



Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP

House of Commons

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Rt. Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
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Our Ref: JR12406

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to express my concern and anger over the events which unfolded in central London yesterday at the Al Quds Day march.

As you will be aware, the flags of Hezbollah, an antisemitic terror group, were openly flown, and speakers at the event called for Israel to be “wiped from the map”.

None of this was unexpected. Last year, a large Hezbollah flag was flown at the front of the march, while hundreds of smaller paper flags bearing the machine gun logo of the Hezbollah movement were carried by participants. Supporters held up banners stating "Zionism is Racism" and "We are all Hezbollah" and members of the crowd chanted slogans such as "From the river to the sea - Palestine will be free." Speakers called for the annihilation of Israel and blamed the Grenfell fire on "Zionists".

Alongside my colleague, Louise Ellman MP, and the Mayor of London, I have been campaigning over the past year for an end to this sick spectacle, which, as Sadiq Khan has rightly argued, causes huge offence to the Jewish community here in Britain.

As the Metropolitan Police have made clear in their meetings and correspondence with Louise, the police do not currently have the power to prevent Hezbollah flags being flown. This is because, as Commander Jane Connors made clear, “Parliament has consciously chosen to proscribe only the “External Security Organisation” (or military wing); the rest of Hizballah [sic] is not proscribed.”

In January, I secured widespread cross-party support when I staged a parliamentary debate calling for Hezbollah to be proscribed in its entirety. Sadly, this action was opposed by the government and the Opposition front bench.

Hezbollah's deep-seated hatred of Jews, its incitement to acts of terror, and its collusion in President Assad's war crimes in Syria are well-established. So too is its perpetration of a string of deadly attacks - stretching back over 30 years - against Israeli, Jewish and western targets in the Middle East and beyond. Indeed, in 2010, the US government labelled Hezbollah "the most technically capable terrorist group in the world".

Hezbollah has also repeatedly and explicitly made clear that it does not itself recognise the distinction between an armed and political wing, which the British government insists exists. As Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy general-secretary stated in 2009: "The same leadership that directs the parliamentary and government work also leads jihad actions in the struggle against Israel." Unsurprisingly, a number of countries, including the Netherlands, Canada, the US, the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, have thus proscribed Hezbollah in its entirety.

The claim that we should keep open a channel of communication to Hezbollah, both because of its role in Lebanese politics and to assist in any future peace process, appears to me totally fatuous. Hezbollah is an utterly malign and destabilising force in Lebanon; legitimising its role there does nothing to assist those who are working to challenge it. Hezbollah is also explicit that it will never participate in any peace agreement with Israel, stating: "Our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated. We recognise no treaty with it, no cease-fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated."

I am appalled that the government should once again have allowed this Iranian-inspired hate fest to take place on the streets of London and I fail to understand why the Home Office has not heeded the repeated warnings raised over the past year.

Given the events of yesterday, I would appreciate the opportunity, alongside Louise, to discuss this matter with you at your earliest possible convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Rt. Hon Joan Ryan MP
Member of Parliament for Enfield North
Chair, Labour Friends of Israel