

Editorial

The Canadian Government's Double Standard on Terrorism

Over the past weekend, three opposition members of parliament, currently on a fact-finding mission in war-ravaged southern Lebanon, were reported to have issued a call for the Canadian government to remove Hezbollah from its list of terrorist organizations. The MPs also stated that there is clear evidence in southern Lebanon that Israel committed war crimes in its month-long bombardment of the region.

Predictably, the Conservative government has refused to address the issue, stating that now is not the time to have such a discussion. Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day, parroting the lies being churned out by the U.S. and Israel, stated: "I can't think of anything more damaging for the hope of peace than to encourage the very group, Hezbollah,

that is intent on the genocide of the Jewish people and the annihilation of Israel." For its part, the Israeli government has been trying to discredit the MPs on the basis that their trip was financed by an Arab-Canadian organization and they did not visit Israel. It must be noted that Israel routinely sponsors junkets of Canadian MPs on "fact-finding" missions to Israel in which they do not set foot in Gaza or the West Bank or even pay visits to Israeli check points.

Canada's list of "terrorist" organizations was drawn up by the previous Liberal government following the hasty passage of anti-terrorism legislation in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001. The anti-terrorism legislation makes it a criminal offense to support or collect funds for any

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For Your Information

A Brief History of Hezbollah

Over the past six weeks, hundreds of articles have been published describing Hezbollah as a terrorist group. Those who have supported Israel's war crimes against the Lebanese people have certainly made this claim, with Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Peter MacKay, going so far as to describe Hezbollah as a "cancer" in the Middle East when testifying in front of the parliamentary committee on foreign affairs.

However, even a cursory review of some of the group's literature and published interviews with Hezbollah leaders reveals the organization has always opposed terrorism and in fact has consistently denounced terrorist acts carried out by other Islamic-based groups. (Hezbollah, for example, issued a statement condemning the attacks

on the World Trade Centre on September 12, 2001. Most recently, the group condemned the beheading of Nicholas Burg by al-Qaeda in Iraq, calling it "an act of terror and an affront to Islam.")

The organization that became Hezbollah ("Party of God") was formed in Lebanon in 1982 as an *ad hoc* coalition of Shia Muslim groups aimed at resisting Israel's invasion of the country. From this inception, the group has unequivocally declared its right to resist Israeli and all foreign aggression. In an interview with the *Washington Post* conducted months before Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah was asked: "Western countries have often associated Islam with

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terrorism. What is Hezbollah's perspective on this and what message would you like to convey to the American public and policy makers about this?" Nasrallah replied: "In truth, the most conspicuous examples of terrorism are the actions undertaken by Israel in occupying Palestine and other Arab territories, its aggression against peaceful civilians and civilian installations, its destruction of villages and water sources, and the tremendous damage which it aggressively inflicts. All of this is done under the full protection of the American administration and with its help in the form of funds, weapons and political support. Truly, this is the terrorism. We are involved in legitimate resistance which is fully justified. This is what all people do when their land is occupied."

While Hezbollah emerged following Israel's invasion of Lebanon, according to several reports, the group was officially founded on February 16, 1985, with the declaration of the group's manifesto. Published in pamphlet form, the manifesto declares Hezbollah has three primary objectives:

1. To expel the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land;
2. To submit the Phalanges [the Israeli-backed Lebanese militia which assisted Israel in its occupation of Lebanon] to a just power and bring them all to justice for the crimes they have perpetrated against Muslims and Christians;
3. To permit all the sons of our people to determine their future and to choose in liberty the form of government they desire. We call upon all of them to pick the option of Islamic government which, alone, is capable of guaranteeing justice and liberty for all. Only an Islamic regime can stop any further tentative attempts of imperialistic infiltration into our country.

The pamphlet further states: "As for our friends, they are all the world's oppressed peoples. Our friends are also those who combat our enemies and who defend us from their evil. Towards these friends, individuals as well as organizations, we turn and say: Friends, wherever you are in Lebanon... we are in agreement with you on the great and necessary objectives: destroying American hegemony in our land; putting an end to the burdensome Israeli Occupation; beating back all the Phalangists' attempts to monopolize power and administration.

Even though we have, friends, quite different viewpoints as to the means of the struggle, on the

levels upon which it must be carried out, we should surmount these tiny divergences and consolidate cooperation between us in view of the grand design."

Characterized in recent years by the Bush administration and Israel and its apologists as "fanatics" and "Islamofascists" seeking to impose a "Taliban-like state in Lebanon", Hezbollah has always stressed that it does not believe Islam can be imposed on an unwilling population. In the founding manifesto, the group declares: "We don't want to impose Islam upon anybody, as much as we don't want that others impose upon us their convictions and their political systems. We don't want Islam to reign in Lebanon by force as is the case with the Maronites today."

This view has remained consistent. In an interview with an editor from *The Nation* in 1999, Hezbollah's Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, said, "We believe the requirement for an Islamic state is to have an overwhelming popular desire, and we're not talking about fifty percent plus one, but a large majority. And this is not available in Lebanon and probably never will be."

Unlike many other Islamic movements, Hezbollah also not only recognizes the role of women but actually enables women to fully participate in political and social life. While Hezbollah's armed wing was concerned primarily with resisting the Israeli occupation, its social wing has also been active since the group's formation, providing food, health care and other social services as well as building and repairing homes, schools and hospitals destroyed during the two decades of Israeli invasion and civil war. Special emphasis was placed on creating services that would assist women – daycares, neighbourhood communal kitchens, residences for the elderly – to enable women to work outside the home.

In the 1990s, Hezbollah also created a political wing, which participated in the Lebanese elections of 1996 and currently holds 28 seats in the Lebanese parliament, with three members in cabinet.

Nasrallah assumed the role of Secretary General in 1992, after Israel assassinated Abbas Musawi. By all accounts, Nasrallah has played a critical role in both broadening support for Hezbollah throughout Lebanon as well as in strengthening the group's military wing. Nasrallah refused point blank to disarm the group following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, noting: "We believe that it serves the Lebanese interest [not to disarm]. The Israelis are afraid of war

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organization listed by the Canadian government as being a terrorist organization. The list is interesting in that it almost exclusively contains the names of organizations which are opposed to U.S. and/or Israeli interests or the interests of their close allies. Conspicuously absent from the list are the organizations based in Miami which openly brag about their terrorist actions against the government and people of Cuba. Also absent from the list are the U.S.-supported death squads in El Salvador and Colombia or organizations that have carried out terrorist attacks in Russia and China and which are widely considered to have links with the U.S. CIA.

The definition of terrorist activity in the Canadian Criminal Code includes any action which is taken or threatened for political, religious or ideological purposes and threatens the public or national security by killing, seriously harming or endangering a person, causing substantial property damage that is likely to seriously harm people or by interfering with or disrupting an essential service, facility or system. This definition not only applies to the activities of those U.S.-sponsored terrorist organizations mentioned above, but is also clearly applicable to the activities of the Israeli Defence Forces in Lebanon and Gaza

during the past month. In fact, Israeli officials openly boasted that they intended to set back Lebanese society 20 years and the IDF bombed hospitals, apartment blocks, power stations and fuel depots for the stated political purpose of forcing the Lebanese government and the international community to take action against Hezbollah. The IDF attacks killed five times more civilians than Hezbollah fighters. Meanwhile, Hezbollah confined most of its attacks to Israeli military targets and killed three times as many Israeli soldiers than Israeli civilians. Yet, the Canadian government sees fit to describe Israel's actions as a measured response, while it considers Hezbollah's defence of the sovereignty of Lebanon to constitute terrorism and genocide against the Jewish people.

By early Monday there were reports that Liberal and NDP spokespersons had distanced themselves from their MP's remarks and had reaffirmed their support for Israel and for Hezbollah being on the list of terrorist organizations. There are also reports that the MPs are now denying issuing the call altogether. This merely confirms that, despite their claims to the contrary, all of the parliamentary parties support the basic policies of U.S. imperialism and the Bush regime. Whatever differences they may have are on superficialities.

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and afraid of peace. They do not want peace even in the [limited] extent accepted by some of the Arabs. This is the nature of a people that isolates itself, this is the nature of a racist people... Nasrallah maintained that disarming would be an act of treason, one which would enable another foreign occupation of Lebanon. Nasrallah has consistently maintained that Israel is not a legitimate state. In an interview published on June 21, 1999, in the Syrian newspaper *Thisreen*, he noted "Everybody talks nowadays about accepting the reality and coexistence, or any other form of settlement with Israel. But I view realism in a different way. Israel is an illegal usurper entity, which is based on falsehood, massacres, and illusions, and there is no chance for its survival. This is the historical rule that governs human societies. It goes back to its [Israel's] hostile and exploiting nature."

This, and similar quotes, have been used by Israel and its apologists to paint Hezbollah as an extremist group which seeks to destroy the state of Israel. It is

therefore worth comparing Nasrallah's comments to those published in *The Guardian* on Sept. 15, 2003, in an article written by Avraham Burg, a former speaker of the Israeli Knesset. "The Zionist revolution has always rested on two pillars: a just path and an ethical leadership. Neither of these is operative any longer. The Israeli nation today rests on a scaffolding of corruption, and on foundations of oppression and injustice. As such, the end of the Zionist enterprise is already on our doorstep. There is a real chance that ours will be the last Zionist generation. There may yet be a Jewish state here, but it will be a different sort, strange and ugly."

Nasrallah and other Hezbollah leaders have also repeatedly stressed a distinction between Zionism and the Jewish people. Nasrallah, in an interview on Lebanese TV on the question of the state of Israel, said, "any Jewish minority in a Palestinian state must be protected by the Muslim majority", describing the co-existence of Jews and Muslims as part of "Islam's proud heritage".

U.S. Court Denies New Trial to Cuban Five

With two judges dissenting, on Wednesday, August 9, the full 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, Georgia rejected the call for a new trial for the Cuban Five outside of Miami. One year ago to the day, the same court with three judges presiding had unanimously ruled that the Cuban Five were denied their constitutional right to an unbiased jury trial, and overturned the convictions of the Five:†Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez and Rene Gonzalez. This victory was short-lived, however. In its efforts to quash that decision, the U.S. government prosecutors demanded a hearing before the full court of 12 judges and that was granted last October. Oral arguments of both sides were heard again in February 2006, with the judges' decision coming down last week.

Denying well-known facts and logic, the court overturned last year's decision that a fair trial had not been conducted in Miami, the heartland of the anti-Cuba mafia that has carried out†terrorist attacks against Cuba for decades, resulting in loss of life and injuries in the thousands. The decision also flies in the face of last year's conclusion by the†United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention that the original trial in 2001 violated all accepted norms of justice and that a new trial was necessary.

One can draw no other conclusion about this decision other than that it was a political one which fulfills†a need of the U.S. government to continue†its more than 45 year campaign against a sovereign Cuba. The Cuban Communist Party daily newspaper, *Granma*, denounced the decision as one demonstrating Washington's hate and vengeance†against Cuba. *Granma* pointed out that this decision comes at a time when the anti-Cuba forces in Miami are calling for an end to Cuba's sovereignty in the wake of Fidel's surgery and his temporary handing over of power to Raoul Castro and other state leaders.

Three weeks ago, Leonard Weinglass, the U.S. lawyer for one of the Five, released a document which outlines new incidents of terrorist plots against

Cuba in the last five months. These include the arrest in April in California of a man representing a militant group planning the overthrow of the government in Cuba† who was holding 1,500 weapons, including machine guns, silencers, rocket launchers and 89,000 rounds of ammunition. In July, a similar arrest was made in Florida. Also, in June,†*The Miami Herald* published an extensive interview with a Miami Cuban ex-patriot who detailed attacks against Cuba in the 1994-97 period. The information provided included the names of the people who donated \$1.4 million towards this particular campaign of terror. The plans included the blowing up via remote-controlled explosives of the Plaza de la Revolucion during a speech given by Fidel Castro. Weinglass' report included other incidents as well, all of which prove that what the Cuban Five were doing in the first place † infiltrating terrorist groups to monitor their plans and prevent more deaths and injuries † was entirely justified. It also proves their argument that a fair trial is impossible in Miami, a city where these terrorists not only walk free, but openly brag about their exploits.

The Cuban Five will soon begin their ninth year of incarceration in different prisons across the U.S. From beginning to end, their arrests, trial and sentences have been a well-documented travesty of justice, denounced by millions of people around the world.†

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