on the allegations that Hizbullah was in cooperation with the ‘deep state’ during the Hizbullah-PKK conflict?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What would you say concerning the allegations that Hizbullah was in a relationship of interest with the [Turkish] state?

A: We are not aware of any substantial claims concerning a relationship of interest with the state. Forward evidence to us if you possess any tangible information in this regard.

Q: What are your views on Iran and the Shia?

A: We consider the *ehl-i kible* [People of Islam] brothers. We’d like to abide by the laws governing [the relationship of] brothers. For that reason, we believe that, instead of focusing on the differences between sects, dispositions, religious orders, and Islamic groups, we ought to unite around our commonalities and help each other in fighting the common enemy for our shared goals and aims. Therefore, we are not in favour of our differences from other Islamic movements being discussed publicly and in a way that leads to mischief.

Q: Has Hizbullah had intellectual and/or physical connections with Iran? If it has, what was the extent of these connections?

A: We have declared our ideological principles in our manifesto. In this context, we are in ideological unity with anyone who is *ehl-i kible*. We are close to all Muslims on the basis of Islam. However, Hizbullah is an independent *cemaat* and it is not the extension of or established by any state, *cemaat*, organisation or movement.

Q: What are your views on the political and religious orientation of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries?

A: Unfortunately, the governments in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries are not legitimate governments founded on the initiative of their peoples. They have largely been set up by the occupying powers, especially the British, based on the latter’s evaluation of the political,

military, and economic conditions that prevailed after the First World War. Instead of protecting the interests of their own people, [these governments] strive for their own prosperity and the interests of the West.

Q: What are your views on the Ikhwanul Muslimun [Muslim Brotherhood]?

A: The Ikhwan is an Islamic revival movement dedicated to fostering Islamic unity that was established in Egypt before extending to the whole Islamic world. They have either been a model for the Islamic movements around the world or made cultural contributions to them. In that sense, they have also contributed to the Hizbullah movement by their experience and the literature they produced.

Q: Which scholarly and intellectual sources does Hizbullah use? Which authors and books do you take as references or consider especially important?

A: We try to make use of all the old and new sources contained within the entire corpus of Islamic texts. We do not limit ourselves to certain books or resources.

Q: What are your views about the Kurdish question?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: Being an organisation with a predominantly Kurdish membership, what are your recommendations for the resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: What are your views on Syrian Kurds?

A: The Kurds in Syria have suffered a lot under the Baath regime. They were not allowed to have their identity and citizenship. Land mines and barbed wire were installed between them and their brothers on this side of the border. Seen from this perspective, we could claim that they have suffered more than their brothers on this side.

Q: What are your views on the tensions and conflicts between Al-Qaeda or its affiliate organisations and the Syrian Kurds?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: Did the Cemaat go into a period of self-critique after the Beykoz Operation?

A: As Muslims, we believe that it is essential to engage in self-critique everyday asking oneself 'what have I done for Allah today?'. We advise all our friends to ask themselves everyday whether they have done their duty towards Allah, whether they have performed their duties of servitude towards Allah. In that sense, we constantly reflect on the negative issues pertaining to what we would like to do as a Cemaat and what we have done. A movement reflects on all the positive and negative issues that they encounter, they experience. They work to amend any shortcomings and inadequacies that exist. They draw lessons from what has happened and take advantage of them as experiences.

Q: Did the Cemaat go through any intellectual transformation after the Beykoz Operation?

A: The Cemaat did not go through an intellectual transformation in terms of its principles, faith, and opinions. However, it is a requirement of Islamic conduct and struggle that the Cemaat renews itself and improves their strategies according to the times and the changing circumstances.

Q: Could the tensions with the BDP lead the Cemaat to engage in armed struggle again?

A: Despite the attacks by the PKK and their affiliates against Muslim people in the last ten years, we have been patient and we have done everything we can, so that things do not go back to how they were in the 1990s. However, they [the PKK] have been continuing with their attacks and provocations. Our position and patience are contingent on whether these attacks continue and, if they do, on the form they take. If the attacks become an obstacle for us to live our faith and pass it down to the next generations, then we will consider defending our cause and our Muslim brothers, and responding to these attacks as an Islamic duty and responsibility.

Q: Do you have a programme for the resolution of the Kurdish issue?

A: (No answer was given)

Q: How many people have been tried in the Hizbullah Trial and how many of them received sentences?

A: In the Hizbullah Trial, tens of thousands of our people have been tried since 1991 on the grounds of Hizbullah membership. Some sources estimate this figure to be around 24,000 or 25,000.

Q: What were those taken to court tried for?

A: Over 90 per cent of those tried in the Hizbullah Trial were tried for Hizbullah membership and aiding [Hizbullah]. Among the evidence for Hizbullah membership was forming lecture circles<sup>6</sup> in a mosque and taking or giving lessons. Giving lessons in a mosque was considered equal to being a member of the armed organisation in the mountains [meaning the PKK]. The *elifba* [Arabic spelling books] and *siyer*<sup>7</sup> books found in the mosques were considered evidence for criminal activity and confiscated.

Q: How many Hizbullah members are in prison at the present time? What are their imputed crimes?

A: Currently there are around 300 people in prison who have been convicted of Hizbullah-related charges. Two thirds of them are serving life sentences. The rest were tried for Hizbullah membership and received prison sentences.

Q: Do you think the *cemaat* of Hizbullah has had any faults in their system of thought or committed any mistakes in their actions?

A: Because Hizbullah adopted its system of thought from the Quran and the Sunna, we cannot talk about any mistakes. Our thinking is moderate [*vasat*] and tolerant [*mutedil*]. Because we take the Quran and Sunna as our fundamental sources of reference, we try to design ourselves accordingly. In terms of action, we have never knowingly or willingly done anything that goes against Islam. So, there is nothing unislamic about the Cemaat's plans or the solutions they devised. However, there may have been unwanted errors in their application by individuals, however, they constitute exceptional situations.

Q: If it were possible to go back in time, is there anything that Hizbullah would not do again?

A: As it is not possible to go back in time, there is not much point in dwelling on this subject.

Q: Why do you think the state has not opened the archive seized as a result of the Beykoz Operation to the public?

A: There is a legal and a political aspect to the state's not making the archive available. From a legal point of view, it is not acceptable that the documents in the archive have not been sent to the courts. Tens of thousands of people were tried and given sentences for having their names mentioned in these documents. However, because these

documents were not incorporated into individuals' case files or into the court archives, the police used these documents in a selective fashion as evidence. In that way, they created evidence and tampered with them. Because defence lawyers were not allowed to access the original documents, they could not look for documents that could be used as evidence in the defence's favour. Because the documents used as evidence were not incorporated into the general case file, the judges decided on the sentences based on the allegations made by the police in their case summaries. The police, prosecutors, courts, and the court of appeals all joined forces and gave Hizbullah defendants prison sentences based on evidence that is absent from the case file. They seized people's properties and businesses because their names were mentioned in these documents.

The political aspect of the state's not making the archive open to the public is to prevent the black propaganda they have been making about Hizbullah from becoming revealed. They had begun a big campaign to create a misperception of Hizbullah in the society by means of all kinds of insults, disinformation, and defamation. Documents and information, which will refute the accusations they had brought against Hizbullah, are available in that archive. In order to prevent that from being revealed, they have been concealing it [the archive] from the courts and the public in defiance of law and custom. There is another important reason and that is to prevent the information and documents in the Hizbullah archive, which could reveal the corruptness of the state, from becoming accessible by the public. There are documents in the archive, which, if made open to the public, would show the state's involvement in extrajudicial kidnapping, killing, execution, recruitment of informers, blackmail, etc.

Q: Do you think Hizbullah is represented in public opinion and the media in a way that is truthful and faithful to reality? If not, what are they not being truthful about?

A: The image of Hizbullah, which was promoted by the Doğu Perinçek-led Aydınlık group, the left-wing media, and the PKK-oriented media since the 1990s, is still widespread in the Turkish media. Because most people in the region [Kurdish region of Turkey] know us, they do not give credit to the slanders in the media. However, because we do not have the opportunity to enlighten people outside the region, they get to know us through the media, that are against us. And this leads to misconceptions about us in public opinion.

Q: If you were to change the misconceptions about Hizbullah, which ones would you change and how?

A: The way to correct the misconceptions about Hizbullah is to share the correct information with the public. It is necessary to know people in the way that they describe themselves. Therefore, those who write and make research about us ought to work with correct evidence and information rather than information provided to them by those who hate us and bear enmity against us. People should first empathise with those they do not know, before they can judge them. If people abide by basic human and moral principles, there should not be any issues.

Q: In your opinion, what is the ideal regime for a state?

A: In the case of a regime, what is of essence is that the law and the source of this law must be Islamic/Quranic, that is, there must be an Islamic government. Our preference is for a republic in which Islam rules.

Q: What are your views on Islam and democracy?

A: Democracy may be the most advanced and sophisticated form of governance among the human systems that are available. However, according to our belief, it is well behind the just form of government that Islam brought to humanity.

Q: In your view, what are the reasons for the economic, political, and social problems that are experienced on a global scale at the present time? How can these problems be solved?

A: Although the problems within societies with different cultures, religions, and denominations vary, in general terms, for economic well-being, Allah the Compassionate has provided more *rızık* [sustenance] than necessary for his past and future subjects on earth. Humanity is experiencing economic, political, and social problems at the present time because, instead of a fair distribution [of this sustenance], today's capitalist countries, which are governed by human systems based on interest, allocate all of it [the sustenance] to themselves. In our opinion, the solution to all the problems that are being experienced in today's world is Islamic governance based on divine justice.

Q: What are your views on Turkey's international policy?

A: Although the 'zero problems policy' with the whole world is good, it is a contradiction that, in practice, [Turkey] has problematic relations

with all of its neighbours. If they [Turkey] could have approached the Syrian issue with caution and common sense, they had had a political position where they could act as mediator before the civil war reached this point. Turkey's relations with the USA and the EU [European Union] are not equal [a relationship of equals], [where Turkey is] independent, and do not benefit our people.

Q: What are your views on Israel's position in the Middle East?

A: We consider Israel a Zionist, occupying, illegal, and tyrannical terrorist regime. They must leave the occupied Islamic lands without making any conditions or demanding status. These are the lands of Islam. Although they have acquired some strength on these lands, we believe that Muslims will emancipate these lands, 'whose surroundings Allah has blessed' [reference to Quran, 17: 1] from Zionists.

Q: What are your views on the Middle Eastern policies of the USA and European countries?

A: It is because of the USA and European countries that the Islamic world is experiencing problems today. In order to be able to exploit the Islamic world that they have had their eyes on for centuries, they have been setting Muslims against each other by creating artificial problems and chaos, and exploiting the people's resources and suppressing their will by means of puppet governments.

Q: What are your views on women's representation in social life?

A: Allah created Man from a man and a woman. They each constitute half of all humanity. Women can be present in any domain suited to their nature, provided that they abide by the criteria set out for women in Islam.

Q: What is the ideal position of women in terms of work life?

A: Islam defends the right to private property. Within the scope of this right, women can possess personal assets. Therefore, provided that they abide by the criteria set out in Islam, they can trade or work in another business.

Q: What is the ideal way to bring up a child and what should it be based on?

A: The answer to this question would fill up a whole book. As with anything, it should be based on Islamic criteria and the Prophet's practices.

Q: What are your views on feminism?

A: Feminism is contrary to the nature of women. It is a movement that has been created by international imperialism and especially Zionism in order to alienate women from their essential nature and turn them into commodity. There are things that women can or cannot do, just as there are things that men can or cannot do. In that sense, forcing women into work that is not suited to their disposition is cruel, as it is similarly cruel to force men into work that is not suited to their disposition.

Q: Are women and men equal? Why?

A: They are equal in the eyes of the law and in terms of basic human rights. However, it is not within reason to claim that they are equals in terms of their biological nature. This is so obvious, it cannot be a matter of debate. The reason for their not being equals can be found in their creation. Allah who created both men and women bestowed on them different duties and attributes. There will not be any problems if everyone is mindful of these attributes and abide by their duties.

Q: What is your opinion on *Emri Bil Ma'ruf Nehyi* 'Anil Münker [Enjoining good and forbidding evil]?

A: Ordering good and beware of evil is an obligation by Allah on Muslims for the betterment of society. Every Muslim individual is obligated to fulfil this according to their ability. However, organised powers such as a state or *cemaats*, which are like smaller versions [of a state], are best suited to perform it. Because individuals are limited in what they can do.

Q: What are your views on homosexuality?

A: Homosexuality is a perversion and a disease, which is against human nature, corrupts society and family life, and removes the [principle of the] 'preservation of offspring' [*nesil emniyeti*] protected by the authority of Islam. The Islamic community must take every precaution to preclude such perversions and disease.

Q: What is your position vis-à-vis hermaphroditism?

A: Hermaphroditism is a condition that exists beyond one's choice or free will. This kind of people can be viewed as people born with disabilities. For hundreds of years, Islamic law has been making judgements in and providing solutions to issues that concern this kind of people. In these cases, Muslim doctors, biologists, and

Islamic scholars may intervene bearing scientific and technological advancements in mind. Because patient's circumstances may be different, it is not possible to make a general evaluation.

Q: Iran is one of the countries where sex-change operations are most common. What is your opinion concerning the fact that, in Iran, sex-change operations are performed with the permission of religious and official authorities?

A: If, by sex-change, you are referring to making a choice in the case of hermaphroditism, then, as stated above, it can be performed with consideration of the particular patient's situation and by permission from Islamic scholars and Muslim doctors. However, because changing one's sex without any medical obligation would denote a change in the nature of the person, Islamic scholars do not permit it. We do not know that such operations are permissible in Iran.

Q: What are your views on the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Directorate's understanding of religion? In that context, what is your opinion on the relationship between state and religion?

A: The purpose of the Directorate is not to help people live their religion, but to design it. Such an organisation can exist to coordinate the provision of services, such as making research in order to solve people's Islamic legal problems, establishing religious institutions, or procuring the texts to be used in these institutions. However, we are opposed to an organisation that would be used to impose an official ideology or sect on Muslims.

Q: What are your views on the *cemaat* of Fethullah Gülen and their approach to Hizbullah?

A: We can easily state that *cemaat* of Hizbullah has suffered the most from the *cemaat* Fethullah Gülen and their members in the police and the judiciary. At first, they used to present themselves as a moderate Islamic organisation. However, after acquiring positions within state institutions, we noticed that they were working to change the state and the society according to their will. They were not willing to cooperate with any other Islamic organisation. They strived to neutralise any group, who did not serve them or whom they judged to be problematic for themselves, by conspiracies and defamation, and defeat them by using the power of the state.

Q: What are your views on the PKK, its approach to and ideas concerning religion?

A: As any other Marxist-Leninist group in the world, the PKK [ideology] is based on materialism. Although they have developed an Islamic discourse for their own interest in the last few years, it is in essence a secular movement. In that sense, it cannot be expected that a Muslim approves of or tolerates a movement with a materialist worldview.

Q: What is your opinion of the *sivil cumas* [civilian Friday prayers]?

A: If your question concerns sermons being given in Kurdish, it is right. The sermon is part of the Friday prayer. Friday sermons mean the weekly gathering of Muslims and their being given in Kurdish is the right way. However, it is clear that people, who have nothing to do with the *namaz* [five-time daily prayer] and do not spend their time performing the *namaz*, are organising them for political ends.

Q: What is your view about mother tongue education?

A: It is one's natural right to have one's education in one's mother tongue. The state ought to provide people with the opportunity to receive their education in their mother tongue. When demanded, even small ethnic groups ought to be given the opportunity by the state to have their education in their mother tongue.

Q: Although Hizbullah has had a pan-Islamist [ümmetçi] perspective, why has it not received the favour of non-Kurdish Muslims?

A: We do not agree with this statement. However, because our starting point is Kurdistan, it is natural that there has been more interest in this area [the Kurdish region of Turkey] in comparison to other areas.

Q: What is the percentage of non-Kurdish Muslim participation in Hizbullah?

A: Because our understanding is not based on nationalist thinking, we have not been concerned about percentages. However, we have brothers of all ethnic origins in Turkey.

Q: If the Hizbullah-PKK conflict in the 1990s had not taken place, what kind of a social situation would we be in today?

A: Only Allah knows that. Hizbullah is not concerned with assumptions.

Q: How did Hizbullah 'succeed' in the Hizbullah-PKK conflict despite the PKK's numerical advantage? What was the secret to Hizbullah's victory over the PKK? Did the [Turkish] state or any unit within the

state provide support [to Hizbullah] during this period? Or were there situations where the state acted as a facilitator or turned a blind eye [on Hizbullah]?

A: A detailed answer to this question can be found in the sources discussed above.

Q: How did Hizbullah acquire weapons and obtain logistic support? Did any other organisation offer any support in this regard?

A: No support was received from any other organisation. They have all been acquired/obtained by Hizbullah's own means.

Q: Could you define the ideal society?

A: In the ideal society, Islamic law, which is a realisation of divine justice, prevails, the rulers are *muttaki*,<sup>8</sup> and the society is virtuous.

# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

1. A member or follower of Hizbullah.
2. Personal communication with Serмест, 27/10/13.
3. *İmam Hatip* is the name given to vocational high schools in which courses in Islam are taught in addition to the standard high school curricula. These schools have been a focus of dispute between secular and conservative political parties since the 1990s and, as a result, their curricula and position within the system of education (for example, the level of qualification awarded) have been altered many times depending on the political party in power.
4. Translator's note: The original phrase used by the author is *eksik yüzleşmeler*. The word 'confrontation' is used here in the sense of 'facing up to something' rather than its more immediate meaning of 'conflict'.
5. In Sunni Islam, *imam* is the name given to clerics who are in charge of local religious activities, such as leading prayers in the mosque.
6. *Haram* refers to all things and practices that are prohibited or considered sinful in Islam.
7. *Abbaras* is the name given to arched passages, which connect streets in Mardin. The bottom part of the structure constitutes part of the street and resembles a tunnel, while the top part is often enclosed and considered private property.
8. *Yüksek İhtisas Eğitim Merkezi* (High Specialisation Training Centre) is the name given to religious training centres affiliated with the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Those who receive training in these centres can take up senior religious positions such as *vaiz* (preacher) or *mufti* (a legal expert empowered to give rulings) and have the authority to give *fatwa* (juristic ruling in Islam).
9. *Azadî* is the Kurdish word for freedom.

## CHAPTER 1

1. See, for instance, Gürtekin (2008), Yıldırım (2012), and Yurtseven (2006).
2. The authors of these works express clearly biased opinions in their studies and I noticed that certain data they employed in these studies were consistently falsified by my informants. For these reasons, I chose not to use these works as resources.
3. Operation Beykoz is the name of the operation carried out by the Turkish security forces against a Hizbullah safe house, where the leader of the

organisation, Hüseyin Velioglu, was killed and the Hizbullah Archive was seized. The operation is named after the district in Istanbul, where the safe house in question was located.

4. Among the other pioneers of Islamist modernism are Hassan al-Banna, Ali Shariati, Jamal -ad-Din al-Afghani, Rashid Rida, and Muhammed Abduh.
5. The term *tağuti* refers to regimes that are not based on Islamic law.
6. A detailed analysis of the Ikhwan movement (the Muslim Brotherhood) is beyond the scope of this study. For a detailed analysis of the Ikhwan movement, see Demant (2006) and Calvert (2013).
7. For example, in the article entitled 'Hizbullah in Turkey Revives: Al-Qaeda's Bridge between Europe and Iraq?', Soner Çağaptay and Emre Uslu claim that Hizbullah has become a bridge between Europe and Iraq and that the USA must take precautions against Hizbullah. The article is written from a security perspective and is based on suspicions instead of substantial evidence. See [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hizbullah-in-turkey-revives-al-qaedas-bridge-between-europe-and-iraq](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hizbullah-in-turkey-revives-al-qaedas-bridge-between-europe-and-iraq) (accessed 31/05/14).
8. The ethno-religious uprising led by Sheikh Said, who was a Sufi-Naqshbandi sheikh, against the Turkish state with the support of the Kurdish nationalist Azadi movement. The uprising was suppressed after a few months and Sheikh Said and others involved in the uprising were hanged in the Dağkapı square in Diyarbakır, hundreds of others who supported the uprising were killed, and tens of thousands of others were exiled.
9. The Kurdish national movement that was founded under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan and that has been operating mainly in Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Although in its early period, the PKK was a Marxist-Leninist organisation with the ultimate goal of establishing the Greater Kurdistan, after the capture of Öcalan in 1999, the PKK gave up on that idea and instead started pursuing the ideal of democratic autonomy (Marcus, 2007).
10. Batman was not administratively a city at the time.
11. I could not establish whether *Hareketa İslâmî* (the successor of the *Mealçiler* group) is the same as the groups *Hizbi İslâmî* and/or the *İslâmî Cemaat*.
12. This group was based in Batman and bears no relation to the Fecir publishing in Ankara.
13. I could not establish whether the organisation known respectively as *Tevhid* and *Selam* are the same as *Tevhid ve Selam* (Tevhid and Selam), which were allegedly connected to Uğur Mumcu's assassination in 1993 and became the focus of media attention again in 2014 for illegal wiretapping. Because my informant mentioned these two organisations separately, it partly convinced me that these are in fact two distinct *cemaats* by the name *Tevhid* and *Selam*.

14. I did not make substantial studies into these groups as they remain beyond the scope of my research. However, it is clear that more research is required into Islamist groups in Kurdistan.
15. The term *tebliğ* refers to the act of informing or warning Muslims by means of Islamic knowledge and law.
16. Hizbullah and the PKK resemble each other on more than this common ground only. Hizbullah and the PKK were both founded by people who had previously been active in Turkish-dominated organisations. For instance, Hüseyin Veliöğlü had played an active role within *Milli Selamet Partisi* and *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (MTTB) until the military coup of 1980.
17. *Ummah* is an Arabic word meaning community or nation. However, the common Islamic use of the word refers to the entire community of Muslims.
18. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=478](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=478) (accessed 31/05/14).
19. The Kurdish word *mal*, which is translated here as ‘family’, in actual fact refers to a patrilineage imagined to descend from the same male ancestor who lived a few generations back.
20. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=479](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=479) (accessed 31/05/14).
21. *Nur Cemaats* or the *Nur Cemaat* is the general name of those *cemaats*, which are based on the ideas expressed in Said-i Nursi’s *Risale-i Nur* corpus. These *cemaats* are also referred to as *Nurcu* (followers of Nur).
22. The Gülen movement did not acknowledge the ideological connection between Aczmenidis and Said-i Nursi for similar reasons.
23. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
24. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=478](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=478) (accessed 31/05/14).
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Mülkiye* is another name for the Faculty of Political Sciences in Ankara University.
27. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=478](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=478) (accessed 31/05/14).
28. Personal interview with Mücteba, 06/10/13.
29. Although the word *sohbet* is used in the meaning of conversation in daily speech, in this context it refers to dialogue on religious matters.
30. *Seyda* is a Kurdish word used to refer to madrasa-educated religious leaders who have the authority to give *fatwas* on Islamic and social matters. The word is of Arabic origin and derived from the triconsonantal root s-y-d, thus sharing the same root as the word *sayyid*.
31. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=486](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=486) (accessed 31/05/14).
32. The information that Mele Eminê Kinik was a founding member of Hizbullah emerged out of the interviews I conducted with my informants. The year of Mele Eminê Kinik’s death is unknown.
33. İsmail Altsoy also wrote the book *Hizbullah in Its Own Words* under the pseudonym ‘İ. Bagasi’.
34. Personal interview with Mücteba, 06/10/13.
35. *Me vê hereketê çêkir. Me digot em ê dewletek Îslâmî binin. Me nedigot em ê li xelkê bixin.*

36. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=486](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=486) (accessed 31/05/14).
37. Ibid.
38. Personal interview with Mücteba, 06/10/13.
39. Translator's note: Unless specified otherwise, the word 'Cemaat' will be written in capitals and not italicised in the remainder of this book when it is used to refer specifically to Hizbullah.
40. Hizbullah is a Quranic word meaning the Party of God.
41. Personal interview with Mahmut, 08/11/13.
42. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=482](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=482) (accessed 31/05/14).
43. Ibid.
44. <http://huseynisevda.biz> (accessed 31/05/14).
45. One who pretends to be a believer while actually being a heathen; a hypocrite.
46. Personal interviews with Mücteba and Ahmet, 06/10/13 and 04/02/14.
47. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
48. Personal interview with Mustafa, 13/08/13.
49. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=489](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=489) (accessed 31/05/14).
50. Madinah Masjid is the masjid founded following Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Madina that was used not only for worship but also as an administrative centre. Today, Madinah Masjid survives as al-Masjid an-Nabawi.
51. Personal interview with Mücteba, 06/10/13.
52. Personal interview with Mustafa, 13/08/13.
53. Personal interview with Dilgeç, 22/09/13.
54. During the war between the Turkish state and the PKK, the Turkish state evacuated over 4000 Kurdish villages as a strategy to cut off support to the PKK. As a result, an estimated 2 million people have been displaced and even more people have been affected by the negative outcomes of forced migration.
55. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=489](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=489) (accessed 01/06/14).
56. Personal interview with Mustafa, 13/08/13.
57. According to the information provided by Azad and some other informants, many people acquired literacy at these mosque events.
58. Islamist groups such as Menzil, Selam, and Fecir, among others, which were active in the area in the 1980s when Hizbullah was becoming powerful.
59. Personal interview with Ahmet, 04/02/14.
60. The Ja'fari jurisprudence is a school of thought under Shia Islam.
61. Personal interview with Mücahit, 14/02/14.
62. *Tekfir* refers to accusing someone of *küfür* (abandoning the religion) because of their actions or opinions.
63. Personal interview with Ahmet, 04/02/14.
64. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
65. Two important figures who had a great influence on the Islamists of the time were Said Hawwa, who was one of the leading members of the Syrian Ikhwan movement, and the Iraqi Dr Abdul Karim, who worked as

- a lecturer at the Middle Eastern Technical University in Ankara and the University of Gaziantep.
66. According to my informant Mûcahit, Hizbullah constructed a discourse in support of Hama. Personal interview with Mûcahit, 14/02/14.
  67. Personal interview with Mücteba, 06/10/13.
  68. *Hürriyet*, 06/03/01 (accessed 01/06/14).
  69. At the request of the informants who shared this information with me I will not disclose the names of the people or groups in question.
  70. Personal interview with Ahmet, 04/02/14.
  71. The whereabouts of Güngör's buried body is still unknown.
  72. When Muslims were a small minority in Mecca, they would gather in the house of a Muslim known as Arqam. In this period, *tebliğ* activities and worship were carried out either in this house or in other secret locations. When the total number of Muslims went above 40, this period of secrecy came to an end and they started worshipping openly. Many Islamists describe this period as the embryo period and it is used to justify a movement operating underground in the initial stages of its development.
  73. The issues of why this violence was never directed to the state and Hizbullah's alleged relations with the Turkish state will be dealt with later.
  74. Personal interview with Mûcahit, 14/02/14.
  75. Ibid.
  76. Personal interview with Ömer, 04/08/13.
  77. Personal interview with Mahmut, 08/11/13.
  78. *Tekfiri* organisations apply the *tekfir* criteria in all action and thought very strictly. *Tekfiri* attitudes are quite common among radical Salafi groups.
  79. Personal interview with Dilgeç, 22/09/13.
  80. Personal interview with Mûcahit, 14/02/14.
  81. For information on Velioglu's relocation to Mardin, Adana, Konya, and Istanbul, see [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=478](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=478) (accessed 02/06/14).
  82. The book is allegedly written by İsa Altsoy, one of the top officers of Hizbullah, under the pseudonym İ. Bagasi.
  83. Personal interview with Ömer, 04/08/13.
  84. Ibid.
  85. *Sofik* is a disparaging diminutive of the word *sofu* (devout) in Kurdish.
  86. Although the state officials never acknowledged the existence of JITEM, there is a substantial literature on the organisation and its activities. For example, Arif Doğan, who claims to be the founder of JITEM, offers detailed information about the organisation in his book (Doğan, 2011). Medeni Duran discusses JITEM from a historical perspective and investigates the place of other similar organisations within the Turkish state tradition (Duran, 2006).
  87. *Medrese-i Yusufiye* is used as a reference to the story where Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) is put in a dungeon but through the connections he builds there, and his skills and patience, he gets out of the dungeon and becomes the treasurer of Egypt. According to this understanding, then, prison is not

- where one is punished; rather, it is a place of purification and learning that leads to success, happiness, Allah's mercy, and heaven.
88. My informant Aziz informed me that the Kurdish tunes in Seyfullah were used to introduce the broadcast of Turkish-language news on Iranian state radio and, being a Hizbullah member, very proud about that. According to Aziz, these broadcasts did not last very long. Therefore, this arguably corresponds to the period when Hizbullah–Iran relations were deteriorating. Personal interview with Aziz, 20/07/13.
  89. [www.huzursayfasi.com/sarki-sozleri-sayfasi/1753-sehid-ata-sehitler-kervani-85-s1.html](http://www.huzursayfasi.com/sarki-sozleri-sayfasi/1753-sehid-ata-sehitler-kervani-85-s1.html) (accessed 02/06/14).
  90. In Aziz's words 'in this period the music disappeared, it was just their yelling left'. Personal interview with Aziz, 20/07/13.
  91. Personal interview with Serмест, 27/10/13.
  92. Personal interview with Musab, 24/01/14.
  93. The number of people killed by the PKK is claimed to be around 200 while the number killed by Hizbullah varies between 500, 700, and over 700, according to the source.
  94. Personal interview with Aziz, 20/07/13.
  95. Personal interview with Musab, 24/01/14.
  96. Personal interview with Gülay, 02/05/14.
  97. The full text of the written interview can be found in the Appendix.
  98. Written interview with Hizbullah officials, 03/05/13.
  99. This is a famous dictum in Turkish politics meaning when it is someone affiliated with the state or the state itself who commits a criminal act, they would make the act look as if it is in accordance with the law.
  100. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
  101. I find it futile to discuss the tip-off aspect of this incident as the content and form of the tip-off and the credibility of the – sometimes conspiracy theory-like – scenarios that have been going around are largely unknown. However, I should mention that I have encountered wide-ranging claims, such as that Velioğlu is still alive or that he was killed by the Iranian intelligence on the Iranian border and subsequently handed over to the Turkish security authorities. There are various motivations behind making these claims. However, I will not discuss them as they do not directly pertain to the subject of this study.
  102. Despite the lack of statistical information, Necat Özdemir, who was one of the lawyers in the Hizbullah trials, estimates the number of people imprisoned for Hizbullah membership or involvement in Hizbullah's criminal acts to be in the thousands. Personal interview with Necat Özdemir, 03/05/14.
  103. The amnesty was issued during the Peace Process between the Turkish state and the PKK. The main purpose of the amnesty was to release some people who had been imprisoned on PKK-related charges. But the amnesty benefited Hizbullah more than it did the PKK as more Hizbullah members were released from prison than people imprisoned on PKK-related charges.

104. Personal interview with Necat Özdemir, 03/05/14.
105. Asking members to submit short biographies was a common practice in Hizbullah until the 2000s. I will discuss this practice in detail in the next chapter.
106. Personal interview with Musab, 24/0/14.
107. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
108. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/13.
109. Ibid.
110. Personal interview with Musab, 24/01/14.
111. I believe Hizbullah has not dissolved itself as an underground illegal organisation and that its being publicly exposed more specifically concerns the early 2000s. However, I could not gather any information on this matter during my field research.
112. From here onwards, I will refer to the association as *Mustazaflar*.
113. [www.dogruhaber.com.tr/Haber/Mustazaf-Derin-Kapatilmasina-Sebeboan-Suc-Neydi-34887.html](http://www.dogruhaber.com.tr/Haber/Mustazaf-Derin-Kapatilmasina-Sebeboan-Suc-Neydi-34887.html) (accessed 05/06/14).
114. The term *tağuti* refers to regimes that are not based on Islamic law and *dar al-harb* refers to countries that are governed by non-Muslim people or governed by a regime that is not based on Islamic law.
115. Gürbüz erroneously states that the word *mustazaf* comes from Persian. While the word is commonly used in Persian, it is of Arabic origin.
116. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/2013.
117. [www.mustazafder.com/Mustazaf-der.html](http://www.mustazafder.com/Mustazaf-der.html) (accessed 05/06/14).
118. [www.nytimes.com/2006/02/12/international/europe/12denmark.html?r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/12/international/europe/12denmark.html?r=0) (accessed 05/02/14).
119. Although Hizbullah remained an underground organisation and chose to keep its operations and actions secret for a long time, it never neglected the message-giving aspect of its actions – that is, give a message to its rivals and distinguish itself from them – and showed a degree of prudent sensitivity in constructing its public image. It is not coincidental that its first operation against the PKK involved the murder of a *Süryani* man, showing that the operation ‘was not carried out against a Muslim’. Again it cannot be a coincidence that Hizbullah would wait for its targets in alleyways and execute them by shooting a single bullet in the back of the head. If anything, this was to promote Hizbullah as an element of fear and authority and to demonstrate the outcome of actions and discourses against Hizbullah.
120. The association operates under the name *Mustazaflar Cemiyeti* (Mustazaflar Society) today. Their current activities can be viewed at [www.mustazafder.com/Mustazaf-der.html](http://www.mustazafder.com/Mustazaf-der.html) (accessed 05/02/14).
121. The association was closed down by the Diyarbakır Court of First Instance (*Diyarbakır Asliye Ceza Mahkemesi*) in 2010 and this decision was subsequently approved by the Court of Cassation (*Yargıtay*) in 2012. See [www.haber-turk.com/gundem/haber/741601-mustazaf-derin-kapatilmasina-yargitaydan-onay](http://www.haber-turk.com/gundem/haber/741601-mustazaf-derin-kapatilmasina-yargitaydan-onay) (accessed 05/06/14).

122. An educational facility often administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, where Quran is taught in Arabic and general religious education is given. Hizbullah-run *kuran kursus* are beyond the control of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, however, their operations are legitimate.
123. *Dershanes* are private educational facilities in Turkey designed to prepare students for the university entrance exams.
124. [www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25143700/](http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25143700/) (accessed 05/06/14).
125. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
126. It is important to bear in mind that, as a result of the Syrian civil war, Salafi groups gained more power in the area, thus making violence more prevalent both in discourse and action.
127. ISIS changed their name to Islamic State (IS) in July 2014.
128. This number exceeded 100 by mid 2016.
129. Personal interview with Fethullah, 11/08/13.
130. Ibid.
131. <http://hudapar.org/Detay/Sayfalar/205/parti-programi.aspx> (accessed 05/06/14).
132. *Andımız* (Our Oath) is the name of the oath students in primary education in Turkey were expected to recite en masse at the start of each school day. The oath text contained many Turkish nationalist themes, such as sacrificing oneself for the sake of the homeland. The oath had long been the focus of criticism on account of its negative effects on non-Turkish minorities in Turkey and was finally abandoned in 2013.
133. Village guards are militia established by the Turkish state to defend national security against the PKK. In this way, certain groups gained privileges, and conflict and violence among the Kurds was exacerbated.
134. *Ergenekon* is the name given to plans for a coup d'état by an ultra-secular and nationalist group within the Turkish army. Thousands of military officers were expelled from the army on the grounds of involvement in the plans and hundreds of officers were imprisoned for some years.
135. Seyit Rıza was an Alevi spiritual leader who was well known and respected in the Dersim area. He was executed by the Turkish state on the grounds that he led the Dersim uprising.
136. Quoted from the Huda-Par party programme, <http://hudapar.org/Detay/Sayfalar/205/parti-progra-mi.aspx> (accessed 05/06/14).
137. Personal interview with Sermest, 27/10/13.
138. Kamuran told me in an interview before the election that if Huda-Par remained below their expectation in the elections, they would try to put it down to the party being newly founded.
139. These operations are considered the precursor of the attempted military coup on 15 July 2016. Both incidents took place between the AK Party government and the Fethullah Gülen movement, which has been organised within the state for many years and even garnered the support of some state departments and political parties. The AK Party government held the Fethullah Gülen movement responsible for the 17–25 January

- operations and adopted Islamist discourses with a more pronounced Turkish nationalist tone.
140. Personal interview with Necat Özdemir, 03/05/14.
  141. The HDP and BDP are two closely related political parties with a predominantly Kurdish base. The two parties were formed out of the same political structure on the basis that the HDP would focus on the general elections and represent the transformation of the movement into a national political party in Turkey rather than a Kurdish one as the movement has been long recognised and the BDP was to focus on local administration. Strong relations and cooperation still continue between the two parties.
  142. Hizbulkontra is a compound word made up of the words Hizbullah and kontrgerilla (counter-guerrilla). The word carries the implication that Hizbullah is a counter-guerrilla organisation that has been founded/ supported by the Turkish state against the PKK.
  143. [www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/huda-pardan-bdp-ve-pkky-uyari](http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/huda-pardan-bdp-ve-pkky-uyari) (accessed 05/06/14).
  144. Kobanê protests refer to the incidents of large-scale public unrest in various towns and cities in the Kurdish region of Turkey in October 2014 whereby tens of thousands of Kurds gathered in protest of the ISIS siege on the city of Kobanê in northern Syria and to show support for the people of Kobanê. More than 50 people died in clashes between the police, Hizbullah members, and protestors.
  145. *Taziye* is the name given to the practice of visiting the family of a recently deceased person in order to give one's condolences.
  146. Not welcoming people on *taziye* visits is characteristic of blood feuds and carries the particular message that the death of the person in question will be avenged.
  147. Bahattin Temel, the vice chairman of Hüda-Par, held the gendarmerie, who allegedly did not interfere with the PKK militants crossing the area, responsible for the killing of Cengiz Tiryaki and presented the official report by the Karlıova Gendarmerie Station (*Karlıova Jandarma Karakol Komutanlığı*) as evidence. See [www.milliyet.com.tr/huda-par-li-tiryakinin-olu-muyle-gundem-1981187/](http://www.milliyet.com.tr/huda-par-li-tiryakinin-olu-muyle-gundem-1981187/) (accessed 09/12/14).
  148. The KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) was proposed by the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in his 2014 book *Bir Halkı Savunmak (Defending a Nation)* as the umbrella organisation within a system of democratic confederalism, which he proposed in place of a nation-state system that the PKK had previously strived to establish in the Kurdish context.
  149. An article published in *Özgür Gündem*, a newspaper close to the PKK line, is an example of the PKK's perception of Hizbullah: [www.ozgur-gundem.com/index.php?haberID=4088&haberBaslik=HIZBULLAH%20VE%20HIZBUL-KONTRA%20GERÇEĞİ%20-%201&action=haber\\_detay&module=nuce](http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/index.php?haberID=4088&haberBaslik=HIZBULLAH%20VE%20HIZBUL-KONTRA%20GERÇEĞİ%20-%201&action=haber_detay&module=nuce) (accessed 05/02/14).
  150. My estimation of this figure is based on the number of administrative personnel involved in the few thousand Hizbullah-affiliated associations and other organisations.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Sharia; Islamic canonical law.
2. Sufi order or sect.
3. Knowledge in Sufi thought.
4. Truth in Sufi thought.
5. See Chapter 1 endnote 54.
6. When he submits (*biat etmek*) to a sheikh, he must first repent for his sins under the guidance of his sheikh by performing a ritual ablution of the whole body (*gusül abdesti*) and ask God for forgiveness for his sins, and resolve never to repeat them.
7. In Islamic Sufism, *haqiqa* is the name given to one of the final stages in reaching the ultimate truth about the universe.
8. *İçtihat* refers to making a judgement on a subject where there is no precedent for it, using the *icma*, that is, the consensual opinions of past Islamic scholars, and the Hadith.
9. Hizbullah members would use code names of their own choosing. This would both protect members' identities in the case of operations by Turkish security personnel and allow them to dispose of their old identities and symbolically mark the onset of a new life in Hizbullah.
10. *Lê ev dosya li vê dinyayê nayê vekirin. Piştî çavên X û piştî yên bi hezaran ... Heta em nekevin hizûra xwedê ev dosya nayê vekirin.*
11. Personal interview with Aziz, 20/0713.
12. The dictionary meaning of the word *alaka* is relation or connection. The word is also used in Surah Al-Mu'minun, verse 14 to refer to embryo in the context of prenatal development. However, in Hizbullah's usage, *alaka* embodies both the meaning of 'relation' as well as 'embryo' in that the Hizbullah recruit is likened to an embryo in development.
13. Musab's understanding that the name Mervan is not preferred by Sunni Muslims while being common among the Alevis is diametrically opposed to reality. The name of the person responsible for the murder of Hussain during the Battle of Kerbela is Mervan. Therefore, it is unimaginable among the Alevis to name a child after him. Mervan is not a common name among Sunni Muslims either. Perhaps it was the strangeness of the name that led Musab to believe it was a commonly found name among the Alevis.
14. Meaning he will fight them as fiercely as he would have fought someone he does not know.
15. Personal interview with Musab, 24/01/14.
16. Baggy trousers worn by men especially in the Kurdish region of Turkey.
17. Personal interview with Fethullah, 11/08/13.
18. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQI9xGijSjg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQI9xGijSjg) (accessed 15/06/14).
19. Personal interview with Dilgeş, 22/09/13.
20. Reports addressed to the city administration are folded very small and after putting the letter 'C', short for Cemaat, on the folded paper, delivered to the highest Hizbullah authorities.

21. Musab is referring to supporters of the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
22. Musab is referring to Velioglu's death during Operation Beykoz, Edip Gümüş and Cemal Tutar's failure to destroy the Hizbullah Archive, and their surviving the operation unharmed.
23. Personal interview with Musab, 24/01/14.
24. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/13.
25. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
26. The names of these groups are not disclosed at the request of my informants.
27. The Zehra group is a *Nur cemaat* that puts more emphasis on the Kurdishness of Said-i Nursi compared to others.
28. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1982\\_Hama\\_massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1982_Hama_massacre) (accessed 16/06/14).
29. The disintegration of Islamist groups in the area over disagreements concerning Iran's involvement in the Hama Massacre can be compared to the disputes and subsequent fragmentation of left-wing groups caused by the USSR's invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
30. Personal interview with Ömer, 04/08/13.
31. Personal interview with Hamza, 01/02/14.
32. Personal interview with Ömer, 04/08/13.
33. Personal interview with Mücahit, 14/02/14.
34. An individual or group supporting the idea of a politically united nation-state of Kurdistan.
35. Personal interview with Mücahit, 14/02/14.
36. Ibid.
37. Personal interview with İzzettin, 01/02/14.
38. Personal interview with Fethullah, 11/08/13.
39. The tone of these accusations and allegations, and the role they played in the justification of violence will be investigated in the next section.
40. Minimal homogeneity refers to two groups with minimal differences in action and thought moving away from each other on account of political violence, group belonging, or a clash of interests and the continuation of this process of separation until a strict homogeneity is attained within the group.
41. *Tağuti* is the adjective form of the term *tağut*.
42. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/13.
43. I will not disclose the pseudonyms of these informants for reasons of security.
44. Although it is known that there are former Hizbullah members among those who converted to Shia Islam, the principal converts to Shia Islam were from the Menzil group.
45. Personal interview with Necat Özdemir, 03/05/14.
46. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
47. [http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article\\_id=480](http://huseynisevda.biz/articles.php?article_id=480) (accessed 16/06/14).
48. Personal interview with Kamuran, 22/01/14.
49. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.

50. Personal interview with Mehmet Göktaş, 02/04/14.
51. Yusuf is referring to the Vahdet group here.
52. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
53. Personal interview with Necat Özdemir, 03/05/14.
54. Personal interview with Mücahit, 14/02/14.
55. Personal interview with Hamza, 23/01/14.
56. Hizbullah is a Quranic word that means 'the party of Allah', however, Ahmet uses the word *Hizb* meaning clique, fraction, or party to refer to Hizbullah.
57. Personal interview with Ahmet, 04/02/14.
58. See endnote no. 142 in Chapter 1.
59. *Hizbuşşeytan* is a Quranic word used to refer to those who are not from the party of Allah and/or are against it.
60. Ergenekon is the name of a clique allegedly operating in the 2000s within the Turkish military. As the Gülen movement started being considered a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government in 2016, the prosecutors in the trials of alleged Ergenekon members were revealed to be Fetullah Gülen supporters and therefore the soldiers tried in the Ergenekon trials have been acquitted and their honour restored.
61. Personal interview with İzzettin, 01/02/14.
62. [www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/hizbullah\\_a\\_yakin\\_site\\_yazinca\\_escinsellik\\_paneli\\_iptal\\_edildi-1187821](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/hizbullah_a_yakin_site_yazinca_escinsellik_paneli_iptal_edildi-1187821) (accessed 17/06/14).
63. <http://muhalefet.org/haber-hizbullahtan-duman-grubuna-tehdit-19-6130.aspx> (accessed 17/06/14).
64. The complete interview text can be found in the Appendix.
65. This refers to the tensions between the BDP and Hüda-Par during the 2014 local elections. Although the BDP continued to operate as a political party, it became responsible for local governments. In its place, the HDP was founded mainly on the initiative of the Kurdish movement.
66. *Siyer* is the generic name for biographies of Muhammad and his companions.
67. Habil and Qabil are the two sons of Adam. According to the myth, Qabil kills Habil out of jealousy and this constitutes the first murder on earth.
68. Personal interview with Serbest, 27/10/13.
69. Personal interview with Musab, 24/01/14.
70. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
71. Personal interview with Serbest, 27/10/13.
72. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
73. Personal interview with Kamuran, 22/01/14.
74. Here the informant is referring to certain speculations concerning the murder of Hüseyin Velioglu and points out that Hizbullah does not take these speculations seriously.
75. Gonca Kuriş, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, and Uğur Mumcu were intellectuals murdered in the 1990s. Kuriş was an Islamist feminist and was murdered by Hizbullah. Both Kışlalı and Mumcu were journalists working for the

- Cumhuriyet* newspaper and they were assassinated in separate car-bomb attacks. Those behind their assassinations were never revealed.
76. Bahriye Üçok was a professor in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Ankara and was well known for her left-wing modernist interpretations of Islam. She was assassinated in 1990 by unknown assailants.
  77. Although Azad claims Hizbullah members could not carry out operations without orders from their superiors, my research data show that while this may be the general rule, save for a few sensational cases of assassination, there are numerous cases of Hizbullah members operating on their own initiative.
  78. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
  79. These questions chiefly concern why they could not destroy the archive when Velioglu was killed, how they could allow the leader of Hizbullah to be killed, how Edip Gümüŝ (the current leader of Hizbullah) and Cemal Tutar could survive unharmed, Hizbullah's explanations of the violent acts and executions that received coverage in the media and that many Hizbullah members had heard rumours about, and finally, the qualities of the new leader.
  80. Personal interview with Kamuran, 22/01/14.
  81. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
  82. This issue was dealt with in Chapter 1.
  83. Personal interview with Dilgeŝ, 22/09/13.
  84. Personal interview with Sinan, 30/11/13. As I will investigate the existence of an ethnic discourse within Hizbullah in the next subsection, Sinan's emphasis on the connection with Turkish Islamism is the focus of this extract.
  85. Personal interview with Dilgeŝ, 20/10/14.
  86. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
  87. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
  88. Personal interview with Dilgeŝ, 22/09/13.
  89. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/13.
  90. Personal interview with Kamuran, 22/01/14.
  91. Long live Islam! Death to slavery!
  92. Although Sinan describes Hizbullah as a *Kurdistanî* organisation, later on during the interview he also stressed that Hizbullah had become indifferent to the Kurdish issue on account of the influence of Turkish Islamism. Personal interview with Sinan, 30/11/13.
  93. Personal interview with Mahmut, 15/11/13.
  94. The Islamic Party of Kurdistan was established in 1979 in Mecca by Muhammad Salih Mustafa and its founding declaration was drawn up by the Syrian Kurdish Ikhwanist Said Hawwa, who is a great influence on Hizbullah. The Islamic Party of Kurdistan has been active in Turkey, the USA, and Europe. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_Kurdistan\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Kurdistan_Party) and [www.mnyekta.com/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=1040](http://www.mnyekta.com/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=1040) (accessed 18/06/14).

95. For example, Dilgeş left Hizbullah on account of their anti-PKK and anti-Kurdish discourse and engagement in violence. Another informant Ahmet referred to himself in recounting a past event saying, 'we are Muslim, we are the people of Sharia, and we are *Kurdistanî*. We are fighting for the liberation of Kurdistan' (personal interview with Ahmet, 04/02/14).
96. Personal interview with Mahmut, 08/11/13.
97. *Azadî* is the Kurdish word for freedom.
98. Personal interview with Mahmut, 08/11/13.
99. Personal interview with Serмест, 27/10/13.
100. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
101. The informant is claiming that they were being inclusive by pointing out that Hizbullah not only produced albums in Kurdish but also in Arabic for a small Arab minority like the Mihelmi.
102. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
103. The youth organisation of the Turkish ultra-nationalist *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Action Party).
104. The rally the Hizbullah-affiliated Lovers of the Prophet Platform (*Peygamber Sevdahları Platformu*) organised in the Kazlıçeşme Square in Istanbul.
105. Misbeliefs that emerged and became popular subsequent to the emergence of Islam.
106. Rules and principles that emerged in Islam after the time of Muhammad and, are therefore considered fallacies.
107. Personal interview with Mehmet Göktaş, 03/04/14.
108. *Sivil cuma* refers to a particular type of activism whereby people were encouraged to perform their congregational Friday prayers in public squares instead of Turkish state-governed mosques. The mainstream Kurdish political movement spearheaded this form of activism to protest the state's hostile attitude towards Kurds' right to their mother tongue.
109. Written interview with Hizbullah officials, 04/05/14.
110. Personal interview with Yusuf, 23/05/14.
111. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/13.
112. Personal interview with Mahmut, 08/11/13.
113. This phrase is an example of Hizbullah's construction of Islam as an ideological discourse. Moreover, I believe the use of the word *serok* (leader) in the phrase is noteworthy and it may be construed as an expression of Hizbullah's objection and opposition to the PKK's use of the word in reference to Abdullah Öcalan.
114. The principle of the oneness and uniqueness of Allah in Islam.
115. The hand gesture that became popular after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt.
116. *Tekbir* is the name given to an Islamic chant and an Islamic phrase meaning, 'God is great' or 'God is the greatest'. In this context, *tekbir* specifically refers to a command-like expression, to which people respond by chanting 'Allahu Ekber'.

117. *Tilavet* refers to the recitation of the Quran to a crowd according to the rules of Quranic recitation (*tecvit*). It must be emphasised that the first sections of the Sura al-Feth, which is concerned with preventing Muhammad and the companions from going from Medina to Mecca during the time of the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah, is interpreted by Islamic commentators as the first *sura* where it was declared to Muhammad that Mecca would be conquered by Muslims. I believe the fact that the selected section depicts a situation which has not yet come about but is a harbinger of future success corresponds to Hizbullah's discourse whereby it associates current affairs with the history of Islam, thus justifying them and thereby motivating the crowds.
118. Salman al-Farisi was one of the Prophet Mohammed's non-Arabic companions. Islamists generally refer to Salman and point to the high esteem he entertained in Arab society on account of his faith in order to emphasise Islam's non-rationally discriminating nature.
119. The pressure on Hizbullah by its supporter base was not given a primary role in the organisation's decision-making processes. This issue was dealt with at the end of the first chapter within the context of the figure, 'Levels of Hizbullah Affiliation'.
120. Idris-i Bitlisi (1455–1520), Kurdish scholar and feudal leader, played an active role in the rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Iran by garnering the support of a large number of Kurdish tribes for the Ottoman Empire.
121. Personal interview with Azad, 28/10/13.
122. Personal interview with Sinan, 30/11/13.
123. Examples in this regard include preventing tango lessons from being taught in Batman claiming, 'tango is the greatest indecency', protesting and eventually stopping an academic talk on homosexuality, statements made against the concert by the Turkish rock band Duman on the grounds that they insult the Quran in one of their songs. See <http://t24.com.tr/haber/batmanda-tangoyapmak-yasak,69198> [www.dogruhaber.com.tr/Haber/Iptal-Yetmez-Bu-Ahlaksizlar-Mardinden-Gitmeli-125261.html](http://www.dogruhaber.com.tr/Haber/Iptal-Yetmez-Bu-Ahlaksizlar-Mardinden-Gitmeli-125261.html) and [www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/duman\\_grubu\\_diyarbakirdaki\\_konserini\\_verdi-1133140](http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/duman_grubu_diyarbakirdaki_konserini_verdi-1133140) (accessed 19/06/14).
124. By theoretical abstraction, I am referring to the theoretical results achieved after the data are classified into categories and themes.

### CHAPTER 3

1. Personal interview with Yusuf, 03/05/14.
2. Contemplation in the Sufi tradition.
3. Personal interview with Hüseyin, 10/11/13.
4. Here the word *fedai* refers to one who sacrifices their life for a cause.
5. [www.enfal.de/eccdad84.htm](http://www.enfal.de/eccdad84.htm) (accessed 14/05/14).
6. <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnewsmobile.aspx?id=-90062> (accessed 14/05/14).
7. See endnote no. 116 in Chapter 2.

8. Emphasising the risks involved in engaging in Hizbullah's Islamist activities at the time.
9. According to the village *imam*, PKK women and men members sleep in the same caves. The ideological basis of the village *imam*'s expectation of women and men to sit separately in a mountain cave becomes evident when his statement is compared with the story *And Xalet*, where the young woman would not remove her headscarf during a clash with the police.
10. A detailed Islamic interpretation of these verses is beyond the scope of this study.
11. According to Islamic thought, after one dies a period of time is spent in the grave until the Day of Judgement. While those sent to heaven experience life in heaven during this period, those deserving of hell suffer the *kabir azabı* (punishment of the grave). This is a controversial issue and many non-Sunni scholars of Islam repudiate the concept of *kabir azabı*.
12. The significance of *My Cemal* for the public is the fact that the book arguably constitutes a written confession of the murder of Gaffar Okkan, the Chief of Police for Diyarbakır, in 2001. In the book's final chapter, the author reports that when Veliöğlü finds out about Cemal Uçar's suspicious suicide/murder in Istanbul, he personally orders the killing of Gaffar Okkan and the two Hizbullah informers involved in Uçar's death and adds that if he does not live to see it, his order should be considered his will (Tutar, İ., 2010, pp. 214–15). In contrast to public knowledge, it becomes evident that Okkan's assassination was decided prior to Operation Beykoz and executed by Hizbullah after Veliöğlü's death.
13. Personal interview with Hüseyin, 10/11/13.
14. *Zekat* is a form of Islamic charity which involves the annual giving of a certain percentage of one's wealth to a designated poor individual or individuals. Giving *zekat* is an obligation on all Muslims and, as such, it constitutes one of the five pillars of Islam.  
In the example from the book, Cemal uses the concept of *zekat* in reference to his father's larger family. In Cemal's usage, *zekat* refers to both dying on the true path and being sacrificed or martyred because of the dangers involved in being a high-ranking Hizbullah official. Cemal's metaphoric use of the concept of *zekat* is reminiscent of the Sons of the Cemaat in Chapter 2, where the concept of sacrifice was explained through the example of Abraham.
15. A lecture circle is a reading group that meets periodically to read and discuss particular subjects.
16. See endnote no. 29 in Chapter 1.
17. Personal interview with Necat Özdemir, 03/05/14.
18. Personal interview with Kamuran, 29/10/13.
19. See endnote no. 87 in Chapter 1.

## CONCLUSION

1. Although I am aware of the ongoing debates as to whether ethnically based or religious motivations underlie the Sheikh Said uprising, here I

am making reference to Hizbullah's incorporation of the uprising into its ideological discourse. My focus, therefore, has been on how Hizbullah carried the uprising into the domain of discourse rather than what were the real motivations behind the uprising, which constitute a subject of historical research.

2. This figure is based on the murders which have been proved to have been committed by Hizbullah. With the addition of some murders committed by unknown perpetrators in southeastern Turkey in the 1990s, this figure goes up to the thousands. As I do not possess adequate information on this subject, I am only quoting existing figures here.
3. See endnote no. 123 in Chapter 1.
4. See footnote no. 87 in Chapter 1.

#### APPENDIX

1. Short for *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*, 'In the name of Allah, the All-Loving, the All-Merciful'.
2. Short for *Allâh Subhanehu ve Teâlâ*, 'Allah, May He be praised and exalted'.
3. Short for *El-hamdü li'llâhi Rabbi'l-Alemin*, 'All praises belong to Allah, the Lord of the worlds'.
4. Short for *Allahüimme salli ala seyyidina Muhammedin ve ala ali seyyidina Muhammed*, 'May Allah deliver his infinite Blessing and Peace on Muhammad and the family of Muhammad'.
5. By *Hizbullah Rehberi*, the Hizbullah officials are referring to Edip Gümüş, the present leader of Hizbullah. Hüseyin Velioglu was also referred to as *Hizbullah Rehberi* until his death in 2000.
6. See endnote no. 15 in Chapter 3.
7. Books about the life of Muhammad or his companions.
8. One who fulfils his faith-related obligations entirely and avoids acts that are disapproved of in Islam.

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