Lebanon: Military activities in the Chouf district that might have involved the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF); links between the IDF and the Druze in Lebanon (January 1980 - April 2006)

According to the *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities*, published in 2005, Lebanon's roughly 200,000 Druze form seven percent of the nation's population and are mostly concentrated in the Chouf (also spelled Shuf [Mackey 1989, 187]) mountains south of Beirut (410).

**Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) - Druze Relations During the Lebanese Civil War**

In 14 March 2006 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a professor of political science at the American University of Beirut provided the following information:

The IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] occupied the Chouf district in June 1982, during their invasion of Lebanon. They completely evacuated the area by the beginning of 1984. Most IDF troops stationed in the Chouf district were Israeli Druze. Apart from driving the PLO and the Syrian army from the district, the IDF had no military activity. The IDF achieved its military objective in the Chouf district within a few days in June 1982....

The only contact between the IDF and the Druze in Lebanon occurred during Israel's invasion in 1982, and it was terminated by the beginning of 1984. The links were not essentially militarily. IDF Druze troops felt affinity toward their coreligionists in the Chouf district. They were received there with hospitality, but not much else happened beyond the display of courtesy.

In her book *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, Middle East specialist Sandra Mackey wrote that when the IDF entered the Chouf in 1982, they "met little resistance, because Druze assumed they could cut a deal with Israel: In return for keeping the Palestinians out of the Chouf, Israel would recognize Druze autonomy" of the area (Mackey 1989, 187). When the IDF permitted the Lebanese Forces, a Phalangist (or Maronite Christian) militia (US 1989, App. B), to enter the Chouf in 1982 (Fisk 1990, 485), tensions flared between the Druze and the Maronite Christians living in the area (ibid.; Mackey 1989, 187; *Political Handbook of the Middle East 2006* 2006, 257; *Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook* 2002, 1012).
In response to attempts by the Lebanese Forces to control the Chouf, the Druze pushed most Maronites out of the district (Mackey 1989, 187). The degree to which the IDF was fulfilling its self-stated mandate as peacekeeper in the Chouf (Fisk 1990, 458) was a matter of some controversy: while one source indicated that "[t]he only thing that stood between the Maronites and a rout at the hands of the Druze was the Israeli army" (Mackey 1989, 187), another stated that "the Israelis were not protecting civilians in their area [of the Chouf]" (Fisk 1990, 486). Pro-Israeli Christian militias were attacking the Druze, who in turn "exact[ed] revenge" upon the Christians when Israel retreated from the Chouf (The Boston Globe 6 Aug. 2001) in August 1983 (Fisk 1990, 488).

Following the retreat of the IDF, there was a massacre of Maronite civilians in the Chouf (Fisk 1990, 501). As Sandra Mackey explained, "the Druze embarked on a rampage of slaughter in Maronite villages" killing some 1,000 Maronites and leaving another 50,000 Maronites homeless (187). The Research Directorate could not find corroboration of these figures among the sources consulted.

**IDF Relations with the Lebanese Druze in Recent Years**

A 2002 article in The Boston Globe mentioned that "Christians and Druze generally do not support the attacks across the border [with Israel]," unlike some of their militant Muslim compatriots (10 Apr. 2002). In August 2001, media reports noted statements made by Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt that Israeli Druze should no longer be obligated to serve in the IDF, so that they would not be put into a position where they might have to fight against fellow Arabs (Jordan Times 20 Aug. 2001; AFP 20 Aug. 2001). As of July 2004, 87 per cent of eligible Israeli Druze served in the IDF, compared to 78 per cent of Israeli Jews (Ma'ariv 29 July 2004).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

**References**


Ma'ariv [Tel Aviv, in Hebrew]. 29 July 2004. Yosi Mizrahi. "Record Number of Druze Recruits." (BBC Monitoring/Factiva)


Professor of Political Science at the American University of Beirut. 14 March 2006. Correspondence.


**Additional Sources Consulted**

**Oral Sources:** Five professors specializing in Lebanese politics did not respond to requests for information made by the Research Directorate.

**Internet Sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *The Daily Star* [Beirut], *The Economist* [London], European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), *Haaretz* [Tel Aviv], Human Rights Watch (HRW), United States Department of State, Ynet News.

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