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**THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC CHARITIES IN INTERNATIONAL  
TERRORIST RECRUITMENT AND FINANCING**

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## Countering Radicalisation through Development Assistance

In the spring of 2005 the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the Danish Institute for International Studies to undertake a policy study on how to counter radicalisation through development assistance.

Despite growing interest in the field, very little research has yet been conducted. To expand the knowledge base, a number of subject matter experts were identified and asked to produce papers on select topics. Initially, the papers were intended to serve only as background material for the policy study. Due to considerable international interest it has been decided to publish the papers as DIIS working papers, making them available to a broader audience. All papers can be downloaded free of charge from [www.diis.dk](http://www.diis.dk).

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The papers do not reflect the views of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs or any other government agency, nor do they constitute any official DIIS position. For more information on the policy study, please contact Michael Taarnby Jensen ([mtj@diis.dk](mailto:mtj@diis.dk)) or Louise Andersen ([lan@diis.dk](mailto:lan@diis.dk)).

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# Abstract

The roots of the contemporary radicalisation and support to terrorism can be traced back two decades to the organisational lessons of the Soviet-Afghan war. At the time a number of sympathetic NGOs provided various kind of assistance which proved to be invaluable in the long-term struggle. By clothing their militant activity with charitable ideals, radical militants discovered that they were able to maintain their level of efficiency while working with very few restrictions on an international level. The practice of radical and militant involvement with NGOs and charitable organisations continues today, and an understanding of the linkages between radicalisation and the NGO community is necessary when considering development interventions.



# The Role of Islamic Charities in International Terrorist Recruitment and Financing

The roots of the contemporary Al-Qaida terrorist financing network can be directly traced back to lessons learned by Arab-Afghan fighters during the early days of the Soviet-Afghan jihad nearly two decades ago. As the 1980s drew to a close, thousands of idealistic Islamic fundamentalist volunteers arrived in Pakistan, often with no local guide or requisite accommodations. At the time, several wealthy Arabian Gulf charitable organizations, under the guise of aiding Afghan and Pakistani refugees, stepped forward to help channel the jihadi recruits where they were most needed. These wealthy NGOs – sponsored by a number of prominent Gulf businessmen – provided weapons, guesthouses, and travel papers to needy members of the quickly-coalescing Al-Qaida movement. Medical ambulances belonging to the Saudi Red Crescent and other fundamentalist-run relief groups were even diverted to bring Arab mujahideen (“holy warriors”) back and forth from combat operations.<sup>1</sup> By clothing their militant activity with charitable ideals, Arab-Afghan leaders including Usama Bin Laden discovered that they were able to slip below the radar of many global intelligence agencies.

Indeed, the efficiency and success of the Afghan jihad financing model was quite an accomplishment for Bin Laden and his international allies – so much so that operations continued even after the end of the Soviet-Afghan war and the expulsion of Bin Laden to the Sudan. In approximately 1993, in conversations with former senior Al-Qaida lieutenant Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl, Usama Bin Laden identified several prominent international Muslim charities as the primary sources of Al-Qaida financial and fundraising activity.<sup>2</sup> In 1996, a recently declassified U.S. government report – attributed by the Wall Street Journal to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – alleged that “approximately one third of... Islamic NGOs support terrorist

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad, Basil. *Al-Ansar al-Arab fi Afghanistan*. The Committee for Islamic Benevolence Publications; ©1991. Page 187.

<sup>2</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” *United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout*. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. Page 25.

groups or employ individuals who are suspected of having terrorist connections.”<sup>3</sup> The final report of the U.S. Congressional 9/11 Commission concluded that “entire charities” under the control of “al Qaeda operatives... may have wittingly participated in funneling money to al Qaeda.”<sup>4</sup>

These organizations served a critical role in the Arab-Afghan terrorist infrastructure by laundering money originating from bank accounts belonging to Bin Laden and his sympathetic patrons in the Arabian Gulf, providing employment and travel documents to Al-Qaida personnel worldwide, and helping “to move funds to areas where al Qaeda was carrying out operations.”<sup>5</sup> According to a U.S. Justice Department brief on the subject:

[Al-Fadl] understood from conversations with Bin Laden and others in al Qaeda that the charities would receive funds that could be withdrawn in cash and a portion of the money used for legitimate relief purposes and another portion diverted for al Qaeda operations. The money for al Qaeda operations would nevertheless be listed in the charities’ books as expenses for building mosques or schools or feeding the poor or the needy.<sup>6</sup>

Standing orders were left by Bin Laden to keep all transactions involving the charitable groups in cash only; by this method, these NGOs were manipulated as a secret laundry to make Al-Qaida’s financial network virtually invisible. The charities would then create false documentation for the benefit of unwary donors, purportedly showing that the money had actually been spent on orphans or starving refugees. According to some former employees of these organizations, upwards of 50% of their total funding was secretly diverted directly to Al-Qaida and

<sup>3</sup> January 1996 CIA Report on “International Islamic NGOs” and links to terrorism. *Page 1*. See also: Affidavit by Senior Special Agent David Kane (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security). United States of America v. Soliman S. Biheiri. United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division. Case #: 03-365-A. August 14, 2003. *Page 2*.

<sup>4</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. *Page 170*.

<sup>5</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Pages 28-29*.

<sup>6</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Pages 28-29*.

Usama Bin Laden.<sup>7</sup> The 9/11 Commission also found evidence that such would-be charities had “provided significant cover... enabl[ing] [Al-Qaida] operatives to travel undetected.”<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, in Europe and North America, Muslim NGOs would come to serve an additional role in indoctrinating new generations of international jihadists. According to a 1996 French intelligence memorandum, “these charities – screens for Islamic groups like... the Egyptian Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya... permitted a very large recruitment among young volunteers; under the notion of jihad, they provided ‘humanitarian’ support for the indoctrination of the youth [and it worked] so well that numerous French converts to Islam joined the ranks of Islamic extremists.”<sup>9</sup> The first known Arab-Afghan jihad cell on U.S. soil led by native American operatives was partly financed by the Sudanese charity Third World Relief Agency (TWRA).<sup>10</sup> TWRA’s membership also included an Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya suicide bomber with Canadian citizenship who attempted to blow up a Croatian police station in 1995.<sup>11</sup>

Even the operational mastermind of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States – Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) – was involved with the activities of suspect Islamic humanitarian groups as early as 1988.<sup>12</sup> KSM’s brother Zahid Sheikh Mohammed (a.k.a. Abu Hafs al-Baluchi) was responsible for overseeing at least two such NGOs active in Pakistan: the Kuwaiti Lajnat al-Dawa al-Islamiyya (officially designated as a terrorist front group by the U.S. government<sup>13</sup>) and Mercy International.<sup>14</sup> When KSM’s nephew Ramzi Yousef – the explosives

<sup>7</sup> Dugger, Celia W. “Anti-U.S. Plot in India Is Foiled; Militant Islamist Intended to Bomb 2 Consulates, Police Say.” The New York Times. January 21, 1999. *Page 4*.

<sup>8</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. *Page 171*.

<sup>9</sup> “La Formation Des Volontaires Pour Le Djihad En Camps D’Entrainement.” Confidential memorandum issued by UCLAT (French Central Anti-Terrorism Unit). December 27, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Sworn affidavit of FBI Special Agent Robert Walker. United States of America v. Benevolence International Foundation, Inc. April 29, 2002. District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case number: 02CR0414. *Page 6*.

<sup>11</sup> January 1996 CIA Report on “International Islamic NGOs” and links to terrorism. *Page 13*. See also: Affidavit by Senior Special Agent David Kane (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security). United States of America v. Soliman S. Biheiri. United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division. Case #: 03-365-A. August 14, 2003. *Page 2*.

<sup>12</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. *Page 147*.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/eotffc/ofac/sanctions/terror.txt>. September 2004.

expert behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York – was training at an Al-Qaida camp in eastern Afghanistan, he “visited” the office of Lajnat al-Dawa in Jalalabad.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Mercy International’s lawyer in Islamabad admitted that Pakistani police had investigated his client in 1994-5 “because [Ramzi] Yousef had made a phone call to the Mercy offices [in Pakistan].”<sup>16</sup>

Much of the funding responsible for underwriting international Muslim charities has originated from the Arabian Peninsula – and in particular, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A well-informed Saudi figure boasted to the *Washington Post*, “No one can control the flow of money from Saudi Arabia... It is not one person – it is a thousand. We are here. Money comes to us from inside Saudi Arabia. We have private talks with businessmen. Sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. But it comes.”<sup>17</sup> Past efforts to stem the flood of Saudi jihad money have mostly failed, perhaps because “even high ranking members of the collecting or monitoring agencies in Saudi Arabia... are involved in illicit activities, including support for terrorists.”<sup>18</sup> The Jeddah-based World Assembly for Muslim Youth (WAMY) is a poignant example of the shadowy Saudi charitable entities that have helped support Al-Qaida over the past two decades. Founded in 1972, WAMY claims to be the world’s largest Muslim youth organization.<sup>19</sup> WAMY sponsors various “humanitarian” causes, including religious youth camps around the world – including in Western Europe and North America. The following is

<sup>14</sup> Azzam Publications. “What Sheikh Abdullah Azzam said about Khalid Ash-Sheikh Muhammad.” Azzam Publications news update carried by IslamicAwakening.com. <http://www.as-sahwah.com/discus/messages/3079/3079.html>. March 4, 2003. See also: The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. *Pages 146-147*. See also: “After Debriefing Report [on ABDUL HAKIM ALI HASHIM MURAD].” Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation Command; Camp Crame, Quezon City. February 18, 1995 (1400hrs-1535hrs).

<sup>15</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. *Page 488*.

<sup>16</sup> Pallister, David and Jamie Wilson. “Muslim relief groups caught in crossfire.” *Guardian* (London). September 26, 2001. <http://society.guardian.co.uk/disasterresponse/story/0,1321,558348,00.html>

<sup>17</sup> Coll, Steve and Steve LeVine. “Global Network Provides Money, Haven.” *The Washington Post*. August 3, 1993. *Page A1*.

<sup>18</sup> January 1996 CIA Report on “International Islamic NGOs” and links to terrorism. *Page 4*. See also: Affidavit by Senior Special Agent David Kane (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security). United States of America v. Soliman S. Biheiri. United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division. Case #: 03-365-A. August 14, 2003. *Page 2*.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.wamyusa.org/about/about%20wamy.htm>, as of December 10, 2002.

an excerpt from an officially sanctioned song to be performed by campers, as printed in an English-language WAMY training manual obtained in the United Kingdom:

Youth of [Islam] are the guided youth. Come! Come to a final decision: The Prophet has called out and so has the Qur'an. So blessed is the servant who responds when he is called... Bring back the glory to it's lions, And restore the zeal to its soldiers. Flatten evil in its cradle, And unsheath the swords... Hail! Hail! O sacrificing soldiers! To us! To us! So we may defend the flag. On this Day of Jihad, are you miserly with your blood?!<sup>20</sup>

There are numerous other connections linking WAMY to international terrorist organizations and terrorist financing. In fact, the U.S. branch of WAMY was incorporated in 1992 by Usama Bin Laden's own nephew Abdullah in Falls Church, Virginia.<sup>21</sup> In November 2001, international media reported that WAMY's Peshawar office was raided in a joint FBI-Pakistani intelligence operation.<sup>22</sup> A WAMY employee was subsequently questioned for allegedly hand delivering a recorded message from Usama Bin Laden to local media.<sup>23</sup> In that tape, bin Laden praised various terrorist attacks – including the Bali nightclub bombing that killed over 200 people and the Chechen takeover of a theatre in Moscow that led to over 150 deaths. In June 2004, federal agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) raided Abdullah Bin Laden's WAMY office in Virginia, allegedly “in connection with a terrorism-related investigation.” Agents seized all of the files and computer hard drives in WAMY's offices. Additionally, a WAMY board member was arrested on immigration charges.<sup>24</sup>

WAMY continues to fund numerous “charitable” projects – including in neighboring Iraq, where donations in 2004 alone totaled over \$200,000. In late 2002, an Internet website affiliated with the Ansar al-Islam terrorist organization in northern Iraq released a photo

<sup>20</sup> “Islamic Camps Objectives, Program Outlines, Preparatory Steps.” World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY); Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Prepared by the Camps & Conference Unit of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth 1987. Translated (with additions) by Abu-Bakr M. Asmal 1990. Obtained at the WAMY Western Europe Office; 46 Goodge Street; London, UK.

<sup>21</sup> United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 1023 Application by WAMY for Recognition of Exemption, filed November 9, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> “Pakistan Questions Sudan Man About Tape.” Associated Press. December 9, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> “Pakistan Questions Sudan Man About Tape.” Associated Press. December 9, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Markon, Jerry. “U.S. Raids N.Va. Office Of Saudi-Based Charity.” Washington Post. June 2, 2004.

showing Ali Bapir – a detained Ansar al-Islam commander – at a public event sponsored by WAMY and featuring banners emblazoned with the WAMY logo.<sup>25</sup> During the spring of 2003, the U.S. military launched several cruise missile attacks on terrorist targets in Kurdistan, including several of Bapir’s “compounds” in the foothills near the town of Khurmal. Bapir surrendered, and several days later was taken with other surviving members of his group to the town of Ranya. Bapir was subsequently re-arrested by U.S. military forces on July 10, 2003 for allegedly supporting Ansar al-Islam. As of last report, Bapir remains in the custody of the American military.

WAMY’s corporate structure has hidden other, darker secrets as well – such as the benignly-named Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), a.k.a. Lajnat al-Birr al-Islamiyya. Lajnat Al-Birr, the precursor to BIF, was established in 1987 in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia by Shaykh Adel Batterjee, a powerful Saudi business magnate in Jeddah. Batterjee (designated as a terrorist by the U.S. government in December 2004) claims to be a former “chairman” of WAMY and reportedly founded BIF as an “affiliate” branch of WAMY.<sup>26</sup> The connections between the two organizations are numerous and troubling. According to a Pakistani Government website, the local mailing address for WAMY is P.O. Box 1055 in Peshawar.<sup>27</sup> The U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) lists the same post office box in Peshawar as a known address of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF).<sup>28</sup> When 1993 World Trade Center bombing conspirator Ahmed Ajaj was arrested in New York, authorities seized an envelope from him containing Arabic-language terrorist training manuals. The envelope was marked with the letterhead of BIF, with a notation explaining that BIF is a branch of the “World Assembly of Muslim Youth.”<sup>29</sup>

From its inception, the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) served as a means for pious, wealthy Muslims to secretly contribute to the jihad in Afghanistan. The Jeddah-based charitable group went to great lengths to protect the reputation of its prestigious donors. In 1993, Adel Batterjee publicly stepped down as head of BIF in exchange for a more behind-

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.ayobi.com/photo/isl\\_17.jpg](http://www.ayobi.com/photo/isl_17.jpg). August 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Hedges, Chris. “Muslims from afar joining ‘Holy War’ in Bosnia.” *The New York Times*. December 5, 1992. See also: Basaddiq, Omar. “Islamic Charity Committee moves to new premises.” *Arab News*. May 21, 1994. See also: IRS 990 forms for the “World Assembly of Muslim Youth” submitted for Fiscal Years 1993 through 1999.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.epb.gov.pk/epb/jsp/ngo.jsp>. December 12, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sanctions/terrorism.html>. December 12, 2002.

<sup>29</sup> *United States v. Usama Bin Laden, et al.* S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Government Exhibit 2800-A.

the-scenes role. Several years afterwards, the individual who took over Benevolence from Batterji, Enaam Arnaout (a.k.a. Abu Mahmoud Al-Hamawi), instructed his staff to disavow any knowledge of the “founders”: “[t]ell him that all we know about them is that they are Saudi Business men and that they left the organization in May 93. Donot[sic] disclose any other information.”<sup>30</sup>

By 1993, it was hardly a secret that BIF was involved in more than just charitable activities. The entity openly advertised itself in its Arabic-language fundraising appeals as a “trustworthy hand for the support of [both] the mujahideen and refugees” in Bosnia.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, documents taken from BIF’s U.S.-based offices in December 2001 included handwritten Arabic notations explaining that its headquarters in Croatia was established “for relief operations and support of jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina... Contribute with your mujahideen brothers to repel the Crusader-Zionist attack on Muslim lands.”<sup>32</sup> Another handwritten note found in Illinois by investigators revealed BIF’s supreme “unwritten law”: “no matter how poor/sick – first priority is for mujahideen.”<sup>33</sup> The raid of BIF’s Illinois office by American investigators also turned up a number of other documents directly related to the war in Bosnia: a receipt dated July 21, 1994, from the “Black Swans” Bosnian Muslim commando brigade for 300 blankets and 200 pairs of boots obtained from BIF; a receipt from the BiH army dated June 3, 1994, for 2,000 uniforms, 2,000 pairs of shoes, and ten “mass communication stations” donated by BIF to “this military unit”; a request dated December 31, 1994, from the Bosnian military for a combat ambulance (later delivered as promised in January 1995); and, a memorandum to BIF director

<sup>30</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Pages 28-29*.

<sup>31</sup> Institute for Study and Documentation. “The Balkan War.” Video produced by the Committee for Islamic Benevolence, Saudi Arabia (*Lajnat al-Birr al-Islamiyya*).

<sup>32</sup> Sworn affidavit of FBI Special Agent Robert Walker. United States of America v. Benevolence International Foundation, Inc. April 29, 2002. District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case number: 02CR0414. *Page 29*.

<sup>33</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Page 57*.

Enaam Arnaout dated November 17, 1995 describing the recent contribution of 200 tents to the Muslim army.<sup>34</sup>

However, the relationship between BIF and militants fighting in Bosnia went beyond mere financing. The Military Security Service of the Bosnian Muslim Army warned its superiors in May 1995 that known members of the Arab-Afghan mujahideen in the Balkans were “connected with the activists from Arab humanitarian organization ‘Benevolence International Foundation.’” The Bosnian Army’s Military Security Service further complained that it had received information “indicating that [BIF] abused the humanitarian aid, in a way that they condition the acceptance of the same with the acceptance of [Islam].” According to its own May 1995 internal memorandum:

In order to win as many as possible followers among the population, so these patrons of the ‘new’ approach to religion, are visiting the families of soldiers killed in war and offer them aid 100-200 KM in case they accept their way of religion, if not they tell them that their killed member will not be ‘shhid’ [a martyr]. In their positions they go that far to recommend that closest family relations should be renounced if they do not accept their way of religion and practicing of the same. The consequence of this is the already present polarization between Bosnian-Muslim population and that could have far reaching damaging consequences.<sup>35</sup>

A number of employees working at BIF’s office in Illinois could not help but notice the glaring inconsistencies in their supposed “humanitarian” work. In a handwritten note recovered by the FBI, a BIF employee wrote unhappily: “That is our mission – Lying to the people.”<sup>36</sup> However, some of BIF’s other staff members openly embraced the jihadi philosophy espoused by Al-Qaida. Suleman Ahmer, BIF’s former operations manager in the United States, was an unabashed supporter of cooperation with radical Islamic movements around

<sup>34</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Pages 67-69*.

<sup>35</sup> “Review of the Information on Activities of the Persons from Afro-Asian Countries Directly Before the War and During the War in the Territory of BIH Republic.” Report written by the BIH Administration of the Military Security Service– Department for Analytical and Informative Affairs.” Sarajevo; May 6, 1995.

<sup>36</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Page 57*.

the world. In an October 1997 letter to other BIF administrators, Ahmer expressed surprise that the organization would even claim to sponsor relief activities: “we have never worked in the countries which are affected by natural disasters and... we may never work in this area. But somehow in so many of our publications we have that BIF works in areas affected by wars and natural disasters. I wonder where it came from and so on.”<sup>37</sup> Ahmer managed to convince his colleagues to create two separate BIF mission statements, one detailing supposed relief work for public consumption and a second internal document that emphasized “making Islam supreme” for the benefit of the extremist board members.<sup>38</sup>

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. government froze the assets of BIF and commenced legal action against one of its principle directors and founders, Illinois-resident Enaam Arnaout. In February 2002, Arnaout worriedly contacted his brother “Dr. Hisham” to discuss how “they” had taken the former director of BIF’s office in Bosnia “in a special plane... [t]o Cuba.” Arnaout, convinced of his own inevitable fate, explained to Hisham how he would attempt to shoulder the blame and exonerate BIF’s Saudi founders. He somberly reflected, “It means, we, I mean, there is death that we will be swallowing. Meaning, the razor will fall on us, but we do not know how.”<sup>39</sup> Less than a month later, the razor did fall; Bosnian police raided BIF’s regional headquarters in Sarajevo and detained its manager, Munib Zahiragic, a former intelligence officer affiliated with the Bosnian Foreign Ministry. Zahiragic reportedly turned over nearly 100 top-secret documents about suspected fundamentalist terrorists operating in Bosnia, including transcripts of communications between BIF management and senior commanders of Al-Qaida based in Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> Also found

<sup>37</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Page 53*.

<sup>38</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Page 54*.

<sup>39</sup> “Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements.” United States of America v. Enaam M. Arnaout. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case #: 02 CR 892. January 31, 2003. *Page 74*.

<sup>40</sup> Whitmore, Brian. “Bosnian Charities Tied to Terror.” The Boston Globe. July 2, 2002. Page 1.

were three firearms, a ski mask, numerous military manuals on topics including small arms and explosives, fraudulent passport materials, and photographs of Usama Bin Laden.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the forced closure of BIF, other still-legal Saudi charities (like BIF's corporate parent WAMY) continue to raise millions of dollars in purported humanitarian donations each year. Though the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long since promised stern action to prevent the misuse of these funds, the U.S. government has expressed recent doubt over the execution and effectiveness of those plans. A September 2005 report by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) warned:

U.S. agencies do not know the extent of the Saudi government's efforts to limit the activities of Saudi sources that have allegedly propagated Islamic extremism outside of Saudi Arabia... [A]ccording to the government of Saudi Arabia, and State and Treasury officials, Saudi Arabia is undertaking a number of charity reforms, including requiring all private Saudi donations marked for international distribution to flow through a new National Commission for Relief and Charity Work Abroad. However, as of July 2005, this commission was not yet fully operational, according to Treasury... According to State, the government of Saudi Arabia also announced its intentions to close al Haramain Islamic Foundation, but in May 2005, a Treasury official told us it was unclear whether the government of Saudi Arabia had implemented its plans.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, the phenomenon of charitable front groups that provide support to Al-Qaida is by no means exclusively limited to the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, elsewhere in the Muslim world, other such entities have been established with near equal success – as in Turkey, with the so-called Foundation for Human Rights, Liberties, and Humanitarian Relief (IHH). Turkish authorities began their own domestic criminal investigation of IHH as early as December 1997, when sources revealed that leaders of IHH were purchasing automatic weapons from

<sup>41</sup> Sworn affidavit of FBI Special Agent Robert Walker. United States of America v. Benevolence International Foundation, Inc. April 29, 2002. District of Illinois, Eastern Division. Case number: 02CR0414. *Page 10.*

<sup>42</sup> United States Government Accountability Office (GAO). "International Affairs: Information on U.S. Agencies' Efforts to Address Islamic Extremism." September 16, 2005. GAO-05-852. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05852.pdf>.

other regional Islamic militant groups.<sup>43</sup> IHH's bureau in Istanbul was thoroughly searched, and its local officers were arrested. Security forces uncovered an array of disturbing items, including firearms, explosives, bomb-making instructions, and a "jihad flag." After analyzing seized IHH documents, Turkish authorities concluded that "detained members of IHH were going to fight in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya."<sup>44</sup>

According to a French intelligence report, the terrorist infiltration of IHH extended to its most senior ranks. The report, written by famed counterterrorism magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguiere, revealed that IHH President Bulent Yildirim had directly conspired in the mid-1990s to "recruit veteran soldiers in anticipation of the coming holy war [jihad]. In particular, some men were sent into war zones in Muslim countries in order to acquire combat experience."<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, in the 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."<sup>46</sup> An examination of IHH's phone records in Istanbul showed repeated telephone calls in 1996 to an Al-Qaida guesthouse in Milan and various Algerian terrorist operatives active elsewhere in Europe – including the notorious Abu el-Ma`ali, who has been subsequently termed by U.S. officials as a "junior Osama Bin Laden."<sup>47</sup>

During the later Seattle trial of would-be Al-Qaida Millennium bomber Ahmed Ressay, federal prosecutors called French magistrate Bruguiere to the stand as an expert witness. Bruguiere

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard. *"Requisitoire Definitif aux Fins de Non-Lieu. De Non-Lieu partiel. De Requalification. De Renvoi devant le Tribunal Correctionnel, de maintien sous Controle Judiciaire et de maintien en Detention."* Cour D'Appel de Paris; Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris. No. Parquet: P96 253 3901.2. Page 112.

<sup>44</sup> Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard. *"Requisitoire Definitif aux Fins de Non-Lieu. De Non-Lieu partiel. De Requalification. De Renvoi devant le Tribunal Correctionnel, de maintien sous Controle Judiciaire et de maintien en Detention."* Cour D'Appel de Paris; Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris. No. Parquet: P96 253 3901.2. Page 112.

<sup>45</sup> Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard. *"Requisitoire Definitif aux Fins de Non-Lieu. De Non-Lieu partiel. De Requalification. De Renvoi devant le Tribunal Correctionnel, de maintien sous Controle Judiciaire et de maintien en Detention."* Cour D'Appel de Paris; Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris. No. Parquet: P96 253 3901.2. Page 112.

<sup>46</sup> Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard. *"Requisitoire Definitif aux Fins de Non-Lieu. De Non-Lieu partiel. De Requalification. De Renvoi devant le Tribunal Correctionnel, de maintien sous Controle Judiciaire et de maintien en Detention."* Cour D'Appel de Paris; Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris. No. Parquet: P96 253 3901.2. Page 112.

<sup>47</sup> Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard. *"Requisitoire Definitif aux Fins de Non-Lieu. De Non-Lieu partiel. De Requalification. De Renvoi devant le Tribunal Correctionnel, de maintien sous Controle Judiciaire et de maintien en Detention."* Cour D'Appel de Paris; Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris. No. Parquet: P96 253 3901.2. Pages 112-113. See also: Pyes, Craig with Josh Meyers and William Rempel. "Bosnia Seen as Hospitable Base and Sanctuary for Terrorists." *Los Angeles Times*. October 7, 2001.

testified that IHH had played “[a]n important role” in the Al-Qaida Millennium bomb plot targeting LAX. Under repeated questioning, Bruguiere insisted that “[t]here’s a rather close relation”:

The IHH is an NGO, but it was kind of a type of cover-up... in order to obtain forged documents and also to obtain different forms of infiltration for Mujahideen in combat. And also to go and gather[recruit] these Mujahideens. And finally, one of the last responsibilities that they had was also to be implicated or involved in weapons trafficking.<sup>48</sup>

Years later, Bulent Yildirim and the IHH also played a key role in galvanizing anti-Western sentiment among Turkish Muslims in the lead-up to the 2003 war in Iraq. By late 2002, 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 U.S. and Israeli flags.<sup>49</sup> Even after the initial U.S. invasion of Iraq, IHH has continued to bitterly oppose the presence of Western troops in Mesopotamia. Leading another anti-U.S. 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.”<sup>50</sup> Protestors at the December rally reportedly shouted various slogans, including “Murderer US, get out of the Middle East” and “Long live our resistance.”<sup>51</sup>

Yet, despite all this, the IHH is now active – and outspoken – in providing “charitable donations” to rebel-dominated areas of restive Sunni central Iraq. As he watched IHH truck convoys leaving Turkey for Iraq, Bulent Yildirim characterized U.S. military operations in the Iraqi city of Fallujah as equally “a strike on Istanbul, Ankara.”<sup>52</sup> In mid-2004, IHH issued an English-language news update from its representatives on the ground in Fallujah: “the women and children shot by [U.S.] snipers now rest in a football field turned into a graveyard for the brave

<sup>48</sup> “Reporter’s Transcript of Proceedings.” United States of America v. Ahmed Ressam, aka Benni Noris. United States District Court for the Western District of Washington. Case #: CR 99-666-JCC. Dated April 2, 2001. *Pages 11-12*.

<sup>49</sup> “First Islamist Protest Against AK Party.” Turkish Daily News. March 1, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> “Protests in Turkey against UK troops.” Dawn (Pakistan). December 4, 2004. <http://www.dawn.com/2004/12/04/int3.htm>.

<sup>51</sup> “Istanbul group protests US operations in Iraq.” Turkish Daily News. December 4, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> “Turkish Islamist group sends food to besieged Fallujah.” Agence France Presse (AFP). November 10, 2004.

freedom fighters who resisted the invasion... The American troops [turned back] the injured being transported to hospitals by shooting at the ambulances. The freedom fighters crashed one airplane and 18 helicopters... Iraqi authorities stated that the resistance of [Fallujah] created a high spirit among their people while causing chaos and confusion among the Americans... As for the search for a new flag by the transition government, the Iraqis are sending a clear and firm message by raising their old flag in every possible place such as the roofs and walls of their houses, cars and gas stations... All the Iraqis share one hope which is the departure of the invading Americans. The big bubble of anger that covers all parts of the country can explode any time.”<sup>53</sup> IHH has continued in its “efforts” in Iraq, at least as recently as the spring of 2005, when Bulent Yildirim announced the departure of two more truckloads “of humanitarian aid to Fallujah city of Iraq. In the coming days, we will send more aid.”<sup>54</sup> Yildirim failed to specify who exactly in the city of Fallujah would be the recipients of IHH’s contributions.

IHH has also helped fill the void created by the departure of other, more brazen charitable front groups, such as the now-banned Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). Only one month before BIF was designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist entity, Halil Demir – a former BIF public relations officer who had traveled in the Caucasus on official business for the charity – established a new non-profit group (also based in Worth, Illinois) known as The Zakat Foundation of America (TZFA).<sup>55</sup> According to its official newsletter, by mid-2003, Demir’s Zakat Foundation had sponsored at least two truck convoys traveling from Turkey to Mosul, Kirkuk, and Baghdad carrying at least \$120,000 in materiel “done in coordination with IHH, a humanitarian organization based in Turkey... Portions of the supplies from [the] second relief convoy were donated locally by individuals and businesses in Turkey.”<sup>56</sup> A photo comparison of images posted on the TZFA’s website demonstrate a consistent pattern of material support to IHH – both in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>57</sup> In one case, supposed relief workers wearing smocks marked with IHH’s logo struggle to hold up a TZFA banner for a photo while goods are distributed to Afghan refugees.<sup>58</sup> In another instance of clear deception,

<sup>53</sup> “IHH: Humanitarian Aid from Turkey to Fallujah.”

<http://www.ihh.org/english/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=102>. January 2005.

<sup>54</sup> “IHH sends humanitarian aid to Fallujah.” *Anadolu News Agency* (Turkey). December 21, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Biemer, John. “For Muslims, charity can carry risks.” *Chicago Tribune*. July 13, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Zakat Foundation of America Summer 2003 Newsletter.

[http://www.zakatfoundation.com/images/\\_dbpics/\\_uploads/Summer03.pdf](http://www.zakatfoundation.com/images/_dbpics/_uploads/Summer03.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.thezakat.org/images/\\_dbpics/\\_PhotoGallery/08.jpg](http://www.thezakat.org/images/_dbpics/_PhotoGallery/08.jpg). November 2005.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.tzfa.org/qafg/afg13b.jpg>. See also: [http://www.tzfa.org/p\\_qafgh01.html](http://www.tzfa.org/p_qafgh01.html). November 2005.

photos published in TZFA's newsletter of truck convoys carrying relief supplies from Turkey to Sunni central Iraq were digitally tampered to remove the original IHH banner hung from the vehicles, substituting it instead with a crude replacement reading "The Zakat Foundation."<sup>59</sup>

Organizations such as IHH are quick to respond to natural disasters and other human catastrophes. Unfortunately, these groups often seek to use these situations to gain leverage with destitute Muslim refugees. In August 1999, when a devastating earthquake struck Turkey, IHH reached the affected zones, in some cases, even before the Turkish government. Friction quickly grew between authorities tasked with relief and independent Islamist "humanitarian" groups. Ultimately, Turkey was forced to ban the IHH from participating in earthquake aid efforts because it was counted among several "fundamentalist organizations" operating "secret bank accounts" that were refusing to allow local authorities to oversee the distribution of their aid resources.<sup>60</sup>

A similar situation is now brewing in Pakistan following the catastrophic October 2005 earthquake. Prompted into action by public anger at the slow pace of aid to local refugees, a host of religious extremist organizations have stepped forward in hopes of filling the void and presenting themselves as populist alternatives to the secular rule of President Pervez Musharraf. One such group is the political wing of the terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) – an entity formerly known as Markaz Dawa wal-Irshad and currently operating under the name "Jammat-ud-Dawa" ("The Islamic Missionary Movement").

The MDI/LeT was founded during the late 1980s as Muslims from across Central Asia and the Middle East were fighting together against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. After witnessing the formation of organized mujahideen units in Afghanistan – consequently – a group of Pakistani Muslim militants decided to "take[] a leaf from the book of [the] Afghans ... [and] lit the torch of Jihad movement."<sup>61</sup> This new movement – which became eventually known as Lashkar-e-Taiba (a.k.a. "The Army of the Pure", "The Army of Madinah") – was

<sup>59</sup> Zakat Foundation of America Summer 2003 Newsletter.

[http://www.zakatfoundation.com/images/\\_dbpics/\\_uploads/Summer03.pdf](http://www.zakatfoundation.com/images/_dbpics/_uploads/Summer03.pdf). See also:

<http://www.ihh.org.tr/images/photo/17/orig/180.jpg> November 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Montgomery, Lori. "Muslims say Turkey impeding aid effort." *The Orange County Register*. August 29, 1999.

<sup>61</sup> Taiba Bulletin (nadqpk@yahoo.com). "Subject: Eleven Years of Lashker-e-Taiba." April 22, 2001.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/muslimworldnews>.

comprised of both intellectual and military components. Markaz al-Dawa wal Irshad (MDI), the political wing of the LeT, was established first in 1986 for the purpose of “organi[zing] the Pakistanis participating in Afghan Jihad on one platform.”<sup>62</sup> According to internal documents published by LeT, the Pakistani founders of MDI “had [the] full co-operation of Arab Mujahideen who taught [them] the intricacies of Jihad and Qital [combat].”<sup>63</sup> On February 22, 1990, a group of Pakistani clerics and mujahideen commanders led by Hafiz Mohammed Saeed from the Ahl-e-Hadith movement in Pakistan “laid the foundation” for the MDI’s military wing (known as Lashkar-e-Taiba) with the joint establishment of their Camp Tango training facility in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup> According to both Hafiz Mohammed Saeed and foreign recruits who joined Lashkar, one of the key individuals responsible for LeT’s formation and development was a prominent Saudi Al-Qaida member known as Shaykh Abu Abdel Aziz “Barbaros” (a.k.a. Abdelrahman al-Dosari).<sup>65</sup>

Since its inception in 1990, the MDI’s military wing Lashkar-e-Taiba has participated in countless guerilla attacks on Indian soldiers, bombings of civilian and military targets in Jammu-Kashmir, and terrorist assaults on civilian targets in India proper, including a December 2000 attack on the Red Fort complex in Delhi, the Indian national capital. Red Fort is considered a geographic landmark, featuring a museum and hosting thousands of tourists each year. According to LeT sources, a two-man Lashkar fidayeen (“suicide commando”) unit forced its way into Red Fort, opening fire indiscriminately inside the ancient, Mughal-built structure. The fidayeen squad reportedly killed two people and seriously wounded another – the senior commander of LeT Hafiz Muhammad Saeed later declared that the Red Fort attack was “a symbolic activity” intended to force India into withdrawing from Kashmir.<sup>66</sup> In December 2001, the U.S. State Department officially named Lashkar-e-Taiba as a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In his public statement on the designation, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell accused Lashkar of “seek[ing] to assault democracy, undermine peace and

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.dawacenter.com/introduction/introduction.html>. March 11, 2000.

<sup>63</sup> Taiba Bulletin (nadqpk@yahoo.com). “Subject: Eleven Years of Lashker-e-Taiba.” April 22, 2001. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/muslimworldnews>.

<sup>64</sup> Taiba Bulletin (nadqpk@yahoo.com). “Subject: Eleven Years of Lashker-e-Taiba.” April 22, 2001. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/muslimworldnews>.

<sup>65</sup> “Hafiz Mohammed Saeed: Pakistan’s heart of terror.” *Kashmir Herald*. Vol. 2; No. 2. July 2002. See also: Author’s interview of Randall Todd Royer.

<sup>66</sup> From: “Abu Omar” (markazdawa@hotmail.com) [203.135.14.210]. “Subject: Taiba Bulletin 23-12-2000.” Newsgroup posting on taiba\_bulletin@egroups.com. December 24, 2000.

stability in South Asia, and destroy relations between India and Pakistan.”<sup>67</sup> LeT’s political wing MDI was subsequently forced to change its name after it was identified in the same U.S. government designation as a “Sunni anti-US missionary organization” and part of LeT’s “fraternal network.”<sup>68</sup>

Though the organization (currently known as Jamat-ud-Dawa) remains under the lead of Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, it has somehow managed to survive Pakistani purges on Islamic militants – perhaps by publicly disavowing any direct link to Lashkar-e-Taiba. Nonetheless, Jamat-ud-Dawa continues to push forward the agenda of LeT, including through charitable subsidiaries such as Idara Khidmat-e-Khalaq (a.k.a. “the Humanitarian Services Institution”).<sup>69</sup> The mission behind the establishment of Idara Khidmat speaks volumes about the intentions of its founders. According to the website of Jamat-ud-Dawa, Idara Khidmat was formed in order to frustrate “certain hidden objectives” of other competing relief agencies from around the world:

In particular the aid donor institutions funded by the western countries are busy in preaching Christianity. They lure the people into meeting the basic needs of life to convert their faith avoiding argumentation. Africa is a special target of these Christian aid donor agencies. All the countries of South Asia in Middle East and Central Asia, western missionaries are engaged in changing the faith... Tsunami was the worst catastrophe of this century that rocked many countries. More than twenty hundred thousands peoples were dead and hundreds of thousands were rendered homeless. Many aid-giving agencies reached this hour with their hideous traditional agenda and the news of their interest in making the people Christian instead of giving aid spread all over the world. Muslim orphan children of Ache were sent to Christian educational institutes and literature of Christianity was distributed. This conspiracy failed soon.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman. “Statement by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell: Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.” <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/2001/1226/epf302.htm>. December 26, 2001.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.treas.gov/rewards/pdfs/terroristlists/list6.pdf>. November 2005.

<sup>69</sup> “Humanitarian and Social welfare Projects of Jama`at-ud-Da`awah.” <http://www.jamatuddawa.org/English2/reliefservices.htm>. August 15, 2005.

<sup>70</sup> “Humanitarian and Social welfare Projects of Jama`at-ud-Da`awah.” <http://www.jamatuddawa.org/English2/reliefservices.htm>. August 15, 2005.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the Tsunami disaster in East Asia, Idara Khidmat-e-Khalaq urged charitable donations and emphasized “[s]ome of the scholars are saying that it is imperative for all muslims do their bit for the relief efforts – for the sake of humanity as well as to compete with the non-muslim efforts.”<sup>71</sup> In order to accomplish that goal, Idara Khidmat has likewise established “partnerships” with other suspect fundamentalist charities – including the previously discussed IHH in Turkey.<sup>72</sup> The designated recipients of support from Idara Khidmat admittedly include “relatives of martyrs” – presumably referring to the families of Pakistani mujahideen killed while fighting in Afghanistan and Kashmir.<sup>73</sup>

Despite having been quick in the past to crack down on some suspected Arab-Afghan charitable front groups like Mercy International, Pakistani officials have not been as eager to crush the financial infrastructures of native militant groups like Jamat-ud-Dawa/Lashkar-e-Taiba. Despite having placed Jamat-ud-Dawa on a “terrorism watch list” in late 2003, Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao recently conceded during an interview that Jamat-ud-Dawa had nonetheless prospered by playing a key role in “the lifeline of our rescue and relief work.” Sherpao was quick to insist that Jamat-ud-Dawa was “only involved in extensive charity work, and their footprint now covers almost the entire quake-affected zone in the country.”<sup>74</sup> Sherpao’s comments reflect the surprising degree of deference paid to Hafiz Mohammed Saeed and his colleagues by the Pakistani government. Perhaps Pakistani President Musharraf hopes to blunt the wrath of fundamentalist Pakistani militants by permitting them to continue on in a limited national role. Undoubtedly, given the desperation of thousands of Pakistani earthquake refugees, he seeks to avoid being accused by “domestic Islamic organizations” of “attacking legitimate Islamic institutions and intentionally hampering relief efforts.”<sup>75</sup>

However, any strategy by Musharraf that offers legitimacy to Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamat-ud-Dawa, or Idara al-Khidmat also carries with it major risks. One cannot but recall the prophetic

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.alhudapk.com/forum/get\\_topic.asp?FID=3&TID=1868&DIR=N](http://www.alhudapk.com/forum/get_topic.asp?FID=3&TID=1868&DIR=N). January 17, 2005.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.ihh.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=110&Itemid=104>. November 2005.

<sup>73</sup> “Humanitarian and Social welfare Projects of Jama`at-ud-Da`awah.”

<http://www.jamatuddawa.org/English2/reliefservices.htm>. August 15, 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Lancaster, John and Kamran Khan. “Extremists Fill Aid Chasm After Quake.” *Washington Post*. October 16, 2005.

<sup>75</sup> January 1996 CIA Report on “International Islamic NGOs” and links to terrorism. *Pages 2-3*. See also: Affidavit by Senior Special Agent David Kane (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security). *United States of America v. Soliman S. Biheiri*. United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division. Case #: 03-365-A. August 14, 2003. *Page 2*.

warning of the Bosnian Muslim Military Intelligence Service in 1995 about the “polarizing” effect of extremist NGOs and the “far reaching damaging consequences” of tolerating them. In a time of national emergency, no genuine, unconditional aid can logically be refused. But Pakistan must take care that a humanitarian disaster like October’s earthquake does not lead to a manmade disaster fomented by religious fanatics emboldened by the sudden spread of their populist message. At a time when Pakistan’s government is increasingly under siege by fundamentalist militants, it must take care to keep such NGOs and missionary charities at arms length – to avoid inadvertently becoming their next victim.

Despite the intense public focus on the role of Islamic charitable groups in financing and recruiting for terrorism following 9/11, those same organizations nonetheless clearly continue to be manipulated by Usama Bin Laden and his global extremist allies. Given the underlying complex web of financial and personal relationships, such agile front groups are notoriously difficult to clean out or shut down. It is a challenge that has largely defied past efforts aimed at addressing it, including the much-lauded “central collecting agencies” supposedly established by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbors. Indeed, when the CIA outlined a number of suggested strategies in 1996 for combating the infiltration of Islamic charities, all admittedly featured inherent drawbacks. However, according to the CIA report, “when applied consistently... the most successful [tactic] in halting illegal activities within NGOs” is “arresting individual members for terrorism or other illegal acts.”<sup>76</sup>

There is some contemporary empirical evidence to back up that conclusion: certainly, following 9/11, the arrests and prosecutions of senior leaders from the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) and another designated entity – the Global Relief Foundation (GRF) – appear to have fatally crippled both of those organizations. Yet, the counter-example of former BIF Public Relations officer Halil Demir should serve to underscore that unless all of the significant “bad actors” present within a given NGO are prosecuted by authorities, remaining staff members are likely to immediately resurrect a would-be charity with a new identity and simply resume their previous illicit activities – hardly a silver bullet.

<sup>76</sup> January 1996 CIA Report on “International Islamic NGOs” and links to terrorism. *Page 4*. See also: Affidavit by Senior Special Agent David Kane (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security). United States of America v. Soliman S. Biheiri. United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division. Case #: 03-365-A. August 14, 2003. *Page 2*.

Rather, if one were to consider the situation from a more general perspective than the CIA, the best straightforward solution towards reducing the terrorist exploitation of non-profit NGOs seems to be investing resources in forming trained teams of financial investigators who are vigilant in their mission and empowered to work within a multi-agency and multi-lateral framework. Simply put, those officials tasked with the responsibility of overseeing suspect NGOs must be equally as nimble, flexible, and thoughtful in their work as their adversaries. Until such time as that is the case – no matter what specific enforcement approach they adopt – European and North American governments will continue to lag behind in the struggle to shut down these potentially lucrative avenues of international terrorist recruitment and financing