

## CLAIM

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*“Shutting out Hezbollah in its entirety will destabilize the Lebanese government, in which Hezbollah and its allies gained a vast majority of the popular vote in parliamentary elections, making it **one of the most effective fighting forces against the Islamic State group.**”*

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### SHORT RESPONSE

**HEZBOLLAH IS THE DESTABILIZER IN THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND HAS DONE LITTLE TO DEFEAT THE ISLAMIC STATE. INSTEAD, IT ASPIRES TO BECOME SOMETHING SIMILAR.**

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### THE FACTS

The struggle to reduce the capabilities of a terrorist organization is ongoing, multi-dimensional, and requires a great deal of determination. A terrorist organization such as Hezbollah, which operates simultaneously as a terrorist organization and within the framework of the Lebanese political system as a “legitimate party,” relies on civilian infrastructure, living spaces, and sources of funding. It carries out profit and loss considerations on an ongoing basis. Reducing Hezbollah’s capabilities and influence must be achieved by exerting pressure on the organization — directly and indirectly. The key to this is **international cooperation** and the mobilization of political elements in the government to reduce Hezbollah’s power.

## KEY DETAILS

- ▶ For years, an alliance between the Christian camp and the Sunnis controlled the centers of power in the Lebanese political system.
- ▶ The assassination of Rafic Hariri, the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah's entry into the government, and especially the rivalry in the Christian camp led to the consolidation of new political dynamics, including an alliance between President Michel Aoun from the Christian camp and Hezbollah. As a result, the political map changed and the Sunni-Christian alliance that ruled this system for decades found itself in the opposition.

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

- ▶ **Hezbollah is part of the "March 8" Alliance**, which includes 72 out of the 128 members of parliament. The "March 8" Alliance holds most of the important portfolios in the government.
- ▶ The Lebanese government in 2019 **has 30 ministers. Of these, 18 are part of Hezbollah's camp, including defense, law, foreign affairs, economics, agriculture and energy.** In addition, two Hezbollah representatives serve as Minister of Youth and Sport and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs. Someone affiliated with Hezbollah serves as Minister of Public Health.
- ▶ **Hezbollah's main rival is the "March 14" Alliance**, an umbrella organization that encompasses several political parties in Lebanon, including Al-Mustaqbal, or Future Movement, and Prime Minister Saad Hariri's party, which has lost a third of its power.
- ▶ Considering the points above and the fact that serious clashes occurred in May 2008 — when the Lebanese government tried to limit Hezbollah's military power — **the current Lebanese administration without external support will find it difficult to isolate or designate Hezbollah a terrorist organization.**

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

One way to reduce Hezbollah's power, military capability, and influence is to harness the international system in a joint effort against the organization and its supporters. In this framework, the following is necessary:

- ▶ **Expand the circle of countries that view Hezbollah as a terrorist organization**, emphasizing Europe. This move will enable legal and security measures to be taken against the organization's operatives and/or institutions operating in the international arena.
- ▶ **Reduce the scope of military and financial assistance that Hezbollah receives** by exerting pressure on Iran and Syria, which support the organization.
- ▶ **Wage an international campaign** to freeze or reduce the organization's sources of income.
- ▶ At the local tactical level, the multinational force operating in southern Lebanon must insist on the **implementation of UN resolutions** regarding Hezbollah's presence in this region.

## WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO DESIGNATE HEZBOLLAH?

The significance of designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organization **primarily derives from the entities that carry out the designation. The list of countries that have made the designated Hezbollah a terrorist organization include:**

	<b>Israel</b> 1982
	<b>The United States</b> 1997
	<b>Canada</b> 2002
	<b>The Netherlands</b> 2004
	<b>Bahrain</b> 2013
	<b>The Arab League</b> 2013
	<b>Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)</b> 2013
	<b>The United Kingdom</b> March 2019
	<b>Argentina</b> July 2019

Some countries and organizations **make a distinction between Hezbollah's alleged political-state wing and its military-terrorist wing.** In 2003, Australia only designated the military wing as a terrorist organization. The European Union did the same in 2013 against the backdrop of the attack in Burgas, Bulgaria in 2012 and in light of the organization's involvement in the Syrian civil war.

It is important to note that **most European countries have not made individual designations and are relying on the EU restrictions when dealing with the organization** (as opposed to the Netherlands, and now Britain). Enforcement of the designation is in accordance with the laws and conduct of the country. For example, the U.S. designated dozens of entities and individuals associated with Hezbollah as illegal, imposed sanctions on Iran, and designated Iranian terrorist-supporting bodies linked to Hezbollah. The U.S. even prompted Lebanese banks to cease their activity vis-à-vis Hezbollah, designated all the organization's associations and companies as terrorist entities, outlawed them in its territory and imposed sanctions on anyone financing them.

Germany refers to Hezbollah's Martyrs Foundation, which supports the families of Hezbollah's fallen soldiers, as a terrorist entity, and therefore shut down associations that transfer money to it. In a similar vein, the Al-Manar network, Hezbollah's television station, was also designated by the U.S., France, Spain, and Germany, where the network's broadcasts have been blocked. Australia also prevents satellite broadcasts.

**Lebanon has not designated Hezbollah a terrorist organization. Therefore, it has a free hand in the Lebanese arena. Moreover, Hezbollah's military capability has made it the most powerful player in Lebanon, giving it the ability to enforce its will on other players and to advance the organization's interests before those of Lebanon.**

Additionally, Hezbollah has not been designated a terrorist organization by the UN Security Council, making it difficult to formulate an international action strategy to decrease the organization's capabilities.