

Beat: Travel

Australia outlaws support for group behind Algerian hostage crisis

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USPA News - The Australian government has outlawed support for the Algerian militant group Al-Murabitun, the al-Qaeda-linked group that claimed responsibility for last year's deadly hostage crisis at a gas plant in the Sahara. which resulted in the deaths of dozens of foreigners. The office of Australian Attorney-General George Brandis said Sunday that Al-Murabitun had been listed as a terrorist organization for the first time, making it a crime to be a member of the group, recruit for, train for or receive training from Al-Murabitun.

It is also an offense to provide support for the group, associate with its members, or to get funds to or from Al-Murabitun. Australian citizens involved in such activities may face up to 25 years imprisonment under the Criminal Code Act 1995. "An organization is listed as a terrorist organization under the Criminal Code when the Attorney-General is satisfied the organization is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act or advocates the doing of a terrorist act, whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur," the attorney-general's office said in a statement. The listing of Al-Murabitun as a terrorist organization will be valid for a period of three years, after which the government will decide whether to re-list the group. Sunday's move follows similar action taken by the United Nations Security Council and other governments, including the United States and the United Kingdom. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the leader of Al-Murabitun, claimed responsibility for the January 2013 hostage crisis in southeastern Algeria, during which 33 militants stormed a gas plant near In Amenas and took more than 800 hostages. The crisis continued for four days until security forces raided the site to free the hostages. At least 39 foreign hostages, an Algerian security guard, and 29 militants were killed.

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