

Excerpts: Germany outlaws Hezbollah fundraising

Contributed by Agence France Presse, AlArabiya News 8 April '14:"
Tuesday, 22 April 2014
Last Updated Tuesday, 22 April 2014

German authorities banned a group Tuesday [8 April] accused of raising money for the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and staged raids across the country on homes and offices used by the organization. Around 150 police officers searched premises across six states and confiscated cash, computers and around 40 boxes of files.

Two bank accounts with a total of around 60,000 euros were frozen but no arrests were made, the German interior ministry said.

The ministry said it had outlawed the "Waisenkinderprojekt Libanon" (Orphan Children Project Lebanon) with immediate effect.

"The name of the group masks its actual purpose," ministry state secretary Emily Haber said in a statement.

She said the organization based in the western city of Essen had raised 3.3 million euros (\$4.5 million) in donations between 2007 and 2013 for the Lebanese Shahid Foundation, an "integral" part of Hezbollah.

It said the funds were used to recruit fighters "to combat Israel, also with terrorist measures" and compensate the families of suicide bombers.

"Organizations that directly or indirectly from German soil oppose the state of Israel's right to exist may not seek freedom of association protection," Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said in the statement.

He said the group's goals violated Germany's constitution.

The European Union in July last year also listed Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organisation.

The German interior ministry said it had put Waisenkinderprojekt Libanon, which has about 80 members, under surveillance since 2009.

Hezbollah, which brands itself a resistance movement against Israel, was formed in 1982 by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and was the principal actor in ending Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 2000.

It acknowledged early last year it was sending fighters into Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad's forces in the country's three-year civil war.

Authorities say there are around 1,000 Hezbollah supporters living in Germany.