



More countries have recently declared all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization but some EU countries still refrain from doing so.

November 22, 2020

Overview

On March 1, 2019, Britain designated all of Hezbollah (i.e., both its military and political infrastructures) as a terrorist organization. Thus, Britain joined **Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands**. In the wake of Britain, a new wave of similar declarations began, with American encouragement, from European and Latin American countries. This wave reached its peak in **October 2020 when Serbia, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Guatemala joined the countries that had declared all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization and outlawed it** (see Appendix). Another country, **Sudan**, did not officially announce this but, according to US sources, it has pledged to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization as part of the agreement with the United States and the normalization of relations with Israel (see Appendix for details). However, **EU countries, including France, Italy and Spain, continue to make an erroneous distinction between Hezbollah's military wing and its political wing.**

► **These countries have joined a number of countries in Europe and Latin America** which, since Britain joined, have declared **all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization and outlawed it** (in addition to the countries mentioned above):

◆ **Europe: On March 1, 2019, Britain** designated all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and outlawed it¹. **On April 30, 2020, Germany declared** Hezbollah a terrorist organization and banned it from operating on German soil². Germany was joined by **Kosovo** (June 25, 2020) and **Lithuania** (August 13, 2020). It was also reported that the **Austrian Parliament** had called on the government to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and that **Switzerland** was now considering the possibility of imposing a complete boycott on Hezbollah.

¹ See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from March 4, 2019, "Reactions to Britain's decision to ban Hezbollah"

² See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from March 7, 2019, "Germany outlaws Hezbollah, joining other countries which designated it as a terrorist organization"



Tweet posted by British Home Secretary Sajid Javid about the decision to outlaw Hezbollah (Sajid Javid's Twitter account, February 25, 2019) The British Parliament approved the decision on March 1, 2019.

◆ **Latin America: On July 18, 2019, Argentina declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization**, on the 25th anniversary of the attack on the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina – AMIA). Argentina was the first country in Latin America to take such a step. **On August 19, 2019, Paraguay** declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization³. **On January 20, 2020, Colombia and Honduras** declared Hezbollah in its entirety a terrorist organization. The decision was made at a conference on the fight against terrorism held in Bogota, Colombia. The conference was attended by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and government ministers from several Latin American countries (Reuters, January 20, 2020).



The declaration of all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization by Colombia and Honduras at a conference in Bogota (US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's Twitter account, January 20, 2020)

³ See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from August 27, 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."

Countries that have recognized all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization

- ▶ **Israel** was the first country to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization, on **June 23, 1989**. It was followed by the **United States in 1995**, when it included Hezbollah on the list of global terrorist organizations. Over the years, the United States has expanded its sanctions on Hezbollah, and has even designated it as one of the **five leading transnational criminal groups**⁴. Israel and the United States were joined by **Canada** (2002), **Australia** (2003), and **the Netherlands** (2004), which was the first European country to designate all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, and later by **New Zealand** (2010). The latest wave of countries that have recognized Hezbollah as a whole as a terrorist organization has taken place as more countries have joined **since March 2019**, as detailed above.
- ▶ The list of countries that have declared all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization **now includes 18 countries: Israel; two countries in North America** (the United States and Canada); **Australia and New Zealand; eight countries in Europe** (Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Kosovo, Lithuania and Estonia) **and five countries in South America** (Argentina, Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay and Guatemala). These countries may be joined by **Sudan** (which has reportedly pledged to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization but has not yet done so publicly). In addition, **the Arab League**, at an emergency conference initiated by Saudi Arabia, also declared Hezbollah “the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah” which operates on behalf of Iran (November 19, 2017).

⁴ For further information see the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from November 4, 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 on those supporting it”



Right: Emergency conference of Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo, at which Hezbollah was designated as a terrorist organization operating on behalf of Iran (the Arab League’s YouTube channel, November 20, 2017). Left: The US Attorney General holding a press conference at which he presented the five leading transnational criminal groups, including Hezbollah (US Department of Justice website, October 16, 2018).

The significance of recognizing Hezbollah as a terrorist organization

► Declaring all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization gives the various countries an improved **“toolbox” to take countermeasures and punitive measures against it, including:** freezing Hezbollah’s assets (including bank accounts); making it difficult for operatives to enter and stay in these countries; streamlining the fight against widespread criminal activity involving Hezbollah and making it hard for the organization to raise funds. **Such capabilities are of major importance for countries where Hezbollah has an infrastructure of operatives and supporters, such as Argentina and Paraguay** (there is a large Lebanese-Shiite community traditionally involved in smuggling and organized crime in the Paraguay-Argentina-Brazil tri-border area).



The Paraguay-Argentina-Brazil tri-border area, where Hezbollah is involved in criminal, subversive and terrorist activity

The erroneous distinction between Hezbollah's military wing and its political wing

- ▶ Despite the fact that **European countries, including Britain and Germany, have joined the list of those designating all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, the EU** still continues **to make the erroneous distinction between Hezbollah's military wing** (which is designated as a terrorist organization) **and its political wing**⁵. This distinction is still adhered to by most EU countries, including key countries such as **France, Italy and Spain**.
- ▶ The reason for this is **mainly political**. France and other European countries claim that their influence in Lebanon and their relations with it are liable to suffer if Hezbollah is designated as a terrorist organization. According to this claim, Hezbollah's political wing is part of the Lebanese government. Another claim is that Hezbollah provides extensive services to the Lebanese people. These allegations are baseless. Hezbollah is the dominant force in Lebanon, **relying on an extensive military infrastructure supported by Iran, and European countries, including France, cannot compete with Hezbollah's influence on the Lebanese government**. Moreover, Hezbollah's social services to the Lebanese population are largely provided to the **Shiite community**, as a means for enhancing the organization's political and military power in the domestic Lebanese arena and spreading Iran's radical ideology.
- ▶ **Hezbollah has been carrying out its terrorist activity for nearly 40 years**. During this long period, considerable evidence has accumulated about the **terrorist identity of this organization, which is part of Iran's policy of "exporting" terrorism and subversion**. This evidence, which includes extensive and reliable intelligence, is in the hands of the security services of the US, Israel, European countries and Latin American countries, which have been targets of terrorist activity by Hezbollah and Iran. In addition, the legal systems of the various countries have accumulated considerable information, based on interrogations of terrorists who were detained, **proving that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization handled by Iran** (blowing up the AMIA building in Argentina and the attack in Bulgaria clearly illustrated this).

⁵The European Union's designation of Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organization was published on July 22, 2013, following the terrorist attack in Burgas, Bulgaria.

The distinction between the Hezbollah military wing and its political wing is erroneous and does not exist in reality. In practice, **the political and military infrastructures are intertwined and both are headed by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah.**

There is a close connection between Hezbollah’s military power and its political power:

The military power strengthens the political power in the domestic Lebanese arena, while the organization’s political and social activity is utilized to strengthen its military-terrorist infrastructure. Hezbollah’s institutions and its leaders, headed by Hassan Nasrallah, are those who set the policy for deploying the organization’s military-terrorist power, as well as its political conduct.

► **Hezbollah’s leadership is well aware of the lack of a genuine distinction** between the political and military infrastructures. Senior Hezbollah figures have expressed this in public. The most prominent statement was made by **Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah:** when asked “Who makes the decision about operations: the operatives on the ground or the political leadership?” he replied: **“Hezbollah’s leadership.** The issue no longer pertains solely to operatives on the ground. **The leadership of the organization** is the leadership of the resistance [i.e., the military-terrorist infrastructure] **and it is the one that considers all the data, the interests of the resistance and its policy of operation.** The brothers on the ground [i.e., the terrorists] are the ones who carry out the policy” (Al-Majalla, March 24, 2002). **Muhammad Fneish, senior Hezbollah operative** and Hezbollah’s representative in the Lebanese Parliament, said the following: “They are trying to tempt Hezbollah in order to curb it. The goal is not to harm the political role [of Hezbollah] but rather its military wing. **However, I can say that the military wing and the political wing of Hezbollah cannot be separated**” (Al-Manar TV, January 18, 2002).

Appendix

Additional countries that designated all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in October 2020

Serbia

► **On October 1, 2020**, Serbia announced that it would **designate all of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization**. The US welcomed Serbia's commitment, which came as part of the agreement to normalize relations between it and Kosovo (VOA, October 1, 2020).

Estonia

► **On October 22, 2020, the Estonian government decided to impose sanctions on Hezbollah**. As part of the decision, Hezbollah supporters will be barred from entering the country. The prohibition of entry applies to Hezbollah affiliates about whom there is information or there are reasonable grounds to believe that their activity supports terrorism and who therefore pose a threat to the Estonian as well as international security. The list of operatives to be sanctioned will be determined by the Foreign Ministry (Estonian World, October 22, 2020; Al-Arabia in English, October 25, 2020). Another statement clarified that **the sanctions apply to operatives of both Hezbollah's military wing and its political wing** (timesofisrael.com, October 22, 2020).

The Czech Republic

► **On October 28, 2020, the Czech Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Parliament in Prague, voted to outlaw both wings of Hezbollah for being a terrorist organization**. The vote was passed by a large majority (63 voted in favor and seven against). The Czech Parliament ruled that Hezbollah is an organization that undermines stability in the Middle East and that it poses a threat to democracies everywhere. The decision means that Hezbollah will not be able to open bank accounts in the Czech Republic and will not be able to establish sleeper cells there. The Czech decision perceives Hezbollah's military and political wings as a single unit, as opposed to the distinction between them made by the European Union. **The Czech Parliament has called on the European Union to abandon this distinction** (middleeastmonitor.com, October 29, 2020; The Times of Israel, October 28, 2020).

Guatemala

► **On October 23, 2020, the Guatemalan government declared Hezbollah as a whole,** both its military wing and its political wing, **a terrorist organization** that threatens stability in the Middle East and democracies around the world. According to the decision, it will prevent Hezbollah operatives from entering its territory and will fight against funding Hezbollah (The National, October 28, 2020; thetimesofisrael.com, October 23, 2020). **The United States was quick to congratulate Guatemala** on the decision as an important step that would help compromise the organization's ability to carry out terrorist attacks and raise funds around the world. According to the United States, with this designation, Guatemala joins a growing list of nations that have recognized Hezbollah for what it is – not a defender of Lebanon, but a transnational terrorist organization dedicated to advancing Iran's malicious agenda (US Department of State website, October 24, 2020).

Sudan

► According to US sources, Sudan has pledged to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization as part of the agreement with the United States and the normalization of relations with Israel. This despite the fact that the issue was not mentioned in the joint statement by Israel, Sudan and the US in the White House on the normalization of relations and no comment has been received from Sudan. According to the same sources, this step is a dramatic change for Sudan, which until 2016 was an ally of Iran and helped it smuggle weapons for Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip (thetimesofisrael.com, October 24, 2020).