

Lebanon urges EU to keep Hezbollah off blacklist

BEIRUT: The European Union should refrain from listing Hezbollah, a principle component of Lebanon's political fabric, as a terrorist organization, caretaker Foreign Minister urged European states Friday.

According to the National News Agency, Mansour sent letters to the foreign ministers of 28 European countries, in which he expressed, "and upon instructions from President Michel Sleiman, that Hezbollah not be placed on the list of terrorist organizations, given that the party is a principle component of Lebanese political life and has representatives in Parliament and government."

The European Union could make a decision on whether to blacklist Hezbollah's military wing as soon as next week, a senior EU official told the Associated Press.

Mansour, according to the NNA, warned that a move to list Hezbollah as a terrorist organization would have negative repercussions on the local political scene while stressing "that Lebanon is very keen on maintaining the positive bi-lateral ties with European Union states and appreciates their continued support at different levels."

Meanwhile, Hezbollah MP Mohammad Raad thanked Sleiman, caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Mansour for asking the EU to refrain from blacklisting the resistance group.

Raad contacted the three via telephone to express his party's gratitude, Hezbollah's office said.

Speaker Nabih Berri also contacted the president and thanked him for his effort "to prevent Hezbollah from being listed on the EU terror list despite Arab and local pressure pushing for such labeling," the National News Agency reported.

Berri also said such pressure could at best be described as “very stupid.”

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