



**Craig Whittaker MP**

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**Al Quds Day March and Banning Hezbollah**

Thank you for contacting me about Hezbollah and the Al Quds Day March.

Peaceful protest is a vital part of our democratic society. It is a long-standing tradition in this country that people are free to gather together and to demonstrate their views, however uncomfortable or repugnant those might be to the majority of us. Of course, they must do so within the law. Protesters' rights need to be balanced with the rights of others to go about their business without fear of intimidation or serious disruption to the community. Rights to peaceful protest do not extend to violent or threatening behaviour or speech, and the police have the necessary powers to deal with such behaviour.

I agree that Hezbollah's beliefs are outrageous and disgusting, and should be condemned at every opportunity. The UK Government has long held the view that elements of Hezbollah have been involved in conducting and supporting terrorism and, as a result, proscribed Hezbollah's External Security Organisation in 2001; in 2008 proscription was extended to include the whole of Hezbollah's military apparatus, namely the Jihad Council and all the units reporting to it. Hezbollah's military wing is also designated in the UK under the Terrorist Asset-Freezing etc. Act of 2010. Funds or economic resources owned, held or controlled by Hezbollah's military wing in the UK therefore can, and will, be frozen.

A decision to proscribe an organisation is done on the recommendations submitted by law enforcement agencies as well as the security services here and intelligence services overseas. It is crucial that we constantly monitor these groups and the individuals involved in them, and review the use of proscription as a means to take action where we see fit.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP