
Time for the EU to Proscribe Hezbollah in Full

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The EU is weighing whether to add Hezbollah to its list of designated terror organisations. Such a move is long overdue both in the European Union and in Britain. In Europe the organisation is not named at all on its terrorist list, whilst on Britain's own list of foreign terrorist groups, a false distinction is made between Hezbollah's military wing, and the organisation as a whole.

The Terrorism Act 2000 came into force in the UK in February 2001, making possible the proscription of foreign terror groups. When the list was drawn up under then-Home Secretary Jack Straw, only the military arms of Hamas and Hezbollah were named, as opposed to the organisations in full.

[Correspondence leaked to journalist Martin Bright](#) between Home Office and Foreign Office officials from 2005, indicated that this was a policy decision made by ministers, and that the intelligence services did not support making a distinction between political and military wings of either organisation. Both Hamas and Hezbollah had appeared in their entirety on the US list of foreign terrorist organisations since the mid-1990s. It is not clear therefore, why a political decision was made in Britain to draw a distinction between political and military wings.

Two years later, in the wake of 9/11, and after Hamas had killed hundreds of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings during the Second Intifada, the UK government changed tack. Jack Straw, by then in the position of Foreign Secretary, [acknowledged](#) that the military and political activities of Hamas were, "very extensively intertwined", and successfully promoted the proscription of Hamas in its entirety in the EU in August 2003.

However, Hezbollah was not added to the EU list, and the UK never amended its own list to include Hamas and Hezbollah in their entirety. In 2005, according to the same [leaked correspondence](#), Straw pressed Home Secretary Charles Clarke to change the UK list of foreign terror organisations to include Hamas and Hezbollah in full. However there were concerns that this would face legal challenge, since there was no change in the intelligence assessment to explain cancelling the artificial distinction Straw himself had made in 2001.

The situation only deteriorated when on the eve of the 2009 Lebanese elections, the UK chose the worst possible moment to grant legitimacy to Hezbollah by [announcing publicly](#) that it was engaging directly with it.

Year by year the case for proscribing Hezbollah, which works side by side with Iran in sowing instability throughout the Middle East, has only grown. Hezbollah fired 4000 rockets at Israeli civilians in 2006, [turned its weapons on fellow Lebanese](#) in 2008, had four of its [operatives indicted](#) for murdering former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2011, and in the past year has been [helping long-time ally Bashar al-Assad](#) butcher his own people in neighbouring Syria.

Hezbollah's nefarious activities are not confined to the Middle East, they affect the EU directly. According to the US government, Hezbollah has made hundreds of millions of dollars [trafficking drugs in Europe](#), and there is [good reason to believe](#) it planned the bombing of a bus in Bulgaria, which killed five Israeli tourists and their Bulgarian driver in July of this year. If the aim of engagement was to moderate Hezbollah's behaviour, it hasn't worked.

It is time to fix this anomaly and impose an EU-wide proscription on Hezbollah in its entirety. This brutal organisation, a proxy for Iran, and neck deep in terror, organised crime and repression, should not be able to maintain assets or raise money in the European Union.

In engaging with Islamist parties in the fast changing Arab world, a clear line must be drawn between those that operate legitimately as political parties, and those that want to hold the ballots in one hand and the bullets in the other.

www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-toby-greene/eu-should-proscribe-hezbollah_b_1887871.html