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# TURKEY, THE GLOBAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, AND THE GAZA FLOTILLA

Steven G. Merley

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Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs  
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Cover Photo: The Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara* taking part in the Gaza flotilla (AFP).

Photos: AP, AFP Cihan News Agency

Note: All quotations used in this report were either cited verbatim from their sources or translated where necessary. The misspellings and other linguistic errors that appear in these references are the result of either translations by non-native English speakers or errors in the source documents.

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# GLOSSARY

**Global Muslim Brotherhood (GMB)** – The global network of individuals and organizations that developed as Muslim Brotherhood members dispersed to other countries while fleeing the periodic crackdowns on the organization in Egypt.

**Turkish Muslim Brotherhood Network (Turkish/MB Network)** – The network of Turkish NGOs identified in this report which are allied with the Global Muslim Brotherhood.

**Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP)** – The Turkish Islamist ruling political party led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

**Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı, İHH)** – A Turkish Islamic NGO active in various disaster and conflict zones around the world and part of the Turkish/MB network.

**Organization of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People (MAZLUMDER)** – Turkish Human Rights NGO and part of the Turkish/MB network.

**Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği (MUSIAD)** – Turkish Islamist businessman's organization and part of the Turkish/MB network.

**Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekkülleri Vakfı (TGTV)** – An umbrella group founded to foster ties amongst Islamist NGOs in Turkey and part of the Turkish/MB network.

**The Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW)** – Founded by TGTV to coordinate Islamist NGOs on a global level and part of the Turkish/MB network.

**Filistin Dayanışma Derneği (FIDDER)** – Turkish Palestinian advocacy group and part of the Turkish/MB network.

**Hikmet Bilim Dostluk ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (HIKMET)** – Turkish member organization of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE).

**Federation of Islamic Organizations In Europe (FIOE)** – Umbrella group for the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe.

**International Solidarity Movement (ISM)** – Palestinian advocacy group comprised of Western citizens known for sponsoring protests in the Palestinian territories.

**Free Gaza Movement (FGM)** – Western group that co-sponsored the flotilla and which emerged from the ISM.

**World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)** – Saudi religious youth organization close to the Global Muslim Brotherhood.

**International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS)** – Organization comprised of Muslim scholars headed by Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi.

**Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah ( Hamas)** – Palestinian terror group that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood.

# CONCLUSIONS

## 1. The Gaza Flotilla Was Supported by the Turkish Government

There is strong evidence for Turkish governmental involvement in the Gaza flotilla incident, including the office of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan. As this report demonstrates, Turkish government support for the flotilla was channeled through the Turkish Muslim Brotherhood network. It included the attendance of officials from Turkey's ruling AKP party at many important Turkish/MB network events in support of the flotilla, a meeting by Erdogan himself with a delegation of Global Muslim Brotherhood and flotilla movement leaders from Britain and France shortly before the flotilla, and a message of support from Erdogan to an IUMS meeting held shortly after the flotilla incident. In addition, in a March 2010 speech, IHH leader Bulent Yildirim implied that the flotilla had official Turkish backing by incorrectly asserting that the flotilla as a whole was "sailing under the Turkish flag" and that Israel would never attack it since that would be "the same as attacking a Turkish consulate." Turkish government administrators facilitated the purchase of the lead ship, the *Mavi Marmara*, from the Istanbul municipality, which was controlled by the AKP, as well as its departure from Turkish ports.<sup>1</sup> The Israeli Intelligence and Information Center has also reported the finding of a laptop computer aboard the *Marmara* containing the minutes of a meeting held by the flotilla organizers on May 16, 2010. The laptop document reportedly revealed claims by the IHH vice-president, who chaired the meeting, that over the last few days the flotilla had received support from Erdogan and other ministers and that if the flotilla should run into difficulties, "gov[ernment] will extend what support they can."

The support given by the Turkish government to the Gaza flotilla is not surprising, given the increasingly Islamist nature of AKP foreign and domestic policy in recent years. Recently disclosed U.S. State Department cables reveal concern over Turkey's "new, highly activist foreign policy" ascribed in part to the influence of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, said to be laboring under "neo-Ottoman fantasies" of regaining lost Muslim lands and avenging Muslim defeats. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, which envisions a restoration of Islamic rule, at an initial stage, in parts of Europe that were once under the banner of Islam, a participant at an AKP think tank meeting expressed the reportedly widespread belief that a neo-Ottoman Turkey would want to "take back Andalusia and avenge the defeat at the siege of Vienna in 1683." The same cable also asserts that many in the AKP believe that it is Turkey's role to spread Islam in Europe. The recently disclosed U.S. diplomatic material provides a context for understanding



Erdogan's ideological ties to the Global Muslim Brotherhood network, ties which this report has documented date back to Erdogan's affiliation in the 1970s with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), a Saudi Wahhabi charity with known connections to extremist and terrorist groups. It should further be noted that the Gaza flotilla was also supported by leaders of the Grand Union and Saadet parties who participated in Turkish/MB network events. State Department cables expressed the view that Erdogan was trying to avoid being "outflanked" on Israel by politicians from these other Islamist parties, providing additional insight into his support of the flotilla. It should also be noted that a personal representative of Erdogan was reported to have intervened with Egyptian authorities during the December 2009 Viva Palestina land convoy, which also included five AKP deputies and 200 Turkish citizens. In another speech during a convoy welcoming ceremony in the Syrian port city of Latakiah, IHH leader Bulent Yildirim thanked both Bashar Assad and Erdogan for "their stances, the ongoing support to the Palestinian people and their efforts to end the siege on Gaza."

## **2. IHH Was Not Acting Alone – The Role of the Global Muslim Brotherhood Network**

The Gaza flotilla incident brought into sharp focus an even more significant long-term development: the growing relationship between the Erdogan government and the Global Muslim Brotherhood, which has given rise to some of the most notorious Islamist terrorist groups – from al-Qaeda to Hamas. **Since 2006, Turkey has become a new center for the Global Muslim Brotherhood, while the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip acted as the main axis for this activity. The AKP allowed key elements of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and above all the International Union of Muslim Scholars, led by Sheikh Youssef Qaradawi, to operate freely on Turkish territory, with its active support, as witnessed by the large number of conferences held recently in Istanbul and sponsored and/or attended by Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders.** The cooperation between the Global Muslim Brotherhood and the Erdogan government appears to have been based on mutual interests. Erdogan and the AKP were able to indulge the "neo-Ottoman" goals of reasserting a sphere of influence in former Islamic areas, while at the same time outmaneuvering the other Islamist parties and, as a bonus, satisfying Erdogan's reported hatred of Israel. For their part, the Global Muslim Brotherhood was able to begin operating out of a major state without any of the interference that it normally encountered elsewhere in the Arab world.

Erdogan chose not to rely on the official organs of the Turkish state alone, but rather on non-governmental organizations with which he and the AKP had close ties. Prominent among those Turkish NGOs was IHH which subsequently became the focus of attention in the aftermath of the flotilla. However, as this report demonstrates, **the IHH was not acting alone but rather was an integral part of a Turkish Muslim Brotherhood network comprised of seven NGOs with strong links to each other, to the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and to the Turkish political establishment.** Taken together, the network possesses a business, a charity, and legal, organizational, and Palestinian advocacy capacity; two of its most important leaders are Turks of Arab ethnic origin who are associated with European Muslim Brotherhood organizations.

The Turkish/MB network has been supported by nearly the whole of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, whose affiliates, from a number of Middle Eastern countries, provided passengers for the *Mavi Marmara*. In addition, the Global Muslim Brotherhood frequently



held press conferences and demonstrations to demonize Israel, initiated legal actions against Israeli leaders, and delivered aid to those in conflict with Israel. The Turkish/MB network played a major role in supporting the Gaza flotilla prior to its launching through statements and press conferences, and one of its most important leaders, MAZLUMDER Chairman Ahmet Unsal, was on board the flotilla. In the aftermath of the flotilla, the Turkish/MB network continued its support in more official statements, and at a post-flotilla event in Kuwait, Turkish/MB network leader Gazi Misirli revealed that MUSIAD had played a major role in funding the flotilla by "coordinating" donations. In addition, the Turkish/MB network was in ongoing contact with Hamas leaders as well as with the Union of Good, the coalition of charities headed by Youssef Qaradawi that raises funds for Hamas. These conclusions raise three further important issues.

### **3. The Flotilla Was Not a Humanitarian Effort**

Although IHH declared that the flotilla was humanitarian in nature, the history of IHH suggests that it is not only a humanitarian organization. **Some of the IHH's key founders fought in the 1990s in the Mujahidin Brigade of the Bosnian Army along with many veterans of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. In addition, there have been multiple reports of terrorist/jihadist activity by IHH, including allegations that IHH was in possession of weapons and explosives, was recruiting soldiers for jihad and sending them into war zones such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya, and that calls had been made from IHH headquarters to an al-Qaeda guest house.** The reports also say that during the 2003 Iraq war, IHH sent donations and aid to areas under insurgent control in Iraq, including to Fallujah in mid-2004, before US and British forces defeated a coalition there made up of al-Qaeda\Iraq and former Baathists at the end of the year. **Finally a French magistrate testified in a US court that IHH played an important role in the 2000 al-Qaeda Millennium bomb plot targeting Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).**

In addition to these reported terrorist ties, this report demonstrates that IHH and the Turkish Muslim Brotherhood network had numerous contacts with Hamas and the Hamas government in Gaza including joint press conferences, delegations to Gaza, and telephone calls with Hamas leaders, including Gaza Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. IHH and its leaders met with senior Hamas activists including Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in Damascus, held joint press conferences with Hamas spokesmen, and attended a Hamas rally in Gaza. The Turkish/MB network also had a relationship with the Union of Good, a coalition of charities headed by Youssef Qaradawi raising money for Hamas and reported by the Israeli government to include IHH as a member organization. This relationship included hosting a congress of the Union in Istanbul that included the IHH chairman as well as the reported transfer by IHH of tens of thousands of dollars to two Hamas charities associated with the Union. Both Israel and the US have designated the Union of Good as a terrorist organization.

Aside from these terrorist connections, this report demonstrates that IHH and the rest of the Turkish/MB network are in fact Islamist, politicized organizations. During the run-up to the Iraq war, IHH convened large anti-US rallies and during the 2004 fighting in Fallujah called for a boycott of US, British, and Israeli goods, claiming: "The United States has been committing a massacre in Fallujah, city of Iraq." IHH also further organized anti-Israeli and anti-US demonstrations in Istanbul in 2004, and by 2006 its website had shifted its focus largely to anti-Israel reporting. Other NGOs in the network engaged in similar political activity. MAZLUMDER, the network's legal component,

also showed early signs of politicization, holding anti-US demonstrations during the Iraq war and joining IHH to protest a 2004 NATO summit. In 2005, MAZLUMDER began its own focus on anti-Israeli rhetoric.

## **4. The Intent of the Flotilla Was Breaking the Blockade and Delegitimizing Israel**

The Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center has provided evidence that the violent altercation with Israeli forces was most likely planned by IHH in advance of the flotilla.<sup>2</sup> If this is true, given that IHH was embedded in the Turkish/MB network that in turn was supported by both the Turkish government and the Global Muslim Brotherhood, it must have been clear to IHH and its leaders that a violent altercation would have repercussions for these partners. While it is beyond what can be proven with information available to the public, it is difficult to believe that IHH would have taken such a risk without the knowledge and assent of key players such as Youssef Qaradawi, the Turkish Prime Minister or his representatives, and/or Kuwaiti funders and flotilla participants.

**Whether or not the violence was planned, this report demonstrates that the intent of the flotilla was breaking the Gaza blockade and delegitimizing Israel.**

The choice of the Free Gaza Movement (FGM) as the flotilla's Western partner is telling, in that FGM had grown out of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), known for its ties to Palestinian terrorist organizations as well as for sponsoring political protests in the West Bank and Gaza and welcoming any violence that occurred in consequence. The ISM was also known for encouraging its volunteers to compare Israel with the Nazis. This report demonstrates that the IHH has been acting in concert with the Turkish/MB network and the Global Muslim Brotherhood in a massive effort to demonize and delegitimize Israel by leveling accusations of serious crimes, such as massacres and genocide, and by invoking Nazi imagery such as concentration camps in connection with Israeli actions and policies. This effort included numerous conferences, press events, demonstrations, and other activities during which such charges were made.

At the 2008 Right of Return conference in Damascus, Hamas leader Mashaal raised the concept of sending a fleet of boats to Gaza in order to break the Israeli blockade, while a Western activist was reported to have brought a plan to open a ship line between Cyprus and Gaza that would "not only break the siege but also embarrass Israel on the side of democracy and human rights." Erdogan himself met a group that included representatives of the European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza (ECESG) in Istanbul on May 12, 2010, and told them, according to their account, that it was Turkey's intention to end the Gaza blockade.



## **| 5. There Are Serious Implications from the Gaza Flotilla for Turkey's Future Relations with the West**

Whether or not the Turkish government was aware of any IHH advance plans for violence, there is no doubt that the effort by the Turkish/MB network was supported by that government, its leaders and representatives, and by other Islamist political parties. That Turkey and its government have become partners of the Global Muslim Brotherhood has implications for both Turkey and its Western allies, including NATO. Until recently, Turkey has been a vital lynchpin of the West as a whole and of NATO in particular. However, the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates are strongly anti-Western. This clearly emerges from Qaradawi's own rhetoric, with his repeated references to the goal of Islamic domination of Europe. The IHH president, Bulent Yildirim, sees the Islamic world in direct conflict with the West, as well as with Russia, China, and India. How Turkey can maintain its traditional role as a Western ally while its political leadership is tying it to some of the most virulent anti-Western forces remains a difficult question.

Moreover, the historical precedents for partnerships of Middle Eastern governments with the Muslim Brotherhood are troubling for another reason. When Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Hassan Turabi was ruling the Sudan in the 1990s, the country became a haven for terrorists of all kinds including Osama bin Laden, who based his operation there until 1996. While Turkey has not yet progressed to this point, its support for a Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood-related propaganda effort is not encouraging, and terrorism is not the only concern. Under the AKP government, Turkey has shown increasing signs of Islamization, a primary goal of the Global Muslim Brotherhood. With Saudi Arabia struggling to control its own export of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism, the possibility exists that Turkey could become another center for exporting such activities. Also, as a growing economic power, Turkey is in a position to become a financial supporter of the Global Muslim Brotherhood as well as providing a sanctuary for its anti-Western political activities.

## **| 6. How Could the Role of the Global Muslim Brotherhood Be So Overlooked?**

The Global Muslim Brotherhood and its Turkish allies were able to play a major role in both the Gaza flotilla and in years of prior anti-Israel activity without this role being reported by the global media or other sources of public information. On the contrary, there does not appear to have been awareness in any quarter that the Global Muslim Brotherhood was active inside Turkey. Moreover, in recent years there has been a troubling trend in the West to present the Muslim Brotherhood as a more moderate Islamist alternative to al-Qaeda, without considering its true ideology and intentions. Since its early days in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood operated overtly as a social and religious organization engaged in charitable enterprises, but at the same time it had a covert side known as the "Secret Apparatus" that trained cadres in the use of weaponry and engaged in political assassination. This duality continues to the present day. This speaks well of the efforts by the Global Muslim Brotherhood to obscure both its nature and its activities, while casting doubt on the ability of the media or others to monitor and report on this activity. Israel, being perhaps the major current target of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, would be well advised to enhance its efforts to track the activities of the Global Muslim Brotherhood in both Turkey and other countries in the region.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

On May 31, 2010, Israeli naval forces were involved in a violent altercation with individuals aboard the *MV Marmara*, one of six ships in a Turkish flotilla attempting to run the Israeli blockade of Gaza. World attention in the wake of the incident was focused either on the group of Western activists known as the Free Gaza Movement (FGM) or on the IHH, the Turkish charity that owned and operated the *Marmara*. Yet neither the FGM nor the IHH, despite their respective ties to terrorist organizations, had the organizational, financial, media, or other capabilities sufficient to carry off an operation of such magnitude. This report demonstrates that those capabilities were provided by the Global Muslim Brotherhood and its network of Turkish allies.

The Global Muslim Brotherhood is a worldwide network of individuals and organizations that developed as Muslim Brotherhood members dispersed to other countries while fleeing the periodic crackdowns on the organization in Egypt. Many of these Muslim Brothers (*Ikhwan*) also settled in Europe and the United States where they went on to found what have become some of the most prominent Islamic organizations in their new home countries. These organizations and their leaders have sought legitimacy while attempting to control the development of Islamic discourse and political activity in their respective countries, and they are associated with fundamentalism, anti-Semitism, and support for terrorism, particularly Palestinian terrorism. This network has become far more important to the Islamist movement worldwide than the Egyptian organization, which is largely confined to activities inside Egypt where its members are under constant government surveillance and control.

The single most important leader of the Global Muslim Brotherhood is Youssef Qaradawi, a Qatari cleric whose *fatwas* in support of suicide bombing were instrumental in the development of that terrorist tactic. He is known for fiercely anti-Western statements, including his comments about Islam returning to Europe as a “conqueror and victor,” albeit by means of ideology and preaching. Qaradawi is most vitriolic in his hatred for Israel and has called for the death of all Jews and the destruction of Israel. He is also known for many extremist statements on social issues, such as contemplating the



killing of homosexuals and ruling that beating is “suitable” for some wives, and his views are pervasive throughout the Global Muslim Brotherhood. Qaradawi is head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), the theological body of the European Muslim Brotherhood and is also the leader of the Union of Good, a global coalition of charities raising funds for Hamas. The Turkish political establishment has had ties with the Global Muslim Brotherhood since at least the 1970s when Prime Minister Erdogan was reported to have been associated with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), a fundamentalist Saudi religious organization that has been accused of promoting extremism and supporting terrorism all over the world. Erdogan has since maintained his ties to the Global Brotherhood as evidenced by his close relationships to Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders such as former Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Akef, Malaysian opposition politician Anwar Ibrahim, and Yassin Abdullah Qadi, a Saudi businessman blacklisted by the United Nations for funding terrorism and who had links with the US Muslim Brotherhood.

A Muslim Brotherhood spokesman has also said that the Brotherhood has maintained ties with the “Islamic movement” in Turkey since the days of Necmettin Erbakan’s early political parties, and the European Muslim Brotherhood has fused with Erbakan’s movement in Europe known as Milli Görüş. German Muslim Brotherhood leader Ibrahim El-Zayat is married to a member of the Erbakan family, and El-Zayat’s business partner is the Secretary-General of Milli Görüş in Germany. El-Zayat, formerly the head of WAMY in Western Europe, also runs Millis Gorus’ extensive portfolio of mosque properties throughout Europe as well as serving as a leader in the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), the umbrella group representing the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe.

Recently disclosed US State Department cables discuss what one of the cables called Turkey’s “new, highly activist foreign policy” which this and other cables ascribe to the influence of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, who is said to be laboring under “neo-Ottoman fantasies” of regaining lost Muslim lands and avenging Muslim defeats. The cables also ascribed the new Turkish foreign policy to both domestic political considerations and to Erdogan’s personal hatred of Israel. Whatever the motivation, consistent with the ties between key Turkish politicians and the Global Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey under the AKP has pursued a foreign policy in line with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, including moving closer to Iran and participating in the demonization of and attacks on Israel. Turkey under the AKP is also showing increasing signs of Islamization.

Individuals tied to the Global Muslim Brotherhood have participated in FGM flotillas since the founding of FGM, and important Brotherhood leaders were onboard the Gaza flotilla, including the personal secretary of Youssef Qaradawi and the head of the Islamic Movement (Muslim Brotherhood) in Israel. Less well known are the European and Turkish groups that provided substantial support to the flotilla. This report focuses on what is called the Turkish/Muslim Brotherhood Network, comprised of seven Turkish NGOs with extensive links among themselves, to the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and to the Turkish government. Two of the most important leaders of this network are Turkish citizens of Arab origin who are also leaders within European Global Muslim Brotherhood organizations.

# TURKISH / MB NETWORK

## 1. MÜSIAD (Business)

The Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği (MÜSIAD) was founded in 1990 by religiously-devout entrepreneurs with ties to Prime Minister Özal or to the Islamist Necmettin Erbakan and as an alternative to TUSIAD, the organization representing the secular middle class. MÜSIAD fused a pro-business philosophy with an Islamic critique of capitalism, seeking to replace it with a system based on Islam. MÜSIAD is supported by Prime Minister Erdoğan, is pro-Palestinian/anti-Israel, and has a strong relationship with the Middle East through its Foreign Relations division, at one time headed by Gazi Misirli, a Turk of Syrian origin who joined MÜSIAD in 1998. Misirli came to Turkey in either 1983 or 1987 and studied engineering at Istanbul University. He is a trustee of the Europe Trust, an arm of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), which has amassed a real-estate portfolio and uses part of the income to fund FIOE projects. All of the trustees, including Ibrahim El-Zayat, are leaders in the European Muslim Brotherhood. Misirli appears to have close ties to Prime Minister Erdoğan.

## 2. IHH (Charity)

The İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı (known as IHH) was founded in 1995 by individuals operating amidst the Balkans conflict. The organization had shown ties to the Global Muslim Brotherhood as early as 1998 when police discovered links to a Muslim Brotherhood student organization as well as to the now defunct Islamist Refah party, and IHH also had received funds from a foundation headed by a US Muslim Brotherhood leader. IHH expanded its work to global disaster zones, and by 2002 was showing increasing politicization, such as fomenting anti-Western sentiment in the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War and orchestrating protests over Gaza in 2004. IHH is funded by "religious business men," a likely reference to MÜSIAD, and is reported to be a member of the Union of Good. Many of the IHH Trustees have ties to the AKP, and its leader Bulent Yıldırım is an attorney who also studied at Istanbul University.

## 3. MAZLUMDER (Legal)

MAZLUMDER was founded in 1991 as an alternative to the existing human rights organizations, one that would be sensitive to the issue of the Islamic headscarf. The organization has branches all over Turkey and says it is associated with Islamist organizations tied to Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, and the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan. MAZLUMDER also showed early signs of politicization, holding anti-US demonstrations during the Iraq war and joining IHH to protest a 2004 NATO summit. In 2005, MAZLUMDER began focusing on anti-Israeli rhetoric and since 2006 has been headed by Ahmet Unsal, a former Lockheed engineer and Amnesty International board member. Unsal served as an AKP Member of Parliament from 2002 to 2007 and was the representative of Turkey to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Currently, he is a member of the IHH board along with another MAZLUMDER board member who is also part of the AKP. Gazi Misirli is also a member of MAZLUMDER.

#### **| 4. HIKMET (European Muslim Brotherhood)**

The Hikmet Bilim Dostluk ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (HIKMET) was founded in 2003 and is the Turkish member organization of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE). The organization is headed by Jemal Kerim, a Palestinian who has been living in Turkey for 29 years and holds a Turkish passport. Kerim studied electronics at Boğaziçi University and is currently the head of a Turkish tourism company that also ships goods to the Middle East. Along with Gazi Misirli, Kerim has been a leader in the MÜSIAD Foreign Relations division.

#### **| 5. TGTV (Domestic Islamist Umbrella)**

The Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekkülleri Vakfı (TGTV) is an umbrella group founded in 1994 to foster ties amongst Islamist NGOs in Turkey. TGTV incorporates and cooperates with other members of the Turkish/MB network including IHH, MÜSIAD, and FIDDER, and since 2006 has placed a growing emphasis on anti-Israel activities.

#### **| 6. UNIW (Global Islamist Umbrella)**

The Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW) was founded in 2005 by TGTV to coordinate Islamist NGOs on a global level and includes many important organizations tied to the Global Muslim Brotherhood including the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), and the Muslim Brotherhoods of Bahrain, Algeria, and Israel. UNIW also includes IHH, MÜSIAD, HIKMET, and FIDDER, discussed below.

#### **| 7. FIDDER (Palestinian Support)**

The Filistin Dayanışma Derneği (FIDDER) describes itself as “a group of Turkish citizens of Palestinian origin who believe in the just Palestine cause and in the Palestinians’ right to live in freedom and dignity and in their right to return to their homeland.” Tahsin Misirli, possibly a relative of Gazi Misirli, is the President of FIDDER. Misirli is the general manager of a company known as TURKPAL and is also a member of the TGTV board of directors.



# DEMONIZING ISRAEL

## Conferences

With the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in 2006 and the consolidation of the AKP regime's control of Turkey under Prime Minister Erdogan, Istanbul became a center for Global Muslim Brotherhood political activity that included undertaking a worldwide effort to undermine the international standing of Israel. From 2006 until the dispatch of the Gaza flotilla, Istanbul hosted at least ten international conferences of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Sheikh Youssef Qaradawi began to visit Turkey frequently. Some of the conferences were centered solely on Palestine and Gaza, with titles such as "World Popular Conference for the Support of Palestine," while others addressed the topic amongst other agendas, including two sessions of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), headed by Youssef Qaradawi. Many of the conferences were organized by Turkish/MB network organizations such as UNIW or TGTV, and all of the conferences were attended by numerous Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders as well as various representatives of the Turkish government and/or AKP; on one occasion, Western flotilla activists were known to be present. There was discussion at several of the conferences of a new role for Turkey in the Islamic world, with some suggesting that Turkey would become the future nexus of the Islamic world, and fervent support was frequently expressed for Turkey and its prime minister. At conferences where Western reporters were present, participants were heard to call for violence in defense of the Al-Aqsa mosque and to laugh about the death of children during the Lebanon war. Israel was frequently vilified and demonized at the conferences by speakers, statements, and proclamations and described using terms such as racist and terrorist. Israel was accused of committing massacres and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians and was said to be worse than the Nazis, having committed "hundreds of holocausts." At one conference, delegates discussed the creation of a third *jihadi* front in Gaza in addition to Afghanistan and Iraq. At several conferences, there was discussion or a statement issued about the need to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. At the 2008 Right of Return conference in Damascus, Hamas leader Mashaal raised the concept of sending a fleet of boats to Gaza in order to break the Israeli blockade, while Western activist Lauren Booth was reported to have brought a plan to open a ship line between Cyprus and Gaza that would "not only break the siege but also embarrass Israel on the side of democracy and human rights."

## Demonstrations

The effort to undermine and delegitimize Israel also included numerous public anti-Israel demonstrations.

While individual Turkish/MB network organizations are known to have organized their own anti-Israel demonstrations, the network demonstrated its joint capacity by organizing massive demonstrations in Turkey as part of its three-month anti-Israel campaign following the December 2009 Israeli military action in Gaza. The demonstrations coincided with large anti-Israel demonstrations in European countries for which a Muslim Brotherhood spokesperson took credit. For example, on January 4, FIDDER officer Hassan Bereket played a role at a demonstration in Diyarbakir organized

by MAZLUMDER and other organizations. More than 100,000 people were reported to have participated, burning US and Israeli flags, and shouting support for Hamas and carrying Hamas flags as well as portraits of deceased Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin. IHH leader Bulent Yildirim reportedly addressed the crowd stating, "I bring you the glad tidings of the victory won by Hamas," and calling on all Muslims to provide material and moral support. FIDDER officer Hassan Bereket also spoke, saying, "I am sure that all those killed in Gaza are watching us from heaven right now."

## **| Press Conferences**

The Turkish/MB network also held a number of joint press conferences where Israel was further demonized. For example, in August 2006, a press conference on the Lebanese crisis was held by the UNIW, featuring speeches by leaders of MÜSIAD, IHH, MAZLUMDER, HIKMET, and the UNIW. The group issued a statement accusing Israel of massacring innocent civilians and using the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers as an excuse to take control of the region.

## **| Legal Actions**

The Turkish/MB network campaign against Israel also had a legal component conducted mainly by MAZLUMDER. In January 2009, only one week after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, MAZLUMDER issued its "Gaza Pre-Working Report" which concluded that Israel was committing a crime against humanity and committing genocide in Gaza. In January 2010, MAZLUMDER petitioned a Turkish prosecutor to start legal proceedings against Defense Minister Ehud Barak for alleged crimes committed against Palestinians during the Gaza war.

In March 2009, UNIW also announced that it would press for legal charges against some 70 Israeli politicians and commanders over their involvement in the Gaza operation, including the Israeli chief of staff and the foreign minister. UNIW officials said they had contacted representatives of NGOs in several European countries to assure them that any charges brought against Israeli leaders would have the backing of the UNIW. The UNIW also said that the organization would provide legal assistance to NGOs in Europe to make sure their appeals to European courts were successful.

## **| Aid Campaigns**

On numerous occasions, the Turkish/MB network sent material aid to Lebanon and Gaza during their conflicts with Israel. Most notably, this aid included three efforts explicitly designated as "convoys," beginning with a truck convoy to Lebanon in 2006 sponsored by a coalition including TGTU, MAZLUMDER, and HIKMET. The most significant of these convoys was a Gaza land convoy originating in the UK and sponsored by Viva Palestina, an organization supported by the UK Muslim Brotherhood. IHH coordinated the Turkish leg of the convoy which was honored by crowds, demonstrations, and a visit to the Turkish Parliament to meet the speaker of the house. After the arrival of the convoy in Gaza, Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh welcomed a group of convoy representatives that included IHH President Yildirim and MAZLUMDER President/IHH



Trustee Ahmet Unsal. Other aid campaigns included a March 2008 delegation to Cairo to visit wounded Palestinians, plane loads of humanitarian aid to Gaza during the 2009 Gaza war sent by IHH and at least partly financed by MÜSIAD, and a 2009 agreement involving MÜSIAD to purchase 2000 prefabricated houses to be used for the “reconstruction of Palestine.”

## SUPPORT OF THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT

Given the scope of these activities, which included venomous calls for the destruction of Israel, it would appear impossible for them to have continued over time without the backing of the Turkish political leadership, and representatives of the Turkish government and its political parties were present at many of the events identified above. As early as 2006, an IUMS meeting in Istanbul was attended by Turkish officials led by AKP Deputy Premier and Minister of State Mehmet Ali Şahin, along with the governor of Istanbul who inaugurated the meeting. AKP deputies also attended a February 2008 special TGTV board meeting focusing on Israel that also included Raed Salah, were part of a March 2008 Turkish/MB network delegation to Cairo to visit wounded Palestinians, and participated in the “First International Conference to Build Gaza,” sponsored by MÜSIAD. AKP Deputy Zeyid Aslan, also an IHH trustee and president of the Palestinian Friendship Committee, was particularly active, attending both May 2009 conferences centered on Gaza and participating in the December 2009 Viva Palestina convoy delegation. Prime Minister Erdoğan himself met with a delegation of Global Muslim Brotherhood and flotilla movement leaders from Britain and France shortly before the flotilla and, as discussed later, sent a message of support to an IUMS meeting held shortly after the flotilla incident. Leaders of the Grand Union and Saadet parties also participated in Turkish/MB network events. A laptop said to have been found on board the flotilla was reported to contain minutes of a meeting held by the organizers shortly before the flotilla launch, in which they asserted that the flotilla had received the direct support of the Turkish government, including of Prime Minister Erdoğan.

## RELATIONSHIP TO HAMAS

The Turkish/MB network had numerous points of contact with Hamas and the Hamas government in Gaza, beginning with a February 2007 press conference sponsored by UNIW featuring Palestinian officials who made a statement accusing Israel of genocide and thanking the Turkish public for a petition aimed at freeing jailed Palestinian officials. On the same day of the AKP electoral victory in June 2007, TGTV and UNIW officials had a telephone call with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in which Haniyeh reportedly thanked TGTV and Turkish civil society in general for their “close interest in Palestine.” Contact also included a delegation to Gaza to coordinate medical aid sponsored by the German Millî Görüş organization and which included leaders of Millî Görüş, the Turkish/MB network, and European Hamas.

IHH, in particular, had many interactions with Hamas, beginning in January 2008 when an IHH delegation met with a senior Hamas activist, followed by an IHH-sponsored

“Night of Solidarity with Palestine” on March 12 that included a message from Hamas Prime Minister Haniyeh. During the 2009 Gaza war, IHH leader Bulent Yildirim met with Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in Damascus; a senior Hamas spokesman and the deputy president of IHH held a joint press conference at an Istanbul hotel; and Bulent Yildirim attended a Hamas rally in Gaza. As noted above, following the arrival of the Viva Palestina convoy in Gaza, Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh welcomed a group of convoy representatives that included IHH President Yildirim.

The Turkish/MB network also had a relationship with the Union of Good, a coalition of charities headed by Youssef Qaradawi raising money for Hamas and reportedly including IHH as a member. As early as July 2006, the Islamic Society together with IHH distributed 2,500 food parcels. The Islamic Society is an important Hamas institution in the Gaza Strip, headed by a member of the UNIW, and is known to be at least partially financed by the Union of Good. In August 2007, FIDDER hosted the Third Congress of the Union of Good at the Park Hotel in Istanbul. Remarks in support of Palestine were reported by FIDDER chairman Tahsin Misirli as well as by IHH leader Bulent Yildirim who was in attendance. In 2009, IHH opened an office in the West Bank that transferred tens of thousands of dollars to two Hamas charities associated with the Union of Good.

## PRE-FLOTILLA SUPPORT

The Turkish/MB network also played a key role in the events leading up to the launch of the Gaza flotilla. On April 2, IHH President Bulent Yildirim held a meeting/press conference on the launch of its flotilla.

The meeting also included MAZLUMDER and TGTV officials, the Istanbul provincial heads of the Saadet and BPP parties, Western flotilla activists, and representatives of the European Muslim Brotherhood flotilla front group. Around the same time, IHH President Bulent Yildirim held another press conference on or around the *Mavi Marmara* together with UK Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood operative Mohammad Sawalha. At the *Marmara* press conference, Yildirim denied that the AKP was behind the flotilla and accused Israel of killing women and children, saying, “We are sailing to Gaza as human shields.”

Early in May, MAZLUMDER Chairman Ahmet Faruk Ünsal made a statement denying the legitimacy of Israel as a state and asserting that Israel does not adhere to legal or moral criteria in the use of power.

Ten days later, a group of UK and French Muslim Brotherhood leaders visited Istanbul and met with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The delegation included leaders of the Palestinian Return Centre and a closely related European flotilla front group known as the European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG). The delegates reportedly urged Turkey to play a more active role in Palestinian issues and, notably, discussed the blockade of Gaza. Prime Minister Erdogan promised that Turkey would do all that it could to see the inhumane siege on Gaza lifted and would help the Palestinian people in any other way that it could. In addition, the European delegation held a lengthy discussion with the leader of the Saadet Party and the head of MAZLUMDER.



On May 22, the *Marmara* and two other ships left Istanbul to rendezvous with the six other ships comprising the Gaza flotilla. Prior to the departure, speeches were given by the representatives of NGOs from various countries, by members of the Free Gaza movement, and by leaders from IHH, MAZLUMDER, and UNIW. IHH President Bulent Yildirim made use of Nazi analogies in his sendoff speech, comparing Gaza to the prison camps set up by Hitler in Europe. MAZLUMDER issued its own statement to the press at the sendoff, once again accusing Israel of genocide and also asserting that Gaza was a prison camp resembling Hitler's. It was also announced at this time that MAZLUMDER General Chairman Ahmet Faruk Ünsal and other MAZLUMDER officials would be joining the campaign. Raed Salah followed directly after Yildirim and praised Prime Minister Erdogan, saying that all Arab leaders should take Erdogan as their role model.

## POST-FLOTILLA SUPPORT

The Turkish/MB network continued to play a key role following the flotilla incident.

### Statements

Before any investigation could have been made, the Turkish/MB network immediately began issuing statements condemning Israeli actions. The statements followed in the wake of a statement issued by the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) on May 31, 2010, the same day on which the Gaza flotilla was involved with Israel. The IUMS statement said that all Muslims were obligated to assist their Palestinian brothers in "all forms of *jihad*" including money, self, speech, and writing and must mobilize the world to stand against Israel. The statement reaffirmed the "noble stance" of Palestinian resistance and called on all Muslims to continue the resistance until "victory and liberation." The IUMS statement also referred to the "long-suffering, garrisoned Gaza Strip, which faces a harmful, shameful campaign to hunger it, this aside from the daily killings, murders and destructions of its leaders, youth, men, women, children, fields, factories, institutions and houses it has been facing daily for years" and said it was obligatory for every Muslim to work for the lifting of the blockade. The IUMS expressed its appreciation for the "human convoys" which tried to break the blockade.

MÜSIAD, the first of the Turkish/MB network organizations to react, also issued a statement that same day accusing Israel of a "bloody assault" and calling on the UN and international community to "review their approach to Israel."

On June 1, UNIW issued its statement accusing Israel of "banditry in international waters."

On June 1, MAZLUMDER acknowledged that its leaders and members, including its president, Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, were on board the flotilla, and issued its statement accusing Israel of "willful murder."

The following day, MAZLUMDER announced that it had filed a Turkish criminal complaint in the name of the victims' families against various Israeli leaders and called on Turkish citizens to join the complaints. Before filing the official complaint, an IHH official made a statement accusing Israel of murder and torture. Thirty families gave MAZLUMDER power of attorney to file the petition, and more than 50 other families signed it. On June 6, Turkish media reported that Ünsal participated in a protest demonstration against Israel in Ankara.

On June 2, two AKP deputies, including IHH Trustee Zeyid Aslan, had gone to Israel along with an adviser to the prime minister and a foreign ministry deputy undersecretary to help with the release of the passengers.

On June 4, IHH issued a statement that accused Israel of committing a massacre and of being “an empire of lies.”

On June 8, IHH officials accompanied by FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli traveled to the southeastern city of Siirt to visit the families of those who were killed or wounded during the flotilla incident.

## **Role of Kuwait**

Kuwait and its government, charities, and parliamentarians appear to have played a significant role in the flotilla. Kuwait had its own cargo ship, and eighteen Kuwaiti nationals from the flotilla were detained by the Israelis, including two of particular importance, discussed below. Kuwaiti media described the country as “a main donor for Palestine” that had participated in the flotilla through contributions by several unidentified charities, but there is evidence that National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi played a role in the funding. The most important Kuwaiti flotilla participant was UNIW Deputy Secretary-General Mubarak Al-Mutawa, an attorney known in Kuwait as a prominent Islamist and supporter of conservative Islamic causes. Al-Mutawa has a long history of ties to the Global Muslim Brotherhood and has both defended terrorist suspects and requested asylum in Pakistan for Arab and foreign fighters currently in Afghanistan. He was the UNIW official who announced that UNIW would be seeking legal action against Israel leaders over Gaza and was in attendance and/or helped organize at least two of the conferences discussed above. Al-Mutawa was the UNIW representative aboard the *Marmara* and before departure had expressed his desire to become a martyr, stating that he himself had purchased a one-way ticket and written a will. Upon his return to Kuwait, Al-Mutawa was widely quoted in the press as claiming that it was the Israelis who had started shooting at the flotilla without warning. Sometime later, Al-Mutawa filed a criminal complaint with the International Criminal Court and the European Court for Human Rights against various Israeli leaders.

The second important Kuwait flotilla participant was Walid al-Tabtabai, a Kuwaiti MP and a former professor of Islamic law at Kuwait University. Al-Tabtabai has been head of the parliamentary Human Rights Committee since 1992 and is described in media reports as a leading Salafist who has taken very conservative positions on social issues. Al-Tabtabai also has ties to the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands and to a Dutch mosque that is also related to the Global Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Tabtabai was also aboard the flotilla and like Al-Mutawa, Al-Tabtabai reportedly said he had written a will prior to departure and was widely quoted as saying that the Israelis had fired first.

Both Al-Mutawa and Al-Tabtabai were featured in two meetings that were held in Kuwait in mid-June. The second meeting was a seminar sponsored by the Kuwait-Turkish Friendship Society. At that meeting, Al-Mutawa and Al-Tabtabai were joined by Gazi Misirli, who identified himself and MÜSIAD as the coordinator for donations to the flotilla as well as having purchased its own ship. Misirli also spoke extensively

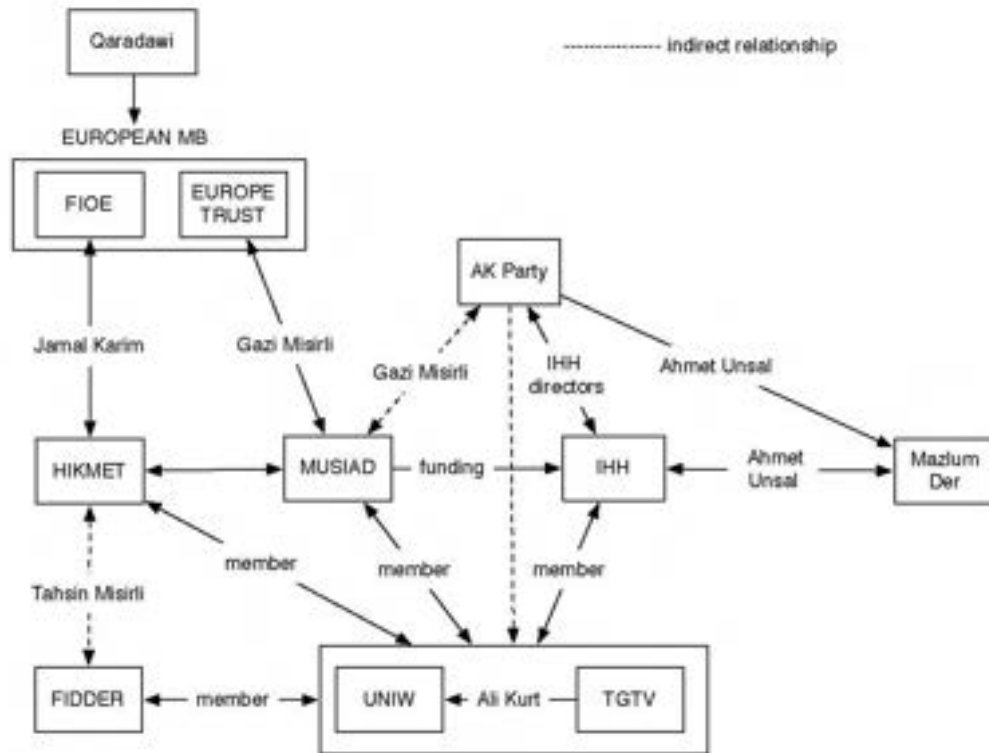
about the support provided by Turkey, particularly by the AKP government and Prime Minister Erdogan, and Al-Tabtabai emphasized the benefits and achievements of the flotilla in the Arab and Muslim world, and its role in breaking the siege.

## I IUMS Meeting

The importance of Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi was highlighted on June 23, when the UNIW hosted another meeting of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). The main agenda of the meeting was the Palestinian issue and the situation in Gaza. Prime Minister Erdogan, as well as the Turkish vice-president and a number of ministers and AKP officials, sent messages to the meeting. IHH President Bulent Yildirim was in attendance as were the leaders of MÜSIAD and TGTV and a representative of the Turkish government. Qaradawi and the IUMS issued effusive praise for both the Gaza flotilla and for Prime Minister Erdogan and praised Turkey for being the “first to raise the flag of *jihad*,” calling for increased trade and travel to Turkey as a reward. The IUMS issued a declaration following the meeting’s conclusion that called Turkey “a blessing from Allah,” labeled the flotilla the “blessed flotilla,” and called for further economic support for Turkey. Qaradawi also indicated at the meeting that Islamic scholars would support the Palestinian cause by being on the next boat to be sent to Gaza from Turkey, as well as supporting crossing into Gaza by land.



### CHART 1: TURKISH/MB NETWORK



**FIOE – Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE)**

**HIKMET** – Hikmet Bilim Dostluk ve Yardımlaşma Derneği

**MUSIAD** – Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği

**IHH – İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı**

**FIDDER – Filistin Dayanışma Derneği**

**UNIW** – Union of NGOs of the Islamic World

**TGTV – Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekkülleri Vakfı**

# THE REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

### | The Flotilla

On May 31, 2010, Israeli naval forces were involved in a violent altercation with individuals aboard the *MV Marmara*, one of six ships in a Turkish flotilla attempting to run the Israeli blockade of Gaza.<sup>3</sup> Nine passengers on the *Marmara* were killed, with dozens more wounded; and seven Israeli commandos were also wounded. The other five ships comprising the “Gaza Flotilla” were boarded without serious incident. The six ships carried 712 people from 34 countries, and the largest ship, the Comoros-flagged *MV Mavi Marmara* (Blue Marmara), was a 4,100-ton, 305-ft. former ferry with a capacity of 1,080 passengers, reportedly purchased for \$1.2 million by the Turkish charity known as IHH (İnsani Yardım Vakfı).<sup>4</sup> It was the *Marmara*, purchased with the help of government administrators and the AKP-controlled Istanbul municipality, which carried most of the passengers in the flotilla as well as the individuals involved in the violent confrontation with Israeli forces.<sup>5</sup> While the flotilla movement has been largely successful at portraying itself as a humanitarian effort, some have zeroed in on the IHH, the Turkish charity that purchased and operated the now infamous *Mavi Marmara*. For example, the *Washington Post* cited Israeli officials and intelligence sources who complained that the Free Gaza Movement (FGM), said to be the organizing group behind the flotilla, had evolved into “a broad international movement that now includes Islamist organizations,” citing only the IHH as evidence:

Once viewed only as a political nuisance by Israel’s government, the group behind the Gaza aid flotilla has grown since its inception four years ago into a broad international movement that now includes Islamist organizations that Israeli intelligence agencies say pose a security threat to the Jewish state. The Free Gaza Movement’s evolution is among Israel’s chief reasons for conducting Monday morning’s raid on a ship carrying medicine, construction materials, school paper, and parts for Gaza’s defunct water treatment plant. The movement once drew its support almost entirely from activists and donors in Australia, Britain, and the United States. But the ship that Israeli forces stormed Monday morning was operated by a Turkish charity that Israeli intelligence agencies and others contend has connections to radical Islamist groups.<sup>6</sup>

Yet given the cost and the complexity of the Turkish flotilla, it seems doubtful that the Free Gaza Movement could have pulled it off on its own. The search for who

exactly stood behind the flotilla has led many analysts to point to the IHH, which has a long history of ties to terrorist organizations. Another approach has been to look at the connections between the IHH and the Turkish government, particularly to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.<sup>7</sup> However, there is another avenue of investigation that has not been fully explored but is the main focus of the analysis that follows: the role of the Global Muslim Brotherhood. One initial indicator supporting the role of the Global Muslim Brotherhood is the prevalence of individuals from organizations affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood among the passengers of the *Marmara*, particularly from Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt.<sup>8</sup> A part of the British delegation on the *Marmara* also included Muslim Brotherhood activists.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, it should always be kept in mind that Hamas, which came to power in the Gaza Strip initially as a result of the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, is actually the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The takeover of the Gaza Strip by the regime was the first time the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in the core of the Middle East.<sup>10</sup>

Focusing on the role of the Global Muslim Brotherhood does not reduce the importance of either the IHH or the Turkish prime minister when examining who stood behind the flotilla initiative. Indeed, this analysis will show that the IHH was important, but it was only part of a larger group of organizations led by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Turkish government is also part of this network, and analysts of Turkish affairs have suggested that Erdogan's AKP is linked to the larger Muslim Brotherhood movement.<sup>11</sup> There are also strong ties between IHH and the Turkish government. For example, passengers from the *Mavi Marmara*, including IHH operatives, made statements describing the close relations between the IHH and Erdogan and reportedly claimed that the Turkish government was involved in preparations for the dispatch of the flotilla.<sup>12</sup> A Turkish journalist who was aboard the *Mavi Marmara* said Erdogan's power base was even built on IHH activists, without whose help he could not have been elected.<sup>13</sup> These connections need further exploration, but here the key point of departure for understanding the Turkish flotilla will be a careful look at the role of the Global Muslim Brotherhood.

Although it might seem that the presence of "Islamist organizations" in the flotilla is a new development, in fact, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas have had a presence in the movement even before the inception of the FGM, which emerged in 2006 out of the pro-Palestinian group known as the International Solidarity Movement (ISM).<sup>14</sup> ISM, in turn, had been founded in 2001 after the Second Intifada, a violent protest involving a wave of suicide bombing attacks in the heart of Israeli cities that left over 1,000 Israelis dead. ISM, together with its Palestinian partners, sponsored protests in the West Bank and Gaza and was known for both welcoming any violence that occurred during its protests and for encouraging its volunteers to compare Israel with the Nazis.<sup>15</sup> Huwaida Arraf, one of the ISM founders, would go on to become the head of the FGM. In March 2003, a senior member of Islamic Jihad was found hiding in an ISM compound and by 2004, ISM's own publicity material had shown its willingness to work with the National and Islamic Forces, a coalition of Palestinian factions that included Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In more recent times, Huwaida Arraf would go to serve on the advisory board of KinderUSA, a charity that an FBI analyst believed to be involved with raising funds for Hamas.<sup>16</sup>

The past willingness of FGM leaders to work with terrorist organizations and their use of tactics foreshadowing the Gaza flotilla are interesting and important but not sufficient to explain the lavish financing, organizational capacity, and media relationships that characterized the June flotilla, all beyond the capacities and resources of the FGM alone. Most media and other reports identified the Free Gaza Movement as the organizer of the flotilla, but it must be asked how could that organization, which was founded in



2006 by a small group of Western, left-wing, pro-Palestinian activists, has expanded into a multi-national, multi-organizational campaign with the critical presence of a large and expensive ship financed by a Turkish charity and the participation of dozens of media correspondents as well as members of national parliaments from eight different countries?<sup>17</sup> This report will demonstrate that the Global Muslim Brotherhood, including its network of Turkish allies, provided these missing capabilities. However, in order to understand their role, it is first necessary to explain the nature of the Global Muslim Brotherhood.

## **| The Global Muslim Brotherhood**

While most are familiar with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, not all are aware how the group has expanded throughout the world, becoming a global phenomenon. Founded in 1928 by Egyptian schoolteacher Hassan El-Banna, the Egyptian Brotherhood has served as the wellspring of Islamism and political Islam. Its importance as a 'springboard' toward radicalization for individuals such as the al-Qaeda deputy leader, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, and the 9/11 mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, has been widely discussed.

Far less known is the existence of a global network of individuals and organizations that developed as Muslim Brotherhood members dispersed to other countries while fleeing the periodic crackdowns on the organization in Egypt. Sheikh Abdullah Azzam fled Jordan and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, where he taught at King Abdul Aziz University. Joining him in Saudi Arabia was Muhammad Qutb, the brother of the executed Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb. Both Muslim Brotherhood refugees became instructors of a young Saudi named Osama bin Laden. Accordingly, Kuwaiti Minister of Education Dr. Ahmad al-Rab'i argued in 2005 that the founders of most modern terrorist groups "went out under the mantle of the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>18</sup>

Many of these Muslim Brothers (*Ikhwan*) also settled in Europe and the United States where they went on to found what have become some of the most prominent Islamic organizations in their new home countries.<sup>19</sup> These organizations in many cases maintained their maximalist goals; thus the Muslim Brotherhood's publication in London, *Risalat al-Ikhwan*, featured at the top of its cover page in 2001 the slogan: "Our mission: world domination" (*siyadat al-dunya*).<sup>20</sup> Mohammad Akram Adlouni, a former US Muslim Brotherhood leader who would go on to play an important role in the flotilla movement, was the author of a 1991 document that stated:

The Ikhwan must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and "sabotaging" its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all other religions. Without this level of understanding, we are not up to this challenge and have not prepared ourselves for Jihad yet. It is a Muslim's destiny to perform Jihad and work wherever he is and wherever he lands until the final hour comes.<sup>21</sup>

Once established, these organizations began seeking legitimacy and have worked to influence and control the development of Islamic discourse and political activity in their respective countries. Less publicly, they are almost always associated with fundamentalism, anti-Semitism, and support for Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and more recently, the Shiite Hizbullah. While claiming to disavow al-Qaeda linked terrorism, the Ikhwan are at best lukewarm in their condemnation of Islamist violence



#### *Graduates of the Muslim Brotherhood*

*The Muslim Brotherhood was the wellspring of some of the most dangerous Islamist terror groups. From left to right, Abdullah Azzam of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Muhammad Quthb, both of whom fled to Saudi Arabia in the 1970s and taught Osama bin Laden. Ayman al-Zawahiri, deputy head of al-Qaeda, came out of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, the mastermind of 9/11, grew up in the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood.*

and commonly issue statements justifying such violence. When compared to the Egyptian organization, there has been relatively little scrutiny of the network that is referred to here as the Global Muslim Brotherhood. This network has become far more important to the Islamist movement worldwide than the Egyptian organization, which is largely confined to activities inside Egypt, where its members are under constant government surveillance and control.

While at times denying its existence, Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leaders have acknowledged the reality of a global Brotherhood network. For example, in June 2008 the first deputy chairman of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was asked about the "International Muslim Brotherhood" and replied:

There are entities that exist in many countries all over the world. These entities have the same ideology, principle and objectives but they work in different circumstances and different contexts. So, it is reasonable to have decentralization in action so that every entity works according to its circumstances and according to the problems it is facing and in their framework....These entities can have dialogue when there is a common cause that faces Arabs or Muslims over their central issues like the Palestinian cause. At that time, all of them must cooperate for it. I want to confirm that while some see that Palestine caused rifts among the Arabs, we see that this cause is the one for which all Arabs unite.<sup>22</sup>

Mohammed Mahdi Akef, the former Egyptian Brotherhood Supreme Guide, said in an interview, "we exist in 70 countries."<sup>23</sup>

In spite of these acknowledgements, there do not appear to any organizations outside of Egypt that refer to themselves publicly as the Muslim Brotherhood, making it necessary to develop other means for identifying Global Muslim Brotherhood organizations and their leaders. The Internet newsletter cited above suggests a useful set of criteria, including examining the origins and founding of the organization and its leaders, contact, and links to other organizations, ideology, and conferences sponsored and / or attended.



Identifying the Muslim Brotherhood is made easier in some European countries such as Germany, where the domestic intelligence agency annually designates the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland as representing the Muslim Brotherhood there.<sup>24</sup> In France, the Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF) is often referred to by the media as "close to the Muslim Brotherhood." In addition, most of the Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Europe have banded together to form an umbrella organization known as the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) whose leaders have acknowledged their relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>25</sup> Other studies have documented the history and structure of the Muslim Brotherhood in the United States.<sup>26</sup>

While much remains to be learned about the leadership/coordination of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, the single most important individual is its de facto spiritual leader, Youssef Qaradawi. Illustrative of his importance and stature, in 2004 Qaradawi turned down the offer to lead the Egyptian Brotherhood after the death of the supreme guide. At the time, an Egyptian Brotherhood leader explained:

Sheikh al-Qaradawi is an influential scholar and one of the Muslim Brotherhood's spiritual leaders in the world. Any Muslim Brother would be honoured to have him as supreme guide, but he turned down the offer for the post, citing health and other reasons, as he did in the past.

Qaradawi himself explained that he had consciously decided not to limit his scope of maneuver by tying himself "to any movement which might constrain my actions."<sup>27</sup>

Based in Qatar, Sheikh Qaradawi has reportedly amassed substantial wealth through his role as Shari'ah adviser to many important Islamic banks and funds. He is also considered to be the "spiritual guide" for Hamas, and his fatwas in support of suicide bombings against Israeli citizens were instrumental in the development of the phenomenon.<sup>28</sup> Qaradawi has asserted that Islam will "return to Europe as a conqueror and victor, after being expelled from it twice." He qualified this by adding: "Perhaps the next conquest, Allah willing, will be by preaching and ideology."<sup>29</sup> Qaradawi's anti-Western views were largely consistent with those of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, with whom he worked. It was al-Banna himself who spoke about raising again the Islamic flag in those lands that once harbored Islam in the past, saying, "Thus Andalusia, Sicily, the Balkans, the Italian coast, as well as the islands of the Mediterranean, are all Muslim Mediterranean colonies, and they must return to the embrace of Islam." He added, "It is our right to bring back the glory of the Islamic Empire."<sup>30</sup>

Qaradawi reserves particular vitriol for Israel and Israelis. For example:

Mixing with those people (i.e. Israelis) without placing any conditions or bonds has a lot of hazards and dangers, since it threatens Arab and Muslim societies and spreads vice and moral corruption and deviation amongst Muslims. Such people have been weaned on vice and perversion and so many diseases, including AIDS, have become widespread amongst them. They plan for achieving such a goal of exporting these ailments to the Muslim society while Muslims are totally unaware. Therefore, blocking the door leading to such temptation is considered a religious obligation and necessity.<sup>31</sup>

Qaradawi has also said that Israel should be removed completely from all of what he views as "Muslim land."

[T]he so-called peace accords involved recognizing the Jews' right to the usurped lands, which means that Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, al-Ladd, Ramallah, Beir



Sheba, and even Jerusalem will be considered as Israeli lands. Such cities that have been part of the Muslim world for more than thirteen hundred years will become part of the Zionist Jewish state. Hence, we will never be able to claim them back and, after being taken by force, such places will be legitimately given to the enemy.<sup>32</sup>

Qaradawi has issued numerous other extremist statements and rulings, including:<sup>33</sup>

- » Hitler was divine punishment for the misdeeds of the Jews, and the Holocaust was exaggerated.<sup>34</sup>
- » His desire to end his life in the service of Jihad by visiting Israel and throwing a bomb, becoming a “martyr” in the process.<sup>35</sup>
- » Calling for the death of all Jews.<sup>36</sup>
- » Calling for the collapse of the US if it doesn’t end its “unjust ways.”<sup>37</sup>

Qaradawi has also made many extremist statements on social issues, such as contemplating the killing of homosexuals and ruling that beating is “suitable” for some wives.<sup>38</sup>

Qaradawi’s fundamentalism, religious intolerance, and support for terrorism are pervasive throughout the Global Muslim Brotherhood. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on a meeting of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) in August 2004 at which:<sup>39</sup>

...papers accepted traditional norms that directly contradict Western law and society, especially regarding women and marriage. Women should only cut their hair with their husbands’ permission, and “any woman who would marry without a male guardian’s consent, her wedding is invalid,” declared Muhammad Hawari, a Germany-based member of the group.<sup>40</sup>

The *Journal* also reported that one council member cited “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” in a position paper on how Muslim families are under threat in Europe. The “Protocols,” the speaker said, was evidence of a Jewish plot to undermine Muslim moral values through sexual permissiveness.

A NEFA Foundation report has analyzed the Union of Good (UOG), a coalition of Islamic charities that provides financial support to both the Hamas “social” infrastructure, as well as to its terrorist activities. The UOG is headed by Qaradawi, and most of the trustees and member organizations are associated with the Global Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>41</sup>

Most importantly for this report, the delegitimization and demonization of Israel are a constant preoccupation of the Global Muslim Brotherhood. For example, the last Shura Council meeting of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), held in Istanbul in late September, issued the following statement on Israel:

The Council is deeply disturbed by the attacks and violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities and settler gangs, in the holy environs of al-Quds (Jerusalem), in what can only be classified as ethnic cleansing, Apartheid, and colonialist expansionism. The Council also views with great alarm the continuing unjust blockade inflicted on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and demands its immediate lifting.<sup>42</sup>

## **| The Global Muslim Brotherhood and the Turkish Government**

Ties between the Global Muslim Brotherhood and Turkish politicians appear to date back as far as the early 1970s. Kemal Al-Helbawy, a Muslim Brotherhood spokesman living in the UK, told a *Wall Street Journal* reporter that in 1972 he went to Saudi Arabia for 10 years to become the first executive director of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), a Saudi religious organization founded in 1972 with the goal of promoting “Wahhabi Islam,” the strict interpretation held by the Saudi religious establishment, to Muslim youth.<sup>43</sup> Various US government agencies believe that WAMY is associated with extremism and terrorism:

- » A 2005 US congressional report said that WAMY was part of Saudi funding mechanisms that have helped to promote global religious extremism.<sup>44</sup>
- » A former US FBI analyst has detailed the role of WAMY in funding Hamas.<sup>45</sup>
- » The US Department of Defense reports that WAMY in Afghanistan may be associated with al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.<sup>46</sup>

In Bosnia, WAMY funded the Active Islamic Youth, reported by Balkan media to be “the target of almost all investigations connected with terrorist activities in BiH.”<sup>47</sup> Indian officials and the Philippine military have also accused WAMY of funding terrorist groups and militant Islamists in their countries.<sup>48</sup>

Since its inception, WAMY has always had a close relationship with the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and it was at WAMY where El-Helbawy said he met former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Anwar Ibrahim, and Taycep Erogan, the current Turkish prime minister.<sup>49</sup> Al-Helbawy told the reporter that all “got their start at WAMY.” Erdogan acknowledges being elected chairman of the National Salvation Party (NSP) Istanbul Youth Organization in 1976 while he was still in high school.<sup>50</sup> The NSP was an Islamist political party founded in 1972 as the successor to the banned National Order Party and led by Necmettin Erbakan. Al-Helbawy has also acknowledged the longstanding ties between the Brotherhood and Islamic political movements in Turkey, dating back to the time of the NSP:

We always had ties with the Islamic movement or the political party with the nationalistic and Islamic background in Turkey since its inception, even before the formation of the AKP. We had ties with the Islamic movement since the inception of the national order party formed by Erbakan and then the National Salvation Party.<sup>51</sup>

Erdogan continued his position with the NSP until the Party was closed by a military coup in 1980 and followed Erbakan into the Refah (Welfare) Party that took its place in 1983.<sup>52</sup> Refah, described as “an explicitly Islamist party, which featured strong anti-Western, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, and anti-secular elements,” was itself banned in 1988 for violating the constitutional principle of secularism, and yet another party, Felicity (Virtue), took its place almost immediately.<sup>53</sup> In 2001, Felicity was also banned, and it split between Erbakan’s followers who created the Saadet Party and Erdogan’s followers who established the more “pragmatic” Justice and Development Party (AKP) with Erdogan, by now the mayor of Istanbul, elected as its founding chairman.<sup>54</sup> Since that time, an Islamic news portal suggests that the AKP “was embraced” by most of the supporters of Erbakan’s Milli Görüş movement as well as by others in the Turkish political spectrum, as evidenced by its success in the 2007 general elections.<sup>55</sup>

Prime Minister Erdogan appears to have maintained his ties with the Global Muslim Brotherhood that date back to his time at WAMY. Former Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Madi Akef told an Egyptian magazine in 2005 that he knew both Erdogan and Erbakan well from when he had lived in Turkey and described both as “good friends.” In June 2008, the Associated Press reported that Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, a former WAMY colleague with many ties to the Global Brotherhood, took refuge in the Turkish Embassy following a police investigation into sodomy allegations. The AP report cited a senior AKP member as explaining that several embassies offered to shelter Mr. Ibrahim, but Anwar chose the Turkish mission “because of his close ties with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.”

In addition, a 2006 Lebanese media article reported that Prime Minister Erdogan was “an acquaintance and business partner” of Sheikh Yassin Abdullah Qadi, a Saudi businessman blacklisted by the United Nations for funding terrorism.<sup>56</sup> The report said that Erdogan defended Qadi, saying he trusted “*Yassin Bey*” (using a Turkish honorific denoting utmost respect) as much as he trusted himself. Qadi had close ties to the US Muslim Brotherhood through his ownership of a large block of the shares of Ptech, a Texas software company whose employees had further ties to terror organizations.<sup>57</sup> Ptech had an interlocking board membership and other ties to the SAAR Foundation, a now-defunct network of Islamic organizations located in Northern Virginia, which was raided by the federal government in March 2002 in connection with the financing of terrorism. The leadership of the SAAR foundation, in turn, was largely the same as that of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), an important part of the US Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, in Europe the Global Muslim Brotherhood has fused with the Turkish Islamist political movement founded by Necmettin Erbakan. The leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Germany maintains an intimate relationship with the Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüs (IGMG), described by the German domestic intelligence agency as having its “ideological roots” in the ideas of Erbakan, who founded the movement in the late 1960s and served as its former chairman.<sup>59</sup> The German intelligence agency describes the IGMG:

The IGMG is a pan-European organisation with around 87,000 members, according to its own statements. The European headquarters is located in Kerpen (North Rhine-Westphalia). The number of IGMG members in Germany is assessed to amount to 27,500 individuals. Its numerous institutions and wide range of offers reach a much larger circle of people, though. According to its own statements, the IGMG has 514 mosque communities, 323 of them in Germany.<sup>60</sup>

The German domestic intelligence agency also identifies the organization known as the Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland (IGD) as essentially the representative of the Muslim Brotherhood in Germany.<sup>61</sup> Ibrahim El-Zayat, for many years the leader of the IGD, is married to Sabiha El-Zayat, the sister of Mehmet Sabri Erbakan, the nephew of Necmettin Erbakan.<sup>62</sup> In addition, Mr. El-Zayat is listed as an officer of a German business called SLM Liegenschaftsmanagement Gesellschaft für Finanzvermittlung und Consulting mbH, established in 1997 and associated with the IGMG.<sup>63</sup> Oguz Ücuncü, the general-secretary of the IGMG, is also listed as an SLM officer.<sup>64</sup> Since 1995, Mr. El-Zayat has also been the manager of the Europäische Moscheenbau und Unterstützungs Gemeinschaft (European Mosque Building Association), which the German domestic intelligence agency refers to as representing the real estate holdings of Milli Görüs.<sup>65</sup>





*Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan*

*Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses the lawmakers of his party at the parliament in Ankara, Turkey, on March 11, 2008. (AP Photo)*

Mr. El-Zayat is also a leader and officer in the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE),<sup>66</sup> identified above as representing the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. He has served as a FIOE officer as well as playing leadership roles in several FIOE-affiliated organizations, including its youth organization known as FEMYSO and the Europe Trust, the FIOE funding/endowment arm.<sup>66</sup> As late as April 2007, Mr. El-Zayat was the Western European representative for WAMY, and a 2000 German money laundering investigation reported that Mr. El-Zayat transferred more than \$2 million on behalf of WAMY, some of which was sent to the Albanian branch of Taibah International, whose Bosnian branch was designated a terrorist organization by the US government.<sup>67</sup> The investigation concluded that Mr. El-Zayat's activities "were used for carrying out fundamentalist Islamic activities in Europe." A PEW Foundation report notes the close ties between WAMY and the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe:

[WAMY] sometimes partnered with other Muslim groups in Europe, including the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations and a variety of groups with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. These partnerships were designed to help the Assembly with its outreach to specific national and local Muslim communities.... Between the 1970s and 1990s, the European activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim World League, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth became so intertwined that it was often difficult to tell them apart.

Necmettin Erbakan has also had a historical relationship with the US Muslim Brotherhood. A program for the 1998 Program Annual Convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) indicates that the ISNA Human Dignity Award was bestowed on Mr. Erbakan "in recognition of his service to Islam and Turkey."<sup>66</sup> The program says that Mr. Erbakan was scheduled to receive the award in person. ISNA is an umbrella group that is an important part of the Muslim Brotherhood in the US.<sup>67</sup>

Another individual with ties to both Mr. Erbakan and ISNA is Merve Safa Kavakçı, a Turkish politician who was elected as a Virtue Party deputy for Istanbul on April 18, 1999.<sup>70</sup> Ms. Kavakci has been a frequent speaker at ISNA events and her father, Dr. Yusuf Zaia Kavakci, who has praised Muslim Brotherhood ideologues such as the Sudanese Hassan Turabi and Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi, was elected in 1997 to the "Shura" or leadership council of ISNA.<sup>71</sup>

Consistent with ties between the current Turkish political establishment and the Global Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey under the AKP government has pursued a foreign and domestic policy agenda consistent with that of the Global Brotherhood. According to Turkish affairs analyst Soner Cagaptay:

The AKP was born out of the Welfare Party (RP), the motherboard of Turkish Islamists since the 1980s. Islamism in Turkey, though traditionally nonviolent, possesses six virulent characteristics; it is anti-Western, anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli, anti-European, anti-democratic, and holds anti-secular sentiments, all of which are adopted from the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>72</sup>

Cagaptay goes on to explain that the foreign policy views of the AKP and its leaders are based on "solidarity with Islamist and anti-Western countries and movements." He writes:

AKP leader and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, along with his government, believe in Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations – only they choose to oppose the West. The AKP's vision as such is shaped by Turkey's philosopher-king, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, who summarizes this position in his opus "Strategic Depth," in which he writes that "Turkey's traditionally good ties with the West...are a form of alienation" and that the AKP will correct the course of history, which has disenfranchised Muslims since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Undoubtedly, the AKP's "us versus them" vision would not have had the same powerful resonance had they come to power before September 11. Because those attacks defined a politically-charged "Muslim world," the AKP's worldview has found fertile ground and has changed not only Turkey itself, but also the nation's role in foreign policy.<sup>73</sup>

The State Department had warned as early as 2004 about the thinking of Erdogan's then-chief foreign policy advisor Davutoglu, an ally of Turkish President Abdullah Gul, who it said was "lost in neo-Ottoman Islamist fantasies," namely, that Turkey's role is to spread Islam in Europe, "to take back Andalusia and avenge the defeat at the siege of Vienna in 1683," as one participant in a recent meeting at AKP's main think tank put it.<sup>74</sup>

By January 2010, a US State Department cable discussed what it called "Turkey's new, highly activist foreign policy" which it said

unquestionably represents a transition not only from prior governments, but also from the AKP regime before the Gaza/Davos events, and before the ascent of Ahmet Davutoglu as Foreign Minister in April.<sup>75</sup>

The cable concluded that the new AKP foreign policy was “driven by both a desire to be more independently activist and by a more Islamic orientation.”

Another State Department cable from 2006 attributed Prime Minister Erdogan’s increasingly Islamist foreign policy to domestic considerations:

According to a broad range of our contacts, Erdogan reads minimally, mainly the Islamist-leaning press. According to others with broad and deep contacts throughout the establishment, Erdogan refuses to draw on the analyses of the MFA, and the military and National Intelligence Organization have cut him off from their reports. He never had a realistic world view, but one key touchstone is a fear of being outmaneuvered on the Islamist side by “Hoca” Erbakan’s Saadet Party....As the Israel-Lebanon crisis intensified, so has this tendency within Erdogan’s small circle. AKP sees its own back to the public opinion wall. Instead of exercising leadership, Erdogan – in populist pre-election mode – has followed. He is playing to AKP’s constituency; to those within the party who have never been positively inclined toward Israel; and to the greater regional Sunni audience that he is trying to court.<sup>76</sup>

Yet another cable attributes Erdogan’s positions to a hatred of Israel:

Our discussions with contacts both inside and outside of the Turkish government on Turkey’s deteriorating relations with Israel tend to confirm Levy’s thesis that Erdogan simply hates Israel. xxxxx discusses contributing reasons for Erdogan’s tilt on Iran/Middle East issues, but antipathy towards Israel is a factor.<sup>77</sup>

Whether motivated by ideological, personal, or domestic considerations, or more likely a combination of all of them, AKP foreign policy agenda has become more consistent with that of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, focusing on bringing Turkey closer to Islamist regimes such as Iran, Sudan, and the Hamas government in Gaza. This foreign policy realignment has also meant deteriorating relations with Israel, including the use of harsh rhetoric normally associated with the Global Muslim Brotherhood, such as calling Gaza a “concentration camp.”<sup>78</sup> Following the December 2008 Gaza military action, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan accused Israel of a “serious crime against humanity”:

“Despite the calls to stop attacks, Israeli officials’ statements that operations will last a long time and are, in fact, open-ended, constitute a serious crime against humanity,” Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday during a party meeting where thousands of his supporters protested the actions of Israel. “I consider these actions by Israel, while we are making an attempt for peace, as delivering a blow to the peace initiatives,” he said. “Killing innocent people, defenseless children and women, bombing civilians, and using disproportionate force are unacceptable. This operation is a blow to world peace,” Erdogan said. Erdogan criticized Israel for isolating the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians try to survive under harsh conditions, from the rest of the world.

On November 25, 2010, Erdogan accused Israel of planning to “kill women and children” in a future Lebanese war:

Turkey will not remain silent if Israel attacks Lebanon or Gaza, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in Beirut on Thursday, as ties between the longtime allies remained at an all-time low. “Does (Israel) think it can enter Lebanon with the most modern aircraft and tanks to kill women and children, and destroy schools and hospitals, and then expect us to remain silent?” Erdogan said at a conference organised by the Union of Arab Banks.<sup>79</sup>



Soner Cagaptay has also described the increasing domestic Islamist influence in Turkey under AKP rule:

According to a recent poll by TESEV, an Istanbul-based NGO, the number of people identifying themselves as Muslim increased by ten percent between 2002 and 2007; in addition, almost half of those surveyed describe themselves as Islamist. Moreover, orthopraxy seems to have become internalized: bureaucrats in Ankara now feel compelled to attend prayers lest they be bypassed for promotions. Public display of religious observance, often devoid of faith, has become a necessity for those seeking government appointments or lucrative state contracts.<sup>80</sup>

In January 2010, the State Department concurred:

As reported REF B, religiosity has been increasing in Turkey in past years, just as has been seen in many other Muslim societies. The AKP is both a beneficiary of, and a stimulus for, this phenomenon.<sup>81</sup>

One of the State Department cables also note that Prime Minister Erdogan “virtually paralyzed financial policy when he tried to appoint an Islamist as head of the Central Bank against President Sezer’s firm opposition” and that from 1983 to 1991, then-Foreign Minister Gul had a background as a specialist at the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia.<sup>82</sup>

Cagaptay concludes:

In effect, the AKP’s steady mobilization of Turkish Muslim identity along with its close financial and ideological affinity with the nation’s new Islamist elites is setting the stage for a total recalibration of Turkey’s international compass.<sup>83</sup>

## **| The Free Gaza Movement and the Global Muslim Brotherhood**

Since the founding of the Free Gaza movement, individuals tied to the Global Muslim Brotherhood have participated in its flotillas. The most important of these was Yvonne Ridley, a UK journalist who was aboard the first Free Gaza flotilla in August 2008. Ms. Ridley is best known for her capture by the Taliban while an undercover reporter and her subsequent conversion to Islam after her release. Ms. Ridley has had close ties to the UK Muslim Brotherhood since that time, including serving as a Respect Party politician and as a journalist for the Islam Channel, and she went on to play an important role in later flotilla efforts.<sup>84</sup>

Israeli analysts have already documented that many individuals tied to Muslim Brotherhood organizations were part of the Gaza flotilla, including those affiliated with UK, Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian, and Yemeni Brotherhood groups.<sup>85</sup> Also playing an important role in the flotilla was Sheikh Raed Salah, the head of the Northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, considered to be the most extreme wing of the movement that essentially comprises the Muslim Brotherhood in Israel. Salah has been frequently the subject of Israeli law enforcement action, which accused him of aiding Hamas and inciting violence in Israel.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps the most significant individual who was part of the flotilla was Akram Kassab, known to be the personal secretary of Youssef Qaradawi.<sup>87</sup> Kassab was also one of the founding members of the International

Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) headed by Qaradawi. His first cited published work is titled "Zionism and the Threat to Humanity."<sup>88</sup>

Less well known are the European and Turkish Global Muslim Brotherhood groups that provided substantial support to the flotilla. There are three such groups that can be identified:

### **1. The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG)**

The ECESG had its own ship in the Gaza flotilla, described by the Israeli government as a small passenger boat.<sup>89</sup> The executive director of the ECESG is Arafat Madi (aka Arafat Madi Shoukri) who is also an executive of the London-based Palestinian Return Centre (PRC), which has strong ties to the Global Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>90</sup> For example, two PRC directors are also directors of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), part of the UK Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>91</sup> PRC director Ghassan Four is also a Trustee of INTERPAL, a key member of the Union of Good and part of the Muslim Brotherhood Hamas fund-raising network.<sup>92</sup> PRC director Zaher Birawi is a Trustee of Education Aid for Palestine (EAP), also a part of the Union of Good.<sup>93</sup> The PRC has also been the co-sponsor of several conferences in Europe associated with Hamas, including the Sixth Palestinians in Europe Conference, which featured Nihad Awad of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), former US Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Akram Al-Adlouni, and Raed Salah, identified above as a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Israel and close to Hamas.<sup>94</sup> The 2009 conference was addressed via video link by Gazan Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.<sup>95</sup>

### **2. International Committee to Break the Siege of Gaza**

The International Committee to Break the Siege of Gaza (ICBSG) was also one of the flotilla organizers and is led by Mohammad Sawalha, identified by Israeli sources as "a senior Hamas activist who publicly supports *jihad*." These same analysts report that Sawalha was formerly involved in both political and operational Hamas activities in Judea and Samaria, including running the terrorist operative infrastructure.<sup>96</sup> The analysts go on to say that Sawalha escaped from Israel to Jordan where he has been involved with anti-Israeli activities as well as being part of organizations providing support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip. They also identify Sawalha as a founder of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and a chairman of the British Muslim Initiative (BMI), both organizations being part of the UK Muslim Brotherhood.

### **3. Turkish/Muslim Brotherhood Network**

Although not constituted formally as an organization, a group of six Turkish NGOs, including the IHH, acted in concert with the Global Muslim Brotherhood to support the Gaza flotilla. Two of the most important leaders of this network are Turkish citizens of Arab origin who are also leaders within European Global Muslim Brotherhood organizations. The remainder of this report will explore these organizations and their leaders, referred to hereafter as the Turkish/Muslim Brotherhood network.



## NETWORK BACKGROUND (1998-2005)

This report relies entirely upon public information sources that by their nature grow sparser as they recede in time. Moreover, the history of the Turkish/MB network does not begin in earnest until 2006, when Hamas emerged victorious from the Palestinian general elections. Still, the available early history of the Turkish/MB network contains several important events setting the stage for what was to come. Gazi Misirli and Jamal Kerim, two Turks of Arabic origin, can be identified during this time period as emerging leaders of the Turkish/MB network. In addition, two important organizations that are part of the network can be seen to be showing the initial signs of politicization that would later characterize the bulk of their activities. It should also be noted that this time period saw the August 2001 founding of the Islamist Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), currently the ruling party of Turkey. The AKP came to power in the November 2002 Turkish elections.

### **| Gazi Misirli – The Origins of a Turkish MB Leader**

The history of the Turkish/MB network begins with Gazwan Masri, later to become its most important leader. Mr. Masri told a Saudi newspaper interviewer that in 1998 he had joined MÜSIAD, the Turkish Islamist businessman's association.<sup>97</sup> MÜSIAD had been founded in 1990 by religiously-devout entrepreneurs, generally from the Anatolian heartland, with connections to either the party of Prime Minister Turgut Ozal or to Erbakan's Refah Party. MÜSIAD was created as both a small business organization and as a lobbying group whose members sought mutual assistance to defend their interests against the secular middle-class, represented in business by the Turkish Employers' Federation (TUSIAD), headquartered in Istanbul.<sup>98</sup> After an early beginning of trying to spread Islam through student-oriented activities and following its success in export businesses, MÜSIAD developed a pro-business philosophy that was based on an Islamic critique of capitalism.<sup>99</sup> This critique employed themes common to the Global Muslim Brotherhood – that as Muslims moved away from the Quran, degeneration of political, economic, and social life followed. MÜSIAD proposed replacing the "neo-liberal" capitalist system with a financial order based on Islam.<sup>100</sup> The group's membership had reached 3,000 in 1998 from 400 in 1991, and its members' companies' annual revenue was US \$2.79 billion.<sup>101</sup> The US State Department reported that MÜSIAD gave Prime Minister Erdogan key financial support as the AKP campaigned prior to the 2002 elections, and in 2006 a Turkish/Islamic business portal reported that MÜSIAD was supported by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, as evidenced by his recent appearance as a guest of honor at a MÜSIAD conference.<sup>102</sup> In October 2009, Mr. Masri described MÜSIAD in an interview as an "economic lobby" comprised of religious businessmen whose constituent businesses represent 15% of the Turkish national income.<sup>103</sup> Mr. Masri went on to say that all MÜSIAD members believe they are not there for the money only, and that MÜSIAD stands firmly with the Palestinians. Since MÜSIAD works mainly to strengthen trade between the Islamic states, he said he didn't think that members work with Israel, which is not only oppressive, but "kills innocent women and children."

Gazwan Masri, also known by his Turkish name Gazi Misirli, was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1964 and later acquired Turkish citizenship.<sup>104</sup> There are conflicting reports both of Mr. Misirli's date of arrival in Turkey and of his educational background. One media report says that he first came to Turkey in 1987 for a university education, earning a degree in Engineering Management from Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi and



eventually marrying a Turkish woman.<sup>105</sup> However, other media reports say he first came to Turkey in 1983.<sup>106</sup> He later became head of the SANTRAL company that describes itself as “supplying products and goods from Turkish and international markets and marketing them in the Arab world.”<sup>107</sup> Shortly after joining MÜSIAD, sometime in 1999 or 2000, Mr. Misirli became a trustee of the European Trust, a part of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), known to be the umbrella group representing the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe.<sup>108</sup> The Trust describes itself as a “*Waqf*,” an Arabic term meaning a religious endowment in the form of a property earning revenues, as regulated by Islamic law. Since renamed the “Europe Trust,” the organization has amassed a real-estate portfolio of income-earning properties, a small portion of which has been used to fund FIOE or FIOE member-organization projects. At the time Mr. Misirli joined the Trust, as well as at the present, the other trustees included some of the most important Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Europe, such as Ibrahim El-Zayat, the leader of the German Muslim Brotherhood, and Fouad Alaoui, one of the leaders of the French Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>109</sup> Illustrative of Mr. Misirli’s close connections to the current Turkish government, in April 2009 he offered on an online forum to forward letters to the office of Prime Minister Erdogan.<sup>110</sup>

## IHH – A Politicized Charity

By late 2002, the Turkish charity known as IHH was showing clear signs that it was not only a humanitarian operation but also a highly politicized Islamic NGO. IHH had been founded in 1995 by individuals who were operating in the Balkans during the conflict in the early 1990s. These individuals said that they had continued their efforts during the Chechen war and wished to “deliver humanitarian aid to all people and take necessary steps to prevent any violations against their basic rights and liberties.”<sup>111</sup> As early as 1998, links could be observed between IHH and the Global Muslim Brotherhood. According to media reports from that time, the Ankara Directorate of the Police had confiscated important documents showing links between an NGO dealing with foreign university graduates, IHH, the International Federation of Islamic Student Organizations (IIFSO), and the Refah Party.<sup>112</sup>

In addition, a US federal agent testified that he had found various correspondences dating from 1999-2002 at the Success Foundation, indicating that IHH had received substantial donations from both the Success Foundation and the IIRO for use in “relief and charity work” as well as for humanitarian aid to the Chechen refugees in Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>113</sup> The former president of the Success Foundation was US Muslim Brotherhood leader Abdul Rahman Alamoudi, later convicted in a plot to murder Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah on behalf of Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi.<sup>114</sup> The US agent also testified that contact information for IHH and its director was found in the Palm Pilot of US Brotherhood leader Alamoudi.

Since that time, IHH has expanded its work beyond Muslim war zones to operations in 120 countries, including humanitarian assistance in disaster zones such as the Haiti earthquake and Hurricane Katrina.<sup>115</sup> IHH currently maintains strong ties to the AKP, and many of its board members are AKP officials.<sup>116</sup> The BBC has further reported that IHH “has strong sympathy” among the AKP and raises some of its money from unidentified Islamic religious groups.<sup>117</sup> According to Israeli media reports, while IHH says it has no ties to the AKP, the organization says it is funded by donations only and that the money comes mainly from Turkey’s religious businessmen, the same social class that supported Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s bid for power.<sup>118</sup> As discussed elsewhere in this report, the Turkish Islamist organization known as





#### *The Roots of the IHH*

*Bosnian government soldiers of the 7th Muslim Brigade parade during the celebration of the third anniversary of the Bosnian Army Third Corps in Zenica, Bosnia, on December 10, 1995. IHH founders served in the 7th Brigade along with Arab veterans of the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Enric F. Marti)*

MÜSIAD is known to represent Turkey's religious businessmen, and IHH reporting strongly suggests that MÜSIAD is a major funder of IHH. For example, in September 2006, IHH reported that it had constructed two health centers in Kashmir with the contributions of MÜSIAD.<sup>120</sup>

However, there are also multiple intelligence reports about the ties between IHH and terrorist groups, beginning with a 1996 NATO intelligence report that listed IHH as one of several charities suspected of providing support for terrorist groups in Bosnia.<sup>120</sup> According to Bosnian intelligence, IHH founder/board member Osman Atalay and IHH founder Hakan Bogoclu had been part of the Bosnian Army's 7th Muslim Brigade, described as "an umbrella for several hundred foreign Mujaheddin known at the time for their Islamist fervor."<sup>121</sup> In 1996, French police, investigating an attempted car bombing in the city of Lille, found that key suspects had IHH contacts. In addition, a French intelligence report cited multiple instances of jihadist activity by IHH during the mid-1990s:

- » Turkish authorities started a criminal investigation of IHH in December 1997 when sources revealed that leaders of IHH were purchasing automatic weapons from other regional Islamic militant groups. IHH's bureau in Istanbul was searched, and its local officers were arrested. Security forces discovered "disturbing items," including firearms, explosives, bomb-making instructions, and a "jihad flag." Based on seized documents, Turkish authorities concluded that "detained members of IHH were going to fight in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya."
- » IHH President Bulent Yildirim conspired in the mid-1990s to "recruit veteran soldiers in anticipation of the coming holy war [jihad]. Men were sent into war zones in Muslim countries in order to acquire combat experience." In hopes of



“obtaining political support from these countries, financial aid was transferred [on behalf of IHH], as well as caches of firearms, knives, and pre-fabricated explosives.”

- » IHH’s phone records in Istanbul showed repeated telephone calls in 1996 to an al-Qaeda guesthouse in Milan and various Algerian terrorist operatives active elsewhere in Europe – including Abu el-Ma`ali, who has been referred to by US officials as a “junior Osama Bin Laden.”

It has also been reported by Turkish media that during the 2003 Iraq War, IHH sent donations and aid to insurgent-dominated areas.<sup>122</sup> In fact, IHH had representatives on the ground in Fallujah during mid-2004, when the Iraqi city was still under the control of al-Qaeda\ Iraq and former Baathists.<sup>123</sup>



#### *Overt IHH Humanitarian Efforts*

*Victims of Yemen floods receive food and blankets in humanitarian aid distributed by Turkey’s Foundation for Human Rights and Freedom and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) in Mukalla, Yemen, in November 2008.*



In perhaps the most noteworthy of these reports about IHH and terrorism, a French magistrate testified in a US District Court that IHH had played “[a]n important role” in the al-Qaeda Millenium bomb plot targeting Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).<sup>124</sup>

The IHH also acknowledges its heavy support of Gaza including aid to orphans, known to be associated with support of Hamas.<sup>125</sup> The IHH says it funds more than 9,000 orphans in Gaza, many of whom were acknowledged by an IHH spokesman to be the children of Hamas members who died. The IHH says it spent nearly \$25 million delivering aid to Gaza from 2005 to 2009.<sup>126</sup> It should also be noted that according to the Israeli government, IHH is a member of the Union of Good, a coalition of Islamic charities headed by Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi, which raises funds for Hamas.<sup>127</sup> The Union of Good is both banned by Israel and designated by the US as a terrorist organization.<sup>128</sup>

The accusations of ties between IHH and terrorist groups notwithstanding, more important for this report is the evidence that IHH is a politicized NGO rather than a purely humanitarian organization. This politicization can first be observed in December 2002, when a Turkish news agency reported that the imam of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the chairman of the Social Aid Foundation came to Turkey as the guests of the IHH. They were reported to have visited Felicity Party (SP) leader Recai Kutan and the Palestinian Ambassador in Ankara, Fuad Yaseen, who also attended the meeting. Kutan was reported to have said that people who were injured in incidents in Palestine had previously received medical treatment in hospitals in Turkey and called on the government to give medical treatment to injured Palestinian people again in Turkish hospitals. Kutan also said that Turkey had the biggest responsibility to solve the Palestinian problem and that the new government should be sensitive to the issue, adding, “The whole Islamic world should come together under the leadership of Turkey.” Huseyin also had a meeting with AKP deputy leader Saban Disli.<sup>129</sup>

Since then, evidence of the politicization of IHH can be seen in numerous examples:

- » In late 2002, IHH and its leader Bulent Yildirim were reported to have played a key role in fostering anti-Western sentiment among Turkish Muslims in the run-up to the 2003 war in Iraq. By late 2002, a Danish national security think-tank report said that the IHH was “instrumental in convening large and raucous protest rallies opposed to the then-imminent effort to depose Saddam Hussein, capped off by the burning of US and Israeli flags.”
- » The same Danish think-tank reported that in mid-2004, IHH issued incendiary English-language news updates from its representatives in Fallujah, Iraq, accusing the US of shooting at ambulances and praising the Iraqi “resistance.”<sup>130</sup> The report also said that Yildirim characterized US military operations in the Iraqi city of Fallujah as “equally a strike on Istanbul, Ankara.”<sup>131</sup>
- » In May 2004, Yildirim was identified by AFP as one of the organizers of an Istanbul demonstration protesting against Israeli military actions in Gaza. A group of almost 800 people were reported to have gathered in front of the Fatih Mosque after prayers Friday afternoon to chant: “Israel, assassin, leave Palestine. US, murderers, leave Iraq” and to have burned an Israeli flag.<sup>132</sup>
- » During a November 2004 news conference, Bulent Yildirim called on the Turkish people to boycott US, British, and Israeli goods, claiming: “The United States has been committing a massacre in Fallujah, city of Iraq.”<sup>133</sup>

- » Leading another anti-US rally in Istanbul in December 2004, Bulent Yildirim told the Anatolia News Agency, "Intelligence cooperation between the United States, Britain, and Turkey must be stopped. Otherwise, we will organize actions at every consulate and, if necessary, will assemble 50,000 or 100,000 people at the US consulate." Protestors at the December rally reportedly shouted various slogans, including, "Murderer US, get out of the Middle East" and "Long live our resistance."<sup>134</sup>
- » In March 2005, AFP reported that IHH was one of the organizers who called for demonstrations in memory of Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov, slain by Russian troops. Bulent Yildirim told the crowd, "I call on all Turks to help Chechnya combat Russian imperialism." The demonstrators chanted, "Putin, murderer, out of Chechnya," "Free the Caucasus, neither America nor Russia," and "Martyrs won't die, the resistance won't stop."<sup>135</sup>

In 2006, the BBC reported that the IHH website had shifted its focus largely to anti-Israeli reporting, with reports centered on the Israeli offensives against Gaza and Lebanon and protests against "Israeli brutality." As of August 18, 2006, a click on the "Day in Palestine" box led the reader to photos that depict the treatment of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers.<sup>136</sup> In July 2010, the *Wall Street Journal* confirmed that IHH had remained focused on Islamic issues, and Gaza in particular.

Muslim-focused causes and conflicts remain at the core of its work. On a recent day, four of the first six projects listed on the IHH's Web site were Islam-specific – two for building mosques, one for refurbishing a Quranic school, and another for translating and publishing key Islamic texts into Cambodia's Khmer language. The IHH has focused on Gaza in recent years.<sup>137</sup>

This shift to a Gaza focus is confirmed by a search of the IHH website, which reveals dozens of reports on Gaza projects as well as anti-Israeli political activities.<sup>138</sup>

## **Jamal Kerim – Second MB Leader Emerges**

During this period, a second Turk of Arabic origin was emerging as a leader of the Turkish/MB network.

Sometime in 2003, an organization was founded known as HIKMET Bilim Dostluk ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (Wisdom Science Society of Friendship and Solidarity), referred to in this report as HIKMET and known to be the Turkish member organization of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE).<sup>139</sup>

HIKMET is headed by Jamal Kerim, also known by his Turkish name Cemalettin Kerim. Mr. Kerim, who was 40 years old in July 2009, was born in Palestine but has lived in Turkey for 29 years, holds a Turkish passport, and received a degree in 1987 in "Electrics and Electronics" from Boğaziçi University.<sup>140</sup> He is also the head of a business known as KERİM DIŞ TIC.VE TURİZM LTD.ŞT. (Kerim Tourism and Travel), which is also listed as an export business dealing in a wide variety of products shipped primarily to Middle Eastern countries but also to Kosovo, Turkmenistan, Nigeria, Zambia, and the US. In January 2005, Turkish media identified Jamal Kerim as the Commissioner of the MÜSIAD Foreign Relations division.<sup>141</sup>

In late June 2005, HIKMET hosted the 15th annual session of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), the theological arm of FIOE, headed by Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi. The meeting was held at an Istanbul hotel



and attended by most of the members of the ECFR, as well as a number of guests and observers, Turkish scholars, and officials. The welcoming speech was delivered by Mr. Kerim and also included an introductory speech delivered by Faisal Mawlawi, Deputy Chairman of the ECFR and head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon.<sup>142</sup>

## **MAZLUMDER – A Politicized Human Rights Group**

In mid-December 2005, Mr. Kerim spoke before the opening of a branch of the Turkish human rights organization known as MAZLUMDER, founded in 1991 as an alternative to the existing human rights organizations, one that would be sensitive to the issue of the Islamic headscarf.<sup>143</sup> MAZLUMDER is headquartered in Istanbul, has branches throughout Turkey, and reports connections to Islamist organizations tied to Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, and the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan.<sup>144</sup> Like IHH, MAZLUMDER had shown early signs of politicization, particularly during the Iraq war, when it was involved in anti-American demonstrations, and in 2004, when it joined with IHH in a coalition to protest a NATO summit in Istanbul.<sup>145</sup> Until 2005, the MAZLUMDER website appears to have made no mention of Israel, but subsequently has focused a great deal of its critical attention on the country. In his 2005 talk, Mr. Kerim accused Israel of wanting to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and of turning Gaza into a prison. He also referred to the “martyrdom” of the late Hamas spiritual leader Ahmed Yassin.<sup>146</sup>

Various media reports indicate that former Lockheed engineer and Amnesty International board member Ahmet Faruk Unsal became President of MAZLUMDER sometime after 2006.<sup>147</sup> Mr. Unsal had served as an AKP Member of Parliament from 2002 to 2007 and was the representative of Turkey to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. While a member of the Turkish parliament, Mr. Unsal was instrumental in the vote rejecting a measure to let US troops attack Iraq from Turkish territory.<sup>148</sup> Currently, he is a member of the IHH board along with Ayhan Kucuk, another AKP member and President of the MAZLUMDER Istanbul branch.<sup>149</sup> A 2006 online biography identifies Gazi Misirli as a member of MAZLUMDER.<sup>150</sup>

## **THE NETWORK STIRS (2006)**

2006 saw the first significant developments in the Turkish/MB network. The year had begun with two important events pertaining to Hamas. On January 25, Hamas won enough seats to form a majority government in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the legislature of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).<sup>151</sup> On February 16, a five-man Hamas delegation headed by political leader Khaled Mashaal arrived in Turkey. The delegation was expected to meet with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but several hours after the arrival of the group, the prime minister’s office announced that no meeting would be held, and the delegation, including Mashaal, met instead with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul at the AKP headquarters.<sup>152</sup> In early July, Turkish media reported that Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu had met with Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal on a trip to Damascus.<sup>153</sup> The remainder of the year saw two important conferences involving Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi held in Istanbul and the first known joint actions of the Turkish/MB network including IHH, which took place during the Lebanon War.



## Qaradawi Comes to Turkey

For the first known time, two significant meetings of the Global Muslim Brotherhood were held in Turkey during July 2006. On July 1-2, 2006, a conference was held in Istanbul titled the "Muslims of Europe Conference." Organized with the support of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the conference steering committee included important leaders of the Global Muslim Brotherhood such as Tariq Ramadan, German Muslim Brotherhood leader Ibrahim El-Zayat, French Muslim Brotherhood leader Fouad Alaoui, and Bosnian Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric.<sup>154</sup> Conference participants also included, most notably, Youssef Qaradawi, but also important Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders such as Tunisian Rashid Ghannouchi, FIOE officer Ayman Aly, and the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim.<sup>155</sup> The Turkish



*The Spiritual Head of the Global Muslim Brotherhood*

*Dr. Sheikh Youssef Qaradawi, the spiritual head of the Muslim Brotherhood, during a meeting with a delegation from Norway, February 14, 2006. Qaradawi became a regular visitor to Turkey beginning in 2006. Israeli sources maintained that the IHH was part of the network of Islamic charities he maintained through the Union of Good.*

participants included many individuals from the Turkish religious establishment such as Mehmet Aydın, the Chairman of Religious Affairs under the Erdogan government, as well as numerous scholars and academics.<sup>156</sup>

Also held in July 2006 in Istanbul was the Second General Assembly of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), headed by Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi.<sup>157</sup> The IUMS meeting was hosted by two Turkish NGO umbrella organizations known as the Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekküller Vakfı (TGTV) and the İslam Dünyası Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birliği (İDSB), or in English, the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW). TGTV had been founded in December 1994 with the intent of fostering ties among the Islamist NGOs within Turkey.<sup>158</sup> The organization is known to engage in a variety of activities, including publishing books and reports, holding conferences, participating in demonstrations, and networking with foreign NGOs. TGTV incorporates other members of the Turkish/MB network, including İHH, MÜSIAD, and FİDDER, discussed later in this report, and cooperates with them in various activities.<sup>159</sup> Examples include humanitarian efforts with İHH in the 2006 Pakistani earthquake, holding a press conference about Chechnya with İHH and MAZLUMDER leaders in 2009, and staging a protest march against military coups together with MAZLUMDER and İHH.<sup>160</sup> Prior to 2006, the TGTV website appears to have made no mention of Israel, until an article was posted at that time about an "Israeli Massacre."<sup>161</sup> Since then, the organization appears to have placed a growing emphasis on anti-Israeli activities. Necati Ceylan has been the President of TGTV since 2007, replacing Necmi Sadıkoğlu, currently the President of UNIW.<sup>162</sup> Mr. Ceylan is an attorney and member of the Hukukcular Dernegi (Lawyers Association).<sup>163</sup>

The Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW) was founded at a conference in 2005 where AKP Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül gave a speech.<sup>164</sup> The UNIW Secretary-General has said that the UNIW was created at the initiation of TGTV, and both TGTV and MÜSIAD have been described as UNIW charter members.<sup>165</sup> In the same way that TGTV was created to coordinate the various Turkish Islamist NGOs, the UNIW was created to coordinate Islamist NGOs on a global level, and its current members include a long list of important Global Muslim Brotherhood organizations such as: the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), and the Muslim Brotherhoods of Bahrain, Israel and Algeria.<sup>166</sup> UNIW members also include the Turkish/MB network organizations İHH, MÜSIAD, HIKMET, and FİDDER. UNIW engages in the same kind of activities as TGTV, and in December 2007 sponsored an international conference on "Islamophobia," which brought together numerous leaders of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, including Tariq Ramadan as well as anti-Israeli activist Norman Finkelstein.<sup>167</sup> The conference also included many leaders of the US Muslim Brotherhood, including Iqbal Unus from the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Louay Safi from the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).

The July 2006 IUMS meeting was reported to have included 270 IUMS members and Turkish officials led by AKP Deputy Premier and Minister of State Mehmet Ali Şahin, along with the governor of Istanbul who inaugurated the meeting.<sup>168</sup> IUMS official Ali Qaradaghi said, "Co-operation between sincere Muslim scholars and rulers is the key to advancement of the Muslim nation," while a Western scholar attending the meeting reported:

[The speakers] had each regaled us with the importance of the location of the meeting, Istanbul, former and, as some suggested, potential future nexus of the Islamic world.<sup>169</sup>



The Deputy IUMS Chairman, Iranian Sheikh Ayatu Allah Muhammad 'Ali At-Taskhiri, called for the Muslim world to rally against Israel and said, "Innocent civilians were facing daily sufferings under Israeli aggressions amidst despicable world silence."<sup>170</sup>

Also held in Istanbul around the same time was the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) hosted by HIKMET, and HIKMET Chairman Ahmet Hasanoğlu was one of the opening speakers.<sup>171</sup> The ECFR is the theological body of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) and is also headed by Qaradawi.

## **| First Actions – Lebanon and Gaza**

On July 12, 2006, two IDF jeeps patrolling the border with Lebanon were ambushed by Hizbullah, resulting in the killing of three soldiers and the kidnapping of two more. The initial Hizbullah attack was followed by ground incursions and rocket/mortar attacks against Israeli border communities and military outposts. These events were the beginning of what became known as the Second Lebanon War, which saw the first known joint anti-Israeli actions by the Turkish/MB network.<sup>172</sup>

On July 20, following the initial Israeli land incursion into Lebanon, TGTV held a press conference where the following Turkish/MB network leaders made statements demonizing Israel:<sup>173</sup>

TGTV Chairman Necmi Sadikoğlu said, "Israel massacres defenseless people in Palestine and Lebanon, particularly the children, women, and the elderly with all its weapons and technology. We condemn Israel, which killed more than 200 civilians in a week, vehemently." Sadikoğlu emphasized that the dominant powers leaked the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers to the international media, presenting it as a pretext for the war, and he said, "We are aware that dark forces are trying to push this region into instability by a planned strategy that will turn it into a lake of blood allowing them to control it. We view the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the political murders in Lebanon, landing of Syrian troops in Lebanon, and the Israeli attack on Lebanon as parts of the same project. We call upon the international community to pressure their governments to stop this tragic scenario."

HIKMET Chairman Cemalettin Kerim said that Turkey supported the Palestinian cause. Kerim proclaimed that the "Support to Palestine" rally organized by the Saadet (Felicity) Party and the aid collected proved this and said, "We are grateful to the people of Turkey." Kerim stated that after the democratic elections, the Palestinian people were subject to oppression unprecedented in the world and said, "Every five minutes a rocket falls on Palestine. According to a call that we received a short while ago, the Palestinians wait for a week to buy gas bottles for their homes. On the other hand, Israel keeps the aid sent to Palestine waiting and so the aid sent from Islamic countries is spoiled." Kerim ended his speech by saying that Israel resisted making peace, despite the good intentions of the Palestinians.

IHH Chairman Bülent Yıldırım emphasized that Israel got out of hand because of US support and said, "The Islamic countries should realize their power and should take action as soon as possible. It is not over yet. The only solution is the unification of Islamic countries and societies."



MÜSIAD (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) leader Omer Bolat stated that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Muslim world was covered in blood and tears, especially by the atrocities committed by Israel in the past period, and said, "İKO (Organization of the Islamic Conference) should come to its senses and should form a peace force from the Islamic countries and should station it between Israel and Lebanon and [between] Israel and Palestine. Israel should pay compensation to Lebanon and Palestine." Bolat emphasized that Turkey should withdraw from the BOP (Great Middle East Project) and said, "The Western powers' welfare and freedom discourse will not bring peace to the region. Turkey should stop being a buffer state." Bolat ended his speech by mentioning that they were aware of the increase in terror attacks in Turkey, and that this was not a coincidence. Head of ASKON (Anatolian Tigers Businessmen Association) Mustafa Koca condemned the Israeli atrocities and said, "Those who oppress people in Palestine are not aware of us and our power."

On August 6, a press conference on the Lebanese crisis was held by the UNIW, prominently featuring speeches by almost the entire leadership of the entire Turkish/MB network at that time – UNIW Secretary-General Necmi Sadikoglu, MÜSIAD Chairman Omer Bolat, IHH Chairman Bulent Yildirim, MAZLUMDER Istanbul Branch Chairman Mustafa Ercan, HIKMET Chairman Cemaleddin Kerim, and Ali Kurt, the Turkish Representative of UNIW. The group issued a statement accusing Israel of massacres:

We are following the heartbreaking events happening in Palestine and Lebanon with regret and sorrow. Israel, with its military and technology, is carrying out massacres on innocent civilians, especially on children, women, and elderly people in Palestine and Lebanon. We fiercely condemn Israel which killed over 200 civilians mercilessly, in one week. We are aware that the evil centers which introduced the pretext and excuse of two kidnapped Israeli soldiers to the world media want to take control of the region by a plan of bringing blood and instability. We are aware that the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, political assassinations in Lebanon, deportation of the Syrian army from Lebanon and, finally, Israeli attack on Lebanon are the steps of the same project, and we are calling on the world for pressure on the governments to stop this evil scenario.<sup>174</sup>

On August 15, the IHH issued a press release announcing that a humanitarian convoy of 13 trucks was leaving for Lebanon, sponsored by a coalition of Turkish NGOs that included TGTV, MAZLUMDER, HIKMET, and Darusselam Vakfı, a charity that is part of TGTV and headed by Gazi Misirli.<sup>175</sup> The press release indicates that TGTV and MÜSIAD promised to help the campaign and pledged their solidarity with IHH.

In late July, the Palestinian Information Centre reported that as part of a campaign sponsored by the Sanabil al-Khay, an investment fund established by the Saudi Muslim World League (MWL), the Islamic Society together with IHH distributed 2,500 food parcels in Jabaliya al-Nazlah, located in the northern Gaza Strip.<sup>176</sup> Dr. Isam Cude (aka Isam Judah, Isam El-Cude), director of the Islamic Society, "praised the efforts exerted by the IHH to deliver this aid, which is indicative of deep ties between Turkish and Palestinian people." The Islamic Society (*Al-Jamiya al-Islamiyya*) is an important Hamas institution in the Gaza Strip headed by Cude, a member of the UNIW, and is known to be at least partially financed by the Union of Good, the coalition of Hamas fund-raising charities headed by Youssef Qaradawi, identified earlier in this report.<sup>177</sup>

Later in August, MÜSIAD announced that Gazi Misirli, described now as the Vice-President of MÜSIAD, along with MÜSIAD member Jamal Kerim, had handed out emergency aid packages consisting of food and cleaning materials to two thousand families who were forced to leave their homes because of the destruction caused by the Israeli bombardment of Gaza.<sup>178</sup>

## FOUNDATIONS (2007)

2007 saw the Turkish/MB network establish important foundations, beginning with the emergence of its newest constituent – a Palestinian advocacy organization known as FIDDER. In May a delegation of the Islamischen Gemeinschaft Milli Görüs, associated with the Saadet Party, visited Gaza. The delegation included IGMG, the Turkish/MB network, and Hamas leaders from Europe. In July, Hamas took over control of the Gaza Strip, and the relationship between the Turkish/MB network and Hamas became clearer as the head of Hamas in Gaza had a phone conversation with a TGTV/UNIW official and as FIDDER hosted a Union of Good meeting. The year ended with a new relationship between the Turkish/MB network and the Al-Quds International Institution (AQII), which held a conference in Turkey for the first time.

### February 2007 – FIDDER Emerges

In February 2007, the UNIW sponsored a press conference featuring Omar El Bursh, identified as a Palestinian official, and Mohammed Farac El Goul, identified as “Deputy.”<sup>179</sup> The two made a statement accusing Israel of genocide:

Israelis, who have occupied Palestine territories since 1948, have been increasing their expansionist policies day by day and almost left no place for Palestinians to take breath. Now, Palestinians, who fell into immigrants in the lands they possessed once, have been undergoing genocide for more than fifty years owing to Israelis’ greed for seizing The Promised Land as they regard everything as legitimate for this greed. Mocking international law, they have been assaulting everybody from infants to defenseless old men and women. They maintain that they do for the sake of state security.<sup>180</sup>

The statement concluded by thanking the Turkish public for a petition aimed at freeing Palestinian officials, presumably Hamas officials, held in Israeli prison.<sup>181</sup>

The UNIW announcement of the press conference indicated that it was supported by six organizations, including UNIW, TGTV, IHH and a new organization known as Filistin Dayanışma Derneği (Palestinian Solidarity Association) or FIDDER.<sup>182</sup> A FIDDER official described the organization as “a group of Turkish citizens of Palestinian origin who believe in the just Palestine cause and in the Palestinians’ right to live in freedom and dignity and in their right to return to their homeland.”<sup>183</sup> Tahsin Misirli, possibly a relative of Gazi Misirli, is the President of FIDDER.<sup>184</sup> Mr. Misirli is the general manager of a company known as TURKPAL, the same company providing accommodations for the 2007 al-Quds conference discussed later in this report.<sup>185</sup> He is also a member of the TGTV board of directors, and in 2009 was identified as the author of a letter to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, thanking him for his actions in Davos.<sup>186</sup>

Another FIDDER official is board member Dr. Hasan Bereket, an Istanbul dentist and a Palestinian originally from Gaza who has been living in Turkey for the last 18 years.<sup>187</sup> Dr. Bereket has made a number of statements praising Hamas, including the following made in July 2010:

Bereket said, "The Palestinian passion for resistance stems from their devotion to Islam. The Palestinians defend the land of their ancestors through their belief in Islam. Could the Palestinians leave these blessed lands behind and go?" Dr. Bereket stated that the Palestinians live their everyday life in total resignation and said, "People are used to death. Although they feel the fear of death every minute, they live happily. This happiness is granted to them by Allah. When people go to bed at night, they believe that the Israeli rockets will kill them and they submit to Allah." Bereket added, "There is no theft, adultery, fight or chaos in Palestine" and added that security ruled under the leadership of Hamas in Palestine, saying, "The Palestinians leave the door of their houses open. They are not scared of anyone. The only reason for chaos is Israel but the people live in peace among themselves. The Palestinian people owe this secure environment to Hamas."<sup>188</sup>

A Turkish media report said that while the organization doesn't collect aid for the Palestinians, it played a role in bringing wounded Palestinians to Turkey for treatment.<sup>189</sup> FIDDER is currently a member of the UNIW.<sup>190</sup>

In May 2007, the Islamischen Gemeinschaft Milli Görüs (IGMG), the Turkish Islamist organization associated with the Saadet Party, sponsored what was described as an aid visit to Palestine and Gaza, said to have "experienced Israeli genocide in front of the whole world." The IGMG delegation was headed by Muhammet Turhan, the leader of the IGMG in Austria, and included Mehmet Yaramis, the head of the IGMG in the Netherlands, Hani Ibrahim, a leader of the Union of Good organization known as the Palastinensische Vereinigung in Österreich, and FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli.<sup>191</sup> The IGMG indicated that it was coordinating aid with the Arab Medical Union, known also to have ties to the Union of Good, and Mr. Turhan said that the flow of aid would continue periodically, and so the European Muslims should continue to contribute.<sup>192</sup> He also said, "Our Palestinian brothers whose hospitals received aid were very thankful and send their prayers."<sup>193</sup>

## **| July-August 2007**

Hamas took over control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, and on July 22, the AKP won what was described as "an unparalleled 46.6 percent of the national vote," allowing it to form a single-party government.<sup>194</sup>

On that same day of the AKP electoral victory, Mustafa Ozkaya, described as both the CEO of TGTV and the General Coordinator of UNIW, had a telephone conversation with Ismail Haniyeh, referred to as the "President of Palestine."<sup>195</sup> In that conversation, Haniyeh reportedly thanked TGTV and Turkish civil society in general for their "close interest in Palestine," and particularly for the petition campaign conducted by UNIW, TGTV, and IHH as discussed above, to release Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Haniyeh also refers to a letter he received from Isam Cude, head of the Islamic Society in Gaza, identified above as partially financed by the Union of Good.<sup>196</sup> The contents of the





*The Head of the IHH*

*Bulent Yildirim, head of the IHH, speaks in front of the Mavi Marmara ship, the lead boat of the Gaza flotilla. Yildirim's ideology is close to that of the Muslim Brotherhood. The IHH is very close to Turkey's ruling AKP Party. (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)*

letter are unknown, but Haniyeh said he would respond to the head of UNIW. In the conversation, Ozkaya informed Haniyeh that:

UNIW and TGTV are engaged in some activities regarding the human tragedy endured by the Palestinians in the Region of Rafah, that is, the passage between Egypt and Palestine.

On August 14, Turkish media reported that FIDDER had hosted the Third Congress of the Union of Good at the Park Hotel in Istanbul. Representatives of around 60 humanitarian assistance organizations from almost 50 European and Arab countries were said to have discussed the Palestinian issue and the Israeli archaeological work near the Al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>97</sup> Remarks in support of Palestine were reported by FIDDER Chairman Tahsin Misirli, as well as by IHH leader Bulent Yildirim who was in attendance:

The people of Turkey are there for Palestine, FIDDER Chairman Tahsin Misirli said in a speech delivered at the congress, while calling on those who care about justice to support the Palestinians. Bulent Yildirim of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) said their assistance for Palestinians would continue

until the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. "Ninety-seven percent of this country[']s people] support the Palestinian cause. We have the support of two-thirds of Parliament," Yildirim added, referring to the fact that the Palestinian cause has also found support at the political level in Turkey. "Everybody in the country is mobilized to help Palestine. Even small children are sending their pocket money," he said.<sup>198</sup>

On August 22, UNIW reported that a delegation from Al-Quds International Institution (AQII) visited UNIW and TGTU in a meeting hosted by the Safa Foundation. AQII is a non-profit organization established in Lebanon in 2001 with a permanent headquarters in Jerusalem that, according to IslamOnline, "seeks to keep al-Quds cause alive and pass it on from one generation to another."<sup>199</sup> The AQII Board of Trustees is chaired by Youssef Qaradawi, and until recently its board of directors was headed by Lebanese Faisal Mawlawi, who has also been Qaradawi's deputy at the Union of Good and the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR).<sup>200</sup> During the August meeting, AQII Secretary-General Akram Adlouni reportedly offered and reached an agreement on cooperation with UNIW and TGTU in several al-Quds-related projects.<sup>201</sup> One of these joint projects was to be a global "al-Quds Conference" to be organized by UNIW and TGTU and which was held in November under the title: "Al-Quds International Forum."

## **| November 2007 – Al-Quds International Forum**

The Al-Quds International Forum described itself as follows:

Al-Quds International Forum is an international, humanitarian demonstration for al-Quds (Jerusalem). The Forum is organized by an initiative from Al-Quds International Institution, with cooperation of Turkey's Waqf (Religious Endowment) for Volunteering Organizations (TGTU) and the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World. Participation includes many institutions, associations, federations, and networks, reaching the Arab-Turkish Islamic and Christian, regional and global communities.<sup>202</sup>

In addition to the three "host organizations," a list of twenty-five other organizations participating in the invitations included three NGOs that are known to have been key backers of the Gaza flotilla movement, including the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), the International Campaign for Resisting Aggression, and several syndicates associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>203</sup> The conference program describes the agenda in sober, albeit anti-Israeli, terms, with sessions titled: "al-Quds in Zionist Ideology and Practice" and "The Reality and the Suffering in al-Quds: Insiders' Testimony." However, a Turkish media report indicates that in reality, the conference was a raucous affair calling for violence to defend the Al-Aqsa Mosque:

At the "Al-Quds International Forum" in Istanbul, in which representatives of organizations like Hizbullah [Party of God] and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] also took part, a call was made for "al-Quds [Jerusalem] to be taken back from the Zionists through the use of force." The Feshane International Congress and Exhibition Hall in Istanbul was yesterday the scene of a meeting, entitled the "Al-Quds International Forum," attended by 3,000 members of mostly foreign Islamist organizations and associations, at which slogans were shouted out containing calls for "al-Quds to be taken back from the Zionists through the use of force." At the meeting, during which those in the conference hall continually shouted out "God is most great" during the speeches and

frequently shouted out slogans in Arabic like, “we will be millions of martyrs for Al-Aqsa” and “we will defend Al-Aqsa with our spirits and our blood,” high-level representatives of organizations like Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine also took part. The meeting, attended by approximately 3,000 people, was observed in the front row by figures from Turkey who included Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s adviser Nabi Avcı and former AKP [Justice and Development Party] Parliamentary Deputy Nevzat Yalcintas.<sup>204</sup>

Important leaders of the Global Muslim Brotherhood known to have been invited and/or in attendance included:<sup>205</sup>

- » Raed Salah and Kamal Al Khatib, heads of the Islamic Movement (Muslim Brotherhood in Israel)
- » Mohamed Ali Taskhiri, advisor to the Iranian Supreme Guide, IUMS
- » Ali Akbar Mohteshmy, adviser to Iranian President & Vice-President of AQII Board of Trustees
- » Harith Sulieman Al Daree, President of the Association of Muslim Scholars of Iraq (Muslim Brotherhood)
- » Saleh Alwahibi, Secretary-General of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)
- » Moussa Abu Marzouk, Hamas political leader
- » Akrima Sabri, Khatib of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Mufti of Jerusalem, Union of Good
- » Essam Al-Bashir, Sudanese Global Muslim Brotherhood leader
- » Faisal Mawlawi, head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon
- » Akram Adlouni, AQII Secretary-General
- » Maan Bashour, AQII Lebanon
- » Youssef Qaradawi
- » Rashid Ghannouchi, Tunisian Global Muslim Brotherhood leader living in the UK

#### **Western Participants:**

- » Ramsey Clark, former attorney-general of the US
- » Stanley Cohen, lawyer in the US
- » George Galloway, close ally of the UK Muslim Brotherhood, Viva Palestina flotilla organizer
- » Claire Short, former UK government minister
- » Desmond Tutu, South Africa

Turkish participants were not officially listed, but the UNIW reported that its head, Necmi Sadikoglu, was in attendance and had “special conversations” with Qaradawi, Faisal Mawlawi, Ghannouchi, Al Dari, Maan Bashour, Hanna, and others. FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli was also reported to be in attendance as well as MÜSIAD President Omar Bolat and TGTV Chairman Necati Ceylan.<sup>206</sup>



The conference concluded by issuing "The Declaration of Istanbul in Support of al-Quds," which called for the end of "occupation" in Palestine, the Golan, and Shebaa Farms as well as labeling Israel a racist and terrorist nation.<sup>207</sup>

3. The Zionist occupation of al-Quds – its Western part in 1948 and its Eastern part in 1967 – is racist and terrorist, based on settlements and replacements. It goes against the flow of history and represents the remains of the colonial phenomenon that was based on injustice, oppression, and exaction of rights. Occupation must end in Palestine, the Golan Heights, and the Shebaa Farms. Thus, the powers that struggle against colonialism, injustice, and occupation must back the Palestinian people's resilience and resistance for the sake of freeing their nation.

4. The Zionist movement is racist and terrorist; and the United Nations has before decided that Zionism is a form of racism, as was confirmed in the Durban Conference in 2001.

5. It condemns and rejects the racist, colonialist measures that seek to wipe out the character of al-Quds and to encroach upon the national and religious rights of its resilient citizens. This is primarily done through besieging it with settlement blocs and suffocating it by the Separation Wall in order to displace its people and isolate it from its Palestinian context.

The declaration also called for all forms of "projects" to free Jerusalem including "economic, social, cultural, educational, as well as media-related" projects.

## THE NETWORK MOBILIZES (2008)

2008 saw a solidification and increasing mobilization of the Turkish/MB network. The year began with a MAZLUMDER anti-Israeli demonstration in Ankara followed by the release of an IHH report on Gaza, as well as a meeting between IHH and a Hamas official from Gaza. In the wake of Israeli military action in Gaza, March saw a flurry of activity under the auspices of TGTV, UNIW, and IHH. Following a gap where no known activity could be identified, the 2<sup>nd</sup> al-Quds Conference was held in Istanbul in October where Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal delivered an address. The AQII conference was followed in November by a "Right of Return" conference held in Damascus where Khaled Mashaal raised the idea of sending a flotilla to Gaza in order to break the Israeli blockade, and where well-known Western flotilla leaders were in attendance. The year concluded with the outbreak of the 2008-2009 Gaza War which was accompanied by the launching of the most concentrated and wide-ranging anti-Israeli campaign ever orchestrated by the Turkish/MB network.

### January-March 2008

2008 began with a MAZLUMDER protest near the Israel Embassy in Ankara where MAZLUMDER members chanted slogans against Israel. Umit Mert, the chairman of MAZLUMDER's office in Ankara, said that Israel commits "genocide" against Palestinian people and that everyone should help Palestinians.<sup>208</sup>

On January 30, the IHH held a press conference to announce its report, "Slow Death in Gaza." IHH President Bulent Yildirim read the report accompanied by Palestinian Ambassador to Turkey Nebil Maruf, TGTV President Necati Ceylan, President of the Palestinian Friendship Association Omar Agha and FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli.<sup>209</sup> Yildirim said at the conference:

Israel declares that all Palestinians are terrorists under the pretext that it is for reasons of security. Israel argues that she occupies the Palestinians' land to protect itself. However, the numbers show us who is actually a terrorist and who is innocent. Israel killed 216 Palestinians in 2005, 678 in 2006 and 896 in 2007. The numbers are increasing. The Palestinian groups killed 48 Israelis in 2005, 25 in 2006 and 13 in 2007. The number is constantly decreasing. While Israel is killing civilians outside its borders, Palestinians kill the Israel soldiers who occupy their country. In other words, we should ask who occupies whose land and who attacks whom. The numbers demonstrate this very well.

Yildirim stated that about 1,000 Palestinians and 40 parliament members were kept in Israeli prisons even though they were not guilty. Yildirim mentioned that the siege in Gaza damaged the health, agriculture and fishing sectors and said, "Israel is punishing the Palestinians economically to break the Palestinian resistance. The economic embargo has been transformed into a policy of revenge starting from June 2007. Today, the average per capita income in Palestine has dropped to \$85 dollars. If over 200 thousand unemployed people in Gaza are added to this, we see that almost all the workforce that reaches up to 400 thousand people is unemployed. The unemployment rate has reached 80 percent in the region."<sup>210</sup>

Yildirim was also reported to have defended Hamas, calling it the "people's official representative," and said that since 2006, Hamas had made sure they would not be involved in activities inside Israel.<sup>211</sup>

Nebil Maruf said:

At this point we are waiting for the support of Islamic countries. The Turkish people have stood by our side. We believe that our Turkish brothers will not leave us alone again. I thank all the Turkish people and the Turkish government and the President who decided to help Gaza.<sup>212</sup>

Furthermore, Israeli analysts reported that in January, an IHH delegation met with Ahmed Bahar, described as a senior Hamas activist and acting chairman of Hamas' council in the Gaza Strip. At that meeting, the IHH delegation was said to have explained the extent of the aid given to Hamas in Gaza during 2007 and promised to double such aid in the future.<sup>213</sup>

On February 20, TGTV held an extended board meeting with a special agenda focusing on Israel. Islamic Movement of Israel leader Raed Salah and Islamic Development Bank consultant Prof. Omar Zubeyr of Saudi Arabia participated in the meeting as guests. UNIW Secretary-General Necmi Sadikoglu and UNIW Deputy Secretary-General Ali Kurt were also present at the meeting with more than a hundred NGOs' representatives reported attending.<sup>214</sup> Also reported attending was AKP Deputy Nevzat Yalcintas.<sup>215</sup> At the meeting, Raed Salah "asked for a support against the threat that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is exposed to," and at the end of the meeting, Necmi Sadikoglu was given an award by Prof. Omar Zubeyr and Raed Salah.<sup>216</sup>

During February 29-March 3, Israel conducted Operation Hot Winter, a military campaign in the Gaza Strip in response to rockets fired from the Strip by Hamas into Israel.<sup>217</sup> From the start of the campaign until its conclusion and aftermath, the Turkish/MB network

was engaged in a flurry of activity under the auspices of TGTU, UNIW, IHH, and FIDDER including:

- » On March 3, the UNIW reported that representatives of NGOs in Istanbul met at the IHH headquarters to "determine an extensive and effective action plan for the Palestinians."<sup>218</sup> IHH trustee and Middle East representative Ahmet Emin Dağ reportedly assessed recent developments in Gaza and was followed by a speech by IHH President Bulent Yildirim who said "that in order to promote the sensitivity for Palestinians in Turkish public opinion, it is essential to run extensive campaigns appealing to every faction." Mr. Yildirim also said much was expected of Turkey and that the IHH campaign is expecting "support from all organizations" and called for the assistance of "all non-governmental organizations to the children of the martyred Palestinians." The UNIW also reported that other speeches showed that "the winners of recent incidents were the Palestinians despite their 120 martyrs and deep sorrows and they won a historic victory against the Israelis."
- » On March 3, the UNIW issued a press release accusing Israel of genocide in connection with Israeli military action in Gaza.<sup>219</sup> The statement said "Israel performed the bloodiest massacre of the last forty years in March 1, 2008, targeting even the government building in Gaza."<sup>220</sup> The statement called on "all Muslims to declare mobilization for Palestinian people, Gaza, Masjid al-Aqsa and al-Quds (Jerusalem)."
- » On March 12, the UNIW reported that a 13-member delegation including the UNIW Secretary-General visited wounded Palestinians at hospitals in Cairo, making contacts to provide for medical treatment in Turkey.<sup>221</sup> The delegation also included an AKP deputy, IHH representatives including its Middle East representative Mehmet Emin Dağ, FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli, TGTU Chairman Necati Ceylan, and a member of Board of Trustees of MAZLUMDER. The delegation visited the Turkish and Palestinian embassies and was expected to visit the Egyptian/Gaza border area.
- » Turkish media reported that the IHH was expected to sponsor a "Night of Solidarity with Palestine" on March 12 which would include a message from Hamas Prime Minister Haniyeh.<sup>222</sup>

Following this Gaza-related activity, the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP) was held on March 22-24. The WCMP describes itself as "the premier community of individual donors and foundations of Muslim heritage, established to promote informed and effective giving."<sup>223</sup> Among the seven sponsors of the conference were the Saudi Islamic Development Bank and the Kingdom Foundation headed and funded by Saudi Prince Waleed Bin-Talal, both known to have financed Muslim Brotherhood projects around the world.<sup>224</sup> Also attending were the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and the Qatar Foundation, also known to have financed such projects, as well as a group of organizations representing the US Muslim Brotherhood, including the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Also in attendance was the US Department of State as well as USAID.<sup>225</sup> Turkish participants included IHH, MÜSIAD, and UNIW.<sup>226</sup>



## **Sixth Al-Quds Conference**

The second of the al-Quds conferences sponsored by the Al-Quds International Institution (AQII) was held in Istanbul on October 12-13 and was reported to have included 300 people from 120 organizations representing 30 countries.<sup>227</sup> The UNIW delegation to the conference included its secretary-general as well as FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli. The UNIW reported that during the conference, its secretary-general and other representatives met with and had "special conversations" with Youssef Qaradawi, Faisal Mawlawi, Hamas political leaders Khaled Mashaal and Musa Abu Marzook, Rashid Ghannouchi, Akram Adlouni, Maan Bashour, and Harith al Dhari, all identified earlier in this report as tied to the Global Muslim Brotherhood and/or Hamas.<sup>228</sup> Other participants of interest included Iranian presidential adviser Ali Akbar Velayati, Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood leader Haam Said, Abdul-Ghafar Aziz, deputy leader of Pakistan's Islamic group *Jamaat-e-Islami*, and Abdul-Rasheed Al-Turaby, the head of *Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir*.<sup>229</sup>

Khaled Mashaal addressed the opening of the conference, stating:

the conference represents a step forward on the road for liberating al-Quds and referred to the sufferings of al-Quds population including emigration, Judaization and displacement and termed whatever was going on in al-Quds as very severe.<sup>230</sup>

Mashaal also was reported to have talked about various other issues, including accusing Israel of attempting to destroy the Islamic heritage in Jerusalem and of playing games with the right of return of Palestinian refugees:

Khaled Mashaal talked about the importance of Muassasah al-Quds [Jerusalem Institute based in Beirut and founded in 2003] in the campaign carried for the cause of Jerusalem and emphasized that this institute was an important step in the salvation of Jerusalem.

After this, he discussed the incidents of Akko and stated that this reflected the forced immigration policies of Zionist occupiers against the Palestinians living in the lands occupied after 1948. Mashaal said that Zionist occupiers fought a multi-dimensional war and battled in every field and against everything and used the expression, "they even fight against the tree and the stone." What he meant by this expression was; the occupiers uprooted trees belonging to the Palestinians and collected and hid the stones which frightened them because they would be thrown at them. Khaled Mashaal emphasized that Jerusalem could not be taken back by negotiations. He said that the Jerusalem issue was not discussed during the negotiations anyway because they did not even allow it to be put on the negotiating table. Meanwhile, he also talked about the attempts of occupiers to destroy the Islamic heritage in Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He discussed the plans to construct a special square for Jews next to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and build a Jewish temple there.

...Another important issue discussed by Mashaal regarding Jerusalem was the isolationist policies of the occupiers by construction of walls. He emphasized that the Zionist state tried to make its plans for the Judaization of Jerusalem more effective by constructing walls and leaving the Palestinians outside these walls.

...Khaled Mashaal emphasized that a game was being played during the negotiations regarding the Palestinian refugees' right of return. According to this political game, twenty thousand refugees would be allowed to return and

the right of return for the rest of the refugees would be blocked this way. How slyly the Zionist state plays such games by deceiving eyes and distorting facts is known to us. If it could implement this political game, twenty thousand people would be allowed to return and this would be presented as a big event by media channels that are in the service of the Zionist state and it would demand to drop this issue, never to open it again. However, today around five million Palestinians are living as refugees.<sup>231</sup>

Qaradawi began his remarks to the conference by praising the late speaker of the Yemeni parliament, a leader of the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood known as Al-Islah.<sup>232</sup> He then went on to say that Israel could be defeated by "other opportunities and power sources" in addition to weapons:

Master Yusuf al-Qaradawi stated in his speech that the Ummah of Islam was a great and powerful ummah that had great opportunities but it was in a difficult condition because its power and opportunities were not used properly. The Master gave some details about the power and the opportunities of the Ummah of Islam and reminded us that Muslims had great material and spiritual opportunities. Master Qaradawi stated that weapons alone were not enough and other opportunities and power sources should be exploited properly. Qaradawi pointed out that the occupying Israeli state was always presented as a power that cannot be defeated but in fact it could be defeated and he said, "The important thing is the self-confidence of the Ummah." He emphasized that there were many reasons for the Ummah to feel confident and talked about the importance of unity and solidarity. He reminded us that he did not mean unity in its absolute sense but unity based on truth and goodness as Islam did not strive for a unity based on falsehood and wrongness. Master Qaradawi also talked about seeking a solution to the Palestinian problem and said that Jerusalem was the head of Palestine and thus it was not possible to resolve this issue without Jerusalem as we cannot think of a body without a head. Qaradawi called upon the Palestinians to overcome divisions between themselves and close their ranks and told Khaled Mashaal sitting in front of him, "Your situation is different. You have no excuse. You should definitely overcome divisions and close your ranks." Master Qaradawi criticized harshly the indifference exhibited by world Muslims, associations representing Muslims and NGOs towards the dangers threatening Al-Aqsa today. He said that it was unacceptable for Muslims who organized their first meeting against the burning of Al-Aqsa in 1969 to remain inactive towards a bigger danger threatening the holy shrine.<sup>233</sup>

IUMS and Union of Good official Faisal Mawlawi, also head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon, told Al-Jazeera that some 60 million Qatari riyals (\$16.2 million) had been raised at the conference "to help ease the problems facing our brothers in Jerusalem and support their steadfastness so that they can continue to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem."<sup>234</sup>

The conference's closing statement called on Arab and Muslim governments to break the siege on Palestine and heal the Palestinian rift, denounced the excavations conducted by the Israeli authorities under the Aqsa Mosque, with the consensus that the ideological differences between the factions (Sunni and Shia) should be "subordinated" to Jerusalem. The statement also called on the "Arab and Islamic nation and its rulers to challenge the fear and break the unjust siege on Palestine, and the Gaza Strip in particular."<sup>235</sup>

## Right of Return Conference

On November 23-24, a Damascus conference was held, organized by the Syrian Hamas leadership and known as the Arab International Congress for the Right of Return.<sup>236</sup> According to Lebanese media, the conference was:

aimed at establishing the Palestinian refugees' right of return as a firm Palestinian and Arab principle, refusing any bargaining or trade-off, and rejecting settlement and alternative homeland projects....It also aimed to suggest a mechanism and practical programs for defending the right of return and rallying international support for it.<sup>237</sup>

Various reports claim a participation of 5,000 individuals from 54 Arab and foreign countries and a program consisting of lectures, 22 seminars, workshops, poetry evenings, and art exhibitions showing the Palestinian refugees' conditions.<sup>238</sup> Known participants included Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal, representatives of Islamic Jihad, and Maan Bashour from AQII Lebanon.<sup>239</sup> Turkish/MB network representatives included a TGTU/UNIW delegation comprised of TGTU head Necati Ceylan, UNIW Turkish representative Ali Kurt, and Murat Yasa as well as FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli and Kuwaiti lawyer and UNIW deputy leader Mubarak Al Mutawa.<sup>240</sup>

Also attending the Hamas conference were three Western individuals subsequently tied to the Gaza flotilla movement:

- » Lauren Booth, journalist for Iranian Press TV and Islamic convert, sister-in-law of Tony Blair.<sup>241</sup>
- » Cynthia McKinney, former US congresswoman.<sup>242</sup>
- » George Galloway.<sup>243</sup>

Lauren Booth was reported to have brought a plan to open a ship line between Cyprus and Gaza that would "not only break the siege but also embarrass Israel on the side of democracy and human rights."

In his address to the conference, Hamas leader Mashaal raised the concept of sending a fleet of boats to Gaza in order to break the Israeli blockade:

The exiled political chief of the Palestinian Hamas movement slammed Arab and Islamic states for keeping silent over Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip. "What is happening in the Gaza Strip is a tragedy. Shame on those who stay silent on the criminal blockade that has been imposed on Gaza. Shame on Arab and Islamic regimes and on the international community," Khaled Mashaal told the meeting. "Every Arab country could send a boat to Gaza" to break the blockade imposed since Hamas ousted forces loyal to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in June last year, Mashaal said.<sup>244</sup>

In addition to supporting the right of return, the conference declaration supported "the need to maintain a culture of resistance" and said that the displacement of the Palestinians:

has been at the hands of Zionist forces through the scheme that adopted the methods of terrorism, murder and massacres, which constitutes a crime of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which bear also the responsibility of international forces which supported and supports the Zionist project and provide him with all forms of support and protection.<sup>245</sup>



The declaration also accused Israel of “apartheid,” a common theme of the Global Muslim Brotherhood:

We consider the so-called (Jewish state), planned to complete the displacement of the Palestinians living in their land occupied in 1948, and an attempt to overthrow the right of return, and to devote Jewish Law of Return as a legitimization of the form of apartheid in Palestine, and fueling of the draft settlement at the expense of the Palestinian people and identity.

Finally, referring to the “rape of Palestine,” the conference statement called for the expulsion of Israel from the UN:

The passed 60 years for the rape of Palestine without the return of Palestinians to achieve their homes and lands, the UN body has become obliged to drop the membership of the Zionist entity and expulsion from the international organization that was formed back condition for acceptance.

## **December 2008 Gaza War**

On December 27, 2008, Israel conducted a series of air strikes in Gaza following months of rocket attacks emanating from the territory. According to Western media, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said, “Palestine has never seen an uglier massacre,” and in Damascus, Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal called for a new Palestinian peoples’ uprising against Israel.<sup>246</sup> Turkish media reported on the following strident comment on the Israeli action made by the Turkish Prime Minister accusing Israel of a “serious crime against humanity”:

“Despite the calls to stop attacks, Israeli officials’ statements that operations will last a long time and are in fact open-ended, constitute a serious crime against humanity,” Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday during a party meeting where thousands of his supporters protested the actions of Israel. “I consider these actions by Israel, while we are making an attempt for peace, as delivering a blow to the peace initiatives,” he said. “Killing innocent people, defenseless children and women, bombing civilians and using disproportionate force are unacceptable. This operation is a blow to world peace,” Erdogan said. Erdogan criticized Israel for isolating the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians try to survive under harsh conditions, from the rest of the world. “Turkey will continue to help its Palestinian brothers. Our Health Ministry has initiated a project to bring injured Palestinians to Turkey and has been in contact with the World Health Organization,” he said. Erdogan canceled a telephone consultation with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Saturday, who had been in Ankara on Monday.<sup>247</sup>

Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders and organizations such as Youssef Qaradawi, Tariq Ramadan, the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), the US Muslim Brotherhood, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood immediately began to employ the themes of massacre and genocide in their response to the Gaza events.<sup>248</sup> The Turkish/MB network sprang quickly into action with a three-month anti-Israeli campaign that demonstrated the growing capacity of the network. A UNIW statement on December 28 set the tone for the campaign, calling the air-strikes the “latest brutal massacre” with a “shameful, cursed and disgusting attack”:

We condemn the Zionist occupation country of Israel’s latest brutal massacre and the planned and merciless genocide Israel committed because of the unbelievable

tolerance of the Western world so strongly, which he added to his file of terror he has committed since the day of his foundation. The terrorist country Israel launching fierce actions toward dynamiting the peace and humanity and the welfare in the region at every opportunity, has now martyred more than two hundred Palestinians and injured about 800 Palestinian brothers in sight of the whole world with a shameful, cursed and disgusting attack witnessed by the modern world. Since the year 1948 when it occupied the Palestinian territory, the occupant country Israel who almost every day committed events such as unlawfulness, bombing, murdering, abduction and slaughter of thousands of innocent people and even the babies in their bundles, and who is at the level of *nafs al-ammara* of the humanity, the level thinking of only evil, did nothing different today....

The terrorist country Israel who is dominated by some malicious ideas such as ruling over the world by an ethnicity whose founder will and moving power are elected, regarding people as the creatures to serve the Jewish race and killing of those people is lawful, takes his actions in accordance with these thoughts.... The last part of the series of massacres taking place in Gaza is a very ignoble action performed by an inhumane mentality!<sup>249</sup>

At the same time, an Istanbul protest demonstration was held in Istanbul that featured the Turkish/MB network including IHH, MAZLUMDER, TGTV, and FIDDER. Protesters shouted anti-Israel slogans such as "Down with Israel, down with Zionism" and "Child killer, terror state Israel," and a press release was delivered by IHH President Bulent Yildirim which called the Gaza strikes "terrorism" and said that IHH had initiated "a new aid campaign for Palestine."<sup>250</sup>

On December 28, IHH said that it had been the first aid agency to enter the Gaza Strip after the latest Israeli air strikes and that it had delivered a second convoy of humanitarian aid of five tons of goods worth \$300,000 to Gaza hospitals. IHH also said that it had sent \$130,000 to be delivered to families of the Palestinians killed or wounded in the Israeli strikes.<sup>251</sup> Finally, IHH said that it had organized donation campaigns for Gaza among Turkish energy workers, a group of college students, and children aged 6-12, some of whom donated their allowances.<sup>252</sup> The children's campaign was described as follows:

The children aged between six and 12 marched in Istiklal Street of Istanbul and urged support to Palestine. They shouted slogans such as "Stop Israel, let children not die," and "Istanbul, do something about Palestine."...Members of the Free Children Club took the front lines of the march and shouted slogans in favor of Palestine. The march was supported by the IHH and a number of nongovernmental organizations....The groups gathered in front of Galatasaray High-school and marched until Taksim Square. The children shouted slogans such as "We are all Palestinians, Killer Israel leave Palestine, Stop the war, stop killing children." The protestors carried blood-tainted dolls symbolizing the bodies of children killed in Israeli strikes. About 1,000 people, most of them children, marched in the freezing and rainy weather and received support from citizens and store-owners on the street. The protesters called on Jews in Turkey in a banner that read, "We want Jews in Turkey to oppose the killing of children in Palestine."<sup>253</sup>

On December 31, AKP Deputy and IHH Trustee Zeyid Aslan, head of the parliamentary Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Group, called Israel's attacks "an unnamed genocide that is being gradually implemented."<sup>254</sup>



## PLANNING AND CONFERENCES (2009)

In early January, the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), headed by Youssef Qaradawi, called for a "Day of Anger," and large anti-Israel demonstrations were held in some European countries.<sup>255</sup> Citing Muslim Brotherhood spokespersons in London, Arab media reported later "a coalition of London-based Muslim groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and several Jewish organizations around the globe" were the driving force behind the mass anti-Israeli demonstrations in Europe and America protesting the Gaza action.<sup>256</sup> In line with the Global Muslim Brotherhood's orchestrated protest, the Turkish/MB network reaction to the Gaza war continued until the end of January, involving numerous instances of anti-Israeli political activity, in some cases mobilizing as many as 100,000 demonstrators. IHH was particularly active at this time, announcing that it had sent relief aid to Gaza, much of it apparently sponsored by MÜSIAD. At the end of January, only one week after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, MAZLUMDER issued its "Gaza Pre-Working Report" that concluded that Israel was "not following any limits in terms of atrocity or genocide."<sup>257</sup>

In February, a conference was held in Istanbul at which numerous speakers called for *jihad* against Israel in support of Hamas. A statement was issued by the conference, which declared the obligation of the Islamic world to open all of the crossings into Palestine permanently, and was signed by numerous Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders, some of whom would play a role in the Gaza flotilla. The month of May saw two important conferences held in Istanbul. The first, the "World Popular Conference for the Support of Palestine," was organized by the FIDDER president and attended by a long list of Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders including Youssef Qaradawi, as well as Western individuals related to the flotilla movement and representatives of the Turkish/MB network. One week following the World Conference for the Popular Support of Palestine, on May 30-31, the UNIW held its own conference in Istanbul titled: "International Symposium on Palestine." June through September saw a variety of actions including an important conference on the reconstruction of Palestine sponsored by MÜSIAD. From October through December, IHH was the center of activity, including its coordination of the Turkish leg of a Viva Palestina land convoy to Gaza.

### January 2009 – Gaza War Reaction Continues

On January 2, following Friday prayers, a demonstration took place organized by a coalition called "Friends of Palestine" that included IHH, MAZLUMDER, and a number of other organizations. A crowd of 10-20,000 people in Beyazıt Square burned Israeli flags, shouted or carried banners with such slogans as "Everywhere is Gaza and We are all Qassams!" "Israel, You Will Be Drowned in The Blood That You Spilled!" and "Long Live The Hamas Fighters, You are the Pride of the Ummah"; carried the flags of Hamas and Hizbullah; and waved posters of Palestinian "martyrs."<sup>258</sup> FIDDER officer Hasan Bereket was reported to have addressed the crowd stating:

The Grandchildren of Abdulhamid, I salute you in the name of Gaza and Palestine. You always showed us by your demonstrations and aid activities that the Palestinian people are not alone. We thank our brothers in Turkey. The blood of your ancestors is on those lands. Gaza belongs to all of us. Palestine belongs to all of us. We are all Palestinians. Allah the Great will surely reward you for your



support. Your activities will prevent the government from implementing the cooperation agreements and Israel will be isolated and will be weakened!"<sup>259</sup>

On January 3, Israel invaded Gaza in an action lasting until its withdrawal on January 21. The Turkish/MB network was involved in numerous anti-Israeli actions following the Gaza invasion, including:

- » On January 4, FIDDER officer Hassan Bereket played a role at a demonstration in Diyarbakir organized by MAZLUMDER and other organizations.<sup>260</sup> More than 100,000 people were reported to have participated, burning US and Israeli flags and shouting support for Hamas and carrying Hamas flags as well as portraits of deceased Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin.<sup>261</sup> IHH leader Bulent Yildirim reportedly addressed the crowd stating, "I bring you the glad tidings of the victory won by Hamas" and called on all Muslims to provide material and moral support. FIDDER officer Hassan Bereket also spoke, saying, "I am sure that all those killed in Gaza are watching us from heaven right now."<sup>262</sup>
- » On January 9, MAZLUMDER volunteers went to the Venezuelan Consulate General in Beyoğlu to deliver a thank-you letter destined for Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who had expelled the Israeli ambassador from the country. The MAZLUMDER Istanbul Bureau Chief Ayhan Küçük made a statement demanding the expulsion of all Israelis from Turkey, the closing of all Israeli consulates, embassies, and representative offices, the abolition of all bi-lateral agreements and military ties, and the halting of all Israeli air traffic. He said, "This silence against an evident murder has exposed that the leaders who position themselves according to world powers do not in fact rule their own countries and are actually not independent economically, politically and militarily," adding "I congratulate Dear Hugo Chavez and the Venezuelan people and we expect the world leaders to follow the same honorable attitude."<sup>263</sup>
- » On January 10, Hassan Bereket was reported to have addressed a demonstration in Sivas organized by 23 NGOs, including MÜSIAD and IHH.<sup>264</sup> Some 20,000 people burned and trampled the Israeli flag, carried baby dolls painted red, and shouted support for Hamas. Bereket told the crowd, "Palestine is not just the Palestinians, there is the blood of your fathers" and called for the liberation of Palestine.
- » On January 18, four NGOs including MÜSIAD and MAZLUMDER organized a rally of 60,000 people in Ankara. The crowd carried flags and shouted slogans such as "Greetings to Hamas, the resistance continues," "Down with Israel," and "Collaboration with Israel is a crime."<sup>265</sup>
- » On January 21, FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli joined the head of the Federation of International Economic and Cultural Affairs in front of the Consulate General of Israel in order to protest the Gaza action. A black wreath was left at the consulate, followed by a press release harshly criticizing Israel.<sup>266</sup>

Meanwhile, IHH continued to send aid to Gaza both during and after the conflict. Much of that aid appears to have been sponsored by MÜSIAD:

- » On January 9, IHH announced that as part of a joint aid campaign with MÜSIAD, it had sent a Turkish Airlines cargo plane to Gaza loaded with 26 tons of relief material worth TL 631,838, enough for an entire hospital.<sup>267</sup>
- » On January 16, IHH announced that it had a third plane loaded with relief materials to the Gaza Strip in cooperation MÜSIAD. The Turkish Airlines cargo plane was said to be carrying 36.5 tons of medication, medical equipment and foodstuff. Eyüp Akbal, member of the MÜSIAD executive board, stated, "We

as MÜSIAD will carry on supporting our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters in Gaza. Working to end the Israeli aggression is as significant as extending aid to the region.”<sup>268</sup>

- » On January 20, IHH announced that it had dispatched a ship loaded with 1,000 tons of relief materials to Gaza. Ali Gür, vice president of MÜSIAD, and Akif Bayramoğlu, secretary of the Association of Anatolian Businessmen (ASKON), said they would continue to send aid to the people of Gaza.<sup>269</sup>

Also, on January 17 IHH announced that Bulent Yildirim and IHH board member Osman Atalay, along with Mehmet Kaya of the German-based charity “Wefa” and Ayhan Kucuk, Istanbul chief of MAZLUMDER, had entered Gaza along with four surgeons and one nurse from Turkey. IHH said it was the first team among international aid organizations to enter Gaza.<sup>270</sup>

During this time, IHH was also publicly engaging with Hamas and its leader:

- » IHH leader Bulent Yildirim met with Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in Damascus on January 15 where Mashaal thanked the Turkish people for their support, stating, “In the war that we are in there are winners and losers. Those who resist in Palestine and the Turkish people are among the winners.”<sup>271</sup>
- » On January 16, senior Hamas spokesman Abu Zuhri and the deputy president of IHH held a joint press conference at an Istanbul hotel where Zuhri stated that Hamas was fighting because they refuse to approve Israel’s right to existence and said there was not a single military complex in Gaza.<sup>272</sup>
- » On February 1, Bulent Yildirim attended a Hamas rally in Gaza where he said that “all of those who do not stand by the Palestinian people will meet their end and destruction and that “all the Islamic people will demand that their leaders become like Rajab Tayyab Erdogan.”<sup>273</sup>

IHH also took the opportunity at this time to engage in propaganda activities, including:

- » Announcing on January 9 that all expenses of children orphaned during the Israeli operation and existing Palestinian orphan children would be met by the IHH.<sup>274</sup>
- » Announcing on January 6 that more school children would be donating their allowance to the IHH Gaza aid campaign.<sup>275</sup>
- » Announcing on January 28, “Israeli troops committed mass killings in Gaza to break the resistance.”<sup>276</sup>

The UNIW was also active during this time. On January 21, it reported that a Palestinian Solidarity Platform delegation including over three hundred NGOs visited the Embassy of Egypt in Ankara to talk about “the latest heinous crimes in Gaza.” The delegation included the UNIW secretary-general and his deputy as well as the president of the TGTV. The UNIW secretary-general told the ambassador, “It is not possible to accept heinous massacres of Israel, and there cannot be any justification to cover this ethnic cleansing.”<sup>277</sup>

On January 22, a “consultation meeting” to discuss Gaza was held at the MÜSIAD Istanbul headquarters organized by UNIW that included hundreds of NGOs and relief organizations in Turkey. A representative of IHH was reported in attendance. The TGTV president said, “It cannot be accepted to be silence or neutral on these heinous crimes of the Israeli Army who destroys mosques, clinics, doctors, ambulances,

designated by the US as a terrorist entity in 2002 due to its connections to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.<sup>283</sup>

According to the BBC and other reports on the GACC conference, over 300 individuals, including many conservative Sunni sheikhs and scholars as well as Hamas leaders, heard “speaker after speaker call for *jihād* against Israel in support of Hamas.” According to the report, the choice of Turkey as a venue was important:

Arab hardliners were keen to put aside historic differences with the Turks. As one organiser put it: “During the past 100 years relations have been strained but Palestine has brought us together.” Many delegates spoke appreciatively of the protest by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who stormed out of a Davos debate on Gaza two weeks ago.

The BBC report also said that in closed meetings, delegates focused on the creation of a “third Jihadist front” – the first two being Afghanistan and Iraq. The report cited Saudi religious scholar Mohsen al-Awajy as stating that “Gaza gives us power, it solves our differences. We are all now in a unified front against Zionism.” Finally, the BBC report noted that:

To laughter in the audience, another speaker noted that twice as many babies were born as children were killed during the war. Every death, I was told, was a martyrdom on the road to liberation.

The UNIW reported that its general coordinator, Cihangir İşbilir, and his deputy participated in the conference where they met with prominent figures and NGO representatives.<sup>284</sup>

A statement on Gaza was issued following the conference signed by ninety of the conference participants.<sup>285</sup> The statement affirmed that the Gaza “victory” had been “achieved through fulfilling the religious obligation of *jihād* in His way” and, among “legal judgments” declared the two following obligations for the Islamic Nation:

5. The obligation of the Islamic Nation to find a fair formula of reconciliation between the sons of the Palestinian people, under whose responsibility a legitimate authority will be formed that will attend to the fixed norms and the legitimate and national rights; and will carry on with the *jihād* and Resistance against the occupier until the liberation of all Palestine.
6. The obligation of the Islamic Nation to open the crossings – all crossings – in and out of Palestine permanently, in order to allow access to all the needs of the Palestinians – money, clothing, food, medicine, weapons and other essentials, so that they are able to live and perform the *jihād* in the way of Allah Almighty. The closure of the crossings or the prevention of the entry of weapons through them should be regarded as high treason in the Islamic Nation, and clear support for the Zionist enemy.

Signatories of interest included:

- » Harith Sulaiman al-Dhari, Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood
- » Daud Abdullah, Muslim Council of Britain<sup>286</sup>
- » Rashid Ghannouchi, a Tunisian Muslim Brotherhood leader living in the UK
- » Muhammad bin Nasr al-Hazmi, Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood and aboard Gaza flotilla
- » Muhammad Sawalha, Hamas/MB leader living in the UK



- Hamam Sa'id, Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood leader
- Walid Musa'id al-Tabtabai, Kuwaiti parliamentarian, aboard Gaza flotilla<sup>287</sup>

On March 3, the UNIW Secretary-General told Turkish media that the UNIW would press for legal charges against some 70 Israeli politicians and commanders over their involvement in the Gaza operation, including the Israeli chief of staff and the foreign minister. The UNIW Secretary-General said, "We want to make sure that Israeli commanders will not even dare to set foot into other countries."<sup>288</sup> UNIW officials said they had contacted representatives of NGOs in several European countries to assure them that any charges brought against the Israeli leader would have the backing of the UNIW. The UNIW also said that the organization would provide legal assistance to NGOs in Europe to make sure their appeals to European courts were successful, indicating that the UNIW would hold an international symposium in Istanbul in May to discuss the Palestinian situation.

## World Popular Conference for the Support of Palestine

A conference was held on May 22-23 in Istanbul and titled, "World Popular Conference for the Support of Palestine." The conference was sponsored by a group of Turkish organizations including FIDDER and IHH, as well as the IUMS and the GAAC, and coordinated by FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli and IHH Middle East representative Ahmet Emin Dag.<sup>289</sup> The conference brought together Youssef Qaradawi and important



### *Creating a "Third Jihadist Front"*

*Muslim Brotherhood leaders and regional Islamists met in Istanbul to discuss opening another jihadist front in the Gaza Strip, after Afghanistan and Iraq.*

*From left to right*

*David Abdullah, Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain, an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK, September 26, 2004. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)*

*Kuwait Islamist MP Jamaan Al Harbush, left, looks at a poster portrait of MP Dr. Waleed Tabtabai, who is absent from the National Assembly session in Kuwait because he was aboard one of the Gaza flotilla ships, June 1, 2010. (AP Photo/Gustavo Ferrari)*

leaders of the Union of Good, AKP, the Global Muslim Brotherhood, the Turkish/MB network, and the Western flotilla movement. Conference participants included:<sup>290</sup>

- » Youssef Qaradawi
- » Mohammed Akram Adlouni (Lebanon), AQIII
- » Abd al-Rahman Siwaral-Dhahab (Sudan), Deputy Head of Union of Good, former Sudan President
- » Osama Hamdan (Lebanon), Hamas
- » Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah (Lebanon), Hizbullah
- » Raed Salah (Israel), Islamic Movement
- » Issam El-Bashir (Kuwait), Global Muslim Brotherhood
- » Awad Al-Qarni (Saudi Arabia), Muslim Brotherhood<sup>291</sup>
- » Harith Al-Dari (Iraq), Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood
- » Anwar Ibrahim (Malaysia), Global Muslim Brotherhood
- » Fehmi Huveyd, likely Fahmi Huwaydi, International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS)
- » Hafidzi Mohd Noor (Malaysia), aboard flotilla
- » Jamal Badawi (USA), leader in the US Muslim Brotherhood
- » Abdullah Bin Bayh (Saudi Arabia), European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR)
- » Ahmed Al-Rawi (UK), former FIOE President, Union of Good
- » Rashid Ghannouchi (UK), Global Muslim Brotherhood
- » Ahmed Jaballah (France), French Muslim Brotherhood and FIOE official
- » Şükri Ramiş (Bosnia), Bosnian Muslim Brotherhood and FIOE
- » Mohammed Al Hawari (Germany), ECFR
- » Basir Nafi (UK), Palestinian Islamic Jihad

#### **Western Participants:**

- » Mads Gilbert (Norway), anti-Israeli activist
- » Tom Nelson (United States), Free Gaza Movement, on board flotilla
- » Mattias Gardell (Sweden), European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG), on board the *MV Marmara*

#### **Turkey:**

- » Bulent Yildirim, IHH
- » Necati Ceylan, TGTV

- » Necmi Sadıkoğlu, UNIW Secretary-General
- » Mubarak Mutawa, UNIW
- » Gazi Misirli, MÜSIAD
- » Erol Yarar, first President of MÜSIAD
- » Zeyid Aslan, AKP Deputy, President of the Palestinian Friendship Committee
- » Cemal Yılmaz Demir, AKP Deputy

Various sources reported on speeches made at the conference, giving a taste of what occurred. A Palestinian/Islamic portal reported the following comments:<sup>292</sup>

Essam Al-Bashir (opening speech):

- We don't want just speeches and words because they will be forgotten.... We have to translate them into strategic planning and projects to change the realities in Gaza and Palestine in general.

Raed Salah:

- This is the real face of the Zionist.
- If there is justice in the political world, the Zionist is equal to the Nazis.
- In fact they are much worse. They have committed hundreds of holocausts.
- But the Palestinian people will not give up and they will continue to resist this terrible holocaust.

Youssef Qaradawi:

- Our help is not a contribution - it is an obligation, a responsibility (we must not shirk).
- We have to support the resistance through financial means.
- We (the Muslim government) must sever our relationship with Israel.
- If Israel stays, it will spell the end of the whole world.

Mubarak Al-Mutawa:

- Stressed that the Islamic societies, as well as civil and popular organizations, will not give up and will provide all possible support to the Palestinian people.

Necmi Sadıkoğlu:

- We must create an international superpower to defend Palestinian rights by legal and peaceful means; if the Muslim world had an international force, the situation would have been resolved in a just Palestinian cause.

Gazi Misirli:

Said that MÜSIAD's participation in the Palestine Conference is important, because the popular NGOs are those who revive in the souls of the Turks the Palestinian problem, which is widely absent in Turkey; this is a forceful message to both inside and out (of Turkey), saying that Turkey is now able to step in and deal with the problems, especially the Palestinian.

Tom Nelson called for war crimes prosecution.



Mohammed Akram Adlouni:

- Mr. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in Davos acted as the Sultan Abdul Hamid. Turkey is still the caliphate as the center of our lives in our heart. I wish all Arab countries would follow Turkey's example by taking this stance. Israel is trying to Judaize Jerusalem.

Turkish media reported that a message from Hamas Prime Minister Haniyeh was read to the conference, calling on the participants to "never give up resistance" and expressing his hope that this kind of conference would someday be held at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.<sup>293</sup>

A conference declaration was also issued with the following points of interest:<sup>294</sup>

One: the Palestinian people have fair, non-negotiable rights as the rest of the human people on earth just as their right of return, establishing their independent country, their free use of their resources, as well as to feel free and secured. The international community and activists of humanity and justice around the world should help them to achieve all this as it is guaranteed by the international law.

Two: the current occupation regime in Palestine represents a colonial example which no longer exists in today's world. The Zionists established a racist country on Palestine, using killing, displacing people...etc. and without any legal law to protect them. The occupation keeps violating the laws and the rights of the Palestinian people in addition to the ethnic cleansing, occupying the land, mass transfer and many other violations for the international law.

Seven: the Palestinian people have the right to resist the occupation and to defend his land by all means and this right is confirmed by the United Nations charter. And for this the Palestinian people should receive support from the international community and freedom supporters in this world.

## International Symposium on Palestine

One week following the World Conference for the Popular Support of Palestine, from May 30-31, the UNIW held its own conference in Istanbul titled, "International Symposium on Palestine."<sup>295</sup> In addition to UNIW leaders, the conference advisory board included MÜSIAD leader Gazi Misirli and FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli as well as MÜSIAD founder Erol Yaar and Ahmet Varol, a Turkish journalist who would be on board the *Marmara* during the Gaza flotilla crisis.<sup>296</sup> The organizers reported some 2,000 participants and presenters who included:<sup>297</sup>

- » Dr. Gulam Nabi Fai (USA), UNIW/Kashmir-American Society/Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
- » Dr. Azzam Tamimi (UK), Hamas/UK Muslim Brotherhood
- » Fehmi Huveydi (Egypt), likely Fahmi Huwaydi, International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS)
- » Isam Cude (Palestine), UNIW and Islamic Society
- » Necmi Sadikoğlu (Turkey), UNIW Secretary-General
- » Necati Ceylan (Turkey), TGTV President

- » Erol Yarar (Turkey), President, Palestine Solidarity Platform, founder MÜSIAD
- » Raed Salah (Israel), Islamic Movement
- » Zeyid Aslan (Turkey), AKP Deputy (Palestine Friendship Committee), IHH Trustee
- » Mubarak Al-Mutawa (Kuwait), UNIW Secretary-General, aboard flotilla

The conference published a set of papers written by conference participants.<sup>298</sup> Perhaps the most important of the contributors was UK Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood leader Azzam Tamimi who wrote:

- » The “ludicrous claims of a Jewish conspiracy” in the Hamas charter will be replaced by an emphasis on the “racist nature of the Zionist project.”
- » That it is unlikely that Hamas will ever recognize the right of Israel to exist as it is an “enclave planted in the heart of the Muslim world in order to obstruct the revival of the Ummah.”
- » That suicide bombings “are seen as the only means of pressuring the Israelis, both state and society, to recognize the rights of the Palestinians and to agree to a cease-fire deal that would at least spare the civilians.”
- » That “another scenario that is prevalent within the thinking of some intellectual Hamas quarters is that so much will change in the world that Israel as a Zionist entity may not want, or may not have the ability, to continue to be in existence. As a matter of principle, Muslims, Christians and Jews can live together in the region as they lived together for many centuries before.”

The final statement of the International Conference on Palestine contained the following points of interest, once again demonizing and delegitimizing Israel:<sup>299</sup>

The following decisions were taken in the “International Conference of the Palestine neighborhood”:

4. The Conference affirms that the occupation of the State of Israel since its foundation, and that its presence in the Palestinian territories, is contrary to historical facts, social, cultural and international laws.
5. The Conference affirms that the most important project for the extremist government of Benjamin Netanyahu, which was established recently, is the liquidation of Muslim citizens, Christians and Judaizing the region as it was in previous governments, and that it must respond to these attempts seriously.
6. The Conference affirms ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories immediately, and that the Palestinian people’s resistance to this unjust occupation as legitimate resistance.
7. The Conference affirms the right of return of refugees and the basis of its origin, and that it must advocate and support this right, which will last until the return of refugees to their homeland.
14. The Conference affirms the need to establish a fund to support strategic, legal, professional efforts for an independent Palestine with legal responsibilities on behalf of the oppressed Palestinians in the international courts, and support the fund in all areas.

16. The Conference recommends that products be boycotted by all bodies and institutions that support this occupation, the brutal oppressor, and choose alternative products.

20. The organizing body of the Conference and its participants provide thanks to Mr. Abdullah Gul, President of the Republic of Turkey, and to Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister, and his government and the Turkish people for their attention to the Palestinian people and their support for them.

## **| June-September 2009**

On June 12, Turkish media reported that the Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister, identified as Muhammet Avam, visited the headquarters of the Büyük Birlik Partisi (Grand Union Party) accompanied by the Palestinian Minister of Health Besim Naim, FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli, MAZLUMDER Secretary-General Faruk Unsal, and IHH Vice-President Hüseyin Oruç. The BPP leader was reported to have said, "Israel's embargo should be removed and all the states in the world recognize the Palestinian State."<sup>303</sup>

Around the same time, Turkish media reported that MÜSIAD, in partnership with a number of other NGOs, would be hosting a forum in Istanbul on June 17-18 aimed at bringing together 1,000 Turkish and international businessmen in order to develop \$300 million in reconstruction projects for Gaza. The project was seen as including "a massive reconstruction of hospitals, schools, social areas and housing." MÜSIAD was reported to be at the forefront of the Gaza reconstruction effort.<sup>301</sup> The conference, titled "The First International Conference to Build Gaza," was organized under the auspices of a new organization closely tied to the new Turkish/MB network called, "The Commitment Campaign to Turkey," headed by its secretary-general, Gazi Misirli.<sup>302</sup> The Commitment Campaign was said to have been started by thirty Turkish NGOs, inspired by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's "One Minute" stance in Davos and serving as a means of new business cooperation between Turkey and the Middle East.<sup>303</sup> Participants in the conference included AKP Deputy Irfan Gündüz representing Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, Gaza Mayor Refik Mekki, the Chairman of ITO, Murat Yalçınbaş, MÜSIAD members, and businessmen from the Islamic world.<sup>304</sup> At the conference, an agreement was reached to purchase 2,000 prefabricated houses to be used for the "reconstruction of Palestine."<sup>305</sup>

On July 31 a new initiative was launched that is likely the same as the "Commitment Campaign" and called "Türkiyeye Vefa Girişimi" (Loyalty to Turkey). The purpose of the initiative was said to be to working with Arab businessmen who had studied in Turkey before returning to the business world in their home countries.<sup>306</sup> Leaders of Loyalty to Turkey were identified as:

- » Gazi Misirli, MÜSIAD Secretary-General
- » Dr. Ammar Ibrahim, Sudanese Businessmen's Union
- » Tahsin Misirli, FIDDER
- » Omer Bolat, former head of MÜSIAD

The group was reported to be planning to screen a 25-second promotional film to be shown on Arab TV stations and introduced on Al-Jazeera, calling on people from the Arab world to contribute to Turkey by purchasing Turkish goods, doing business with



Turkish entrepreneurs, and traveling to the country. The group also took credit for some 3,000 thank-you letters to Erdogan.

On September 18, MAZLUMDER staged a demonstration in front of the Israeli Embassy in honor of World al-Quds Day.<sup>307</sup> Some 30 people were reported to have carried pictures of Palestinians killed in the attacks and shouted "Down With Israel." At the demonstration, MAZLUMDER Chairman Ahmet Faruk Unsal called Israel "the Zionist occupiers" and said that "the common conscience" would destroy Zionism:

Unsal said that according to the UN General Assembly decision on 1947, the Palestinian lands were divided between Palestinians and imported Jews and Jerusalem got international status. This decision was finalized when the Zionists founded a structure called Israel on May 14, 1948. Unsal said that Israel expended its occupation with each passing day with the help of power and support it receives from global capitalism. He argued that the United Nations 1947 decision intended to change the demographic structure of Palestine by settling imported Jews to the lands that they occupied.

Unsal emphasized that with the foundation of Israel the Zionist occupiers violated the Muslims' freedom of religion, freedom of expression and right to live and said that their most brutal attack was on Gaza at the beginning of year 2009. Unsal said that the common conscience of humanity composed of the Jews, Christians and Muslims would destroy Zionism which damages humanity and after this Jerusalem as well as the rest of Palestinian lands would become the best example of peace and cohabitation just like it was in history.<sup>308</sup>

## **October-December 2009 – IHH in the Spotlight**

October saw two actions by IHH which centered on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. On October 6 IHH President Bulent Yildirim read a press statement on behalf of a group of Turkish NGOs that had organized an Istanbul demonstration in response to events taking place at the mosque.<sup>309</sup> Yildirim said in his speech:

Gaza led to a regional war, the Al-Aqsa Mosque incident leads to a world war. Al-Aqsa Mosque must be protected for peace and happiness. Al-Aqsa Mosque does not belong to only Palestinians, but to all Muslims. All Palestinians will try to overcome the Israeli police barricade, if necessary, to protect Al-Aqsa....20 thousand people entered from the Maghreb door and attacked Al-Aqsa, Palestinian youth inside the Mosque tried to prevent them....Over 60 Palestinians wounded in Jerusalem. One million Jews are called to attack Al-Aqsa by Zionist Israel. The decision to occupy Al-Aqsa until the end of 2009 has been made. The aim is conversion of Aqsa to a synagogue....We call all sides in Turkey to support Al-Aqsa Mosque....This is Turkey's territorial land, a land registered to Turkey. Turkey should respond to this attack as the same way it would respond to any attack on its own land....Organization of Islamic Conference should gather immediately and should take several decisions, including cutting all diplomatic relations with Israel, if necessary. Israel's attacks will be shaped according to the reaction from the world.

Protesters were reported to have shouted slogans in solidarity with Palestinians, then burned the Israeli flag.

On October 26, the UNIW reported that together with TGTU it had hosted a program centered on Al-Aqsa titled: "Our Heritage Is in Danger."<sup>310</sup> The program featured

Muhammad Demirci, president of the Association for Protecting and Maintaining Ottoman Heritage in Adjacency of Quds, and Raed Salah who

spoke to the attendees via satellite system informing them about the latest threatening situation in Bait al Maqdes and the Holy Quds. Sheikh Salah pointed out the very dangerous attempts of occupation forces aiming to full destruction of the Masjed al Aqsa and establishment of their claimed Solomon Temple. He said: "We are not alone in our struggle; we are with our brothers in Turkey."

The program ended with the presenting of gifts to Bulent Yildirim of IHH and Prof. Dr. Ahmet Ağırakça of the Civilization Association for their support in the cause of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The ICT has reported that in November, IHH sent an individual identified as Izzat Shahin to open a West Bank office in addition to its Gaza office. The ICT report described Mr. Shahin's work as follows:<sup>311</sup>

Shahin started work supporting Hamas "charitable societies." He 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." His activities were thwarted by the Israeli security forces. In April 2010 he was detained for questioning on suspicion of involvement in financing terrorism and supporting Hamas, and was deported from Israel immediately after his interrogation in compliance with an official Turkish request.

In December, the IHH coordinated the Turkish leg of a Gaza land convoy originating in the UK and sponsored by Viva Palestina, an organization supported by the UK Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>312</sup> On December 19, Palestinian media reported that the convoy had left London on December 6 with 80 vehicles and had arrived in Turkey, where 62 additional vehicles were donated by IHH.<sup>313</sup> After being welcomed in Istanbul by crowds and a demonstration featuring George Galloway, representatives of the convoy visited the Turkish Parliament where they met with Turkey's deputy prime minister, foreign minister, humanitarian minister, and the speaker of the house in a meeting at the Turkish Parliament. The convoy delegation included IHH President Bulent Yildirim, IHH Trustee and AKP Deputy Zeyid Aslan, and Kevin Ovenden, head of the British group in the convoy. The convoy also met the Palestinian Ambassador Marouf to inform him about the convoy.<sup>314</sup>

Turkish media reported that five AKP deputies and 200 Turkish citizens took part in the convoy that was allowed to pass through Egypt into Gaza on January 7, after AKP officials, including a representative of Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, intervened with Egyptian authorities.<sup>315</sup> Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh welcomed a group of convoy representatives that included IHH President Yildirim and MAZLUMDER President/IHH Trustee Ahmet Faruk Unsal. Haniyeh reportedly gave a letter to Yildirim written to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, inviting him to Gaza.<sup>316</sup> Haniyeh addressed the visitors, stating:

All the Palestinians respect you. You reached Gaza with great effort, after all hurdles.

We followed you from the beginning, lived and felt your difficulties with you, prayed to Allah for your safety. There is a great love and happiness in the hearts of the people of Gaza, because you came here. I see your visit as an opportunity. We offer our love and respect for our brothers in Turkey. And as leaders, as well as the government and the people, we send our love to Turkey.

Haniyeh also thanked the IHH for their help, saying the help is the symbol of the “importance of Islamic brotherhood.”<sup>317</sup>

Yildirim announced that IHH would later go to Palestine by ship to break the Israeli embargo and thanked Jordan and Syria for unidentified contributions. In addition, keys for the vehicles brought by the convoy were handed over to Hamas in a ceremony attended by Yildirim, George Galloway, the vice president of the Saadet Party, and a group of AKP deputies including Murat Mercan, who also heads Parliament’s Foreign Relations Commission.<sup>318</sup> Haniyeh’s remarks at the key ceremony were reported as follows:

“We still haven’t forgotten Prime Minister Erdogan’s courageous act in the face of Israel’s attacks and blockade,” he said, referring to Erdogan’s walking off the stage during a panel discussion in Davos last year in protest of Israeli attacks on Gaza last January after an angry exchange with Israeli President Shimon Peres. Haniyeh said he attached great importance to Turkey’s stance regarding the rights of Palestinians, noting, “With the new policy Turkey has been pursuing, the Middle East is also being reshaped.”

He said they had followed the journey of the convoy from the start, seeing the difficulties they had to face. He said those who finally made it to Gaza on Wednesday night were “true heroes.” During his meeting with the deputies, he also thanked President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Erdogan and the Turkish nation for their support. Haniyeh also noted that the region where new homes will be built with cement from the Turkish Red Crescent will be named after Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the Ottoman emperor who conquered Istanbul in 1453.<sup>319</sup>

The Syrian Ministry of Information reported that in another speech during a convoy welcoming ceremony in the Syrian port city of Latakiah, Yildirim thanked both Bashar Assad and Erdogan for “their stances, the ongoing support to the Palestinian people and their efforts to end the siege on Gaza.”<sup>320</sup>

## 2010 – THE GAZA FLOTILLA

### January-March 2010

It is striking that during 2010, with the exception of a single MAZLUMDER action at the beginning of the year, the Turkish/MB network engaged in none of its customary demonstrations, conferences, and other anti-Israeli actions. Instead, the network appeared to turn its entire attention to the planning, execution, and aftermath of the Gaza flotilla.

On January 15, Israeli media reported that MAZLUMDER had petitioned a Turkish prosecutor to start legal proceedings against Defense Minister Ehud Barak for alleged crimes committed against Palestinians during the Gaza war. The MAZLUMDER demand came two days before Barak’s scheduled visit to Turkey in an attempt to improve Turkish/Israeli relations in the wake of the Gaza war.<sup>321</sup>



On January 28, the Free Gaza Movement (FGM) and IHH formally announced the Gaza flotilla:<sup>322</sup>

Today the Free Gaza Movement and the Turkish Relief Foundation (IHH) announce a joint venture, sending 10 boats in the spring of 2010 to the besieged Gaza Strip. Organizations from Greece, Ireland and Sweden have also promised to send boats to join the flotilla with the Free Gaza movement and Turkey. Mr. Bulent Yildirim, chairman of the IHH, said, "We sail in the spring to Gaza, and our last port is freedom; freedom for the 1.5 million Palestinians denied the right to rebuild their society. We will never stop sailing until Israel's siege is lifted." Two cargo ships will be part of the flotilla, one donated by the Malaysia-based Perdana Foundation and one from IHH. Both will be laden with building supplies, generators and educational materials that Israel prohibits from entering Gaza since their brutal attack on the civilian population a year ago. The many passenger boats accompanying the cargo ships will carry members of parliament from countries around the world as well as high-profile journalists and human rights workers. According to the chair of the Free Gaza Movement, Huwaida Arraf, "The illegal blockade on Gaza and Israel's continued intransigence make a mockery of international law. If our governments will not take a stance to stop Israel's abuse of the Palestinian people, global civil society is showing that we will."<sup>323</sup>

On March 31, 2010, IHH leader Bulent Yildirim gave a speech to a massive crowd in the Istanbul neighborhood of Uskudar during the "Days of Istanbul's support of al-Quds." The speech was summarized by the Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC):

In a speech titled: "If Israel [wants to act] wisely, it will not stop the flotilla," Yildirim detailed IHH's radical Islamic worldview. That worldview considers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general and the Israel-Hamas conflict in particular to be a reflection of a wider, global conflict in which imperialist and colonialist forces kill and suppress Muslims in various places worldwide. Bulent Yildirim praised Hamas, slandered Israel, and analyzed for his listeners the purposes of the then-to-be-launched flotilla and the various scenarios he expected to take place during the flotilla.<sup>324</sup>

The ITIC report goes on cite Yildirim's remarks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque:

In his speech, Yildirim emphasized the importance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, for which Muslims must sacrifice their lives and property, and the significance of ruling Jerusalem: "If al-Quds [Jerusalem] will be in Muslim hands, the whole world will to be in Muslim hands." He then added (in an anti-Semitic tone), "the present Rulers of Jerusalem are the Jews, the Zionists. All the suffering and the evil in the world today is a result of that. Therefore Jerusalem must be liberated."

In a possible foreshadowing of the violence to come, the ITIC report also details the third of Yildirim's possible scenarios for the outcome of the Gaza flotilla that he outlined in his speech:

Scenario C: Israel would attack the ship (perhaps hinting at the *Mavi Marmara*), its passengers would defend it, and the ship would eventually "break the siege." Yildirim mentioned that out of five previous attempts to break the siege, three had ended with ships successfully reaching the Gaza Strip despite Israel's threats to open fire. Yildirim further added, "we want to protect the flotilla at this point [that is, to continue the process which started in the past]. What can

Israel do? Will it open fire on us? Those who came on board the ship have taken that into account. We have made up our minds. We've succeeded as soon as we have made up our minds."

Finally, in his speech Yildirim gave the impression that the entire flotilla was a Turkish-sponsored project, inaccurately stating that the flotilla ships were Turkish-flagged:<sup>325</sup>

They [the Israelis] will not attack the flotilla because the ships are sailing under a Turkish flag. A ship is like a country's consulate. Attacking a ship is the same as attacking a Turkish consulate.

## **| April 2010 – The Formal Announcement**

On April 2, IHH reported on the launch of its flotilla campaign: "Palestine Our Destination, Freedom Our Load" with a meeting/press conference at IHH headquarters.<sup>326</sup> The meeting included IHH President Bulent Yildirim, the head of the MAZLUMDER Istanbul branch, TGTV Chairman Necati Ceylan, and the Istanbul provincial heads of the Saadet and BPP parties.<sup>327</sup> Also attending the IHH meeting were flotilla activists from Western countries, including FGM spokesperson Huwaida Arraf, Greek representative Vangelios Pissias, and Mazen Kehil, representative of the European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza. At the meeting, Yildirim revealed that the flotilla was expected to sail in May and would include seven ships in total, two from Turkey, two from Britain, one from Greece and one from Ireland to carry over 1,000 passengers to Palestine including human rights advocates, activists, representatives of civil society, journalists, and artists. Yildirim also said that IHH had already purchased two vessels, one passenger boat and one cargo ship, including the *Mavi Marmara* passenger ship at a cost of TRY 1,800,000 (\$1,200,000) and the cargo ship at TRY 850,000 (\$570,000). Finally, Yildirim said that the ships were financed with "donations to the Palestine fund." Yildirim told the meeting:

This flotilla will serve as a test of sincerity for Israel. If it fires at our ships, it will be interpreted as a declaration of war on our countries. Israel and Egypt should permit this international movement...doing what our states should be doing.

Around the same time, IHH held another press conference, this time on or around the *Mavi Marmara*. The conference was held by IHH President Bulent Yildirim and Mohamed Sawalha, identified only as the Secretary-General of the Islam Expo but also known to be a Hamas/MB operative living in the UK. IHH reported that numerous writers and NGO representatives joined the press conference, as well as three injured Palestinians receiving medical treatment in Turkey and "voluntary human shields" who would be on board the flotilla. At the *Marmara* press conference, Yildirim denied that the AKP was behind the flotilla and that:

Israel is not only acting completely illegal in times of war, but also acting illegal in times of peace. It is Israel killing women and children in war and it is again Israel oppressing women and children under the embargo. The aid for their most basic human needs are not let into Gaza. We, God willing, are going to carry the common conscience of mankind to Gaza.

He added, "We are sailing to Gaza as human shields."

Numerous writers and NGO representatives joined the press conference to give their support. 3 Palestinians injured by the Israeli attacks and receiving

medical treatment in Turkey came to tour the ship that is going to sail to Gaza. Voluntary human shields also visited *Mavi Marmara*, the ship that will carry them to Gaza.<sup>328</sup>

Also at approximately the same time, global media reported that the Gaza flotilla would include not only IHH and FGM but also the European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG), the Greek Ship to Gaza campaign, the Swedish Ship to Gaza campaign, and a flotilla of ships laden with cargo, media, parliamentarians, celebrities, and activists.<sup>329</sup> Later reports added the International Committee to Break the Siege of Gaza (ICBSG) to the flotilla list.<sup>330</sup>

On April 17, Gulf media cited Western flotilla activist Adam Shapiro as saying:

the movement invites participation based on two criteria: the value of their citizenship in deterring Israel from blocking the flotilla, and the amount of hype that participants can create that could help the cause of Gaza and the Palestinians.<sup>331</sup>

On April 15, IHH reported that a delegation had visited Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the Islamic Community of Milli Görüş, and gave information about the ship convoy to Gaza. The delegation was comprised of Bulent Yildirim and other IHH officials, Ahmet Faruk Unsal, chairman of MAZLUMDER and IHH trustee, and Mohammed Sawalha, identified only as a "Palestinian friend from England." IHH reported that the delegation thanked Erbakan for his support.<sup>332</sup>

## **| May 2010 – The Flotilla Launch**

On May 2, MAZLUMDER Chairman Ahmet Faruk Unsal made a statement denying the legitimacy of Israel:

Unsal emphasized that 1948 did not signify the independence of Israel but the declaration of a state for Jews who migrated to Palestine starting from 1917 and settled at the historical and personal lands of the Arabs and occupied it. He said, "Thus the Europeans have compensated for and redeemed from their sins against the Jews during the Second World War not by giving German lands but Arab lands and forced the Arabs who had no responsibility in committing these sins, to pay for it. Through this, the Europeans cleared their conscience and got rid of these people that they could not get rid of, although for centuries they massacred them, kept them away by isolating them in ghettos, forced them to change their religion through inquisitions and sent them to die. Thus, 1948 became the date that Arabs refused to pay the price for things done by others and it was the starting point for occupation and humiliation approved by the Europeans who forced the Arabs to pay for their sins. While these occupations, annexations and oppression take place, they act as if none of these are happening. In a similar manner, they do not mention the cruelty of a country like Israel who is the only one possessing nuclear weapons in the region and who does not abide by any legal or moral criteria when it uses power. Meanwhile, they declare Iran who develops nuclear technology for non-military purposes, a criminal. This is nothing other than carrying out the policies of international powers."<sup>333</sup>

On May 5, IHH reported that it had held a press conference at its headquarters for the release of its West Bank representative Izzat Sahin, who had been arrested by Israel. The press conference included Bulent Yildirim and the head of MAZLUMDER's Istanbul



Branch as well as other NGOs and Mr. Sahin's wife.<sup>334</sup> MAZLUMDER stated that it held demonstrations on Sahin's behalf on May 10 and May 14, and on May 14 it sent lawyers to Israel to help in his defense.<sup>335</sup>

Palestinian media reported that on May 12, a group of UK and French Muslim Brotherhood leaders had visited Istanbul and met with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.<sup>336</sup> The delegation included:

- » Majed al Zeer (UK), Palestinian Return Centre
- » Daud Abdullah (UK), former Secretary-General, Muslim Council of Britain
- » Abdallah Thomas Milcent (France), Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF)
- » Said Ferjani (UK), Muslim Association of Britain
- » Arafat Shoukri (UK), European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza, PRC

The delegation also included Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) founder Massoud Shadjareh and his associate Seyfeddin Kara. An Israeli university report describes the Islamic Human Rights Commission as "a radical Islamist organization that uses the language and techniques of a human rights lobbying group to promote an extremist agenda":

Formed in 1997 by its current chairman, Massoud Shadjareh, the IHRC supports *jihad* groups around the world, campaigns for the release of convicted terrorists, and promotes the notion of a Western conspiracy against Islam. Shadjareh and the IHRC subscribe to the radical Islamist belief that Jewish conspiracies are afoot to undermine Muslims, and they compare Jews and Israelis to Nazis. Members of the IHRC's board of advisors have even called on Muslims to kill Jews.<sup>337</sup>

The purpose of the visit was reported to be as an opportunity to urge Turkey to play a more active role in the Palestinian issue and at the meeting, the delegates raised issues, including Israel accession to the OECD, Israeli settlements, and the Gaza blockade. In return, Prime Minister Erdogan reportedly "promised that Turkey would do all that it could to see the inhumane siege on Gaza lifted and would help the Palestinian people in any other way that it could."

In addition, the European delegation held a lengthy discussion with Numan Kurtulmus, the leader of the Saadet Party and the head of MAZLUMDER.<sup>338</sup>

The Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center reported the discovery of a file found on a laptop on the *Mavi Marmara* that contained minutes of a May 16, 2010, meeting held in Istanbul by the flotilla organizers. Attending the meeting was IHH Vice President Yavuz Dede and representatives of five organizations that were involved. The summary of the minutes of the meeting included the following observation:

Turkey: Government did not announce openly support for mission at first; but last few days, getting direct support from PM and other ministers.<sup>339</sup>

In the minutes it was also written that "if we have any difficulties gov[ernment] will extend what support they can."

On May 22, the *Marmara* and two other ships left Istanbul to rendezvous with the six other ships comprising the Gaza flotilla. Media reports say that the ships were seen off by a wide variety of people, including media people, artists, politicians, and human

rights activists.<sup>340</sup> Prior to the departure, speeches were given by the representatives of NGOs from Malaysia, Kuwait, Algeria, Greece, England, Ireland, and officials from the Free Gaza Movement and IHH.<sup>341</sup> Bulent Yildirim made the following statement to the press at the time of the ships' departure, once again using a Nazi analogy:

Hitler set up prison camps in Europe. Now, Zionism is setting up a prison camp in Palestine. Here, I would like to address Israel: Come on and be wise in managing this crisis. If you try to stop this campaign, you will be isolating yourself from whole world, you will only harm yourself. These are humanitarian aid ships. They are not even carrying one jackknife onboard. There will also be women, children and the elderly onboard those ships. Those ships will also be carrying medical supplies and medicines. We will be carrying 120 different types of medicines onboard.<sup>342</sup>

Yildirim also said, "The Israeli threats do not affect our resolution to reach our destination."<sup>343</sup>

IHH reported that Islamic Movement leader Raed Salah followed directly after Yildirim and "spoke highly of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan," saying "all Arab leaders should take Erdogan as their role model." Salah reportedly added that Turkey supports Palestine, both its people and its government.<sup>344</sup>

MAZLUMDER issued its own statement to the press at the sendoff, once again accusing Israel of genocide, using Nazi analogies and warning of embargoes on Israel in the future:

Current Israeli government causes itself to become isolated by declaring everyone as its enemy. In fact, it is isolating the Jewish people by doing so. It has turned Gaza into a prisoner camp and has been carrying out a genocide. This camp and genocidal acts very much resemble Hitler's actions in history. It is an important duty for all the Jews, especially the Jews from Turkey living in Israel. We are calling out to them and to all people of Israel to stand for justice. We would like them to also know that Jewish people that live in Israel will become totally isolated from the rest of the world thanks to these Israeli policies. Because Israel waged a war against peace and humanity. Soon, they may face great difficulties and embargo because of this reason. If, one day, they turn into an embargo-stricken nation in need of humanitarian aid, everybody in this flotilla campaign will again work with the same degree of determination and passion to break the embargo that will be imposed on them.<sup>345</sup>

It was also reported at this time that MAZLUMDER General Chairman Ahmet Faruk Ünsal and other MAZLUMDER officials would be joining the campaign

Finally, UNIW reported on the comments of its Secretary-General:

"The solution of the Palestinian problem is dependent on the unification of the Ummah," Mutawwa said and stated that this convoy which is the embodiment of the unity of the Islamic World also represents people's conscience. In his message, UNIW Secretary-General Necmi Sadikoglu stated that the Islamic World backed this initiative with all its members, the circles of politics, economy and non-governmental organizations being in the first place, all the institutions and organizations, and said that taking humanitarian aid to Gaza and supporting this movement is the requirement of being human, and went on his speech as follows:

"This movement of humanitarian aid and this noble-hearted group of people should not be blocked. This can be a start for regional and global peace. Our

Palestinian brothers should no longer be aggrieved or suffer. Israel, world public opinion, international organizations and international decision mechanisms will be tested through this initiative. And we will struggle with all our strength for the success of this movement.<sup>346</sup>

The UNIW announcement added that UNIW Deputy Secretary-General and Kuwait Representative Mubarak Al-Mutawa would represent the UNIW in the flotilla.

Iranian media announced that the 19th International Congress of the Muslim Brotherhood Convention would be held in Istanbul on May 26-June 2.<sup>347</sup> The Congress was reported to be part of the 40th anniversary of the Milli Görüş (National Vision) movement to include events centered on discussing “the possibility of establishing a new world” and celebrating the conquest of Istanbul. Scheduled participants in the conference included:

- » Necmeddin Erbakan, former Turkish prime minister
- » Abd al-Rahman Siwaral-Dhahab, Deputy Head Union of Good, former President of Sudan
- » Burhanuddin Rabbani, former President of Afghanistan
- » Abdulhadi Awang, former Prime Minister of Malaysia
- » Ketatini, Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood
- » Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan
- » Khaled Mashaal, Hamas political leader

## Post-Flotilla – Turkish / MB Network Reactions

Before any investigation could have been made or the facts of the matter known, the Turkish/MB network immediately began issuing statements condemning Israeli actions. The statements followed in the wake of a statement issued by the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) on May 31, the same day in which the Gaza flotilla engaged with Israel. The following are the points of the IUMS statement most relevant to the Gaza flotilla:<sup>348</sup>

1) The IUMS confirms that the bleeding wound of this nation for more than sixty years, in Jerusalem [*bayt al-maqdis*] and its wings from the land of Palestine that Allah blessed. It is obligated to the Muslims, wherever they are, to assist their brothers in all forms of *jihād*: with money, self [physical *jihād*], tongue and pen. They must mobilize the well loving powers across the world to stand in one line and condemn the Zionist entity’s crimes against Palestinian human rights, their homes, culture and children; they should strive, with full consciousness and firmness, no restraints attached, to applaud the Palestinian people’s demand for the right of return to its land.

2) The IUMS reaffirms that the courageous Palestinian resistance [*muqawama*] is one of the most noble stances of this nation both in the past and present, and is also a justful, even obligatory act – resisting the occupation, that Islam and other religions had established, and the Geneva Convention and other UN and international organizations’ decisions. Each Muslim must assist the Palestinian resistance in every possible way he can; it deserves to be blessed and praised for the deep consciousness and balanced co-operation it demonstrates, and for



the way it keeps away any disagreements which might divide the Palestinian lines "inside" and "outside." The IUMS reminds the Palestinian resistance on all its factions that the Palestinian blood is sacred, and that they must apply Islamic and national principles when comes to the Palestinian issue; the IUMS calls upon them to stick to this position until victory and liberation are achieved with Allah's will.

5) The IUMS would like to draw the attention to the Palestinian people, especially in the long-suffering, garrisoned Gaza Strip, which faces a harmful, shameful campaign to hunger it, this aside from the daily killings, murders and destructions of its leaders, youth, men, women, children, fields, factories, institutions and houses it has been facing daily for years. It is obligatory upon every Muslim to work in any possible way to lift the oppressing siege, which prevents food, medications and construction materials from getting to the Gazan people; the siege kills its children, women and sick persons slowly. The IUMS points to the clear illegality of closing the border crossings, especially the Rafah Crossing, and would like to remind the Muslim colleagues the Prophetic *hadith*: "A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor humiliates him nor looks down upon him." The IUMS welcomes the latest initiative to open the crossing, hoping that opening the Rafah border will be opened for indefinite period. This heroic, struggling and patient people – as far as all members of the General Assembly of the IUMS are concerned – has to be assisted with charity money, donations, benefits in general and more. Muslims must pull out part of their personal income and food to help their brothers in Palestine. The IUMS would like to refer to the Prophetic saying: "there would not be from us who stays hungry while his neighbor is full and knows about it." In this context, the IUMS would like to articulate its appreciation to all efforts and attempts performed by those liberators from the free people of the world, their institutions and individuals, especially those human convoys which tried to break the oppressing siege by land and by sea and bring necessary food, medications, garments and construction materials to our kinsfolk in Gaza. The IUMS further calls upon the *ulama* to take part in the convoy that it plans to send soon with Allah's will.

## 1. MÜSIAD

MÜSIAD, the first of the Turkish/MB network organizations to react, also issued a statement the same day, accusing Israel of a "blood assault" and calling on the UN and international community to "review their approach to Israel."

"With the most recent assault in international waters of unarmed ships which were carrying only humanitarian aid to Gaza, Israel has shown the entire world that it will not allow any peaceful attempt in the region and will not respect human rights. The attack cannot be approved or backed by any nation in the world. World leaders do not have the luxury to hide themselves behind mere statements. It is high time the world said 'stop' to the perpetrators of the bloody assault," the MÜSIAD statement read and called on the United Nations and the international community to review their approach to Israel.<sup>343</sup>

## 2. UNIW/TGTV<sup>350</sup>

On June 1, UNIW issued a statement accusing Israel of "banditry in international waters":

"Israel's assault on the humanitarian aid ships is inhumane. Israel has once again transgressed the boundaries," Sadikoglu said and called on the Turkish government, Islamic countries and international decision-making mechanisms for urgent intervention. "Israel shed blood in a ship where Turkish flags were displayed. Israel carried out assault on 600 civilians from 50 countries. Israel has lost forever after its assault causing 15 deaths and more than 100 people to get wounded! Israel has made banditry in international waters! It should get its response in the strongest manner."<sup>351</sup>

### 3. MAZLUMDER

On June 1, MAZLUMDER acknowledged that its leaders and members, including its president, Ahmet Faruk Unsal, were on board the flotilla, and issued a statement accusing Israel of "willful murder":

- » The attack which was committed on the humanitarian aid flotilla is barbarous.
- » Israel's raid on the flotilla is totally a willful murder.
- » Israel's raid incongruous with none of local or international law.
- » The attack is actually the start of a war on the whole humanity and the countries of whose citizens were in the flotilla.
- » This attack is a shoot to the hand of humanity which embraces Palestinian people who are exposed to any kind of shortage by being seized.
- » In the perspective of the people who set out with humanitarian purposes this raid is not the first one. Rachel Corrie was also murdered by being grinded under Israeli bulldozers.
- » The attack which appeared today is just an enlarged repetition. It is obvious that Israel behaves like a pirate and makes false demonstrations blatantly. While the quality of the loads and the identities of the crew in the ships are open to any supervision and took place in the records, the Israeli managers do not abstain from making false statements.
- » If Israel's lawless attacks go unpunished, obviously it is going to drag the future of the world into chaos and damage world peace heavily.<sup>352</sup>

The following day, MAZLUMDER announced that it had filed a Turkish criminal complaint on behalf of the victims' families against Simon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, Avigdor Lieberman, Gabi Ashkenazi, and Eliezer Meron and called on Turkish citizens to join the complaints. Before filing the official complaint, the Vice President of MAZLUMDER's Istanbul Branch made a statement accusing Israel of murder and torture:

The lawyer Uzunpinar added, "Today, here, we are filing a criminal complaint against the Israeli authorities with the victims' families for intentional homicide, attempted murder, willful injury, retention of freedom, prevention of the right to travel in international waters, property damage, looting, prevention of communication, torture, and abduction or detention of sea, rail or air transports."<sup>353</sup>

CNN reported that thirty families gave MAZLUMDER power of attorney to file the petition, and more than 50 other families signed it, said MAZLUMDER Chairman Murat Ozer.<sup>354</sup> On June 6, Turkish media reported that Unsal participated in a protest demonstration against Israel in Ankara.<sup>355</sup> Israeli media reported that Ahmet Unsal

along with several *Marmara* passengers had been invited to participate in an event organized by Al-Awda-New York and the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition, scheduled for June 17.<sup>356</sup> However, a prominent blog reported that he was denied a visa to enter the US.<sup>357</sup>

#### 4. IHH

On June 2, Turkish media reported that two AKP deputies, including IHH Trustee Zeyid Aslan, had gone to Israel along with an adviser to the prime minister and a Foreign Ministry deputy undersecretary to help with the release of the passengers.<sup>358</sup> On June 4, IHH issued a statement that accused Israel of a massacre and of being “an empire of lies”:

Brothers and Sisters,

We will be telling about this massacre victims of which are innocent, unarmed civilians, to anyone till the end of time.

There will be no one left unaware of this unjust, cruel and illegal act, all people will condemn it.

Those who attacked us and massacred our friends with firearms are now on another attack mission.

Israeli government who has become a professional liar, is now carrying out a black propaganda campaign against our organization.

We know that they have the best artistic skills when it comes to lying. But, thank God, when we take a look at the international community today, no one seems to believe Israel’s empire of lies.

Israel is accusing us of supporting terrorism. This is the furthest point that their lies can go.

Israel kills innocent civilians, we martyr while trying to save them.

Israel kills babies, we martyr while trying to save them.

Israel dooms people to famine, we martyr while trying to deliver food to them.

Israel deprives people of their right to medication, we martyr while trying to deliver medical aid.

I am calling out to those wise people of conscience with compassion and concern: Which one is the terrorist?<sup>359</sup>

On June 8 IHH officials accompanied by FIDDER President Tahsin Misirli traveled to the southeastern city of Siirt to visit the families of those who were killed and wounded during the flotilla incident. The visit was reported as follows:

...visited the house of Ibrahim Bilgen killed in the same attack and offered their condolences. During their visit IHH Diyarbakır Representative Recep Idikut said that they were in the same ship with Bilgen. IHH Vice President Ahmed Sarikurt stated that Istanbul Fatih Municipality would name a public square after the Gaza aid ship *Mavi Marmara* and said, “In a similar manner, roads and streets will be named after the martyrs of *Mavi Marmara* in other cities and we were informed that a monument would be erected in Gaza for our 9 martyrs. We hope that similar initiatives would be taken for our martyr Ibrahim Bilgen. We



were touched by the arrival of thousands of people from different ethnicities, religious communities and sects to the funeral. During our visits, we were happy to hear demands from the people about ‘when the second ship would travel to Palestine to bring aid.’” After the speeches, Palestinian government representative Tahsin Mısırlı gave Ibrahim Bilgen’s son Yusuf a painting as a present. The committee which made its first visit of condolence in Siirt left the city after its meetings.<sup>360</sup>

## Post-Flotilla – Kuwait

Kuwait and its government, charities, and parliamentarians appear to have played a significant role in the flotilla. Kuwait had its own cargo ship, and eighteen Kuwaiti nationals from the flotilla were reportedly detained by the Israelis, including two of particular importance discussed below.<sup>361</sup> Kuwaiti media reported that the detainees were flown home on an Amiri plane sent by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah and were welcomed in the ministerial protocol hall by National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi, described in media reports as “a wealthy businessman.”<sup>362</sup> The Kuwaiti news agency had reported in May that Kuwait, described as “a main donor for Palestine,” had participated in the flotilla through contributions of several unidentified charities.<sup>363</sup> Another media report cited Senan Al-Ahmad, one of the female flotilla participants, as revealing that Speaker Al-Khorafi had sponsored the charity activity and quoted him as saying, “the charitable act will protect the doer.”<sup>364</sup> A Kuwaiti MP in turn said that al-Ahmad had raised 1.38 million dollars in donations and bought a vessel in Turkey to take part in the aid journey to Gaza.<sup>365</sup> For his part, Al-Khorafi spoke during a celebration held in honor of the flotilla participants. He was reported to have expressed satisfaction over the international community’s reaction towards the flotilla but lamented some Arab nations’ lack of support for Arab causes, indicating that he had received “thank-you notes” from unidentified parties for his contribution.<sup>366</sup>

## Leaders

The most important Kuwaiti flotilla participant was UNIW Deputy Secretary-General Mubarak Al-Mutawa, an attorney known in Kuwait as a prominent Islamist and supporter of conservative Islamic causes such as the *hijab*.<sup>367</sup> Al-Mutawa is known to have been in contact with elements of the Global Muslim Brotherhood since at least 1999 when he appeared at a conference on Kuwaiti POWs with Bassem Hatahet from the Islamic Students Union in Belgium.<sup>368</sup> In December 2001, as Secretary-General of the Kuwait-based International Islamic Committee for Human Rights, Mutawa issued a written request to Pakistan to grant political and humanitarian asylum to Arab and foreign fighters currently in Afghanistan, presumably including Osama Bin Laden.<sup>369</sup> Al-Mutawa has subsequently defended terrorist suspects such as Sheikh Hamed al-Ali in 2005, who allegedly had issued *fatwas* encouraging militants to kill US troops and fight against them.<sup>370</sup>

Al-Mutawa had been a colleague of TGTV President Necati Cylan since at least 2001, when together they announced the establishment of a Muslim legal foundation in Berlin.<sup>371</sup> He is known to have been one of the early leaders of the UNIW, and in March 2009 was the UNIW official who announced that the UNIW would seek legal action against some 70 Israeli politicians and commanders over their involvement in the Gaza operation.<sup>372</sup> As noted above, Al-Mutawa was one of the officials attending the

November 2008 "Right of Return" conference in Damascus and was an organizer for the May 2009 World Popular Conference for the Support of Palestine, where he chaired the session: "Human Rights Violations of Israel and Its War Crimes." Also noteworthy is that Al-Mutawa was the UNIW representative aboard the *Marmara*. His family reported on his desire to become a martyr, expressed shortly before his departure:

Since he was little, my father hoped to become a martyr for the sake of Allah. Al-Mutawa's wife related that on the day of his departure, her husband had gathered their children together to tell them about martyrdom and *jihad*, and that he bade them farewell by saying: "If I am martyred during my voyage, do not be sad. I will be in Paradise, because I am going to wage *jihad* for the sake of Allah."<sup>373</sup>

Al-Mutawa himself reportedly said he had purchased a one-way ticket and wrote a will:

I wrote a will and purchased a one-way plane ticket because [I knew that] all options existed. It was not just me. The Turks did the same before us.<sup>374</sup>

Upon his return to Kuwait following the flotilla incident, Al-Mutawa was widely quoted in the press as claiming that it was the Israelis who had started shooting at the flotilla without warning:<sup>375</sup>

"Israeli commandos started shooting from the air without warning," lawyer Mubarak Al-Mutawa, who was also on the *Mavi Marmara*, told reporters. "They killed a number of volunteers even before landing aboard the ship," he said.<sup>376</sup>

Sometime later, Al-Mutawa filed a criminal complaint with the International Criminal Court and the European Court for Human Rights against Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, Mahmoud Merza Abbas, and Mohammad Dahlan.<sup>377</sup>

The second important Kuwaiti flotilla participant is Walid al-Tabtabai, a Kuwaiti MP and a former professor of Islamic law at Kuwait University. Al-Tabtabai has been head of the parliamentary Human Rights Committee since 1992 and is described in media reports as a leading Salafist who has taken very conservative positions on social issues since at least 1996, when he called for a popular downtown cinema to change its name, claiming it was offensive to Islamic sensibilities.<sup>378</sup> Al-Tabtabai also has ties to the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands. In March 2007, Dutch media reported that Al-Tabtabai had worked with the founders of the Essalam Mosque in Rotterdam and described him as a "proponent of Islamic punishments such as stoning and amputation."<sup>379</sup> The Essalam mosque is financed and operated by a branch of the Maktoum Foundation, a charity operated by the ruling family of Dubai that has funded Global Muslim Brotherhood projects in Europe.<sup>380</sup> One of the members of the Dutch board is Nooh Al-Kaddo, the director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Ireland, which also houses the European Council for Fatwa and Research, chaired by Global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi.<sup>381</sup>

Like Al-Mutawa, Al-Tabtabai reportedly said he had written a will prior to departure along with the rest of the Kuwaiti contingent.<sup>382</sup> On May 29, Kuwait media reported on comments by Al-Tabtabai from aboard the *Marmara*, suggesting that he might welcome media attention to any Israeli actions with regard to the flotilla:

"We wish that there would be Kuwaiti popular interaction for pressuring the international community to expose Israeli intentions to prevent relief supplies from reaching Gaza." Defying Israeli threats, he said: "I believe that Israeli moves and threats cannot scare us, given that this relief campaign is the key

media event in the world at present. There are several international and Arab media networks partaking in the campaign and covering the events step by step." He admonished that should Israel take any action against the "Freedom Fleet" ships, then it would be internationally monitored. However, the Kuwaiti parliamentarian did a hatchet job on Kuwaiti local media for failing to properly cover this campaign to break the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip "in spite of the participation of a Kuwaiti delegation."<sup>383</sup>

On June 2, Al-Tabtabai was widely quoted as saying that the Israelis had fired first:

Tabtabai, who was also on the *Mavi Marmara*, said that at least two aid activists were killed by Israeli gunfire from boats and the helicopter. "Israeli soldiers landed on the ship after the killings. People then resisted by hand in self defence as they had no weapons at all...it's a crime by high sea pirates," he said.<sup>384</sup>

On June 3, Al-Tabtabai described the flotilla clashes and the preparations the group had made to fight off Israeli military forces:

There were violent clashes between the activists and the army, and our friends managed to capture three Israeli soldiers. One of the Turks grabbed a soldier and brought him to us, saying: "Here is a new [Gilad] Shalit." Al-Tabtabai noted, "The Turks had no weapons but used pipes and sticks they found on the ship." In answer to a question about whether the activists "had made any preparations before the arrival of the soldiers," he replied: "We agreed not to let them take the ship....We agreed to fend off any Israeli soldier who came near. Our goal was to prevent a takeover." Al-Tabtabai also reported that Sheikh Raed Salah, head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, was "the star of the trip and gave rousing speeches." Asked whether he would participate in another Gaza flotilla, Al-Tabtabai said: "If I have to, I will not hesitate. When they asked me, I agreed in principle."<sup>385</sup>

On June 24, Arabic media reported on comments by Al-Tabtabai on a full-fledged satellite TV channel to be devoted to the flotillas:

MP Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabaei announced that a full-fledged satellite channel for the various volunteer groups of the Freedom Flotilla from Kuwait will debut in the next few days. He said the channel is on test transmission, and a member of the crew, Abdul-Rahman Al-Kharaz, is the general manager of the channel. He noted that stakeholders will send the necessary equipment to Bahrain, where the channel is located, for proper take off. The channel has been established to inform the public about our subsequent missions, and to remember martyrs who lost their lives during the last trip. It also involves the need to sensitize the public for lifting of the blockade in Gaza, and open opportunity for more people to participate in future. He added the channel will link Arabs who wish to participate in international humanitarian service, while exhibiting vital roles Kuwait plays in humanitarian activities.<sup>386</sup>

## Kuwait Meetings

On June 12, Arab media reported that both Al-Mutawa and Al-Tabtabai had spoken at a seminar on the flotilla organized by the Kuwait Bar Association one day earlier.<sup>387</sup> The report characterized Al-Mutawa's remarks as follows:

A Freedom Flotilla returnee Lawyer Mubarak Al-Mutawa disclosed that the ships were about 100 kilometers away from the Israeli waters, yet the Zionists



attacked the convoy, killing 16 Turkish crew, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily. Al-Mutawa declared this at a seminar organized by Kuwait Bar Association Thursday, and said the trip was purely humanitarian rather than military, contrary to propaganda the Zionists embarked upon. He stated the incident aboard was a clear message to the entire world that Zionists are hostile to conscientious Muslims and other international communities. He stressed the Palestinian situation concerns the entire world, based on the large number of individuals from different parts of the world joining the convoy, and lauded the Turkish crew for their unequalled bravery and determination to face the hostility of Zionists, which led to some of them dying. "Some journalists criticized certain individuals with the convoy, instead of criticizing actions. This is unfair journalism and must not continue that way," the activist lawyer submitted.

In the same report, Al-Tabtabai's remarks were also reported:

In his contribution, MP Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabaei declared that the voluntary participation the trip witnessed has broken the inhumane restriction on the Gaza Strip. He said Kuwaitis participated in the trip because it was a humanitarian and Islamic issue. He noted the Kuwaiti government did not support them financially but the country benefited from the honor and achievement at the international level. He added the Al-Azhar scholars are proud of the Kuwaiti participants. "We have been able to defeat the propaganda by the Zionists, with the US and Europe criticizing them on the Gaza blockade and terrible attack against the convoy," he pointed out.

On June 16, Al-Mutawa and Al-Tabtabai were featured speakers at a seminar sponsored by the Kuwait-Turkish Friendship Society under the direction of its leader Abdullah Salem al-Jam'iyya.<sup>388</sup> Al-Jam'iyya explained that the Society was in charge of "[building the] bridges of brotherhood between the institutions and societies of both Kuwait and Turkey":

Kuwait does not hesitate to give a hand of co-operation with this country, as Allah created the various peoples to get to know each other and communicate, not to disagree and argue. He further stressed that "For the Arab countries, Turkey is not a society like other societies, or a people like other peoples, rather it is the depth and culture, and we welcome it to the lap of its Arab sisters." He also added, "the Zionist brutal aggression on the Freedom Flotilla has inflamed the feelings of solidarity between the Arab and Islamic people to face this absurdity."

Al-Mutawa and Al-Tabtabai were joined by Gazi Misirli, who was identified as Vice-President of the International Businessmen Forum and coordinator of international relations in MÜSIAD. Mr. Misirli reportedly opened his comments by stressing the importance of voluntary work and the role of civil organizations (NGOs), saying, "Praise to Allah, even if all Arab armies would have gathered to open a front with Israel, they would not have accomplished such a success like the Freedom Flotilla and the civil organizations did." He then identified himself and MÜSIAD as the coordinator for donations to the Flotilla as well having purchased its own ship:

We worked day and night to equip the Freedom Flotilla, and collected donations for it with devotion and dedication; with Allah's help we also bought another ship, that will be sent to Gaza carrying aid again.

Mr. Misirli also spoke extensively about the support provided by Turkey and particularly by the AKP government and Prime Minister Erdogan:

"The Turkish people as a whole gathered to agree and assist the Freedom Flotilla, and this is the first time that all Turkish people agree on a certain issue," adding that "the declaration of PM Rajab Tayyip Erdogan in the Turkish parliament should be written on golden waters; he not only spoke 'dust,' but also issued decisions which were executed, promised that the prisoners and martyrs will be back, and appointed Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to see these decisions are carried out and the whole issue is resolved quickly. In addition he co-opted with the UN in issuing a decision re what happened." Masry further continued: "Erdogan sent airplanes to carry the wounded from Israel, and the al-Fatih Mosque in Turkey was filled with prayers in spite of the great heat and sun, all praying for the martyrs and wounded," adding that "among the most important successes was the Turkish nation's recruitment around the flotilla issue."

Al-Tabtabai reportedly emphasized the benefits and achievements of the flotilla in the Arab and Muslim world, and its role in breaking the siege:

"The Turkish people are brave, generous and noble; this was made clear by their stand on the freedom ship, and by their facing the deadly Zionist weapons and bullets with their own bodies." "I have never seen such bravery and generosity like the Turks in the Israeli prisons; three Turks as well as the head of the IHH were with me, and they all refused any Turk is released before the Arabs who were with them on the ship." He further added that "in Allah's will, there will be a confrontation with Zionism, having kidnapped 700 activists on their peaceful way to Gaza," pointing at the fact that "the Zionist Ehud Barak has cancelled a scheduled visit to France, since he heard of a legal procedure initiated against him by activists, and this made him fear he will be held in custody for shooting at the ship; thus, Israel has been placed under siege for its mistreatment of the freedom flotilla, and this is one of the real gains." Another gain, according to him, was that "Amr Mussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, did not even wait for a second on the Rafah crossing blessing the freedom flotilla."

Al-Mutawa was reported to have expressed his opinion that following the flotilla, the Gaza siege is now viewed as a siege imposed on all Arabs and Muslims:

"There is no doubt that the siege imposed on Gaza, following the Freedom Flotilla, is no longer [seen as] imposed on Gaza alone, rather on all Arabs and Muslims," implying to "a land convoy that left to Gaza the day before yesterday, which is one of the gains of the flotilla, which opened the way to this region." Mutawa asked: "Under what right the Turkish-Arab and Islamic relations were in the past titled 'colonialism'? In any case, what happened in the freedom flotilla has transformed this approach, and brought closer the Arab and Turkish peoples to the level of becoming a blood brotherhood," expressing his "honor and pride in taking part in the freedom flotilla." He further added that "the Kuwaiti-Turkish Friendship Committee expresses the understanding of brotherhood, further more than only friendship, as it perceives it [understanding] very deep and effective."

## Post-Flotilla – IUMS / Qaradawi

In a June 5 sermon, Youssef Qaradawi launched a vitriolic attack on Israel and the Jews over the flotilla incident, saying, “we should not be surprised, as they had killed the prophets of God”:

In his Friday sermon, Sheikh Qaradawi said that Israel’s raid of the flotilla was a “barbaric and unexpected crime” that should not go unpunished. “When they (Israelis) had said that they would block the aid ships, we thought that those were just mere threats. Nobody ever thought that the Zionist gang in Israel would really attack activists and volunteers on board a defenceless ship carrying humanitarian aid,” Sheikh Qaradawi told a congregation at the Omar bin al-Khattab mosque in Khalifa South town. “But (then) we should not be surprised as they had killed the prophets of God,” he added. “Those corrupt Zionists are war-mongers. I believe that Israel’s day of God’s wrath is coming very soon because they have, tempted by the American veto and weapons, crossed all lines,” he maintained. The scholar hailed the “great Turkish stand” on the Palestinian cause as heroic, saying that Arab countries should feel ashamed. “We have to greet our brethren the Turks. Some people thought that Turkey had lost its link with Islam but the recent incident showed that Islam was still inherent in the hearts of its people,” he said. Qaradawi, who is also the head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, urged the Palestinian factions to stand united against Israel’s aggressions. “It is not acceptable any more that some Palestinians would go and shake hands with the Zionist murderers,” he added. He praised Qatar’s stance on the attack, saying that Qatar had announced that it would bear the financial cost of suing Israel for its raid on the aid flotilla, both before national and international courts. “Qatar is among the few Arab countries which strongly support the resistance movement,” he added. The sermon was followed by speakers who condemned the attack on the ship.<sup>389</sup>

On June 23, the UNIW hosted another meeting of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). Turkish media described the main agenda of the IUMS meeting as the Palestinian issue and the situation in Gaza.<sup>390</sup> Turkish media reported that a message sent by Prime Minister Erdogan was read before the opening speeches, where he said he saluted the participants with the “warmest feelings” and wished that the meetings would be conducted in unity and solidarity. The Turkish vice president and a number of ministers and AKP officials also sent messages to the meeting.<sup>391</sup> Turkish media reported that some 500 Islamic scholars attended the opening meeting of the third general assembly of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and characterized the comments of the following IUMS leaders:<sup>392</sup>

- » The inauguration session started with a speech from IUMS Vice President Dr. Ali al-Qaradaghi in which he drew attention to a new sense of solidarity among Muslim people in the world, stating that “finally the hearts and minds of Muslims are coming together today. The Freedom Flotilla and the proud stance of Turkish President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan against the Israeli attacks are the examples of this.”
- » IUMS Chairman al-Qaradawi also highlighted the importance of using Turkish goods and investing in Turkey, saying, “We are not guests here; we are among our own brothers and sisters,” adding how fond he is of Istanbul. “This city was once the base for the most powerful army in the world,” he said, announcing that the fourth assembly of the IUMS will also be in Istanbul, just like the second and



the third ones. Al-Jazeera further reported that Qaradawi called upon Egypt to open the Rafah Crossing permanently.<sup>393</sup>

Turkish/MB network leaders were also in attendance, and their remarks were characterized as follows:

- » IHH President Bulent Yildirim emphasized the importance of Muslim scholars coming together, "especially the courageous ones." Recounting the events that happened on the boat during the attack, Yildirim stated that the freedom of Gaza and Palestine is no longer that far off.
- » MÜSIAD head Omer Cihad Vardan thanked the UNIW for their recent call for increased consumption of Turkish goods in the Muslim world and their support for tourism and investments in Turkey.

Al-Jazeera reported on the comments of two additional individuals of interest:

- » Turkish government representative Hamza Aqta said that the situation of the Islamic world needs the perception of the *ulama*, that everyone should work together, and that resisting oppression and getting free from it is an international humanitarian task.
- » TGTV Chairman Necati Ceylan pointed to the capitalist-imperialist system, and the deviation which exists in Western culture in the grave problems around the world; he further added that it is time to create an alternate culture and a new world, which requires unity between the Muslims.

On June 25, Arab media reported on a statement and declaration issued by Qaradawi and the IUMS in support of the flotilla that praised Turkey for being the "first to raise the flag of Jihad" and referred to various plots and conspiracies directed against Muslims:<sup>394</sup>

Greetings to the noble Turkish people on all its wings, and we further send our condolences for its justified martyrs; I wish another flotilla will be launched. Greetings to the bravery of the hero PM Rajab Tayyip Erdogan, who stood like a high mountain to oppose Israel and those behind it, and wrote a new page in the history of the Turkish people who were the first to raise the flag of  *Jihad*  by 'Emad Uddin Zanaki, his son Nur Uddin Mahmoud the martyr, and his student Saladin al-Ayyubi. This fear has made Turkey's enemies plot against it and deceive its leader Erdogan, therefore the Islamic nation should stand with Turkey, greet Erdogan, call for his victory, strengthen and lean on his back; talking is not enough, it has to be followed by action like buying Turkish goods, prefer them on others, encourage people to travel to Turkey, mainly to Istanbul, and open the doors to Turkish factories, governmental, [private] companies and institutions. We call upon our nation across the world at this stage, to support and unite for the making of a major bloc, which has its substance and power among the other international blocs; this will be the bloc for the victory of truth, justice and human rights, standing against superiority over people. We have the numerous, economic, cultural and spiritual powers which place us in the head of the convoy if the intentions are right.

#### Declaration

1) This nation [*umma*] is one...(Quranic and hadith verses); its unity is best pronounced during times of crisis, therefore everyone is expected to leave behind any sectarian differences and unite around their biggest problem, the land of

the *isra wa-al mi'raj*, Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque, which is under threat of destruction by Zionism, that wishes to fulfill its dream over its ruins.

2) That [Muslims] should stand on the right of the oppressed and defend them as long as they are oppressed. Turkey took a brave position re the Freedom Flotilla that wished to break the oppressing siege on Gaza, and paid with martyr's blood who sit next to Allah; furthermore Turkey plans to send another flotilla.

3) Greetings to the brave Turkish people, and greetings to the hero PM Erdogan who wrote a new chapter in Turkish history (then he puts him with one line with heroes who raised the flag of  *Jihad*  like 'Emad Uddin Zanaki, first to declare  *Jihad*  on the crusaders, his son Nur Uddin Mahmoud the martyr, and his student Saladin al-Ayyubi).

4) The Islamic nation has to praise Erdogan and call for his victory. Words are not enough, and should be followed with action like starting to buy Turkish goods, travelling to Turkey, especially to Istanbul, and open doors to co-operation with factories, companies and other Turkish institutions.

5) We call upon the Turkish people on all its different classes, religious, political and ideological trends to stand together to face the challenges and strive to annul the plots and conspiracies which stand in the way of the positive reforms that Erdogan's government is promoting.

The meeting also issued a statement of support for Turkey that referred to Turkey as "a blessing of Allah," since it did not remain indifferent to the difficulties in the Middle East and played an important role in the resolution of problems. The statement was described as follows:<sup>92</sup>

#### The Long-Awaited Actor

The Islamic scholars who prepared the manifesto for the consideration of all Muslims around the world pointed out to the courageous steps taken by Turkey in the international arena for the support of Gaza which is under Israeli occupation and its attempts to bring aid to the region. When referring to the lawlessness of Israeli acts in Gaza, they said, "We owe responsibility to these Arab and Muslim people because they are our neighbors sharing the same religion and race and they are the victims of a great crime," and thus made an important self-criticism on behalf of the Arab world. In their manifesto, the Islamic scholars used expressions showing their gratefulness to Turkey who acted to overcome the distress in Gaza: "Turkey arrived at the right time as a blessing from Allah. As a state that preserves global and regional balances, it acted to seek justice for our suffering Palestinian people and to regain its expected role as an important actor in the region."

#### People in the Flotilla Were Noble

The Islamic scholars viewed the "freedom flotilla," which became the target of Israeli terror while delivering aid to Gaza, as a big step since it brought the attention of the world to the siege in Gaza. The manifesto referred to the flotilla that was the target of a bloody raid as: "The Turkish people who believed in the justness of this cause and felt the depth of their bond with Islam and their Arab neighbors sacrificed precious people. Noble and honorable people from all the countries of the world participated in this blessed flotilla."

### Give the Turks Media Support

The Islamic scholars emphasized that the developments following the atrocities committed in the Mediterranean necessitated the support of the Islamic and Arab world for Turkey and called for media support in their manifesto. The Islamic scholars said, "It is important to return the salute of the Turks with something even better" and explained the need for media support as follows:

"We call upon the Islamic world and especially the Arab world to stand by their Turkish brothers and to give them media support. Words have an important role and a wider scope in echoing messages."

"This is the call of Muslim scholars and Islamic leaders of the world regarding the attitude that should be taken towards the Turks. It is the blessing of Allah that whenever we are entangled in disasters, difficulties and intense crises, we get closer to relief, openness and good news. Deprivation of the people of Gaza from all the necessities of life by embargo and occupation is unacceptable in the eyes of humanity and the international law. This is a crime against Arab and Muslim people. It is a blessing of Allah that Turkey, a strong state in global and regional balances, has regained its expected role as an important actor in the region and arrived at the right time to defend the rights of the Palestinian people. Turkish people were martyred. Noble and honorable people from all countries of the world participated in this blessed flotilla. Thus, we call upon the Islamic world and especially the Arab world to stand by their Turkish brothers and give them media support. Words play an active role and they have the power to create public opinion. Fighting *jihad* by speech, writing, pictures, modern electronic tools and media technology is legitimate. Its influence on public opinion is obvious."

### Support the Turks By Spending Your Vacation in Turkey

The Islamic scholars urged the Muslims and Arabs to spend their vacations in Turkey. They stated in the manifesto, "We call upon the families and groups who want to visit various countries of the world and travel to Europe, the United States and other countries to give priority to Turkey." The manifesto pointed to the annulment of visas between Turkey and many Arab countries and stated, "If an individual has decided to travel, Turkey and other Muslim countries are more suitable to the cultural and moral nature of an Arab tourist." The manifesto also mentioned that the Islamic and Arab world should also support Turkey, who played an active role in the problematic region, economically. The scholars emphasized that strategic and economic partnerships between Turkey and the Arab countries should be strengthened and said, "Common interests between the countries should be advanced and the trade of goods, commodities and industrial products should be increased. We call upon the companies, institutions and businessmen to benefit from the opportunities in Turkey in the fields of industry, construction and others. We want them to give priority and privileges to Turkey in their work."

The statement was signed by the following Global Muslim Brotherhood leaders:

- » Youssef Qaradawi
- » Abdullah Bin Bayh, ECFR
- » Salman Al-Awda (Saudi Arabia), International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS)



- » Chakib Ben Makloul, FIOE President
- » Ahmed Al-Rawi, past FIOE President, Union of Good
- » Tariq Al-Suwaidan, leader in the Kuwait Muslim Brotherhood
- » Emin Belhac, President, Muslim Association of Britain (MAB)
- » Rashid Al-Ghannouchi, International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS)
- » Walid Al-Tabtabai (Kuwait)

It should be noted that Tariq Suwaidan is the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait and that Gazi Misirli has taught at Suwaidan Leadership Academy.<sup>396</sup>

Qaradawi also indicated at the meeting that Islamic scholars would support the Palestinian cause by being on the next boat that would be sent to Gaza from Turkey, as well as supporting crossing into Gaza by land.<sup>397</sup> At the closing session, the IUMS announced that it would purchase its own ship to sail in its name and described it as follows:

The 2,000-tonne ship will carry up to 50 passengers as well as its crew, and have the words "International Union of Muslim Scholars" written prominently across its hull. The mission of the ship will be to travel around the world providing assistance and humanitarian relief wherever it is needed. One philanthropist attending the assembly in Istanbul, Turkey, has already pledged to pay one-third of the cost of the ship, while Sheikh Abdullatif Aal Mahmood separately pledged 200,000 Euros to the project.<sup>398</sup>

Sheikh Mahmood is known to be one of the trustees of the Union of Good.<sup>399</sup>

On July 4, Middle Eastern media reported that Qaradawi himself would take part in the next sea convoy attempting to break the Gaza blockade, stating:

"The Union will contribute effectively, God willing, to Freedom Flotilla II and will continue to issue statements in order to alert and warn the Islamic nation until it recovers its rights in the land of the prophets," he said. "The IUMS," continued the Sheikh, "has paid attention to all of the major issues facing Muslims." Focusing at times on the core issue, that of Palestine and Jerusalem, has not distracted the IUMS from the situation in Somalia, Kashmir, Iraq and Afghanistan which are currently occupied by the US and other issues, he added.<sup>400</sup>

However, a Kuwaiti media report cast doubt on Qaradawi's participation, saying "the members of the IUMS refused this; 'Israel will arrest him, and this will be a great victory for the Zionist state, which sees Qaradawi as its enemy.'" The report added that Al-Tabtabai "welcomed the IUMS initiative, saying he wished Qaradawi would join, however he knows his medical condition does not allow him to. Tabtabai further said that their mission is not to deliver aid, rather, 'the battle is comprised of media and politics, aiming to break the siege on Gaza.'<sup>401</sup>

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## About the Author

Steven Merley is an investigative researcher with a specialty in political extremism. Since September 11, 2001, Mr. Merley has been collecting and analyzing information on the Muslim Brotherhood and its networks in Europe and the US. Clients for his work have included NGOs, US think-tanks, documentary film makers, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

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# **TURKEY, THE GLOBAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, AND THE GAZA FLOTILLA**

Steven G. Merley

**Abstract:** This report presents the results of an investigation into the role played by the Global Muslim Brotherhood and its Turkish allies in the May 2010 Gaza flotilla which involved a violent altercation between passengers on one of the ships and Israeli naval forces.



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