



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2018-0015, 23 January 2018

# Proscription of Hezbollah

## Commons Chamber, Thursday 25 January 2018

A Backbench Business Committee debate on Proscription of Hezbollah is scheduled for Thursday 25 January 2018. The debate will be opened by Joan Ryan MP.

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# 1. Introduction

## Proscription

Under the *Terrorism Act 2000* (the 2000 Act), the Home Secretary may proscribe an organisation if she believes it is "concerned in terrorism". For the purposes of the Act, this means that the organisation:

- **commits** or **participates** in acts of terrorism;
- **prepares** for terrorism;
- **promotes** or **encourages** terrorism (including the **unlawful glorification** of terrorism); or
- is otherwise **concerned** in terrorism.

"Terrorism", as defined in section 1 the 2000 Act, means the **use or threat of action** which:

- involves serious **violence** against a person;
- involves serious **damage** to property;
- **endangers** a person's **life** (other than that of the person committing the act);
- creates a serious **risk** to the **health or safety** of the public or section of the public;
- or is designed seriously to **interfere** with or seriously to **disrupt** an **electronic system**.

The use or threat of such action must be designed to **influence the government or an international governmental organisation** or to **intimidate the public or a section of the public** and be undertaken for the purpose of advancing a **political, religious, racial or ideological cause**.

In considering whether to proscribe an organisation, the Home Secretary will take into account a number of factors, including:

- the **nature** and **scale** of an organisation's activities;
- the specific **threat** that it poses to the **UK**;
- the specific threat that it poses to British nationals overseas;
- the extent of the organisation's **presence** in the UK; and
- the need to support other members of the international community in the global fight against terrorism.

It is a criminal offence for a person to belong to or invite support for a proscribed organisation. It is also a criminal offence to arrange a meeting to support a proscribed organisation or to wear clothing or to carry articles in public which arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of the proscribed organisation.

Proscription means that the financial assets of the organisation become terrorist property and can be subject to freezing and seizure.

## Hizbollah

Hizbollah – or the Party of God – is a powerful political and military organisation of Shia Muslims in Lebanon. The group was formed, with financial backing from Iran, in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The group calls for the destruction of the state of Israel. It regards the whole of Palestine as occupied Muslim land and argues that Israel has no right to exist. It also demands the release of prisoners from Lebanon who are being held in Israeli jails.

The Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 won Hizbollah the respect of many Lebanese. It has built support by providing social services and health care, again largely funded by Iran. The group also has an influential television station, al-Manar, a radio station, and is very active online. It also has a very strong presence in Lebanese politics, including 12 MPs in the Parliament and a cooperative relationship with the largely Christian Free Patriotic Movement, which holds the Presidency.

The group's military wing is believed to have 21,000 full-time, highly trained and motivated fighters and a similar number of reservists.<sup>1</sup> With funding and training from Iran probably amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars per year,<sup>2</sup> the military wing has grown strongly since the 2006 conflict with Israel, during which Hizbollah fired rockets deep into northern Israel. Since then their rocket arsenal has grown to maybe as many as 150,000 rockets with ranges up to 200km. Hizbollah also has armoured vehicles and some warplanes, adding up to a military strength that is certainly greater than the Lebanese Army's and is comparable to that of many neighbouring Arab states.

The group has participated decisively in the Syrian conflict on the side of the Syrian Government; the Assad Government played a crucial role as a conduit for Iranian aid to the group, so its survival was an existential issue for Hizbollah. Supporting Assad made Hizbollah a much more sectarian organisation, losing it much support from Sunni Muslims throughout the region.

The group also supports the Houthi rebels in Yemen and has carried out a number of terrorist attacks, both in Lebanon and elsewhere, including in the UK.

The United States, [Canada](#) and Israel regard the whole of Hizbollah as a terrorist group, as do the [Netherlands](#). The [EU](#) and [Australia](#) have designated the military wing only.

UN Security Council resolutions call for armed militia groups like Hizbollah to disarm.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, Hizbollah group profile

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## The position of the UK Government

The UK proscribes the military wing of Hizbollah is a terrorist group, but not the political side of the organisation. The UK Government has long held the view that Hizbollah's military wing has been involved in conducting and supporting terrorism, and in March 2001, the Hizbollah External Security Organisation (ESO), part of the broader military wing of Hizbollah, was added to the list of proscribed organisations under the [Terrorism Act 2000](#), which gives the Home Secretary the power to make Orders adding an organisation to the list of proscribed organisations.

On 2 July 2008, Parliament passed [The Terrorism Act 2000 \(Proscribed Organisations\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Order 2008](#), extending the prohibition to the whole of the military wing of Hizbollah. It became a criminal offence to belong to, fundraise and encourage support for any part of the military wing.

The Home Office provides a [list of proscribed organisations](#) under the *Terrorism Act 2000*. The note on Hizbollah says:

Hizballah is committed to armed resistance to the state of Israel, and aims to seize all Palestinian territories and Jerusalem from Israel. Its military wing supports terrorism in Iraq and the Palestinian territories.

On 2 July 2008, the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown told the House of Commons:

To help bring about more general peace in the Middle East, we have been considering what we can do. We have today laid an order before Parliament extending proscription to cover Hizbollah's entire military wing, solely on the grounds of new evidence of its involvement in terrorism in Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories. Proscription will not affect Hizbollah's legitimate political and social wings, but we continue to call on Hizbollah to end its status as an armed group, to participate in the Lebanese democratic process, and to do so on the same terms as other political parties.<sup>3</sup>

The Government, however, emphasised that this would not affect Hizbollah's political, social and humanitarian activities. Introducing the Order, Home Office Minister Tony McNulty said:

Proscription of Hizballah's military wing will not affect the legitimate political, social and humanitarian role Hizballah plays in Lebanon, but it sends out a clear message that we condemn Hizballah's violence and support for terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

The present Government gave the following answer on 28 June 2017:

**Paul Masterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will proscribe the political wing of Hezbollah under section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

**Ben Wallace:** We do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription. A

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<sup>3</sup> [HC Deb 2 July 2008, c860](#)

<sup>4</sup> "Government to proscribe Hizballah's military wing", Home Office press release, 2 July 2008

decision to proscribe an organisation must be based on a belief that it is concerned in terrorism as defined in the Terrorism Act 2000.<sup>5</sup>

In a debate in December 2017, Ben Wallace, who is security minister at the Home Office, reiterated the reasoning behind proscribing only the military wings of Hizbollah and Hamas, the Palestinian group:

Those organisations are not proscribed in their entirety. Their military wings are proscribed, but as Hezbollah forms part of the Government in Lebanon and Hamas plays an active role in its part of the region as a member of a Government, the proscription applies only to the military wing. In some cases the flags [of their respective military and political wings] are identical, but that does not mean that if people participate in Hezbollah-supporting actions here that constitute terrorism or anything linked to it, our police and law enforcement agencies will not act. We have acted in respect of Hezbollah and Hamas in the past, either to disrupt activity or to bring prosecutions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [HC Written question – 556](#), 28 June 2017

<sup>6</sup> [HC Deb 19 December 2017, c1019-21](#)

## 2. News and Blogs

Track Persia

[British Parliament to debate full ban of Hezbollah as terrorist entity](#)

Benjamin Weinthal 16 January 2018

Jewish News Blog

[Time for politicians to express their horror of Hezbollah](#)

Michael McCann 15 January 2018

Labour Friends of Israel

[LFI secures parliamentary debate on Hezbollah proscription](#)

11 January 2018

London Assembly

[Assembly wants action over Al Quds Day parade](#)

6 July 2017

Labour Friends of Israel

[Answers and action on Hezbollah](#)

21 June 2017

Conservative Friends of Israel

[Lord Polak calls on government to proscribe Hezbollah in letter to Home Secretary](#)

19 June 2017

BICOM (Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre)

[Briefing: EU decision on proscription of Hezbollah](#)

22 July 2013

Washington Institute

[Europe's moment of decision on Hezbollah](#)

Matthew Levitt 22 July 2013

Conciliation Resources

[EU decision to ban the military wing of Hezbollah risks closing avenues for dialogue and further destabilising Lebanon's precarious peace](#)

July 2013

Conciliation Resources

[Prospect of EU ban on Hezbollah raises questions over peace in Lebanon](#)

May 2013

Henry Jackson Society

[It's time to proscribe Hezbollah](#)

Douglas Murray 8 October 2012

Huffington Post Blog

[Time for the EU to proscribe Hezbollah in full](#)

Toby Greene 17 September 2012

## 2.1 Press

Arab News

[Calls for UK to follow US crackdown on Hezbollah](#)

16 January 2018

Israel National News

[Britain to discuss full Hezbollah ban](#)

14 January 2018

Jewish News

[MPs to debate whether to fully designate Hezbollah as a terror group](#)

10 January 2018

Jewish Chronicle

[Amber Rudd seeks to ease concerns over displays of Hezbollah flags](#)

9 January 2018

Jewish News

[Amber Rudd to Sadiq Khan: no running commentary on Hezbollah ban](#)

2 October 2017

Jewish Chronicle

[London Mayor 'extremely disappointed' as Home Secretary fails to ban Hezbollah](#)

2 October 2017

Jewish News

[Petition launched to fully proscribe Hezbollah as a terrorist group](#)

27 September 2017

New Statesman

[Why Britain and the US are helping Lebanon fight a secret front against Islamic State](#)

2 September 2017

Times [Registration required]

[Will the West confront the power of Hezbollah?](#)

30 August 2017

New York Times

[Iran out to remake Mideast with Arab enforcer: Hezbollah](#)

27 August 2017

Jewish Press

[London Mayor promises to call for full ban on Hezbollah](#)

8 July 2017

Jewish News

[Sadiq Khan calls on home secretary to fully ban Hezbollah](#)

6 July 2017



Guardian

[Hezbollah's 'external security' branch remains listed by Australia as terrorist group](#)

22 June 2015

Independent

[Hezbollah rattled as EU unanimously agrees to put group on terrorism blacklist](#)

22 July 2013

Guardian

[EU resists Hezbollah ban but lists armed wing as terrorist group](#)

22 July 2013

Independent

[UK bid to blacklist Hezbollah faces EU opposition](#)

4 June 2013

Guardian

[Middle East: Britain bans military wing of Hizbullah](#)

3 July 2008

BBC News

[UK ban on Hezbollah military arm](#)

2 July 2008

## 3. Parliamentary Business

### 3.1 Debate

[Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism](#)

HC Deb 19 December 2017 c1006-21

### 3.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Hezbollah](#)

**Asked by: Helen Jones**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has received on proscribing Hezbollah.

**Answered by: Ben Wallace | Home Office**

Hizballah's External Security Organisation was proscribed in March 2001 and in 2008 the proscription was extended to Hizballah's military apparatus including the Jihad Council. I have received representations from Parliamentarians, civil society organisations and members of the public amongst others on whether to extend the proscription of Hizballah to cover the whole organisation.

**22 January 2018 | Written question | 123048**

[Hezbollah](#)

**Asked by: Helen Jones**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the nature of the links between the political and military wings of Hezbollah.

**Answered by: Ben Wallace | Home Office**

The military and political activities of Hizballah are distinct, though links exist between the senior leaders of the political and military wings. The UK proscribed Hizballah's External Security Organisation in March 2001 and in 2008 the proscription was extended to Hizballah's military apparatus.

**22 January 2018 | Written question | 123046**

[Hezbollah](#)

**Asked by: Joan Ryan**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information she holds on the number of Hezbollah (a) members and (b) supporters there are in the UK.

**Answered by: Ben Wallace | Home Office**

The department does not collect data on specific numbers of Hezbollah members or supporters in the UK.

**18 January 2018 | Written question | 122667**

[Hezbollah: Weapons](#)

**Asked by: Ian Paisley**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of Hezbollah's weapon arsenal.

**Answered by: Alistair Burt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We are aware of reports that Hizballah continues to amass an arsenal of weapons. We condemn the threat this poses to regional stability and the direct contravention of UNSCRs 1559 and 1701.

**21 November 2017 | Written question | 113131**

[Hezbollah: Weapons](#)

**Asked by: Paul Masterton**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the size of Hezbollah's weapons arsenal.

**Answered by: Alistair Burt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We are aware of reports that Hizballah continues to amass an arsenal of weapons in direct contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. Hizballah's arsenal has been increasing since the 2006 war with Israel and we remain concerned about Hizballah's involvement in the Syria conflict where they have provided essential support to the Syrian Armed forces.

**3 July 2017 | Written question | 557**

[Hezbollah](#)

**Asked by: Paul Masterton**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will proscribe the political wing of Hezbollah under section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

**Answered by: Ben Wallace | Home Office**

We do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription. A decision to proscribe an organisation must be based on a belief that it is concerned in terrorism as defined in the Terrorism Act 2000.

**28 June 2017 | Written question | 556**

[Business of the House](#)

**Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord**

The European Union, including the United Kingdom, recognises a difference between the military and political wings of Hezbollah, but such a distinction does not appear to be recognised by the organisation itself. Therefore, in the light of the confusion about the legality of demonstrators displaying Hezbollah flags on the streets of London last Sunday, may we have a statement on the legality of displaying them and any flag associated with a proscribed terrorist organisation?

**Answered by: Chris Grayling | Leader of the House of Commons**

I agree with my hon. Friend that if an organisation is proscribed in the UK, it should not be allowed to publicise itself in the UK, whether through flags, placards or anything else. I will ensure that the Home Secretary is aware of the concerns he raises. If an organisation is illegal in the UK, it should not manifest itself in the UK.

**HC Deb 7 July 2016 c1047**

[Engagements](#)

**Asked by: Gordon Banks**

With the attack in Jerusalem and the reported violence on the Egyptian border today, peace in the middle east is vital, not only for that region, but for the world. Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to tell the House what more he can do to make sure that extremism does not derail the long-term plan for peace in the region?

**Answered by: The Prime Minister**

I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who takes a very big interest in matters in the middle east. I am sorry to hear of reports today of yet another terrorist incident in Jerusalem. I hope that we will hear reports that the casualties are minimal. To help bring about more general peace in the middle east, we have been considering what we can do. We have today laid an order before Parliament extending proscription to cover Hezbollah's entire military wing, solely on the grounds of new evidence of its involvement in terrorism in Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories. Proscription will not affect Hezbollah's legitimate political and social wings, but we continue to call on Hezbollah to end its status as an armed group, to participate in the Lebanese democratic process, and to do so on the same terms as other political parties.

**HC Deb 2 July 2008 c860**

## 4. Further reading

### *Library briefings*

[Lebanon 2018](#), Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP 8208, 22 January 2018

[Proscribed terrorist organisations](#), Commons Library Briefing Paper SN 0815, 22 June 2017

### *Petition*

UK Government and Parliament Petition, [Proscribe Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation in its entirety in the UK](#), 18 September 2017 - 18 March 2018

### *Official publications and reports*

Home Office, [Proscribed terrorist organisations](#), 22 December 2017

[Proscribed terrorist organisations](#), [London] Mayor's Question Time, 21 October 2015

Domhnall O'Sullivan, [Road to proscription: the EU and Hezbollah since the Arab Spring](#), EU Diplomacy Papers 07/2013, College of Europe, October 2013

Florence Gaub, [The role of Hezbollah in post-conflict Lebanon](#), Ad Hoc Briefing, European Union, 16 July 2013

Briefing requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs

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