



Germany outlaws Hezbollah, joining other countries which designated it as a terrorist organization

May 7, 2020

Overview

On April 30, 2020, Germany banned Hezbollah from operating on German soil and designated it as a terrorist organization. Immediately after doing so, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer instructed the security forces **to conduct searches in mosques, in gathering places of Hezbollah followers** and in a number of suspects' homes in several cities (including Berlin, Bremen, Münster and Dortmund). According to the German minister of the interior, Hezbollah publicly calls for the destruction of the State of Israel and questions Israel's right to exist, and therefore its positions are contrary to those of the international community.

► Following the decision, the use of Hezbollah's insignia has been banned in Germany and it has been decided that all Hezbollah's assets in Germany will be confiscated (Germany's Federal Interior Ministry, April 30, 2020). According to intelligence assessments, there are **1,050 Hezbollah followers in Germany** who usually meet secretly in mosques or cultural clubs but, at the same time, carry out overt activity on the Internet (The New York Times, April 30, 2020).



**German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer
(website of the German Interior Ministry)**

► Until the banning of Hezbollah, Germany did not have its own list of terrorist organizations, adopting instead the policy of the European Union's Council of Foreign Ministers, which distinguished between Hezbollah's military wing and its political wing. On July 22, 2013, the

EU Council of Foreign Ministers decided to add Hezbollah's military wing to the list of terrorist organizations of the EU. However, **it did not outlaw Hezbollah's political wing.** Steps to outlaw Hezbollah (as a whole) in Germany began about a year ago, in 2019, after a group of lawmakers pressured Chancellor Angela Merkel to take a tougher stance against Hezbollah by designating its political wing as a terrorist organization. Such designation was intended to ensure that Hezbollah would not be able to operate on German soil and would be prevented from raising funds and engaging in propaganda activity in Germany (The New York Times, April 30, 2020).

► **Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah** lashed out at the German decision, claiming that **it represented surrender to Israeli and US pressure.** He also noted that Germany did not produce any evidence linking Hezbollah to terrorist activity on its soil. He stressed that Germany's step would not impact Hezbollah's resolution to confront Israel ("the occupation"). **Lebanon's foreign minister** pointed out to Germany's ambassador to Lebanon that Hezbollah is a fundamental political element in the country, representing a large part of the Lebanese people. **Iran, Syria, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** also condemned the decision of the German government, presenting it as surrender to the dictates of the United States and Israel ("the Zionist entity").

► According to Lebanese news website Lebanon Debate, **the German decision constitutes a major blow to Hezbollah, especially in the economic aspect.** This is so because, according to Western senior security officials, investigations of the CIA and the US Department of the Treasury revealed that **Germany is a significant stop in the transfer of funds to Hezbollah.** It was reported that funds raised for Hezbollah by operatives in Europe **are transferred to Germany and from there to legitimate bank accounts in Beirut.** In addition, the US uncovered that **Hezbollah supporters who had moved from Africa to Germany were sending funds from Hezbollah supporters to Berlin, and from there to Beirut.** The funds are funneled to Hezbollah in various methods: in cash, through bank transfers, and by currency exchange offices (Lebanon Debate, May 3, 2020).

► Following are two appendices:

- ◆ **Appendix A:** Reactions to the decision of the German government
- ◆ **Appendix B:** Hezbollah's legal status in various countries

Appendix A

Reactions to the decision of the German government

Lebanon

Hezbollah

► **Hezbollah** condemned the decision of the German government which, according to it, constitutes surrender to pressure by Israel and the United States. **Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah** elaborated on the issue in a speech on May 4, 2020. Following are the main points he made on the German government's decision (Al-Nashra; Al-Manar, May 4, 2020):

- ◆ **Germany's decision was expected. According to Nasrallah, it is a political decision intended to please Israel and the US.** Germany succumbs to the will of the US and Israel not only in relation to Hezbollah but also in relation to other “resistance movements” which the US and Israel seek to fight against (i.e., the Palestinian terrorist organizations).
- ◆ Nasrallah condemns **the raids carried out by the German authorities on mosques and homes of Lebanese** on the pretext that they are followers of Hezbollah and the “resistance.” According to him, Germany did not produce any evidence linking Hezbollah to terrorist activity on its soil. Nasrallah even claims that for many years, Hezbollah has had no branches in any country in Europe or any other country.
- ◆ It is possible that Lebanese people living in Germany support the “resistance” and oppose “the occupation;” It is also possible that they conduct religious or other activity. However, **Nasrallah claims, they respect German law and have no organizational connection to Hezbollah.** Hezbollah, too, Nasrallah claims, refrains from contacting Lebanese abroad in order not to put them in danger.
- ◆ Germany's move **will not affect Hezbollah's will power and resolution. Hezbollah will continue to confront Israel (“the occupation”) and fight against Israel's aspirations and the American hegemony in the region.** According to Nasrallah, all the attempts to eliminate Hezbollah will only strengthen it.

Senior Shiite figure

► **Sheikh Abdel Amir Qabalan, chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council**, condemned the German decision, claiming that it was directed against a national party with a vast base of supporters in the Lebanese society, a party which is represented in parliament and is a full partner in the Lebanese government. According to Sheikh Qabalan, Hezbollah fights against both “Zionist terrorism” and “Takfiri terrorism” (i.e., against ISIS and other jihadi organizations in Syria). According to Qabalan, the decision is detrimental to the strong bonds between the two countries and runs counter to the interest of the Lebanese people and the German people. He demanded that the German government revoke its decision taken, according to him, following pressure and dictates from Israel and the United States (Al-Nashra, May 3, 2020).

The Lebanese administration

► **Lebanese Foreign Minister Nassif Hatti** summoned German Ambassador to Lebanon Georg Birgelen. According to a statement released by the Lebanese Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Birgelen said that the decision to ban the activities of Hezbollah had been taken a while ago and it recently entered into force. Birgelen clarified that “the decision does not classify Hezbollah as a terrorist [group], but rather prohibits its activities on German soil.” Nassif Hatti stressed Lebanon’s basic position that Hezbollah “is a fundamental political component in the country and represents a broad class of the people, and is part of the Lebanese parliament” (Anatolia, May 5, 2020).

Iran

► **Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi condemned the German government’s decision.** According to him, it seems that some of the European countries take a stance without taking account of the facts but rather “the purposes of the propaganda machine of the Zionist entity and the confused American regime.” Mousavi noted that the German government’s decision had been taken without respecting the Lebanese government and the Lebanese people, since Hezbollah is an official and legitimate part of the government and the parliament in Lebanon. According to Mousavi, Hezbollah has been an influential political party in everything that pertains to assisting political stability, saying that it enjoys widespread popular support in Lebanon and the entire region (Al-Nashra, May 1, 2020).

► According to **Guardian Council Spokesman Abbas-Ali Kadkhoda'i**, it was the blood and sacrifices made by Hezbollah's operatives that prevented ISIS operatives from reaching European capitals. Kadkhoda'i noted that designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organization is contradictory to international law and compromises the right of self-determination. He added that the German government, which purports to protect human rights, should stand by "the forces of resistance" which protect their land and their people instead of supporting Israel ("the Zionist entity") (Al-Nashra, May 2, 2020).

Syria

► **Syria also condemned the decision of the German government.** "Official source" in the Syrian Foreign Ministry noted that the German government's decision had clearly demonstrated Germany's surrender to the "global Zionist dictates" and "its humiliating subjugation to American policy," while continuing to lose sovereignty and independence. The source further said that Syria considered Hezbollah one of the most prominent resistance movements against Israel ("the occupation"). Syria regards the German government's decision as a sign of respect and genuine recognition of Hezbollah's role of resistance to Israel (Al-Manar, April 30, 2020).

Palestinian terrorist organizations

► **Spokesmen for Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) condemned the German decision:**

- ◆ **Hamas's spokesman Hazem al-Qassem** said that this was a clear bias towards the narrative of Israel, which behaves aggressively and exercises terrorism against the Arab nations. According to Al-Qassem, this decision will encourage Israel to continue its aggression in spite of international law decisions. He noted that Israel and its senior officials must be designated as terrorists (Hazem al-Qassem's Twitter account, May 1, 2020).

- ◆ **A statement released by the PIJ** noted that the decision stemmed from pressure exerted by Israel and the United States, and that it was a bias towards Israel, which behaves aggressively, engages in terrorism, and threatens security and stability in the region. The statement further described Hezbollah as one of the pillars of resistance to Israel's aggression in Lebanon (SAWA, May 1, 2020).

Other Iranian-sponsored organizations

► **The political bureau of Ansar Allah in Yemen** (the Iranian-sponsored Houthis) released a statement noting their rejection of the German decision against the jihad fighters in Hezbollah and the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. According to the statement, this was actually an implementation of US and Israeli aspirations for normalization with the Zionists and confronting the free nations which reject the domination of global arrogance (i.e., the United States). The statement pointed out that the Houthis were standing side by side with their brethren, the jihad fighters in Hezbollah and the Islamic resistance movements, declaring their full solidarity with them (Al-Manar, April 30, 2020).

Appendix B

Hezbollah's designation as a terrorist organization

- ▶ Hezbollah's terrorist activity has been going on for nearly 40 years. This has been a long period, **during which much evidence has accumulated on the terrorist identity of Hezbollah, which is involved in the Iranian policy of "exporting" terrorism and subversion.** Such evidence, which includes a great deal of reliable intelligence, has accumulated in the hands of the security services of the United States, European countries, and Israel, which have been the target of Iran and Hezbollah's terrorist activity over a long period of time. In addition, a lot of information has accumulated in the hands of the legal systems in the various countries, after having interrogated apprehended terrorists. This information proves that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization handled by Iran (the bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires is a prominent example, see below).
- ▶ Hezbollah itself has published statements and photos in which it boasts that **Israeli towns and villages as well as civilian facilities in Israel have been and will be the target of its rocket arsenal** (originating from Iran). Based on the accumulated information, which **unequivocally indicates** Hezbollah's responsibility for terrorist actions, including attacks against the US causing hundreds of American fatalities, **the US has included Hezbollah in the list of international terrorist organizations and also designated it as a transnational crime organization.**
- ▶ As part of the war against terrorism and the transfer of funds intended to finance terrorism, governments have been entrusted with the authority of designating organizations, entities and operatives as terrorists. The significance of such a designation is that any property belonging to the terrorist organization will be confiscated by the relevant country. Operatives designated as members or supporters of the organization are expected to stand trial and be sentenced to imprisonment. In the United States and in Israel, Hezbollah including both of its wings has been designated as a terrorist organization.
- ▶ For years, there have been attempts, mainly on the diplomatic level, to convince additional countries to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. **Recently, Britain and several Latin American countries have also outlawed Hezbollah's political wing** (see below). **However, most of the EU countries have outlawed only Hezbollah's military wing.** Due to an **artificial distinction** between its military and political wings, which apparently also stems

from political considerations, they still refrain from outlawing Hezbollah's political wing as well.

The distinction between Hezbollah’s military and political wings is **artificial and is not based on reality. In practice, both its political and military wings are intertwined and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah heads both of them.** There are reciprocal relations between the two wings: Hezbollah’s military power strengthens its political power in the Lebanese internal scene, while Hezbollah’s political and social activity is employed to strengthen its military-terrorist infrastructure. Hezbollah’s top institutions, and its leaders, headed by Hassan Nasrallah, determine the policy of exercising the organization’s military-terrorist capabilities. **Senior Hezbollah leaders have also declared that, from their own perspective, there cannot be a distinction between a “political wing” and a “military wing”¹.**

The United States

- ▶ The United States has designated the entire Hezbollah as a terrorist organization responsible for the death of over 300 American citizens in terrorist attacks carried out by Hezbollah in Lebanon in 1983 against the US Embassy and the US Marine base. Since the designation has been made, the United States has been expanding it to include further entities and figures belonging to Hezbollah.
- ▶ **In October 2018**, during Donald Trump's presidency, in view of the new policy declared by the president towards Iran, the American administration took a series of legislative and law enforcement measures against Hezbollah and all its supporters. On October 11, 2018, the US Congress approved two bills expanding the scope of sanctions imposed on Hezbollah and its supporters, on the basis of a previous bill (from 2015)²

¹ The most prominent statement in this regard was made by Hassan Nasrallah, when asked **“who makes the decision on the actions: the fighters on the ground or the political leadership?”** he answered: **“Hezbollah’s leadership.** The subject no longer concerns ground operatives only. **Hezbollah’s leadership is the leadership of the resistance** [i.e., of the military-terrorist network] **and it is the one that considers all the data, the interest of the resistance and the policy of its action.** The brothers on the ground [i.e., the ground operatives] are the ones who carry out the policy (Al-Majalla, March 24, 2002). **Mohamad Fneish**, senior Hezbollah figure and a Hezbollah MP in the Lebanese parliament, made the following statement: “They are trying to tempt Hezbollah in order to curb it. The purpose is not to hit the political role [of Hezbollah] but the military wing. **However, I can say that Hezbollah’ military wing and political wing are inseparable**” (Al-Manar, January 18, 2002).

² See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from November 2018, “The United States recently designated Hezbollah as one of the five leading transnational criminal groups and approved bills intensifying the sanctions imposed on Hezbollah and those supporting it”

► These measures, widely supported in Congress, **gave the US law enforcement authorities improved “toolbox” in the fight against Hezbollah and international crime in which it is involved.** Furthermore, **these measures reflected the Trump administration’s deep commitment to give high priority to the fight against Hezbollah, as part of the overall campaign against Iran.**

► The following is a short summary of the American steps:

◆ **Two law bills expanding the sanctions against Hezbollah (October 11, 2018):** One expands the economic and financial sanctions imposed in previous legislation (2015) on Hezbollah and anyone who supports the organization and its criminal activity around the world (individuals, companies, and government entities). **The second bill imposes sanctions on Hezbollah and Hamas which make use of civilians as human shields** and on individuals, institutions and countries that help them do so.

◆ **The inclusion of Hezbollah in the list of the five leading transnational criminal groups and the establishment of a task force for the struggle against them (October 15, 2018):** US Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the inclusion of Hezbollah in the list of the five leading transnational criminal groups. Aside from Hezbollah, **four other international drug and criminal cartels** based in Latin America were included in the list. In order to manage the struggle against these leading groups, **a special task force headed by the deputy attorney general** was set up, with the participation of prosecutors and experts with experience in the war against drugs, terrorism, organized crime, and money laundering.



US Attorney General in a press conference presenting the five leading transnational criminal groups, including Hezbollah (website of the US Department of Justice, October 16, 2018)

Canada

- ▶ Canada outlawed the entire Hezbollah on October 12, 2002, **without distinguishing between the military wing and the political wing** (Canadian government website).

The European Union

- ▶ On July 22, 2013, the EU Council of Foreign Ministers unanimously decided **to add Hezbollah's military wing to the EU list of terrorist organizations**. According to the decision, this position will be reexamined every six months (EU Council of Foreign Ministers' Document A 395/13, July 22, 2013). According to media reports, this decision means that the 28 EU countries and their governments will not be allowed to transfer funds to Hezbollah, the organization's assets will be frozen, and its operatives will not be allowed travel freely in Europe. **Hezbollah's political wing was not included in the EU announcement.**

Britain

- ▶ Britain outlawed the whole of Hezbollah **in stages**. **In 2001, Hezbollah's military wing was designated by Britain as a terrorist organization**. Hezbollah's External Security Organization was designated as a terrorist organization in 2008. **On March 1, 2019, the British Parliament approved a decision to designate the whole of Hezbollah**, including both its military and political wings, as a terrorist organization. Home Secretary Sajid Javid and other ministers explained the decision by the difficulty to distinguish between Hezbollah's military wing and its political wing. Therefore, it was decided to designate the whole of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization (British government website; Home Secretary Sajid Javid's Twitter account, February 25, 2019).



The tweet of British Home Secretary Sajid Javid (Sajid Javid's Twitter account, February 25, 2019)

France

► France outlawed **only Hezbollah's military wing**. In response to the British decision to include also Hezbollah's political activity, French President Emmanuel Macron noted that they would not designate Hezbollah's political wing as a terrorist organization because France refuses to include Lebanese represented in the Lebanon's government in its terrorist lists.

The Netherlands

► **The Netherlands designated the whole of Hezbollah, including all its wings, as a terrorist organization.**

Latin American countries

► For years, Hezbollah has been maintaining extensive terrorist and subversive activity in Latin America, accompanied with extensive criminal activity (drug trafficking, counterfeiting and other criminal affairs). In the 1990s, two deadly terrorist attacks were carried out in Argentina, against the Israeli Embassy and the Jewish Community Center (the AMIA building) in Buenos Aires. These attacks were carried out on direction by Iran and with terrorist infrastructure created by Iran and Hezbollah in Argentina and other Latin American countries. In spite of that, Hezbollah was not banned in Argentina and other Latin American countries until 2019.

► Only on July 18, 2019, **Argentina designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization** and froze all its assets. About a month later, on August 19, 2019, **the Paraguayan government officially designated** Hezbollah as a terrorist organization³.

Arab countries

► In Arab forums, the whole of Hezbollah was designated by most of the Arab countries as a terrorist organization, without distinction between its military and political wings. **On November 19, 2017, the Arab League held an emergency meeting of foreign ministers in Cairo, on Saudi Arabia's request.** The meeting focused on the intervention of Iran and its proxies in the internal affairs of the Arab countries.

³ For additional details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from September 1, 2019, "Paraguay has designated Hezbollah a terrorist organization, joining Argentina. It gives Paraguay's government better tools to deal with Hezbollah's activities, especially in the Tri-Border Area, which serves as the center for smuggling and organized crime." See also the ITIC's Information Bulletin from August 1, 2019, "Argentina designates Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and freezes all its assets, joining other countries, led by the United States. That gives the Argentine government better tools to deal with Hezbollah's activities in Argentina and Latin America."

► **In its concluding announcement, the meeting vehemently condemned Iran and “Lebanese Hezbollah terrorist organization” operating on its behalf.** The announcement included a clause (clause 9) holding Hezbollah, which is a partner in the Lebanese government, accountable for supporting terrorism and terrorist groups in the Arab countries by advanced weapons and ballistic missiles. The announcement pointed out that Hezbollah must stop spreading radicalism, sectarianism and intervention in the countries’ internal affairs and refrain from supporting terrorism and terrorists in its regional environment.



Emergency meeting of the Arab League’s foreign ministers in Cairo, where Hezbollah was designated as a terrorist organization operating on behalf of Iran (The Arab League’s YouTube channel, November 20, 2017)