

JOINT REQUEST BY AUSTRALIAN KURDISH ORGANISATIONS ABOUT RESPONDING TO THE ISLAMIC  
REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS & ITS SUPPORT FOR WAR & TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

17 August 2024

Attention: Honourable Members of the Australian House of Representatives and Senate

Today, Jonathan Spyer wrote in [The Australian](#): “[The IRGC’s QUD’s force] is an unusual structure, perhaps unique on the international stage today. It is a group of men whose task and skill set is the raising up of proxy political and military forces in neighbouring countries that they might serve the interests of Tehran. It has no parallel in the organs of other states.”

We, the undersigned Australian Kurdish organisations, urge the Attorney General and the Australian Government to re-examine the issue of proscribing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation, or at least consider travel bans and asset freezes on the IRGC, or an expanded list of IRGC individuals (which we can supply). We ask this because:

- The IRGC fits all criteria used to classify organisations outlined by the [Attorney General’s Department](#).
- The IRGC is a threat to Australians and Australia’s interests in the Middle East and in Australia. These threats include:

**Regional Instability:** The IRGC has been involved in supporting and training militant groups in Iraq and Syria, including those that have attacked coalition forces, potentially endangering Australian military personnel stationed in these countries.

**Support for Terrorism:** The IRGC provides financial and military support to terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah, which has a global network capable of targeting Western interests, including Australia’s.

**Espionage and Influence Operations:** There are reports of IRGC activities concerning intimidation and surveillance of Iranian dissidents in Australia, creating security concerns within the Iranian-Australian community.

- Proscribing the IRGC would align with Australia's international efforts to combat terrorism, support human rights, and maintain international peace and security.
- Some of Australia’s closest allies have designated the IRGC as a terrorist organisation, including the USA in 2019 and Canada in 2024. Currently, Germany, Austria and other countries are strongly advocating that the EU proscribe the [IRGC](#).
- The IRGC provides all kinds of material and ideological support to Australia’s list of proscribed terrorist organisations in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen.
- Distinctions between state and non-state actors have become increasingly blurred.

This letter is written in the knowledge that one of the undersigned organisations - Kurdish Lobby Australia (KLA) - met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Mr Tim Watts, and numerous members of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2023 and

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2024 asking for the Australian Government to consider proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organisation. KLA representatives were repeatedly told that the Australian Government does not proscribe state actors as terrorist organisations. When KLA pointed out that Hezbollah is proscribed, despite being a state actor (Hezbollah holds 14 of the 128 seats in the Lebanese Parliament and is a member of the Resistance and Development Bloc), the response was that there was no comparison between Lebanon and Iran. When KLA pointed out that both Lebanon and Iran are sovereign countries, each having a seat in the UN General Assembly, KLA received no further clarification.

The IRGC issue is of particular concern to Kurds as Iranian Kurds are overrepresented in Iran's revolutionary courts and prisons, and in those receiving death sentences, on death row, and prisoners being executed, also in those dying in custody or being arbitrarily killed in public spaces by branches of the IRGC. The IRGC is also responsible for missile and artillery attacks on Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and attacks on the Syrian Democratic Forces and civilians in the Kurd-led Autonomous Administration of North & East Syria.

Hence, our request for the Attorney General and Australian Government to seriously:

- Reconsider proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organisation.
- Reconsider the obstacles that block the Attorney General from doing so, or
- Consider ways of circumnavigating these obstacles. For instance, the Australian Government could freeze all assets and issue travel bans on the IRGC based on its material support for IRGC members and Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, and others in the Axis of Resistance, which the Australian Government proscribes as terrorists or terrorist organisations, many of these organisations directly threatening Australians and Australia's interests. Other targets could include IRGC managed companies.

In all these matters we suggest that the Australian Government consider potential coordination with our allies: anything to avoid war between Iran and Israel.

### **Existing Sanctions and Boycotts on IRGC in other Countries**

Various sanctions and boycotts, particularly by Western countries, already target the IRGC, and its affiliated companies, individual members, and their relatives. The sanctions typically include travel bans, asset freezes, and restrictions on financial transactions<sup>1</sup>.

In 2019, under Executive Order 13224, the US Government designated the IRGC as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) leading to extensive sanctions. This designation prohibits American citizens and companies from engaging in any transactions with the IRGC and its affiliates<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, "Iran: Human Rights Violations and Sanctions," report, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," April 8, 2019, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://2017-2021.state.gov> (State Gov).

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The European Union has imposed sanctions on the IRGC, and specific individuals connected to it, limiting their ability to travel, access funds, or engage in business within the EU<sup>3</sup>. Germany is joined by other countries in pushing the European Union to recognise the [IRGC as a terrorist organization](#).

Canada's designation of the IRGC as a terrorist organisation was finalised on 19 June 2024. It had been a multi-year process, starting with Canada's House of Commons passing the motion to list the IRGC in 2018. Canada had already proscribed Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad as terrorist organisations, all of which benefit from IRGC's patronage, and in June 2019 Canada added another three IRGC-backed groups, namely the Yemeni-based Al-Ashtar Brigades, the defunct Palestinian-based Harakat al-Sabireen, and the Afghan-Syria-based Fatemiyoun Division. In November 2022, Canada designated the Islamic Republic of Iran as a regime that engages in terrorism and systematic human rights violations. Under Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, thousands of senior Iranian government officials, including top IRGC personnel, are banned from entering Canada. Those residing in Canada can be [investigated and removed](#).

The decision to proscribe the IRGC was based on testimonies and well documented evidence from intelligence agencies and human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that proved the IRGC's involvement in activities that promote terrorism and violate human rights. Canadian MPs, Tony Clement and Michael Cooper, were among those pivotal in advocating for the designation. They highlighted evidence of the IRGC's support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, its role in destabilising the Middle East, and its suppression of domestic dissent. The legislative process involved detailed hearings and debates in parliamentary committees, particularly the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security<sup>4</sup>.

Australia's criminal code, its 56-year-old bilateral relationship with Iran that goes beyond trade, and Australian Iranian individuals with private wealth could be preventing the Australian Government from proscribing the IRGC, for it does not appear that its reticence is due to economic relations. A comparison of bilateral trade with Iran indicates that [Canada](#) has more to lose than [Australia](#). Whatever the obstacles, we ask the Attorney General and the Australian Government to reexamine, and if necessary, circumvent the obstacles.

### **Steps we ask the Attorney General and the Australian Government to Consider**

We suggest that to effectively counteract the malign activities of the IRGC throughout Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Gaza, and the diasporas, Australia can undertake the following.

1. *Research and Advocacy*: Australia should consider evidence of the IRGC's involvement in terrorism and human rights abuses, and the funding of terrorist organisations. This may require further research on how it impacts Australians and Australia. Building a robust case will involve working with human rights

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<sup>3</sup> New E.U. and British Sanctions on Iran," *The Iran Primer*, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://iranprimer.usip.org>.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Canada lists the IRGC as a terrorist entity," June 19, 2024, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.canada.ca> ([Canada.ca](#)).

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organisations, intelligence agencies, and Iranian diaspora communities, as well as entities inside Iran.

2. *Legislative Process*: Initiate parliamentary discussions of documented evidence and testimonies to focus on national security and foreign affairs implications highlighting the IRGC's threats to Australians, Australia, and our international relations, as did Canada, which involved detailed analyses by experts like Mark Dubowitz.
3. *Economic Considerations*: Assess the potential impact on trade and diplomatic relations with Iran and the region, engaging stakeholders to mitigate any adverse effects, ensuring that self-interest and the welfare of Iranians are balanced with taking a firm stance against terrorism.
4. *Diplomatic Efforts*: Collaborate with international allies to build a coalition that can coordinate a unified international response.

### **Evidence of IRGC's Activities**

To support the designation of the IRGC as a terrorist organisation it is essential to gather comprehensive evidence. Key evidence includes:

- *Support for Terrorist Groups*: Documentation and testimony on the IRGC providing financial, logistical, and military support to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Iran's Axis of Resistance. Reports from the US State Department and various intelligence agencies have detailed the IRGC's role in training and arming these groups, which have conducted numerous terrorist attacks and acts of war on Australia's allies, particularly the US and Israel.
- *Human Rights Abuses*: Individual testimony and evidence provided by Human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on the IRGC's involvement in the violent suppression of protests, torture of detainees, and arbitrary executions of political prisoners inside Iran. For example, during the 2019–2020 and 2022 protests, the IRGC was implicated in the deaths of many hundreds of protesters and the detention of thousands more.
- *Regional Destabilisation*: Evidence needs to be accessed or gathered to irrefutably show that the IRGC and individual commanders contribute to the ongoing destabilisation of the Middle East, and the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars. An examination of the ways the IRGC and its proxies support the Assad regime in committing war crimes against civilians; of IRGC's Quds Force's activities in supports of political-military organisations that have been accused of human rights violations and attacks on coalition forces in Iraq, and how members of these organisations act as representatives of the Iraqi Coalition Government, and in the public and private sector to further their ends would produce such evidence.
- *Impacts on Australians and Australia*: Two vital areas of primary research are an analysis of how much the IRGC costs the Australian taxpayer when Australia provides

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a military and/or humanitarian response to conflicts in which the IRGC or its proxies engage in. Also required are in-depth investigations into cases of IRGC operatives in Australia instilling fear and uncertainty among Iranian Australians and interference in Australia's affairs.

By taking these steps and presenting compelling evidence, Australia can demonstrate its commitment to global security, human rights, and the rule of law and send a clear message against terrorism, oppression and military 'solutions'.

In a world undergoing huge political-economic challenges, it is in Australia's long-term interests to be on the right side of history, which includes the prevention of a major war, and supporting Iranians to achieve a democratic government that respects ethnic rights, women's rights, religious rights and every other fundamental human right.

We thank you for your attention and urge you to seriously consider our request. We are happy to provide further information or discuss matters further. The ideal time for the latter is at a presentation to be held between parliamentarians and Australian Kurdish community organisations at Australian Parliament House on 21 November between 10.30 am to 12 midday, which is being organised by Senator Paul Scarr and the Hon. Mr Graham Perrett MP.

Yours Sincerely,

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