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PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Proscribing the IRGC and the Muslim Brotherhood



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LEEDS leads AGAINST ANTISEMITISM



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Why this matters now

This briefing is premised on a simple claim: the UK is facing a dual-headed Islamist challenge that is routinely misunderstood because it is still analysed through an outdated and overly sectarian lens. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) are commonly treated as separate phenomena—one “Shia” and state-backed, the other “Sunni” and political-social. The paper argues this framing is strategically inadequate, because it misses the more operational reality: beneath public antagonisms lies a strategic convergence.

The consequence of missing that convergence is policy drift: governments isolate one actor while leaving adjacent networks intact, allowing the wider ecosystem - funding pathways, propaganda, recruitment, intimidation, and institutional entryism - to continue functioning. The paper’s conclusion is that proscription is urgently required for both organisations, not as symbolism, but as national security and democratic self-preservation.

Executive Summary

The UK faces a hybrid threat ecosystem that combines (i) Iranian state-directed intimidation and hostile activity linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and (ii) a gradualist ideological infrastructure linked to the Muslim Brotherhood that can enable radicalisation pathways, institutional capture, and community-level intimidation.

Two complementary legal regimes should be used in parallel:

1. Proscription (Terrorism Act 2000): creates enforceable offences (membership, support, fundraising, meetings, propaganda/glorification) and removes the “grey zone” exploited by networks operating in the UK.
2. Asset-freezing designation (UK sanctions/asset-freezing legislation): enables the UK to freeze assets and impose financial restrictions not only on organisations, but also on key personnel, facilitators, and financial enablers, in a manner that can be rapidly operationalised.

This dual-track approach strengthens enforcement, reduces institutional ambiguity, and enables coordinated European action, as UK asset-freezing designation closely corresponds to EU designation practice.

Core asks: Initiate proscription procedures for the IRGC and the Muslim Brotherhood; simultaneously pursue targeted organisational and individual designations under UK asset-freezing legislation; and align these measures with European partners.

Why this is a UK national security issue

This is not “Middle East politics”. It is a domestic safeguarding and public safety issue. The IRGC is linked to the regime’s capability to intimidate, surveil, and target dissidents abroad. The Iranian diaspora in the UK - particularly dissidents and journalists - should be treated as a protected population under threat from hostile state activity.

This framing is crucial: the state’s duty is to protect those under its jurisdiction from organised intimidation and potentially lethal plots, irrespective of where the directing power sits.

Legal architecture: two regimes, one objective

A. Proscription (Terrorism Act 2000)

Proscription is appropriate where an organisation is believed to be “concerned in terrorism”. Its utility is practical and immediate: it enables offences relating to membership and active support, constrains fundraising and propaganda ecosystems, and gives police and regulators a bright line.

B. Asset-freezing designations (separate UK regime)

In parallel, the UK should deploy asset-freezing designation powers to constrain the operational and financial footprint of the IRGC and Muslim Brotherhood-linked networks, and crucially to target key personnel. This regime is distinct from proscription, and should be viewed as a complementary instrument—particularly where the policy objective is to degrade capability, restrict movement of funds, and deter facilitation.

Importantly, UK asset-freezing designation corresponds closely to the EU designation regime. This makes designation a natural vehicle for coordinated European action—ensuring the UK is not an outlier, and preventing hostile networks exploiting jurisdictional gaps between London and the continent.

Policy implication: Parliament should treat proscription and asset-freezing designation as mutually reinforcing tools: proscription constrains activity, designation constrains resources and enablers.

The case for action on the IRGC

The IRGC is not a conventional military. It is the regime's coercive and ideological engine - central to internal repression and external subversion. The UK should respond through a dual-track strategy:

- Proscription to criminalise and disrupt UK-based support, facilitation, recruitment, propaganda, and operational networks.
- Asset-freezing designation to restrict financial channels and target key IRGC-linked individuals involved in hostile activity, intimidation networks, and facilitation infrastructures.

This approach recognises a core operational reality: the IRGC's power is sustained not only by direct operators but by a wider enabling chain - finance, logistics, intermediaries, and influence facilitators. Designation allows that chain to be targeted rapidly and precisely.

The case for action on the Muslim Brotherhood

The Brotherhood should be evaluated not solely on the narrow question of whether it is "violent" in the UK, but on its function as a gradualist ideological infrastructure that can normalise extremist premises, embed them in institutions, and provide pathways into harder networks.

A dual-track approach is again recommended:

- Proscription where legal thresholds are met, to remove ambiguity and prevent the laundering of extremist mobilisation into "community" activity.
- Asset-freezing designation of key personnel and facilitators where evidence supports it, particularly in relation to financing, organisational architecture, and cross-border enabling structures.

Designation is particularly important here because ideological infrastructures often rely on financial and institutional ecosystems. Freezing and restricting the enablers can be operationally decisive even when overt violence is not the primary modality.

Convergence thesis: one ecosystem, two functions

This is the central logic:

- IRGC: coercion, intimidation, proxies, and hostile state-directed operations.
- Muslim Brotherhood: ideological embedding, institutional capture, and social mobilisation pipelines.

Together they form an ecosystem in which ideology lubricates recruitment and legitimisation, while coercive organs provide enforcement and intimidation. The UK response should therefore combine:

- legal line-drawing (proscription), and
- capability degradation (asset-freezing designations).

Recommended parliamentary actions

1. Request the Home Secretary provide a timetable and evidential posture for proscription assessments of the IRGC and Muslim Brotherhood.
2. Request that the Government set out its intent regarding asset-freezing designations of:
 - the organisations where applicable, and
 - key personnel, facilitators, and financial enablers.
3. Urge Government to pursue coordinated European action, leveraging the correspondence between UK asset-freezing designation and the EU designation regime, to close gaps exploited by hostile networks.
4. Advance parallel safeguarding measures: enhanced protection for dissidents and journalists; regulator guidance to charities and universities; scrutiny of front organisations and financial channels.

The UK should stop treating this as a choice between symbolism and pragmatism. The correct approach is layered: proscription to criminalise and disrupt, and asset-freezing designation to degrade finances and constrain key individuals - ideally in coordination with European partners. This is not escalation; it is governance. It is how a serious democracy defends those living under its protection from organised intimidation and hostile ideological infrastructure.

