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## EU poised to put Hezbollah's military wing 'on terror list'



The European Union stands poised to put the military wing of Lebanon's Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations after a formal request to blacklist the group was filed by a member state Monday, diplomats said. The request from Britain formally launches a process to blacklist the group, a move that has long been requested by Israel and which will be discussed in early June, several EU diplomats told AFP news agency.

"We hope to have an agreement by the end of June," one of the diplomats said, adding that EU experts would meet in a special committee to discuss the request early June. Both Israel and the United States have pressured the 27-member bloc to follow their example and designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group but the issue remained sensitive and divisive, with Britain openly in favor while France and Italy were believed reluctant. France, the former colonial power, feared the move could destabilize Lebanon, where Hezbollah is part of the government. There was also concern for the safety of UN peacekeepers there. The mood shifted however last year after an attack on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria which Sofia has blamed on Hezbollah and the arrest of a suspected Hezbollah agent in Cyprus, believed to have been planning attacks there.

Currently in Europe, only the Netherlands lists Hezbollah as a terrorist group, while Britain blacklists its military wing.

Outside Europe, the United States, Canada and Israel have long blacklisted the group, allowing them to criminalize Hezbollah activities, freeze its bank accounts and monitor suspected members.

In April, Bahrain became the first Arab country to blacklist Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

Its alleged backing and training of radical Shiite groups against Bahrain was the main reason given for the decision.

"The measure is to protect Bahrain's security and stability from Hezbollah's threats," Bahraini MP Adil al-Asoumi told Al Arabiya.

There is evidence that Hezbollah is instigating violence against the government in Bahrain, Asoumi added.

The country has a Shiite majority, but is ruled by a Sunni monarchy.