



THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

# **WEAPONIZING INFORMATION: PROPAGANDA AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IN THE ISRAELI-HEZBOLLAH CONFLICT**

**Ralph Baydoun**



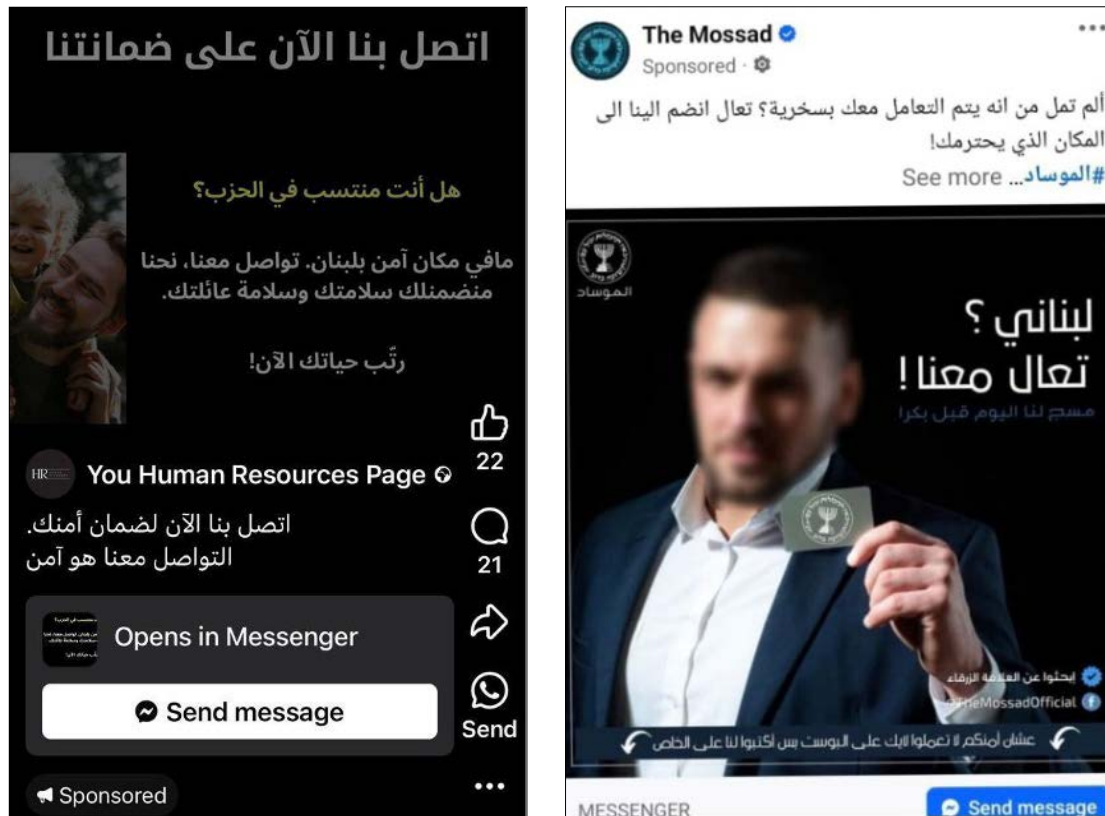
**November 2024**

## **DATA BREACH AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY**

During World War II, as part of Operation **Cornflakes**, the OSS implemented a unique strategy against Nazi Germany by dropping counterfeit mail near bombed mail trains. This mail, designed to appear as though scattered from the wreckage, contained anti-Nazi propaganda, including fake letters and newspapers critical of Hitler and his regime. These items were intended to seem as if sent by dissidents within Germany, showcasing early psychological warfare tactics.

Today, the landscape of information warfare has significantly evolved. This article explores the tactics employed by Israel and Hezbollah in the context of ongoing Israeli aggression in Lebanon.

From the onset of the Israeli escalation on September 23, 2024, Israeli information warfare has focused on two main objectives. The first is data acquisition, which involves gathering human intelligence and recruiting spies. Recruitment often occurs through direct targeting via emails, phone calls, or public outreach on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

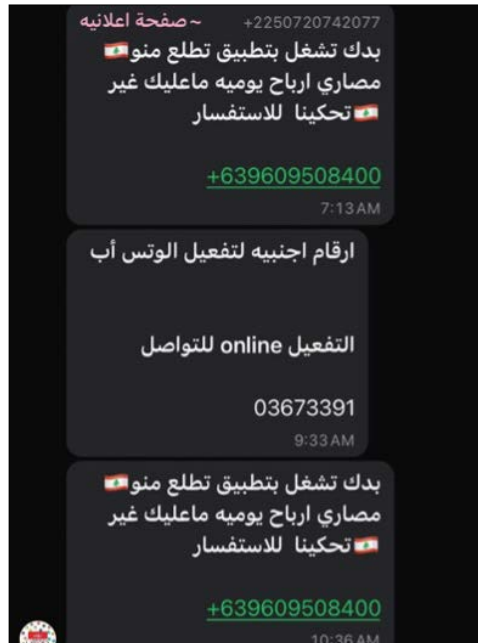
**Figures 1, 2: Israeli intelligence ads**

These platforms feature ads directly appealing to Hezbollah members, promising safety for them and their families, with some ads appearing directly from the Mossad's Instagram platform inviting Lebanese people to collaborate. Additionally, websites like [almonkiz.net](http://almonkiz.net), (Arabic word for "savior") were created, purportedly offering evacuation assistance. Unbeknownst to users, filling out forms on this site allows their information to be cross-referenced with other databases and is used for intelligence gathering. Israel has long been known as a startup or super-tech country. Little did the Lebanese people know that some of their \$10 surveillance cameras, placed in shops and on the streets all over Lebanon, were hacked! This was evidenced by Israeli Telegram pages posting surveillance footage from Beirut on September 17, after the pager attack, before such footage circulated within Lebanese media. In addition to the surveillance cameras, Israel hacked Lebanese radio stations on September 23, broadcasting a message with the Lebanese national anthem in the background, asking people to evacuate. Furthermore, they also acquired the phone numbers of citizens and called or texted thousands of people asking them to evacuate, which means they have access to their ID, phone number, location and other type of important personal data.

The acquisition of data extends to the use of WhatsApp, Telegram, and various applications downloaded by Lebanese citizens, often due to a lack of media literacy. For years at InFlueAnswers, we have warned about the dangers posed by WhatsApp news groups in Lebanon, where misinformation and malicious activities are rampant, including in a [report](#) published by the Samir Kassir Foundation.

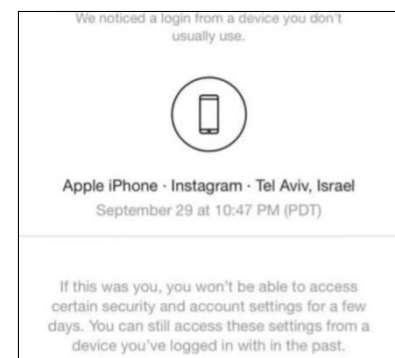
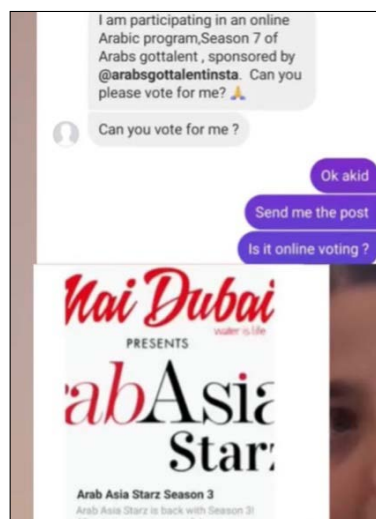
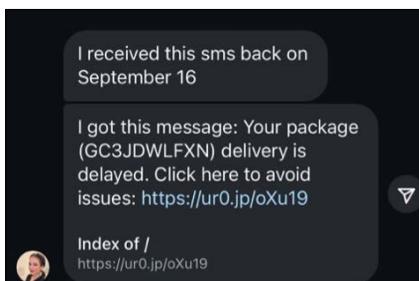
The economic crisis has driven many Lebanese to these groups, searching for job opportunities, only to be lured into downloading applications that compromise their personal data, such as location and contact lists.

**Figure 3: Example of inauthentic applications advertised on Lebanese WhatsApp groups**



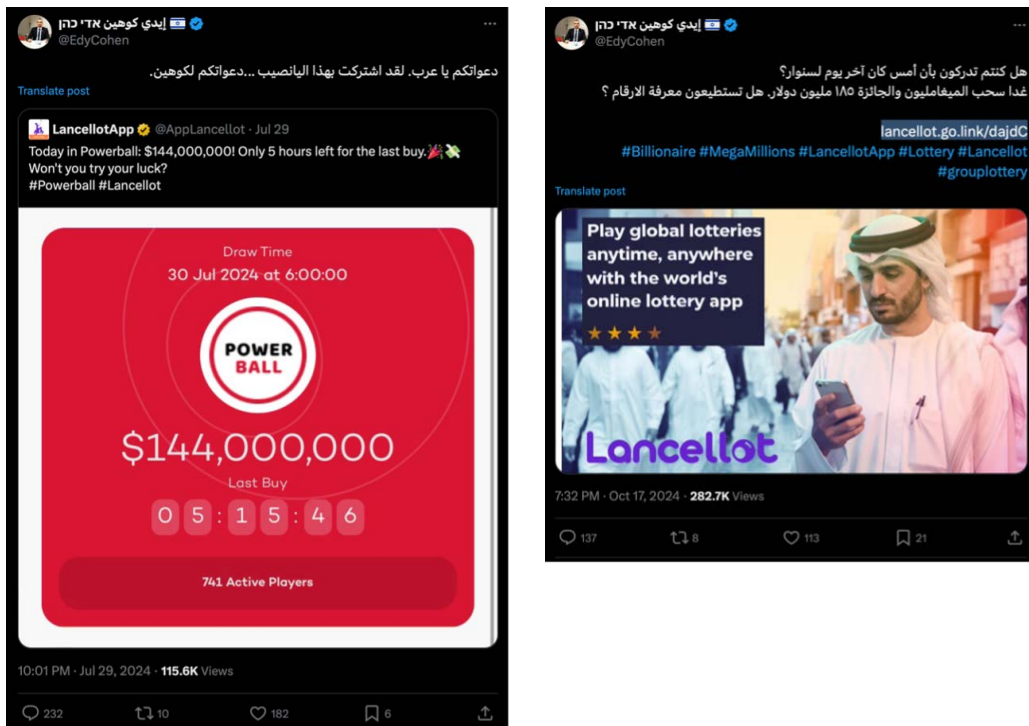
Phishing attacks have also been a significant tactic. These are not confined to WhatsApp groups but have spread through Instagram and Facebook. Typically, these phishing attempts involve messages from a known contact encouraging the recipient to click on a link under the guise of supporting a friend in a contest, or to check the status of a delivery package, only to lead to a phishing site.

**Figure 4, 5, 6: Examples of phishing attacks targeting Lebanese accounts**



An example includes a tweet by Edy Cohen, a Lebanese Israeli commentator unrelated to the military architecture, which featured a phishing link disguised as a lottery promotion enticing Arabs to participate.

**Figure 7, 8: Example of phishing links shared by Israeli accounts targeting Arab populations**



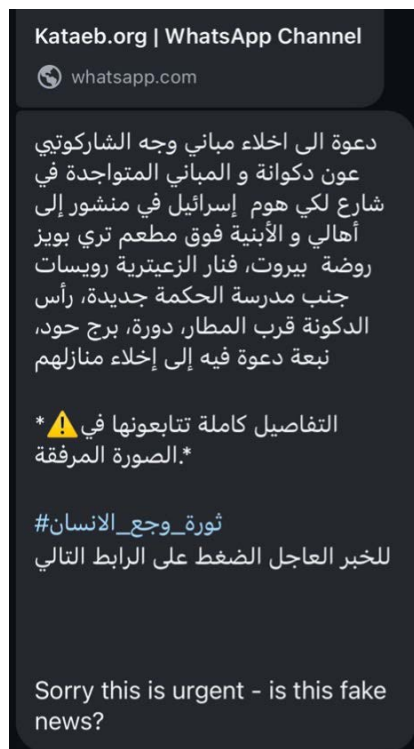
Phishing attacks are important because Israel has demonstrated the first use of AI systems in Gaza and now in Lebanon. In a theoretical scenario where systems like **Palantir's Artificial Intelligence Platform (AIP)** are used, the data from phishing campaigns could theoretically enhance the capability of such systems. Phishing campaigns, if hypothetically conducted, would generate large volumes of data on human interactions, communication patterns, and network vulnerabilities. This data could potentially be used to identify anomalous or suspicious behaviors that stand out from typical civilian activities. For example, the AIP could analyze the collected data to discern patterns or links that might suggest covert operations or logistics support within civilian infrastructures. By applying advanced AI algorithms to evaluate this data, the system could potentially help in distinguishing between civilian and non-civilian elements and suggest the required course of action.

## AMPLIFYING EXISTING TENSIONS

The second strategic objective of the Israeli information war is to sow division among Lebanese communities. From the onset of the war, Israel has selectively targeted predominantly Hezbollah or

pro-Hezbollah areas, which drove the community in these regions to relocate to safer areas that are at odds politically and had completely different views about the war to begin with. Early in October, Israel started attacking Hezbollah members in the host community areas. The direct effect was fear and panic among citizens, and disinformation campaigns around evacuation orders by the Israeli army caused further panic.

**Figure 9: Example of fake evacuation orders shared on WhatsApp news groups**



As part of the same strategy, Israel targeted weapon caches in civilian areas, broadcasted live on television, to validate the fears of the host communities. Now these communities find themselves in a position where their humanitarian side is welcoming, but their political/security side is aware of and very paranoid about Hezbollah's infiltration among civilian houses. If Israel destroys a building in an urban center killing civilians from the host community (considering their animosity with Hezbollah, and their vocal opposition to this war and the connection with Gaza), there will be severe repercussions that will cause a ripple effect across the country and will probably lead the Council of Ministers to declare a state of emergency with the Lebanese army taking wider control of the security situation. Who do we blame in this situation? It is cause and effect... In retrospect, failed policy, unresolved assassinations, lack of accountability, and lack of sovereignty have led us to this stage.

**Figure 10: Example of false flag campaigns originating from Israel**

As part of the same strategy, an invisible hand is playing with Lebanese public opinion online. Anonymous X (ex-Twitter) accounts that impersonate people from various Lebanese sects have become very vocal at critical junctures, spreading hate, incitement, and division. This tactic reached a notable point last July when a Facebook group titled “Rajee Yetammar Lebanon” promoted a post calling for a demonstration to end the war. The choice of Facebook, known for its older demographic, was strategic, aiming to stir pro-Hezbollah sentiments against Christians, labeling them as Zionists and internal enemies. After requesting the data of this campaign from Facebook, Meta confirmed the campaign’s origin was Israel. This campaign demonstrates the power of social media in information wars in a country like Lebanon. Four hundred comments were written on a post that called for offline demonstrations. Those comments validated the beliefs of the pro-Hezbollah group while also validating the sentiments of anti-Hezbollah people. This post pushed the mainstream media to visit the square where this protest was supposed to be held, only to find no one there.

**Figure 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17: Example of people's reactions to the false flag campaign originating from Israel**

**Jamil Awwad**  
Hadi Ba تعا شوف يا خي عاملين مهرجان بعد بوكرة برياض الصلح 🤔🤔🤔  
See translation  
23h Like Reply 2

**Hadi Ayash replied · 2 replies**

**Azmi Kayouf**  
بلي ما بدو الحرب يقدم طلب فيزا على فرنسا او كندا  
See translation  
15h Like Reply

**Joumana Saab**  
امين  
See translation  
11h Like Reply

**Abed Merhi**  
أه يا عكاريت... ايه نزلو 🤔  
See translation

**RA Y AN Tawbe**  
ما تعزبو حالكن وقت بنفرض علينا حرب من جهة اسرائيل غصب عنكم رح ندافع عن ارضنا ونقطه انتهى  
See translation  
4h Like Reply

**ابولي**  
يلا في سحسوح 🤔  
See translation  
13h Like Reply

**Mahmoud Sibai**  
كيف ركبت معكم السيدة مريم عليها السلام هيدي الأغنية بتقصد بعكس نية هلبوست هيدي لأهل الشرف ولكرامة  
See translation  
15h Like Reply

**منير شمعي**  
إذا في رقاصات أنا بنزل سوشي كفيار وسومو  
See translation  
7h Like Reply 1

**محمد نحال**  
نحن أهل الجنوب الصامد الكبير مابدنا الحرب بس بدنا دعوس الكيان الصهيوني كل العملاء معو  
See translation  
1h Like Reply

**Wajdi Saliba**  
هيدا احتفال ديني او تحفّع سياسي؟؟؟ ليش إستعمال الشعارات والعبارات الدينية؟ عم تعملو تحفّع مسيحي ضد الشيعة؟؟؟ ليش مين بدو الحرب؟؟؟ إنتو يا ولاد الهيك، ولادكن عم يموتو وأرزاقكن عم تحترق؟؟؟!! سألتو بالأول إسرائيل إذا ما بدها الحرب؟ يعني موقفكن هوي ضد إسرائيل وحزب الله او ضد حزب الله بس؟؟؟ إنتو بتتجمعو وتتوقفو شي مرة مع شعاراتكن الدينية ضد إسرائيل؟؟؟!!!! انقبرو روحو انضّبّو!!!!!!  
See translation  
1h Like Reply

**جهاد علي**  
Alia اعفوا الدعوة من السفارة

**عيسى احوش**  
العذرا ماعم ترد بلكي بترد ويتأخدم، اكيد انتوا يهود ضمنا.  
See translation  
1d Like Reply 1

**Emmi Khal replied · 1 reply**

**تيسير رسلان**  
ازهبو إلى سفارة امريكه طالب وقفوا القصف في غزه بدلن تقفز في بيروت هذه اعمال شنيع  
See translation  
4h Like Reply 1

**Abo Ali**  
انتو ما بدكون عملو لمظاهرة بسفارة ميش برياض ضد شيعة  
See translation  
5h Like Reply

**Yousef Shbib**  
هيا الغنية مقصود فيها أهلا الشرف والنخوة والكرامة مش اهل الذل والخنوع والخيانة يا بلا احساس العذراء براء منكن  
See translation

**راجع بتعمر لبنان · Follow**  
Reeis · 1d · 📍

**Fadia Chaccour**  
بعد في العذراء ما تاجرته فيها الله بنجينا  
See translation  
1d Like Reply 11

**Emmi Khal replied · 1 reply**

**Fadi Sbeity**  
غريب!!!! عنوان الدعوة.....استسلام، مع أغنية يا ثوار الأرض.... رفض الذل، شو الغاية؟؟؟  
See translation  
2h Like Reply

**Ali D Hotait**  
صها، الداخ  
See translation  
6h Like Reply

**Nadia Youssef**  
الأفعى تحت التبن اجمعوا كيدكم والله لن نفلحوا  
See translation  
11h Like Reply 1

**بارا علي**  
دخيلك يامريرم العذراء نجينا من عملا الداخ

**محمد سلامة**  
تجار الهيك  
See translation  
9h Like Reply

**Zouzi H Mkahal**  
لازم نزل  
See translation  
5h Like Reply

**Neamat Kashmar**  
عاملينها سهرة برياض الصلح أو ناويين ترجعوا الثورة الفاشلة اللي خربتو البلد فيها  
See translation  
21h Like Reply 2

**Laudy Chdid Rachkidi**  
الله يحمي لبنان  
See translation  
11h Like Reply

**ايمان ايمان**  
يارب ينجنا من الاعظم يارب يارب  
See translation

**أحمد قاسم**  
انتو خليكين بحفلاتكن ببيروت واخلو الحرب والعزه والكرامه لاهلها يا م ت ص هينين  
See translation  
1d Like Reply 7

**Emmi Khal replied · 1 reply**

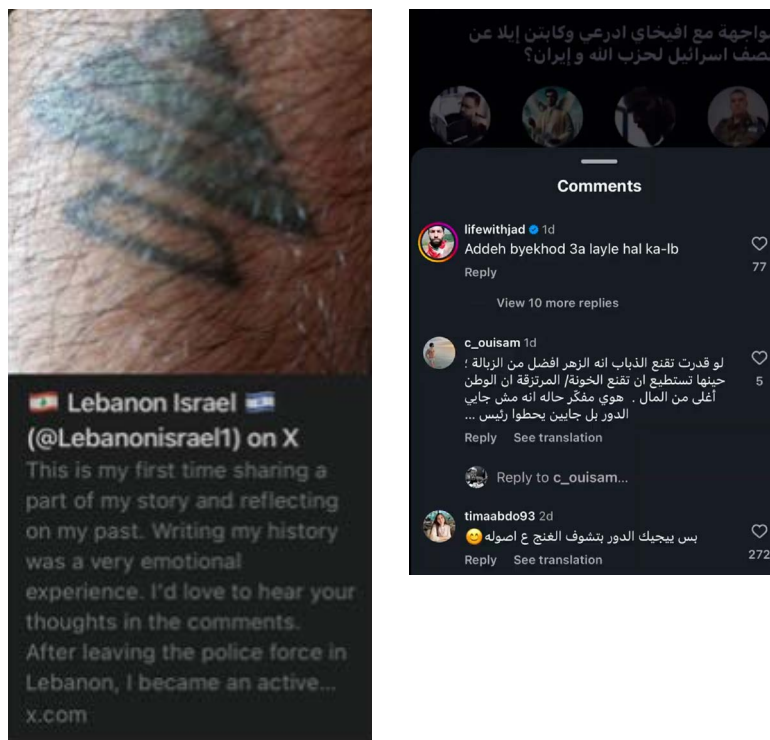
**Hilen Zd**  
يا الله التصر من عندك  
See translation  
2h Like Reply

**Malak Dandach**  
ابن سيدة لبنان بدو يرجع ويثور عالطغيان... نتهو  
See translation  
3h Like Reply

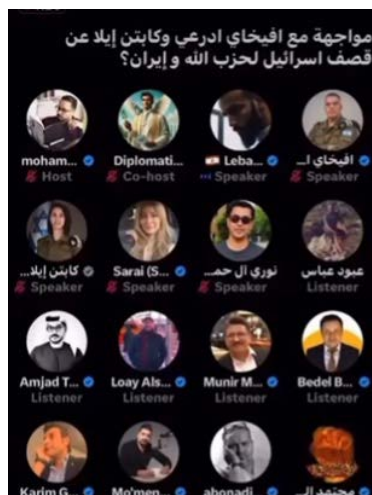
**Douaa Berri**  
الصهاينة هيك طلبوا منكن بلا كلنا ايد وحدة (لبيك يا نصرالله) 🤔🤔🤔  
See translation

As part of the same strategy, an X Space organized by Avichay Adraee, the Israeli spokesperson, purportedly hosted a dialogue between Lebanese and Israelis seeking peace. However, an intervention by an anonymous account impersonating a Christian Lebanese citizen – evident by the photos and narratives this account shares on their feed – asked the Israeli spokesperson to be tougher on Shia in Lebanon, sparking immediate backlash from pro-Hezbollah groups, who used the recording to paint the Christians in Lebanon as collaborators and Zionists, validating their beliefs, without questioning if this person is a real Lebanese or an Israeli impersonator.

**Figure 18, 19:** Example of the false flag X space campaign, and impersonation of Lebanese citizen.



**Figure 20:** Video- Extract of the X space and people’s reactions.

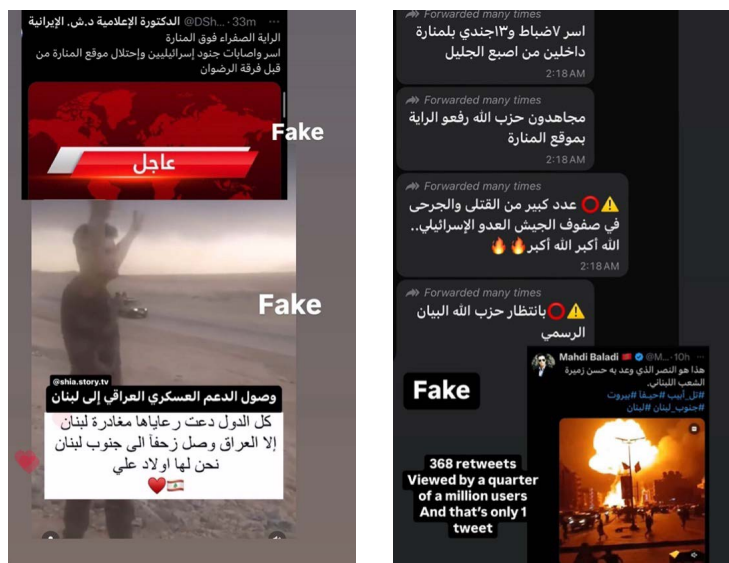




## PROJECTING STRENGTH

Concurrently with the Israeli information operations, pro-Hezbollah groups have actively disseminated disinformation to project an image of strength after significant setbacks, starting with the pager attack on September 17 and the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah on September 27. For example, there were unfounded rumors about the kidnapping of the Israeli ambassador in Cyprus and the capture of seven Israeli soldiers and commanders.

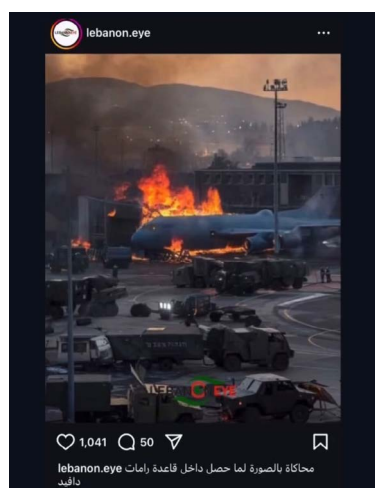
**Figure 21, 22:** Examples of disinformation promoting false military achievements.



Misleading videos originally from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict were repurposed by pro-Hezbollah groups, claiming the scenes of destruction targeted Israeli forces.

Fabricated news included images from Ravid airport showing planes allegedly under attack—later exposed as false.

**Figure 23:** Examples of disinformation promoting false military achievements.



Similarly, videos of fireworks in Algeria were edited to mimic scenes in Israel. Images of a mall fire in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were falsely portrayed as happening in Haifa, and footage of a Yemeni gas station was altered to appear as if it was in Haifa.

**Figure 24, 25:** Examples of disinformation promoting false military achievements.



There were also manipulated reports of Israeli planes landing in Cyprus due to destroyed Israeli airports, which proved incorrect. Each piece of doctored content reached hundreds of thousands. For instance, a tweet about the capture of Israeli soldiers and the takeover of Al-Manarah base was viewed by 260,000 people.

**Figure 26:** Video- Example of disinformation promoting false military achievements.



A propaganda post by pro-Iran Mintpress alleging that the Iranian strike on the military airport on October 1 took out half of Israel’s F35 fleet, was shared more than 4,000 times, reaching approximately a million people.

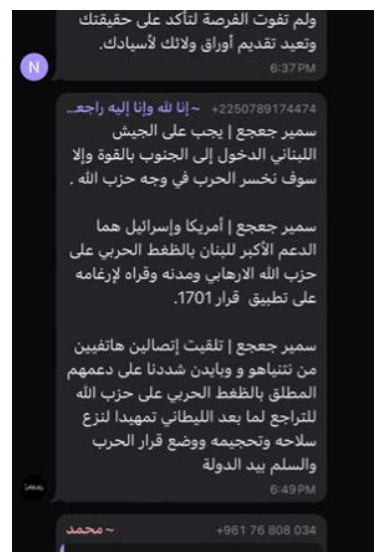
**Figure 27: Example of disinformation promoting false military achievements.**



## ATTACKING THE “ENEMY FROM WITHIN”

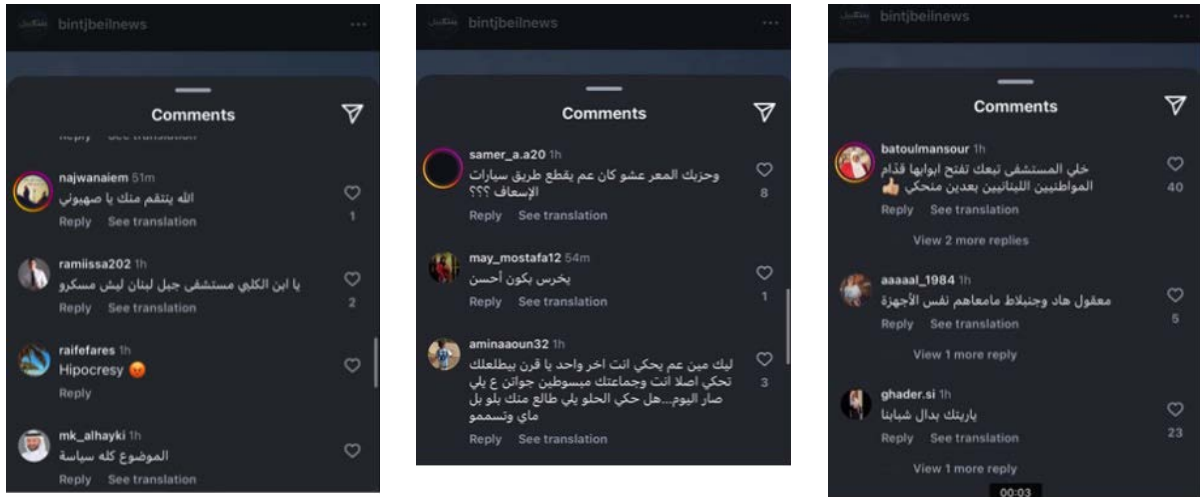
In addition to the amplification of fake achievements, some groups shared disinformation accusing Lebanese Christians associated with the Lebanese Forces of moving displaced individuals out of the Bekaa city of Zahleh. This was taken out of context and amplified by pro-Hezbollah groups.

**Figure 28, 29: Examples of disinformation and incitement targeting Christian parties.**



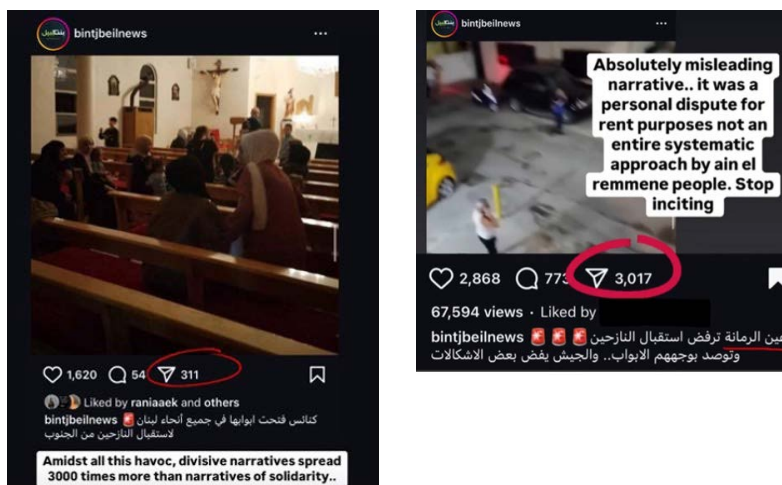
Moreover, there were false allegations that the Lebanese Forces were blocking hospital access for Hezbollah patients after the September 17 attack, which spread widely across Lebanon through WhatsApp groups, further propagating this disinformation.

**Figure 30, 31: Examples of disinformation and incitement targeting Christian parties.**



Another divisive example occurred on the pro-Hezbollah news outlet Bint Jbeil, which published two consecutive videos. The first, misleading viewers about Christians in the Ain al-Remmaneh neighborhood not accepting displaced people from Shiyah, was shared 3,000 times and seen by nearly 250,000 people. In contrast, the second video, showing an open church sheltering displaced people in Ain al-Remmaneh, was shared only 300 times.

**Figure 32, 33: Examples of disinformation and incitement targeting Christian parties.**



## BEYOND ILLUSION

These tactics employed by Israelis are seen as attempts to exploit the existing divisions among Lebanese communities. The creation and manipulation of content designed to exacerbate sectarian tensions are examples of how easily the Lebanese public, in general, and the Hezbollah's supportive community, in particular, can be manipulated, and how the lack of media literacy has led to numerous intelligence breaches, panic, and confusion. In parallel, pro-Hezbollah propaganda has focused on creating a false sense of security, an illusion of superiority and strength, and manufactured consent for its participation in the war by silencing opposition and acquiring passive acceptance from its supporters under the guise of morality. Just as Egypt Radio in 1967 broadcasted that Egyptian tanks had reached Tel Aviv, and just as former Iraqi Information Minister Muhammad Saeed Al-Sahhaf in 2003 insisted that there were no American troops in Baghdad, history is repeating itself. A significant portion of the Lebanese population is still clinging to the illusion of victory.

What Lebanon has been through since September should serve as a reality check and a wake-up call. The Lebanese people have proven that they are there for each other despite stark political divisions, but what they still need to prove, despite all the challenges, is their ability to build a new country, a new system that is rooted in facts and centered around Lebanon's interests and the Lebanese people's wellbeing.