

MEMMO

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Who was Behind the Gaza Flotilla?

The **Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH)** was responsible for dispatching the Gaza flotilla. IHH was founded in Istanbul in 1995. It has well documented ties to Hamas and has been linked to other Islamic terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda.

IHH purchased three of the six ships used in the recent flotilla, including the infamous *Mavi Marmara*, whose passengers attacked Israel Defense Forces soldiers. IHH President Bulent Yildirim was aboard this ship, along with a large group of IHH supporters—nine of whom were killed while assailing Israeli forces.



IHH President Bulent Yildirim met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza in April, 2010.

During the April meeting Haniyah personally thanked Yildirim and IHH for their support:

"The IHH has particularly delivered substantial amount of aid to the people of Gaza. IHH President Bulent Yildirim offered help and stood beside our side during the war (2009 Gaza conflict). This is an example of Islamic fraternity, an indication that we are all parts of the same umma (nation). Muslims are like walls reinforcing each other. Welcome. Gaza is proud of you. I pray to Allah that we will pray together in al-Quds freely one day."

- After being stopped by Egyptian security trying to enter Gaza in April, 2010, IHH's Yildirim said, "I will keep this blood stained shirt all my life."
- In May 2008, Israel outlawed IHH after it uncovered that the group had become a major component in Hamas' global fundraising machine. The group operates an office in Gaza to coordinate its activities there.

- IHH is a member of the Union of Good, an umbrella organization of more than 50 Islamic funds and foundations around the globe, which channels money into Hamas institutions in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories.
- In 2006, Yildirim stated, “ Hamas leader Khalid Mashaal should be invited to Turkey and welcomed with a state ceremony.”
- In 2005, as Russian forces battled Islamic insurgents in Chechnya, the IHH leader called on “Turks to help Chechnya combat Russian imperialism.”
- During a 2004 U.S. offensive against insurgents in Fallujah, Iraq, the IHH sent “humanitarian” goods to the region. Yildirim said, “A U.S. strike on Iraq is a strike on Istanbul,” and accused the U.S. of committing a “huge massacre” there. The IHH also called for a Turkish boycott of U.S. and British goods.
- In 1997, Turkish authorities launched a criminal investigation into IHH revealing that the group’s leaders were purchasing automatic weapons from other regional Islamic militant groups. Several high-level IHH members were detained for planning to fight alongside mujahedeen in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya.
- A French examination of IHH’s 1996 phone records showed repeated telephone calls to an al-Qaeda guesthouse in Milan and to various Algerian terrorist operatives active throughout in Europe.
- In a 1996 report, the CIA identified IHH as a radical Islamic humanitarian organization, according to The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.
- French counter-terrorism magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguière testified during the trial of failed Millennium bomber Ahmed Ressam that IHH had played an “important role” in the al-Qaeda terrorist plot. He further stated that in relation to the Montreal-based al-Qaeda cell:

“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 mujahedeen in combat. And also to go and gather these mujahedeen. And finally, one of the last responsibilities that they had was also to be implicated or involved in weapons trafficking.”