

10/7 Attack Highlights Need to Sanction Iran-Backed Terrorists

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Iran and Hezbollah have been supportive of, complicit in, and/or participants in the war against Israel launched on October 7 with Hamas's savage attack against Israel. Iranian proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon has continually attacked Israeli civilian and military targets. In addition, reports have emerged alleging Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) involvement in Hamas's attack.

The United States, together with Israel, has already designated all three groups—Hamas, Hezbollah, and the IRGC—as terrorist organizations. Indeed, the U.S. Treasury Department just announced on November 29 sanctions on more than 20 individuals and entities for working to facilitate funding to Iranian entities including the IRGC. Yet, Washington and Jerusalem are alone in considering all three of these groups as terrorist organizations, according to a JINSA review of 32 major countries and three international organizations. To increase international pressure on Iran and its terrorist proxies, the United States should push other countries, particularly its NATO allies and Japan, to label Hamas, Hezbollah, and the IRGC in their entirety as terrorist organizations.

What Happened?

- The U.S. Treasury Department [announced](#) on November 29 that its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned more than 20 individuals and entities for involvement in financial facilitation networks that benefit several Iranian entities. Those the Treasury Department sanctioned on November 29 worked to benefit Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS), and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF).
 - » The Treasury Department specified that "Iran generates the equivalent of billions of dollars via commodity sales to fund its destabilizing regional activities and support of multiple regional proxy groups, including Hamas and [Hezbollah]."
 - » Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson said, "the IRGC-QF and MODAFL continue to engage in illicit finance schemes to generate funds to fan conflict and spread terror throughout the region."
- Despite Hamas, Hezbollah, and IRGC involvement in attacks on [Israel](#) and [U.S. citizens](#) since October 7, only two countries in the sample that JINSA examined—the United States and Israel—have designated all three entities as terrorist groups.
 - » Out of 32 countries and three international organizations that JINSA examined, 9 have designated Hamas, 26 have designated Hezbollah, and four have designated the IRGC.

Most Countries Have not Sanctioned Terrorists Responsible for Attacking Israel



Designates as a Terrorist Group



Does not Designate as a Terrorist Group




Has Friendly Relations

Click Designation and Friendly Relations Icons for Additional Information

Numbers Denote How Many Nationals Killed in 10/7 Attack

	Hamas	Hezbollah	IRGC
North America			
Canada 5	✓	✓	✗ <small>Quds Force only</small>
United States 32	✓	✓	✓
Europe			
Austria 1	✗	✗	✗
Estonia	✗	✓	✗
European Union	✓	✗ <small>Military wing and units that report to it only</small>	✗ <small>Some parliamentarians support designation</small>
France 39	✗	✗ <small>Supported adding military wing to EU terrorist list in 2013 but believes dialogue with "political wing" necessary</small>	✗
Germany	✓	✓	✗
Kosovo	✗	✓	✗
Latvia	✗	✓	✗

	Hamas	Hezbollah	IRGC
Lithuania	✗	✗ Banned affiliates from entry	✗
Serbia	✗	✓	✗
Slovenia	✗	✓	✗
Switzerland 1	✗ Federal Council seeks designation	✗	✗
Czech Republic	✗	✓	✗
Netherlands	✗	✓	✗
United Kingdom 17	✓	✓	✗ Parliament members voted in favor of a non-binding resolution to designate in January 2023
South and Central America			
Argentina 7	✗	✓	✗
Colombia 1	✗	✓	✗
Guatemala	✗	✓	✗
Honduras	✗	✓	✗
Paraguay	✓	✓	✗
Asia (Excluding Middle East)			
Japan	✓	✓	✗
Malaysia	✗ 	✗ Declared "specified entity"	✗

	Hamas	Hezbollah	IRGC
Africa			
Sudan	✗	✓	✗
Middle East			
Bahrain	✗	✓	✓
Egypt	✗ <small>Designation implemented in February 2015 and rescinded in June 2015</small>	✓	✗
Gulf Cooperation Council	✗	✓	✗
Israel	✓	✓	✓
Qatar	✗ 	✗	✗
Saudi Arabia	✗ <small>Ties have recently warmed</small>	✓	✓
Arab League	✗	✓	✗
Turkey 1	✗ 	✗	✗
United Arab Emirates	✗	✓	✗
Oceania			
Australia	✓	✓	✗ <small>Senate recommended designation in February 2023</small>
New Zealand	✗ <small>Military wing only</small>	✗ <small>Military wing only</small>	✗

Why Is It Important?

- Hamas’s savage October 7 assault, Hezbollah’s near daily attacks on Israel since, and Iran’s continuous support for terrorism, via the IRGC, highlight the importance of designating all three groups as terrorist organizations to impede the flow of money and weapons that fuel the war against Israel.
 - » The Treasury Department’s recent commendable announcement that it is levying additional sanctions on enablers of Iranian entities including the IRGC further underscores the importance of impeding terrorist finance to prevent attacks against civilians.
- Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designations [better enable](#) the United States to block members of proscribed groups from entering the country and prosecute those who conduct business with them. They also discourage such business transactions in the first place by rendering them illegal under U.S. law.
 - » Accordingly, like-minded countries following suit vis-à-vis Hamas, Hezbollah, and the IRGC would compound pressure on Iran and three of its most dangerous terrorist groups and proxies.
- Several U.S. partners have designated the military wings of terrorist groups but have carved out exceptions for the political wings of those groups. The U.S. embassy to Germany, for example, has criticized this approach, [noting](#) that the European Union’s (EU) “false distinction” between Hezbollah’s “political” and “military” wings allows the group “to fundraise, recruit and operate freely.”
- Some U.S. partners, namely major non-NATO ally Qatar and NATO member Turkey, have friendly relations with Hamas.
 - » Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [argued](#) on October 25 that “Hamas is not a terrorist organization, it is a liberation group, ‘mujahideen’ waging a battle to protect its lands and people.” Senior Hamas members [reside](#) in Turkey.
 - » Qatar, which also [hosts](#) Hamas leadership, failed to condemn the group for its massacre, asserting on October 7 that it “holds Israel solely responsible” for the violence.
 - » Such rhetoric and actions empower Hamas by lending it political legitimacy and havens from which to plan attacks against civilians.
- Hamas not only killed and took hostage those with Israeli citizenship but those with foreign nationalities as well, underscoring the international community’s broad interest in protecting civilians of myriad nationalities from Iran-backed terrorism.

What Should the United States Do Next?

- The United States should encourage more countries, particularly its close allies including North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states and Japan, to designate Hamas, Hezbollah, and the IRGC as terrorist organizations.
 - » The United States should make clear that responsible countries should eschew spurious distinctions between “political” and military” wings of these groups and designate each in its entirety as a terrorist organization.