

HEZBOLLAH MUST BE DESIGNATED "TERRORIST ORGANISATION" BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The Bulgarian authorities announced on Tuesday, Feb. 5 that Hezbollah had "financed" the bombing on July 18, 2012 in Burgas (6 dead) and that "at least two members" of the organization were directly involved.

This immediately resurfaced the spectrum of the designation of the group as a "terrorist organization" by the European Union. Remember: today, only the United States, Australia, Canada and Israel have registered the Lebanese movement on such a list. The Netherlands decided to join them in 2008 and the United Kingdom considers that only the "military wing" of the Lebanese Party of God is a terrorist.

Such designation, if adopted by the whole of Europe, would obviously allow the major interest of preventing Hezbollah from fundraising in Europe, but also to limit its propaganda. For a while, France led the opposition to any sanctions against the Lebanese group. Primarily in the name of "political stability" in Lebanon ...

The French position, which provides a noble alibi to European cowardice, is disastrous.

Obviously, if the words and the facts make sense, then Hezbollah is indeed a terrorist group.

- In April 1983, 63 Americans were killed in Beirut in the blowing up of the United States Embassy.
- On October 23 of the same year, they attacked the barracks of the French and American troops, who had come (under UN mandate) to protect Lebanese civilians, killing 58 French paratroopers and 248 Marines.
- Between 1985 and 1991, Hezbollah abducted and held in atrocious conditions, dozens of French, British, German, Italian, Swiss and Irish nationals. Terry Anderson of the Associated Press had to stay six years at the hands of his captors. Ten of these "hostages in Lebanon" were murdered or disappeared forever.
- In 1985 and 1986, Hezbollah, acting as the "tool" of the MOIS (Ministry of Intelligence and Security" or "SAVAMA", the Iranian secret services) perpetrated the bloody attacks in France killing a dozen innocent civilians and wounding nearly 300.
- On March 17, 1992, they blew up the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 civilians and wounding 242.
- On July 18, 1994, they attacked the AMIA Jewish community center, also in Buenos Aires: 85 people dead and hundreds injured.

We are told regularly (that I was reminded of this again this morning when I took part on this subject, on the programme "Have Your Say" on BBC World), that since the mid-90s, Hezbollah has "changed", renouncing terrorism and choosing to play the game of politics.

Certainly, certainly. But then how is it that the same Hezbollah, not later than 2012, targeted the Israeli embassies in India and Georgia? Or that an operator of Hezbollah, who was preparing an attack, was seriously injured in Bangkok with his own bomb (finally some good news)? Or, finally, that several members of the MOIS and Hezbollah were arrested in Baku, during the same month of February 2012, while they organized an attack against a school bus? For Hezbollah, as for Iran, to attack a Jewish or Israeli target in Azerbaijan makes sense: this country is a NATO ally but also maintains a very good relationship with Israel, while Iran supports Armenia in the dispute between the two countries concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh region ...¹

The liability is heavy. But it is also clear: yes, Hezbollah is a terrorist organization.

A senior European counterterrorism official however declared yesterday that "being behind a terrorist attack does not automatically designate one as a terrorist organization: it is not only a legal issue but also a political analysis."

Let's talk about this "policy analysis". We are told that attacking Hezbollah could "destabilize Lebanon." Lebanon's stability is actually a real problem. But does Hezbollah play a positive role, here? Have they contributed to peace and stability to Lebanon when they started (in July 2006), the operations against Israel? Operations which had dramatic consequences for the country?

Did they participate in the stabilization of Lebanon when they assassinated Rafik Hariri (and 22 others ...), on February 14, 2005?

Did they participate in the stabilization of Lebanon, when they organized started armed riots in Beirut, in May 2008, after the dismantlement of its communication network and the arrest of one of its senior executives?

This alibi for non-interventionism is a sad and pitiful comedy. It is unworthy of France, which has a historical responsibility toward the "Country of the Cedar".

Finally, can we simply prohibit only the military wing of Hezbollah? I do not think so. The organization **has** actually several branches (political, military, charitable, cultural), but they all depend on the central management of 7 people, the Majlis al-Shura, headed by its secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah. This leadership is collegial and makes decisions by consensus. This means that it is fully responsible for any act done by the entire organization.

On March 15 2005, the European Parliament made no mistake in deciding, by 473 votes against 33, that Hezbollah was indeed a terrorist organization. They have not been heard.

It is time to fix this error; it is time for France to cease its obstruction and the European Council to finally say, loud and clear, that the simple facts proclaim **for** thirty years: Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. It is time to make them pay the price.

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¹ See our January 17, 2013 report : « The Armenian-Iran Relationship » (www.esisc.org , Publication/Analyses)