

Ties That Bind: Hamas and the Brotherhood

Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood have been intertwined since Hamas's establishment, when the group's 1988 [charter \(https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st_century/hamas.asp\)](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st_century/hamas.asp) defined it as the movement's Palestinian branch. Thereafter, Brotherhood outposts around the world—including in the United States—created entities to support the militant Palestinian branch. Still in 1988, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestine Committee [traveled \(https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-10/hamas-networks-final.pdf\)](https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-10/hamas-networks-final.pdf) from the Middle East to meet with movement leaders in the United States and created the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) as the primary U.S.-based vehicle to raise financial and other support for Hamas. The U.S. Department of the Treasury [designated \(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/po841\)](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/po841) the HLF for its ties to Hamas in 2001, and a U.S. court [convicted \(https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/federal-judge-hands-downs-sentences-holy-land-foundation-case\)](https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/federal-judge-hands-downs-sentences-holy-land-foundation-case) its leaders in 2008 for providing millions of dollars in support to the group. In 2011, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit [reaffirmed this verdict \(https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/ca5/08-10664/08-10664-cr0.wpd-2011-12-07.html\)](https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/ca5/08-10664/08-10664-cr0.wpd-2011-12-07.html), pointing to evidence that after Hamas's formation, "the Muslim Brotherhood directed its world-wide chapters to establish so-called 'Palestine Committees' to support Hamas from abroad."

Muslim Brotherhood members followed this playbook elsewhere around the world as well. In 2000, at the start of the second Palestinian intifada, [Hamas leaders established \(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/hp1267\)](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/hp1267) the [Union of Good \(https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF1/FEB22_05_680981780.pdf\)](https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF1/FEB22_05_680981780.pdf), a global umbrella organization, to facilitate Hamas's overseas financial activities. This network, which included more than fifty so-called charities, was led for many years by the influential Brotherhood spiritual leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi. The U.S. Treasury Department subsequently [designated \(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/hp1267\)](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/hp1267) both the Union of Good and many of its members for their ties to Hamas. In its [designation \(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/tg1725\)](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/tg1725) earlier this year of a Netherlands-based NGO, the Treasury Department confirmed that the Union of Good is still very much in operation and reports "directly to the Hamas military wing."

Evidence from other cases abounds:

- In 2010, Germany [banned \(https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE66B1ZU/\)](https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE66B1ZU/) the German wing of the Turkish group Internationale Humanitaere Hilfsorganisation (IHH)—a member of the Union of Good—citing the group's fundraising for Hamas. Israel [had banned \(https://info.publicintelligence.net/IDF-IHHreport.pdf\)](https://info.publicintelligence.net/IDF-IHHreport.pdf) the group—which it [describes \(https://info.publicintelligence.net/IDF-IHHreport.pdf\)](https://info.publicintelligence.net/IDF-IHHreport.pdf) as "being close to the Muslim Brotherhood"—in 2008 for ties to Hamas and [deported \(https://info.publicintelligence.net/IDF-IHHreport.pdf\)](https://info.publicintelligence.net/IDF-IHHreport.pdf) an IHH activist from the West Bank for transferring funds to Hamas-controlled organizations in Hebron and Nablus.
- In a 2019 criminal case, a Spanish court [pointed \(https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-09/verbatim-final_0.pdf\)](https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-09/verbatim-final_0.pdf) to another Muslim Brotherhood-dominated umbrella organization, the [Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe \(https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/aims-and-methods-of-europe-s-muslim-brotherhood/\)](https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/aims-and-methods-of-europe-s-muslim-brotherhood/), for its ties to Hamas. The court found that in some European countries, the federation was seen to have "strong links with Hamas and with other organizations that have supported Hamas."
- In June 2025, the Treasury Department [designated \(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0162\)](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0162) what it described as "sham charities [\(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0162\)](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0162)"—several of which appear to be tied to the Brotherhood—for funding Hamas. These groups' reach is broad: the designated entities have been [located \(https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20250610\)](https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20250610) across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, including in Algeria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Qatar, Sudan, Turkey, and Yemen.

Violent Brotherhood Branches as FTOs

In addition, several more Muslim Brotherhood branches could potentially be designated based on their violent activities. For example, when Jordan [banned \(https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn4w8prpkepo\)](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn4w8prpkepo) the movement's branch in April, the action followed charges against a number of its members for [organizing and planning a terrorist attack \(https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/15/world/middleeast/jordan-plot-arrests.html\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/15/world/middleeast/jordan-plot-arrests.html). Another example is the Lebanese Brotherhood branch, al-Jamaa al-Islamiyah, and its militant wing, the al-Fajr Forces. This branch has launched [rocket attacks \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/mapping-clashes-along-israel-lebanon-border\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/mapping-clashes-along-israel-lebanon-border) targeting Israel in coordination with Hezbollah, and has also [worked closely \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/muslim-brothers-give-hamas-foothold-lebanon\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/muslim-brothers-give-hamas-foothold-lebanon) with Hamas in Lebanon.

Yet many other Brotherhood branches have long been careful to avoid violence, recognizing that crossing such a line would open them up to more government scrutiny and punishment. Designating Brotherhood branches that have engaged in terrorist violence could warn others away from that threshold.

Officials in the first Trump administration encountered evidentiary challenges and settled for designating two Egypt-based Muslim Brotherhood splinter groups— [Liwa al-Thawra \(https://2017-2021.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-ismail-haniyeh-harakat-al-sabireen-liwa-al-thawra-and-harakat-sawad-misr-hasm/\)](https://2017-2021.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-ismail-haniyeh-harakat-al-sabireen-liwa-al-thawra-and-harakat-sawad-misr-hasm/) and [Harakat Sawad Misr \(https://2017-2021.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-ismail-haniyeh-harakat-al-sabireen-liwa-al-thawra-and-harakat-sawad-misr-hasm/\)](https://2017-2021.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-ismail-haniyeh-harakat-al-sabireen-liwa-al-thawra-and-harakat-sawad-misr-hasm/)—that helped launch a series of deadly bombings, assassinations, and other attacks in Egypt over the period 2015–17. The second Trump administration should follow this focused, circumspect approach.

Conclusion

The evidence validates U.S. concerns about the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly as the Trump administration aims to move beyond the Gaza ceasefire to build a more stable, peaceful Middle East. But taking sweeping action against the entire group will be both counterproductive and ineffective. Instead, the administration should look closely at Brotherhood entities that provide financial support for Hamas as potential SDGT targets. It should also designate those branches that are tied to violence as FTOs. At the same time, it should provide a strong legal framework to go after Brotherhood organizations using both sanctions and law enforcement tools.

On the Hamas financing front, authorities should first zero in on entities falling under the Union of Good, Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, and Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad. The impact of unilateral U.S. sanctions will only go so far on their own, and other key governments—particularly in Europe—will be far more likely to take similar steps if they are persuaded that the U.S. actions are legally sound and based on concrete, reliable information.

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