



Turkey as a Terrorism-Sponsoring State:
Turkey allows Hamas to conduct terrorist activities from its territory, including the handling of terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria and the transfer of funds to Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip to finance terrorism.

December 24, 2019

Overview

A Hamas delegation headed by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, recently paid a visit to Turkey. The delegation was accompanied by Jihad Yaghmour, who **for the first was officially mentioned as Hamas' representative in Turkey**. Yaghmour is a **Hamas terrorist operative** from Beit Hanina in east Jerusalem who was **involved in the abduction of IDF soldier Nahshon Waxman 1994**. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in Israel but was deported to Turkey in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal. In Turkey he liaises between Hamas and the Turkish government and the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT). At the same time, in ITIC assessment, **he has also been involved in covert activities, mainly the handling of terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria**. In Hamas' perspective, his past experience as a field operative may have **prepared him for the role of terrorist handler**. As Yaghmour's cover for his activities in Turkey he is president of a Turkish organization called the Association of Jerusalem and Our History.



Right: Jihad Yaghmour in his office at the Association of Jerusalem and Our History Association, which serves as the cover for his covert activities (picture from the Association website) Left: Jihad Yaghmour accompanies Isma'il Haniyeh on his recent visit to Turkey (Association Twitter account, December 13, 2019).

▶ During the past decade, since the expulsion of terrorist operatives to Turkey following the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, **Turkey has become a base for Hamas' operational operatives**. Turkey allows them to handle terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria from its

territory, as has been made evident by the interrogation of terrorists in Judea and Samaria who were exposed by the Israel Security Agency. The networks handled from Turkey planned various attacks, including assassinating Israeli officials, carrying out "spectacular" attacks in Israel, undermining security and stability in Judea and Samaria and harming the control of the Palestinian Authority (PA) (conclusions drawn from the interrogation of several terrorist operatives by the Israel Security Agency – see below for details).

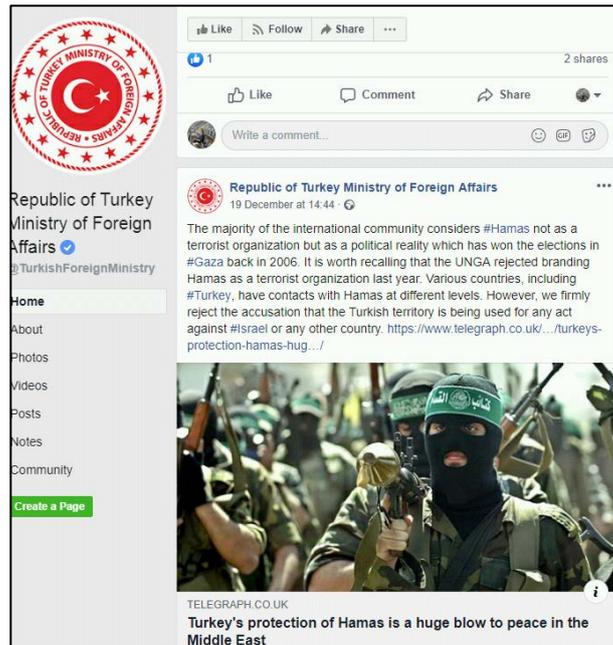
► In addition, Turkey serves as **a base for the transfer of funds to terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria and to Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip**. The activity of enlisting, laundering and transferring funds from Turkey to Hamas operatives was recently **described at length in a report issued by the United States Treasury Department**.¹ The American report showed that **the main source of funds transferred to Hamas through Turkey (and sometimes through Lebanon) is Iran**. The funds **are transferred by the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps**. Involved in the process are Hamas operatives and supporters, as well as foreign exchange companies based in Turkey.

► The British *Telegraph* recently issued an article exposing the extent of Hamas' terrorist activity carried out from Turkey (Telegraph, December 18, 2019). Following the publication of the article, the Turkish foreign ministry issued a denial, claiming that Hamas is a "political reality" which won the elections held in the Gaza Strip in 2006² and is recognized by many states, including Turkey. Therefore, according to the foreign ministry statement, there is nothing to prevent Turkey from maintaining contacts with the organization at different levels from other countries. However, on those grounds Turkey rejected the accusation it allows its territory to be used for activities against Israel or any other country.³

¹ For further information, see the September 19, 2019, bulletin, "New designations recently published by the US Department of State and Department of the Treasury reveal Turkey's central role as a hub from which Hamas handles its financial matters, including funding terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria."

² A false claim. Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip by force and by persecuting and assassinating Fatah and PA activists.

³ Turkey enables terrorist operatives to use its territory for anti-Israeli activities, as was proved by the interrogation of detainees in Israel and the report issued by the American treasury department.



**The notice from the Turkish foreign ministry
(Facebook page of the Turkish foreign ministry, December 19, 2018).**

In Hamas' perspective, it became necessary to use Turkey as a base for handling terrorist networks and transferring funds **after Hamas' headquarters were forced to leave Damascus in the wake of the Syrian Civil War (2011)**. Moreover, Turkey's fundamental support for Hamas, the easy communications with Turkey and the settling in Turkish territory of terrorists expelled in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal all made it easy **to turn Turkey into a base to replace Damascus**. Turkey's importance as an alternative **increased after Operation Protective Edge (2014)** because of Hamas' efforts to encourage Palestinians to carry out terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria in view of Hamas' policy of restraint in the Gaza Strip at the time.

► In addition its use as a location from which to promote terrorist attacks, **Turkey provides Hamas, and the Palestinians in general, with economic support**. Turkey regards the support as a tool for **increasing its influence among the Palestinians and as an indirect way of supporting Hamas**. Two Turkish organizations are prominent in supporting Hamas and the Palestinians: **IHH**, a radical Islamic, anti-Israeli and anti-Western NGO; and **TIKA**, a Turkish government agency subordinate to the office of the prime minister. **Both IHH and TIKA have permanent offices in the Gaza Strip, and TIKA has one in Ramallah**.

► Both organizations are involved in promoting projects to support the Palestinian population, but **some of their activities are clearly political in nature and serve Hamas** (for example, the support Turkey gives Palestinians wounded in the return marches, or TIKA's

construction of residences for Gazans whose houses were destroyed in Operation Protective Edge). In addition, TIKA, which operates in Judea and Samaria, **is very active in east Jerusalem, with the intention of increasing its influence in the city and on the Temple Mount, and in order to challenge Israel's control.**

Appendices:

- ▶ **Appendix A:** Short portrait of Jihad Yaghmour, Hamas' representative in Turkey.
- ▶ **Appendix B:** Handling terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria and transferring funds for terrorist activities from Turkey
- ▶ **Appendix C:** Economic support and implementing projects as tools for advancing Turkey's policies and challenging Israel

Appendix A

Short Portrait of Jihad Yaghmour, Hamas representative in Turkey

Jihad Muhammad Shaker Yaghmour, Hamas representative in Turkey, was born in Beit Hanina in east Jerusalem in 1967, and has a BA in engineering (Hamas' Amana website, August 9, 2011). **He was an operative in the Hamas terrorist squad that abducted IDF soldier Nahshon Waxman, who was killed during the IDF attempt to rescue him.**⁴ Yaghmour was detained in October 1994 and **sentenced to life imprisonment**. While in prison he was a member of the so-called "supreme leadership" of the Hamas prisoners (aljazeera.net, October 16, 2019). **He was released on October 18, 2011, as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and deported to Turkey** (Hamas website, December 18, 2019). In ITIC assessment he is **a handler of terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria**, taking orders from **Saleh al-'Arouri**.⁵ Apparently, after Saleh al-'Arouri was forced to move to Lebanon (November 2015), **Yaghmour became Hamas' official representative in Turkey**.

▶ After Yaghmour was deported to Turkey he married Alaa, the daughter of Zakariya Latfi Najib, also an operative in the terrorist squad which abducted IDF soldier Nahshon Waxman. Najib was released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and deported to the Gaza Strip (Paldf, February 10, 2012, aljazeera.net, September 1, 2014). In March 2016 Yaghmour's first son, Omar, was born (Palinfo Twitter account, March 2, 2016)



**Jihad Yaghmour on trial in Israel at a military court, 1994
(YouTube, May 21, 2015)**

⁴ Nahshon Waxman was abducted on October 9, 1994, by a squad of four Hamas terrorist operatives. He was held captive for six days in Bir Nabala, north of Jerusalem, and killed during the IDF attempt to rescue him.

⁵ See the August 11, 2019 Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Policy article.



Right: Jihad Yagmour with his son Omar (Palinfo Twitter account, March 2, 2016). Left: Jihad Yagmour's wife Alaa with her parents (aljazeera.net, September 1, 2014).



Jihad Yagmour meets with Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian terrorists released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal who were banished to Turkey (Mahmoud Abbas' YouTube channel, December 21, 2011).

Jihad Yaghmour's activity in Turkey

Since his banishment to Turkey Yaghmour and his family have lived in Istanbul where **he is the president of an organization called the Association of Jerusalem and Our History**⁶ (see below). In ITIC assessment, his role as president **is a cover for his political and operational activities**. As Hamas' representative in **Turkey he liaises between Hamas and the Turkish administration**. He also accompanies senior Hamas figures who come to Turkey on official visits, and is present when they meet political figures such as representatives of the Turkish government. At those meetings he was formerly presented as the Association's president, however, some of the Turkish media now call him "Hamas' representative in Turkey." **On December 14, 2019, Yaghmour accompanied the Hamas delegation headed by Isma'il Haniyeh when it visited Turkey**. During the visit he was, for the first time, **officially referred to by Hamas as its representative in Turkey** (Hamas website, December 14, 2019). However, in the meantime, in ITIC assessment, **Jihad Yaghmour is involved in covert operational activities, mainly the handling of terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria**. In Hamas' perspective, his past as a terrorist field operative prepared him for such a role (for the activities of terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria directed from Turkey, see below).



Jihad Yaghmour accompanies Isma'il Haniyeh to the Friday prayer during his visit to Istanbul (Jihad Yaghmour's Association Twitter account, December 13, 2019).

⁶ **Muslem Omran**, the Hamas representative in Malaysia, is chairman of the Palestine Cultural Organization in Malaysia (Hamas website, May 23, 2019). Apparently, for the sake of security, **Hamas creates a cover for its representatives as dealing with cultural activities rather than terrorism**.

► Examples of **Jihad Yaghmour's activity in Turkey:**

◆ On **November 27, 2019**, The Investigative Journal issued a report dealing with the criminal suit brought by the Henkin family against Hamas in the United States.⁷ According to the indictment Jihad Yaghmour had an account in the **Kuvyet Turk Bank**⁸ in Turkey, **and liaised between Hamas and the Turkish authorities** (The Investigative Journal YouTube channel, November 27, 2019).

◆ On **November 14, 2019** Jihad Yaghmour met with the deputy chairman for foreign affairs of the Turkish Justice and Development party, where he was introduced as Hamas' representative in Turkey (sanad news, November 14, 2019). According to a recent Telegraph article, **Jihad Yaghmour is in daily contact with the MIT, Turkey's intelligence organization**⁹ (Telegraph, December 18, 2019).



Jihad Yaghmour (left) meets with the deputy chairman for foreign affairs of the Justice and Development party (sanad news, November 14, 2019).

◆ On **July 22, 2019** Jihad Yaghmour accompanied Taher al-Nunu, advisor to Isma'il Haniyeh, when he came from the Gaza Strip and met with Hasan Turan, chairman of the Turkey-Palestine Friends' Circle (Twitter account of Hasan Turan, July 22, 2019).

⁷ **Naama and Itam Henkin** (he was an American citizen) were murdered by Hamas terrorist operatives in a drive-by shooting at the Beit Furik Junction (between the communities of Elon Moreh and Itamar in Samaria on October 1, 2015).

⁸ The Kuvyet Turk Bank was established in 1989 and provides interest-free loans. It has between 5,000 and 10,000 employees and is based in Istanbul (Kuvyet Turk Bank website).

⁹ The Turkish government's intelligence agency which cooperates with Western intelligence in the fight against terrorism. The agency is responsible for transmitting intelligence information the president, the prime minister, the army's chief of staff, the head of the national security council and to other relevant Turkish government organizations (Wikipedia)



Jihad Yaghmour (right) accompanies Taher al-Nunu at a meeting with the chairman of the Turkey-Palestine Interparliamentary Friends' Circle (Twitter account of Hasan Turan, July 22, 2019).

◆ On **May 18, 2019**, Jihad Yaghmour accompanied Khaled Mashaal, former chairman of Hamas' political bureau, when he met with the deputy chairman of the Justice and Development party (AKP), the ruling party in Turkey (al-Andalou News in Turkey, May 18, 2019).



Right: Jihad Yaghmour (left) at a meeting of Khaled Mashaal and the deputy chairman of the Justice and Development party (euupsultan.bel.tr website, May 20, 2019). Left: Jihad Yaghmour (right) at a meeting with the president of Turkey (unknown date) (Twitter account of Turkish journalist Abdullah Bozkurt, August 10, 2018).

◆ In **February 2018** the Israeli security forces detained two Palestinians suspected of having been recruited by Hamas operatives in Turkey. They had been recruited by **Zaher Jabarin**, a senior Hamas figure living in Turkey. According to information from the interrogation of one of the Palestinians, Turkey contributes to Hamas' military buildup in various ways, and Hamas communicates directly with the Turkish

authorities through Jihad Yaghmour (Israel Security Agency website, February 14, 2018).

◆ On **September 21, 2017**, Jihad Yaghmour met with the leader of the BBP party.¹⁰ The media reported he was Hamas' representative in Turkey and the president of the Association of Jerusalem and Our History (al-Andalou News in Turkey, September 21, 2017).



**Jihad Yaghmour meets with the leader of the BBP party
(al-Andalou News in Turkey, September 21, 2017).**

Jihad Yaghmour's cover for his activities in Turkey: Association of Jerusalem and Our History

► Until recently Jihad Yaghmour was represented as the president of the Association of Jerusalem and Our History. According to its Facebook page, it was founded to increase national and international awareness of the fabric of Jerusalem, its social and cultural structure and the international importance it has had since the days of the Ottoman Empire. Its activities include promoting studies, organizing training activities such as courses, seminars and conferences, and publishing documents. To implement its goals it works in cooperation with Turkish universities for giving courses and establishing research institutions dealing with the history of Jerusalem. It also has a branch in Ankara (yeniakit.com.tr, December 17, 2019).

¹⁰ The Great Unity Party or Great Union Party is a far-right Islamist and nationalist political party in Turkey, founded on January 29, 1993, and based in Ankara. A BBP delegation participated in the IHH-led Mavi Marmara flotilla in 2010.



Right: Jihad Yagmour in his office at the Association of Jerusalem and Our History. Left: The Association's logo (Association website)



Right: A meal to break the Ramadan fast held by the Eyupsultan Association in Istanbul. It was attended by former Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal; Numan Kurtulmu, the deputy chairman of the Justice and Development party; and Hasan Turan, the chairman of the Turkey-Palestine Interparliamentary Friends' Circle (Friends' Circle Twitter account, May 18, 2019). Left: A meal to break the Ramadan fast held by the Association of Jerusalem and Our History, attended by Hamas' Usama Hamedan and Sami Abu Zuhri (Association Facebook page, June 23, 2017)

Appendix B

Handling terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria and transferring funds for terrorist activities from Turkey

Beyond giving Hamas political and media support, **Turkey enables Hamas to exploit its territory as a base for recruiting and handling terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria and for transferring funds to finance terrorist activities in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.** That is because of Turkey's fundamental support for Hamas, stemming from their joint Muslim Brotherhood ideology and deep hostility to Israel. **There are Hamas operatives who stay permanently in Turkey** (many of them terrorists released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal).¹¹ Those operatives handle terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria and are in contact with Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip.

Recruiting and handling terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria

► **In addition to operatives who went to Turkey following the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, more operatives arrived during the past year.** According to a recent Telegraph article quoting Israeli and Egyptian security sources, posts to the social media and interviews with Palestinians, **about ten Hamas operatives went from the Gaza Strip to Istanbul during the past year.**

► Among the Hamas operatives were **Abd al-Rahman Ghanimat**, who in the past headed Hamas' Tzurif squad, which was responsible for several deadly terrorist attacks in Israel, including the 1997 attack on the Tel Aviv Café Apropos (three women killed, including the mother of an infant, and 48 people wounded). He was released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and deported to the Gaza Strip. Another was **Kamal Awad**, Hamas' CFO, who was recently sanctioned by the United States Treasury Department (Telegraph, December 18, 2019). The new terrorist operatives joined those already in Turkey, such as Zaher Jabarin, who is in charge of Hamas' financial office, which integrates dealing with funds for terrorism

¹¹ In February 2018 the Israel Security Agency detained two terrorist operatives who were handled from Turkey. One of them, Cemil Tekeli (of Turkish origin), said that in 2012 he was requested to help Hamas operatives who had arrived in Turkey to live there permanently. He said most of them were Palestinians released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal who had been involved in terrorist attacks in which Israelis had been killed. He said he helped them get residence permits and jobs, and to buy real estate for residences and businesses, and to buy luxury vehicles and establish businesses in Turkey by registering them in his name (Israel Security Agency, February 14, 2019).

with political and operational activities (evidence was found connecting him to the recruitment of terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria).

▶ In recent years a number of terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria were prevented **which were directed by Hamas operatives in Turkey**. Some of them were the following:

◆ **According to the British Telegraph**, the transcript of the interrogation of suspects detained by Israel revealed a plot devised on Turkish soil to assassinate senior Israeli officials. Among the names of the Israelis mentioned were **Nir Barkat**, former mayor of Jerusalem; **Yehuda Glick**, former Knesset member; and **Roni Alsheich**, police chief at the time (Telegraph, September 18, 2019).

◆ In **August 2018** it was reported that the Israeli security forces had exposed a large Hamas military network that operated in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. **The network, which was handled by Hamas headquarters in Turkey**, planned to carry out a coup in the PA and take control of Judea and Samaria by undermining its security and stability, and carrying out a series of deadly terrorist attacks in Israel. More than 600,000 shekels (a little less than \$175,000) belonging to Hamas were confiscated. The network was headed by a Hamas operative named Riad Nasser, from the Ramallah region, who had been recruited from Turkey by Saleh al-'Arouri (Israel Security Agency, August 18, 2018).

◆ In **February 2017** the Israel Security Agency detained a Hamas operative in the Qalqilya region who had been living in Turkish Cyprus. He was recruited to Hamas in January 2017 and **met with Hamas operatives in Istanbul**. He was instructed to return to Judea and Samaria and recruit operatives to Hamas. His interrogation again revealed the activities of Hamas headquarters abroad, including in Turkey, conducted on instructions from **Saleh al-'Arouri, head of the Hamas office for the West Bank** (Israel Security Agency, April 4, 2017).

◆ In **September 2014** the Israel Security Agency exposed a large Hamas terrorist network operating in Judea and Samaria. The operatives managed to place IEDs on roads in Samaria. Their operations were **directed by Hamas headquarters in Turkey**. The activities were participated in by Hamas operatives who had been trained abroad and infiltrated into Judea and Samaria. **They had been trained in several countries, including Turkey**. They were divided among several networks and received various missions according to decisions made by senior Hamas figures in Turkey, who

determined the nature of the missions. **One of the networks, which was directed by Saleh al-'Arouri, smuggled more than a million shekels (about \$290,000) into Judea and Samaria for the acquisition of weapons and to fund terrorist attacks** (Israel Security Agency, November 24, 2019).

Transferring funds for terrorist activities through Turkey

Turkey serves as a base for transferring funds to Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. The Turkish authorities turn a blind eye to those activities and they are carried out freely.

Zaher Jabarin works from Turkey and serves as Hamas' CFO, responsible for the organization's budget. **His raising and transferring funds was recently described at length by the United States Treasury Department.**¹² Zaher Jabarin is a member of Hamas' political bureau, involved in political activity. In ITIC assessment, when Saleh al-'Arouri left Turkey Zaher Jabarin became the senior Hamas figure in Turkey and integrates his dealings with funds for terrorism with political and operational activities.



Zaher Jabarin interviewed by Hamas' al-Quds TV (YouTube, August 29, 2019).

► On **September 10, 2019** the United States Treasury Department issued a list of sanctions imposed on 15 terrorist operatives and foreign exchange companies that supported terrorist organizations. According to the report, Hamas operatives and supporters in Turkey raise funds, transfer them to Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip, and finance terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria. They also operate foreign exchange and transfer companies in Turkey which launder funds for terrorism. It is clear from the United States Treasury Department's report that **the main source of funds transferred to Hamas through**

¹² For further information, see the September 19, 2019 bulletin, "New designations recently published by the US Department of State and Department of the Treasury reveal Turkey's central role as a hub from which Hamas handles its financial matters, including funding terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria."

Turkey (and on occasion Lebanon) is Iran, and that the transfers are effected by the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. The funds are transferred by Hamas operatives and supporters, and foreign exchange companies based in Turkey.

▶ One of the foreign exchange companies mentioned in the American report was **Redin Exchange**, based in Turkey and which served a channel for transferring funds to Hamas. In the middle of 2018 the company was identified as an important part of the network that transfers funds to Hamas, and with its help tens of millions of dollars reached Hamas. **In 2017 Zaher Jabarin was involved in transferring millions of dollars to Hamas through Redin Exchange.** In March 2019 Muhammad Srour, a company employee, was involved in the transfer of \$10 million to Hamas' military wing.



Right: Offices of Redin Exchange in Istanbul. Left: Redin Exchange business card (Twitter account of Khalas-Hamas, September 12, 2019).

▶ **Money transfers from Turkey to Hamas terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria were exposed in the past by the Israel Security Agency.** Some examples are the following:

◆ In **April 2018** the Israel Security Agency prevented terrorist attacks in Israel directed by Hamas operatives from the Gaza Strip. In 2017 two of the squad operatives met with Hamas handlers in Turkey, where one of them received **thousands of dollars. Another Hamas operative received hundreds of thousands of euros from his handlers in Turkey**, to be transferred to Hamas' military-terrorist infrastructure, and left them in various hiding places in Judea and Samaria (Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS), a position paper by Omer Dostri, "Hamas activities in Turkey against Israel," August 3, 2018).

◆ In **February 2018** the Israeli security forces detained two Palestinians suspected of having been recruited by Hamas in Turkey. The **investigation revealed that the two had been recruited in Turkey by Zaher Jabarin, Hamas CFO, on instructions from**

Saleh al-'Arouri. The investigation also revealed Hamas' extensive money-laundering activities in Turkey on instructions from Zaher Jabarin, **while the Turkish authorities turned a blind eye to the source of the funds.** In action, Hamas operatives owned a company called IMES, used by Hamas to camouflage **the laundering of millions of dollars**, which were sent to the Gaza Strip and other countries. IMES opened an account at the AK Bank, one of the largest banks in Turkey (Israel Security Agency, February 14, 2018).

◆ In **August 2016** an indictment was handed down against Sayif al-Din Abd al-Nabi, 39, from Jerusalem. According to the indictment, Abd al-Nabi was introduced to Zakariya Najib, a Hamas operative who had been sentenced to prison and released. The two met in Turkey while Abd al-Nabi was on a business trip. The two met a number of times during Abd al-Nabi's business trips to Turkey. He took a total of \$25,000 from Najib and smuggled the money into Israel hidden on his person (from the indictment handed down by a Jerusalem court judge, September 7, 2016).

Appendix C

Economic support and implementing projects as tools for advancing Turkey's policies and challenging Israel

There are Turkish relief organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem through which Turkey provides indirect economic support for Hamas and Islamist groups in east Jerusalem in order to increase Turkish influence among the Palestinians. The two main organizations are **IHH**, a radical Islamic anti-Israeli anti-West NGO, which operates in the Gaza Strip and among Muslim communities in other countries; and **TIKA**, a Turkish government relief organization subordinate to the office of the prime minister, which provides aid to developing countries around the globe. **IHH and TIKA both have permanent offices in the Gaza Strip, and TIKA has one in Ramallah.**

IHH and TIKA offices in the Gaza Strip

► The **IHH office** in the Gaza Strip is **headed by Ashraf Jarada** (according to al-Andalou News he is also named **Ashraf Yilmaz**). He is nicknamed Abu Muhammad and his origins are in the Gaza Strip (IHH Gaza Facebook page, July 18, 2018).



Ashraf Jarada (Yilmaz) at the left in both pictures (Right: al-Andalou News, October 2, 2019; Left: Facebook page of the Palestinian Green Crescent Association, September 9, 2019).

► The **TIKA office** in the Gaza Strip is headed **by an engineer named Ra'ed Keshta** (Facebook page of the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, November 5, 2018; website of the ministry of endowments in the Gaza Strip, July 7, 2019). Before he headed the office he directed TIKA projects in the Gaza Strip. According to his LinkedIn page, he has a BA in architecture from Uludag University in Bursa, Turkey. A Chinese TV show noted that he speaks Arabic.



Ra'ed Keshta (right), head of the TIKA offices in the Gaza Strip (website of the ministry of endowments in the Gaza Strip, July 7, 2019).

► The funds transferred by the Turkish organizations to the Gaza Strip are used for projects to help the population, including the construction of hospitals, residences, and institutions; welfare, etc. However, apparently some of the funds trickled into the charitable organizations affiliated with Hamas (see below). The Turkish support helps Hamas deal with the economic hardships of the Gaza Strip, which results, among other causes, from the priority Hamas gives to its military buildup.

Support for Palestinians wounded in the return marches

► An example of humanitarian support which serves the interests of Hamas is the aid given to Palestinians wounded in the return marches, at least some of whom were involved in rioting and violence. Given the large number of Palestinians wounded in the return marches and the difficulty Hamas has in getting treatment for them in the Gaza Strip, **Turkey became one of the countries that offered to provide them with medical treatment.** Thus a number of wounded Palestinians from the Gaza Strip arrived in Turkey for medical treatment. A Hamas delegation to Turkey headed by Maher Salah paid a visit to the hospital where the wounded were being treated (Facebook page of Sami Mahmoud al-Zahar, November 27, 2018; Facebook page of the Change and Reform, the faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, November 28, 2018).



Hamas delegation visits Palestinians wounded in the return marches and hospitalized in Turkey (Facebook page of Sami Mahmoud al-Zaher, November 27, 2018).

Support from the director of the TIKA branch in the Gaza Strip for Hamas' military wing¹³

► An example of **how funds trickled from humanitarian purposes to Hamas military wing** can be found in the affair revealed in 2017 by the Israel Security Agency. In February 2017 the Israeli security forces detained **Muhammad Faruq Shaaban Murtaja**, originally from the Gaza Strip, who at the time managed the TIKA office. He was detained on suspicion of using his role to promote the interests of Hamas' military wing (Israel Security Agency, March 21, 2017).



Muhammad Murtaja, formerly head of TIKA in the Gaza Strip (Palsawa, February 13, 2019).

► **Murtaja's interrogation revealed that he had been recruited to Hamas at the end of 2008. From the beginning of 2009 he operated for Hamas' military wing. He received military training and also stored weapons in his home.** He was apprehended at the Erez Crossing while en route to Ankara. During interrogation he revealed he was being sent to Turkey for training by TIKA. However, **he was also going to collect information that would**

¹³ For further information, see the March 27, 2017 bulletin, " Hamas's military wing uses foreign aid funds sent to the Gaza Strip: The case of the head of the Gaza Strip office of the Turkish aid organization TIKA."

help Hamas improve the accuracy of its rockets (Israel Security Agency, March 21, 2017). According to the indictment handed down by the district court in Beersheba, **he had been sent to Turkey by Hamas' military wing to get maps based on photographs taken by a Turkish satellite** (Haaretz, March 22, 2017).

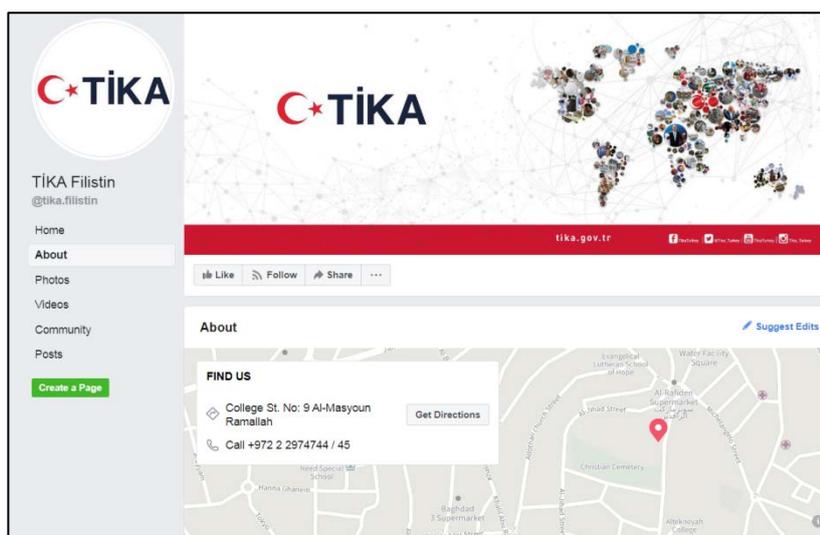
▶ **In 2012**, about three years after the joined Hamas' military wing, **Murtaja was appointed TIKA director in the Gaza Strip**. Apparently **Hamas encouraged him to accept the position** on the grounds that the organization would be able to use him to promote its interests. Murtaja's interrogation revealed that **since joining TIKA he had provided Hamas with millions of dollars in funds and resources originally intended for the organization's humanitarian needs and civilian projects in the Gaza Strip**. He also transferred funds to Hamas operatives and members of their families, and allotted houses to Hamas operatives in construction projects built for the needy (Israel Security Agency, March 21, 2017).



Muhammad Murtaja (second from left), formerly head of the TIKA branch in the Gaza Strip, meets with the heads of the Hamas-affiliated Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim wal-Sunna in his office. The meeting was described as being held to strengthen the ties between the two groups (Dar al-Quran website, April 23, 2014).

TIKA activities in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem

▶ **The head office of TIKA in Judea and Samaria is in Ramallah**. Tens of millions of dollars pass through it every year, mostly for health, water and archeological projects (Hürriyet Daily News, July 23, 2018). **Part of TIKA's activities are in east Jerusalem, and are political and anti-Israeli**.



**The TIKA head office in Ramallah
(Facebook page of TIKA Filistin).**

► The activities of the Turkish aid organizations in **east Jerusalem** serve first and foremost **to deepen Turkey's influence in Jerusalem by inculcating its Turkish-Ottoman heritage**. Investigative reports by Israeli journalists in recent years revealed that Turkey's activities in east Jerusalem included renovating buildings and mosques, disseminating Turkish culture and increasing Turkish involvement on the Temple Mount. (Al-Monitor, October 17, 2019). It has been estimated that **TIKA allots \$1.2 million annually to finance its activities in east Jerusalem to challenge the [so-called] "Israeli occupation" of east Jerusalem** (middleeastmonitor.com, October 7, 2019). The Israeli media reported that in the wake of Turkey's subversive activism, on October 6, 2019, the Israeli foreign minister instructed the management of his office to prepare a program to put a stop to Turkey's activities in Jerusalem (Al-Monitor, October 17, 2019).

► According to Israeli media and security sources, some of the Turkish aid, **especially in east Jerusalem**, is used to promote **political, anti-Israeli initiatives**. An investigative report in *Israel Today* at the time revealed that TIKA gives financial support to the Mirazimis Association, which in the past organized the mass transportation of Arabs to the Old City. Among those brought in were thousands of members of the **Murabitoun and Murabitat**, subsidiaries of northern wing of the Islamic Party in Israel. They were **outlawed after they rioted on the Temple Mount** and attempted to harass Jews visiting the site. **The Association of Jerusalem and Our History deals with buying, renovating and preserving buildings in the Old City near the Temple Mount** (article by Nadav Shragai, Israel Today, August 1, 2017).

Transferring land deeds to the Palestinian Authority (PA) to prevent Israelis from buying land

There has been close, long-term cooperation between PA representatives and Turkey **to locate and transfer documents to the Palestinians from the Ottoman Archives, especially those relating to land ownership.** A number of Palestinian groups are involved in the cooperation, including the Palestinian embassy in Ankara, the PA minister of endowments, the ministry of endowments and the Methaq Center for Islamic History and Research, which is subordinate to the ministry of endowments. **On the Turkish side TIKA is also involved in the cooperation.** In ITIC assessment, for Turkey the cooperation is aimed at **supporting the Palestinians and strengthening their claims against Israel regarding ownership of the land by presenting proof** that the land is registered as Palestinian and Muslim *waqf* assets. **Their objective is to undermine any legal or political claim to the land.**

► The Palestinians regard using the documents from the Ottoman Archives to prove claims of ownership of the land which Israel is allegedly trying to take control of, and thereby **prevent the land from being passed into the hands of non- Palestinians.** The Ottoman documents are also regarded as ammunition to back up **claims against Israel in international courts by proving the "Palestinian right" to the land.** According to reports, the Palestinians have received copies of the documents from the Ottoman Archive, including many relating to the registration of land and Muslim and Palestinian assets in the territory of the Ottoman Empire between 1517 and 1914.¹⁴

¹⁴ For further information, see the March 15, 2018 bulletin, The Palestinian Authority in collaboration with Turkey is searching the Ottoman State Archives for documentation regarding Palestinian ownership of lands, including waqf property in Jerusalem, to prevent land from being sold to Israel."



Right: The signing of the agreement by Khalil Karaji al-Rifa'i, director of the Methaq Center for Islamic History and Research, and Ugur Unal, director of the Ottoman Archive. Also present is Yusuf Adais, the PA minister of endowments. Left: A display of documents and pictures from the Ottoman Archive entitled "The rights given to non-Muslims in the city of Jerusalem." It includes fifty documents and pictures, most of them from the Ottoman Archive (Facebook page of the Methaq Center for Islamic History and Research, April 12, 2018).