GIOR | GLOBAL INFLUENCE OPERATIONS REPORT

EUROPE AND THE GLOBAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD PART 3:

Cooperation Between US and European Muslim Brotherhood Groups

Version 1.1

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Synopsis:
The Global Muslim Brotherhood in the US and Europe have been in contact for many years but, until recently, were not known to have formalized their relationship, either by forming joint organizations or undertaking joint political activity. This ended in 2016 with the international "Muslim Councils in the West" conference that brought together US and European GMB leaders intending to form a permanent assembly. Although this body appears never to have been created, the last two years have seen increased cooperation between US and European GMB groups. This cooperation has involved both political collaboration and participation in various joint events.

REPORT:

BACKGROUND

The GLOBAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD (GMB) is a transnational network of political Islamists tracked by the Global Influence Operations Report (GIOR). The GIOR FAQ explains the GMB as follows:

Most observers are familiar with the pan-Islamic organization known as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Founded in 1928 by Egyptian schoolteacher Hassan El-Banna, the Egyptian Brotherhood has been a wellspring of Islamism and political Islam since its inception. Its importance as a 'springboard' toward radicalization for individuals such as Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has been widely discussed. Far less known is the existence of a global network of individuals and organizations that developed as Muslim Brotherhood members dispersed to other countries while fleeing the periodic crackdowns on the organization in Egypt. Many of these Muslim Brothers (Ikhwan) settled in Europe and the United States, where they went on to found what have become some of the most prominent Islamic organizations in their new home countries. Once established, these organizations began seeking legitimacy and have worked to influence and control the development of Islamic discourse and political activity in their respective countries. Less publicly, they are almost always associated with fundamentalism, anti-Semitism, and support for Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and even Hezbollah. While claiming to disavow Al-Qaeda linked terrorism, the Ikhwan are at best lukewarm in their condemnation of Islamist violence and commonly issue statements justifying and supporting such violence. Compared to the Egyptian organization, there has been relatively little scrutiny of the network referred to as the Global Muslim Brotherhood. This network has become far more important to the Islamist movement worldwide than the Egyptian organization, which until recently had been largely confined to activities inside Egypt- where its members were under constant government surveillance and control until the fall of the Mubarak government in 2011.1

The GIOR FAQ goes on to explain the existence of the GMB in Europe:

The Global Muslim Brotherhood has been present in Europe since 1960 when Said Ramadan, the son-in-law of Hassan Al-Banna, founded a mosque in Munich. Since that time, Brotherhood organizations have been established in almost all of the EU. countries as well as many non-EU countries such as Russia and Turkey. Many of these organizations have banded together into an EU-level lobbying group known as the Federation of Islamic Organizations of Europe (FIOE), based in Brussels and which includes some 26 European Muslim Brotherhood organizations as well as being the parent body for other pan-European Brotherhood bodies such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research.

The same source describes the GMB in the US as follows:

The Global Muslim Brotherhood has been organized in the United States since 1963 when the Muslim Student Association (MSA) was established by Brotherhood members fleeing their home countries. Key figures in the MSA, as well as others linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, went on to form numerous other organizations, many of which have been recently identified by the US government in court documents as part of the US Brotherhood.

A report by the GIOR Senior Editor on the GMB in the US concludes:

Since the early 1960s, the Brotherhood has constructed an elaborate covert organizational infrastructure on which was built a set of public or "front" organizations. The current US Brotherhood leadership has attempted to deny this history, both claiming that it is not accurate and at the same time that saying that it represents an older form of thought inside the Brotherhood. An examination of public and private Brotherhood documents, however, indicates that this history is both accurate and that the Brotherhood has taken no action to demonstrate change in its mode of thought and/ or activity.²

The GIOR FAQ explains that these US and European organizations, as well as Islamic organizations in other parts of the world, operate as a coherent network—sharing similar ideology, backgrounds, funding, and institutional links.³

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL CONTACT

The GLOBAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD in the US and Europe are known to have been in contact for many years. For example, at least ten years ago, North American MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD leader Jamal BADAWI was reportedly invited as a guest speaker in nearly 27 other countries, some of which he visited several times.^{4 5} In one such visit, BADAWI participated in an April 2008 meeting at the Swedish Parliament, which included important representatives of the European and US MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD as well as the Swedish government.6 The meeting was held under the theme "Freedom of Religion-Bridges to Understanding" and was organized jointly by the FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS IN EUROPE (FIOE), the ISLAMISKA FORBUNDET I SVERIGE (IFIS), and the SVERIGES MUSLIMSKA RÅD (SMR), all tied to the GMB in Europe. ^{a 7 8 9} Other GMB figures reported attending were:

- Isam AL-BASHIR, Director of the WASATIYA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
- Hussein HALAWA, General Secretary of the EURO-PEAN COUNCIL FOR FATWA AND RESEARCH
- Chakib BEMAKHLOUF, FIOE President
- a The IFIS is a FIOE member organization indicating its status as part of the GMB.

- Mahmoud KHALFI, IFIS
- Helena BENOUDA, SMR

From 2005-2007, the US government was actively facilitating contact between US and European GMB groups. Examples include:

- In November 2005, the US Embassy in Belgium sponsored a two-day conference in Belgium titled 'Muslim Communities Participating in Society: A Belgian-US Dialogue." 10 11 12 The goal of the conference was described as "to bring Belgian and American Muslims together to break stereotypes and foster networking opportunities." The USMB umbrella group, the ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA, was said to have played a major part in the conference's planning from the US side.¹³ ¹⁴ Also attending were the COUNCIL ON AMERICAN ISLAMIC RELATIONS (CAIR) and its leader Nihad AWAD, the MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL, and the MUSLIM STUDENT ASSOCIATION, all part of the US Brotherhood. 15 ¹⁶ ¹⁷ ¹⁸ Also in attendance was Michael PRIVOT, vice president of the FORUM OF EUROPEAN MUSLIM YOUTH AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (FEMYSO), the European MUSLIM BROTHER-HOOD youth umbrella group.¹⁹
- In October 2006, the USMB group, the MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL, participated in a conference titled "International Conference on Muslim Youth in Europe and North America Agenda," held at a UK conference center.²⁰ The conference was expected to have included GMB leader Tariq RAMADAN, German MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD leader Ibrahim ELZAYAT, and European MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD youth leader Khallad SWAID.²¹ ²² ²³ Also expected to have attended was David GERSTEN, Director of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Programs, US Department of Homeland Security.
- In September 2007, the US-based INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT (IIIT), part of the US MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, announced that Imam Tariq OUBROU had visited IIIT headquarters in July as part of a US State Department-sponsored visitors program.²⁴ ²⁵ OBROU, described as a leading Imam in the French Muslim community, reportedly gave a presentation on Muslims in France and addressed a panel of IIIT interns. Mr. OUBROU is strongly associated with the UNION DES ORGANISATIONS ISLAMIQUES EN FRANCE (UOIF), renamed MUSULMANS DE FRANCE in 2018 and representing the MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD in France.²⁶ ²⁷



Despite contacts such as these, the GMB groups in Europe and the US were not known to have formalized their relationship, either by forming joint organizations or undertaking joint political activity. This appears to have changed beginning in February 2016 with a conference in Arlington, Virginia, titled the "1st International Conference of Muslim Councils in the West." Conference publicity described the event as follows:

...the first of its kind to bring Muslim leaders around the world together to exchange experiences and to discuss common issues of concern to our communities. A conference of this scale, uniting the voices of Muslims across the Western Hemisphere and world...

An event PR website reported that high ranking government and elected officials from the US, EU, and the UN were expected to attend and that a White House briefing and visit to the US Congress was planned.²⁹ A publicity photo for the conference featured twelve individuals, including Oussama JAMMAL, the Secretary-General of the US MB umbrella group US COUNCIL OF MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS (USCMO), at the podium and CAIR leader Nihad AWAD standing prominently next to him.^{30 31} To the far right is Anas ALTIKRITI, the most important leader of the MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD in the UK.^{32 33} Photos posted on Twitter indicate the conference was also attended by other European MB leaders and a US Congressman, including:³⁴

- Abdullah BEN MANSOUR (FIOE President)³⁵
- Iqbal SACRANIE (former Chairman of the MUS-LIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN, part of the GMB in the UK)^{36 37}
- Omer EL-HAMDOON (President of the MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF BRITAIN, the premier group representing the GMB in the UK)³⁸ 39

The USMCO reported later that one outcome of the conference was the "Washington Declaration" to form an assembly body for western Muslim organizations.⁴⁰

Since this conference, there has been heightened cooperation between US GMB organizations and their European counterparts over the past two years.

POLITICAL COOPERATION

The following instances of political cooperation between US and European GMB groups were identified:

1. CAMPAIGN AGAINST FRENCH PRESIDENT MACRON

There is evidence of a targeted and continuing campaign of US GMB groups against French President Emmanuel Macron and in support of their French GMB counterparts. In October 2020, Macron proposed broad legislation to tackle Islamist separatism and the favoring of religious rules over national laws among the country's growing Muslim population.41 These plans included stricter control over foreign funding of mosques.⁴² Public debate over Macron's efforts coincided with public outrage over the 16 October 2020 killing of Samuel Paty, a French history teacher who was brutally murdered after showing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in class.⁴³ Against this backdrop, the French government ordered a crackdown on multiple groups accused of radicalism, carrying out dozens of raids and temporarily shutting down mosques. 44 The French Interior Minister also sought to dissolve two Islamic NGOs, which, according to the minister, were involved in the events leading to the killing of Paty. One of these NGOs, the Islamophobia watch group COLLECTIF CONTRE L'ISLAMOPHOBIE EN FRANCE (CCIF), was later identified as an Islamist influence operation with multiple ties to the GMB.45 The CCIF also maintained ideological positions in close sync with the GMB, such as a passionate defense of the Islamic headscarf and campaigns against French secularism.

French critics called government efforts to curb Islamist separatism an unfair singling out of the Muslim community. Criticism also came from several Arab nations and Turkey, who called for a boycott of French products. The leading GMB organization campaigning against the French state was the prominent US Muslim advocacy group the COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS (CAIR). CAIR campaigning included:

Calling on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIFR) to investigate what CAIR called France's "ongoing campaign of collective punishment" against the French Muslim community⁴⁹

- Issuing a travel advisory on its website, warning Muslims against traveling to France and saying they may face danger and discrimination there⁵⁰
- Issuing a statement offering CCIF office space and logistical resources at the CAIR headquarters in Washington, DC⁵¹ 52
- Accusing Macron of "Islamophobia" and warning his nation was steering towards the colonial racism of its past⁵³
- Co-signing a formal complaint against France at the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHCR) over its alleged systemic discrimination of Muslims⁵⁴
- Publishing a statement urging US President Joe Biden to condemn the French government over its forced closure of CCIF⁵⁵
- Calling on the US Department of State to designate France among the Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) over the firing of an imam whose remarks were deemed "contrary to the values of the Republic" 56
- Publishing a press release calling on US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to condemn and address actions targeting mosques in France and India⁵⁷

Additionally, on 13 November 2020, the USCMO published a lengthy statement on its website calling out "France's fanatical secularism, persecution of Muslims, and its assault on freedom of religion, thought, and speech." ⁵⁵⁸ ⁵⁹

In turn, GMB groups in the US instrumentalized allegations of Islamophobia against France to win political support in the US. This included urging members of the US Congress to vote "Yes" on a newly introduced law aimed at combating Islamophobia in the US and internationally and asserting that anti-Muslim rhetoric, bigotry, and acts of violence went together with the rise of political parties that attack the rights of Muslims, especially in France and other parts of Europe."

2. US ACADEMICS SUPPORTING AUSTRIAN RESEARCHER RAIDED BY AUSTRIAN POLICE

Farid HAFEZ is an Austrian Islamophobia researcher who was one of the targets of 2020 Austrian police raids involving a large number of Islamic organizations and individuals suspected by the Austrian government of ties to terrorist and criminal organizations. ⁶¹ HAFEZ is a founding member of the MUSLIMISCHE JUGEND ÖSTERREICH, an Austrian Muslim youth organization that has been a member of FEMYSO. ⁶² In September 2021, HAFEZ announced he had relocated to Williamstown, Massachusetts, to take up a visiting professorship at the local Williams College. ⁶³

He is now a senior researcher at Georgetown University's BRIDGE INITIATIVE, a multi-year research project whose staff includes multiple individuals tied to the GMB in the US. 64 65 66

In January 2021, two US academics with extensive ties to the GMB in the US joined a support committee for HAFEZ.⁶⁷ ⁶⁸ One of the supporters is BRIDGE director John ESPOSITO, a professor of International Affairs and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University and founding director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (CMCU) at Georgetown.⁶⁹ ESPOSITO, a former US State Department advisor, has espoused views consistent with GMB doctrine and, during the 1990s, was known for his claims that Islamic fundamentalism was, in fact, democratic and posed no threat to the US.⁷⁰ 71 ESPOSITO has had at least a dozen past or present affiliations with GMB/HAMAS-related organizations, including serving on the advisory board of the INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT in the UK headed by Azzam TAMIMI, a leader in the UK GMB and often described as a HAMAS spokesman.⁷²

The HAFEZ support Committee website also identifies Tamara SONN as a supporter.⁷⁴ SONN is the Qatarifunded Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor in the History of Islam and current Director of the CMCU.⁷⁵ SONN and ESPOSITO have both been important leaders in the CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY (CSID), a little-known organization founded in 1998 in a cooperative effort among the US GMB, the US State Department, and ESPOSITO.⁷⁶ Past CSID board members included Jamal BARZINJI and Taha AL-ALWANI, early leaders in the US GMB who helped to establish many of the most important US Brotherhood organizations.⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ ⁷⁹

On 2 March 2022, 31 international academics, including HAFEZ and ESPOSITO, published an open letter urging French President Emmanuel Macron to stop his government's alleged "institutionalization of Islamophobia," arguing that Macron's government was in "almost permanent violation" of the 1905 law on the separation of church and state.⁸⁰

3. HILTON HOTELS BOYCOTT

On 8 September 2021, a coalition of more than 40 international Muslim advocacy groups launched a global boycott campaign against Hilton Hotels & Resorts. 81 The coalition included several GMB groups from the US and Europe, including:

- **CAIR**
- **USCMO**
- MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

The boycott was intended to pressure the corporation over its refusal to end the construction of accommodation on the site of a bulldozed mosque in the Xinjiang province of China. On 16 October 2021, coalition members participated in an educational leafleting campaign outside Hilton hotels in several major US cities. The campaign centered on Chinese human rights violations.

4. JOINT RESEARCH REPORT ON US WAR ON **TERROR**

On 7 October 2021, a coalition of US and European GMB groups released a research report on US counterterrorism efforts that urged Muslim communities in the US not to cooperate with the FBI and law enforcement.82 The 192-page document, titled "The Terror Trap," featured contributions from 30 mostly left and far-left international scholars, journalists, and activists providing a critical assessment of the US-led Global War on Terror. The report contains recommendations for governments, media professionals, civic organizations, and Muslim communities worldwide. The authors also recommend that Muslims not open the doors of their mosques and community centers to the FBI and law enforcement "until entrapment and targeting of communities ends" and that they should not "partner with Zionist organizations." The paper was co-sponsored by GMB-tied Muslim advocacy and research initiatives from the US, including:

- CAGE83
- ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF NORTH AMERICA84
- THE BRIDGE INITIATIVE85

The report's contributors included Farid HAFEZ and John ESPOSITO.

US AND FUROPEAN MUSI IM BROTHERHOOD PARTICIPATION IN GMB EVENTS

Multiple conferences that included both US and European GMB participants were also identified:

1. COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS

On 1 July 2020, CAIR Executive Director Nihad AWAD joined a virtual summit co-organized by the EAST LONDON MOSQUE.86 87 The event, titled "The Triple Pandemic of Racism, Islamophobia, and COVID-19," brought together

GMB leaders from the US and Europe to discuss "the triple global pandemics the world faces." Speakers included:

- Anas ALTIKRITI88
- HindMAKKI, an instructor at the USINSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND UNDERSTANDING89 90

The event was moderated by EAST LONDON MOSQUE trustee Ruhana ALI. Other speakers included Lee Jasper, former Senior Advisor to the Mayor of London, and former UK Shadow Foreign Minister Catherine West. 91 92

2. US COUNCIL OF MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS

From 20-22 October 2020, the USCMO, in cooperation with the COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUSLIMS, hosted the second "Muslim Councils in the West" conference, one of the largest virtual gatherings of the GMB since 2016.93 94 The gathering was titled "Resilience, Courage, and Passion. Western Muslims Confronting Racism, Violence, and Covid-19" and brought together almost every important GMB leader in Europe and the US. Event participants discussed a wide range of topics, such as Islamophobia, White Supremacy, as well as the impact of Covid-19 on Muslim communities. According to a USCMO announcement:

Join national leaders in this unique conference to discuss important issues of common interest to those who live in the West. This conference follows USCMO's first conference, which was held in Washington, DC, in 2016.95

The meeting announcement went on to identify 21 "invited councils," all of which are tied to the GMB and included:

- COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUSLIMS%
- NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADIAN MUSLIMS 97
- MUSULMANS DE FRANCE
- MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF BRITAIN
- MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN
- US COUNCIL OF MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS

At least eleven individuals representing major GMB organizations both in the US and Europe participated in the event, including:98

- Oussama JAMMAL, USCMO Secretary-General
- Dorsaf BENDHIAB, EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF MUSLIM WOMEN⁹⁹

- Samir FALAH, COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUSLIMS
- ♦ Khallad SWAID, DEUTSCHE MUSLIMISCHE GEMEINSCHAFT¹00
- Raghad ALTIKRITI, MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF BRITAIN
- ♦ Harun KHAN, MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

The meeting announcement indicated that a committee charged with implementing the Washington Declaration to form an assembly body for western Muslim organizations would present its report at the conference.

No further details on the MUSLIM COUNCILS OF THE WEST are available, and there is no evidence that the group is currently active or that the assembly body was ever created.

3. INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC FEDERATION OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

On 27 February 2021, the INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC FEDERATION OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS, the international youth/student organization of the GMB, held a virtual "revival" conference titled "Together for A Brighter Future." The event featured speaking appearances by a large number of GMB leaders from both the US and Europe, including: 103

- Dalia MOGAHED, Director of Research at the US INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL POLICY¹⁰⁴
- Oussama JAMMAL, USCMO Secretary-General
- Timothy WINTER, a Professor of Islamic Studies at the AZIZ FOUNDATION, a British scholarship organization whose past leadership was tied to several organizations in the European GMB network, including the EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM and the MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN¹⁰⁵ 106
- Mohsin ANSARI, Chairman of the USCMO and President of the ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF NORTH AMERICA¹⁰⁷

The event's participants also included Kenan MUSIC, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the University of Sarajevo, and British writer Hamza TZORTZIS, a former trustee of a British charity under investigation by the UK Charity Commission over links to Islamist terrorism. ¹⁰⁸ ¹⁰⁹ Also present was Zamzam IBRA-HIM, Vice President of the European Students Union, where FEMYSO is an associate member. ¹¹⁰

4. ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF NORTH AMERICA

From 28-30 May 2022 in Baltimore, Maryland, this year's edition of the annual convention of the USMB groups the ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF NORTH AMERICA and the MUSLIM AMERICAN SOCIETY brought together GMB leaders from the US and Europe, as well as high-ranking US government officials and a member of the US Congress. 111 112 Speakers covered topics such as education, parenting, social justice, Islamic finance, and character development. Participants included US Representative Ilhan Omar and Keith Ellison, the Attorney General of Minnesota, who has a long history of cooperation with GMB groups in the US Other participants included:

- Mohsin ANSARI
- Hatem BAZIAN
- Zahra BILLOO, Executive Director of CAIR-San Francisco
- Hammad LODHI, President of the UK ISLAMIC MISSION, a British mosque umbrella affiliated with JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI, a Southeast Asian Islamist movement close to the GMB¹¹³ ¹¹⁴

Also present was British Muslim social media personality Mohammed HIJAB, accused of being a leading figure during the 2021 anti-Semitic demonstrations in London.¹¹⁵

5. DEMOCRACY FOR THE ARAB WORLD NOW

On 12 July 2021, Sarah Leah WHITSON, the Executive Director of DEMOCRACY FOR THE ARAB WORLD NOW (DAWN), participated in a virtual Srebrenica Genocide commemoration event hosted by the EAST LONDON MOSQUE in cooperation with the MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN (MCB).^a 116 DAWN is a US think-tank founded by the late Saudi dissident Jamal KHASHOGGI. Its board of directors includes numerous individuals tied to the GMB, including CAIR Executive Director Nihad AWAD and Esam OMEISH, a former president of the MUSLIM AMERICAN SOCIETY.¹¹⁷ Other participants in the event included MCB Secretary-General Zara MOHAMMED.

DAWN will be the subject of a forthcoming report.

a WHITSON is known for her misleading statements about the GMB. See https://www.global-influence-ops.com/us-muslim-brotherhood-associates-of-jamal-khassogi-launch-middle-east-human-rights-project/

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