

Delisting the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MeK)

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Two months ago, on 28 September 2012, the US Secretary of State formally [removed](#) the Iranian group, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MeK), from the US Government's list of [Foreign Terrorist Organizations](#) (FTO) and delisted it as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, in recognition of the group's renunciation of violence. This is a significant milestone for the MeK which was first designated as an FTO by the US Government in 1997 and whose repeated attempts since then to be delisted have failed a number of times. The delisting follows similar rulings in the UK in 2008 and the EU in 2009. While Australia has never proscribed the MeK as a terrorist organisation, in December 2001 the Australian Government effectively froze the MeK's assets and made it an offence to fund the group by adding the MeK to the Government's '[Consolidated List](#)'—where it currently still remains.

As outlined in the 2003 Parliamentary Library Research Note, [Behind the Mujahideen-e-Khalq \(MeK\)](#), the MeK (also known as the Mujahideen-e-Khalq Organisation, or the People's Mujahideen Organisation of Iran, or PMOI) formed in the mid-1960s as a splinter group of the Liberation Movement of Iran and became the largest group within the coalition of Iranian opposition groups known as the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Its military wing, the National Liberation Army, was formed in 1987. The MeK was designated as a terrorist organisation by the US Government in October 1997 following the murder of a number of US nationals in which the MeK was involved or suspected of involvement.

According to the profile of the organisation in [Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism](#) the MeK murdered three US military personnel in the early 1970s. The US State Department also notes in [Country Reports on Terrorism 2010](#) that in 1972 the MeK set off bombs at the US Embassy and the offices of US companies in Tehran to protest against the visit to Iran by President Nixon, and again in 1974 to protest against the visit of US Secretary of State Kissinger. The State Department also claims that in 1976 and 1979, the MeK murdered several US civilians working in Iran. The MeK was also accused of actively supporting the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979, and of assisting Saddam Hussein's suppression of the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings at the end of the Gulf War in 1991—although the MeK has always denied any involvement in either of these events. In April 1992, the MeK carried out a series of simultaneous attacks on Iranian Embassies worldwide, including in Australia, apparently in retaliation for the bombing by Iran of MeK bases in Iraq in the preceding days. The Iranian Embassy in Canberra was over-run and some staff were seriously injured. According to *Jane's* and the US State Department, the MeK has also, over many years, carried out armed attacks and assassinations against Iranian Government personnel and property.

The UK proscribed the MeK in March 2001 and the EU designated the MeK as a terrorist group in May 2002, although both jurisdictions have since delisted the group. For a discussion of the listing and delisting of the MeK in the UK, see the 2009 House of Commons Library Standard Note, [People's Mujahiddin of Iran \(PMOI\) or Mujahiddin e Khalq \(MEK\): an update](#). Canada [proscribed](#) the MeK in 2005, and its listing remains current.

In December 2001, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs added the MeK to the Government's 'Consolidated List' which contains the names of entities, the assets of which must be frozen in line with [UN Security Council Resolution 1373](#) which requires UN member states to implement a series of measures designed to suppress terrorism. As explained in detail on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) [website](#), 'Australia implements Resolution 1373 through Part 4 of the Charter of the United Nations Act 1945 and through regulation 20 of the Charter of the United Nations (Dealing with Assets) Regulations 2008'. Once an organisation is listed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'it becomes a criminal offence to deal with their assets or to make assets available to them'.

In June 2003, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) conducted raids on the homes of a number of Iranian Australians. In a [report](#) at the time by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *7.30 Report*, the status of the MeK in Australia was described by Clive Williams (then the Director of Terrorism Studies at the Australian National University) as 'basically a fundraising arm'. The report cited suspicions by commentators that the raids were connected to increased diplomatic engagement between Australia and Iran in the weeks before the raids, during which, it was suggested, the Iranians may have 'expressed concern about the activities of MeK supporters in Australia'. According to the report, any suggestion that the raids were politically motivated was dismissed at the time as 'nonsense' by a spokesman for the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Despite its violent track record, the MeK has over the years enjoyed some [political support](#) from individual politicians in the UK, the US and [Australia](#). While acknowledging the designation of the MeK as a terrorist group, supporters have tended to refer to it as a 'resistance organisation'. Among the Australian federal politicians to have spoken out in public support of the MeK over the years is Kelvin Thomson (a Government MP) who has [repeatedly called](#) for the removal of the MeK from the Government's 'Consolidated List'.

The MeK's entry on the 'Consolidated List' is not due to expire for another year (25 November 2013), although according to the DFAT website, listed organisations can apply at any time to the Minister to have their listing revoked. It will be interesting to see whether following the recent delisting of the MeK in the US, the MeK makes a request of the Australian Government to be removed from the 'Consolidated List' prior to November 2013. To date, the Government has not indicated that it is currently considering any such request, but with the UK, the EU and now the US having removed any restrictions on the MeK, the pressure to remove it from the Government's 'Consolidated List' could well be mounting.

Tags: [Australian foreign policy](#), [terrorist financing](#), [terrorist groups](#)
[Top](#)