



## The United States Department of Justice

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### **Justice Department Announces Terrorism Charges Against High-Ranking Hezbollah Member Who Helped Plan 1994 Bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina**

***Samuel Salman El Reda Participated in Terrorist Operations for Hezbollah in South America, Asia and Lebanon, and Helped Plan and Execute Hezbollah's July 18, 1994, Bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina Building in Buenos Aires, Killing 85 People***

WASHINGTON – A Manhattan federal court today unsealed terrorism charges against Samuel Salman El Reda, aka Samuel Salman El Reda El Reda, Salman Raouf Salman, Sulayman Rammal, Salman Ramal, Salman Raouf Salman, and Hajj, 58, a dual Colombian-Lebanese citizen and member of Hezbollah's Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO), in connection with El Reda's alleged role leading decades of terrorist activity on behalf of Hezbollah and the IJO.

El Reda is charged with, among other offenses, conspiring to provide and providing material support to Hezbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization. El Reda is based in Lebanon and remains at large.

"Nearly three decades ago, long-time Hezbollah terrorist operative Samuel Salman El Reda allegedly helped plan and execute the heinous attack on a Buenos Aires Jewish community center that murdered 85 innocent people and injured countless others," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division. "This indictment serves as a message to those who engage in acts of terror: that the Justice Department's memory is long, and we will not relent in our efforts to bring them to justice."

"As alleged, for decades, Samuel Salman El Reda has led terrorist operations on behalf of the Islamic Jihad Organization of Hezbollah, including a 1994 bombing in Buenos Aires that massacred 85 innocent victims," said U.S. Attorney Damian Williams for the

Southern District of New York. “The career prosecutors of this Office have not forgotten the pain and suffering that El Reda has allegedly caused, and we thank the dedication of our law enforcement partners for pursuing this important case. The Southern District of New York continues to be a leader in prosecuting violent terrorists and terrorist organizations, and we will not rest until those who create chaos and destruction are brought to justice.”

“While it’s been nearly 30 years since this horrific terrorist attack, the FBI and our partners throughout the U.S. government are committed to delivering justice for the victims’ families,” said Executive Assistant Director Larissa L. Knapp of the FBI’s National Security Branch. “Our reach and our memory are long, as this investigation shows. The charges unsealed today are a result of the hard work and determination of the men and women of the FBI and Justice Department, and the assistance of our international partners in law enforcement.”

According to court documents, Hezbollah is a Lebanon-based Shia Islamic organization with political, social, and terrorist components. Hezbollah was founded in the 1980s with support from Iran after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and its mission includes establishing a fundamentalist Islamic state in Lebanon. Since Hezbollah’s formation, the organization has been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks that have killed hundreds, including U.S. citizens and military personnel. In 1997, the U.S. Department of State designated Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization, pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and it remains so designated today. In 2001, pursuant to Executive Order 13224, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Hezbollah as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity. In 2010, State Department officials described Hezbollah as the most technically capable terrorist group in the world and a continued security threat to the United States.

The IJO, which is also known as the External Security Organization and “Unit 910,” is a component of Hezbollah responsible for the planning and coordination of intelligence, counterintelligence, and terrorist activities on behalf of Hezbollah outside of Lebanon. In July 2012, an IJO operative detonated explosives on a bus transporting Israeli tourists in the vicinity of an airport in Burgas, Bulgaria, killing six people and injuring 32 others. Law enforcement authorities have disrupted several other IJO attack-planning operations around the world, including through the arrest of an IJO operative surveilling Israeli targets in Cyprus in 2012, the seizure of bomb-making precursor chemicals in Thailand in 2012, the seizure of similar chemicals in May 2015 in connection with the arrest of another IJO operative, and the seizure of approximately three tons of ammonium nitrate in London in the fall of 2015. Since June 2017, multiple IJO operatives have been arrested, charged, and convicted in the Southern District of New York for terrorism-related offenses.

Beginning in at least 1993, El Reda has led terrorist operations on behalf of Hezbollah and the IJO in South America, Asia, and Lebanon. El Reda was responsible for, among other things, helping to plan and execute the July 18, 1994, bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which killed 85 people and injured hundreds more. El Reda’s activities for Hezbollah in connection

with the AMIA bombing included relaying information to IJO operatives that was used for planning and executing the attack. In the decades following the attack, El Reda continued to engage in terrorist activity on Hezbollah's behalf by recruiting, training, and managing IJO operatives around the world. El Reda deployed IJO operatives to Thailand, Panama, and Peru, among other places, to help Hezbollah and the IJO conduct pre-operational surveillance in support of attack planning and stockpile explosive precursor chemicals, including ammonium nitrate. For example, in or about May 2009, El Reda instructed an IJO operative to travel to Thailand to help destroy a cache of ammonium nitrate and other explosive materials that the IJO believed was under law enforcement surveillance. In or about February 2011, El Reda instructed an IJO operative to travel to Panama to surveil the Panama Canal and Embassies maintained by the United States and Israel, and in or about January 2012, El Reda instructed an IJO operative to travel again to Panama to conduct additional pre-operational surveillance.

El Reda is charged with: (i) providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison; (ii) conspiring to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison; (iii) aiding and abetting the receipt of military-type training from a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison or a fine; and (iv) conspiring to receive military-type training from a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The FBI's New York Joint Terrorism Task Force, which principally consists of agents from the FBI and detectives from the NYPD, is investigating the case. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs provided valuable assistance.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jacob H. Gutwillig and Jason A. Richman for the Southern District of New York are prosecuting the case with valuable assistance from Deputy Chief Larry Schneider of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

*An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

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