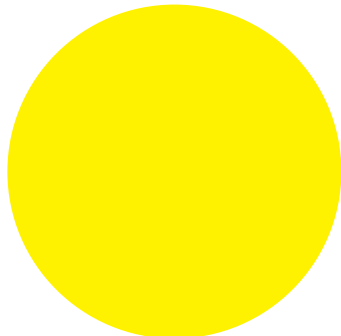




Iran
advancing
despite many
challenges:
Leader

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World leaders, including Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (front 4th R), pose for a group photo as they attend an international conference on "Peace and Trust" in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on December 12, 2025.

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hails 'decisive
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as Iran,
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yielded most
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success for Iran
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Intangible
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Iran's cultural
diplomacy in Europe
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Iraq's freeze-and-reversal of resistance assets underscores push for neutrality

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW



The Asset Freezing Committee at Iraq's Central Bank has reversed its earlier decision and removed names linked to Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Ansarallah (Houthis) from its asset-blocking list. The committee had placed both groups on the roster of "terrorist groups," a designation published in Iraq's Official Gazette on November 17. Following the controversy, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani ordered an immediate investigation into the decision. According to the prime minister's office, Iraq has agreed only to Malaysia's re-

quest to freeze assets connected to Daesh (ISIS) and al-Qaeda. This designation and its swift annulment come as the Iraqi government faces mounting US and Western pressure to dismantle armed groups broadly labeled as "resistance groups." Speaking to Iran Daily, Mideast affairs analyst Ali Bidboo explained the background and implications of the decision and its withdrawal. He noted that although the move was not accidental — and was made under Western pressure before being reversed under domestic pressure — neither the implementation nor the reversal is likely to bring about any major shift in Iraq-Western relations. According to him, a post-war Iraq in need of reconstruction will continue its attempt to walk a fine line and preserve neutrality between the West and its regional adversaries.

IRAN DAILY: What was the background

behind the Asset Freezing Committee's decision? Was it simply an administrative error, or was it taken under political and international pressure on Iraq? BIDBOO: Legally speaking, the designation of terrorism in Iraq is carried out by the country's National Security Council (NSC). In practice, if Hezbollah or the Houthis were to be added to Iraq's terrorist list, the NSC would have to convene, review the matter, and formally approve adding both groups. Only then would the designation become official. The point — as reflected in media coverage — is that it was claimed these two groups had been added to Iraq's terrorist list, but that was not the case. Any group that might be included on Iraq's terrorist list must first go through the NSC, whose members include the interior minister, the defense minister, and senior-ranking security officials, just as in any other state. Therefore, even before the reversal, it must be clarified that neither of the two groups

had been added to Iraq's terrorist list. Instead, they had been placed on a list of "supporters of terrorism" or "terrorism financiers." Nevertheless, the move was not accidental. Being placed on a list overseen by the Terrorist Financing Committee, which operates under the Central Bank, does not constitute a legal designation, because the committee's own reference point is UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), issued a few weeks after the 9/11 attacks. If Hezbollah and the Houthis were to appear alongside al-Qaeda and Daesh on that committee's list, Iraq would first have had to officially declare them terrorist organizations — something it did not do. This indicates that Iraq was under significant US pressure, prompting the government to place the two groups on that list. Yet the massive public backlash, especially in southern Iraqi cities, and the government's reluctance to face renewed protests forced it to backtrack almost immediately.

Besides, Iraq's prime minister stated in his last interview that the move was meant to "undermine his government" and prevent him from securing another term. Since the two groups were never added to Iraq's official terrorist list, the measure had no legal basis. It only aimed to reduce US pressure on the Central Bank of Iraq. How will this reversal affect Iraq's relations with the United States and other Western countries? Could it be interpreted as a sign of Baghdad's autonomy, or might it fuel new tensions? In the late Biden administration, Washington had been ramping up pressure on Baghdad. The governor of Iraq's Central Bank had repeatedly traveled to the US, while American officials frequently met with him and with Iraq's prime minister to discuss the financing of resistance groups. These meetings intensified after the events of October 7.

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