



## **PERU, ABANCAY & HEZBOLLAH: THE PARTY OF GOD IN THE CITY WHERE THE GODS SPEAK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October of 2016, after the death of a man in the protests against the Las Bambas mine in rural Peru, Congresswoman Luciana Leon asked the country's Minister of Interior to investigate a possible infiltration by Hezbollah and Sendero Luminoso in the protests. The question of a possible relationship between radical Islam and local groups placed the newly established Muslim community of Abancay and its leaders at the center of the debate. This paper aims to explore the presence of a possible Hezbollah cell in Peru, specifically in the city of Abancay, and to dissect its relationship with local militant groups and terrorist group Sendero Luminoso. The paper first addresses Iranian presence and allegations of Hezbollah networks in South America, then explores the Muslim community of Abancay and their establishment of Hezbollah political party and finally explains the situation in Las Bambas and how it relates to allegations about Hezbollah, local militias and Sendero Luminoso.

\* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

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## Introduction

When Peruvian Congresswoman Luciana Leon asked the country's Minister of Interior to investigate the infiltration of Hezbollah and Sendero Luminoso in relation to the death of man in protests of Las Bambas copper mine on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October of 2016, the news quickly went viral. The question of whether Hezbollah has an operating cell in the country and its relationship with the local terrorist group Sendero Luminoso suddenly became more pressing and urgent. This paper aims to explore the presence of a possible Hezbollah cell in Peru and specifically in the city of Abancay and to dissect its relationship with local militant groups and terrorist group Sendero Luminoso. The paper first addresses Iranian presence and allegations of Hezbollah networks in South America, then tackles the Muslim community of Abancay and their establishment of Hezbollah political party and finally explains the situation in Las Bambas and how it relates to allegations about Hezbollah, local militias and Sendero Luminoso.

## Iranian and Hezbollah Networks in the Region

In the intelligence and security communities there seems to be a lack of consensus about the extent of Iranian presence and Hezbollah networks in South America.<sup>1,2,3</sup> In 2014 General John F. Kelly, Commander of U.S Southern Command, presented a posture statement to the House and Senate and Armed Services Committees in which Kelly stated that "Iran's involvement in the Western Hemisphere is a matter for concern" and that he remains concerned that Hezbollah "maintains an operations presence" in the region and stated that "Islamic extremists visit the region to proselytize, recruit, establish business

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<sup>1</sup> Karmon, Ely, Dr. "Iran and Its Proxy Hezbollah: Strategic Penetration in Latin America." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. April 15, 2009. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1060/Iran%20and%20its%20Proxy%20Hezbollah%20Strategic%20Penetration%20in%20Latin%20America>.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, Rex. "TERRORIST AND ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS IN THE TRI-BORDER AREA (TBA) OF SOUTH AMERICA." The Library of Congress. July 2010. Accessed November 25, 2016. [http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/TerrOrgCrime\\_TBA.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/TerrOrgCrime_TBA.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Levitt, Matthew. "Iran and Hezbollah Remain Hyperactive in Latin America." The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. August 11, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-and-hezbollah-remain-hyperactive-in-latin-america>

venues to generate funds, and expand their radical networks.”<sup>4</sup> Venezuela has long been considered a safe haven for Las FARC and Hezbollah and there have several allegations about the problematic relationship between Venezuelan officials and Hezbollah operatives. According to statements by former President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez’s former bodyguard, who entered the U.S witness protection program and testified before a grand jury, “Venezuela’s current president, Nicolás Maduro, negotiated with Hezbollah to allow 300 of their operatives to fundraise in Venezuela.”<sup>5</sup> In Venezuela there is also the question of the alleged conversion of indigenous **Wayuu community** to Islam and the establishment of the Hezbollah Latina political group.<sup>6,7</sup> Similarly, the **Tri-Border Area (TBA)** of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay has long been described by intelligence officials as well as by governmental sources as a haven for “fund-raising, recruiting, plotting terrorist attacks elsewhere in the TBA countries or the Americas in general”.<sup>8,9</sup> Even more so, after the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) and Israeli Embassy bombings in Argentina and the investigations that followed, there is reason to believe that a Hezbollah network has been operating in Argentina and attempting to

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<sup>4</sup> Karmon, Ely, Dr. "Hezbollah Terrorism Returns to Latin America." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. November 04, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1244/Hezbollah-Terrorism-Returns-to-Latin-America>

<sup>5</sup> Naguel, Juan Cristobal. "Something Is Rotten in the State of Venezuela." Foreign Policy. April 28, 2015. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/28/something-is-rotten-in-the-state-of-venezuela-chavez-maduro-cabello-salazar-farc/>

<sup>6</sup> Samuels, Shimon Samuels Y Ariel Gelblung \*, and Ariel Gelblung. "La Rivalidad Estado Islámico-Hezbollah En América Latina." América - Infobae. April 05, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://www.infobae.com/2016/04/05/1802123-la-rivalidad-estado-islamico-hezbollah-america-latina/>

<sup>7</sup> Karmon, Ely, Dr. "Iran and Its Proxy Hezbollah: Strategic Penetration in Latin America." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. April 15, 2009. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1060/Iran%20and%20its%20Proxy%20Hezbollah%20Strategic%20Penetration%20in%20Latin%20America>.

<sup>8</sup> Hudson, Rex. "TERRORIST AND ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS IN THE TRI-BORDER AREA (TBA) OF SOUTH AMERICA." The Library of Congress. July 2010. Accessed November 25, 2016. [http://www.loc.gov/r/rfd/pdf-files/TerrOrgCrime\\_TBA.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/r/rfd/pdf-files/TerrOrgCrime_TBA.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Levitt, Matthew. "Iran and Hezbollah Remain Hyperactive in Latin America." The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. August 11, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-and-hezbollah-remain-hyperactive-in-latin-america>

expand in other countries.<sup>10</sup> Peru is no exception, and the country has had its fair share of controversies involving anti-Semitic attacks and allegations of the presence of Hezbollah in the country.<sup>11</sup> In July 1990 Yaakov Hazon, the secretary of the Jewish community of Lima was shot numerous times from a moving vehicle<sup>12</sup>. The attackers were arrested and later accused of being members of Sendero Luminoso. Similarly, in December 1990, a car bomb exploded near the Sephardic Synagogue of Lima and Sendero Luminoso took responsibility for the attack.<sup>13</sup> Even more so, in October 2014 a Lebanese man, **Muamad Amdar**, was arrested in connection to an attempted attack in Lima against Israelis and Jews.<sup>14</sup> The man in question was a suspected member of Hezbollah and was arrested based on information allegedly provided by the Israeli Mossad.<sup>15</sup> Currently the debate about Hezbollah's presence in the country centers on Abancay, a city in the rural area of the country that hosts the largest community of converts and its own Hezbollah political party.

### **Apurimac and Abancay: Where the Gods Speak**

The city of Abancay is located in the Department of Apurimac within the Central Andes region in Peru. The etymology of the word Apurimac comes from Apu meaning God and Rimac meaning Speaker, in indigenous tongue of Quichua. Up until the last complete census of 2000, the department had 426,904 people and the city of Abancay had 118,853<sup>16</sup>. The entire region and more specifically the city of Abancay, is composed

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<sup>10</sup> Levitt, Matthew. "Iranian and Hezbollah Operations in South America." The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. December 16, 2015. Accessed November 25, 2016.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Levitt20151216-PRISM.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Karmon, Ely, Dr. "Hezbollah Terrorism Returns to Latin America." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. November 04, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1244/Hezbollah-Terrorism-Returns-to-Latin-America>

<sup>12</sup> Torres, Jorge Serrano. "Investigación: Terroristas De Hezbollah Y Al-Qaeda Son Amenaza Para Perú Y América Latina." CATARSIS Y HAKIRI. November 2014. Accessed November 28, 2016.

<http://www.blogcyh.com/2016/06/investigacion-terroristas-de-hezbollah.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Karmon. "Hezbollah Terrorism Returns to Latin America."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

almost entirely of ethnically indigenous people who are descendants of the Incas of Peru. Although up to 58.5% of people in Apurimac registered in primary education, only 23.9% registered in secondary school and even less, only 5.3% are registered in higher education.<sup>17</sup> The educational situation reflects accurately the levels of illiteracy in the region as in 2015, 20.4% could not read or write.<sup>18</sup> The region relies heavily in agriculture for its economy and due to their Incan roots and traditions; the people also value immensely their land and natural resources.

## Muslims in Abancay

Although the exact number is unclear, local sources claim that the department has the largest and most active community of Muslim converts in the country.<sup>19</sup> Although there are other Muslim communities in the country such as those in Tacna or Lima, these communities are made up of mostly migrants from the Muslim world. The Abancay community, where many members have adopted Muslim names and women can be seen wearing Hijabs, hosts a Mosque as well as **Inkarry Islam**, an Iranian Incan Cultural Exchange Program led by **Edwar Quiroga Vargas**, an indigenous political representative. Through Inkarry Islam, the community in Abancay has sent more than twenty young men to study in Iran.<sup>20</sup> Quiroga Vargas established the community with funding from different charities in Iran that are linked with the Ayatollah<sup>21</sup> as well as help from Argentinian sheiks **Abdul Karim Paz**, **Edgardo Ruben Assad** and **Ali Adburrah Man Pohl** who also often visit the community.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation finances the trips as well as the community centers and the students are sent

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<sup>16</sup>Aponte, Francisco Costa, Econ., and Anibal Sanchez Aguilar, Econ. "Conociendo Apurimac." Instituto Nacional De Estadística Y Informática. May 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Aponte and Aguilar. "Conociendo Apurimac."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup>PuntoFinal: Muslumanes En Abancay. June 22, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0oQrAM-sAA>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

to the Al-Mustafa University in Qom. Furthermore,<sup>23</sup> Abdul Karim Paz runs the **At Tauhid** Mosque in Argentina, a mosque that was mentioned during the investigation of the **AMIA** bombings in Argentina. Ali Adburrah Man Pohl is also a leader within the At Tauhid Mosque and has lived in Iran, and Edgardo Ruben Assad also frequents the At Tauhid Mosque and is a notorious Holocaust denier who has been denied entry into Mexico due to his links to Hezbollah.<sup>24</sup> The three men have all at some point been students of **Mohsen Rabanni**, who is wanted by INTERPOL in relation to the AMIA bombings.<sup>25</sup> In June 2016, Edwar Quiroga Vargas registered the “**Partido de Dios**” (Party of God, a direct translation from ““Hezbollah”” into Spanish) as a political party in Apurimac<sup>26</sup>. Although there have long been concerns regarding the nature of the community and the possible spread of radical ideology in the Andean region of Peru, these concerns have been difficult to prove in the past. The community was interviewed by the local news agency PuntoFinal and in this interview Edwar Quiroga Vargas and Ali Adburrah Man Pohl, as well as members of the community can be heard preaching radical rhetoric. Ali Adburrah Man Pohl specifically refers to the American governments as “corrupt, tyrannical, oppressive, racists and murderous”, blames Jewish people and the Mossad for attacks in AMIA and defends Hezbollah.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Ali Adburrah Man Pohl claims that America’s administration violated war regulations by unjustly “taking revenge on 30,000 to 100,000 people for the deaths of 3,000 in the Twin Towers attack”.<sup>28</sup> Clearly these radical beliefs are not limited to the religious leaders, as the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Infobae. "Sheik Edgardo Ruben Assad Pone En Duda El Holocausto Judío." América - Infobae. June 12, 2013. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://www.infobae.com/2013/06/12/1073000-sheik-edgardo-ruben-assad-pone-duda-el-holocausto-judio/>

<sup>25</sup> Infobae. "Sheik Edgardo Ruben Assad Pone En Duda El Holocausto Judío."

<sup>26</sup> "Why Are Hezbollah Militias Involved in Peru’s Violence?" English.alarabiya.net. November 19, 2016. Accessed November 27, 2016. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2016/11/19/Why-are-Hezbollah-militias-involved-in-Peru-s-violence-.html>.

<sup>27</sup> PuntoFinal: Muslumanes En Abancay. June 22, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0oQrAM-sAA>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

students Awki Ahmad and Jhon Aroni, who visited Iran through Inkarry Islam, can be heard lamenting the “moral decadence” in Peru, reiterating their belief that “the AMIA attacks were orchestrated by the Zionist enterprise to slow down the spread of Islam” and praising Iran’s cultural superiority.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, in a previous interview with PuntoFinal, members of the community can be seen participating in small plays wearing masks of the former Iranian president as well as American president Barak Obama and using religious justifications for the right of self defense in relation to Iran’s nuclear program and support of terrorist organizations<sup>30</sup>.

### **Iran’s Man in Peru: Edwar Quiroga Vargas**

Edward Quiroga Vargas, otherwise known as Hussein Quiroga Vargas, is a man of many faces. Currently he serves as the President of the Center of Cultural Exchanges **Inkarry Islam** (established in 2012) and is often credited as the man responsible for promoting the presence of Islam and Iran in the city of Abancay. He formerly ran for representation of the Apurimac Department with the **Ednocacersita** political movement under Antauro Humala. The Ednocacersita or Ednonacionalismo Peruano, is a political movement established by former militant Antauro Humala, which seeks to return the glory of the Incan Empire, the revival of Inca culture, pride and control over the government as well as the nationalization of Peruvian industries.<sup>31</sup> The ideology is mostly socialist/Marxist and its founder Humala, who has been in jail since 2009, is equally as known for his past as a radical leftist/Marxist militant as well as for being the former president of Peru Ollanta Humala’s brother.<sup>32</sup> The Ednocacersita political movement has been heavily associated with the terrorist groups Sendero Luminoso and Movimiento

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Panorama “Avance etnocacerista, comentarios de Octavio Salazar”. June 15, 2015. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eB5yg5kF1ZA>.

<sup>32</sup> “Partido Etnocacerista De Antauro Humala Ya Recolecta Firmas Para Inscripción.” El Comercio Peru. September 18, 2011. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://elcomercio.pe/politica/gobierno/partido-etnocacerista-antauro-humala-ya-recolecta-firmas-inscripcion-noticia-1304677>



Revolucionario Tupac Amaru.<sup>33</sup> Quiroga Vargas has since converted to Islam and established the Inkarry Islam Cultural Exchange and the “Partido de Dios”/ Hezbollah Political Party in Apurimac.

Edward Quiroga Vargas has traveled to Iran and then around South America meeting with political figures such as Evo Morales (see Appendix A) as well as with Muslim religious figures with the purpose of spreading his ideology.<sup>34</sup> Although he has been invited four times to the General Summit of the World Assembly of Ahlul Bait, he claims he was only able to participate twice because he was removed from a KLM flight after being labeled as a terrorist in a document presented before the U.S Congress.<sup>35</sup> The World Assembly of Ahlul Bait “is managed by Muhammad Hassan Akhtari, a leading Iranian cleric and one of the founders of Hezbollah.” According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Ahlul Bait's “activities are directed by the office of the Supreme Leader Khamenei”.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Quiroga Vargas, who refers to himself as a “soldier of the Islamic Revolution”<sup>37</sup>, has claimed numerous times that the Zionist enterprise is responsible for the suffering of the Muslim people as well as author of many catastrophes for the indigenous communities.<sup>38</sup> He also masterfully combines Inca traditional beliefs with Islamic religion to express the betrayal of the indigenous peoples by the “false liberty offered by Bolivar and San Martin” as well as by the

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<sup>33</sup>“Antauro Humala Se Identifica Con Ideología Terrorista Y Pide Amnistía General.” El Comercio Peru. November 25, 2012. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://elcomercio.pe/politica/gobierno/antauro-humala-se-identifica-ideologia-terrorista-pide-amnistia-general-noticia-1501307>

<sup>34</sup> Ain.Alavi. "Hussein Quiroga Vargas En La 6ª Asamblea General [80] “El Islam Nos Vino a Salvar De La Falsa Libertad Ofrecida Por Bolivar Y San Martin”.” Agencia De Noticias Ahlul Bait (P) ABNA - Noticias Shiítas. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://es.abna24.com/707118/print.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Terzi, Giulio Di Sant'Agata, Amb. "Countering Extremism and Radicalization: A Fight for Values." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. September 14, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1777/countering-extremism-and-radicalization-a-fight-for-values>.

<sup>37</sup> Ain.Alavi. "Hussein Quiroga Vargas En La 6ª Asamblea General [80] “El Islam Nos Vino a Salvar De La Falsa Libertad Ofrecida Por Bolívar Y San Martin”.” Agencia De Noticias Ahlul Bait (P) ABNA - Noticias Shiítas. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://es.abna24.com/707118/print.html>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

masons, who he believes to be Jewish secret organizations.<sup>39</sup> Even more so, he has been recorded blaming the Jewish community of Peru for pressuring the current President of Peru, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, to sell Las Bambas copper mine in a deal that disproportionately affected the indigenous communities nearby negatively.<sup>40</sup> He also frequently posts anti-Semitic messages and conspiracy theories regarding attempts by the Zionist enterprise to silence the media in Peru (see Appendix G, H).

Quiroga Vargas is specifically valuable because he serves as a direct link between the Ednocacersitas, the local indigenous communities, tentatively Association Plurinacional de Reservistas del Tahuantinsuyo (ASPRET) and the relatively new Muslim community and Hezbollah party in Apurimac. He regularly hosts Muslim political and religious leaders that have ties to Hezbollah and the more radical elements of Shia based Islam.<sup>41</sup> There is no record of the number of times that Abdul Karim Paz, Edgardo Ruben Assad and Ali Adburrah Man Pohl have met with Quiroga Vargas or visited the community in Abancay but by his own admission he hopes that through Islam “there will be a final and definitive revolution where they will be able to undo all the negative” that has been done in South America but more specifically in Peru.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, he has been recorded stating that the world should “thank Hezbollah for fighting against Zionist financed terrorism of ISIS and Al-Qaeda”.<sup>43</sup> He has been a frequent face in protests with indigenous groups and recently, he has been at the center of controversy due to his involvement with Las Bambas protests and violence.

## What is Sendero Luminoso?

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamiento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamiento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>

<sup>41</sup> PuntoFinal: Musلمانes En Abancay. June 22, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0oQrAM-sAA>.

<sup>42</sup> A Ain.Alavi. "Hussein Quiroga Vargas En La 6ª Asamblea General [80] “El Islam Nos Vino a Salvar De La Falsa Libertad Ofrecida Por Bolívar Y San Martín”." Agencia De Noticias Ahlul Bait (P) ABNA - Noticias Shiítas. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://es.abna24.com/707118/print.html>

<sup>43</sup> Conferencia de Prensa Edwar Quiroga Vargas Las Bambas. Comité de Lucha Nacional Peru. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSwpQb-qJuM>.

El Sendero Luminoso, otherwise known as Shining Path, is one of the most violent terrorist groups in South America. Abimael Guzman established the Shining Path in 1960 under a Maoist political ideology that opposed Peru's elites.<sup>44</sup> The group coalesced into a violent guerrilla army that used terrorist tactics to attack the Peruvian government, and at the height of its power, had tens of thousands of followers. Initially the group targeted mostly local authorities, police and political leaders but since 1983 the group has expanded its target list to include wealthy locals.<sup>45</sup> The group has allegedly killed more than 11,000 civilians but it is also responsible for over 70,000<sup>46</sup> deaths during the war against the government.<sup>47</sup> The Shining Path has expanded its activities to include drug-trafficking and forced taxes on the areas they control. They have business relation with Colombia's Las FARC and as the Colombian government has cracked down on drug trafficking inside the country, cocaine production has moved to areas controlled by the Shining Path. After crackdown on the group by former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's government and the capture of Guzman in 1992, the group's activity declined but it has since revived in rural areas in Peru.<sup>48</sup> The group was recently labeled as a terrorist organization by the US and since 2006<sup>49</sup> the group has engaged in several attacks against police officers and workers in the region.<sup>50</sup> Currently VRAEM (Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mantaro) is the area of main area of influence of Sendero

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<sup>44</sup> ""LOS ACTORES ARMADOS: EL PARTIDO COMUNISTA DEL PERÚ SENDERO LUMINOSO." Comisión De La Verdad Y Reconciliación. Accessed November 25, 2016. [http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO II/CAPITULO 1 - Los actores armados del conflicto/1.1. PCP-SL/CAP I SL ORIGEN.pdf](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20II/CAPITULO%201%20-%20Los%20actores%20armados%20del%20conflicto/1.1.%20PCP-SL/CAP%20I%20SL%20ORIGEN.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Coha. "Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, Leftists)." COHA. September 30, 2008. Accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.coha.org/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> ""Principales Datos Y Cronología De Sendero Luminoso." Noticias Terra. February 12, 2012. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://noticias.terra.com.pe/mundo/principales-datos-y-cronologia-de-sendero-luminoso,d313a4cb8e275310VgnVCM10000098f154d0RCRD.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Coha. "Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, Leftists)." COHA. September 30, 2008. Accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.coha.org/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists/>.

Luminoso.<sup>51</sup> According to intelligence officers approximately 100 to 200 tons of cocaine are trafficked via air towards Brazil through Bolivia annually.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the drug trafficking enterprise was coordinated with Las FARC under the leadership of renowned drug trafficker and leader of Sendero Luminoso VRAEM Victor Quispe Palomino<sup>53</sup>. In the 90's, Sendero Luminoso was allegedly responsible for the shooting of the secretary of the Jewish community of Lima and the attempting bomb attack of the Sephardic Synagogue in Lima as well.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the Shining Path claims to work on behalf of the indigenous rural population in Peru who has been exploited the elites and they still have some support in the rural areas.<sup>55</sup>

### **What is Asociación Plurinacional de Reservistas del Tahuantinsuyo (ASPRET)?**

ASPRET, or the Plurinational Association of Reservists of the Tahuantinsuyo, is an Ednocacersita group that refers to itself as the “Guardians of the People”.<sup>56</sup> They are a Peruvian militant organization present in many rural areas of the country as well as the capital Lima. According to an investigation by Panorama News Agency and statements by Congressman Octavio Salazar, ASPRET has been involved in several violent encounters and civil disobediences such as Pichanaki against Pluspetrol, the taking of the Municipality of Oxapampa and the violent clashes in Puerto Bermúdez.<sup>57</sup> ASPRET's

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<sup>51</sup> Torres, Jorge Serrano. "Investigación: Terroristas De Hezbollah Y Al-Qaeda Son Amenaza Para Perú Y América Latina." CATARSIS Y HARAKIRI. November 2014. Accessed November 28, 2016.  
<http://www.blogcyh.com/2016/06/investigacion-terroristas-de-hezbollah.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Crime, InSight. "Shining Path." Shining Path Profile. December 01, 2015. Accessed November 28, 2016.  
<http://www.insightcrime.org/peru-organized-crime-news/shining-path-profile>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Cohat. "Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, Leftists)." COHA. September 30, 2008. Accessed November 27, 2016.  
<http://www.coha.org/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists/>.

<sup>56</sup> Panorama “Avance etnocacerista, comentarios de Octavio Salazar”. June 15, 2015. Accessed November 24, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eB5yg5kF1ZA>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

leader is Sacha Villarroel, a militant with pending criminal charges who has aspirations to be president of the country.<sup>58</sup> The group receives funding for weapons, trucks and uniforms from Miguel Angel Quispe Palomino.<sup>59</sup> Quispe Palomino is an alleged drug trafficker and was included in a list of the Minister of Interiors for his involvement in drug trafficking.<sup>60</sup> Quispe Palomino is closely related to alleged head of Sendero Luminoso VRAEM, Victor Quispe Palomino who is known for his massive cocaine trafficking enterprise and collaboration with Las FARC.<sup>61,62</sup> The investigation by Panorama included photos and videos in which Quispe Palomino's political propaganda can be seen in ASPRET's trucks.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore the trucks in question are also allegedly registered to Quispe Palomino's companies. ASPRET has been present in many political and social clashes within the country and their presence has also been noted in the conflict regarding Las Bambas.

## **Las Bambas: Meeting point for local groups and Islamic extremism?**

**Las Bambas** is copper mine located in Apurimac region in Peru. In 2004 Xstrata Copper acquired a license to operate Las Bambas. Like any large mine exploited by a transnational companies, Las Bambas was not controversy free, but it was not particularly unpopular until May 2013 when Glencore (an Australian company) and Xstrata (a Chinese Company) merged.<sup>64</sup> This merger forced Xstrata to sell the project in order to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Crime, InSight. "Shining Path." Shining Path Profile. December 01, 2015. Accessed November 28, 2016. <http://www.insightcrime.org/peru-organized-crime-news/shining-path-profile>.

<sup>62</sup> Torres, Jorge Serrano. "Investigación: Terroristas De Hezbollah Y Al-Qaeda Son Amenaza Para Perú Y América Latina." CATARSIS Y HAKIRI. November 2014. Accessed November 28, 2016. <http://www.blogcyh.com/2016/06/investigacion-terroristas-de-hezbollah.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Cárdenas, Jorge. "Todo Lo Que Debes Saber Sobre El Conflicto En Las Bambas." Larepublica.pe. September 29, 2015. Accessed November 27, 2016. <http://larepublica.pe/politica/706865-todo-lo-que-debes-saber-sobre-el-conflicto-en-las-bambas>.

comply fully with Chinese antimonopoly laws.<sup>65</sup> Consequently the project was bought by a series of multinationals, primarily by MMG Limited as well as International Investment Co. Ltd and CITIC Metal Co. Ltd, and they introduced a series of policy changes to the mine.<sup>66</sup> The indigenous communities in the surrounding areas claimed that the changes would have devastating environmental consequences for their communities and released a series of demands. Furthermore, these communities also protested poor working conditions, low wages and the social impact that the mine has on their homes.<sup>67</sup> Due to what they saw as lack of an appropriate response by the companies, the communities organized mostly peaceful protests in the cities and roadblocks to prevent the trucks from getting to Las Bambas.<sup>68</sup> This conflict is the continuation of a series of protests that began in 2013 that resulted in 3 deaths as well as many injured and arrested under the government of Ollanta Humala. Currently, clashes between the police and the communities resulted in the death of 42-year-old Quintino Cerceda Huilca who was shot and many others, including 20 policemen, were injured.<sup>69</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, Congresswoman Luciana Leon asked the Minister of Interior Carlos Basombrio to investigate allegations that Hezbollah and Sendero Luminoso had infiltrated the protests of Las Bambas.<sup>70</sup> Leon, who is also the president of the Commission of Defense, sent Minister Basombrio a letter inviting him to an extraordinary session to investigate Inkarry Islam, whether it serves a veil for Hezbollah

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> "1 Muerto Y 20 Heridos Por Represión Policial De Protesta En Perú ." HispanTV. October 15, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://www.hispantv.com/noticias/peru/301235/represion-policial-mina-las-bambas-deja-muerto-heridos>

<sup>70</sup> Noticias, Redacción RPP. "Luciana León Pidió a Basombrio Aclarar La Supuesta Presencia De Hezbollah En Apurímac." Rpp.pe. October 18, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://rpp.pe/politica/congreso/luciana-leon-ministro-respondera-sobre-posible-vinculacion-del-hezbollah-en-las-bambas-noticia-1003229>.

and its links with Sendero Luminoso.<sup>71</sup> After her declarations caught the attention of news agencies around the world, Congresswoman Leon stated that it is up to Intelligence Services, and not her, to determine whether there is in fact a relationship between Sendero Luminoso and Hezbollah in Peru.<sup>72</sup> However, Congresswoman Leon is not alone in her beliefs. Waynakuna Peru, an NGO dedicated to educating the Peruvian people to the reemergence of terrorist groups, fighting against violence inside the country and promoting democracy, as well as the National Forum for Youth Political Parties,<sup>73</sup> released a statement in which they condemned Inkarry Islam and specifically Quiroga Vargas and Sendero Luminoso for their violent rhetoric and infiltration of the marches of Las Bambas. In their statement, they included a video in which Quiroga can be seen and heard blaming Jewish people for pressuring the current president of country into entering a faulty deal in Las Bambas and inciting violence.<sup>74</sup> In a video of a press conference by Edwar Quiroga Vargas relating to Las Bambas, he can also be heard referring to the Peruvian State as terrorists, calling for violent resistance and blaming “Zionists” for the deaths of 90 million indigenous people since the dawn of Peru.<sup>75</sup> In this conference he also reiterates that it is necessary to be willing to die to defend la Pachamama, or the Mother Earth.<sup>76</sup> Waynakuna Peru also included photos of Quiroga, other members of Inkarry Islam and Edgardo Ruben Assad with members of ASPRET<sup>77</sup> (see Appendix C,D,E). Although ASPRET’s Villarroel denied a direct link between Inkarry Islam and his organization, the many photos of members of both organizations together (see Appendix

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamiento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016.  
<http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamiento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Conferencia de Prensa Edwar Quiroga Vargas Las Bambas. Comité de Lucha Nacional Peru.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSwpQb-qJuM>.

<sup>76</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamiento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016.  
<http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamiento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

C,D,E) and the recurring claims that Quiroga Vargas is a member of ASPRET suggests a more intimate relationship between them.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, in a statement to El Comercio newspaper the miners expressed their frustration with Inkarry Islam and Sendero Luminoso for their exploitation of the Las Bambas controversy to push their respective hidden agendas.<sup>79</sup> For his part, Quiroga Vargas claimed that Congresswoman Leon and other sources that reported on Las Bambas included claims about Hezbollah and Sendero Luminoso in order to reduce public support of the protests against Las Bambas.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

Although the ties between the Muslim community and Iran are undeniable, the connection with Hezbollah is less certain. The establishment of the “Party of God”(Hezbollah in Spanish) in Abancay, Quiroga Vargas’s own relentless defense of Hezbollah (see Appendix F) on social media and the connection of the sheiks Abdul Karim Paz, Edgardo Ruben Assad and Ali Adburrah Man Pohl to Mohsen Rabanni and other Hezbollah operatives is more than suspicious. Furthermore, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the radicalization process that the Abancay community has been experiencing is a well-known technique used by Hezbollah cells in other places. Even more so, it is clear that Inkarry Islam, and specifically Quiroga Vargas himself, has an intimate relationship with the local militant group ASPRET and possibly ties to Sendero Luminoso. Even more so, the connection between the Quispe Palomino drug traffickers and both ASPRET and Sendero Luminoso are reason for concern. Overall, it is

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<sup>78</sup> "Niega Que Aspret Tenga Vinculo Con Hezbola Y El Etnocacerismo." PressReader.com - Connecting People Through News. October 30, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.pressreader.com/peru/diario-expresso-peru/20161030/281685434396455>.

<sup>79</sup> "Las Bambas: Comunidades Rechazan "agendas Oscuras" De Asesores." El Comercio Peru. November 12, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://elcomercio.pe/amp/sociedad/apurimac/bambas-comunidades-rechazan-agendas-oscuras-asesores-noticia-1946074>.

<sup>80</sup> Conferencia de Prensa Edwar Quiroga Vargas Las Bambas. Comité de Lucha Nacional Peru. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSwpQb-qJuM>.



undetermined whether infiltrations by Sendero Luminoso and Hezbollah can be directly attributed for the death of Quintino Cerceda Huilca and the violence experienced in Las Bambas protests. Still, local indigenous groups and NGOs have clearly stated that the presence of Inkarry Islam, Sendero and ASPRET and their attempts to use this cause to spread their respective messages are not welcome.

## Appendix

### *Appendix A- Edwar Quiroga Vargas meets President of Bolivia Evo Morales*

Picture taken from Waynakuna Perú depicting Edwar Quiroga Vargas and President of Bolivia, Evo Morales<sup>81</sup>



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<sup>81</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016.  
<http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

## *Appendix B- Edwar Quiroga Varga's praises Iran*

Picture taken from Edwar Quiroga Varga's Twitter depicting his support for Iran<sup>82</sup>



<sup>82</sup> Taken from Edwar Quiroga Vargas' Twitter  
<https://twitter.com/Quirogaperu/media>

### *Appendix C- Argentinian Sheik Edgardo Ruben Assad meets members of ASPRET*

Picture taken from Waynakuna Perú depicting Edgardo Ruben Assad and members of ASPRET in their headquarters.<sup>83</sup>




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<sup>83</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamiento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016.  
<http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamiento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

*Appendix D- Edwar Quiroga Vargas poses with members of ASPRET*

Picture taken from Waynakuna Perú depicting Edwar Quiroga Vargas and a member of ASPRET in their headquarters.<sup>84</sup>



Picture taken from Waynakuna Perú depicting Edward Quiroga Vargas and ASPRET leader "Sacha" Villaroel Medina<sup>85</sup>



<sup>84</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamiento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamiento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

<sup>85</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamiento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamiento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

### *Appendix E- Edward Quiroga Vargas defends Hezbollah*

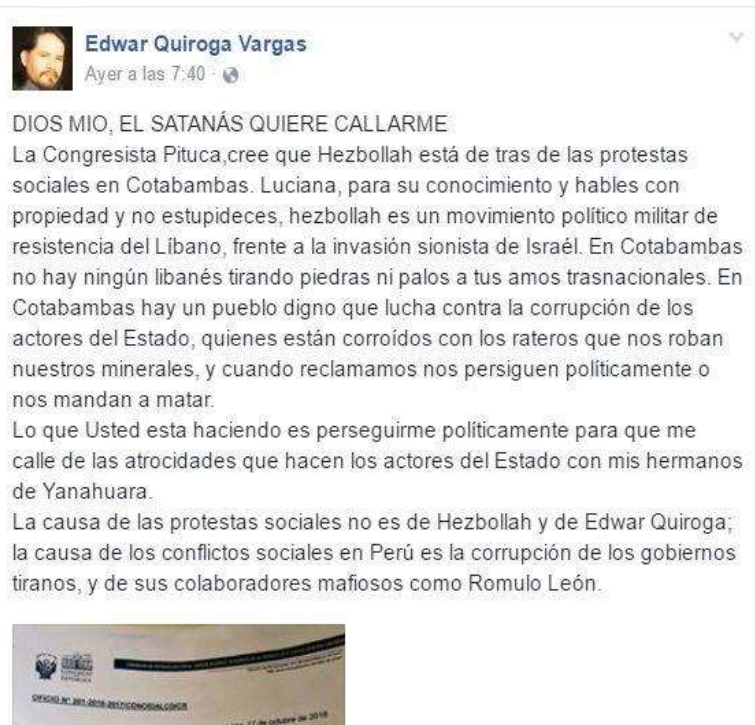
Picture taken from Edwar Quiroga Vargas' Facebook account depicting his messages of support of Hezbollah<sup>86</sup>



<sup>86</sup> Edwar Quiroga Vargas Facebook Accounts  
<https://www.facebook.com/EdwarQuirogaVargasYaku/>.  
<https://www.facebook.com/yaku.quiroga>.

## *Appendix F- Edward Quiroga Vargas responds to accusations of infiltration*

Picture taken from Edwar Quiroga Vargas' Facebook depicts his response to Congresswoman Leon regarding the accusation of infiltration of Hezbollah to Las Bambas protests.<sup>87</sup>



<sup>87</sup> Edwar Quiroga Vargas Facebook Account  
<https://www.facebook.com/yaku.quiroga>



## Appendix G- Edwar Quiroga Vargas accuses media of being pro-Zionist

Picture taken Edwar Quiroga Vargas' Facebook account depicting accusations against the media <sup>88</sup>



<sup>88</sup> Edwar Quiroga Vargas Facebook Account  
<https://www.facebook.com/yaku.quiroga>



## *Appendix H- Edwar Quiroga Vargas protests against mines in Peru*

Picture taken from Waynakuna Perú depicts Edwar Quiroga Vargas protesting against mining projects in Peru<sup>89</sup>



<sup>89</sup> Sanchez Caceres, Luis Alberto, Pres. "Pronunciamento Acerca De Denuncias De La Presencia Del Hezbollah En El Perú." Waynakuna Perú. October 21, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <http://waynakunaperu.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/pronunciamento-acerca-de-denuncias-de.html>.

*Appendix J- Sheik Ali Adburrah Man Pohl visits the community in Abancay*

Picture taken from Latina news report depicts Ali Adburrah Man Pohl with Edwar Vargas Quiroga, members of the Abancay Muslim community and a photo of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei<sup>90</sup>



<sup>90</sup> PuntoFinal: Muslumanes En Abancay. June 22, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0oQrAM-sAA>.

*Appendix K- Members of the Abancay community visit Iran*

Picture taken from Latina news report depicts members of the Abancay Muslim community visiting Iran as part of Inkarry Islam cultural exchange<sup>91</sup>



<sup>91</sup> Ibid