



BACKGROUND ON THE IHH ORGANIZATION

May 30, 2010

KEY POINTS

- ❖ The Turkish IHH, which played a central role in organizing the flotilla to the Gaza Strip, is a Turkish humanitarian relief fund with a radical Islamic anti-Western orientation.
- ❖ Beyond its legitimate philanthropic activities, the IHH provides extensive support to radical Islamic organizations, including Hamas.
- ❖ In the past, the IHH has maintained contacts with and provided support to global jihad organizations.
- ❖ IHH is a member of a coalition of organizations, the "Union of Good" which has been designated a terrorist entity by the US government.



BACKGROUND

- ❖ Prominent among the coalition of organizations participating in the flotilla is the Turkish IHH (Insani Yardim Vakfi, IHH, "Humanitarian Relief Fund"). The IHH is a radical Islamic organization which was established in 1992 and formally registered in Istanbul in 1995. It is headed by Bülent Yildirim.
- ❖ The IHH has a broad program of activities in distressed areas. They include sending food and support to orphans, establishing educational institutions, hospitals and clinics, programs for vocational education, supplying medicines, building mosques and preventing the violation of human rights in various Islamic locations throughout the world. In recent years it has begun widening its activities to European countries, in part by establishing branches which bear its name.
- ❖ However, in practice, besides its legitimate humanitarian activities, IHH supports radical Islamic terrorist networks. In recent years it has prominently supported Hamas (through the Union of Good). In addition, in the past the IHH provided logistical support and funding to global jihad networks.

IHH LINKS TO HAMAS

- ❖ IHH's orientation is radical-Islamic and anti-Western, and it is close to the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas' parent movement). IHH supports Hamas and does not hide the connection between them. Hamas also considers its links to IHH and Turkey to be extremely important.



**Hamas Leader Khaled Mashaal with
IHH Head Bülent Yıldırım in January 2009.**

- ❖ In recent years, especially since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, IHH has supported Hamas' propaganda campaigns by organizing public support conferences in Turkey. At those conferences, which featured the participation of senior IHH figures, the heads of IHH expressed their support for Hamas and its strategy (including the armed struggle it favors), in defiance of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas' rival.

- ❖ IHH is a member of the *Union of Good*, an umbrella organization of more than 50 Islamic funds and foundations around the globe, which channels money into Hamas institutions in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories.



**Hamas Leader Ismail Haniya with
IHH Head Bülent Yıldırım in January 2010.**

- ❖ **The *Union of Good* was designated a terrorist entity** under by the United States government under Executive Order 13224 in November 2008.

- ❖ As a *Union of Good* member IHH has connections with other worldwide Islamic funds and foundations which support Hamas. Among other things, the support includes initiating and conducting joint projects whose objectives are to bolster the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip and Hamas' civilian infrastructure in Judea and Samaria, which also supports terrorism (the infrastructure is under pressure from the Palestinian Authority security services). IHH, which has become an important factor in global fund-raising for Hamas, transfers significant amounts of money to Hamas institutions in Judea and Samaria, including the Islamic Charitable Society in Hebron and the Al-Tadhamun Charitable Society in Nablus (Hamas' two central "charitable societies," both outlawed by Israel).

- ❖ IHH operates widely throughout the Gaza Strip. To promote its activities it opened a branch in Gaza, headed by Muhammad Kaya, who recently stated that IHH intended to send other aid flotillas to the Gaza Strip (See below). In January 2009 IHH head Bülent Yildirim met with Khaled Mashaal, chairman of Hamas’ political bureau in Damascus, and Mashaal thanked him for the support of his organization.

ISRAEL OUTLAWS IHH AND EXPELS ACTIVIST

- ❖ Israel has also outlawed the IHH because of its affiliation with the *Union of Good* and in November 2009 deported an IHH activist, Izzat Shahin, who was sent to open a an office of the organization in the West Bank.
- ❖ Shahin transferred tens of thousands of American dollars from IHH to the Islamic Charitable Society in Hebron and Al-Tadhamun in Nablus, two of Hamas’ most important “charitable societies.” **Al-Tadhamun has been involved in providing payments to the families of suicide bombers.**

Operation	Date	Martyrs	Location	Bombers	Number
عملية استشهادية في مستوطنة أريئيل	07/03/02	22	مادما	نابلس	شادي محمد صدفى نصار
قتل نصفية أثناء دعاه للقيام بعملية استشهادية	08/03/02	24	بيت وزن	نابلس	محمود سعيد عبد الرحيم صلاح
أصيب بثلاث أخوة نازري في القلب	09/03/02	30	نابلس	نابلس	حامد عزات سلمان عمران
عملية استشهادية في نتانيا	09/03/02	21	ج. عسكر	نابلس	معيد عبد الحفيظ سمح النقة
عملية استشهادية في نتانيا	09/03/02	22	ج. العين	نابلس	شادي علي مطلق النحسي
عيار نازري في الكف استقر في القلب	10/03/02	27	صرة	نابلس	محمود نيسو أحمد غام
فصف عبد حاجر السليح	20/02/02	27	كفر قدوم	نابلس	غام نيسو أحمد برهم

Part of a document seized by the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield (2002): A table prepared by the *Union of Good* containing the names of shaheeds (martyrs) who carried out mass-murder suicide bombing attacks in Israeli cities. It was used to arrange payments to the suicide bombers’ families though the Hamas-affiliated Islamic “charitable society” Al-Tadhamun in Nablus. It is one of the charitable societies Izzat Shahin transferred money to after he was appointed IHH representative in the West Bank in 2009.

IHH'S LINKS WITH GLOBAL JIHAD

- ❖ Information shows that in the past IHH had links with global jihad and Islamic terrorist elements in the Middle East. As part of its connections with the global jihad it supported jihadist terrorist networks in Bosnia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya.
- ❖ The support took the form of logistic support for the transfer of weapons and money. This information verifies findings of a study conducted by a Danish research institute into IHH's past links with Al-Qaeda (See below).
- ❖ We do not have updated information about current IHH links with global jihad affiliated persons or organizations; however, its past activities give an indication as to the nature of the organization.
- ❖ In a declassified CIA report produced in January 1996, entitled International Islamic NGOs and Links to Terrorism, the CIA identified IHH as a radical Islamic humanitarian organization with its main offices in Zagreb and Sarajevo and headquarters in Germany. The CIA report noted that the organization had connections with extremist groups in Iran and Algeria. The CIA report identified IHH as one of 15 organizations employing members or otherwise facilitating the activities of terrorist groups operating in Bosnia.

DANISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE: PAST IHH LINKS WITH AL-QAEDA

- ❖ In 2006 a Danish research institute called the Danish Institute for International Studies conducted a study which reported that in the past IHH had connections with Al-Qaeda and global jihad operatives. The well-documented study was conducted by Evan Kohlman, an American researcher who specializes in Al-Qaeda and related subjects. It deals with the involvement of Islamic charity funds and foundations in supporting terrorism.
- ❖ According to the study, the Turkish authorities began investigating IHH at least in December 1997, after having received information that senior IHH figures had purchased automatic weapons from radical Islamic organizations. The office of the organization in Istanbul was consequently raided and activists were arrested. During the raid the Turkish security forces found weapons, explosives, instructions for making IEDs and a flag with a jihad message. An examination of the documents found in the IHH office indicated that IHH members were planning to take part in jihad activities in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya.
- ❖ The study quotes a French intelligence report stating that in the mid-1990s IHH leader, Bülent Yildirim, was directly involved in recruiting "veteran soldiers" to organize jihad activities. According to the French report, a number of operatives were sent by IHH into war zones in Islamic countries to gain combat experience. The report also stated that IHH transferred money, "caches of firearms, knives and pre-fabricated explosives" to Muslim fighters in those countries.

- ❖ The study also states that an examination of IHH's telephone records in 1996 showed repeated calls in 1996 to an Al-Qaeda guest house in Milan and to Algerian terrorists operating in Europe (one of whom was notorious Al-Qaeda figure Abu Ma'ali [Abd al-Qadr Mukhtari], who operated in Bosnia). IHH's name was also mentioned during the trial of Ahmed Ressam held in the United States in 2000 (Ressam was a senior Al-Qaeda operative active in Canada, who at the end of 1999 entered the United States in a car carrying 600 kilograms (1320 pounds) of explosives. He planned to carry out a mass-casualty attack at the Los Angeles International Airport on the eve of the millennium.) The United States federal prosecutors called Jean-Louis Bruguière, a leading French investigating magistrate in charge of terrorism affairs, as an expert witness. He testified that IHH had played an important role in Al-Qaeda's planned attack. According to Bruguière, IHH served as a cover for Al-Qaeda and acquired forged documents, enlisted operatives and transferred weapons.
- ❖ According to the study, following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, Bülent Yildirim and IHH played a key role in anti-Western incitement among Turkish Muslims. At the end of 2000 IHH organized protests against the attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein, during which Israeli and American flags were burned. In December 2004 IHH organized an anti-American march in Istanbul. During the march Bülent Yildirim told the Turkish Anatolia News Agency that the intelligence cooperation between the United States, Britain and Turkey had to stop, otherwise IHH would organize actions in front of every consulate, and if necessary organize 50,000 or 100,000 people in front of the American consulate.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE IHH IN THE FLOTILLA

- ❖ IHH purchased three ships (of the nine which were intended to participate in the flotilla): a passenger ship named the Mavi Marmaris and two cargo ships (one named "Gaza"). The Mavi Marmaris left Istanbul on May 22 en route to Antalya, where 500 passengers were expected to board it. The three ships will sail from Turkey to Cyprus to join the others, and from there they will sail together to the Gaza Strip (where they are apparently expected to arrive on the morning of May 29). In addition, in recent months IHH aided the de facto Hamas administration's ministries of transportation and of public works by carrying out various projects in the Gaza harbor to prepare it to receive the ships (Filastin Al-Yawm, April 19, 2010).
- ❖ On April 7, 2010, IHH head Bülent Yildirim told a press conference in Istanbul that the flotilla would be a "test" for Israel. He said that should Israel oppose the flotilla it would be considered "a declaration of war" on the countries whose activists arrived on board the ships (IHH website, April 7, 2010). In a fiery speech given at the launching of the Mavi Marmaris on May 23, he said to Israel, "Handle this crisis well. If you prevent [the flotilla from reaching the Gaza Strip] you will remain isolated in the world and harm yourselves" (IHH website in Turkish, May 23, 2010). On May 21 Muhammad Kaya, head of IHH's branch office in the Gaza Strip, said there was a plan to send flotillas to the Gaza Strip every month.