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The True Face of the UOIF:

Antisemitism, Advocacy and Financing of Terrorism, and the Call to Jihad

Introduction

The Union of Islamic Organizations of France (Union des Organisations Islamiques de France – UOIF) was established in 1983 by two students, the Tunisian Abdallah Ben Mansour and the Iraqi Mahmoud Zuheir. Today, it comprises over 200 associations throughout France. It was considered the natural representative of Islam in France, by a French government that was eager to establish a counterpart to the central councils of Jewish and Protestant communities.

The Official Discourse:

The UOIF had presented itself as an organization with a cultural and social vocation, aimed at facilitating the integration of Moslems in France.

“The UOIF works to help answer the religious, cultural, social and humanitarian needs of the Moslems in France. It participates in building individual and collective awareness towards a responsible and positive integration...”

[Mission statement on the UOIF website]

The UOIF denies any link to Islamist elements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and ostensibly rejects antisemitism.

“The UOIF condemns all acts of antisemitism.”

“To attack the Jews is tantamount to attacking the Koran.”

“The UOIF has nothing to do with the Muslim Brotherhood, nor with Tariq Ramadan.”

[Statements by Fouad Alaoui, UOIF Secretary General, during a 13 June 2004 Europe 1 TV interview by J.P. Elkabach]

The UOIF claims to oppose the import of foreign conflicts into France.

“Maintaining its solidarity towards peoples in distress, the UOIF rejects the outbreak or the import, in the name of Islam, of foreign conflicts onto French territory...”

[The UOIF website]

And the Reality...

UOIF's vocation is mainly political. In conformity with the doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sheikh Qaradawi, with whom it maintains multiple ties, the UOIF aims mainly at consolidating its control over the Moslem communities in France to transform them into a political power and its voice in European institutions.

The links between the UOIF and Sheikh Qaradawi, an ideologue close to HAMAS, are alleged to be intimate. Hamas is banned from operating in the European Union, having been officially listed by Brussels as a “terrorist organization.” Furthermore, the UOIF participates directly in the financing of HAMAS, through a French-registered charitable organization, the CBSP (Palestinian Charitable and Relief Committee).

Notwithstanding its official discourse, the UOIF also encourages radical views on Israel and the Jews, and its own website abounds in anti-Jewish hate messages, calls to Jihad and the advocacy of terrorism...

1. The Link between UOIF, the Muslim Brotherhood and Sheikh Qaradawi.

Sheikh Qaradawi is not only alleged to be the spiritual mentor of the UOIF and inspirer of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Islamisation strategy in Europe, but also the President of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), inaugurated in London in 1997. He also presides the « Scientific Council » of the European Institute of Human Sciences (EIHS), the main education centre for Imams in Europe, located in Saint-Léger-de-Fougeret, a small village in the Nièvre region of France. The EIHS is a subsidiary of the FIOE (Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe), of which the UOIF is the French branch. [See: www.fioe.org or <http://www.eu-islam.com/>]

1.1 Qaradawi, HAMAS and the Terrorism Bank Al Taqwa

Egyptian-born Qaradawi studied at the celebrated Al-Azhar University in Cairo, before being jailed on several occasions in relation to his activities within the Muslim Brotherhood. Based in Qatar since 1962, he was nominated Dean of the Islamic Shari’a (Law) faculty of Qatar University in 1977. He is considered an eminent member of the Steering Committee of the Muslim Brotherhood, which directs the movement’s international structure. Through his regular participation in one of the most widely viewed religious programmes on the Al Jazeera TV channel, he has become, since the 1990’s, one of the principal authorities for contemporary Sunni Islam. Claiming to be a modernist champion of womens’ rights in Islam, his fatwas include the authorization of suicide bombing by married women over the objection of their husbands. More recently, he has endorsed the killing of civilians in Iraq for Jihad.

Sheikh Qaradawi was declared *persona non grata* in the United States, after his ties with the Al-Taqwa Bank were discovered. The Bank’s accounts were frozen on 7 November 2001, due to its relations with the Al-Qaeda network. Sheikh Qaradawi acknowledged these links when, during a Friday sermon in Qatar on 14 March 2003, he stated:

“Most of my belongings and properties were in the Al-Taqwa Bank. It was sequestered, accused of being a terrorist foundation under the pretext that they help HAMAS.”

Despite the strong links between HAMAS and the Al-Taqwa Bank, Qaradawi is not *persona non grata* in France and in Europe. Thus, he was invited by the UOIF to its annual conference at Le Bourget in 2000. In July 2003, he took part in an ECFR (European Council of Fatwâ and Research) conference in Stockholm (see below). More recently, he participated in the inauguration of the “Pro-Hijab” (in favour of the headscarf) movement held in London in July by invitation of the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone.

1.2 Sheikh Qaradawi’s Fatwas Authorize Suicide Bombings

At the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, Sheikh Qaradawi rendered a fatwa affirming that attacks against Israeli civilians were justified by the fact that “each Jewish male or female citizen in Israel does his military service and is thus a potential soldier.” On other occasions, Sheikh Qaradawi has invoked arguments to justify suicide attacks. He has thus explained that suicide attacks, which he calls “martyr operations,” are a “form of resistance to occupation”:

“By these operations, Allah has compensated for the weakness of the Palestinians. Indeed, contrary to the Zionists, they have no Apache helicopters, airplanes, tanks and missiles. Allah has compensated for their weakness with these human bombs. It is divine justice.”

1.3 Qaradawi, the E.C.F.R. and Suicide Attacks

One does not find Sheikh Qaradawi justifying suicide attacks on the UOIF website. Yet, the ECFR., which is presented on the UOIF website as a “specialized and independent Islamic academic entity composed of numerous scholars,” is not at all unfamiliar with the positions of Qaradawi on this question. Proof was given during the conference of the ECFR in Stockholm in July 2003. In a lecture entitled “Jihad and Denying its Connection to Terror,” Sheikh Qaradawi lengthily explained why suicide attacks committed by Palestinians do not constitute acts of terrorism, but are rather a means of resistance, developing the arguments in his earlier fatwas. [See the MEMRI report, “Al-Qaradawi speaks in Favor of Suicide Operations at an Islamic Conference in Sweden”, 24 July 2003, on www.memri.org]

2. The UOIF, the CBSP and the Financing of HAMAS in France

On 22 August 2003, the day after a suicide attack had killed twenty people and wounded more than a hundred in a bus in Jerusalem, the US President George Bush announced a series of measures designed to prevent the financing of the HAMAS terrorist movement. These included freezing the properties of six HAMAS leaders, described as “*Specially Designated Global Terrorists*”, and of five charitable associations which provided financial support to the terrorist movement. Among the latter is an association based in France, the Palestinian Charitable and Relief Committee (CBSP), as also the Association of Palestinian Relief (APR) based in Switzerland, and the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund (Interpal) based in London. [See press release of the *Office of Public Affairs*, www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/js672.htm]

The American decision reiterated that HAMAS had committed more than fifty terrorist attacks in 2002, including the attacks on the Park Hotel in Netanya on the eve of Passover in the cafeteria of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Several United States and French citizens were among the victims of these attacks. Details were revealed on financing methods on behalf of the HAMAS movement, which “raises tens of millions of dollars each year around the world, using, as a cover, the collection of funds for charitable purposes”:

HAMAS receives donations from Palestinian expatriates around the world and from private donors in Arab states, Western Europe and North America.

HAMAS avails itself of a network of charities to facilitate its financing and channel vast amounts of money. Donations from NGO's are obfuscated and transferred from one

organization to another to conceal trace of the true recipients and are then misappropriated to fund terrorism.

Financing Terrorism through “Charitable” Organizations

The practise of financing terrorism through charities is not new. It was described by numerous counter-terrorism experts well before 9/11. Nevertheless, only in the wake of the deadly attacks on New York and Washington DC, did the US government show awareness of the gravity of this phenomenon and decided to take measures against the bankrollers of terror. A 22 August 2003 press release lists five associations which are used to levy funds for HAMAS in Europe and Lebanon. The CBSP and the ASP are the main HAMAS fund-raisers for France and Switzerland.

Founded in France in the early 1990’s, the CBSP works in cooperation with a dozen humanitarian organizations linked to HAMAS, based in different towns of Gaza and the West Bank, as well as in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. The ASP, a branch of the CBSP, was founded in Switzerland in 1994. This group has collected large amounts of money through mosques and Islamic centres, and then transferred these funds to HAMAS subsidiaries. Interpal, based in the UK, is the main charity in Great Britain used for concealing and channelling funds towards HAMAS. Reports show that Interpal serves as coordinator for HAMAS’ fund-raising campaign.

The CBSP Stand at the UOIF Congress

UOIF opened the doors of its annual Congress in Le Bourget to CBSP to raise its appeal revenue among the tens of thousands of visitors. During UOIF’s last Congress in April 2004, the CBSP stand was one of the most visited. A huge maquette of Jerusalem’s Mosque of Omar was the centrepiece of the stand. The crowd crammed around to view this exhibit and to contribute to CBSP’s “charitable” activities... [See photo on www.cbasp-france.info/CBSP_fichiers/bour3g.gif].

The innumerable Moslem visitors to CBSP’s stand were invited to participate actively in “supporting the Palestinian people’s struggle.” For a mere 50 euros, they could “foster a Palestinian orphan”... An inquiry would reveal that these orphans were not the children of Intifada victims, but rather the orphans of HAMAS’ “martyrs,” those suicide bombers who had killed, along with themselves, dozens of Israeli civilians, men, women and children...

CBSP’s fund-raising activity in France, supported by the UOIF, is carried out according to the programme defined by UOIF’s spiritual mentor, Sheikh Qaradawi. This programme, entitled “The 101-Day Campaign,” is detailed on CBSP’s website [www.cbasp.free.fr]. This campaign is the fund-raising programme for HAMAS in each European country by the so-called “Charity Coalition” over which he presides. Its objective is to “mitigate the effect of the blockade of the Palestinian territories.” Yet, this apparently humanitarian objective is but a façade, as Sheikh Qaradawi himself reveals the true goal of the “101-Day Campaign” in the programme posted on the CBSP website:

*To create small agricultural and industrial projects to help the Palestinian people, but **most especially the families of martyrs...***

[<http://cbasp.free.fr/101days.lettre.htm>]

The actual beneficiaries of the collection handled by the CBSP, as admitted by its president, are the families of the HAMAS “Shahid” suicide bombers.

3. Antisemitism, Advocacy of Terrorism and Calls to Jihad on the UOIF Website

A visit to the UOIF Internet site (www.uoif-online.com) reveals numerous antisemitic messages, advocating terrorism or calling to Jihad. See specific examples of these messages below.

3.1 Antisemitism

3.1.1 Example 1

Messages dated 25/8/04

[Title] *Tariq Ramadan will not teach in the USA, the Zionists prevented his entry*

...don't tell me there aren't Judeo/Zionist lobbies ... it is a veritable cancer, a tumour for the planet and for Humanity

and

“Zionist lobbies and their contacts, like Daniel Pipes, press the American-Zionist government to forbid Tarik Ramadan from teaching Islam in the USA... The average American sees Moslems as bloody monsters, as they are taught by the propaganda masters and criminals of Tel Aviv. To preserve the good image of the Zionist entity.”

3.1.2 Example 2

Message dated 26/8/04

“...do not worry about American pressures on Israel. We, the Jewish People, control America and the Americans know it” (attributed to Ariel Sharon speaking to Shimon Peres on Israeli radio).

3.1.3 Example 3

Message dated 4/10/04

[Title] *Jihad in Iraq: Mujahadeen hold Samarra*

All these multinational companies, in the hands of French Zionists, involved in the financing of Zionist terrorist operations in the world, which finance electoral and presidential campaigns so that, one day, the puppet they have managed to get elected will do them a favour in return... You may observe the cacophony of the French Zionist occupation government of the Raffarin puppet, divided by the low blows dealt by its Zionist component, which is enraged to see Yisrael die without being able to do anything...

3.2 Advocacy of Terrorism

Example 4

Message dated 10/7/04

[title] *Exclusivity : on video, the heroic bomb attack against the Zionist criminals in Gaza*

Selem ahleykom,

Here we have, on video, the famous bomb attack which sent to Hell, insha Allah, dozens of SS soldiers from the Nazi "Tsahal" army

http://www.hamasonline.com/MediaC/tunnel_blast.htm

(NB The link to the HAMAS site functions, however the video does not seem to be accessible on the date of the present report.).

3.3 Calls to Jihad

Example 5

Message dated 12/7/04

[Title] *A MUST READ: Dialogue with a Shahid (Martyr)*

This is a supposed dialogue with a "Shahid" (martyr), and represents many of the citations quoted from the Koran and the Sunna concerning the great merits of the "Shahada" (the fact of becoming a martyr) and those who have gone the way of Allah... This is an imaginary dialogue between a "Shahid" and a Moslem believer who aspires to Jihad, to throw himself into the battlefield, but who has encountered many obstacles on his way...

Example 6

Message dated 5/10/04

"Good only exists by the sword and the shadow of the sword! People are obedient only under the threat of the sword! The sword is the key to the gate of Paradise"
(Ayatollah Khomeini)

These examples show how the pretense of rejecting both antisemitism and the import of the Middle East conflict is violated on the website's Forum...

The Forum is not a "free" unsupervised chat-group. In fact, it has a "moderator," responsible for sorting the messages posted to the Forum and for eliminating those that contain illicit statements or phrases that do not correspond to the declared spirit of the organization. It turns out, after investigation, that this moderator is none other than UOIF's "Director of Communication," Mr. Boukhzer...

CONCLUSION

The present study shows that UOIF, contrary to what is officially claimed on its website, is not a cultural association which encourages the integration of Moslems in France... It is an Islamist political organization, linked to the Moslem Brotherhood and to Sheikh Qaradawi, an ideologist who has legitimized suicide bombers.

Not only does UOIF not encourage the integration of Moslems in France, it actually provides a nursery for the most radical Islamist positions. By sponsoring the CBSP's financing of HAMAS, and welcoming the CBSP at its annual conference at Le Bourget, UOIF participates directly in the logistical support of terrorism.

The publication of calls to Jihad and of anti-Jewish messages on its own website shows the true face of this organization, which – behind its official mask – incites the Moslems of France to become soldiers of international Jihad.

In short, UOIF is a threat to Moslem welfare, to inter-community relations, to the values of the French Republic and to France's national interest in pursuing balance in the quest for peace in the Middle East.