

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0908/05

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to the Council

Subject: Al-Manar Hizbullah Television

Is the Council aware of the activities of Al-Manar: Hizbullah TV, a Shiite satellite 24-hour TV service, which has been broadcasting to the Arab world from west Beirut, Lebanon since 1991?

Hizbullah is the Iranian and Syrian-backed organisation which has been on the US State Department's designated terrorist list since 1996 and whose status is currently subject to review by the Council. Hizbullah was responsible in 1983 for suicide attacks in Beirut against French and American peacekeepers which killed 260 people, has kidnapped thousands of Lebanese and 87 Westerners, including 36 EU citizens, was responsible for terrorist attacks against Jewish targets in Argentina in 1992 and 1994, linked to the 1996 Khobar Towers attacks in Saudi Arabia and, most recently, implicated in the Tel Aviv nightclub suicide bomb attack on 25 February 2005.

Al-Manar has recently been put on the US State Department Terrorism Exclusion list. Al-Manar declares itself the 'station of resistance' committed to 'psychological warfare against the Zionist enemy'. As an ideologically militant Islamic broadcaster, it advocates the destruction of the State of Israel through terrorism and an end to the current US presence in the Middle East. It openly supports suicide missions against Israel and bizarrely claimed Israeli involvement in the 11 September 2001 attack on the United States.

The French Government instructed one of Al-Manar's satellite providers, Eutelsat, to cease broadcasting that channel, but French viewers can still access Al-Manar through at least two other satellite providers (Saudi-owned Arabsat and Egyptian-owned Nilesat).

However, the French Government has not instructed Globecast, a satellite provider which it partly owns, to cease broadcasting Al-Manar.

It is alleged that Al-Manar, as well as receiving funding from Iran, the Arab world, the Muslim communities resident in the EU and North America, may have received some funds via an NGO based in Lebanon which receives EU funds from a pro-democracy initiative supported by the European Commission.

Furthermore, a number of European companies, such as Maggi cubes, Milka chocolate and Henkel detergent of Germany, Smeds cheese and butter from Finland, Gauloises cigarettes and Picon cheese from France, and Austrian Red Bull, place commercial advertising contracts with this TV station.

Does the Council consider that such advertising by EU Member State registered companies meet the requirements of the EU proposals on corporate social responsibility? If funds from the EU budget are involved, will this situation be terminated immediately?

Will the Council press the French Government to instruct Globecast to cease providing Al-Manar programmes to satellite broadcasters that make it available in Europe, South America and Africa?