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# The Muslim Brotherhood's Pan-European Structure

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Austrian Fund for the Documentation of  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### What is the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe?

All aspects of the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, including its very existence, have long been debated and with little consensus. Yet, given the position of relative influence within and representation of European Muslim communities that individuals and organizations linked to the Brotherhood have obtained over the last few decades, a deeper understanding of the movement is crucially important for European policymakers and civil society.

While there are differences from country to country, the original embryo of this presence was established between the 1960s and the 1980s by Middle Eastern students at European universities and a few senior Brotherhood members fleeing persecution in their home countries. What started off as an unexpected and temporary presence in Europe, over time became stable and expanded greatly. Today, every major European country is home to a small network of individuals and organizations with varying degrees of connectivity to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Terminology can be deceiving and the term Muslim Brotherhood in the

West can mean different things. While other categorizations are possible, it can be argued that the term Muslim Brotherhood refers to three separate yet highly connected realities which, in decreasing degrees of intensity, are:

- Pure Brothers. The first generation of pioneers arriving from the Arab world set up structures that mirrored those of the countries of origin, obviously replicated on a much smaller scale. Pure Brothers are individuals who, having undergone a rigorous recruitment process and having been sworn in, belong to the non-public/secret structure created by Brotherhood members in each European country.
- Brotherhood spawns. Upon arriving in Europe, the first Brothers established a web of organizations devoted to a broad array of activities. None of these entities publicly identifies as having links with any structure of the Muslim Brotherhood. But, in reality, they represent the other side of the coin to the pure Brothers – the public face of the secretive network, the part that advances the group’s agenda in society without giving away the secret structure.
- The Brothers’ decision to create this binary structure – a public and a secret one – is largely dependent

to their understanding that organizations that cannot, in theory, be directly linked to the group are more effective at conducting engagement with Muslim communities and European societies. For this very reason, Brotherhood spawns do not identify as being linked to the Brotherhood and reject any accusation of the contrary, often using the argument that they are independent entities – something that is, on a purely formalistic level, correct. Moreover, to increase their engagement potential, Brotherhood spawns are given names that seek to convey an image of moderation and broad representativeness.

- Organizations influenced by the Brotherhood. These are entities that have some historical, organizational, financial and, most importantly, ideological ties to the core Brotherhood milieu but have no clear operational ties to it.

The individuals and organizations belonging to the pure Brotherhood and the leadership of the latter two categories in each European country constitute the local Brotherhood milieu. The term milieu is preferable to the term branch because the latter gives an impression of dependence. In reality, each European Brotherhood milieu operates in complete

autonomy from other European milieus and from the much larger branches in the Middle East/North Africa. There is therefore a French Brotherhood milieu, a German Brotherhood milieu, an Austrian Brotherhood milieu, a Danish Brotherhood milieu and so forth. While European Brotherhood milieus constantly communicate and coordinate with their mother groups in the Arab world and among them, they are free to choose their goals and tactics.

The number of full-fledged members of each European Brotherhood milieu is relatively small (a bit more than a thousand in large countries like France or the UK, less than a hundred in the smaller ones), but each has the capacity to influence and mobilise a much larger number of allies and fellow travellers. Moreover, Brotherhood milieus create many public organizations that, while controlled by the same small number of activists, aim to project an image of wide support and representation.

### **The Brotherhood's Pan-European network**

Since the late 1980s, leaders of the informal pan-European network have sought to create a formal pan-European structure. In 1989, they established the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), a Brussels-based,

pan-European umbrella organization. In substance, every European country's FIOE member is the main entity of that country's Brotherhood milieu. Moreover, the vast majority of FIOE leadership positions have historically always been occupied by top leaders of each country's Brotherhood milieu. FIOE supervises, coordinates and harmonises the activities of its member organizations throughout Europe.

Over time, FIOE (which in 2020 changed its name to Council of European Muslims, CEM) created several specialised entities to serve specific goals. Among them, the most important are:

- The Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO). Also Brussels-based, FEMYSO serves as the umbrella organization for youth and student organizations for every European country's Brotherhood milieu. Leadership positions within FEMYSO are generally occupied by children of some of the most senior leaders of the European Brotherhood milieu and leaders of local youth and student organizations.
- The European Institute for Human Sciences (IESH). Originally established by FIOE and the UOIF (Union des Organisations Islamiques de

France), the French Brotherhood's milieu flagship organization, IESH is a network of schools located in France, Germany, the UK and Finland devoted to training European imams.

- The European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). Based out of Dublin, ECFR is a jurisprudential body that provides religious decrees to aid European Muslims to reconcile their desire to respect Islamic law while living within Europe's non-Muslim majority societies. Historically led by Yusuf al Qaradawi, the majority of ECFR's scholars are linked to branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe or the Middle East/North Africa.
- Europe Trust. UK-based, but with affiliates in various European countries, Europe Trust is controlled by some of the most senior leaders of the European Brotherhood network. It engages in a variety of financial activities, mostly in real estate, which in turn serve the purpose of funding various entities of the milieu.

An important organization close to the European Brotherhood milieu is Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW). IRW strongly denies any connection to the Muslim Brotherhood, but its organizational and personnel ties to the group's European



network are extensive. Organizations that belong to individual countries' Brotherhood milieus regularly fundraise for and promote IRW and individuals who belong to them often run the local IRW branches.

### **Influence and funding**

The various pan-European entities and the many organizations created by each European Brotherhood milieu form one fairly cohesive cluster. While each Brotherhood milieu acts on its own territory, their personal, organizational and financial connections are extensive. The network's circular nature cannot be overstated, as it is run by a fairly small (a few hundred individuals in total, if looking at senior leadership) clique of men (and a small but growing number of women, most of which wives or daughters of senior leaders) who all know each other, a tight-knit Islamist nomenclatura with a disproportionate impact on organised Islam in Europe.

Despite their small numbers, in fact, European Brotherhood milieus have managed to obtain substantial influence in two separate yet related contexts: within European Muslim communities and with European establishments. As for the former, the majority of European Muslims have not been swayed by the Brothers and either reject or ignore their

socio-political-religious worldview. Yet the massive web of mosques, charities, schools, lobbying and civil rights organizations, and many other kinds of entities that cater to specific needs or sub-groups does help in spreading the Brothers' message and is something no competing Islamic trend can deploy due largely to a lack of resources.

By the same token, the Brothers have often achieved a disproportionate influence with European establishments: politicians at all levels, governmental agencies, media outlets etcetera. Thanks to its vocal and visible presence, the Brothers often manage to outshine competing Muslim trends.

One of the main reasons that explain the Brothers' relative success is their access to ample financial resources. The European Brothers' financing dynamics are complex and difficult to penetrate. But there are four main categories of financial sources:

1. Donations from the Muslim community.
2. The group's own financial activities. The European Brothers have long developed a web of businesses, some focused on Islamic-related activities (certification of halal meat, sales of religious publications, etc.),

some unrelated (from real estate to financial services).

3. Foreign donations: historically from virtually all Arab Gulf countries, albeit over the last decade mostly from Qatar and, to a lesser degree, Kuwait. Turkey has also come to play an important role in recent years.
4. Grants from European governments and the European Union. In recent years, organizations that belong to the European Brotherhood milieu have been increasingly receiving public funds for activities such as integration work, radicalization prevention, anti-racism/Islamophobia, etc. In some cases, charities linked to the Brotherhood milieu also act as contractors for European governmental aid agencies, carrying out projects for them in particularly challenging regions of Africa, the Middle East or Asia.

### **Goals and problematic views**

While some of its leaders and literature do talk about a vision for a fully Islamised Europe in a distant future, the quintessentially pragmatic European Brotherhood works for goals that are significantly more realistic. In substance, the movement understands that what it can achieve in the non-Muslim majority

societies of Europe is substantially different from the Arab world. Therefore its three main goals are:

1. Spreading its socio-political-religious worldview to European Muslim communities, fostering their Islamic identity
2. Becoming the official or de facto representatives of Muslim communities with European establishments
3. Influencing policymaking on any Islam-related policy matter

In order to obtain these goals, the European Brothers conduct a variety of activities and adopt a series of postures. The movement has generally understood that being seen as a moderate and reliable interlocutor of European establishment is the best tactic to further its aims. Nevertheless, instances in which European Brotherhood leaders and organizations espouse views that are diametrically different from those expressed when engaging with policymakers, civil society leaders and media outlets are common. This report has documented a pattern of highly problematic (anti-integration, anti-Semitic, homophobic, misogynistic ...) views consistently expressed by the upper echelons of the movements.

Assessing whether or what kind of threat

the European Brotherhood network poses is a complex task and opinions vary significantly. From a security point of view, it should be stated that the European Brotherhood does not pose a direct threat and that the movement is not engaged in any attack on the continent. At the same time, European Brotherhood networks however do support in words and deeds Hamas and other violent groups operating outside of Europe. Moreover, the Brothers' narrative of victimhood and partial justification, according to many, does create a conducive environment for violent radicalization.

Arguably, the largest challenge posed by the European Brotherhood has to be identified in its threat to social cohesion and integration. Its "Us versus Them" narrative, politically instrumental exaggeration of the undeniable phenomenon that is anti-Muslim hatred, and dissemination of highly problematic views on matters such as women and gay rights, can have a polarizing impact, driving a wedge between European Muslims and the rest of the population.


## **Conclusion and recommendations**

In substance, this report shows that a small network of interconnected activists runs a broad Europe-wide web of organizations that have managed

to become a powerful nomenklatura of self-appointed leaders of organised Islam. Thanks to their mobilization skills and access to ample resources, they have been able to exert a disproportionate influence on local Muslim communities and, to some degree, convince European establishments of seeing them as moderate and legitimate representatives of European Muslims. While not posing a direct security threat, their views on several key issues are highly problematic and run counter human rights and European constitutions.

The question of what to do regarding the matter is highly contested and no blanket policy can or should be adopted. That is both because each European country's approach is influenced by its own cultural, historical and political dynamics and because the issue of the Brotherhood plays out on many different levels, from integration to security, from education to religious affairs. Notwithstanding these difficulties, it is still possible to provide three general policy recommendations that are arguably applicable to all European actors (politicians, government agencies, civil society organization) dealing, for whatever reason, with individuals or organizations linked to the European Brotherhood network.

1. Build knowledge. Every interaction



and, before that, the very decision on whether to interact at all with European Brotherhood entities should be grounded on sound knowledge of their nature and aims, as well as an awareness of all the implications stemming from any engagement decision. This, unfortunately, does not always happen.

2. Engage, but don't empower. An outright refusal to engage with Brotherhood organizations might not be a sensible approach, even for governments that view the network in very negative terms. Governments might have sound strategic reasons to interact with European Brotherhood organizations and often

do so with full knowledge of who they are engaging. However, they should make sure that engagement does not become empowerment, that it does not unduly provide legitimacy and political capital to the network.

3. Do not fund. Over the last few years, European Brotherhood organizations have become skilled at obtaining public funding to conduct a broad variety of activities (integration and anti-discrimination work, radicalization prevention, aid, etc.). European public actors should stop providing funding for Brotherhood organizations, making criteria for funding not purely formal but assessing a potential recipient's system of values.



**PART  
ONE**

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, European policymakers, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, media outlets and publics have been constantly debating the various strains of Islamism operating on their soils. The discussion has often times been poorly informed, erroneously confusing various outwardly manifestations of the Islamic faith with the actions of Islamists. Islamists, to be clear, are political actors that utilise an instrumentalised interpretation of Islam to achieve political goals – something very different from mainstream and even conservative Islam.

Islamism is an extremely heterogeneous ideological movement. Most of the attention has understandably been focused on violent Islamism, also known as jihadism. Europeans, in fact, have prioritised trying to understand the motives that have driven thousands of young men and women from the continent to embrace the ideology of groups like al Qaeda and the Islamic State and carry out attacks on their behalf.

Attention has also been devoted to a broad array of groups and networks that adopt various non-violent (or, some would argue, not directly violent) iterations of Islamism. From various strains of the broad and extremely heterogeneous

Salafist movement to militant/activist groups like Hizb ut Tahrir, Europeans have often discussed actors that, while operating largely within the law, reject democracy and adopt views that are severely at odds with mainstream European values on several key issues such as democracy and gender equality.

Despite divergences on how to deal with them, there is substantial agreement among Europeans over the problematic nature of these actors and the need to diminish their influence. Things turn significantly more complex when the attention shifts to another category of Islamists: participationists. Participationists are individuals and groups that adopt a highly conservative and politicised interpretation of their faith that, like the others, sees Islam as an all-encompassing system regulating all aspects of private and public life. But, unlike jihadists and most Salafists, participationists believe that working within the existing political systems, even if that means occasionally and temporarily sacrificing some of their principles, is the best way to further their goals.

Whether in the Middle East or in Europe, the Muslim Brotherhood constitutes the archetypal participationist Islamist group. It is also the oldest and most influential global Islamist movement with a century-long history that touches all

continents. Yet, despite this history and the rivers of ink spilled to describe it, European policymakers, government agencies and scholars widely differ in their views on it. Critics and supporters of the movement endlessly debate whether the Brotherhood truly believes in democracy or simply exploits it to cunningly advance its agenda, or, more generally, whether it is “moderate” or “extremist,” inherently vague and arbitrary terms that are unable to capture the movement’s many facets.

This debate over the nature and aims of the Brotherhood applies to both the Muslim-majority societies of the Middle East and to Europe, where the Brotherhood operates in contexts where Muslims are a small minority. In a European setting, opinions range from those that argue that the European Brothers are simply a religiously conservative movement that accepts democracy and favours the integration of Muslims in European societies to those that accuse them of being a subversive force engaged in supporting terrorism in the Middle East and in a long-term social engineering project aimed at forming parallel and inimical societies in Europe. Many have an opinion that is somewhere in between these two extremes, but the debate often takes strident tones and is rarely grounded on evidence.

Moreover, in Europe an additional issue complicates the debate over the group: identification. In Middle Eastern countries, in fact, there is generally little contention over who is a member of the Brotherhood and what political, charitable or educational entities are spinoffs of the group. Even in those Arab countries where the Brotherhood is illegal and membership in it is severely punished, there are few quarrels over who belongs to it.

Dynamics are very different in the West where, save for a handful of senior leaders of various Middle Eastern branches of the movement living in exile in Europe, virtually all individuals and entities that are linked to the movement deny any connection to the Brotherhood. While some critics tend to emphasise and exaggerate said connections, Brotherhood-linked activists have traditionally gone to great lengths to downplay or hide them. In substance, there is no common framework to identify European-based actors that are in various ways linked to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite these difficulties, identifying and assessing Muslim Brotherhood actors in a European context is an important task largely due to their disproportionate influence. Number-wise, in fact, Brotherhood activists constitute a small minority – arguably a few hundred



individuals in each European country. Yet, thanks to their commitment to their cause, their skills as activists, and the ample financial resources upon which they have been able to rely for decades, they have gained an importance that significantly transcends their small size. This dynamic plays out in two separate yet related contexts: within European Muslim communities and with European establishments.

As for the former, while dynamics somewhat differ from country to country, it is fair to say that throughout Europe, the Brothers have been able to create a sophisticated web of mosques, charities, schools, lobbying and civil rights organizations, and many other kinds of entities that cater to the local Muslim community. From day cares to funeral parlours, from halal certification providers to media outlets, the Brothers seek to tend to all the possible needs of European Muslims and, in the process, influence them. These efforts have not necessarily swayed the majority of European Muslims to the Brothers' worldview, arguably one of the European Brothers' ultimate goals. Most European Muslims, in fact, either reject or ignore the ideas disseminated by Brotherhood networks. However, it is unquestionable that other Muslim organizations do not possess the resources (nor, in many cases, the inclination)

to compete with the Brothers in terms of efforts to influence European Muslim communities.

By the same token, the Brothers have often achieved a disproportionate influence with European establishments: politicians at all levels, governmental agencies, local administrations, media outlets, civil society, etcetera. Although circumstances vary from country to country, when European establishment reach out to the Muslim community, it is quite likely that many, if not all, of the organizations or individuals that are engaged belong, albeit with varying degrees of intensity, to Brotherhood networks. It is not uncommon to find exceptions to this situation and things have changed in various countries over the last few years but, overall, it is apparent that no other Islamic movement has the visibility, political influence, and access to European establishments that the Brothers have obtained over the last decades.

For these reasons it is important for European authorities to possess a framework to 1) identify when an actor is in some way linked to the Brotherhood, 2) as a logical next step, assess what the existence of said affiliation means and 3) finally, based on the first two steps, conceive a coherent policy approach. Yet, this ideal scenario is quite different from




reality. No European country, in fact, has adopted a cohesive assessment followed by all branches of its government. There is no centrally issued white paper or internal guidelines sent to all government officials detailing how Brotherhood-linked organizations should be identified, assessed and, eventually engaged. This situation leads to huge inconsistencies, not only from one country to another but also within each country, where approaches diverge from ministry to ministry, from municipality to municipality, and even from office to office of the same body. Non-governmental actors, such as media outlets, religious and civil society organizations, are similarly divided and confused in their identification, assessment and engagement processes.

These dynamics play out in various ways but according to patterns that are fairly common throughout Europe. In many cases, controversies often arise when an actor engages as partner of a certain individual or organization that is seen as being somehow linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. Take the examples of a governmental aid agency that provides funds to a certain Muslim charity to do relief work abroad; a political party that includes in its electoral list a certain Muslim activist; a church organization that engages a certain Muslim organization as interfaith dialogue partner.

As the story of the engagement goes public, what often happens is that some critics will allege that the specific engagement partner is “a member of”, “part of”, “linked to” or even just “inspired by” the Muslim Brotherhood, therefore criticizing the choice to partner with them. The argument that the specific individual/organization is linked to the Brotherhood can be made with varying degrees of sophistication and detail. Nevertheless, these charges generally lead to responses from both the entity that engaged the allegedly Muslim Brotherhood-linked actor and from the actors themselves. The former can either distance itself from its choice and end its engagement with the allegedly Brotherhood-linked actor, embarrassingly declaring that it was not aware of certain links, or stand by its choice, shrugging off the accusations as unfounded and/or politically motivated. Individuals and entities accused of being linked to the Brotherhood will, on the other hand, almost invariably reject the accusations as unfounded and attribute them to Islamophobia and other malign motivations.

These dynamics regularly occur with some variations in all European countries. What characterises most of these debates is the lack of a common framework to not only assess and devise engagement policies towards Brotherhood entities, but also to make the initial



step of determining whether a certain individual or organization can be legitimately accosted to the Brotherhood. In substance, in many cases the more substantive questions over the true nature of Brotherhood entities and the implications of engaging them are not discussed in depth, as the debate stops at an often-ill-informed shouting match over whether that very entity can be legitimately linked to the Brotherhood. This is problematic, as it would behave European societies to go beyond identification issues and engage in a serious debate about the aims of organizations that, as said, have a profound impact on how Europe's second and fastest growing religion is interpreted and managed.

The implications of how European governments – and, by extension, media and civil societies – perceive Brotherhood-linked entities play out on many fields, from security to education, from integration to religious affairs. For example, should the Brothers be allowed to run private schools? Should European governments partner with Brotherhood organizations, which often control a larger and better organised cadre of teachers than other Muslim organizations, to teach Islam in public schools? Should they be the partners of European governments in training and selecting chaplains for the prison system, the military, the police and other similar bodies?

Should they receive public funding to conduct outreach, education and integration activities with the Muslim communities and the recent large numbers of refugees arrived from Muslim majority countries? Should they be made partners of a domestic counter-radicalization strategy?

These are just some of the many issues related to the Muslim Brotherhood that European policymakers have been debating for decades and with even greater intensity over the last few years. Needless to say, the dynamics and the intensity of these debates vary from country to country, as each has its own political, cultural, social and legal peculiarities. But it is apparent that the first step in determining cogent policies is to understand how the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe operates, what it believes and what it wants. And even before that, what it is, and how individuals and organizations linked to it can be identified.

For this reason, one of this study's first aims is to provide a framework that can help to reasonably identify European-based individuals and organizations as linked to the Brotherhood. The first part of the study, in fact, seeks to elaborate both a common terminology and empirically grounded criteria to help identify the potential varying degrees

of connectivity to the Brotherhood various actors might have. It identifies a tripartite categorization of Brotherhood entities in Europe; it clarifies that in every European country operates a local branch of the Brotherhood, linked to a pan-European and global family but independent in both form and substance; it provides various indicators that can be used to assess an organization's Brotherhood connections.

The second and third part of the study seeks to map out summarily European Brotherhood networks. The second part provides an in-depth overview of pan-European structures linked to the movement, detailing their history, membership and activities. Membership in or close links to these pan-European entities by individual organizations in various countries is often a strong indicator of Brotherhood connections. The third part of the study briefly describes the history, evolution and current situation of Brotherhood-linked entities in several individual European countries.

The fourth part of the study provides an overview of how the European Brotherhood operates. It first briefly outlines the movement's goals and funding mechanisms. It then analyses how its messaging often conflicts with the image the movement seeks to present externally and with human rights and

core European values. The report culminates with basic policy recommendations.

In substance, this study seeks to be a primer on Muslim Brotherhood-influenced networks in Europe. While fully aware that alternative analyses of this extremely complex topic are possible, it aims to provide a common framework of what constitutes the Brotherhood in Europe, who belongs to it, how the network operates and what its views and goals are. The authors hope that this primer could be the foundation for a more informed debate and further research on what is an important policy matter.

## WHAT IS THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN EUROPE?

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest and the world's most influential Islamist movement. Since its foundation, it has played a crucial role in political, religious and social developments in the Arab world. The Brotherhood's view of Islam as a complete and all-encompassing system has in fact shaped generations of Islamists worldwide, from those who seek to implement their vision through peaceful means to those who make acts of brutal violence their primary modus operandi.

Despite this enormous influence, few aspects of the organization are uncontested. Views over its inner workings, ideology, and aims differ widely among scholars, policymakers and the general public, in the Muslim world as well as in the West. The group's proverbial secrecy is one of the main reasons for this confusion. As the Brotherhood was founded and operates mostly in countries where local regimes have enacted various forms of repression against it, the movement has understandably always seen dissimulation of many aspects of its structure and goals as a necessary tactic to survive.

Moreover, a universal assessment of what the Brotherhood is and wants is

further complicated by the fact that, to some degree, the organization's ideology and tactics have changed over time and vary from country to country. Even the very name "Muslim Brotherhood" can be interpreted in various ways. Arguably, the term is most commonly used to refer to the organization founded by Hassan al Banna in 1928 in Egypt. Al Banna conceived a complex organizational structure, a web of strict rules and internal bodies aimed at making the Brotherhood a modern and efficient machine capable of Islamizing Egyptian society and establishing an Islamic regime in the country. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has gone through many phases since then, including several crackdowns on the part of various Egyptian regimes and even a brief moment at the helm of the Egyptian state, in the aftermath of the 2011 overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. Still today, despite its deep crisis, the term Muslim Brotherhood is frequently used in reference to its Egyptian branch, the mother group from which all others originate.

Since the 1940s, the Brotherhood's message has spread to virtually all Arab and Muslim-majority countries. In each country, individuals embracing the group's worldview have established networks that mirror its structure and have adapted its tactics to local dynamics and political conditions. It is common to

refer to these networks in each country as Muslim Brotherhood branches (the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jordanian, the Libyan...), even though the term should not imply an authority of the Egyptian mother group over them.

The term Muslim Brotherhood is often used with a third meaning, encompassing the totality of the national branches of the organization and all the entities worldwide that adhere to al Banna's ideology and methodology. All these actors work according to a common vision but with operational independence, free to pursue their goals as they deem appropriate. Like any movement that spans continents and has millions of members and sympathisers, what is often referred to as the global Muslim Brotherhood, is hardly a monolithic block. Personal and ideological divisions are common. Senior scholars and activists often vie with one another over theological issues, political positions, access to financial resources and leadership of the movement. Despite these inevitable differences, their deep belief in the inherent political nature of Islam and their adoption of al Banna's organization-focused methodology make them part of the informal transnational movement of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite this complete operational independence, the individuals and entities that belong to the so-called global Muslim Brotherhood perceive themselves as part of a larger family. Their ties go beyond just a common origin and a shared ideological foundation, and are shaped by a deep, global web of organizational, personal, and financial connections. Past attempts to formally coordinate and supervise them through a formal structure, the so-called International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, led by the Egyptian branch, gained limited traction.<sup>1</sup> But the term Muslim Brotherhood could be used to identify an informal, yet tight-knit, global network of individuals and entities that share not just an ideology but regular operational connections as well.

Finally, Muslim Brotherhood could also be used to identify a type of Islamist activism. Ikhwanism (from the Arabic word for Brothers, ikhwān) is, in fact, a commonly used term for a methodology of socio-religious-political mobilization that, transcending formal and informal affiliations, is inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. The adoption of its mindset by non-affiliated groups has been seen positively by the "formal" Brotherhood, from its origins until today. Al Banna himself advocated for creating a

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Pargeter, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Burden of Tradition*, London: Saqi, 2010, pp. 96-132.

global movement rather than a formally structured organization, as he saw the Brotherhood “as an idea and a creed, a system and a syllabus, which is why we are not bounded by a place or a group of people.”<sup>2</sup> In a 2005 interview, Mohammed Akef, then murshid<sup>3</sup> of the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, explained that “a person who is in the global arena and believes in the Muslim Brotherhood’s path is considered part of us and we are part of him.”<sup>4</sup> Other senior members have described the movement as a “common way of thinking” and “an international school of thought.”<sup>5</sup>

### The Brotherhood in Europe

If the evolution of each national branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East took particular turns based on each country’s political culture and developments, the Brotherhood’s history is particularly peculiar in Europe, where it has had the unique characteristic of operating in non-Muslim majority societies. The first active presence of Brothers on the continent can be dated to the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when small,

scattered groups of militants left various Middle Eastern countries to settle in cities throughout Europe. A handful of these pioneers, like Said Ramadan and Yusuf Nada, were prominent members of the Egyptian Brotherhood fleeing the crackdown implemented by the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the following decades, Brotherhood members from other Middle Eastern countries similarly found refuge in Europe from the repression of local regimes.

Yet, the majority of Brotherhood-linked activists relocating to Europe were students, members of the educated and urban middle classes of the Middle East who had already joined or had flirted with the idea of joining the Brotherhood in their home countries. Settling in Europe to further their studies in local universities, these students continued their involvement in Islamic activities in their new environments. The combination of experienced militants and enthusiastic students bore immediate fruits, as Brotherhood activists formed some of Europe’s first Muslim organizations – most often small student groupings. Eu-

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in Hillel Fradkin, “The History and Unwritten Future of Salafism”, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, November 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Supreme guide, elected by the Brotherhood’s *shūrā* council according to what is stipulated in the internal regulations of the organization.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammed Akef, interview, in: *Asharq Al-Awsat*, December 11, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Yusuf Nada, interview with Lorenzo Vidino, July 2008, Campione d’Italia; Abd El Monem Abou El Fotouh, interview with Lorenzo Vidino, December 2008, Cairo.

Europe's freedoms allowed the Brothers to openly conduct the activities for which they had often been persecuted in their home countries.

The arrival of the first Brothers to Europe was hardly the first phase of a concerted and sinister plot of the Muslim Brotherhood to Islamise the West, as it is sometimes portrayed.<sup>6</sup> They initially represented a small, dispersed contingent of militants whose move reflected not a centralised plan, but rather personal decisions that fortuitously brought some Brotherhood figures to spend years or the rest of their lives in the West. Yet, the small organizations they formed soon developed beyond their most optimistic expectations. The Brothers' student groupings evolved into organizations seeking to fulfil the religious needs of Europe's rapidly growing Muslim populations and their mosques – often structured as multi-purpose community centres – attracted large numbers of worshippers. Following al-Banna's complex organizational model, they established youth and women branches, schools, and think tanks. The ample funds they received from wealthy public and private donors in the Arab Gulf allowed the Brothers to operate well beyond what their small numbers would have otherwise provided for.

By the late 1970s, the Brothers' isolated clusters throughout Europe increasingly began to interact with one another, thereby establishing formal and informal networks that spanned the continent. Yet, because most of the pioneers' hearts were still in their native countries, they viewed their sojourn in the West as only a temporary exile in a convenient sanctuary before returning home to continue their struggle. Nevertheless, with time, the European Brothers came to see their presence in Europe, where Muslim communities were growing, as an enormous opportunity. While still supporting in words and deeds their counterparts' efforts to establish Islamic states in the Muslim world, they increasingly focused their attention on their new reality in Europe and aimed at introducing European Muslim communities to their interpretation of Islam.

Convinced that the future in the Arab world was not going to change any time soon, the time had come to accept reality, reformulate the strategy and lay the foundations of Islam and da'wah<sup>7</sup> in Europe. For that purpose, they established an ever-growing constellation of overlapping organizations devoted to tasks ranging from education to financial investments, political lobbying and chari-

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<sup>6</sup> Brigitte Maréchal, *The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots and Discourse*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008, pp. 56-82.

<sup>7</sup> The act of inviting people to embrace Islam.

ty, thereby catering to Europe's growing Muslim populations and, what is more important, seeking to shape the nature of a nascent European Islam. Over time, these organizations grew significantly in both number and influence, becoming the wide constellation of what can be termed Muslim Brotherhood-related entities in Europe or, more succinctly, European Brotherhood.

### **A tripartite categorization**

As said, one of the most challenging aspects related to the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe is identifying which organizations and individuals can be linked to the movement. Governments and commentators have endlessly debated whether the organizations founded by the Brotherhood's pioneers and their offshoots – established decades ago and increasingly guided by a second generation of mostly European-born leaders – can be described as Muslim Brotherhood entities. Complicating things, most European-based, Brotherhood-linked activists, aware of the negative stigma that any possible link to the Muslim Brotherhood can create, have traditionally gone to great lengths to downplay or hide such ties.

Terminology can indeed be deceiving and, as in the Middle East, the term Muslim Brotherhood in Europe can mean

different things. While other categorizations are certainly possible, it can be argued that the term Muslim Brotherhood refers to three separate, yet highly connected realities which, in decreasing degrees of intensity, are:

- **pure Brotherhood,**
- **Brotherhood spawns,**
- **and organizations influenced by the Brotherhood.**

#### *Pure Brotherhood*

Pure Brotherhood are the non-public/secret networks established in Europe by the members of Middle Eastern branches of the Brotherhood. In most European countries, in fact, the first generation of pioneers arriving from the Arab world set up structures that mirrored those of the countries of origin. Some of the formalities were adapted and the structures were obviously replicated on a much smaller scale, as the number of full-fledged, card-carrying members of the Brotherhood in each European country ranges from a few dozen individuals for the smaller countries to little more than a thousand in countries with a relatively large Brotherhood presence such as France, the UK and Germany. However, in substance, what the Brothers did is establishing, de facto, a small Brotherhood branch in every European country.



Exactly like in the Middle East, the process of joining the Brotherhood in Europe is a complex one, one that does not start with any application by the aspiring member but only after a multi-year process of selection on the part of the organization. Once the subject is accepted (generally after a screening process that lasts a few years) as a full-fledged member sworn in through a ritualised ceremony, he is inserted in the local branch's pyramidal structure that goes from the *usra*,<sup>8</sup> the nuclear unit of a handful of activists that meet weekly at the local level, to an elected leadership supervising the activities in each country. Members are also given tasks according to their skills and the branch's needs and each member has to pay dues based on their income and be subjected to the organization's strict internal rules.

This structure is kept strictly secret and vehemently denied (or, in some cases, described as just a thing of the past) by the European Brothers when brought up

by critics. It nonetheless still represents the cornerstone of the Brotherhood in Europe.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Brotherhood spawns***

Brotherhood spawns, on the other hand, are visible/public organizations established by individuals who belong to the "pure Brotherhood." As previously mentioned, over time European Brothers established a wide web of entities devoted to a broad array of activities. None of these organizations publicly identifies as having links (if not, at times, in purely historical or ideological terms) with any structure of the Muslim Brotherhood. But, in reality, these organizations represent the other side of the coin to the pure Brothers: the public face of the secretive network, and the part that advances the group's agenda in society without giving away the secret structure. In the words of a former member of the Brotherhood in France, "there is the façade and the *arrière boutique* [back of the shop, transl. by au-

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<sup>8</sup> Literally, a "family".

<sup>9</sup> In 2020, one of the authors of this report, Lorenzo Vidino, released a book titled *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Columbia University Press) which was based on extensive interviews with more than a dozen former members of the Brotherhood in various European countries. All of them, without fail, described the inner workings of the non-public side of the Brotherhood in Europe as succinctly outlined above. The same description has been provided in other books written by former members of the Brotherhood in Europe. See, for example: Mohamed Louizi, *Pourquoi j'ai quitté les Frères Musulmans*, Michalon, 2016; Farid Abdelkrim, *Pourquoi j'ai cessé d'être islamiste: Itinéraire au cœur de l'islam en France*, Le Les Points Sur Les I, 2015; Ahmed Akkari, *Min afsked med islamismen: Muhammed-krisen, dobbeltspillet og kampen mod Danmark*, Udgivet af ArtPeople/Berlingske, 2016.

thor]”, each serving a function, but both part of the same structure and design.<sup>10</sup>

The European Brothers’ decision to create this binary structure – a public and a secret one – is largely dependent on their understanding that organizations that cannot, in theory, be directly linked to the group are more effective at conducting the kind of engagement it seeks with Muslim communities and European societies. For this very reason, Brotherhood spawns do not identify themselves as being linked to the Brotherhood and reject any accusation of the contrary, often using the argument that they are independent entities – something that is, on a purely formal level, correct. Moreover, to increase their engagement potential, Brotherhood spawns are given names that seek to convey an image of broad representativeness (“Muslim association of country X” or “Islamic Society of city Y”) and moderation (for example “Muslim Organization for Dialogue” or “Islamic Coexistence League”).

Membership in Brotherhood spawns is not generally limited to card-carrying members of the Brotherhood, as individuals who are not pure Brothers often serve even in leadership positions of Brotherhood spawns. The presence of non-Brothers within Brotherhood

spawns is considered an asset by the pure Brothers, as it helps them deflect accusations against their organizations as being Brotherhood. But pure Brothers will always maintain de facto control of these entities by maintaining a firm hold on the board and/or the budget.

### *Organizations influenced by the Brotherhood*

Finally, organizations influenced by the Brotherhood are those that, while adopting an ideology that is clearly influenced by that of the organization, have no clear operational ties to it. Traces of Brotherhood presence might be present, for example, in the composition of the board, the organization’s sources of funding, or some historical ties. But, at the same time, organizations belonging to this third tier of the European Brotherhood might engage in progressive reinterpretations of classic Islamist thought and might try to emancipate themselves from Brotherhood tutelage.

Generally, many of the people involved in these organizations, even in senior positions, are not members of the Brotherhood and in most cases have no idea of – and would even strongly and sincerely deny – their links to the Brotherhood. Yet, their relatively small numbers do not di-

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<sup>10</sup> Mohamed Louizi, as quoted in: Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

minish the Brothers' domination of these organizations, as they will maintain some degree of sway by controlling the board and using other tactics. At the same time, the presence – often in very visible positions – of individuals who clearly are not Muslim Brotherhood members is advantageous to the Brotherhood, as it makes the accusation that these organizations are “Muslim Brotherhood” a difficult one to sustain.

Inevitably, this tripartite classification cannot encapsulate all the degrees of complexity that surround organizations linked to the Brotherhood. As Brigitte Maréchal perfectly puts it, “[w]hat makes the Brotherhood so complex is that it consists of various types of superimposed structures, some of them evolving out of the local European situation, while others trace their history back to the organization’s country of origin”.<sup>11</sup> The movement’s secrecy makes most efforts aimed at understanding its and its spinoffs’ inner workings challenging. By the same token, fluidity is another element that needs to be taken into consideration, as it is not uncommon for organizations and individuals to increase or decrease their levels of personal, structural and ideological connectivity with the Brotherhood and therefore shift position in the tripartition.

Despite these important limitations, this classification aims to provide some nuance and order to a debate that often becomes polarised along two “extreme” and simplistic positions: the “there-is-no-Muslim-Brotherhood-in-Europe” approach and the “all-organizations-with-some-Brotherhood-trace-are-part-of-the-Muslim-Brotherhood” line of thinking.


### **An independent Brotherhood branch in each European country**

Unfortunately, the debate about Brotherhood-linked entities does not enter often the realm of substance, but stops at the issue of identification. It is a common dynamic for critics to accuse an individual or an organization of ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and for the accused part to reject the accusation, arguing it is unsubstantiated. It is not infrequent for this diatribe to move from the public realm to a court of law. And while defamation laws change from country to country and a myriad of factors influence the outcome of each legal challenge, the specific language the accuser used to allege a connection to the Brotherhood is a crucial factor.

More specifically, charges of connectivity to the Brotherhood can be

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<sup>11</sup> Brigitte Maréchal, “The European Muslim Brothers’ Quest to Become a Social (Cultural) Movement,” in: Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer (Eds.), *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2013, page 91.



placed on a spectrum. On one extreme, one can situate statements with which critics accuse a specific individual or organization of a strong, direct linkage to the Muslim Brotherhood (“individual X is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood,” “organization Y belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood”). On the opposite end of the spectrum are more nuanced charges that allege simply a consistent connection with the Brotherhood without indicating some kind of formal insertion in it (“individual X has ties to the Brotherhood network,” “organization Y is part of the Brotherhood milieu”).

Irrespective of how it is framed, the charge is often based on an alleged connection between an individual or an organization operating in Europe and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East. The issue of the connections between European-based networks and those in the Arab world is a complex one. On one hand, it is apparent that, when they established the first Brotherhood presence in Europe, activists transplanted tout court – or subjected to only minor variations – many of the dynamics of how the Brotherhood operates in the East. Still today, when it comes to the core, the pure Brothers, the structure and inner workings of the Brotherhood in Europe are almost identical to those of mother branches in the Arab world.

Nevertheless, this replication of forms and structures does not imply subordination. While it is true that European Brotherhood networks are modelled on those of the Arab world, with time they have grown independent. It is obvious that European Brothers look up to the significantly older, larger and more developed Middle Eastern Brotherhood networks, with whom they are in constant communication and coordination. But that does not mean that European Brotherhood organizations regularly receive marching orders from the East on what strategy to adopt and how to pursue their goals. Rather, it is arguable that they are independent, junior members of a global family, but without any subordination.

This assessment has important implication for the issue of identification. It is arguable, in fact, that the debate over determining whether a European Muslim organization “belongs to the Brotherhood” is often incorrectly framed. In many cases, in fact, an organization’s affiliation to the Brotherhood is assessed based on its connections to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or, more broadly, the Arab world. Those making the charge that a specific organization is linked to the Brotherhood will, in fact, say that “it is part of the Muslim Brotherhood” or use similar expressions that denote a subordination to some branch

in the Middle East. Those denying that the organization has ties to the Brotherhood will emphasise said organization's independence from Cairo or, more broadly, the Middle East.

It appears that neither analysis captures the reality of the Brotherhood in the West. Unquestionably, ties to the mother branch in the Middle East are an important indicator but they are not the key to determining whether an organization can be ruled to be "Muslim Brotherhood." Rather, evidence shows that, over the last few decades, in most European countries, a small cluster of Brotherhood members originally hailing from the Arab world created independent Brotherhood structures, which mirrored those of the mother countries, albeit on a smaller scale. Thus, the French Brotherhood, the British Brotherhood or the Spanish Brotherhood are realities as tangible as the Jordanian, Syrian or Tunisian Brotherhood.

The way to identify whether an organization based in a European country belongs to the Brotherhood is therefore not necessarily by uncovering possible but, in most cases, feeble ties to any

Middle Eastern country. Rather, that determination is better made by assessing whether they are a direct emanation of the Brotherhood branch of the specific European country in which it operates. While it is often true, as European Brothers say, that their organizations and structures are independent and do not receive orders from Cairo, that fact in itself does not indicate that they are not Muslim Brotherhood.

This analysis is confirmed by many Brotherhood leaders themselves. In an interview with Xavier Ternisien, a French expert on religions, former Egyptian Brotherhood murshid Mohammed Akef clearly described how the Brotherhood transcends formalities such as official affiliation.<sup>12</sup> "We do not have an international organization; we have an organization through our perception of things," explained the murshid. "We are present in every country. Everywhere there are people who believe in the message of the Muslim Brothers. In France, the Union of Islamic Organizations of France [UOIF/MF] does not belong to the organization of the Brothers. They follow their own laws and rules".<sup>13</sup> Confirming the informality of the movement's ties, Akef

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<sup>12</sup> Xavier Ternisien, *Les Frères Musulmans*, Paris: Fayard, 2005, pp. 110-111.

<sup>13</sup> "L'internationale éclatée des Frères musulmans", *Le Monde*, October 22, 2004. Retrieved from: [https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/10/22/l-internationale-eclatee-des-freres-musulmans\\_383958\\_1819218.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/10/22/l-internationale-eclatee-des-freres-musulmans_383958_1819218.html) (Accessed: August 26, 2021).

elsewhere referred to the UOIF as “our brothers in France”.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in a 2005 interview, Akef explained that European Ikhwan organizations have no direct link to the Egyptian branch, yet they coordinate actions with them. He concluded the interview with a telling remark: “We have the tendency not to make distinctions among us”.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, in a 2008 interview Mohamed Habib, first deputy chairman of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, confirmed this analysis of the organizations that locate themselves in the Brotherhood’s galaxy. “There are entities that exist in many countries all over the world,” said Habib. “These entities have the same ideology, principle and objectives but they work in different circumstances and different contexts. So, it is reasonable to have decentralization in action so that every entity works according to its circumstances and according to the problems it is facing and in their framework”.<sup>16</sup>

### Identifying indicators

Identification is, as said, a key need and

a massive challenge. It is apparent that a formalistic approach, one that identifies as Muslim Brotherhood only those actors that identify as such, leads nowhere. If one were to employ it, the only conclusion would be to state that there is virtually no presence of the Brotherhood on the continent—something obviously untrue, as top members of the Brotherhood from the Middle East themselves openly admit.

It is therefore necessary to adopt a more analytical approach to critically identify Brotherhood actors, ideally according to the tripartite categorization suggested above. Arguably the best approach is one based on a rigorous application of indicators, the presence of which helps determine the varying degrees of connectivity to the Brotherhood. It is clear that each case should be assessed individually, and that in the vast majority of cases it is the presence of several, not just one indicator, that determines a positive assessment. And it would be disingenuous to claim that this approach guarantees results with mathematical precision and without any degree of arbitrariness.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with the General *Murshid*, Ikhwanonline. January 14, 2004. Retrieved from: <https://ikhwanonline.net/article/4109> (Accessed: August 26, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Sylvain Besson, *La Conquête de l’Occident*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, page 100.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with MB Deputy Chairman Mohamed Habib in al Ahrar Daily, as reported by the Muslim Brotherhood’s official website, June 16, 2008. Retrieved from: <https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=17267> (Accessed: April 23, 2021).

In substance, the indicators suggested help a neutral observer, given the refusal of the European Brothers to openly identify themselves as such, get a better sense on whether a certain individual or organization can be reasonably linked –to varying degrees– to the movement.

Assessing whether an individual is a member of the Brotherhood should, in theory, be easy, considering the highly bureaucratic nature of the group. As said, it is so in many Middle Eastern countries, where many members openly and proudly identify themselves as such. With some differences from country to country, it has always been fairly easy for any Western scholar or diplomat to travel to any country in the Middle East and interact with scores of card-carrying Brotherhood members. That is not the case in Europe, where virtually anybody who is close to Brotherhood networks denies any connection. Arguably the only exceptions to this rule are a handful of top leaders of various Middle Eastern Brotherhood branches living in exile in Europe. That is the case, for example, of the current head of the Egyptian Brotherhood, long-time London resident Ibrahim Munir.<sup>17</sup>

So how to determine who belongs to the small elite of “pure Brothers” in Eu-

rope? As said, admission to this clique is highly selective and secretive, and the few who are admitted to the position of full-fledged members take an oath of secrecy. The only way for outsiders to know with certainty who belongs to this elite is to either obtain the internal membership records of the local branch –something the group guards jealously– or to obtain that information from an actual member. As said, the few European Brotherhood members who are open about their affiliation are top leaders like Munir and the few who leave the group, although this latter category comes forward only after leaving. Short of these two, statistically extremely unlikely scenarios, there is no way to know with absolute certainty that a specific individual is a full-fledged member of the Brotherhood, one of the few hundred activists that are inserted in the group’s secret structure in each European country.

What is then a more feasible approach is the application of identifying indicators to attempt to determine whether an organization or, by extension, an individual can be defined as being linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. These indicators revolve around the general notion that the Brotherhood is an extremely tight-knit network of entities and activists connected by personal, organizational, financial, familial

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<sup>17</sup> George Mikhail, “Muslim Brotherhood appoints acting guide after arrest of leader,” *Al Monitor*, September 18, 2020.

and ideological ties. Indicators therefore are elements such as:

- Governance: presence of Brothers on the board and/or in managerial positions of Brotherhood structures
- Financial connections: receiving funding from traditional Brotherhood-linked funders and collecting donations for Brotherhood-linked charities
- Frequent interactions with other Brotherhood entities in their country and abroad: organizing joint events, co-hosting conferences...
- Inviting predominantly or exclusively Brotherhood-linked speakers to keynote events
- Translating, publishing, disseminating and promoting predominantly literature by Brotherhood authors
- Membership in Brotherhood transnational structures such as FIOE and FEMYSO.

The deeper an organization is inserted into this network, the more likely and the stronger its Brotherhood affiliation. The occasional contact, the one-off invite to a Brotherhood speaker, the exceptional joint activity with a Brotherhood entity, are not per se indicators. Frequency and intensity of connections are crucial elements. Therefore, for example, a charitable organization that has one

Brotherhood member on the advisory board and has organised one aid campaign in an African country together with a Brotherhood-linked organization cannot be reasonably called a Brotherhood organization. One might wonder whether that one board member might influence some of the organization's decisions in a Brotherhood-friendly way, but, short of other indicators, it would be dramatically overstated to define it as even Brotherhood-influenced.

On the other hand, for example, an organization that has six out of seven board members who in various ways belong to the Brotherhood milieu, that regularly receives funding from a Brotherhood-linked entity in the Middle East, that almost exclusively invites Brotherhood speakers to keynote its events and that translates books by Yusuf al Qaradawi can be relatively safely assumed to be a Brotherhood spawn.

Needless to say, each case should be assessed individually and there is no magic formula – the framework and indicators suggested have inevitable limitations. However, any analysis should be based on research and empirical analysis. What this study terms as the Muslim Brotherhood network in Europe is composed of a fairly small network of individuals who, at the same time, have set up an enormously wide infrastructure, a fluid



jungle of organizations with bombastic and oft-changing names and interlocking governance boards aimed at conveying the impression of broad representativeness. The only way to get a better understanding of this network is to engage in a painstaking research effort, which passes largely through the collection of primary sources (articles of incorporation, tax records, chamber of commerce reports, website registration forms...) and interviews. Only this kind of research, as adopted for this study, can provide an empirical basis for an identification of Brotherhood-linked structures.

Finally, it should be said that the framework here suggested simply aims at easing a complex dilemma often faced by European policymakers. Let it therefore be clearly stated at this point that an organization's or an individual's identification with the Brotherhood is not an indictment. The Brotherhood is not a designated terrorist organization in any European country and being a member of the group or being an organization that is controlled by or linked to it is not per se an illegal matter. The identification process simply aims at facilitating the two activities that should naturally come afterwards: assessment and engagement. In substance, the framework provided should help decision-makers to understand when an organization or an individual is close to the Brother-

hood, with varying shades. Once that determination is made – something that European decision-makers have often had trouble doing – deciding how to view and interact with them is a logically consequent but separate matter.

## AIMS

Having so far mapped out the European Brotherhood's network, this report's main aim, it is now necessary to briefly outline what its goals are. The issue is widely debated and even among the many who see the movement in negative terms there is no consensus on its aims. Many critics, in fact, equate the goals of European Brotherhood networks to that of their counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa. According to this view, the overarching aim of all Brothers throughout the world is the same: Islamizing society and establishing Islamic states ruled by sharia law.

This assessment appears to fail to take into consideration the pragmatic nature of the Muslim Brotherhood. There is no question that many of the movement's leaders have always emphasized its global aspirations, which they have seen as inherently connected to its divine mission. Brotherhood founder Hassan al Banna had clearly stated what the movement's plan should have been after the formation of an Islamic state in the Muslim world. "We will not stop at this point, but will pursue

this evil force to its own lands, invade its Western heartland, and struggle to overcome it until all the world shouts by the name of the Prophet and the teachings of Islam spread throughout the world," declared al Banna. "Only then will Muslims achieve their fundamental goal, and there will be no more 'persecution' and all religion will be exclusively for Allah."<sup>18</sup>

And contemporary leaders of the movement have expressed similar viewpoints. In 2004, Egyptian Brotherhood murshid Mohammed Akef declared his "complete faith that Islam will invade Europe and America, because Islam has logic and a mission." He added that "Europeans and the Americans will come into the bosom of Islam out of conviction."<sup>19</sup> Al Qaradawi has repeatedly expressed the same view. In a 1995 speech at an Islamic conference in Toledo, Ohio, he stated: "We will conquer Europe, we will conquer America, not through the sword but through da'wah."<sup>20</sup> And in a fatwa posted on IslamOnline in 2002 he reiterated the concept. "Islam will return to Europe as a conqueror and victor, after being expelled from it twice," stated al Qarad-

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<sup>18</sup> Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006. pp. 31-2.

<sup>19</sup> "New Muslim Brotherhood Leader: Resistance in Iraq and Palestine is Legitimate; America is Satan, Islam Will Invade America and Europe," MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 655, February 4, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, MAYA Conference, 1995, Toledo, Ohio. Transcript available at: [http://www.investigativeproject.org/profile/167#\\_ftn3](http://www.investigativeproject.org/profile/167#_ftn3) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

awi. “I maintain that the conquest this time will not be by the sword but by preaching and ideology.”<sup>21</sup>

These and other statements by top Brotherhood leaders have led many of its critics to argue that the European Brothers’ civic participation and pro-integration statements are simply deceitful tactics to better further their goals. The European Brothers, they argue, have pragmatically understood that expressing their wishes to turn the West into part of a global Islamic state, as al Banna and Qaradawi did, would be counter-productive, but still secretly share their movement’s founders’ dream. Understanding that such discourses can make their interlocutors uncomfortable, pessimists argue that the European Brothers see no point in attracting undesired attention by publicly expressing the vision of something whose attainment, even in the most optimistic of views, lies far in the future and, therefore, tend to avoid public endorsements of the vision of an Islamic conquest of the West heralded by al Qaradawi and others spiritual leaders of the movement.

Others argue that, even though they come from celebrated ideological guiding stars of the movement, these views

do not reflect the thinking of the European Brothers. Optimists argue that the movement has significantly evolved over time and the new generations, particularly those who grew up in the West, have refined their views on Islam’s relationship with the West. Even though they are reluctant to publicly challenge the old leadership, many of these new activists have framed their own religious and political vision.<sup>22</sup> While still adhering to some concepts of the Brotherhood’s intellectual heritage, they are gradually distancing themselves from its most militant aspects and are the agents of a slow, internal reformation to adapt the tradition to today’s context.

This debate over the long term aspirations of the movement is difficultly reconcilable. But there is no question that a quintessentially pragmatic movement like the European Brotherhood clearly understands that what it can currently achieve in the non-Muslim-majority societies of the West is completely different to what it can in Muslim-majority societies. During the mid-1980s, once the foundations and the first protostructures of Muslim Brotherhood in Europe had been established, the European Brothers began to adapt their rich intellectual heritage to the new environ-

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<sup>21</sup> “*Leading Sunni Sheikh Yousef al-Qaradhwai and Other Sheikhs Herald the Coming Conquest of Rome*,” Middle East Media and Research Institute (MEMRI), Special Dispatch #447, December 6, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Interview by Lorenzo Vidino with Peter Mandaville, Washington, October 2008.

ment. Even if the ideas of al Banna and other core ideologues could still provide methodological and spiritual guidance, it was clear to them that applying those teachings to the letter in modern European societies would have been pointless if not counterproductive.

The movement therefore began establishing a set of goals that better fit its specific situation of Islamist movement operating in non-Muslim majority societies. Since those days, arguably the main one has been shaping and preserving a well-defined Islamic identity for European Muslims. As any religiously conservative movement, Islamists worldwide are concerned with maintaining the morality and piety of their communities. Such defensive posture becomes even more important when referred to Muslim minorities, as they incur the risk of being culturally absorbed by the host society. "It is the duty of the Islamic Movement," wrote Yusuf al Qaradawi, the undisputed spiritual leader of the global and Western Brotherhood, "not to leave these expatriates to be swept by the whirlpool of the materialistic trend that prevails in the West."<sup>23</sup>

Yet, unlike Salafists and other Islamic trends that seek to strengthen the Islamic

identity of Western Muslims, the Brothers do not advocate isolation from mainstream society. To the contrary, they urge Muslims to actively participate in it, but only insofar as such engagement is necessary to change it in an Islamic fashion. According to al Qaradawi, Muslims in the West should adopt "a conservatism without isolation, and an openness without melting."<sup>24</sup> Finding the balance between cultural impenetrability and active socio-political interaction is not easy, but the Brothers see themselves as capable of defining how Muslims can be both loyal to their faith and active citizens of European secular democracies.

The Brothers see this guiding role as an unprecedented opportunity for the movement, which, in the words of al Qaradawi, can "play the role of the missing leadership of the Muslim nation with all its trends and groups."<sup>25</sup> While in Muslim-majority countries the Brotherhood can exercise only limited influence, as it is kept in check by regimes that oppose it, al Qaradawi realises that no such obstacle prevents it from operating in the free and democratic West. Moreover, the masses of Muslim expatriates, disoriented by the impact of life in non-Muslim societies and often lacking the most basic knowledge about Islam,

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<sup>23</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, Swansea, UK: Awakening Publications, 2000, Page 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

represent an ideal receptive audience for the movement's message. Finally, no competing Islamic trend has the financial means and organization to compete with the European Brothers. The combination of these factors leads al Qaradawi to conclude that the West is a sort of Islamic tabula rasa, a virgin territory where the socio-religious structures and limits of the Muslim world do not exist and where the Brothers can implement their da'wah freely, overcoming their competition with their superior mobilization skills and funds.

A further goal common to all European Brotherhood organizations is the designation as official or de facto representatives of the Muslim community of their country. Becoming the preferred—if not the exclusive—partners of European governments and elites would serve various purposes. One, publicly and proudly declared by the Brothers, is to positively contribute to the future of European societies. Highlighting common values, the Brothers present themselves as a moderate force encouraging Muslims to simultaneously participate in society and spread their Islamic principles, which, ultimately, benefit everybody. Unlike competing Islamic trends, they can lead the Muslim community on the

path of integration while simultaneously contributing to a moral revival of the rest of society.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, the European Brothers seem to have additional purposes attached to the establishment of a preferential relationship between them and European governments. Despite their unrelenting activism and ample resources, the Brothers have not been able to create a mass movement and attract the allegiance of large numbers of European Muslims. While concepts, issues, and frames introduced by the Brothers have reached many of them, most European Muslims either actively resist the Brothers' influence or simply ignore it. The Brothers understand that a preferential relationship with European elites could provide them with the financial and political capital that would allow them to significantly expand their reach and influence inside the community.

By leveraging such a relationship, the Brothers aim at being entrusted by European governments with administering all aspects of Muslim life in each country. They would ideally become those whom governments task with preparing the curricula and selecting the teachers

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<sup>26</sup> For an overview of what, according to the Brotherhood, Muslims can contribute to the West, see, for example, Kamal el-Helbawy, "Cementing Relations between Muslim Citizens and Governments in the West: The United Kingdom as a Case Study," *Islamism Digest*, Volume 3, Issue 9, September 2008.

for Islamic education in public schools, appointing imams in public institutions such as the military, the police or in prison, and receiving subsidies to administer various social services. This position would also allow them to be the de facto official Muslim voice in public debates and in the media, overshadowing competing forces. The powers and legitimacy bestowed upon them by Eu-

ropean governments would allow them to exert significantly increased influence over the Muslim community. Making a clever political calculation, the European Brothers are attempting to turn their leadership bid into a self-fulfilling prophecy, seeking to be recognised as representatives of the Muslim community in order to actually become it.



Picture 1: *The European Council of Imams, the latest of the pan-European structures created by FIOE/CEM.*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See for reference: “Establishment of the European Council of Imams,” Media Statement from Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse, November 23, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://rabeta.ch/%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%A6%D9%85%D8%A9/> (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

Finally, the position of representatives of European Muslims would allow the Brothers to influence European policymaking on all Islamic-related issues. While having their say in the crafting of domestic policies can be very important, the European Brothers seem to have placed an even higher premium on influencing foreign policies. Once again the writings of Yusuf al Qaradawi perfectly encapsulate this vision. Understanding the crucial role that the policies of Western governments play in the struggle between Islamist movements and their rivals for the control of Muslim countries, al Qaradawi declares that “it is necessary for Islam in this age to have a presence in such societies that affect world politics” and that the presence of a strong and organised Islamist movement in the West is “required for defending the causes of the Muslim Nation and the Muslim Land against the antagonism and misinformation of anti-Islamic forces and trends.”<sup>28</sup>

In other words, al Qaradawi argues that the European Brothers find themselves with the unprecedented opportunity to influence European public opinion and policymakers on all geopolitical issues related to the Muslim world. And indeed, over the last twenty years, the European Brothers have consistently tried to take

advantage of their position of influence to advance Islamist causes. From private meetings with senior policymakers to mass street protests, from editorials in major newspapers to high profile conferences, they have used all the material and intellectual resources they possess in order to advance the Islamist point of view on several issues, from Palestine to Afghanistan, and on the nature of the Islamist movement itself.


### **Is the Brotherhood a threat?**

If these are, broadly summarised, the goals of the European Brotherhood, is the movement a threat to Europe? The issue is, once again, hotly debated and the answer arguably changes depending on the perspective. Not rarely the assessment is made through security lenses. If this is the approach chosen, then it is evident that the European Brotherhood does not pose a direct security threat. European Brotherhood networks are not engaged in terrorist activities against Europe and lumping them with al Qaeda or the Islamic State, from a European perspective, constitutes a severe analytical mistake.

Having said so, there are some security-related concerns that do involve the European Brotherhood. First, the net-

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<sup>28</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, Swansea, UK: Awakening Publications, 2000.



work regularly engages in a variety of support activities, ranging from financial to purely political, for Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and a European Union designated terrorist organization. Second, while not indicative of an involvement of the entire network, in recent years there have been more than occasional instances in which Brotherhood members in Europe have allegedly provided various forms of support to violent activities in countries such as Syria (in that regard, see the chapter on Spain) and Libya.

But, from a security point of view, an additional concern stems from the indirect impact of the Brothers' activities on violent radicalization. The problem lies in its mainstreaming of a narrative that, brought to one of its logical consequences by individuals beyond the group's control, might lead to violence. In substance, the Brothers' narrative, spread with the eloquence and pervasiveness that characterises the group's discourse, centres on two elements upon which violent Islamist groups can build and unaffiliated youth on the radicalizing path can draw inspiration.

The first element is the group's justification for violence. The Brotherhood's rejection of violence, in fact, is hardly absolute, but rather riddled with "ifs" and "buts." It argues, in substance, that

Muslims "under attack" (a concept that is difficult to define) have a right to defend themselves, including through violent acts aimed at civilians. The second problematic element of the Brotherhood's discourse is its narrative of victimhood. Drawing on some anti-Muslim incidents and attitudes that unquestionably do exist, European Brotherhood organizations have purposely exaggerated them and tried to foster a siege mentality within local Muslim communities, arguing that the government and Western societies are hostile to them and to Islam in general.

The combination of these two elements can potentially be explosive. If Muslims in Gaza have the right to defend themselves, one can argue, why not also in the West, where, according to what the Brothers say, they are also under attack? The Brothers do not reach this conclusion. To the contrary, they publicly advocate for political engagement and social activism as the solution. However, the problem lies in the widespread dissemination of the Brothers' narrative and their inability to control its impact on, let's say, a hot-blooded sixteen-year-old outraged by world events—arguably the profile of the most likely candidate for violent radicalization. It is easy to see how the Brothers' narrative of victimhood and partial justification of violence can potentially represent the first



building block of a radicalization trajectory that could progress all the way into violent militancy. It is this analysis that leads German security services to state that “there is the risk that such milieus could also form the breeding ground for further radicalization.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, it must be said, the debate between words and actions and, specifically, the impact of the narrative of a non-directly violent Islamist network on violent radicalization is complex and contested in policy and academic circles throughout the West since 9/11.<sup>30</sup>

The security aspect is just one frame to look at the potential threat posed by the Brothers to Europe, and arguably not the most important one. In recent years, in fact, policymakers, commentators and even security services have increasingly looked at the issue from the angle of integration and social cohesion, increasingly concerned about the European Brothers’ impact on them.

Over the last few years, European Broth-

ers have been outspoken about the need of Muslims to become active citizens, fully participating in the political and social life of their countries. Most of their leaders embody this spirit: they are well-educated individuals who participate in an array of activities that range from parent-teacher associations to parliamentary elections. They are involved in inter-faith dialogue and their charitable activities increasingly aimed at a diverse set of projects and not just Muslim communities or causes. Unlike most other Islamist groups and even many conservative but non-Islamist Muslim trends, the Brotherhood does indeed encourage various forms of integration into European society. As any other socially and religiously conservative force, the Brotherhood is understandably wary of the potential implications of this integration and therefore advocates “a conservatism without isolation, and an openness without melting.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet, scratching slightly beyond the surface, it is not difficult to find in the rhet-

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<sup>29</sup> Bundesverfassungsschutz 2005, Bundesministerium des Innern. Page 190. Retrieved from: [https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/63244/Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2005\\_de.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/63244/Verfassungsschutzbericht_2005_de.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Peter R. Neumann, “The Trouble with Radicalization,” *International Affairs*, Volume 89, Issue 4, pp. 873–893, July 2013; and Alex P. Schmid, *Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* ICCT Papers, The Hague, May 12, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.icct.nl/app/uploads/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf> (Accessed: June 29, 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, Swansea, UK: Awakening Publications, 2000.

oric of many of the speakers at Brotherhood events and in the texts its networks promote a message that is at times quite different. Virulent condemnations of Western society as corrupt, immoral and unjust are not infrequent and go hand-in-hand with a narrative that sees Muslims as better, but under attack – in substance fostering an “us versus them” mentality that severely undermines social cohesion. Moreover, on certain key issues such as religious freedom, women’s rights and homosexuality many Brotherhood leaders espouse positions that are severely at odds not just with mainstream European values but also basic human rights.

The next chapter will outline and contextualise many of these views. It is important to note that opinions are divided on the matter, even though there is a growing consensus that transcends political boundaries over the problematic impact of the Brothers’ activities and narratives on social cohesion and integration. It is equally noteworthy that there seems to be a consensus on the negative social impact of the Brotherhood’s activities among continental European intelligence agencies. Many of these entities traditionally possess a broad institutional mandate, as they are tasked with monitoring not just direct threats to national security but also more oblique

phenomena of subversion that might threaten the democratic order. Due to this extensive remit they have long studied the Brotherhood’s presence within their jurisdictions and formed an opinion about it—which almost invariably tends to be suspicious, if not outright negative.

“These ‘legalistic’ Islamist groups represent an especial threat to the internal cohesion of our society,” argues, for example, the 2005 report from the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Germany’s domestic intelligence agency) when describing Brotherhood-influenced organisations operating in the country. “Among other things,” it continues, “their wide range of Islamist-oriented educational and support activities, especially for children and adolescents from immigrant families, are used to promote the creation and proliferation of an Islamist milieu in Germany. These endeavours run counter to the efforts undertaken by the federal administration and the Länder [states] to integrate immigrants. There is the risk that such milieus could also form the breeding ground for further radicalization”.<sup>32</sup>

Belgium’s domestic intelligence agency, Sûreté de l’État, described the activities of Muslim Brotherhood offshoots in the country in similarly negative terms:

<sup>32</sup> Bundesverfassungsschutz 2005, Bundesministerium des Innern, page 190.

“The Sûreté de l’État has been following the activities of the Internationalist Muslim Brothers in Belgium since 1982. The Internationalist Muslim Brothers have possessed a clandestine structure in Belgium for more than twenty years. The identity of the members is secret; they operate with the greatest discretion. They seek to spread their ideology within Belgium’s Muslim community and they aim in particular at young, second- and third-generation immigrants. In Belgium as in other European countries, they seek to take control of sports, religious, and social associations, and they seek to establish themselves as privileged interlocutors of national and even European authorities in order to manage Islamic affairs. The Muslim Brothers estimate that national authorities will increasingly rely on the representatives of the Islamic community for the management of Islam. Within this framework, they try to impose the designation of people influenced by their ideology in representative bodies. In order to do so they were very active in the electoral process for the members of the body for the management of Islam [in

Belgium]. Another aspect of this strategy is to cause or maintain tensions in which they consider that a Muslim or a Muslim organization is a victim of Western values, hence the affair over the Muslim headscarf in public schools.”<sup>33</sup>

In 2021, almost 20 years later, a short note by the same agency shows its assessment of the Brotherhood’s philosophy and political activities in Belgium remains similarly negative:<sup>34</sup>

“The Muslim Brotherhood is branched out worldwide and has a presence in Belgium. Besides the purely national implants in the Arab world, an ‘international’ tendency strongly represented in countries with an Islamic minority and which develops its own dynamic has also arisen. In our country, the League of Muslims in Belgium (LMB) can be regarded as the Belgian branch of the international Muslim Brotherhood. The LMB and the Belgian Muslim Brothers are usually part of an overarching structure, a transnational network that tries to a certain extent to direct and coordinate the activities of the national branches

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33 “Report of the Comité Permanent de Contrôle des Services de Renseignements et de Sécurité (Comité R) to the Belgian Parliament, July 19, 2002. Retrieved from: [http://www.senate.be/www/?Mival=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr#2-1171/1\\_112](http://www.senate.be/www/?Mival=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr#2-1171/1_112) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).”

34 “Himad Messoudi, “Affaire Haouach : nous avons lu la note de la Sûreté de l’Etat, voici ce qu’elle dit”, *Radio Télévision Belge de la Communauté Française*, July 13, 2021. Retrieved from: [https://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail\\_affaire-haouach-nous-avons-lu-la-note-de-la-surete-de-l-etat-voici-ce-qu-elle-dit?id=10803432](https://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail_affaire-haouach-nous-avons-lu-la-note-de-la-surete-de-l-etat-voici-ce-qu-elle-dit?id=10803432) (Accessed: September 2, 2021).”

and organizations affiliated with the Muslim Brothers. [...] In Europe and in Belgium, the Muslim Brotherhood strives in the long term for the gradual Islamization of European societies. In the shorter term, their primary goal is to protect and strengthen the Islamic identity and the social anchoring of Islam, which is interpreted in an orthodox way. Their strategy to achieve these goals is based mainly on political-social activism, lobbying and entryism and is driven by an 'elitist vanguard' of well-trained Muslim Brotherhood militants. The European Muslim Brothers opt for a gradual and extremely pragmatic approach, dealing flexibly with certain orthodox Islamic precepts, adapting their discourse to their audience and hiding their true intentions and beliefs. [...] The main danger, in the shorter term, posed by the Muslim Brotherhood is that they create a climate of segregation and polarization, which in turn can be fertile ground for further (violent) radicalisation.”<sup>35</sup>

AIVD, the Netherlands' domestic intelligence agency, is even more specific in its analysis of the European Brother-

hood' tactics and aims:

“Not all Muslim Brothers or their sympathizers are recognisable as such. They do not always reveal their religious loyalties and ultra-orthodox agenda to outsiders. Apparently cooperative and moderate in their attitude to Western society, they certainly have no violent intent. But they are trying to pave the way for ultra-orthodox Islam to play a greater role in the Western world by exercising religious influence over Muslim immigrant communities and by forging good relations with relevant opinion leaders: politicians, civil servants, mainstream social organizations, non-Islamic clerics, academics, journalists and so on. This policy of engagement has been more noticeable in recent years, and might possibly herald a certain liberalisation of the movement's ideas. It presents itself as a widely supported advocate and legitimate representative of the Islamic community. But the ultimate aim – although never stated openly – is to create, then implant and expand, an ultra-orthodox Muslim bloc inside Western Europe.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid; document in the possession of the authors.

<sup>36</sup> *The radical dawa in transition, The Rise of Islamic Neoradicalism in the Netherlands*, AIVD, October 2007. Page 51. Retrieved from: <https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2007/10/09/the-radical-dawa-in-transition> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).



**PART  
TWO**

## THE BROTHERHOOD'S PAN-EUROPEAN STRUCTURE

The previous chapter described how most European countries are home to a mini-branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, with its own formalities and structure which, on a much smaller scale, replicate the dynamics of the much larger mother branches in the Middle East. In substance, as said, there is a French branch of Muslim Brotherhood, a German branch, a Swedish branch, a Spanish branch and so on and each with independence in its choice of goals and tactics. Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood network in Austria, for example, focuses on influencing the Austrian Muslim community, Austrian policymakers and the Austrian public debate using tactics and frames it chooses as best suited to the Austrian context, the same do the British branch, the Swiss branch, the Italian branch, the Ukrainian branch and so on.

At the same time, while fully independent, all European branches are part of the Brotherhood's transnational network. Globally, the Muslim Brotherhood, in fact, can be described as a fairly tight-knit cluster of activists and organizations tied together by personal, financial, organizational and, of course, ideological ties. Top Brotherhood activists from all over the world and the organizations they run

are in constant contact with one another. While disagreements, competition and jealousies are not uncommon, it is a global family that guarantees a certain degree of homogeneity in thinking and action. This dynamic makes the Brotherhood a quintessential "*glocal*" organization: extremely transnational but, at the same time, very much integrated within each local reality in which it operates.

This phenomenon is particularly evident for the European Brothers. While focusing the bulk of their activities on their specific context, European Brotherhood networks have always maintained very strong contacts with Brotherhood environments in the Middle East. This phenomenon became particularly evident during the Arab Spring, when many long-time European-based Brotherhood activists, many of which held leadership positions in organizations that for years had claimed to focus on the Muslim community of their European country, left Europe and moved to their countries of origin (mainly Egypt, Libya and Tunisia) to participate in the revolution and then occupy senior government or parliamentary positions with Brotherhood political parties.

But the deep connections between European Brothers and the much larger and sophisticated branches of the Middle East and North Africa manifest themselves in many ways. European Brothers, for exam-

ple, have long been connected to various rulers, private individuals, and charitable institutions in wealthy Arab Gulf countries who have richly funded their activities. They have also created connections with investors and sharia-compliant banks in the region, further advancing their own fundraising ability. Moreover, they have strong connections with prominent Brotherhood and Brotherhood-leaning clerics, who provide them with the religious knowledge, guidance and prestige that no European-based scholar could. Arguably the most prominent example of scholar to whom European Brothers look up to, disseminating his opinions and participating in his initiatives, is Qatar-based Yusuf al Qaradawi (of which more later).

The European Brothers' foreign connections are both formal and informal.

Formal connections are represented in their inclusion in transnational organizations close to the Brotherhood (such as Qaradawi's International Union for Muslim Scholars, IUMS, and the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, IIFSO) and their participation in *ad hoc* initiatives led by various Middle Eastern branches of the Brotherhood. But top European Brotherhood leaders have the most meaningful interactions with their counterparts from the much larger and more sophisticated Middle Eastern branches during private visits or at the margins of the many conferences and social gatherings (such as weddings and funerals) of the network. Moreover, European Brotherhood networks constantly reinforce family ties with non-European Brothers through marriage, a fact that further solidifies unity.



Picture 2: *Prominent members of the European Brotherhood milieu (Ibrahim el Zayat, Khallad Swaid and Ayman Ali) interacting with some of the most prominent leaders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (including its former head, Mohamed Akef and top representatives Saad el Katatny and Mohamed Ezzat) at the funeral of Turkish Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan (Istanbul, March 2011).*<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Official Facebook page of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO). March 10, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/IIFSOofficial/photos/a.194906287198917/195027470520132/> (Accessed: September 15, 2021).





Picture 3: *Prominent members of the European Brotherhood milieu interacting with some of the most prominent leaders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood at the funeral of Turkish Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan (Istanbul, March 2011).*<sup>38</sup>

Many of these dynamics apply also at the intra-European level, where the European Brothers have created an intertwined continent-wide network. Exactly like their extra-European connections, some are informal and some formal. As for the former, the families of pioneers of the Brotherhood in Europe like Yusuf Nada, Ghaleb Himmat, Said Ramadan, Rached Ghannouchi, Nooh al Kaddo, Ahmed Ja-

ballah and a few others occupy central roles in this network. Not only did they found and, most of those still alive still maintain leadership roles in some of the most prominent Brotherhood-linked organizations in Europe, but their wives, children and in-laws similarly got to serve in senior positions in some of the network's organizations and to interact and often intermarry with one another.

<sup>38</sup> Official Facebook page of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO). March 10, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/IIFSOofficial/photos/195026310520248> (Accessed: September 15, 2021).

The top tier of the European Brotherhood constitutes, in substance, a tight-knit Islamist nomenclature that aims to control organised Islam throughout the continent.

From its early days on the continent, this web of informal connections also made attempts to create formal pan-European structures. This effort served two purposes. The first, typical of the Brotherhood everywhere, was to make the interaction among its members more organised and professional. The second was to create entities that could convey the perception of representativeness of European Muslims to European policymakers and media, arguably one of the European Brothers' main goals since the 1970s, when it first realised that European authorities were looking for engagement partners within their growing Muslim communities.

Arguably the first pan-European organization created by the Brothers was the Islamic Council of Europe.<sup>39</sup> Financially supported by the Saudi Arabia-based Muslim World League and headed by Salem Azzam, then Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Saudi Embassy in London, the Council regularly brought together some of the pio-

neers of Islamist ideology on the continent (not only the Muslim Brotherhood, but, given its headquarters in London, also from Jemaat-e-Islami, the Brotherhood's sister organization in South Asia).

The Council's activities fizzled out by the mid-1980s, but by the end of that decade the then more established European Brotherhood network created a more stable and truly pan-European entity: the Federation of Islamic Organizations of Europe (FIOE, which in 2020 changed its name to Council of European Muslims, CEM). Over time, FIOE spawned several entities serving various purposes: the Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO), the Europe Trust, the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), and the European Institute for Human Sciences (better known by its French acronym IESH). While technically independent, these entities have deep connections among themselves and are dominated by prominent Brotherhood leaders and organizations in Europe and outside of it, clearly showing that they are part of the same design to create a formal pan-European presence.

As usual, a terminological clarification about identification is necessary. Even

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<sup>39</sup> "London Conference of Islamic Centres and Bodies in Europe," *Impact International*, May 25-June 7, 1973; John Lawton, "Muslims in Europe: The Presence," *Saudi Aramco World*, January/February 1979, pp. 3-8.

though affiliation with them is unquestionably an indicator of proximity, not every individual or organization affiliated with FIOE/CEM and its satellite entities is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood or part of one of its European milieus. Various individuals and organizations that in various ways are connected to them are not in any way part of the movement. But there is an abundance of evidence, which will be here shown, that these entities have been created and are run by members of the Brotherhood to advance their agenda at the European level. As confirmed by Mohammed Akef, the former head of the Egyptian Brotherhood, “these organizations and institutions are independent and autonomous. We [the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood; clarification by author] do not control them. It is the Brothers abroad that control them. The structures linked to Qaradawi are organizations of the Brotherhood directed by the Brothers of different countries.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Akef in Sylvain Besson, *La Conquête de l'Occident*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, page 100.

## FIOE/CEM

Founded in 1989 with the stated goal of “serving Muslims in European societies,” the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE, which in 2020 changed its name to Council of European Muslims, CEM, therefore subsequently referred to as FIOE/CEM) describes itself as “the largest Islamic organization on the European level” and “an independent, inclusive European Islamic institution”.<sup>41</sup> Based in Brussels in a building just a few blocks from key European Union institutions, FIOE/CEM is a pan-European umbrella organization with member organizations from 26 countries. It is arguably the best-known Muslim organization operating in the EU environment, regularly lobbying and liaising with many European institutions.

An in depth, document-based analysis of FIOE/CEM adds an additional layer, clearly showing that it is the first and the most important of the various pan-European organizations created by the European Brotherhood network to expand

its influence with EU institutions and throughout the Continent. FIOE/CEM’s history, membership and governance, in fact, overwhelmingly show how top European Brotherhood activists and organizations have founded and, up to the current day, controlled the organization.

### History

A brief history of FIOE/CEM published, in Arabic only, in January 2020 on the organization’s Facebook page acknowledges that the 1989 foundation of FIOE is the culmination of decades of “Islamic activism”.<sup>42</sup> Telling a story that is very much that of the arrival of the Brotherhood in Europe and using terms typically used by the Brothers, the text explains that “Islamic work began in Western Europe in particular at the beginning of the fifties of the last century through some students and workers coming from various Arab and Islamic countries and who settled in the West.” “These,” it continues, “especially students among them, took the lead in organizing Islamic action

<sup>41</sup> “The Council of European Muslims in a few lines [...] في سطور... أوروبا” [مجلس مسلمي أوروبا] - Council of European Muslims official Facebook page, January 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-council-of-european-muslims/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1/2932358320122416/> Facebook post no longer available; screenshot in possession of the authors.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

in Europe through several formations and associations at the level of European countries such as France, Germany, Spain, Britain and the Netherlands and others, until the year 1984 when a number of them convened a symposium in the Spanish capital Madrid". In FIOE's words, "Madrid was the starting point for the constitution of a European Islamic work that started from the idea of settling the Islamic presence."<sup>43</sup>

Five years later, in November 1989, FIOE was formally registered. The complex vicissitudes of FIOE's formal registration and actual offices are very revealing of the organization's deep connections to European Islamist networks. Interestingly, in the first eighteen years of its existence (from 1989 to 2007), FIOE was based in the small British village of Markfield, some ten kilometres outside of Leicester. The location is hardly coincidental, as Markfield had historically been home to the European headquarters of Jamat-e-Islami. Founded by Abul A'la Mawdudi in 1941, Jamat-e-Islami is the South Asian

equivalent of the Muslim Brotherhood. The two organizations share worldview and aims and their cooperation dates back to their very first leaders. "We consider ourselves as an integral part of the Brotherhood and the Islamic movement in Egypt, Sudan and Malaysia," confirms Qazi Ahmad Hussain, head of Jamat-e-Islami in Pakistan, "our nation is one. The intellectual foundation of our movement is one: based on the Quran and the Sunna, and on the teachings of imam Hassan al Banna and Mawdudi."<sup>44</sup>

In Europe this cooperation dates back to the early 1970s, as leaders of the two organizations headed the London-based Islamic Council of Europe. Given the country's large South Asian Muslim population, Jamat-e-Islami had created a small base of operations in Britain since the early 1960s and in 1973 it had opened the Islamic Foundation in Markfield. The Islamic Foundation immediately became active in printing and translating the works of Mawdudi, Qutb, and other

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<sup>43</sup> Historical Context, Council of European Muslims. Retrieved from: <http://eumuslims.org/ar/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Sylvain Besson, *La Conquête de l'Occident*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, page 114.

theorists of contemporary Islamism.<sup>45</sup>

FIOE, like the Islamic Council of Europe ten years earlier, was the product of the cooperation between European networks of the Brotherhood and Jamat-e-Islami. Tellingly, FIOE's first offices were reportedly sublet from the Islamic Foundation.<sup>46</sup> FIOE remained based in Markfield until May 2007, when it held a ceremony to celebrate its relocation to its new offices in Brussels' rue de la Pacification 34.<sup>47</sup> The new location made sense for an organization seeking to represent all European Muslims, as the Belgian capital is the headquarters of most European Union institutions.

Yet, an analysis of filings related to FIOE's 2007 change of address point to an in-

teresting reality. Documents filed with Belgian authorities, in fact, do not show that FIOE was incorporated in Belgium as a new entity or had transferred from the UK, where it was previously located. Rather, the documents simply notify Belgian authorities that FIOE was a French-registered entity whose General Assembly had deliberated to open "a centre of operations in Belgium."<sup>48</sup> In substance, FIOE was not established as an entity created under Belgian law, but as a satellite office of a French organization registered under French law.

What is even more interesting among the things that transpire from the registration documents is the French address that FIOE provided as its headquarters and the place where its General Assem-

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<sup>45</sup> Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*, New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, page 143. A crucial figure in the nascent European network of the Jamat-e-Islami and its cooperation with the Brotherhood was Khurshid Ahmad. An early follower of Mawdudi, Ahmad rose to the position of vice-president of Jamat-e-Islami and had a prestigious career as a member of the Pakistani senate and a minister of planning in Zia ul-Haq's government. Assigned by the party the task of engaging in "the propagation of Islam in Europe, Africa, and America," between 1968 and 1978 he lived in Britain. There he served on the executive board of the Islamic Council of Europe and founded the Islamic Foundation of Leicester. He became a key player in the informal networks of Islamic revivalists who lived in Europe, cementing his and his organization's symbiosis with the European Brothers by joining the governing council of the Munich mosque, the Brothers' first mosque in Europe. While the rest of the Muslim community was still rigidly divided along national lines, Islamic revivalists, driven by their belief in the unity of the *ummah*, were able to transcend ethnic differences and work together towards the implementation of a common vision.

<sup>46</sup> Ian Johnson, "How Islamic Group's Ties Reveal Europe's Challenge," *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113582317237133576> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Communiqué finale de l'Assemblée Générale de la FIOE, Brussels, 25-27, May 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Filed with the Moniteur Belge on October 10, 2008.

bly took place. The address provided, in fact, is 20, rue de la Prévôté, in the northern Paris suburb of La Courneuve. Tellingly, it is also the same address of the headquarters of the UOIF (Union des Organisations Islamiques en France, since 2017 *Musulmans de France*, MF).<sup>49</sup> One of France's oldest Muslim organizations, UOIF is almost universally identified as the main public organization of the French Brotherhood milieu and one of the most important of the European milieu. While some of its leaders try to add some nuance to UOIF's relation to the Brotherhood (UOIF's former president, Amar Lasfar, stated that UOIF was "not part of the Muslim Brotherhood" but "ascribed to its current of thought"<sup>50</sup>), there is in fact little doubt about UOIF's nature as a quintessential Brotherhood spawn. Just the latest of a long litany of official sources identifying it as such, a 2020 French Senate report openly stated the Muslim Brotherhood "operates in France with the creation in 1983 of the

Union des Organisations Islamiques en France (UOIF)."<sup>51</sup> The same address in La Courneuve was also provided in an October 2018 filing with French authorities (prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis) in which FIOE declared its new articles of incorporation.<sup>52</sup> The filing details a complex structure with a General Congress, a European Shura (Council) and various other bodies and confirms that its headquarters (siege) are in La Courneuve—Brussels is not mentioned anywhere in the statute.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, the La Courneuve address shared with UOIF/MF was also the only address provided (again, no mention of Brussels) in a March 9, 2020 document FIOE/CEM filed with French (again, not Belgian) authorities to announce its name changed from FIOE to Council of European Muslims (in French, *Conseil des Musulmans d'Europe*).<sup>54</sup> The name change had been decided at FIOE's January 2020 General Conference, which had taken place in

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<sup>49</sup> Records from the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis obtained by the authors; Contact, *Musulmans de France*. Retrieved from: <http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/contact/> (Accessed: April 21, 2021).

<sup>50</sup> Élise Racque, "L'Union des Organisations Islamiques de France change de nom pour redorer son image," *La Croix*, April 17, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Islam/LUnion-organisations-islamiques-France-change-pour-redorer-image-2017-04-17-1200840107> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Rapport du Sénat Français n° 595 sur les réponses apportées par les autorités publiques au développement de la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre. Retrieved from: <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r19-595-1/r19-595-11.pdf> (Accessed: April 21, 2021).

<sup>52</sup> Records from the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis obtained by the authors.

<sup>53</sup> Records from the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis obtained by the authors.

<sup>54</sup> Records from the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis obtained by the authors.

Istanbul, a frequent meeting place for FIOE and its affiliated entities.<sup>55</sup> Mirroring FIOE's language, CEM described itself as "the largest Islamic organisation in Europe," "with hundreds of member organisations across the 28 European states."<sup>56</sup>

The history of FIOE/CEM's filings, from its foundation until today, clearly shows that the organization is an outgrowth of a tight-knit cluster of Islamist actors. In its first decade, as seen, FIOE was hosted on the premises of the sprawling campus of the Islamic Foundation, the Jamat-e-Islami's premier institution. By 2007, as it opened its Brussels offices to increase its lobbying efforts with EU institutions, it did not operate as an independent entity but simply as a satellite office in Belgium of an entity registered in the same office of UOIF, France's main Brotherhood-linked entity. Even in 2020, when it changed its name to CEM to further solidify its ambition of representing European Muslims, the address used in its filings was not that of its office in Brussels but that of the UOIF. These facts

lead to the difficulty of objectively seeing FIOE/CEM as anything but an outgrowth of some of the most prominent Islamist organizations in Europe.

## Membership

FIOE/CEM's connections to some of the most prominent Islamist organizations in Europe are further demonstrated by an analysis of its member organizations. FIOE/CEM, in fact, is an umbrella organization that encompasses, as of June 2021, 36 organizations from 26 countries. While some are from EU member countries (Greece, Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Denmark, Belgium), others are from non-EU member countries (Serbia, Switzerland, Albania, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, UK, Norway, Ukraine, Russia).

What is noteworthy about FIOE/CEM's membership system is that, in most cases, the member organizations for each European country tend to be the one

<sup>55</sup> Closing statement of the General Conference of Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, Istanbul 23-26 January 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7/closing-statement-of-the-general-conference-of-federation-of-islamic-organisatio/3086583708033209/> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>56</sup> About us, Council of European Muslims. Retrieved from: <http://eumuslims.org/en/about-us#:~:text=Council%20of%20European%20Muslims%20is,across%20the%2028%20European%20states.> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).



or two entities that constitute the most prominent Muslim Brotherhood spawns in that country. As this study will later demonstrate, from the UOIF/Musulmans de France to the Liga Kultur Verein in Austria, from the Muslim Association of Britain to the Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft in Germany, the core entities that historically drove the foundation and the activities of FIOE/CEM are the most prominent and widely identified as Brotherhood-linked entities in their country.

## Governance

Further indication of the symbiotic relationship between FIOE/CEM and the European Muslim Brotherhood milieu, with the former being an outgrowth of the latter, comes from an analysis of FIOE/CEM's leadership from its foundation until the current days. As this section will show, in fact, save for a few exceptions, the vast majority of individuals who have historically occupied governance positions within FIOE/CEM belong to the upper echelons of the European Muslim Brotherhood milieu.

This dynamic is perfectly exemplified by the entire governing structure of FIOE in the organization's early days.<sup>57</sup> Of the

eight individuals listed in leadership positions, three (Ahmed al Rawi, Ibrahim el Zayat and Emad Elbannani) are among the most prominent Brotherhood-linked activists to have ever operated in Europe. The remaining five are leaders of the then UOIF, the French Brotherhood spawn, demonstrating the dominating influence that the French Brotherhood milieu has historically had on FIOE/CEM and the other Brotherhood-linked pan-European structures. In detail, highlighting their connections to the Brotherhood milieu, the members of the early governing structure of FIOE are:

Ahmed al Rawi (President and finance):

- Iraqi-born and UK-based since 1975, Ahmed al Rawi is one of the most prominent members of the European Muslim Brotherhood network. He denies being a member of the Brotherhood.<sup>58</sup>
- Al Rawi has occupied leadership positions in various organizations that are part of the British Brotherhood milieu. Most prominently, he served as Chair of the Shura Council of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), a FIOE founding member organiza-

<sup>57</sup> FIOE's old website, obtained through Archive.org, dated April 6, 2001.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Norfolk, "The money trail: from student digs to 'motherhood of Islamism,'" *The Times*, July 10, 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4493452.ece> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

tion and an entity UK authorities routinely identify as being a Brotherhood offshoot (see UK chapter).<sup>59</sup>

- Al Rawi has occupied leadership positions in various Brotherhood pan-European organizations:
  - Europe Trust (director from 1992 to 2000)
  - Member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research
  - Islamic Relief Worldwide (where he served as director until 2000).<sup>60</sup>
  - His late brother Khadem was the head of IESH Wales.

Emad Elbannani (General secretariat)

- Born in Benghazi in 1960, Emad Elbannani co-founded the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>61</sup>
- In 1995 he left Libya and settled in Zurich, a city that has historically seen

a large presence of Libyan Brotherhood members.

- In 2011, he returned to Libya and has occupied top positions in the Justice and Construction Party, Libyan Brotherhood's political party.<sup>62</sup>

Ibrahim el Zayat (youth and student's department)

- Born in 1968 in Marburg, Germany, Ibrahim el Zayat has occupied leadership positions in various organizations of the German Brotherhood milieu. Most prominently, he served as chairman of IGD, Germany's FIOE member and an organization German security services regularly refer to as the offshoot of the Brotherhood in the country.<sup>63</sup>
- He has occupied leadership positions in various pan-European MB organizations:

<sup>59</sup> "MAB holds its 2013 General Meeting," The Muslim Association of Britain, August 17, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.mabonline.net/mab-holds-its-2013-general-meeting/> (Accessed: May 26, 2021).

<sup>60</sup> Islamic Relief Worldwide Officers, Companies House UK. Retrieved from: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02365572/officers> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>61</sup> "Emad al-Banani, possible head of Brotherhood's party in Libya," The Reference, December 25, 2018. <https://www.thereference-paris.com/2554> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example Bundesministerium des Innern, Verfassungsschutzbericht, 2007, page 165. Retrieved from: [https://fragdenstaat.de/files/foi/105691/verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2007\\_.pdf?download](https://fragdenstaat.de/files/foi/105691/verfassungsschutzbericht_2007_.pdf?download) (Accessed: August 27, 2021).

- First president of FEMYSO (1996-2002)
  - Europe Trust
  - IESH (trustee)
  - Chair of Islamic Relief Worldwide's board of trustees<sup>64</sup> (and also board member of IR Deutschland)
- El Zayat is also very active in high-profile real estate activities and German media dubbed him “lord of the mosques.”<sup>65</sup>
  - Several members of El Zayat's family have occupied management positions in various Brotherhood-linked organizations.<sup>66</sup> He is married to Sabiha Erbakan, the niece of Turkish Islamism's godfather, Necmettin Erbakan, and the sister of Mehmet Sabri Erbakan, the former leader of Millî Görüş in Germany, who is El Zayat's business partner.
  - El Zayat strongly denies being a member of the Brotherhood and has sued individuals who accused him of being one. In April 2008, he was sentenced in absentia to ten years in prison by an Egyptian military court, which had accused him of being an overseas leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hartwig Möller, head of the security services in North Rhine-Westphalia, has called El Zayat the “spider in the web of Islamist organizations.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> New Chair and Vice Chair Web Statement, Islamic Relief Worldwide. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/new-chair-and-vice-chair-web-statement/> (Accessed: April 24, 2021); IRW annual report, 2013. Page 5. Retrieved from: [https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRW\\_AR2013\\_2-3.pdf](https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRW_AR2013_2-3.pdf) (Accessed: April 25, 2021).

<sup>65</sup> Helmut Frangenberg, “ElZayat, der Herr der Moscheen,” *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, December 20, 2020; “Islam and Europe: Ibrahim El-Zayyat Discusses the Future,” *Islamism Digest*, Volume 3, Issue 2, February 2008, page 16; Uta Rasche, “Spinne im Netz der Muslime in Deutschland: Die Macht des Ibrahim el Zayat,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Ibrahim's brother Bilal is a founding member of the Muslimischen Jugend Deutschland (German Muslim Youth) and an officer of the Muslim Studenten Vereinigung (Muslim Students' Union). His sister Manal el Zayat is a graduate of IESH, the Brotherhood's institution of higher learning in France, and has also been involved in various Islamic organizations in several European countries. She is married to the son of Kamal Helbawy. His other sister Amina el Zayat was involved in a number of Islamic education projects in Bavaria before moving to Austria, where she married Ammar Shakir and headed IRPA (Islamisches Religion Pädagogisches Akademie), an organization that received public funding to train Austrian imams.

<sup>67</sup> Uta Rasche, “Spinne im Netz der Muslime in Deutschland: Die Macht des Ibrahim el Zayat.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007; Andrea Brandt, “Wendiger Weltmann,” *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2008; Helmut Frangenberg and Detlef Schmalenberg, “El-Zayat, der Herr der Moscheen,” *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 20, 2009.

## Ahmed Jaballah (da'wah to Islam)

Born in Tunisia in 1956, Ahmed Jaballah studied theology in Tunis and then obtained a doctorate from the Sorbonne in Paris in 1987.<sup>68</sup>

- Jaballah has occupied leadership positions in various organizations of the French Brotherhood milieu, serving as president of UOIF in 1989.
- He has occupied leadership positions in various pan-European Brotherhood organizations, having served as:
  - Vice-president of ECFR69
  - Director of Europe Trust
  - Director of studies at IESH Château-Chinon
  - Director of the Paris campus of IESH.<sup>70</sup>
- Jaballah has also occupied prominent positions in various organizations linked to the global Muslim Brotherhood such as the International Union for Muslim Scholars and the Muslim World League.<sup>71</sup>

## Fouad Alaoui (planning)

- Born in Morocco in 1961, Fouad Alaoui obtained a doctorate in neuro-psychology in Bordeaux.
- Alaoui has occupied leadership positions in various organizations of the French Brotherhood milieu, including secretary general of the UOIF.
- He has served as director of another pan-European Brotherhood organization, Europe Trust.

## Abdallah ben Mansour (media and public relations)

- Born in Tunisia 1959, Abdallah ben Mansour studied electrical engineering.
- Ben Mansour has occupied leadership positions in various organizations of the French Brotherhood milieu, including secretary general of the UOIF.<sup>72</sup>
- He became FIOE president in 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Ahmed Jaballah's profile. Our Team, Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics. Retrieved from: <https://www.cilecenter.org/about-us/our-team/dr-ahmed-jaballah> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Henri Tincq, "Abdallah Ben Mansour : « Il n'y a pas d'incompatibilité entre l'islam et la République », *Le Monde*, December 24, 1994. Retrieved from: [https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1994/12/24/abdallah-ben-mansour-il-n-y-a-pas-d-incompatibilite-entre-l-islam-et-la-republique\\_3834555\\_1819218.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1994/12/24/abdallah-ben-mansour-il-n-y-a-pas-d-incompatibilite-entre-l-islam-et-la-republique_3834555_1819218.html) (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

- In 1999, the French Conseil d'Etat denied ben Mansour's request to obtain French citizenship on the grounds that the UOIF was a "federation to which several extremist movements were affiliated advocating the rejection of the essential values of French society".<sup>73</sup>

Noura Jaballah (Muslim women's affairs)

- Noura Jaballah is the wife of FIOE board member and top French Brotherhood milieu leader Ahmed Jaballah.
- She has served as president of FIOE's women organization European Forum for Muslim Women (EFOMW).

Mohsen Ngazou (education)

- Tunisian-born, Mohsen Ngazou has served in various leadership positions within the UOIF, the French Brotherhood milieu's main organization, including vice president and president of its southern region, where he served as director of the

Centre Musulman de Marseille.<sup>74</sup> Ngazou was elected president of Musulmans de France in June 2021.

<sup>75</sup>

Over the years, various individuals have succeeded one another at the helm of the organization and members of the original board, while still informally involved in the organization, have progressively been replaced. But the backgrounds of most of the individuals who have occupied governing positions within FIOE/CEM are fairly similar to those of the first board members, therefore characterised by strong connections to Brotherhood entities in their countries of origin and internationally. In substance, but for a few exceptions, the vast majority of people who have served on FIOE/CEM's board belong to the upper echelons of the Brotherhood's European network.

Arguably, one of the most prominent among them was Ayman Ali. Egyptian-born, Ali came to Europe in the 1990s to conduct allegedly charitable work during the Bosnian war (the char-

<sup>73</sup> Conseil d'Etat, 7 juin 1999, n° 178449, Ben Mansour. *Revue de l'Actualité Juridique Française*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rajf.org/spip.php?article330> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>74</sup> L'édito du Directeur, Etablissement Ibn Khaldoun. Retrieved from: [www.college-ibnkhaldoun.com/ledito/](http://www.college-ibnkhaldoun.com/ledito/) (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>75</sup> Communiqué, Assemblée Générale de MF, Musulmans de France, June 14, 2021. Retrieved from: [http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/communiquée-AG\\_12\\_13\\_juin\\_2021.pdf](http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/communiquée-AG_12_13_juin_2021.pdf) (Accessed: June 16, 2021).

ity he ran was designated as a terrorist organization in 2004).<sup>76</sup> After the war, Ali settled in Graz, where he became the head of the al Nur mosque, which serves as the headquarters of the Liga Kultur Verein für Multikulturellen Brückenbau, one of the most prominent organizations of the Austrian Brotherhood milieu and a FIOE member.<sup>77</sup> Ali also became FIOE's Secretary General and was particularly active in expanding FIOE's activities in Eastern Europe. A bio published by IslamOnline also identifies him as a founder of FEMYSO.<sup>78</sup>

Ali returned to Egypt when the Brotherhood won the 2012 elections and Mohammed Mursi was elected president. Clearly showing the connectivity between the FIOE milieu and the Brotherhood, Ali was then selected to serve in the Mursi government as a senior advi-

sor, a position he occupied until the fall of the Mursi regime and his arrest in the summer of 2013.<sup>79</sup>

Other examples, among the many, of individuals who occupied FIOE's top positions while also serving in leadership roles in Brotherhood-leaning entities in their countries of origin include Ali Abu Shwaima, former FIOE Head of Da'wah and editor of FIOE's official magazine al Europiya, who was a founding member and Secretary General of UCOII (Unione delle Comunità ed Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia); and Chakib Benmakhlouf, FIOE's president from 2008 to 2014, who occupied senior positions in various Brotherhood-leaning organizations in Sweden.

This pattern continues until today, as the latest articles of incorporation filed

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<sup>76</sup> Ali served as director of the Albanian-based Taibah International Aid Agency. In 2004, Taibah's Bosnian branch was designated as a terrorist organization, while local authorities raided the Albanian branch. Ali and the charity were thereafter accused of terrorism financing, but never formally charged. A German police report related to the investigation stated that "*the constellation of accounts, money flows and persons indicate that the accounts in Germany of Ibrahim El-Zayat and Ayman Sayed Ahmed Ali were used for carrying out fundamentalist Islamic activities in Europe.*"

<sup>77</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria*, report by the George Washington University Program on Extremism and the University of Vienna, September 2017. Retrieved from: <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/MB%20in%20Austria-%20Print.pdf> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>78</sup> Aiman Ali, Guest CV, *Islam Online*. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20090321012541/https://islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=rbQxt5> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> "Egypt: Morsy Aides Moved From Secret Detention," *Human Rights Watch*, December 25, 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/25/egypt-morsy-aides-moved-secret-detention>. Accessed: April 24, 2021).

by FIOE at the prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis show.<sup>80</sup> The documents, filed in December 2018, indicate three names as officials:

The president is Tunisian-born German-resident Samir Falah. Following an educational path common to many in the milieu, Falah studied both at IESH

and at a prominent technical university (the Karlsruher Institut für Technologie).<sup>81</sup> As an activist, he also followed a typical trajectory – identical to Ibrahim el Zayat’s – that took him first to head the German student organization linked to the Brotherhood (the MSV) and then the national organization (the IGD).<sup>82</sup> Picture 3: Samir Falah’s Facebook post showing the Muslim Brotherhood’s R4bia symbol.<sup>83</sup>



Picture 4: Samir Falah’s Facebook post showing the Muslim Brotherhood’s R4bia.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Records from the Prefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis obtained by the authors.

<sup>81</sup> Samir Falah’s LinkedIn profile. Retrieved from: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/samir-falah-8811b243/?originalSubdomain=de> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>82</sup> “DMG: Gesprächsangebot an Verfassungsschutz,” *Islamismus und Gesellschaft*, November 21, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://vunv1863.wordpress.com/tag/islamische-gemeinschaft-in-deutschland/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); “IGD-Präsident und Vizepräsidentin”, *Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland*. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180429153520/http://igd-online.de/igd/vorstand/> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

<sup>83</sup> Samir Falah’s personal Facebook page, August 18, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=511326715609594&set=ecnf.100001968092105&type=3&theater> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

The current secretary general is Syrian-born Palestinian Basil Marei. Marei moved to the Soviet Union in 1988 to study, graduated in civil engineering from Kiev's National University and re-

mained in Ukraine ever since. He headed Arraid, the local Brotherhood-linked organization, from 2011 to 2016, and also served as assistant to the president of FIOE in 2013.



Picture 5: Basil Marei's Facebook post showing the Muslim Brotherhood's R4bia symbol.<sup>84</sup>

The treasurer is Hassan Mahmoud Keliem. Keliem has served on various organizations of the Swedish Brotherhood milieu, including IFiS and Ibn Rushd.

84 Basil Marei's personal Facebook page, August 18, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=513310985415780&set=a.113081048772111> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).



## FIOE/CEM's activities

According to its website, FIOE/CEM's goals are "[t]o publicise Islam, and inspire and support Europe's Muslims to practise the rituals of their faith, and participate effectively in the varied aspects of life, within a frame of moderate understanding and a reformist, innovating approach."<sup>85</sup> The organization's main activities fall in the sphere of lobbying, engaging with a variety of European actors to introduce them to its members' points of view.

Arguably, one of the most recognizable milestones since FIOE's foundation has been the 2008 declaration of the "Muslims of Europe Charter", a document "setting out the general principles for better understanding of Islam, and the bases for the integration of Muslims in society, in the context of citizenship."<sup>86</sup> The Charter, the preparation of which began in 2000 under the stewardship of Ibrahim el Zayat, was presented to the public in Brussels at an event attended by representatives of

the European Parliament.<sup>87</sup>

If these are the external activities, internally FIOE plays an important role in coordinating and supervising the activities of its member organization—a fact that reinforces the view of a pan-European Brotherhood family with FIOE/CEM as a central nerve. Various elements confirm this dynamic:

- The 2002 to 2006 General Plan passed by FIOE's Executive Board asked all FIOE member organizations to standardise their bylaws according to common requirements it established.<sup>88</sup>
- The bylaws of various FIOE/CEM members indicate that, in case of their dissolution, their assets should be transferred to FIOE (see, for example, the chapter on Sweden).
- FIOE has repeatedly stepped in to solve internal disputes within national Brotherhood milieus. In Spain, for example, when an internal conflict arose between two different associations under FIOE's umbrella in the

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85 About Us, Council of European Muslims. Retrieved from: <http://www.eumuslims.org/en/about-us> (Accessed: May 24, 2021).

86 Muslims of Europe Charter, Council of European Muslims. Retrieved from: <http://eumuslims.org/sites/default/files/documents/eng.pdf> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

87 Teresa Küchler & Leigh Philips, "400 groups sign charter for European Muslims," *EuObserver*, January 14, 2008. Retrieved from: <https://euobserver.com/news/25444> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

88 Document in possession of the authors.

early 2000s,<sup>89</sup> it was the pan-European federation who stepped in sending Abderrahim Tawil –ECFR member, now imam at the Great Mosque of Valencia– to settle the controversy.<sup>90</sup> A similar dynamic reportedly occurred in Denmark in 2004, when FIOE appointed a three-member panel to solve a dispute between the two self-appointed leaders of the Danish milieu, Mohammad al Barazi and the late Jihad al Farra.<sup>91</sup>

- In Austria, FIOE is directly involved in the Liga Kultur's internal electoral process, where it takes on a supervisory function,<sup>92</sup> closely overseeing the election of the new president.<sup>93</sup>

These dynamics clearly show that FIOE is a super-structure aimed at supervising, coordinating and homogenising the activities of its members.

## **FIOE/CEM as a pan-European Brotherhood platform**

Over time, following a common Brotherhood methodological pattern, FIOE established several spinoffs, each tasked to work on a specific subject and goal. FIOE itself explained this process in a 2019 Facebook post about its history it later removed:

“The idea of specialization also emerged as a working tool and a necessary and effective approach to achieving the goal of settling down, and so the initiative of establishing a group of specialised institutions was born. The most important of these specialised institutions are: the European Institute for Human Sciences (1990), then the Union of European Institutes for Islamic and Human Sciences (2007), the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (1996), the European Council for Fatwa

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89 Luis Gómez, “Tensión en la Gran Mezquita,” *Diario El País*, November 6, 2005. Retrieved from: [https://elpais.com/diario/2005/11/06/espana/1131231611\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2005/11/06/espana/1131231611_850215.html) (Accessed: April 26, 2021)

90 Interview with Abderrahim Tawil, ECFR member, Valencia, September 2020; interview with Cherifa ben Hassine, president of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Valencia, Valencia, September 2020.

91 The story has been recounted by former Danish Brotherhood member Ahmed Akkari in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

92 “Der Liga Kultur-Verein in Österreich”, Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam, September 2021. Retrieved from: [https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Liga-Kultur\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Liga-Kultur_WEB.pdf) (Accessed: September 15, 2021); Robert Maher Kreshan, “Im Namen Allahs, des Gnädigen, des Barmherzigen,” Liga Kultur Verein, February 28, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://ligakultur.at/stellungnahme-im-namen-allahs-des-gnaedigen-des-barmherzigen/> (Accessed: April 26, 2021)

93 Ibid.

and Research (1997), the Europe Trust (1997), the European Forum of Muslim Women (2006), the European Assembly of Muslim Imams and Spiritual Guides (2008), [...], in addition to many institutions, social and cultural associations, Islamic centres and mosques across all Europe.”<sup>94</sup>

These and several other entities (such as the European Forum for Media Professionals or the Association of Muslim Schools in Europe) form a plethora of entities with interlocking governance and constant cooperation in a multiplicity of activities. All entities are run by the same small network of senior activists and they all serve a specific purpose that clearly corresponds to a larger design. The four most important “specialised institutions” spawned by FIOE are its youth organization (FEMYSO), its theological/jurisprudential arm (ECFR), its academic arm (IESH), and its financial

arm (Europe Trust). Each will be analysed individually.

Before doing so, it is useful to provide additional evidence of the connections to the Brotherhood of FIOE/CEM and its specialised institutions. The evidence related to history, membership and governance previously outlined should have provided strong indications of said connectivity. But, most tellingly, its confirmation comes directly from top leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Some FIOE/CEM leaders, aware of the negative connotations Brotherhood connections can bring, are keen to downplay them. Ahmed al Rawi, the organization’s former president, has admitted that FIOE shares “a common point of view” and has a “good close relationship” with the Brotherhood.<sup>95</sup> But he has also stated that “anyone who suggests that FIOE is the Muslim Brotherhood’s

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<sup>94</sup> “مجلس مسلمي أوروبا [مجلس مسلمي أوروبا... في سطور...] *The Council of European Muslims in a few lines* [...] - Council of European Muslims official Facebook page, January 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-council-of-european-muslims/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1/2932358320122416/> Facebook post no longer available; screenshot in possession of the authors.

<sup>95</sup> Ian Johnson, “How Islamic Group’s Ties Reveal Europe’s Challenge,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113582317237133576> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

representative is incorrect”,<sup>96</sup> technically a correct assessment as FIOE is not a representative of the Brotherhood but, rather, an organization created by some of its top members in Europe.<sup>97</sup>

Yet, internal FIOE communications commonly uses references to the group and its revered founder, Hassan al Banna. For example, a memo submitted to FIOE’s Shura Council at the March 2002 meeting in Paris and penned by Emad Elbannani and Mohsen Ngazou, respectively FIOE Secretary General and Director for education, argued the solution to the challenge the organization was facing in training a new generation of activists could “in no way be resolved through a Western methodology of work” but only through “the implementation of the system of specialised study groups introduced by the great teacher al Banna.”<sup>98</sup> “We need a perfect missionary personality,” continued the memo, “which possesses the essential personality-building traits according to the true Islamic way, based on the writings and

teachings of imam al Banna.” In substance, the document written by two of the top leaders of FIOE openly argued for strictly applying al Banna’s teachings and methodology as the only way for the organization to be successful.

Moreover, many senior Brotherhood members, particularly those based in the Middle East, do not engage in semantical games like al Rawi but, rather, proudly proclaim that FIOE’s ideological and methodological identification with the Brotherhood is complete. “If we move a step forward, and look into targets of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE),” wrote Salem Sheikhi, a senior Libyan Muslim Brotherhood leader and a member of FIOE’s European Council for Fatwa and Research, “it represents the Muslim Brotherhood’s moderate thought taking into consideration European specialty, and working under European regimes and laws.”<sup>99</sup> Al Sheikhi goes on to speak of the *Al-Gurabaa* (The Strangers) magazine, saying that it is “the Muslim Brotherhoods [sic]

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<sup>96</sup> Andrew Norfolk, “Unwitting students fund Islamist projects with their rent payments,” *London Times*, July 10, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unwitting-students-fund-islamist-projects-with-their-rent-payments-rbmz02grtm> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Document in possession of the authors.

<sup>99</sup> “The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe and a Course of Reviews, UK an Example,” *Ikhwanweb*, August 12, 2008. Retrieved from: <https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=17575> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

mouthpiece in Britain in particular and Europe in general- it is a monthly magazine issued by the Muslim Student Society in Britain and Ireland with the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe.”

Similarly, Kamal Helbawy, former official spokesperson of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West who served on FIOE’s Shura Council until 2012, calls FIOE and the other pan-European institutions a “Brotherhood project.”<sup>100</sup> Former Egyptian Brotherhood murshid Mohammed Akef has made it clear that FIOE, FEMY-SO, and their member organization fall under the large umbrella of the global Muslim Brotherhood and, more specifically, the trend led by Qaradawi. “These organizations and institutions are independent and autonomous. We do not control them,” said Akef in an interview with the Swiss journalist Sylvain Besson. “It is the Brothers abroad that control them. The structures linked to Qaradawi are organizations of the Brotherhood directed by the Brothers of different countries.”<sup>101</sup>

Indeed it is Yusuf al Qaradawi, the Qatar-based spiritual leader of the European Muslim Brotherhood network, that has repeatedly confirmed that FIOE/CEM and the other pan-European organizations are close emanations of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2000, for example, interviewed over the role of FIOE’s official magazine *al Europiya*, Qaradawi stated:

“I see that *al Europiya* is one of the tools that European Islamic work has developed in recent years. European Islamic work has also established its own institutions through which it advances its agenda like the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, the European Islamic Institute and the European Islamic Institute in Britain<sup>102</sup> and the European Council for Fatwa and Research [...]. In fact, *al Europiya* is the mouthpiece of all these institutions and that is why the brothers should support it and also support the Islamic institutions advancing Islamic thought and Islamic da’wah and working for the Islamic community in Europe.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Email correspondence with Lorenzo Vidino, March 2021.

<sup>101</sup> Sylvain Besson, *La Conquête de l’Occident*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, page 100.

<sup>102</sup> Referring to the European Institute of Human Sciences (IESH), both in France and the UK.

<sup>103</sup> *Al Europiya* magazine, issue 19 [مجلة الأوروبية], July 2000, page 42.

Similarly, in 2004, on his popular Al Jazeera show *Sharia and Life*, Qaradawi further elaborated:

“It all started in Egypt, after the 1967 catastrophe, but every cloud has a silver lining, and events made believers repent and return to God. That Islamic Awakening emerged from Egypt but we saw it expand elsewhere. It was also the beginning of my journey with the movement to other countries. The movement started to feel the need of strengthening the identity of Muslims outside dar al Islam, and its adherents started to organise themselves through the founding of Islamic institutions in order to preserve that identity. [...] It was necessary to educate the people, train imams, establish jurisprudence through the issuing of fatwas [...] And so French Muslims began by opening IESH, and the British did the same by opening a similar institute. To close the circle the brothers founded FIOE, precisely in Europe, following the trend of economic, cultural and political union. [...] It was FIOE who understood the needs of the people and there was indeed a necessity to provide Islamic orientation to Muslims in Europe. That is why they founded ECFR in Ireland, to become a religious reference.”<sup>104</sup>

Qaradawi further highlighted the central role of FIOE in the network:

„It was necessary to achieve coordination in order to strengthen the identity of Muslims outside dar al Islam and fulfil the necessities to educate the people, train imams, establish jurisprudence through the issuing of fatwas [...]. It was FIOE who understood the needs of the people following the European trend of economic, cultural and political union.”<sup>105</sup>

Qaradawi’s comments are echoed also by the late Fayçal Mawlawi, who for decades was one of the most influential clerics of the European Brotherhood network and served as deputy chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research. In a 2001 interview with *al-Europiya*, he stated:

“I feel that Islam is making steady progress in Europe, inshallah. And the reason for that is that the Islamic awakening has deepened its roots and expanded. As a movement it has also come to understand the society in which it lives and how to deal with it. Consequently, it has become much more performant in dealing with this society, in addition to the fact that the freedoms granted by European laws allow [the movement] to

<sup>104</sup> Peculiarities of Islam in Europe [خصوصيات الإسلام في أوروبا], *Sharia and Life*, Al Jazeera, 2004. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZH51yvOxy0> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

carry out its da'wah activities and other works while enjoying a kind of freedom impossible to find in our Arab world.”<sup>106</sup>

Considering how top Brotherhood leaders openly speak, albeit mostly in Arabic, of FIOE and its specialised institutions as being Brotherhood emanations, it is not surprising that various European governments characterise the organizations as such. The AIVD, the Netherlands' intelligence agency, states that FIOE “can be seen as the umbrella organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. The FIOE has a guiding role within the European Muslim Brotherhood and determines the central policy, which is implemented locally by national federations.”<sup>107</sup> In Germany, the federal security services and those of major länder like

Bavaria and North Rhine Westphalia call FIOE “the umbrella organization for Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Europe” in their annual reports.<sup>108</sup>

Similarly, the 2014 British government official Review of the Muslim Brotherhood states “Muslim Brotherhood organisations in the UK –including charities– are connected to counterparts elsewhere in Europe. MAB [Muslim Association of Britain] are associated with the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), established by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1989. FIOE subsequently created the European Council for Fatwa and Research, another pan European Muslim Brotherhood body, intended to provide religious and social guidance to Muslims living in Europe”.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Al Europiya magazine, issue 24 [مجلة الأوروبية], February 2001, page 18.

<sup>107</sup> Brief regering; “Conclusies onderzoek Moslimbroederschap in Nederland - Grondrechten in een pluriforme samenleving,” Parlementaire Monitor, KST2961426. May 26, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vvij5epmj1ey0/vipncvj8czzn> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>108</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern, Verfassungsschutzbericht, 2007, page 193; Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration, Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019, page 43; Verfassungsschutzbericht des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2018, page 252.

<sup>109</sup> *Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings*, House of Commons, December 17, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/muslim-brotherhood-review-main-findings> (Accessed: April 11, 2021).

# FEMYSO

## History

As FIOE itself has clearly stated, the Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO) is one of the first organizations created by FIOE to pursue its strategy of specialization.<sup>110</sup> As a FEMYSO document explains, the first formal meeting that spurred the organization's creation took place in Stockholm in June 1995. Titled, "Islam in Europe," the event was organised by SUM (Sveriges Unga Muslim, or Swedish Young Muslim), Young Muslims UK (YMUK) and JMF (Jeunes Musulmans de France) as those entities, according to FEMYSO, "were given the responsibility to establish better communication between the organisations and undertake steps towards greater co-operation and co-ordination."<sup>111</sup>

Interestingly, the Stockholm event was financially sponsored by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and featured activists from the European Brotherhood milieu but also scholars and non-Brotherhood leaning European Muslim activists. The conference caused discomfort among some of the participants, who were unaware of its underlying aims and accepted an invitation to it because of the Swedish government's endorsement. Most notable among them was famed French scholar Gilles Kepel. "I was surprised to see how the youth conference was controlled by the Islamists," Kepel confessed to a Swedish newspaper at the time. "They are well-organized, intelligent, and have a built-up contact network throughout Europe. With this, they succeeded in taking control over the youth conference, even though they are in the minority among Muslims in Europe."<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> "The Council of European Muslims in a few lines [مجلس مسلمي أوروبا] [مجلس مسلمي أوروبا... في سطور...]" - Council of European Muslims official Facebook page, January 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%A7-council-of-european-muslims/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1/2932358320122416/> Facebook post no longer available; screenshot in possession of the authors. (Accessed: January 31, 2020)

<sup>111</sup> History, The Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations. Retrieved from: <https://femyso.org/history/> (Accessed: December 19, 2019).

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Aje Carlbom, *Islamic activism in a multicultural context – ideological continuity or change?*, report by the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency and Malmö University, 2017. Page 23. Retrieved from: <https://www.msb.se/siteassets/dokument/publikationer/english-publications/islamic-activism-in-a-multicultural-context-ideological-continuity-or-change.pdf> (Accessed: June 21, 2020).



One of the organisers of the 1995 Stockholm meeting confirms Kepel's analysis. Pierre Durrani, who at the time headed Swedish Young Muslims, has publicly recounted how the organization was part of the Swedish Brotherhood milieu and how he himself was a sworn member of the Muslim Brotherhood (having pledged allegiance, interestingly, during the year he studied at IESH). Durrani, who has since left the Brotherhood and become a critic of it, recounts how Brotherhood activists were elated that their efforts were aided by Swedish authorities, a fact he attributes to the latter's naivete and inability to understand internal dynamics within Muslim communities and, in turn, the Brothers' ability to exploit them.<sup>113</sup>

A definitive follow up meeting to the one in Stockholm was held the following year. FEMYSO's website states that a meeting of "nineteen youth and student organisations from eleven countries across Europe" was held in Leicester in June 1996. The choice of the British city is unsurprising, as its suburb of Markfield

already hosted the headquarters of FIOE. "This meeting," continues FEMYSO's website, "created strong bonds between those present and resulted in the official launch of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)."<sup>114</sup>

An old FEMYSO brochure provides additional details, explaining that "in June 1996, the FIOE (Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe) joined together with WAMY (World Assembly of Muslim Youth) and invited SUM, YMUK and JMF, the three youth organizations that had organized the Stockholm meeting, to a meeting in Birmingham [which is some 40 miles west of Leicester], UK to facilitate this process. The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, also became involved."<sup>115</sup> Another FEMYSO document explains that "after an intensive consultation process to develop the statutes and all other necessary documents, FEMYSO was registered as an international Non-Governmental Organisations [sic] (NGO) in Brussels, the capital of Belgium in the heart of Europe."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Lorenzo Vidino interviewed Pierre Durrani over several meetings between 2017 and 2018 in Stockholm and Malmoe. A chapter describing Durrani's time in the Brotherhood can be found in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

<sup>114</sup> We are FEMYSO, The Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations. Retrieved from: <https://femyso.org/we-are-femyso/> (Accessed: June 17, 2021)

<sup>115</sup> FEMYSO brochure in possession of the authors.

<sup>116</sup> History, The Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations. Retrieved from: <https://femyso.org/history/> (Accessed: December 19, 2019).

The founding of FEMYSO clearly shows its Brotherhood connections. Documents by FIOE, an organization whose Brotherhood nature has been analysed in detail above, clearly identify FEMYSO as a FIOE outgrowth and FEMYSO literature openly states that FIOE summoned the 1996 Birmingham meeting where FEMYSO was founded. Moreover, the three youth organizations that spearheaded the process in Stockholm and participated at the Birmingham meeting have unmistakable Islamist connections. SUM is the youth organization of Swedish Brotherhood network, as both Durrani, who sat on its board, and the former head of

the Swedish Brotherhood network Mahmoud Aldebe publicly admit.<sup>117</sup> JMF is the youth branch of the UOIF/Musulmans de France, whose Brotherhood nature has already been analysed. YMUK, on the other hand, is a British youth organization of the Jemat-e-Islami, the South Asian equivalent and, as seen, long-time fellow traveller of the Brotherhood. Jemat-e-Islami's involvement in FEMYSO's foundation is confirmed by a FEMYSO brochure ("The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, also became involved").<sup>118</sup>

An additional entity involved in FEMYSO's foundation and early days provides fur-

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<sup>117</sup> In 2013, Jordanian-born Mahmoud Aldebe, one of the historical leaders of the Swedish Brotherhood milieu, published an open letter to reveal his involvement in the organization and to criticise its aims. He wrote: "I, Mahmoud Aldebe [...] was one of those who established the Swedish branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden and who wrote its statutes. I abandoned my commitment to the Islamic Federation in Sweden (IFIS) and the Muslim Brotherhood in 2010, after over 25 years as a leading figure for the organization. I'm not saying this to besmirch anyone, but the truth should come forward. The problem is not the movement per se, but those who rule over it. I devoted my whole adult life to defending the Islamic Federation in Sweden, but realized I was its tool—and thus decided to leave all my positions of responsibility in the federation and the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden. This move cost me much, but I sacrificed it all to save myself from the dark tunnel. Now the truth must come to light, and I chose to go out and describe the true picture of the Islamic Federation in Sweden. [...] The problem we are facing is the double message, which is more harmful than beneficial. Dialogue is pursued with Christian and Jewish groups in official forums, but internally they spread fears regarding them. They speak of democracy, but actually do the opposite. The Federation managed to deceive those who want to have dialogue with them in Sweden.[...]" Aldebe continued with a long list of institutions (among others, Ibn Rushd Study Association, Swedish Young Muslims, the Stockholm mosque, and the Gothenburg mosque) and individuals (Chakib Benmakhlouf, Mostafa Kharraki, Khemais Bassomi, Mohammad Amin Kharraki, Omar Mustafa, and Mahmoud Khalfi) that he, like Pierre, claimed are associated with the Brotherhood. Aldebe concluded his letter with a sharp critique of the Brotherhood: "Today, the Federation uses its conferences to prove to Swedish politicians that it controls Islam in Sweden. The Federation also works to make Sweden accept its order for Muslims. The division is sharp and clear: the enemies of Islam cannot be tolerated. Its representatives are active in large parts of organized Islam in Sweden... [D]emocracy, equality, and freedom of speech are met with great dislike. They speak of democracy to achieve their own goals and to exert power over Islam in Sweden." The letter is quoted in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

<sup>118</sup> FEMYSO brochure in possession of the authors.

ther evidence of the organization's deep Islamist nature. The abovementioned FEMYSO brochure explains that the organization's foundational meeting in Birmingham had been organised by FIOE "together with WAMY (World Assembly of Muslim Youth)." Together with its sister organization, the Muslim World League, WAMY was one of the main technically non-governmental organizations created by Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s to spread its ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam. Generously funded by the Saudi government and wealthy Arab Gulf donors but staffed largely with Brotherhood members, for decades WAMY provided ample financial support to various Muslim but mostly Brotherhood-controlled or Brotherhood-leaning organizations worldwide, including in Europe. In the words of the Pew Research Center, "between the 1970s and 1990s, the European activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth became so intertwined that it was often difficult to tell them apart."<sup>119</sup>

WAMY's involvement in FEMYSO's foundation is therefore not surprising. The relationship between the two continued after

FEMYSO's foundation. Evidence of that is, for example, the Brussels office FEMYSO occupied since its foundation. Located in Rue Archimede 50, a stone's throw from the European Commission and other EU institutions, FEMYSO's office occupies half of the first floor of a small but elegant townhouse. Tellingly, the other half was occupied for years by WAMY's offices. According to the lease, the rent for the office is paid by Bassem Hatahet, an activist of Syrian origin who heads a series of Brotherhood-linked organizations in Belgium.

## Membership

In a virtually identical fashion to FIOE, the vast majority of FEMYSO member organizations for each European country tend to be, save for a few exceptions, the one or two entities in that country that constitute the most prominent Muslim Brotherhood spawns among the youth and student organizations.<sup>120</sup> Among them, in fact, are the abovementioned founders such as the French JMF and the Swedish SUM, the youth branches of organizations such as the Muslim Association of Britain or Ukraine's Arraid, and, showing the interconnectivity of the pan-European structures of the Brother-

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<sup>119</sup> Muslim World League and World Assembly of Muslim Youth, part of the *Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe* project, Pew Research Center, September 15, 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/15/muslim-networks-and-movements-in-western-europe-muslim-world-league-and-world-assembly-of-muslim-youth/> (Accessed: June 17, 2021).

<sup>120</sup> For the list, see FEMYSO's website: <https://femyso.org/member-organisations/>

hood, FIOE's Youth Section and the Paris branch of IESH. Moreover, showing also the interconnectivity with fellow Islamist movements, it is noteworthy that FEMYSO's members include the youth section of the German branch of the Turkish Islamist movement Millî Görüş and, in keeping with a pattern seen since its founding, various British entities linked to Jemat-e-Islami (Islamic Society of Britain, Young Muslims in UK, and the Islamic Foundation).

## Governance

Exactly like FIOE's, FEMYSO's early board reads like a who's who of top Islamist players but only younger, as FEMYSO is a body seeking to represent youth and students. Confirming the virtually complete overlap between FIOE and FEMYSO, FEMYSO's first president was Ibrahim el Zayat, who was also in charge of "Youth and Student" affairs at FIOE. The extensive Brotherhood connections of El Zayat, the "spider in the web of Islamist

organizations," as German authorities describe him, have already been outlined.<sup>121</sup>

Equally interesting and revealing of patterns that continue until today are the four remaining members of FEMYSO's initial board. The only female on the board was Hadia Himmat. Hadia is the daughter of Ghaleb Himmat, a member of the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and one of the first pioneers of the Brotherhood in Europe. Himmat, in fact, was a long-time president of IGD, the organization that German authorities refer to as "the most important organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Germany."<sup>122</sup> Ibrahim el Zayat actually succeeded Ghaleb Himmat at the helm of IGD in January 2002, months after Hadia's father was designated as a terrorism financier by both the United States and the United Nations in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.<sup>123</sup> Himmat, in fact, was a long-time business and personal associate

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<sup>121</sup> Uta Rasche, "Spinne im Netz der Muslime in Deutschland: Die Macht des Ibrahim El Zayat." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007; Andrea Brandt, "Wendiger Weltmann," *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2008; Helmut Frangenberg and Detlef Schmalenberg, "El-Zayat, der Herr der Moscheen," *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 20, 2009.

<sup>122</sup> Bundesverfassungsschutz, 2019, Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat. Retrieved from: [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/vsb-2019-gesamt.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=10](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/vsb-2019-gesamt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>123</sup> "Recent OFAC Actions," U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, November 7, 2001.

of Yusuf Nada,<sup>124</sup> the Egyptian Brotherhood's "foreign minister" in exile and arguably the movement's top financier in Europe for decades.

The remaining three board members were Murad Farooq, Dilwar Hussein and Khallad Swaid. Farooq and Hussein come from the British Jemat-e-Islami milieu, having occupied important positions at the Islamic Foundation and the related Markfield Institute of Higher Education (both located in the Leicester suburb of Markfield, where FIOE was first headquartered). Swaid, on the other hand, hails from Germany and has personally undergone the same managerial trajectory as El Zayat or the few others that climb to the top of their country's Brotherhood milieu. Swaid, in fact, first headed Germany's youth organization (MJD) and in 2017 became the president of the Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft (DMG, the successor organization to the IGD, which German security services similarly call "the largest and most influential organization of MB supporters in the Federal Republic"<sup>125</sup>). Swaid, whose father, Hassan Swaid, is a former IGD senior member and founder of the Complex Éducatif et

Culturel Islamique de Verviers (CECIV, Belgium), also served as president of FEMYSO (2002-07) and secretary general of International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO), a global student organization with strong Brotherhood leanings.

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<sup>124</sup> Ghaleb Himmat and Yusuf Nada live in two adjacent villas in the luxury Italian enclave in Swiss territory of Campione d'Italia.

<sup>125</sup> Baden-Württemberg, Verfassungsschutzbericht 2018, Ministerium für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Migration. Retrieved from: [https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/pdf/20190606\\_Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2018.pdf](https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/pdf/20190606_Verfassungsschutzbericht_2018.pdf) (Accessed: June 17, 2021).



Picture 6: FEMYSO's Khallad Swaid meeting the former head of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Akef,<sup>126</sup> at the funeral of Turkish Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan (Istanbul, March 2011).<sup>127</sup>

FEMYSO's initial board reflects a dynamic that has become a constant in FEMYSO's 25-year history. An analysis of its governance structure based on all the organization's filings since 2003, in fact, shows a pattern in the composition of FEMYSO's boards. Roughly one fifth of board members have a background similar to Hadia Himmat's: they are children (both

male and female) of some of the most prominent first-generation leaders of the Brotherhood in Europe. Another approximately three-fifth of board members are, on the other hand, prominent activists within their European country's Brotherhood milieu (often the presidents of the local youth or student organization). Finally, roughly one fifth of members (al-

<sup>126</sup> Mohammed Akef lived in Munich for various years.

<sup>127</sup> Official Facebook page of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO). March 10, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/IIFSOOfficial/photos/195026853853527> (Accessed: September 15, 2021).

though this portion has arguably grown in recent years) are unaffiliated activists that cannot be reasonably tied to any Brotherhood-milieu if not in very superficial ways.

Michaël Privot, a self-declared former member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium who was elected member of FEMYSO's executive committee as secretary general in 2003 described the board composition as follows: "Some 'sons and daughters of,' members of these militant Brotherhood dynasties in the process of reconstructing themselves in exile: parents who were political refugees following their Brotherhood activism, then children who engage in youth work in Europe taking advantage of their surname and symbolic capital within their communities. And some non-Brothers from various movements, such as the Millî Görüş or the Pakistani Jamaat-e Islami [...]."<sup>128</sup>

Examples of the first category abound, as it has been a frequent pattern for many of the first-generation European Broth-

erhood pioneers to propel their wives, children, and in-laws to some of the top positions inside the milieu. While the dynamic is extremely common within each European country, where these "Brotherhood proteges" occupy top-ranking positions in national structure, it is also replicated at the pan-European level. FEMYSO is therefore the perfect entity where the scions of top Brotherhood families can hone their activism skills and create a broader network during their formative years.

The Executive Committee elected by FEMYSO's 17th General Assembly in June 2013 illustrates this point well, as the four most senior positions were all assigned to scions of top Brotherhood families.<sup>129</sup> The assembly, in fact, elected as President Intissar Kherigi, the daughter of Tunisian Islamist movement Ennahdha's leader Rached Ghannouchi. London-based Kherigi, who uses Ghannouchi's familial surname, is also involved in some of his father's political activities.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Michaël Privot. "Quand j'étais frère musulman, parcours vers un Islam des lumières," *Paris: La Boîte à Pandore*, 2017. Page 120.

<sup>129</sup> FEMYSO annual report, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://es.scribd.com/document/260745472/FEMYSO-Annual-Report-2014> (Accessed: June 17, 2021).

<sup>130</sup> James Brandon and Raffaello Pantucci, "UK Islamists and the Arab Uprisings," The Hudson Institute, June 22, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.hudson.org/research/9902-uk-islamists-and-the-arab-uprisings> (Accessed: August 26, 2021).



Picture 7: *Rached Ghannouchi and his daughter, former FEMYSO president Intissar Kherigi*<sup>131</sup>

The first vice-president was also a woman, Ireland-based Hajar al Kaddo. Al Kaddo has experience in inter-faith dialogue, a doctorate in clean energy and has occupied leadership positions with the charity Human Appeal.<sup>132</sup> But, besides this impressive resume, Hajar al Kaddo is also the daughter of Nooh Edreeb al Kaddo, an Iraqi who is one of the leaders of the Irish Brotherhood

milieu. Al Kaddo, in fact, is a trustee of the Europe Trust and the CEO of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI) in the Dublin suburb of Clonskeagh, historically the hub of the Brotherhood in the country and the headquarters of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, one of the network's five pan-European entities.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Picture by Amin Landoulsi, the Associated Press.

<sup>132</sup> Hajar al Kaddo's LinkedIn profile. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/in/hajar-al-kaddo-24311541/> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>133</sup> Adil Hussain Khan, "Political Islam in Ireland and the role of Muslim Brotherhood networks," in Oliver Scharbrodt, Tuula Sakaranaho, Adil Hussain Khan, Yafa Shanneik, and Vivian Ibrahim, eds., *Muslims in Ireland: Past and Present* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Shane Phelan, "'Fatwa' sheikh with links to Irish Muslims is refused visa," *Independent*, August 8, 2011.



FEMYSO's other vice president was Youssef Himmat, the son of above-mentioned top Brotherhood financier Ghaleb Himmat. As alluded, his sister Hadia had also served on the board of FEMYSO in previous years, making the familial pattern even more evident. Finally, FEMYSO's treasurer was Anas Saghrouni, the son of Mohamed-Taïeb Saghrouni, one of the éminences grises of the UOIF/MF. His mother, Hela Khomsi, is, like her husband, a board member of UOIF, where she is also in charge of family-related issues.<sup>134</sup> She is also the president of the French League of the Muslim Woman (Ligue Française de la Femme Musulmane, LFFM) and, at the European level, a founding member of the European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW), the female branch of FIOE.<sup>135</sup> Their son Anas is a rising star of the French Brotherhood milieu. After serving as president of the Étudiants Musulmans de France (EMF, a FEMYSO member organization), he is currently in charge of the youth portfolio for UOIF.<sup>136</sup> His position at FEMYSO was a

natural and common progression of his career inside the network.

If the 2013 board epitomises FEMYSO's familial dynamics, the trend still continues with several more children of Brotherhood-linked activists. Among them, for example, Kauthar Bouchallikh, whose father headed Islamic Relief Netherlands for almost twenty years;<sup>137</sup> and Fatima Halawa, whose father Hussein is Secretary General of the European Council for Fatwa and Research and the imam of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland.

It should be noted that these familial dynamics, whether in FEMYSO or other national or pan-European entities of the network, are a long-standing cause of internal frictions within Brotherhood milieus. While some of the "Brotherhood children" given leadership positions are unquestionably qualified, many "unconnected" activists feel that their appointments lack transparency and that more capable activists are unjustly bypassed

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<sup>134</sup> Équipe de direction de MF, Musulmans de France. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180815160626/http://www.uoif-online.com/equipe-de-direction/> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>135</sup> Structure and Members, the European Forum of Muslim Women. EFOMW's old Website <https://efomw.wordpress.com/structure-members/> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>136</sup> Équipe de direction de MF, Musulmans de France. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180815160626/http://www.uoif-online.com/equipe-de-direction/> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>137</sup> Mostapha Bouchallikh's LinkedIn profile. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mostapha-bouchallikh-4752b725/?originalSubdomain=nl> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

because they do not belong to prominent families.<sup>138</sup> In any case, the dynamic reinforces the view that the European Brotherhood is composed of a small nomenklatura of interconnected activists, an aristocratic elite that controls everything.

The second category of FEMYSO board members is composed of rising stars of the milieus of their home countries, often the presidents of their youth and student organizations. Appointing them is, exactly as for the “Brotherhood children,” a way to expose the future leaders of the network to activism on an international platform and to connect them to one another in order to solidify their bonds. A common trajectory for many of these young leaders is to serve for a few years on the board of FEMYSO (a position that requires only a limited time commitment) while heading one of the youth organizations in their countries of origin; then, there is a promotion to some leadership position in their countries’ main Brotherhood-linked organization and some part-time position in another pan-European entity.

Some FEMYSO board members have also made important strides in national politics, a path FEMYSO seeks to aid. Most notable among them is Omar Mustafa, who also served in leadership positions of several entities of the Swedish Brotherhood milieu (among them, president of IFiS, director of Ibn Rushd, and vice president of the local branch of Islamic Relief). In 2013 Mustafa was elected to the national governing board of the Swedish Democrat Party, but media exposés of the links between the organizations he was involved in and misogynistic and anti-Semitic views forced him to resign only a few days after his election. “You can’t hold an elected position within the Social Democrats,” commented the embarrassed head of the SAP, Stefan Löfven, “unless you can fully stand up for the party’s values that all human beings are equal and for equality between women and men.” For his part, Mustafa insisted that he was the victim of “unfounded attacks and conspiracy theories about Islam, Muslims, and Muslim organizations” and vowed to continue working within Muslim civil society for “justice, equality, and human rights.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> In his autobiography “Salaam, Italia!”, *Aliberti*, 2005, Khalid Chaouki, once a prominent activist in the Italian Brotherhood milieu, attributed this dynamic to “*Middle East-style pseudo-democratic rules: bylaws that change at the last second, proxies with voting rights from non-existent people, budgets that do not know the meaning of the word transparency, assemblies of wise-men and guarantors with access rights completely unknown to all members of the organizations.*”

<sup>139</sup> “Social Democrats force out Mustafa over ‘values,” *The Local*, April 13, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.thelocal.se/20130413/47320/> (Accessed: June 21, 2021)

## Activities

FEMYSO describes itself as the “de facto voice of Muslim youth in Europe” seeking to “be an exemplary European institution, bringing together Muslim youth to network and exchange ideas, developing them to achieve their full potential and working closely with its member organisations as well as other partners to build a better Europe for all.”<sup>140</sup> From its small office one block from the Berlaymont, the European Commission’s headquarters, FEMYSO is constantly consulted by “the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and a host of other relevant organisations at the European level.”<sup>141</sup> Indeed, FEMYSO has created a broad network of institutional connections that allow its members to obtain what all bodies of its kind seek: the ability to influence its partners along its own socio-political lines and the opportunity to network with individuals and entities that could further its goals.

Moreover, as for most other organizations, networking at the EU level also

provides an additional possibility: funding. Over the years, in fact, FEMYSO has been able to obtain important grants and other forms of funding from the European Commission and other EU entities. In 2013, for example, FEMYSO launched the Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network (IMAN) project. The initiative, according to FEMYSO’s 2016 annual report, aimed to provide “information and advice to victims of Islamophobia on obtaining legal assistance and how to access their rights,” “training for law enforcement officials on identifying Islamophobic incidents,” and “training to NGOs on how to support victims and work with official authorities.”<sup>142</sup>

IMAN, which in Arabic means “faith”, was carried out in various European countries in partnership with the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF).<sup>143</sup> It should be noted that the CCIF dissolved itself in October 2020, shortly before French authorities issued a decree accusing the organization of, among other things, fomenting “a permanent suspicion of religious persecution likely to stir up hatred, violence or discrimina-

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<sup>140</sup> FEMYSO brochure in possession of the authors.

<sup>141</sup> FEMYSO brochure in possession of the authors.

<sup>142</sup> FEMYSO annual report, 2016; *The Handbook, Islamophobia Monitoring & Action Network (IMAN)*. FEMYSO and CCIF. Retrieved from: <https://es.scribd.com/document/251750388/IMAN-The-handbook> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

tion.”<sup>144</sup> The program was funded by the Open Society Foundation and the European Commission through a EUR 70.187 grant.<sup>145</sup> This is just one of the many grants FEMYSO received from the EU. According to EU records, in 2014 and 2015 FEMYSO “received two operating grants...as a support of civil society cooperation in the field of youth, amounting to EUR 49.881 and EUR 35.000 respectively.”<sup>146</sup> FEMYSO’s annual reports routinely acknowledge for their support the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Open Society Foundation, and the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Jean-Pierre Stroobants, “Dissous en France, le CCIF est soupçonné de vouloir renaître en Belgique,” *Le Monde*, February 17, 2021. Retrieved from: [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/02/17/dissous-en-france-le-ccif-est-soupconne-de-vouloir-renaitre-en-belgique\\_6070293\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/02/17/dissous-en-france-le-ccif-est-soupconne-de-vouloir-renaitre-en-belgique_6070293_3224.html) (Accessed: June 21, 2021)

<sup>145</sup> “Financial support for the Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network (IMAN),” Question for written answer E-007227-15, the European Parliament. Retrieved from: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2015-007227-ASW\\_EN.html?redirect](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2015-007227-ASW_EN.html?redirect) (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> See for example, FEMYSO annual report, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://es.scribd.com/document/260745472/FEMYSO-Annual-Report-2014> (Accessed: June 17, 2021).

# THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

## History

In July 1992, some of the most prominent members of the global Islamist movement met in a castle in the bucolic Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region of France that had been previously purchased by the UOIF, the main organization of the French Brotherhood milieu.<sup>148</sup> Participants included global Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader Yusuf al Qaradawi, the former Supreme Guide of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Abu Fattah Abu Ghudda, UOIF's spiritual guide and former head of the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood Fayçal Mawlawi, Egyptian scholar and head of the Saudi Brotherhood until his death in 1999 Manna' al Qattan, and Sayyid al Darsh, founder of the British Islamic Sharia Council.<sup>149</sup>

The occasion was a three-day fiqh (jurisprudence) seminar devoted to the theme of Muslims in the West in which the prominent scholars presented research documents on the legal foundations governing the life of Muslims in non-Muslim lands.<sup>150</sup> It was a seminal moment in the history of the Brotherhood in Europe. The seminar and the many activities that followed it, in fact, sought to present the Brothers as those who can provide formal religious guidelines to European Muslims trying to reconcile their faith with life in non-Muslim majority societies – arguably, one of the European Brothers' main goals.

The 1992 seminar was part of a larger strategy by the Brothers, which entailed the creation of two entities that are expansions of the FIOE family. One is the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), which was created by FIOE in 1997 and included in its leadership many of the scholars that participated to the 1992 seminar. In fact,

<sup>148</sup> Gerard Wiegers, "Dr Sayyid Mutawalli ad-Darsh's fatwas for Muslims in Britain: the voice of official Islam?" in G. Maclean (ed), *Britain and the Muslim World: historical perspectives*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010, pp. 178-191; Franck Fregosi, "Les Filières Nationales de Formation des Imams en France," in Franck Fregosi (ed.), *La Formation des Cadres Religieux Musulmans en France*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998, pp. 108-113.

<sup>149</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi "On Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities: the Lives of Muslims in Non-Muslim Societies [في فقه الأقليات المسلمة: حياة المسلمين وسط المجتمعات الأخرى]" Dar el Shourouk: Cairo, 2005, pp. 5-6.

<sup>150</sup> The texts under discussion were Mawlawi's book *The Sources of the Sharia regarding the Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims*, 1987, and a text by al Qattan on secondary issues affecting the life of those who settled in the West; Alexandre Vasconcelos Caeiro, "Fatwas for European Muslims: the Minority Fiqh Project and the Integration of Islam in Europe," *Utrecht University Repository* 2011, pp. 60-61.

Qaradawi and Mawlawi would serve respectively as ECFR chairman and vice chairman for twenty years. Ahmed Jaballah and Ounis Gherghah, two UOIF senior members at the time who were also present in the seminar, would also become ECFR members.<sup>151</sup> For more on ECFR, see the following section.

The other organization created by the European Brothers as part of this effort was the European Institute for Human Sciences (IESH, from its French name Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines),<sup>152</sup> which had been inaugurated a few months earlier<sup>153</sup> and had since been located in the castle and adjacent 11 hectares of land near the town of Château-Chinon.<sup>154</sup> Since its foundation, IESH has become the European Brotherhood network's main centre of higher learning.

According to Mahmoud Zouhair, one of the founders of the French Brotherhood milieu and IESH's first director, one of the first dilemmas faced by the founders was "whether IESH should be reserved for the Muslim Brotherhood alone, or should it be run by them in the service of all Muslims?"<sup>155</sup> In the end, Mahmoud acknowledged, they chose the second option and indeed not all teachers and students at IESH are Brotherhood members or sympathisers. But Mahmoud's statement, together with the presence of various participants to the 1992 meeting on the institute's scientific council and the election of Fayçal Mawlawi as the institute's first dean leave little room to interpretation regarding the institute's ideology and connections to the Brotherhood.

IESH's creation by FIOE and UOIF is widely documented. A now removed

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<sup>151</sup> Op. Cit. Gerard Wiegers, "Dr Sayyid Mutawalli ad-Darsh's fatwas for Muslims in Britain: the voice of official Islam?" in G. Maclean (ed), *Britain and the Muslim World: historical perspectives*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010, pp. 178-191.

<sup>152</sup> IESH is sometimes referred to in Arabic as *the European Institute of Islamic Studies* [الإسلامية الكلية الأوروبية للدراسات]. See image for reference: [https://www.lejdc.fr/saint-leger-de-fougeret-58120/actualites/le-sejour-eclair-dans-la-nievre-en-2001-du-jihadiste-thomas-barnouin-recement-arrete-en-syrie\\_12695545/](https://www.lejdc.fr/saint-leger-de-fougeret-58120/actualites/le-sejour-eclair-dans-la-nievre-en-2001-du-jihadiste-thomas-barnouin-recement-arrete-en-syrie_12695545/) (Accessed: May 3, 2021).

<sup>153</sup> Rapport d'Information au nom de la mission d'information sur l'organisation, la place et le financement de l'Islam en France et de ses lieux de culte. Sénat de la République Française. July 5, 2016. Page 404. Retrieved from: <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r15-757/r15-7571.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>154</sup> Franck Fregosi, "Les Filières Nationales de Formation des Imams en France," in Franck Fregosi, ed., *La Formation des Cadres Religieux Musulmans en France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), pp. 108-113.

<sup>155</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019, page 128.

page on IESH's website states that FIOE's leaders "were convinced that it had become necessary to give Islam stable structures that meet the needs of Muslims while taking into account the specificities of the surrounding reality". "It is within this framework that the UOIF, FIOE's representative in France, in association with thinkers, researchers, theologians ..., took the initiative to create in 1990 an association governed by law 1901 named 'European Institute of Human Sciences' (IESH)".<sup>156</sup>

Moreover, FIOE itself confirmed that IESH was one of its outgrowths in a 2020 statement: "After FIOE was established its leaders put all their effort to draft the orientation, policies and objectives that would serve their vision of a European Islam. [...] To contribute to this goal the initiative was to launch a group of specialised institutions, most notably the European Institute for Hu-

man Sciences (1990) and the European Union of Islamic Institutes for Islamic Sciences (2007), the Union of European Institutes for Human Sciences (2007), the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (1996), the European Council for Fatwa and Research (1997), Europe Trust (1997) [...]."<sup>157</sup>

The creation of IESH is the implementation of the Brotherhood's historical focus on education. "A Memorandum on Religious Education", the first pamphlet published by the founder of the Brotherhood Hassan al Banna, outlined the importance of education for the group, a tool whose purpose is to transform students into individuals whose life is guided by the teachings of the Quran and the Sunna.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, one of the main concerns of al Banna, himself a teacher, was to select among the most capable members of the Brother-

<sup>156</sup> About the College, European Institute of Human Sciences. Retrieved from: [https://web.archive.org/web/20030701131320/http://www.eihs.org.uk/pages/about\\_the\\_collage.php](https://web.archive.org/web/20030701131320/http://www.eihs.org.uk/pages/about_the_collage.php) (Accessed: April 29, 2021).

<sup>157</sup> "The Council of European Muslims in a few lines [...] في سطور... في سطور... أوروبا" مجلس مسلمي أوروبا - Council of European Muslims official Facebook page, January 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-council-of-european-muslims/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1/2932358320122416/> Facebook post no longer available; screenshot in possession of the authors.

<sup>158</sup> Johannes J. G. Jansen, "Hasan al-Bannâ's Earliest Pamphlet," Die Welt des Islams New Series, Bd. 32, Nr. 2 (1992), pp. 254-258; Hassan al Banna, Ahmad Sukari and Hamid Askariyya, "A Memorandum on Religious Education [مُنذَرَةٌ فِي التَّعْلِيمِ الدِّينِيِّ]," The Salafi Press: Egypt, 1928, pp. 3-5.

hood those who would become teachers and instruct the new generations.<sup>159</sup>

Over time, IESH expanded its operations beyond Château-Chinon. In 1997, the first British branch was established in an 18th century manor in the rural heart of west Wales,<sup>160</sup> later followed by two additional centres, one in Birmingham in 2007 and one in London in 2009.<sup>161</sup> In 1999, IESH opened what is now its biggest centre in France, in the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, close to UOIF's headquarters. A German branch opened in Frankfurt in 2013 and a Finnish one in Helsinki in 2015. They all form the Union of European Institutes for Human Sciences.<sup>162</sup>

In 2016, after having multiplied by 10 the number of students enrolled since its opening, the Parisian branch began expansion works to renovate and enlarge its facilities, to be culminated with an impressive central building facing the river Seine. Under the name Al Waqf Campus Project and through a solidarity financing tool- or charitable endowment – that allows private donors to individually contribute to the purpose as per their economic possibilities, IESH plans to build a large building to house the facilities of its different departments: 25 classrooms, a conference room, two amphitheatres, a library, a research centre, several research laboratories as well as student accommodations in a separate building. The planned budget amounts to over € 17 million.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ehud Rosen, *"The Muslim Brotherhood's Concept of Education,"* Hudson Institute 2008. Retrieved from: <https://www.hudson.org/research/9881-the-muslim-brotherhood-s-concept-of-education> (Accessed: April 29, 2021).

<sup>160</sup> About the College, European Institute of Human Sciences. Retrieved from: [https://web.archive.org/web/20030701131320/http://www.eihs.org.uk/pages/about\\_the\\_collage.php](https://web.archive.org/web/20030701131320/http://www.eihs.org.uk/pages/about_the_collage.php) (Accessed: April 29, 2021).

<sup>161</sup> European Institute of Human Sciences, UK Register of Charities, Charity Commission for England and Wales. Retrieved from: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/3976500/charity-overview> (Accessed: April 29, 2021).

<sup>162</sup> Identity of the association registered in the French National Directory of Associations (RNA number: W931008471) under the name "Union des Instituts Européens des Sciences Humaines et Islamiques" (UIESHI) federating the different branches of IESH.

<sup>163</sup> Ahmed Jaballah vous présente le projet waqf campus IESH. IESH de Paris Students' Desk Official YouTube Channel. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttP-UikRIYc> (Accessed: April 30, 2021).





Picture 8: *Al Waqf Campus Project central building.*<sup>164</sup>

## Governance

An analysis of IESH's governing structure helps to confirm not only its close relationship with FIOE/CEM and other pan-European Brotherhood structures, but also the connections – or at least ideological affinity – of its members and staff to Muslim Brotherhood milieus. German Brotherhood milieu leader Ibrahim el Zayat, for example, was part of IESH's initial board of trustees.<sup>165</sup> Not surprisingly, a good number of key figures from the French Brotherhood

milieu have occupied top positions at IESH: the aforementioned Fayçal Mawlawi was the institute's first dean; Ahmed Jaballah was among the founding members and was later appointed dean of the Paris campus;<sup>166</sup> Abdallah ben Mansour – FIOE president in 2014 and UOIF founding member – also worked as a teacher at IESH.

<sup>164</sup> UOIF/CEM brochure advertising the project. Authors' personal archive

<sup>165</sup> Bio of the speakers of the conference "Muslims of Europe in the New Millenium", organised by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists and the Islamic cultural Centre of Ireland, September 9-10, 2000. Retrieved from: [www.amssuk.com/docs/pdf/AMSSUK%20Europe%20Conf%20Sep2000%20-%20booklet.pdf](http://www.amssuk.com/docs/pdf/AMSSUK%20Europe%20Conf%20Sep2000%20-%20booklet.pdf) (Accessed: May 14, 2021).

<sup>166</sup> Équipe de l'IESH de Paris: Ahmed Jaballah. Retrieved from: <https://ieshdeparis.fr/professeurs/ahmed-jaballah-4/> (Accessed: April 30, 2021).

Other key individuals in IESH's staff also hold key positions not only in different pan-European Brotherhood structures in Europe, but also in national branches federated under FIOE/CEM, further revealing the tight web of connections of the movement in Europe. Khadem al Rawi, Ahmed al Rawi's late brother, was the director of the British branch of IESH, which also includes ECFR president Abdullah al Juday<sup>167</sup> and Salem al Sheikhi, also an ECFR member and a senior Libyan Muslim Brotherhood leader, among its teachers.<sup>168</sup> As for the German branch, the dean of the institute is Khaled Hanafi – also ECFR's Assistant Secretary-General and chairman of the Council of Imams and Scholars in Germany (RIGD) –<sup>169</sup> while Taha Amer, also member of the RIGD and imam at the Islamic Centre in Frankfurt,<sup>170</sup> serves as head of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences.<sup>171</sup>

The composition of IESH's Scientific Council helps to further clarify the ideology behind the project. It includes among its members the ubiquitous al Qaradawi – responsible for the initial design of the educational programs and syllabus<sup>172</sup> – as the most visible face. Exactly as in ECFR, al Qaradawi has been accompanied in this role by some of his most loyal partners: Fayçal Mawlawi and the historical leader of the Brotherhood in Sudan Issam al Bachir.

In sum, IESH's Brotherhood leanings are evident not just from its history as a FIOE offshoot and from the statements of some of the key leaders behind it, but also from an analysis of its leadership, which, as seen, is composed of some of the top leaders of the movement in the Middle East and in Europe. It is therefore not surprising that many IESH stu-

<sup>167</sup> "Dr. Abdullah al Judai elected Chairman of the Council succeeding al Qaradawi [للمجلس خلفاً للعلامة القرضاوي انتخاب د. عبدالله الجديع رئيساً]," ECFR's Official site. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2018/11/11/%d8%b1%d8%a6%d9%8a%d8%b3%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ac%d9%84%d8%b3-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%88%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a-%d9%84%d9%84%d8%a5%d9%81%d8%aa%d8%a7%d8%a1/> (Accessed: April 3, 2021).

<sup>168</sup> Staff - European Institute of Human Sciences. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110317165134/http://www.eihs.org.uk/staff/> (Accessed: May 4, 2021)

<sup>169</sup> Dekanat - EIHW - Wissem auf Akademischem Niveau. Retrieved from: <https://eihw.de/institut/dekanat/> (Accessed: May 3, 2021).

<sup>170</sup> RIGD Vorstand. Der Rat der Imame und Gelehrten in Deutschland. Retrieved from: <https://rigd.wordpress.com/vorstand/> (Accessed: May 3, 2021).

<sup>171</sup> Fakultätsleitung Islamische Wissenschaften - EIHW. Retrieved from: <https://eihw.de/islam/leitung/> (Accessed: May 3, 2021).

<sup>172</sup> Op. Cit.

dents often display their sympathy for the Brotherhood in group photos that are regularly posted on social media (see below for two examples). It should

nonetheless be clarified that not every person that works at or has studied at IESH is necessarily a Brotherhood member or sympathiser.



Picture 9: *Students from IESH Château-Chinon accompanied by Said Bouhdifi, Head of the Holy Quran Department.*<sup>173</sup>



Picture 10: *Students from IESH Château-Chinon.*<sup>174</sup>

<sup>173</sup> IESH Château-Chinon official Facebook page, May 20, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/leshChateauChinonOfficiel/photos/880801188623294> (Accessed: May 3, 2021).

<sup>174</sup> Comité des étudiants de l'IESH de Château-Chinon official Facebook page, October 11, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/Comit%C3%A9-des-%C3%A9tudiants-de-lIESH-de-Ch%C3%A2teau-Chinon-519828878097015/photos/529314160481820> (Accessed: May 3, 2021).

## Activities, curriculum and scrutiny from authorities

IESH's stated goal is that of providing an Islamic education adapted to European realities to imams, teachers and researchers.<sup>175</sup> IESH's curriculum, identical in all its branches, is divided into fields of specialization: Arabic language, Quran memorization, Quranic applied sciences and theological (sharia) studies, which can be studied in Arabic or in the local language. IESH also presents itself as a think tank, even though its publication output appears to be quite limited.

IESH's activities and curriculum have faced substantial scrutiny in various countries. Already in 1992, when IESH opened its first campus in Château-Chinon, then French State Secretary of Integration Kofi Yamgnane stated that "the ideological affinity of certain backers of this institute with the Muslim Brotherhood and its funding by countries far removed from French republican values raise questions about the ability of this establishment to

spread the values of secularism and the separation of church and state".<sup>176</sup>

According to a study conducted by the prestigious French School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS) in 2010 that analyses IESH and three other Muslim institutes of higher education, these entities "do not offer syllabi that combine religious sciences and human sciences [...] They have become 'open universities' which seek to provide religious training without this being accompanied by a professional project". "The survey," the study concludes, "reveals a discrepancy between the stated intentions to train imams and religious executives and the expectations of students who seek more information about Islam and deepen their knowledge of their religion".<sup>177</sup>

More recently, in 2020, Laurent Nunez, Secretary of State to the Minister of the Interior gave the following assessment of IESH when questioned by a Member of Parliament in the French National As-

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<sup>175</sup> Présentation: Mission et fonction de l'I.E.S.H. Former official site of the Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20041205071147/http://www.iesh.org/Html/historique.htm> (Accessed: April 27, 2021).

<sup>176</sup> Rone Tempest, "A Place for Islam in Europe: Nearly 25 million Muslims now live on the Continent. An institute in rural France seeks to offer them a center of learning--and becomes a center of controversy," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1992. Retrieved from: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-02-08-mn-1367-story.html> (Accessed: April 30, 2021).

<sup>177</sup> "L'enseignement de l'Islam dans les écoles coraniques les institutions de formation islamique et les écoles privées". Institut d'Etudes de l'Islam et des Sociétés du Monde Musulman (IISMM) Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), page 7. Retrieved from: <http://www.disons.fr/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/RAPPORT-ENSEIGNEMENT-ISLAMIQUE-final.pdf> (Accessed: August 27, 2021).

sembly: “The Interministerial Mission of Vigilance and Combat against Sectarian Aberrations (MIVILUDES [authors’s comment: by its French acronym]) has been questioned twice on IESH. [...] The education provided at this establishment and the changes observed in some of the students by their relatives have prompted a call for the greatest vigilance, and I can confirm that this is what we are doing”. The Secretary of State continued: “The control of private educational establishments is a priority, in particular for what regards those establishments which have attracted the attention of the police services due to their links with the radical Islamist movement.”<sup>178</sup>

IESH’s activities have also concerned authorities in Germany. The Office for

the Protection of the Constitution of the State of Hesse described the German IESH branch in the following terms: “In 2012 the EIHW<sup>179</sup> was opened in Frankfurt am Main following the model of the European Institutes for Human Sciences in France and Great Britain and in 2013 it started functioning. It is registered as an association and has the support of the RIGD and the IGD.<sup>180</sup> It serves as a training facility to spread the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and as an academy for IGD and Muslim Brotherhood officials.”<sup>181</sup> Other states of the Federal Republic of Germany, among them Saxony<sup>182</sup> and Baden-Württemberg,<sup>183</sup> follow the same line and have made similar assessments of the ideology and the ties to the Brotherhood of the German branch of IESH.

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<sup>178</sup> Question orale sans débat N°942 de Mme Constance Le Grip, 15ème législature, Assemblée Nationale Française, February 5, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q/15/15-942QOSD.htm> (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

<sup>179</sup> German acronym for the European Institute for Human Sciences.

<sup>180</sup> The Council of Imams and Scholars in Germany (RIGD), a German institution similar to ECFR organizationally and ideologically close to the IGD, and the Islamic Community of Germany (IGD, now DMG) the main representative of the Brotherhood in Germany. See for reference: Aladdin Sarhan, “Die Muslimbruderschaft in Deutschland,” *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*. Retrieved from: <https://www.kas.de/de/web/islamismus/die-muslimbruderschaft-in-deutschland> (Accessed: May 5, 2021)

<sup>181</sup> Verfassungsschutz Hessen, Bericht 2017, Hessisches Ministerium des Innern und für Sport, page 132 Retrieved from: [https://www.hessen.de/sites/default/files/media/hmdis/verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2017.pdf](https://www.hessen.de/sites/default/files/media/hmdis/verfassungsschutzbericht_2017.pdf) (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

<sup>182</sup> Sächsischer Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017. Staatsministerium des Innern, Freistaat Sachsen. Retrieved from: [https://www.verfassungsschutz.sachsen.de/download/VSB2017\\_webversion.pdf](https://www.verfassungsschutz.sachsen.de/download/VSB2017_webversion.pdf) (Accessed: May 4, 2021)

<sup>183</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht Baden-Württemberg 2020. Ministerium für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Migration. Retrieved from: [https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/publikationen/20200615\\_Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2019.pdf](https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/publikationen/20200615_Verfassungsschutzbericht_2019.pdf) (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

In the UK, the University of Wales, Lampeter, used to partner with the Welsh branch of IESH but in 2005 it discontinued the agreement.<sup>184</sup>

IESH has also attracted negative attention because of the several individuals associated to the institute who have been involved in terrorist activities. While their number is statistically small in relation to IESH' student body, the dynamic cannot be overlooked. Cases of IESH students involved in jihadist activities include Michael Adebowale, one of two men who murdered Lee Rigby in London in 2013, who had previously studied in IESH Wales;<sup>185</sup> Redha Hame, a former student of IESH Château-Chinon who was commissioned by Islamic State's senior operative Abdelhamid Abaaoud to carry out an attack during a rock concert;<sup>186</sup> and Ines Madani, who

was sentenced to 30 years in jail for having placed a car loaded with six gas cylinders near Notre-Dame Cathedral.<sup>187</sup>

## Financing

The sustainment of the IESH project, with all its facilities throughout Europe, is an expensive endeavour. Mahmoud Zouhair, first director of IESH Château-Chinon, shed some light on the funding during the first steps of the project in the early 90s: "initially, 80-90% [of the budget needed to open the facilities] was covered by private donations from Gulf countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Back then, these states were not in conflict with each other as they are today. We started with a budget of 1,500,000 francs [approximately €228,000] paid by the benefactors of

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<sup>184</sup> Polly Curtis, "University cuts off controversial Islamic college," *The Guardian*, August 11, 2005. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2005/aug/11/highereducation.religion> Accessed: April 30, 2021).

<sup>185</sup> "Lee Rigby killer Michael Adebowale studied in west Wales," *BBC News*, November 25, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-mid-wales-30196206> (Accessed: April 30, 2021).

<sup>186</sup> Jean-Michel Décugis, "A Saint-Denis, «l'école des imams» dans le viseur de la justice," *Le Parisien*, July 29, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/a-saint-denis-l-ecole-des-imams-dans-le-viseur-de-la-justice-29-07-2020-8360604.php> (Accessed: April 30, 2021).

<sup>187</sup> "Procès du commando de Notre-Dame: Inès Madani fait appel," *Le Parisien*, October 22, 2019. Retrieved from: [www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/proces-du-commando-de-notre-dame-ines-madani-fait-appel-22-10-2019-8177820.php](http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/proces-du-commando-de-notre-dame-ines-madani-fait-appel-22-10-2019-8177820.php) (Accessed: April 30, 2021).

the Gulf. The rest was provided by student tuition fees”.<sup>188</sup>

That donations from the Gulf played a crucial role well after the 1990s was confirmed by Larabi Becheri, deputy director of IESH’s Château-Chinon branch, during a 2016 French Senate hearing on the financing of Islam in France. “A full board student costs between € 5,500 and € 6,000 per year. Students pay € 3,500 euros and the rest is covered by the Institute,” Becheri stated. “On the other hand, to balance the accounts we are obligated to resort to donations. Only 10% of the donations we receive come from state charities, the rest comes from private donors of foreign origin, especially from the Gulf”.<sup>189</sup>

In recent years, due to the geopolitical changes that have led most Arab Gulf countries to stop their support of the Brotherhood, the bulk of the foreign funding comes from Qatar.<sup>190</sup> A 2007 incident provides a glimpse into some of the dynamic of Qatari funding.<sup>191</sup> Back then, in fact, Mohamed Karmous, former FIOE vice president and former IESH treasurer and president of the Union of European Institutes of Human Sciences, was arrested by French customs officials while crossing the border between Switzerland and France with a suitcase with € 50,000 in cash for IESH.<sup>192</sup> The money, Karmous declared, had been given to him by Ahmed al Hammadi, Qatar Charity’s Ghaith proselytizing program supervisor.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l’émirat finance l’islam de France et d’Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019, page 129; see also, page 511-513. Nathalie Goulet & M. André Reichardt, “De l’Islam en France à un Islam de France, établir la transparence et lever les ambiguïtés,” Rapport n° 757 (2015-2016), Sénat de la République Française, July 5, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r15-757/r15-757-annexe.pdf> (Accessed: June 22, 2021).

<sup>189</sup> Comptes Rendus de la Mi Organisation, Place et Financement de l’Islam en France, Audition de M. Larabi Becheri, directeur-adjoint de l’Institut européen des sciences humaines de Château-Chinon, French Senate, April 27, 2016. Retrieved from: [www.senat.fr/compte-rendu-commissions/20160425/mi\\_islam.html](http://www.senat.fr/compte-rendu-commissions/20160425/mi_islam.html) (Accessed: May 3, 2021)

<sup>190</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l’émirat finance l’islam de France et d’Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019, page 131.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Antoine Peillon, “*Résistance!*”, Paris: Éditions Le Seuil, 2016, page 27.

<sup>193</sup> Qatar Charity Launches “Ghaith” (Rain) Initiative for Islamic Projects Worldwide. Qatar Charity press room. Retrieved from: <https://www.qcharity.org/en/qa/news/details/2400-qatar-charity-launches> (Accessed: May 4, 2021).



According to the research carried out by French journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot in their book *Qatar Papers: Comment l'Émirat Finance l'Islam de France et d'Europe*, the funds with which Qatar Charity financed IESH only increased over time. Various documents published in the book show a total balance of more than € 1.5M until 2014.<sup>194</sup> Social media also shows the presence of Qatar Charity's Ahmed al Hammadi at IESH Château-Chinon's facilities in 2017.<sup>195</sup> In addition, other projects in IESH's orbit have also been funded by Qatar Charity. For example, Boubaker el Hadj Amor, former IESH president and former UOIF vice president and treasurer, succeeded in channelling € 1.2M of Qatar Charity funds<sup>196</sup> for his mosque in Poitiers.<sup>197</sup>



Picture 11: IESH poster promoting Qatar Charity's Ahmed al Hammadi's visit to Château-Chinon (2017).<sup>198</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019, pp. 130-135.

<sup>195</sup> See for reference: Séminaire d'Été, with the participation of Sheikh Ahmad al Hammadi, Official Facebook Page of IESH Château-Chinon. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/leshChateauChinonOfficiel/photos/1426816910688383> and <https://www.facebook.com/leshChateauChinonOfficiel/photos/a.468279876542096/1446947642008643/> (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

<sup>196</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019, pp. 139-148.

<sup>197</sup> Ghaith, TV program, chapter 21. [غيث - الحلقة الحادية والعشرون], aired July 8, 2015, Al Rayyan TV. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWjWMbu3Y3c&list=PLNI-cJa63vBKO45DxBO3xGBNkwPmjuyq&index=9> (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

<sup>198</sup> IESH Château-Chinon Official Facebook Page, July 5, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/leshChateauChinonOfficiel/photos/a.468279876542096/1426816910688383/> (Accessed: August 27, 2021).



Moreover, Europe Trust, one of the other organizations that constitute the core of the Brotherhood's pan-European structure, has also contributed to the expansion of IESH. Europe Trust filings, in fact, reveal donations to the IESH branches of Château-Chinon, Paris and Wales.<sup>199</sup> Finally, fundraising campaigns through Islamic crowdfunding tools are a common practice for IESH, as the institute and prominent individuals associated with it make frequent calls to fellow Muslims to support the projects through their extensive presence on different social media platforms.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Education, Europe Trust. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200205140605/http://www.euopetrust.eu.com/services/education/> (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

<sup>200</sup> See for reference: “*Objectif 150 000€ atteint!*” IESH de Paris official YouTube channel, January 18, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePWTvYrBWO8&t=42s> (Accessed: May 5, 2021); “*Save the Institute,*” IESH Château-Chinon official YouTube channel, July 15, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMkJxelyrJ4> (Accessed: May 5, 2021); “*IESH Château-Chinon official YouTube channel,*” May 24, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3oGcLJqZCM&t=51s> (Accessed: May 5, 2021).

## THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR FATWA AND RESEARCH

The European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) is a jurisprudential body composed of senior clerics and scholars from various European and non-European countries currently based in Dublin. Established in London in 1997 by FIOE, its origins date back to a series of fiqh (jurisprudence) scholarly seminars on the legal foundations governing the life of Muslims in Europe organised on IESH's premises in 1992 and 1994.<sup>201</sup> The founding of ECFR therefore constitutes the creation of an institutional framework on the part of the European Broth-

erhood network aimed at officialising fiqh in Europe, establishing a platform for the dissemination of jurisprudential collective opinions.<sup>202</sup>

ECFR has set for itself the ambitious goal of becoming a key reference for European [Sunnī] Muslims by issuing collective fatwas that meet the perceived needs of the community and regulate their interactions with European societies in light of the provisions and purposes of sharia law.<sup>203</sup> ECFR's jurisprudence is aimed at guiding Muslims through a "program of perfect life for the individual, the family, society and the state," an expression closely reminiscent of Hassan al Banna's multi-pronged program.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi "On Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities: the Lives of Muslims in Non-Muslim Societies [في فقه الأقليات المسلمة: حياة المسلمين وسط المجتمعات الأخرى]," Dar el Shourouk: Cairo, 2005, pp. 5-6. See also Gerard Wiegers (2010), "Dr Sayyid Mutawalli ad-Darsh's fatwas for Muslims in Britain: the voice of official Islam?" in G. Maclean (ed), *Britain and the Muslim World: historical perspectives*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Pres, pp. 178-191.

<sup>202</sup> Alexandre Caeiro, "The making of the fatwa: The production of Islamic legal expertise in Europe," in: *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 155, July-September 2011, pp. 81-100.

<sup>203</sup> Objectives, 2nd Article of the Internal Statutes of the European Council for Fatwa and Research. The European Council for Fatwa and Research. Retrieved from: [https://www.e-cfr.org/%d8%a7%9d%84%9d%86%8d%8b%8d%8a%7d%9d%85-%d8%a7%9d%84%8d%a3%8d%b3%8d%8a%7d%8b%3d%9d%8a/?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=221dcae1c5ad4c2a1ff77abc8243c6db323b36c7-1620981849-0-AfaYtMrw-aUIHY0Q4kGiUi\\_GnssovQP6GWea9Uvvyj0N4B1DBBXo0yMjxZrRhA8SnQijp111jQS\\_rie\\_Q41827tON4xMQJb7MuB-7yKlBjdLkYaRmCcc6rE5gMacfPRmkHaKKoMO0ESnaDdNclCoMjmdo5cql1b5TCapHGuhL18QbL0DGPmO82IV-CzfQuQVZVRedFcOXHkrv4IUmol3157fPkQhfNMbOppmfqR8xilBhsOA71LjyJYWtpOZ5cjSJZU7\\_g64AcE41xz fLLqMNV-WHw0zYEWIe0\\_A6iqcw2Hp2ruTyQE7Anzl5-McGe\\_dr5XhvAm13uQnLtnRfzMOMQ3y6mPL8fXT\\_mTxSR5HFaOZCNFb-F39ZqqddnRH9w9Y\\_YuZokdouOk5M3nMlMkYczkOM5ZU DO7SynsLYj\\_1H0ZPoWsl58ulM7d7j5N5lmpkOQDDiV4M3Vz2glbY088v2\\_KYQkZrYveyj9VZiTFQaSi6i5Zw4sbAHZ8VyVeKhKX3iA](https://www.e-cfr.org/%d8%a7%9d%84%9d%86%8d%8b%8d%8a%7d%9d%85-%d8%a7%9d%84%8d%a3%8d%b3%8d%8a%7d%8b%3d%9d%8a/?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=221dcae1c5ad4c2a1ff77abc8243c6db323b36c7-1620981849-0-AfaYtMrw-aUIHY0Q4kGiUi_GnssovQP6GWea9Uvvyj0N4B1DBBXo0yMjxZrRhA8SnQijp111jQS_rie_Q41827tON4xMQJb7MuB-7yKlBjdLkYaRmCcc6rE5gMacfPRmkHaKKoMO0ESnaDdNclCoMjmdo5cql1b5TCapHGuhL18QbL0DGPmO82IV-CzfQuQVZVRedFcOXHkrv4IUmol3157fPkQhfNMbOppmfqR8xilBhsOA71LjyJYWtpOZ5cjSJZU7_g64AcE41xz fLLqMNV-WHw0zYEWIe0_A6iqcw2Hp2ruTyQE7Anzl5-McGe_dr5XhvAm13uQnLtnRfzMOMQ3y6mPL8fXT_mTxSR5HFaOZCNFb-F39ZqqddnRH9w9Y_YuZokdouOk5M3nMlMkYczkOM5ZU DO7SynsLYj_1H0ZPoWsl58ulM7d7j5N5lmpkOQDDiV4M3Vz2glbY088v2_KYQkZrYveyj9VZiTFQaSi6i5Zw4sbAHZ8VyVeKhKX3iA) (Accessed: May 10, 2021); Alexandre Caeiro, "La normativité islami que à l'épreuve de l'Occident: le cas du Conseil européen de la fatwa et de la recherche", Paris: École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, DEA, 2002, page 16.

<sup>204</sup> Closing remarks at the Council session in Stockholm, July 2003. As quoted in Sylvain Besson, "La Conquete de l'Occident," Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2005, page 124.

Its inaugural meeting, attended by fifteen scholars at the initiative of FIOE, saw the approval of a draft constitution and the formation of a General Assembly and a General Secretariat.<sup>205</sup> The second session, held in 1998, decreed to set up two additional ECFR branches, one in France (Paris) and one in Great Britain (Manchester),<sup>206</sup> aimed at reducing the workload of ordinary council sessions, which were set to take place once a year. ECFR also set up permanent and temporary committees, among them a Committee for Research Studies, Translation and Publishing, a Fatwa Committee, a Committee for Planning and Information and a Committee for Dialogue and Communication.<sup>207</sup>

## Ideology: in the footsteps of Qaradawi

Since its inception, ECFR's ideological approach and jurisprudential methodology have been largely shaped by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the prominent scholar and spiritual leader of the global Muslim Brotherhood. Qaradawi's interest in the situation of Muslims in the West, and in particular in Europe, dates back to at least 1960, when he published the well-known book "The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam."<sup>208</sup> In essence, ECFR has arguably become the jurisprudential institution in which two of Qaradawi's trademark creations – the ethos of *wasatiyya*<sup>209</sup> and the doctrine of *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* – have found the right plat-

<sup>205</sup> "Fatwas of the European Council for Fatwa and Research," *Islamic Inc. Publishing and Distribution*, Cairo 2002.

<sup>206</sup> Final Statement of the second Session of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, October 11, 1998. Retrieved from: [https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2017/11/04/second-session-european-council-fatwa-research/?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=3a204df3a2415930bdb9ce0e8f74b7f40ae63043-1620226726-0-AQK4t-ND0c-cUF-JzCQqkgRcY9oTrTs86HW78GppPKmtJXZqYIUPQsUiya6YjVix\\_OEaq9TDtgSnQnCaix2JiMq1\\_z0HiyNKr0W5LYgBQt0qsEajGdBQZOfovXZB9FrsO4pAgb09kEdUk4rGHLuAkazUIRinoG04QrbgTA9nbquApPto4eVfXMydOcrRuB6GMgGgxrLva2VeNEJd1kN0EbrNjr4ed2ripHMZoHtgHMGlfrl2-eMzl4Xg4bbn3NRyG27RMBIP9X1N3PKdBd3bnBvkYIEY5AAnuKoH993tg6iqBiTy\\_wzsmFVuE1NrEpYX2RH9qhaYVLNhLDatftu8j9loxfcp9t0svmokcR\\_B1-uVd7X7v7i5YemtPAznWShOesZJ11M7iKeAda3l0NUS7qf0zGao4YA19LePU59VjgCIMADpFpm0A2c7puDqO1UwHOfCsB8h6u83s7oHilwCg41vfZy4w62conFJ4gZkHNeE](https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2017/11/04/second-session-european-council-fatwa-research/?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=3a204df3a2415930bdb9ce0e8f74b7f40ae63043-1620226726-0-AQK4t-ND0c-cUF-JzCQqkgRcY9oTrTs86HW78GppPKmtJXZqYIUPQsUiya6YjVix_OEaq9TDtgSnQnCaix2JiMq1_z0HiyNKr0W5LYgBQt0qsEajGdBQZOfovXZB9FrsO4pAgb09kEdUk4rGHLuAkazUIRinoG04QrbgTA9nbquApPto4eVfXMydOcrRuB6GMgGgxrLva2VeNEJd1kN0EbrNjr4ed2ripHMZoHtgHMGlfrl2-eMzl4Xg4bbn3NRyG27RMBIP9X1N3PKdBd3bnBvkYIEY5AAnuKoH993tg6iqBiTy_wzsmFVuE1NrEpYX2RH9qhaYVLNhLDatftu8j9loxfcp9t0svmokcR_B1-uVd7X7v7i5YemtPAznWShOesZJ11M7iKeAda3l0NUS7qf0zGao4YA19LePU59VjgCIMADpFpm0A2c7puDqO1UwHOfCsB8h6u83s7oHilwCg41vfZy4w62conFJ4gZkHNeE) (Accessed: May 5, 2021).

<sup>207</sup> Internal regulations of the Council after amendments of the twenty-first session in Dublin (2011), The European Council for Fatwa and Research. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%a6%d8%ad%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%ae%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%a9/> (Accessed: May 10, 2021).

<sup>208</sup> Zahalka, Iyad, *Shari'a in the Modern Era. In Shari'a in the Modern Era: Muslim Minorities Jurisprudence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

<sup>209</sup> Bettina Gräf, "The Concept of *wasatiyya* in the Work of Yusuf al-Qaradawi", in: Bettina Gräf and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (eds.), *The Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, London: Hurst, 2009, pp. 213-238.

form to grow deeper roots and become an integral part of a strategy for disseminating his views in Europe.

Fiqh al aqalliyāt – the jurisprudence of [Muslim] minorities – is the legal/religious doctrine which asserts that Muslim minorities deserve a specific legal framework to address their unique religious needs when living in non-Muslim majority societies.<sup>210</sup> It was developed to assist Muslim minorities in the West in practicing their faith in the 1990s by two prominent religious figures: al Qaradawi and the late Taha Jabir al Alwani, one of the founders of the Muslim World League and a key figure of the Muslim Brotherhood network in the United States.<sup>211</sup>

In the document that lays the hermeneutical bases of the theory, Foundational

Views on Fiqh al Aqalliyāt,<sup>212</sup> Alwani describes how the presence of large Muslim communities living outside dar al Islam (the traditional abode of Islam) justifies the creation of a new system of rules and regulations. However, what his text outlines is not only a classical jurisprudential system based on the issue of fatwas on what is licit and what is not, but a new framework for political and social interactions based on religion whose final aim is to provide Muslim minorities with a tool for increasing their internal social bonds and enhancing their political influence within society.<sup>213</sup> As for Qaradawi, in his work on fiqh al aqalliyāt published in 2005, he places significant importance on da'wah (proselytism), stating that Muslims are not only allowed to settle in the West but mandated to spread Islam's message to the world.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>210</sup> Tauseef Ahmad Parray, "The Legal Methodology of 'Fiqh al-Aqalliyat' and its Critics: An Analytical Study", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2012, 32:1, pp. 88-107.

<sup>211</sup> Shammai Fisherman, "Fiqh al-Aqalliyat: A Legal Theory for Muslim Minorities", Research Monographs on the Muslim World, Series No 1, Paper No 2, October 2006, *Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World, Hudson Institute, Washington, DC*. Retrieved from: [https://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1148/20061018\\_monographfishman2.pdf](https://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1148/20061018_monographfishman2.pdf) (Accessed: May 8, 2021).

<sup>212</sup> Dr. Taha Jabir al Alwani, "Foundational Views on Fiqh al Aqalliyāt [نظرات تأسيسية في فقه الأقليات]", *Islam Online*, 2001. Retrieved from: <https://islamonline.net/archive/%d9%86%d8%b8%d9%80%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%aa%d8%a3%d8%b3%d9%8a%d8%b3%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%81%d9%82%d9%87-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%82%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa> (Accessed: May 8, 2021).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi "On Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities: the Lives of Muslims in Non-Muslim Societies [في فقه الأقليات المسلمة: حياة المسلمين وسط المجتمعات الأخرى]", DarelShourouk: Cairo, 2005, pp. 32-33.

The other ECFR key feature with Qaradawi's imprint is the adoption of *wasatiyya*, often translated as "the middle way," as a main component of its core ideology. Although used in the past by renowned scholars,<sup>215</sup> the term *wasatiyya* was recovered and reinvigorated by Qaradawi in the 1970s to become arguably his greatest intellectual contribution. Based on the Quranic concept *ummatah wasatan* [Quran 2:143], meaning "a just community", Qaradawi himself defined *wasatiyya* as the "the trend of moderation [...] the current that expresses the realities of Islam and which embodies the nation's hopes and aspirations".<sup>216</sup>

In substance, *wasatiyya* is, in Qaradawi's view, a middle ground between two excesses in Islam: extremism and laicism. The scholar condemns the literalist interpretations of Islam and extremist actions of jihadist groups as well as the secular ways of living the faith. He therefore suggests a middle way that, according to him, combines the princi-

ples of the *salaf* – the first three generations of Muslims – with contemporary requirements; strikes the right balance between Islamic permanent principles and changing conditions of time; couples religious duties with social realities and presents Islam as an all-encompassing civilizational mission.<sup>217</sup> By 1997, the same year ECFR was established, Qaradawi already argued that *wasatiyya* was "the most widespread current as it all-Islamic world and has been embraced Justice and Development Party [...]".<sup>218</sup>

Since its first steps, ECFR has not only served to promote Qaradawi's ideology but has also sought to establish itself as the exclusive authority for European Muslims by developing a new corpus of adapted jurisprudence. In doing so, it seeks to exploit the dearth of intellectual Muslim leadership and structured Islamic clergy in Europe, presenting itself as the most qualified entity to influence the religious and socio-political behaviour of European Muslims.

<sup>215</sup> Among others by al Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyya.

<sup>216</sup> *Wasatiyya* in Islam. Sharia and Life TV episode aired October 26, 1997. Al Jazeera. Transcription from the now defunct link in Al Jazeera's official website can be found here. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130124030713/https://www.aljazeera.net/home/print/0353e88a-286d-4266-82c6-6094179ea26d/f4478517-8a76-4242-9c2f-38ff3d21fece> (Accessed: May 19, 2021).

<sup>217</sup> Yussuf Qaradawi, "The Islamic Awakening from Adolescence to Adulthood [الصحوۃ الاسلامیة من المراهقة إلى الرشد]," Dar el Shourouk: Cairo, 2002, pp. 147-149.

<sup>218</sup> *Wasatiyya* in Islam. Sharia and Life TV episode aired October 26, 1997. Al Jazeera. Transcription from the now defunct link in Al Jazeera's official website can be found here. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130124030713/https://www.aljazeera.net/home/print/0353e88a-286d-4266-82c6-6094179ea26d/f4478517-8a76-4242-9c2f-38ff3d21fece> (Accessed: May 19, 2021).

It should also be noted that ECFR encompasses scholars from different backgrounds and schools of thought, from Maliki to Hanbali and even Salafi.<sup>219</sup> The explanation for this inclusiveness is to be found in the pragmatism of the Brotherhood in seeking to build an authoritative body which covers as much as possible the heterogeneity of the Muslim community in Europe while trying to attain control of the development of contemporary Islamic thought in Europe.<sup>220</sup>

## Governance

ECFR's leadership is headed by its president, who since 2018 has been former ECFR Secretary General<sup>222</sup> and IESH teacher Abdullah al Judai, who succeeded Qaradawi, ECFR head since its founding; two vice presidents, former UOIF president and FIOE vice president Ahmed Jaballah, and Suhaib Hasan, Islamic judge and trustee at the Islamic Sharia Council in the United Kingdom; and a secretary general, Hussein Halawa, imam of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, which hosts the headquarters of ECFR.<sup>223</sup>

In its bylaws, approved during the founding meeting in London in 1997, ECFR agreed on the criteria in order to become a full member of the Council: (1) to hold an appropriate legal qualification, university level or equivalent; (2) to



Picture 12: ECFR meeting hosted by UOIF in Paris in July 2002.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>219</sup> This cross-*maḥab* methodological approach and the heterogeneous composition of the roster of members are not ECFR's only peculiarities. Apart from the classical sources of Islamic jurisprudence upon which the vast majority of scholars agree –Quran, prophetic tradition, analogical deduction (*qiyās*) and consensus (*ijmā*)– ECFR incorporates other sources of legislation into its methodology that could come into play if it serves the interests of the community: namely independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), the consideration of reasonableness (*istihsān*), public utility (*maṣlaḥa mursala*) and customary tradition (*urf*).

<sup>220</sup> Lena Larsen (2018), “How Muftis Think: Islamic Legal Thought and Muslim Women in Western Europe,” *Brill: Studies in Islamic Law and Society*, Volume: 44, pp. 91-93.

<sup>221</sup> authors' personal archives

<sup>222</sup> Abdullah al Judai is one of ECFR's founders and served as Secretary General from 1998 to 2000.

<sup>223</sup> “The European Council for Fatwa and Research: Renewed leadership, renewed hopes,” The European Council for Fatwa and Research, December 16, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2018/12/16/european-council-fatwa-research/> (Accessed: May 10, 2021).

be of good conduct and commitment to the regulations and manners of Islamic sharia; (3) to be resident of the European continent; (4) to enjoy wide knowledge both of Islamic jurisprudence and the current environment and situation and (5) to be approved by the absolute majority of members.<sup>224</sup> The document, later amended, also states that the members of the Council may select a number of scholars who do not normally reside in Europe but who otherwise fulfil the conditions of membership, although those members must not constitute more than 25 % of the total members of the Council at any one time.

In reality, these criteria have rarely – if ever – been met. An analysis of ECFR member lists shows that, over the years, between 30 and 50% of the members resided outside of Europe. If we take

the current composition of the Council, only little more than half of them live in Europe. Considering that representation of European countries with significant Muslim presence is to be taken into consideration by ECFR, it is noteworthy that it currently does not have members from Kosovo, Albania or Bulgaria. Furthermore, only two of its current members –the German convert Muhammad Saddiq and Bosnia’s Grand Mufti Husein Kavazović– were actually born in Europe.<sup>225</sup> In addition, even though ECFR’s leadership changed in 2018, another striking aspect of the composition of the Council is that Qaradawi and Mawlawi, long-time serving as president and vice-president of the Council,<sup>226</sup> resided in Qatar and Lebanon respectively while in office. In substance, the European nature of ECFR is much more diluted than one would think.

<sup>224</sup> Fourth article: Membership Statutes of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, approved at the founding meeting of the Council in London [النظام الأساسي للمجلس الأوروبي للإفتاء والبحوث، [أقر في اللقاء التأسيسي للمجلس المنعقد في لندن 29-30، 1997. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/>/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b8%d8%a7%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%b3%d9%8a/ (Accessed: May 8, 2021).

<sup>225</sup> List of members of the European Council for Fatwa and Research. Retrieved from: [<sup>226</sup> Fayçal Mawlawi stayed in office until his death in 2011.](https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/category/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B9%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1/?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=143eb44aaf83bf8bb809d2d3bff8b44c5b76e10f-1620824867-0-AXvG9Uhp28EJzDHAMyqX9Shqkm2UGh7rIIBXMGJ9NLGoZTw5-QvhV8k3u3xRS7SSkTF0sg6mrjd8dIK5Jp5dH2B0IcOk34y5ox3_Q7AYnnD98H61_CydfSXPLVJsi3dhP8IRwa-c2NBUbVhpEySe4fJ8Hr4GV037-6vIwXsdqwS2h9c6Jyk4z-M-fAP02TZsoBYbR_Qcbh1qjioKECDm6bxcQ0l-iQ1I0ISXYhO34OznWjdCpRsAbkqXfjPooQ1Wj44dkhL4iePlzckuGM2q3JDsYzOPQO8cg6tu6d7CDdHp0b-jfMt0pe5wEk8ZVgjs_Ob2_baU0Utm_68S6wNWhclCQ6TifcY5NAiNCUqrQVHTQ0gF0dV6wdclknCiCYbB06IUv99MGfFw (Accessed: 8 May, 2021).</a></p>
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Picture 13: ECFR's 26th ordinary session, held in Istanbul, October 2016. <sup>227</sup>

Moreover, while including scholars from different schools of thought, ECFR is a body dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood's global network. As Tunisian Islamist leader and ECFR member Rached Ghannouchi pointed out, "some members belong to the Brothers, some others do not. What matters is the ideology, not the movement".<sup>228</sup> As a matter of fact, ECFR's member list features a number of individuals with close ties to the Brotherhood.

For example, all six ECFR French-based members are part of the UOIF/MF orbit and hold senior positions at IESH. Other members include former FIOE president Ahmed al Rawi and Khaled Hanafy, IESH teacher and prominent member of the German Brotherhood milieu. Other ECFR members occupy senior positions within different Brotherhood branches in North Africa: the abovementioned Rached Ghannouchi, the historical leader of the Brotherhood in Sudan Issam al

<sup>227</sup> Official Facebook page of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, May 9, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/ecfrorg/photos/1139580636184460> (Accessed: October 18, 2021)  
<sup>228</sup> Official Facebook page of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, May 9, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/ecfrorg/photos/1139580636184460> (Accessed: October 18, 2021)

<sup>228</sup> Xavier Ternisien, *Les Frères Musulmans*, Paris: Fayard, 2005, pp. 197-198.



Bashir, the Libyan Brotherhood senior member Salem Sheikhi and Ennahdha's founding member and former UOIF cadre Abdelmajid Najar. In addition, the Council also counts several high-profile scholars from the Arab Gulf among its members, most of them holding positions very close to the Ikhwān, such as Qaradawi's right hand Ali Qaradaghi, Jasser Auda, and Salman Ouda.<sup>229</sup>

Linguistical matters further point to ECFR being less European than what its bylaws might suggest. The Council's meetings take place in Arabic, which is not surprising given both its composition and the nature and particularities of Islamic jurisprudence. However, ECFR's bylaws pledges to translate the organization's fatwas, research and studies into European languages.<sup>230</sup> At the beginning of the project, in 2002, it was Anas al Tikriti, the son of the leader

of Iraq's Muslim Brotherhood and a key leader of the UK Brotherhood milieu,<sup>231</sup> who was in charge of the translation of the first fatwa collections published by the Council.<sup>232</sup> However, ECFR has not kept its linguistic commitment, and except for occasional English –and very seldom French– translations, most of its fatwas appear on its website only in Arabic.

### Activities

ECFR's initial funding came from the Maktoum Foundation, in particular from the late Sheikh Rashid Hamdan al Maktoum, Deputy Prime Minister of Dubai, who also financed the construction of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Dublin –which hosts ECFR headquarters– in the late 1990s.<sup>233</sup> The Dubai-based foundation also covered the expenses related to the organization of the different sessions of the Council

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<sup>229</sup> Members of the Board of Trustees [أعضاء مجلس الأمناء], The International Union of Muslim Scholars Official Website. Retrieved from: <https://iumsonline.org/ar/Members.aspx> (Accessed: May 19, 2021).

<sup>230</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>231</sup> James Brandon and Raffaello Pantucci, "UK Islamists and the Arab Uprisings," The Hudson Institute, June 22, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.hudson.org/research/9902-uk-islamists-and-the-arab-uprisings> (Accessed: May 12, 2021).

<sup>232</sup> First and Second Collections of Fatwas. European Council for Fatwa and Research. Cairo: Al Falah Foundation, 2002.

<sup>233</sup> Alexandre Caeiro, "The making of the fatwa, the production of Islamic legal expertise in Europe," Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions 155, July-September 2011, pp. 81-100. Retrieved from: <https://journals.openedition.org/assr/23312?lang=en> (Accessed: May 10, 2021).

outside Dublin until its 22nd ordinary session in 2012.<sup>234</sup>

ECFR does not operate all-year round: apart from its offices and publishing related costs, it does not have permanent work teams or an organised archive.<sup>235</sup> The Council holds ordinary sessions at least once a year in its headquarters or in different locations in other cities of the continent<sup>236</sup>(Istanbul is where it met the most).<sup>237</sup>

The Council devotes a large part of its efforts to disseminating its most important resolutions through different channels: its website, its scientific journal<sup>238</sup> and, until a few years ago, FIOE's now defunct al Europiya monthly magazine and IslamOnline. Furthermore, due to Qaradawi's large transnational appeal, some parts of the ordinary sessions

of the Council and interviews with its members are broadcasted live on Al Jazeera and other satellite TV and online channels. The Council's meetings have also drawn attention from mainstream media such as the BBC, The Guardian, Le Monde, etc.<sup>239</sup>

Yet, assessing the influence of ECFR is no easy feat. A recent German study showed that its fatwas had virtually no influence on the work of local imams and even the very existence of the body was unknown to the vast majority of worshippers of the German mosques surveyed.<sup>240</sup> Of course, different studies in other locales could yield different results.

In order to bridge the gap with younger generations and expand its reach, during Ramadan of 2019 ECFR

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<sup>234</sup> See for reference, Final Statement, 22nd Ordinary Session of The European Council for Fatwa and Research, Istanbul, Turkey, July 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2017/11/04/22nd-ordinary-session-european-council-fatwa-research/> (Accessed: May 5, 2021)

<sup>235</sup> Zahalka, Iyad, "Shari'a in the Modern Era", in: *Shari'a in the Modern Era: Muslim Minorities Jurisprudence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

<sup>236</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>237</sup> Istanbul has hosted 8 ECFR ordinary sessions since 2006: in 2006, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

<sup>238</sup> For reference see the European Council for Fatwa and Research scientific journal archive. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/category/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ac%d9%84%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%85%d9%8a%d8%a9/> (Accessed: May 14, 2021).

<sup>239</sup> Op. Cit. 161-162.

<sup>240</sup> Uriya Shavit and Fabian Spengler, "Does the European Council for Fatwa and Research Matter? The Case of Muslims in Dortmund, Germany," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* (2017), 18(4), pp. 363-382.

launched its own mobile App.<sup>241</sup> Introduced to the public at UOIF/MF's Le Bourget annual gathering, the application has been surrounded with controversy. Google Play UK – the official app store operated and developed by Google – initially removed the App from its directory<sup>242</sup> due to the anti-Semitic rhetoric found in the introductory letter signed by Qaradawi,<sup>243</sup> which included passages like “Muslims became a disgrace to Islam and have acted similarly to the Jews who decreed it was correct to steal.”<sup>244</sup>

Subsequently, the security services of several German states have issued warnings against the App, not only linking its content to the Muslim Brotherhood,<sup>245</sup> but also deeming it “a building block in the radicalization process.”<sup>246</sup>

Criticism of ECFR has come from both outside and inside the Council. The respected Sunni scholar Muhammad Said Ramadan al Bouti, dean of the Faculty of Sharia at the University of Damascus and preacher at the Umayyad Mosque, went as far as to describe fiqh al aqalliyyāt

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<sup>241</sup> “*The European Council for Fatwa and Research: Renewed leadership, renewed hopes,*” The European Council for Fatwa and Research, December 16, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2018/12/16/european-council-fatwa-research/> (Accessed: May 10, 2021).

<sup>242</sup> Mark Tighe, “Muslim app banned for containing anti-semitic rhetoric,” *The Sunday Times*, May 12, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/muslim-app-banned-for-containing-anti-semitic-rhetoric-lwp6s0r7p> (Accessed: May 17, 2021).

<sup>243</sup> The same introductory letter can be found in ECFR's *First Collection of Fatwas*. See for reference pp.3-5. Retrieved from: <https://boiv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ECFR-Fatawa-Collection-01-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>244</sup> Mark Bridge, “Apple offers Muslim Brotherhood ‘radicalisation app,’” *The Times*, June 25, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/apple-sells-muslim-brotherhood-radicalisation-app-d2t9cl369> (Accessed: May 17, 2021).

<sup>245</sup> Verfassungsschutz in Hessen, Bericht 2019, Hessisches Ministerium des Innern und für Sport, pp 241-242. Retrieved from: [https://lfv.hessen.de/sites/lfv.hessen.de/files/LfV\\_Bericht19\\_100521\\_screen.pdf](https://lfv.hessen.de/sites/lfv.hessen.de/files/LfV_Bericht19_100521_screen.pdf) (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

<sup>246</sup> Martin Lutz and Uwe Müller, “Die dubiose Fatwa-App, mit der Apple und Google kein Problem haben,” *Die Welt*, June 2, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.welt.de/politik/article194537493/Verfassungsschutz-warnt-Die-dubiose-Fatwa-App-mit-der-Apple-und-Google-kein-Problem-haben.html> (Accessed: May 17, 2021)

as “an Islamic dressing on the basis of pure interest [...], a plan to fragment Islam”.<sup>247</sup> Tahar Mahdi, one of ECFR’s founding members, denounced that “the Council has nothing of European, it is oriental and monopolised by (sic) the traditionalists”.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Muhammad Said Ramadan al Bouti. The text of the month, June 2001. Dr. Muhammad Said Ramadan al Bouti Official Website. Retrieved from: [https://web.archive.org/web/20020305231815/http://www.bouti.com/ulamaa/bouti/bouti\\_monthly15.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20020305231815/http://www.bouti.com/ulamaa/bouti/bouti_monthly15.htm) (Accessed: May 15, 2021)

<sup>248</sup> Stéphanie Le Bars, “Le Conseil européen de la fatwa critiqué pour son traditionalisme,” *Le Monde*, May 15, 2007. Retrieved from: [https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2007/05/15/le-conseil-europeen-de-la-fatwa-critique-pour-son-traditionalisme\\_910206\\_3214.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2007/05/15/le-conseil-europeen-de-la-fatwa-critique-pour-son-traditionalisme_910206_3214.html) (Accessed: May 12, 2021).

# EUROPE TRUST

## History

Of the five organizations that constitute the core of the Brotherhood's pan-European structure, the Europe Trust—sometimes referred to as the European Trust—is the least public and advertised. This is arguably due to its core function, which by nature has to be discreet: funding the other parts of the structure. Europe Trust is, in fact, the financial arm of the pan-European network, founded and headed by its top leaders and regularly funding its various entities.

According to a now deleted FIOE statement, the Europe Trust was created in 1997 (although other FIOE documents indicate that it was founded in

1996)<sup>249</sup> as part of FIOE's goal of specialization.<sup>250</sup> FIOE and Europe Trust are two formally separate and independent entities,<sup>251</sup> but there is little doubt, reviewing FIOE's own records and literature, that Europe Trust is an emanation of FIOE, funded by the same individuals and aimed at funding the activities of FIOE's network.

The first indication of the close connection is represented by the contact information. Before moving its headquarters to Brussels in May 2007, in its publications and on its website FIOE provided two addresses—both of them Post Office Boxes. In *Al Europiya*, FIOE's official magazine, it provided PO Box 5735 in Markfield. But on some of its official releases it gave PO Box MAR005 in Markfield. PO Box MAR005 is also the PO Box currently

<sup>249</sup> See <http://europetrust.eu.com/images/ET%20review%202005.pdf> (Accessed: December 11, 2020).

<sup>250</sup> "مسلمي أوروبا [مجلس مسلمي أوروبا... في سطور...]" مجلس - Council of European Muslims official Facebook page, January 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-council-of-european-muslims/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1/2932358320122416/> Facebook post no longer available; screenshot in possession of the authors.

<sup>251</sup> In a 2015 interview with the *London Times*, Ahmed al Rawi declared that the statement, posted on FIOE's website, which declared Europe Trust "was established in order to support and promote our work by providing stable financial reserves" was "a mistake." See Andrew Norfolk, "The money trail: from student digs to 'motherhood of Islamism,'" *The Times*, July 10, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-money-trail-from-student-digs-to-motherhood-of-islamism-pjt5qj8g98l> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

used by the Europe Trust, clearly showing the overlap between the two.<sup>252</sup> The phone number provided by FIOE during its early days (the UK number +44-1530-245919) also corresponds to a line used by Europe Trust.<sup>253</sup>

Moreover, FIOE flaunted the relationship in its early literature, such as a 2004 statement on its website that included the European Trust in its list of “central organisations” and stated that “the Trust was established in order to support and promote our work by providing stable financial reserves. The Trust has managed to take successful strides towards investing its funds and examining possible venues of high yield return in an attempt to ensure the funding of various projects and organisations in Europe... Funding Islamic work in Europe and promoting the stability of Islamic organisations is one of the major challenges that we face. For this purpose, the FIOE has strived to establish a strong trust,

which will help fund the work throughout Europe.”<sup>254</sup> Ayman Ali, the former FIOE leader who headed various Brotherhood-linked organizations in Austria before serving in the government of Mohammed Mursi in Egypt, called Europe Trust “part of our organization” and, in 2015, FIOE’s president Samir Falah “confirmed that FIOE had helped in setting up the organization.”<sup>255</sup>

## Governance

An analysis of Europe Trust’s governance clearly confirms the close relationship with FIOE, as multiple individuals simultaneously served on the board of both entities. Moreover, it shows that, unlike FIOE and FEMYSO, whose leadership includes some individuals who are not part of the European Brotherhood’s inner circle, virtually all those who have occupied managerial positions inside Europe Trust are either some of the most senior members of the movement

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<sup>252</sup> <http://www.europetrust.eu.com/contact/>; Europe Trust, Registry of Social Services & Welfare Organisations, Markfield. Retrieved from: <https://markfield.cylex-uk.co.uk/company/europetrust-23016743.html> (Accessed: June 2021).

<sup>253</sup> Europe Trust, Markfield Local Business. Retrieved from: <http://markfield-eng.thelocalbusiness.co.uk/europe-trust.html/> (Accessed: January 10, 2021).

<sup>254</sup> Steve Merley, *The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe*, report by Steve Merley for the NEFA Foundation, October 1, 2008. Retrieved from: <https://www.globalmbwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/The-Federation-of-Islamic-Organizations-in-Europe.pdf> (Accessed: August 21, 2021).

<sup>255</sup> Live Dialogue with Veteran Muslim Activist Dr. Ayman Ali, “Eastern Europe’s Muslims: Prospects and Challenges,” *Islam Online*, February 28, 2005; see also Khalil Charles, “British Muslim Charity to Challenge Baseless Times Newspaper Article,” MAB website, October 28, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.mabonline.net/muslim-charity-to-challenge-times-article/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

in Europe or important personalities linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab Gulf—historically the region where the Brotherhood raised most of its fund. In substance, the Europe Trust, is a discrete, top level financial institution founded and run by the *éminences grises* of the European Brotherhood network and a few prominent activists from the Gulf to fund the milieu’s activities.

An analysis of the background of all the 26 individuals that, based on an analysis of all publicly available Europe Trust records, clearly shows these dynamics.

Six individuals who, over time, occupied managerial positions at Europe Trust, also occupied top positions at FIOE at some point. They are, arguably, some of the most influential leaders of the pan-European network:

- Ahmed al Rawi: Chairman of Europe Trust until 2006, was also FIOE’s President until 2007, where he also was in charge of financing.
- Fouad Alaoui: Director at Europe Trust, was in charge of the “Da’wah to Islam” portfolio in the early days of FIOE, also served UOIF’s Secretary General and in other top positions of French Brotherhood milieu organizations.
- Ayman Ali: Director at Europe Trust, also served as Secretary General of

FIOE and in top positions of Austrian Brotherhood milieu organizations before moving back to Egypt and serving in the Mursi government.

- Ibrahim el Zayat: Director at Europe Trust, was in charge of the “Youth and Student” portfolio in the early days of FIOE, also served as President of FE-MYSO and in top positions of German Brotherhood milieu organizations.
- Ahmed Jaballah: Director at Europe Trust, was in charge of the “Da’wah to Islam” portfolio in the early days of FIOE, also served as vice-president of ECFR, director of IESH’s Paris campus, and in top positions of French Brotherhood milieu organizations.
- Ali Abu Shwaima: Director at Europe Trust, also served as FIOE Head of Da’wah, editor of FIOE’s official magazine *al Europiya* and in top positions of Italian Brotherhood milieu organizations.

More than a dozen additional individuals who have occupied managerial positions at Europe Trust, while not having the same ubiquity and pan-European stature of the six abovementioned *éminences grises*, play an important role in the Brotherhood milieus of their individual countries. Among them, an important cluster is British, as several directors of the UK-based Europe Trust also occupied top positions in the Muslim Welfare House (MWH) and the Muslim

Association of Britain (MAB), which are both FIOE members. Among them Abdel Shaheed el Ashhal (Project manager at MAB and Manager at MWH)<sup>256</sup>; Tahir Aydarus (Head teacher at MWH)<sup>257</sup>; Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed (Director of MWH)<sup>258</sup>; and Riyadh al Rawi (Director at the MAB<sup>259</sup> and MWH).<sup>260</sup>

Other Europe Trust officials are prominent leaders of local Brotherhood milieus in their individual European countries. Among them:

- Imad al Naddaf Yalouk, founding member and former president of the Valencian Islamic Council Federation (Great Mosque of Valencia), FIOE's former Spanish associate.

- Nooh al Kaddo, Chairman of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI) in Clonskeagh, Dublin, which is also ECFR headquarters.
- Abdul Jabbar Koubaisy, Secretary General of the Polish Muslim League, FIOE's member organization from Poland.
- Ismail Kady, Chairman of Arraid (2010-2018), FIOE's member organization from Ukraine.<sup>261</sup>
- Mohamed Ibrahim, President of the Alleanza Islamica d'Italia and Member of UCOII, both FIOE member organizations from Italy.

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<sup>256</sup> Abdel Shaheed El-Ashhal, Companies House, UK. Retrieved from: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/officers/YbZT08ZMg4xX0eNMubOXd8BMX38/appointments> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>257</sup> See for reference: <http://mwht.org.uk/schools/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>258</sup> Muslim Welfare House, Companies House UK. Retrieved from: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/04041294/officers> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>259</sup> Companies & Appointments, Mr. Riyadh al-Rawi, Company Check. Retrieved from: <https://company-check.co.uk/director/914859218/RIYADH--AL-RAWI/companies> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>260</sup> About Mr. Riyadh al-Rawi, Company Check. Retrieved from: <https://companycheck.co.uk/director/914859218/MR-RIYADH-AL-RAWI/summary>

<sup>261</sup> "Ismail Kady was re-elected as Chairman of AUASO 'Alraid,'" Info. Department of the AUASO "Alraid", January 15, 2010. Retrieved from: <https://www.araidd.org/en/node/112> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).



Moreover, the rest are Middle East based individuals with close ties to the Brotherhood:

- Nurettin Gazi Mizirli (Turkey/Syria): AKP member, member of the Turkish Islamist Business Association (MÜSİAD). Participated in financing flotillas to Gaza.<sup>262</sup>
- Khaled Ali Al Mulla (Kuwait): Works at the Kuwait Finance House, strategy and corporate affairs.
- Saleh Bagalagel (Saudi Arabia). Financial control manager at Royal Commission for Al-Ula.<sup>263</sup> Extensive experience in private sector and Saudi owned companies.<sup>264</sup>
- Samir Alumran (Saudi Arabia): Scholar. Works at Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education. Bought the Catalan Islamic Cultural Centre in Barcelona

(belonging to LIDCOE, FIOE's affiliate in Spain).

- Abdullatif al Hajeri (Kuwait) was the founder and president of Lajnat al-Dawa al-Islamiya (LDI),<sup>265</sup> a Muslim non-governmental organization based in Kuwait with alleged ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and which, in 2004, the US government designated as a terrorist entity.<sup>266</sup>

## Activities

Europe Trust operates as an investment company, focusing mostly on real estate. According to information provided to the UK Charity Commission, the profits from its property investments are “used to make grants to organisations that further its objectives,” which trustees describe as “the advancement

<sup>262</sup> Steven G. Merley, “Turkey, the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and the Gaza Flotilla,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2011. Retrieved from: [https://www.jcpa.org/text/Turkey\\_Muslim\\_Brotherhood.pdf](https://www.jcpa.org/text/Turkey_Muslim_Brotherhood.pdf) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>263</sup> See for reference: <https://www.rcu.gov.sa/en>

<sup>264</sup> Saleh Bagalagel LinkedIn profile. Retrieved from: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/saleh-bagalagel-msc-4b146816/?originalSubdomain=sa> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>265</sup> “Abdullatif al Hajeri... and he left the care of 60,000 orphans away from the noise of the media [عبد اللطيف الهاجري.. ورحل من كفل 60 ألف يتيم بعيدا عن ضجيج الإعلام],” Pioneers of philanthropy, International Center for Research & Studies. Retrieved from: <https://medadcenter.com/cv/1301> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>266</sup> Additional Background Information on Charities Designated Under Executive Order 13224, United States Department of the Treasury. Retrieved from: [https://web.archive.org/web/20090110115352/https://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/key-issues/protecting/charities\\_execorder\\_13224-i.shtml](https://web.archive.org/web/20090110115352/https://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/key-issues/protecting/charities_execorder_13224-i.shtml) (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

of the Islamic religion.”<sup>267</sup>

An analysis of its corporate records shows that Europe Trust funds projects, mostly real estate acquisitions to build mosques or community centres, for organizations of the pan-European Brotherhood network. Recipients of Europe Trust funding include, in fact, IESH (both in France and Wales), the Muslim Association of Britain, and Inssan in Berlin. Also in Germany, the building that serves as the headquarters of DMG, the country’s Brotherhood milieu main organisation, is owned by Europe Trust.<sup>268</sup> As of 31st December 2019, the end date of the last audited financial statement made public and signed by the board of trustees, Europe Trust had a total of £ 8,329,708 in funds.<sup>269</sup>

Over the years, Europe Trust also spawned a series of subsidiaries and related entities with varying degrees of connectivity to it: from technically independent but related through addresses, board members and activities to completely subordinated. One of them, sharing the Trust’s address in Leicester and various board members (including Ahmed al Rawi and Nooh al Kaddo) was Europe Trust Property Enterprises Limited, established in 2004 and dissolved in 2017.<sup>270</sup> Similarly, a real estate company called Europe Trust Property Enterprises SARL, was established in Montpellier, France, in 2008. French corporate records show that the company is headed by Salah Bouabdallah, a board member of Europe Trust in the UK.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Andrew Norfolk, “The money trail: from student digs to ‘mothership of Islamism,’” *The Times*, July 10, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-money-trail-from-student-digs-to-mothership-of-islamism-pjt5qj8g9l> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>268</sup> Information from the Berlin Grundbuchauszug.

<sup>269</sup> Europe Trust Strategic Report, Report of the Trustees and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended: 31 December, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search?p\\_p\\_id=uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=2&p\\_p\\_state=maximized&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_resource\\_id=%2Faccounts-resource&p\\_p\\_cacheability=cacheLevelPage&\\_uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet\\_fileName=0001103290\\_AC\\_20191231\\_E\\_C.pdf&\\_uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet\\_objectiveId=A10340861&\\_uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet\\_priv\\_r\\_p\\_mvcRenderCommandName=%2Ffull-print&\\_uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet\\_priv\\_r\\_p\\_organisationNumber=4007138](https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search?p_p_id=uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet&p_p_lifecycle=2&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_p_resource_id=%2Faccounts-resource&p_p_cacheability=cacheLevelPage&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_fileName=0001103290_AC_20191231_E_C.pdf&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_objectiveId=A10340861&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_priv_r_p_mvcRenderCommandName=%2Ffull-print&_uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_priv_r_p_organisationNumber=4007138) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>270</sup> Europe Trust Property Enterprises Limited, Company House UK. Retrieved from: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/05302540/officers> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>271</sup> French corporate records in possession of the authors.

Particularly interesting among the entities that, to a varying degree, fall into the orbit of Europe Trust, is Europe Trust Nederland (Stichting Europe Trust Nederland, ETN). ETN is technically an independent organization, incorporated in the Dutch city of Zaandam in 2006. But its bylaws make ETN's subordinate relationship to Europe Trust apparent, as the latter can appoint three board members (which cannot be removed if not by Europe Trust itself); needs to approve in writing any change to ETN's bylaws; and, in case of dissolution of ETN (a decision that also has to be approved by the Europe Trust), all its remaining assets are transferred to Europe Trust.<sup>272</sup> Following a pattern common throughout Europe, ETN is run by some of the most prominent activists of the Dutch Brotherhood milieu, owns some of the largest Islamic centres in the Netherlands and has received ample funding from Brotherhood-linked donors in the Arab Gulf.<sup>273</sup>

Similar is the dynamic in Belgium. In 2009, a non-profit organisation (association sans but lucratif) called Europe Trust was established in Liege. Filings with Belgian authorities indicate that the entity's main address was "MR005, Markfield."<sup>274</sup> The address, as seen, is Europe's Trust main and was used by FIOE in its early years. Records show that the only representative for the Belgian entity is Monsif Chatar. Chatar happens to be one of the co-founders, in 1997, of the Ligue Islamique Interculturelle De Belgique (LIIB), the Belgian FIOE member.<sup>275</sup> Confirming the full circle dynamic, LIIB's bylaws indicate that, upon its dissolution, all the organization's assets would be devolved to Europe Trust.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Oprichting of the Stichting Europe Trust Nederland, notarised document, October 24, 2006.

<sup>273</sup> "(On)zichtbare invloed verslag parlementaire ondervragingscommissie naar ongewenste beïnvloeding uit onvrije landen," Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, June 25, 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/verslag\\_pocob.pdf](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/verslag_pocob.pdf) (Accessed: June 20, 2021);

<sup>274</sup> Belgian corporate records in possession of the authors.

<sup>275</sup> Belgian corporate records in possession of the authors.

<sup>276</sup> Liste des Membres - Modifications aux Statuts - Renouvellement du Conseil d'Administration Nominations, Annexes du Moniteur Belge, Service Public Fédéral, February 27, 2006. Retrieved from: [www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv\\_pdf/2006/02/27/06041047.pdf](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/02/27/06041047.pdf) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

## ISLAMIC RELIEF

Founded in 1984 in Birmingham, Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) is a global aid giant with, according to its website, “over 100 offices in 40 countries worldwide.”<sup>277</sup> It has partnership agreements with entities like the UNHCR, the World Food Program, and the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department and receives funding from various Western governments and highly respected aid agencies.

It has, at the same time, been the target of accusations of support of terrorism and connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. It has been designated as a terrorist organization by the government of the United Arab Emirates and banned from operating on their territories by the governments of Bangladesh and Israel. And also some European governments have leveraged accusations, including the German government, which, in November 2020, announced it had stopped funding IRW and its German branch because of its “significant connections to the Mus-

lim Brotherhood or related organisations.”<sup>278</sup>

IRW staunchly denies these accusations, pointing out the fact that its budgets are certified by top auditing agencies and claiming that allegations of links to extremism and to the Brotherhood are “damaging, defamatory and false.” “Islamic Relief,” states the organization’s website, “is a purely humanitarian organisation, which categorically has no ties to any political group.”<sup>279</sup>

Assessing the terrorism accusations is a complex task that is beyond the scope of this report. As for allegations regarding links to the Muslim Brotherhood, the problem is, as for most entities analysed throughout this report, a matter of terminology. IRW is arguably technically correct in saying that it is an independent organization with no formal connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. But it is, at the same time, also demonstrable by a preponderance of evidence that many of the individuals who founded and manage the organization do have undeniable links to the global network of the

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<sup>277</sup> Our History, From emergency relief to sustainable development. Islamic Relief UK Official Site. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/about-us/history/> (Accessed: Mars 28, 2021).

<sup>278</sup> “Zuwendungen an ‘Islamic Relief Deutschland,’” German Parliament, December 3, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/811522-811522> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

<sup>279</sup> Response to Allegations of Links to Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic Relief Official Site, April 18, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/response-to-allegations-of-links-to-muslim-brotherhood/> (Accessed: Mars 28, 2021).

Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, it is also easily provable that IRW has inextricable connections with Brotherhood networks in most countries in which it operates.

Limiting the analysis to the European context, it is fair to say that IRW is the charity of choice of the European Brotherhood network. IRW has its own history and structure, which are different from those of the five pan-European entities led by FIOE so far analysed. But the level of connectivity with the European Brotherhood network is extremely strong and can be seen on three, overlapping levels:

1. In the several European countries in which a local branch of Islamic Relief operates, it is consistently run by individuals who are among the most prominent members of the local Brotherhood milieu or their close associates.
2. Both in European countries in which a formal branch of IRW exists and those in which it does not, entities of the local Brotherhood milieu regularly organise fundraising events for IRW.
3. In both European countries in which a formal branch of IRW exists and in those in which it does not, entities of the local Brotherhood milieu regularly promote IRW's activities and campaigns at their events, in their litera-

ture, and on their website and social media accounts.

In substance, as it will be herewith analysed, IRW has a history and governance that clearly shows strong connections to the global network of the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, at the European level, most countries' local and the pan-European Brotherhood milieu are deeply connected to and strongly promote IRW. The two facts combined not only reinforce the assessment that IRW, while not being technically affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, as the organization correctly states, has strong Brotherhood connections but also that a local European entity's connectivity to IRW is an indication (although not a certain proof) of its linkage to the Brotherhood milieu.

### **History and governance**

IRW was established in 1984 by four medical students from the University of Birmingham "in response to the famine in Africa."<sup>280</sup> The main founder, Dr. Hany el Banna, was born in Cairo in 1950 and has always denied any relation to the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al Banna. But, he stated in a 2004 interview, admiringly: "in Egypt, you don't hear of Hassan al Banna, you grow up with him. He was a phenomenon, just like Nelson

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<sup>280</sup> "Taking smile to the world," Interview with Hany el Banna. *Emel Magazine*, May/June 2004. Retrieved from: [https://www.emel.com/article?id=&a\\_id=1568](https://www.emel.com/article?id=&a_id=1568) (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

Mandela and Muhammad Ali are. His presence could be felt everywhere even though his name dare not be uttered openly.”<sup>281</sup> Hany el Banna added that the Brotherhood founder used to pray at the same mosque where his father gave sermons and that one “could breathe al Banna’s teachings in the air. He was held in so much awe and respect.”<sup>282</sup>

After arriving in the UK in 1977 to study medicine, Hany el Banna said that he began reading the works of Brotherhood ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb (which he calls “a visionary”) and began running an Islamic study group.<sup>283</sup> He also became a member of the Executive Committee (1985/86) of FOSIS (Federation of Student Islamic Societies), which is currently the UK member of FEMYSO and has historically been the Brotherhood-linked stu-

dent organization in the country.<sup>284</sup>

If one could argue that Hany el Banna’s professed admiration for top Brotherhood ideologues such as Hassan al Banna and Sayyid Qutb and his leadership position in a Brotherhood-linked entity like FOSIS do not necessarily prove his membership, or even his proximity to the Brotherhood, a different assessment should be made for another IRW co-founder, Dr. Essam el Haddad.<sup>285</sup> El Haddad hails from a wealthy family in Egypt, and several of his closest relatives were members of the Brotherhood.<sup>286</sup> In 2012, when still serving as chair of IRW’s board of trustees, El Haddad was appointed as an advisor on foreign affairs to then newly elected Egyptian president Mohammed Mursi (El Haddad immediately resigned from his position at IRW).<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> About Islamic Relief. Retrieved from: <https://www.charityjob.co.uk/recruiter/islamic-relief/15736> (Accessed: June 13, 2021).

<sup>286</sup> Noora al Habsi, (2020). “Finance Network of Muslim Brotherhood in the West: Forms and Manifestation”. *TRENDS Research & Advisory*. Retrieved from: <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/finance-network-of-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-west-forms-and-manifestation/> (Accessed: April 5, 2021)

<sup>287</sup> Islamic Relief letter to Congress, July 19, 2018. Retrieved from: <http://irusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018.7.19-IRUSA-Congressional-Response-to-MEF-Cover-Letter-FINAL.docx.pdf> (Accessed: January 29, 2021); See also; Misleading claims about Islamic Relief in media coverage of El-Haddad’s court session, Facebook post by the official page for office of Assistant to President of Egypt on Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, December 6, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/Foreign.Relations.President.Asst.Egy/posts/misleading-claims-about-islamic-relief-in-media-coverage-of-el-haddads-court-ses/1715161668508250/> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

Indicating how entrenched the El Haddad family is in the Egyptian Brotherhood's inner circles, Essam's son Gehad, who grew up between Egypt and the United Kingdom, served as a senior adviser to the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party's Foreign Affairs Committee and as the Brotherhood's media spokesman in 2013.<sup>288</sup> Both Essam and Gehad were arrested after the fall of the Mursi regime and are still, at the time of writing, detained in Egyptian prisons. After 2013, Essam's younger son, Abdullah, became one of the main spokespeople for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in London.<sup>289</sup>

It is also noteworthy that serving as Chair of IRW's Board of Trustees for several years throughout the 2010s was Ibrahim el Zayat.<sup>290</sup> Described by German authorities as the "spider in the web of Islamist organizations", El Zayat has served in leadership positions of several

German Muslim organizations. German authorities identify as being close to the Brotherhood and of various pan-European Brotherhood entities (board member of FIOE, president of FEMYSO, board member of Europe Trust).<sup>291</sup>

While the stories of Al Banna, El Haddad and El Zayat are illustrative, it is, at the same time, unquestionable that not everybody who holds governing or managerial positions within IRW is linked to the Brotherhood or even holds pro-Brotherhood/Islamist views. Yet this undeniable fact does not necessarily negate IRW's Brotherhood's linkages. This complicated dynamic is succinctly explained by Kamal Helbawy, a towering figure within contemporary Islamism.<sup>292</sup> A Brotherhood member since his youth in Egypt in the 1950s, Helbawy played a key role in the creation of European networks, having served as director of Saudi-based funding organization

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<sup>288</sup> Biography, Free Haddad Campaign. <https://www.freehaddad.org/gehad-biography/> (Accessed: January 31, 2021); "Brotherhood spokesman Gehad al-Haddad held in Egypt," BBC News, September 17, 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24132046> (Accessed: March 30, 2021).

<sup>289</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom," Program on Extremism, George Washington University. December 2015. <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/ff/downloads/MB%20in%20the%20UK.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>290</sup> IRW annual report, 2013. Page 5. Retrieved from: [https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRW\\_AR2013\\_2-3.pdf](https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRW_AR2013_2-3.pdf) (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>291</sup> Uta Rasche, "Spinne im Netz der Muslime in Deutschland: Die Macht des Ibrahim El Zayat." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007; Andrea Brandt, "Wendiger Weltmann," *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2008; Helmut Frangenberg and Detlef Schmalenberg, "El-Zayat, der Herr der Moscheen," *Kölnischer Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 20, 2009.

<sup>292</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

WAMY, co-founder of British entities like MAB and the Muslim Council of Britain, and director of the only official representation of the Muslim Brotherhood in London in the mid-1990s (an office closed after only a few years, according to Helbawy, due to the discomfort of many members of the Brotherhood to have such a formal presence).<sup>293</sup> He also served for years as a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Shura Council.

In order to explain how the Brotherhood in Europe operates, Helbawy adopts a tripartite framework, based on different degrees of connectivity to the Brotherhood, similar to the one adopted in this report. Helbawy, in fact, argues that the “pure Brothers” – the highly skilled and devoted individuals who are sworn members of the organization (whether they have publicly disclosed their affiliation or not) – represent a relatively small group at the heart of the much larger machine that is the Brotherhood in Europe broadly conceived.

The way this small clique punches above their weight, according to Helbawy, is by controlling a series of satellite entities in which the majority of people are not linked to the movement. “There are other organizations,” explains Helbawy, “especially in the field of welfare and relief organizations, that are run by [the] Muslim Brotherhood . . . and can involve Muslim Brothers and non-Muslim Brothers.” As example, Helbawy points to IRW. “IRW’s leadership,” explains Helbawy, “are Brotherhood, but the people who contact [donors] for donations are not necessarily even Muslims; they can be Christians, and Jews, and whatever.” Essentially, Helbawy argues that organizations like IRW are founded and run at the senior leadership level by Brotherhood members.<sup>294</sup>

Nevertheless, maintains Helbawy, most of the people who work for IRW, even in senior positions, are not members of the Brotherhood and in most cases have no idea of –and would even strongly and sincerely deny—IRW’s links to the

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<sup>293</sup> Interview with Kamal Helbawy, as in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

<sup>294</sup> For more on the relationship between Islamic Relief and the Brotherhood, focusing mostly on its early days, see Marie Juul Petersen, *For humanity or for the umma? Ideologies of aid in four transnational Muslim NGOs*, University of Copenhagen, 2011, page 169.



Brotherhood.<sup>295</sup> Their relatively small numbers, according to Helbawy, do not diminish the Brothers' domination of these organizations, as they will always maintain sway by controlling the board and using other tactics. At the same time, the presence – often in very visible positions – of individuals who clearly are not Muslim Brotherhood members is advantageous to the Brotherhood, as it makes the accusation that these organizations are “Muslim Brotherhood” a difficult one to sustain.

Another former member of the Shura Council of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Abdul Sattar al Malijji, has publicly expressed a similar view of IRW. “Hany al Banna’s organisations in particular,” Malijji has stated in a documentary, “are relief organisations well known in Europe who do real aid work. They have several certificates from European governments.” “But ultimately,” continued

Malijji, “the management and the governing ideology are that of the Brotherhood. Furthermore, if some momentous event occurred that required them to intervene on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood, then they did so.”<sup>296</sup>

Further evidence of IRW’s connectivity with the European Brotherhood milieu is represented by its local affiliates. Over the years, in fact, various branches of the organization, legally independent but fully integrated in the global IRW structure and with rights to vote in IRW’s leadership elections, have sprung up in various European countries. As IRW explains, “these national offices differ in their legal relationships and status with regard to the Islamic Relief family.”<sup>297</sup> Still, they all utilise the renowned Islamic Relief logo and coordinate with IRW headquarters in Birmingham on matters ranging from fundraising materials to destination of the donations.

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<sup>295</sup> Petersen’s assessment of Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid (a British-based charity influenced by Ja maat-e-Islami) further helps to confirm this analysis: “While the boards of trustees is by and large unchanged, and many first-generation staff members have remained in the organisation, in recent years, both Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid have increasingly incorporated a new generation of staff. First of all, and contrary to the older generation, many of the new staff members have relevant development education and experience. Some have a degree in development studies, others in e.g. journalism, nutrition, politics, or sociology. Many people, in particular among country office staff, have previously worked in national, non-Muslim, NGOs such as BRAC, just like several move on to work in transnational development NGOs such as CARE, Oxfam or Save the Children. They work in Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid, because they want to work in a development NGO, not because they want to work in a religious organisation.” Petersen, page 179.

<sup>296</sup> Available at: <https://mobile.twitter.com/IslamismMap/status/849643250583560192> (Accessed: June 23, 2021).

<sup>297</sup> IRW annual report, 2010, page 46. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2010-Annual-Report.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

What is telling, for the focus of this study, is the consistent pattern that sees many of the core individuals who run the local branches of Islamic Relief in each European country in which it operates also being key players in that country's Brotherhood scene. As outlined by Helbawy, not everybody that works at the organization does so for political reasons and has any connection to the Brotherhood. Rather, arguably the majority of people who work or volunteer for Islamic Relief in any European country are well-meaning individuals seeking to help the needy. However, the pattern that sees top activists of the local Brotherhood milieu occupying the senior positions inside the local IRW branch is well documented. Some notable examples include:

- Rachid Lahlou. Lahlou started *Secours Islamique France* (SIF), the French branch of IRW, in 1991 after, as he recounts, "Hany el Banna offered me to open an office in France."<sup>298</sup> Over time SIF became independent from IRW. Lahlou had served as treasurer of UOIF in the late 1980s and SIF regularly works with UOIF/Musulmans de France.<sup>299</sup>

- Salim Benamara. Benamara is the founder and former director of the Spanish branch of IRW. He is also the president of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Catalonia, which is part of LID-COE (FIOE's Spanish member).
- Mohamed Ibrahim Benmakhlouf. Benmakhlouf served as secretary general of IR Sweden. He is the son of former FIOE's president Chakib Benmakhlouf.
- Yassine Baradai. Baradai served as media manager of Islamic Relief Italy and is currently secretary general of UCOII, Italy's Brotherhood milieu's main organization.
- Mudafar Tawash. Tawash is chair of Islamic Relief Ireland and occupied top positions with the Islamic Foundation of Ireland and Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland.

Moreover, both in European countries where a local Islamic Relief branch exists (Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland) and where it does not, local Brotherhood milieus consistently promote Islamic Relief. Be it throughout their network, organizing fundraising

<sup>298</sup> Rachid Lahlou, "Islam et action humanitaire: le Secours Islamique France (SIF) célèbre ses 20 ans," *Grotius International*, December 3, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://grotius.fr/islam-et-action-humanitaire-le-secours-islamique-france-sif-celebre-ses-20-ans/#.Ylag1ZAzaUk> (Accessed: April 25, 2021).

<sup>299</sup> Margot Dazey, "Pan-Islamic ideals and national loyalties: Competing attachments amongst early Muslim activists," *Nations and nationalism*, Volume 27, Number 1, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/nana.12655> (Accessed: August 27, 2021).

events, hosting money and used clothes collection boxes, distributing Islamic Relief pamphlets, or promoting the organizations in its literature and on its online platforms. The fact that several of international guest speakers most frequently brought by the local branches, such as Omar Abdelkafi, Aid al Qarni or Jasem al Mutawa, are highly controversial religious figures due to their openly anti-Semitic, segregationist, misogynistic, homophobic or conspiratorial positions on various issues should also be noted.

Finally, IRW and its European affiliates are the frequent recipients of funds from various European governments and European Union institutions. For example, in 2019, the European Commission,

through the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, gave 550.000 Euros to Islamic Relief Deutschland for “humanitarian aid.”<sup>300</sup> The same agency gave 740.000 Euros in 2018, but divided between IRW and Islamic Relief Deutschland. Governments that have, at least at some point, funded IRW or its local affiliates include the UK<sup>301</sup>, Switzerland<sup>302</sup>, Sweden<sup>303</sup>, Spain,<sup>304</sup> and Germany<sup>305</sup>. It is noteworthy, as mentioned above, that in November 2020 the German government announced it had stopped funding IRW and its German branch because of its “significant connections to the Muslim Brotherhood or related organisations.”<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> See for reference the Financial Transparency System (FTS) of the European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index\\_en.html](https://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.html)

<sup>301</sup> Islamic Relief annual report, 2018. Page 51. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/IslamicReliefWorld-AnnualReportandFinancialStatements-2018.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> “Sidas utredning av Islamic Relief klar,” statement posted by Swedish aid agency SIDA on April 15, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.sida.se/om-sida/nyheter/sidas-utredning-av-islamic-relief-klar> (Accessed: April 17, 2021).

<sup>304</sup> Islamic Relief annual report, 2012, page 35. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2012-Annual-Report.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>305</sup> “Zuwendungen an ‘Islamic Relief Deutschland,’” German Parliament, December 3, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/811522-811522> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.





**PART  
THREE**

This chapter provides a brief overview of most European countries' local Muslim Brotherhood milieus and the debates and governmental assessments related to them.

## AUSTRIA

Austria is home to a small but active and well-entrenched Muslim Brotherhood presence. Its origins date back to the 1960s, when prominent Egyptian Brotherhood members Yusuf Nada, Ahmed Elkadi and a few others found asylum in the country.<sup>305</sup> They established a small hub and published the organization's main magazine in the West, *al Da'wah fi Urūba* (Proselytism in Europe), in the 1970s and 1980s. The other Middle Eastern Brotherhood branch that has shaped Austria's Brotherhood milieu is the Syrian, as several activists linked to it settled mostly between Vienna and Graz from the late 1970s onwards.

The public organization that unites activists from and sympathisers of the Egyptian, Syrian and, in smaller num-

bers, other Middle Eastern branches of the Brotherhood is the Liga Kultur Verein. Founded in 1998, it has two main branches in Vienna and in Graz. It is the local member of FIOE and very well inserted in the Brotherhood's pan-European and global network. Tellingly, a long-time leader of the Liga and imam of its mosque in Graz was Ayman Ali. As seen, Ali served as FIOE Secretary General and was particularly active in expanding FIOE's activities in Eastern Europe. He returned to Egypt when Mohammed Mursi was elected president of Egypt in 2012, and he was appointed as one of his top advisors. Other Liga leaders have made no secret of their affiliation to – or at least sympathy for – the Brotherhood, and the group has over time hosted several prominent leaders of various Middle Eastern branches of the group in Austria.

Other organizations with varying degrees of connectivity to the Brotherhood are active in the country. One of them, despite the fact that its leaders staunchly deny any connection, is the Muslimische Jugend Österreich (MJÖ),

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<sup>305</sup> Most of the information for this chapter can be found in *Der Politische Islam als Gegenstand wissenschaftlicher Auseinandersetzungen und am Beispiel der Muslimbruderschaft*, report by the Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam, Vienna, December 2020; and Lorenzo Vidino, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria*, report by the George Washington University Program on Extremism and the University of Vienna funded by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung (BVT) and the Österreichischen Integrationsfonds (ÖIF), September 2017.

Austria's largest Muslim youth organization.<sup>306</sup> Formed in 1996, MJÖ was for a short time (2003-2005) an "exceptional member" of FEMYSO, but it appears to be no longer formally affiliated with the pan-European organization.<sup>307</sup>

Austrian Brotherhood-linked activists have also historically exercised a large influence in state-recognised organizations. Telling in that sense are, respectively, the cases of Brotherhood-linked individuals who have occupied leadership positions with the Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (IGGiÖ), the official representative body of Muslims in Austria, and Islamische Religionspädagogische Akademie (IRPA), the organization tasked with training imams in the country.

Finally, it should be noted that several individuals linked to Hamas have long called Austria their home. Vienna-based Adel Doghman, a crucial player in the Palestinian milieu, has been active in various pro-Palestinian activities in Austria and throughout Europe. Doghman

led the Palestinian Association in Austria, an organization designated as a sponsor of terrorism by the U.S. government in 2003.<sup>308</sup>

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

During most of the 2000s, the Austrian political establishment appeared to have been largely unaware of or uninterested in the presence of Brotherhood activists in the country and their disproportionate role in organised Islam. To the contrary, many Brotherhood activists regularly interacted with top political figures and received funds from public entities.

These dynamics changed dramatically in the second half of the 2010s, as several political actors and the security services began adopting a very different position on Islamism. The Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung (BVT), the police agency also fulfilling the role of domestic intelligence agency, first publicly expressed its

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<sup>306</sup> Liga Kultur. (no date), "Stellungnahme: Buch JUNG, MUSLIMISCH, ÖSTERREICHISCH", *Liga Kultur*. Retrieved from: <https://ligakultur.at/stellungnahme-buch-jung-muslimisch-oesterreichisch/> (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

<sup>307</sup> "Richtigstellung: Muslimische Jugend Österreich (MJÖ)," May 9, 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.profil.at/oesterreich/richtigstellung-muslimische-jugend-oesterreich-mjoe-5638610>. (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

<sup>308</sup> "U.S. Designates Five Charities Funding Hamas and Six Senior Hamas Leaders as Terrorist Entities," U.S. Department of the Treasury, August 22, 2003. Retrieved from: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/js672.aspx> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

position in 2016 in a document filed with the court in Graz deciding on whether to grant political asylum to Ayman Ali's relatives. It stated that "The Muslim Brotherhood is not institutionalised under this name in Austria; however, it characterises the public depiction of Islam through its intellectual and personal strength. The Muslim Brotherhood does not maintain membership registers; its members are kept secret in all countries to protect them from being identified by the authorities".

The document continued assessing the Brotherhood's goals and compatibility with the Austrian state and society. "The political system aimed for [by the Muslim Brotherhood]," it argued, "is reminiscent of a totalitarian system, which guarantees neither the sovereignty of people nor the principles of freedom and equality". "Such a fundamental position," it continued, "is incompatible with the legal and social norms of the Republic of Austria". It went in further detail, expressing its views on one of the core organizations of the Austrian Muslim Brotherhood milieu. "The Liga Kultur Verein für multikulturellen Brückenbau in Graz," it stated, "is an association of the Muslim Brotherhood, in which it is

allowed to spread only their ideology, which in its core contradicts the Western democratic understanding of coexistence, equality of men and women, the political order and the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Austria".<sup>309</sup>

In its 2018 annual report the BVT provided further analysis, describing the Brotherhood in Austria as "a network of associations and front organizations as well as, in its inner core, a hierarchically structured organization. Due to its perception of Islam as holistic system of society, it is school of life, cultural association, social idea and economic enterprise in one". The report also noted that "in the past, there have been occasional individual cases of Salafi and Jihadi radicalization out of the environment of the Austrian Muslim Brotherhood".<sup>310</sup>

The shift has also occurred at the political level, and particularly within the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which has made the fight against political Islam one of its defining features. Among the actions taken on the subject over the last few years, the ban of Muslim Brotherhood signs and the foundation of the Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam,

<sup>309</sup> Landesverwaltungsgericht Steiermark, cases LVwG 70.8-3597/2015-34, LVwG 41.8-37/2016-34 and LVwG 41.8-39/2016-34, Graz, September 9, 2016.

<sup>310</sup> *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2018*, Bundesministerium für Inneres, page 16. Retrieved from: <https://www.bvt.gv.at/401/files/Verfassungsschutzbericht2018.pdf> (Accessed: May 14, 2021).



a research institution for the documentation of trends related to political Islam.

In November 2020, Austrian authorities conducted a massive police operation (dubbed Luxor) that involved hundreds of police officers and raids in some sixty

locations throughout the country. Targets of the raids were many of the entities and leaders purported to be part of the local Brotherhood milieu. As of June 2021, formal charges have not yet been filed and it is impossible to assess the allegations.

## BELGIUM

The Belgian Brotherhood milieu is relatively small and fragmented, even though the presence of pan-European structures such as FIOE and FEMYSO in Brussels gives it increased visibility and connectivity.

As in most other European countries, from the 1960s onwards, the first clusters were established by students from the Arab world, who created organizations such as the Union Internationale des Étudiants Musulmans (UIEM) and the Association Humanitaire pour la Promotion de la Jeunesse (AHPJ).<sup>311</sup> Those pioneers came from throughout the Arab world, but with a prominence of Syrians and, starting in the 1980s and early 1990s, Tunisians, Moroccans and Algerians. They each set up their small infrastructures, albeit most of them aimed at helping their brethren in their home countries. Some, operating mostly individually, created a small following among local youth, particularly in the

more disenfranchised neighbourhoods of Brussels, often creating a synthesis between their Brotherhood-style approach and Salafism.<sup>312</sup>

Others formed more organised clusters. Particularly noteworthy among them is the one that took shape in the town of Verviers. An important role in its formation was played by Syrians from neighbouring Aachen, the German town that has historically been the headquarters of one of the main wings of the Syrian Brotherhood in Europe.<sup>313</sup> The Verviers Brotherhood cluster spawned several organizations, the most prominent of which are the Complex Éducatif et Culturel Islamique de Verviers (CECIV) and the Belgian branch of Al-Aqsa Foundation, an entity connected to two organizations in Germany and the Netherlands. The entities, which shared activities and officials, were accused of funding Hamas by their respective governments; a 2002 Belgian parliamentary Intelligence Committee report openly stated “Hamas was present in Belgium via the organiza-

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<sup>311</sup> Brigitte Maréchal, “Courants Fondamentalistes en Belgique”, MERIA, Volume 3, March 2008; Steve Merley, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium*, NEFA Foundation, 2008. Retrieved from: <https://www.globalmbwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/The-Muslim-Brotherhood-in-Belgium.pdf> (Accessed: August 27, 2021).

<sup>312</sup> For a description of this dynamic, see Bernard Rougier, Pierre-François Mansour and Ahmed Almakir, “Molenbeek et la production islamiste à Bruxelles,” in Bernard Rougier, *Les territoires conquis de l’islamisme*, Paris: PUF, 2020. Pp. 253-80.

<sup>313</sup> Felice Dassetto, *L’iris et le croissant: Bruxelles et l’Islam au Défi de la co-inclusion*, Louvain-La-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011.

tion Al-Aqsa in Verviers”.<sup>314</sup> Glue among the entities in Verviers and Aachen was, at least in the early days, Hassan Swaid, who served in various leadership positions in IGD and other entities of the German Brotherhood milieu and whose son, Khallad, served as FEMYSO’s president.

The Belgian Brotherhood milieu’s various clusters (Verviers, Brussels, Liege, Ghent, Antwerp) are fairly small and operate somewhat independently, but have a national structure in the Ligue des Musulmans de Belgique (LMB), previously Ligue Islamique Interculturelle de Belgique (LIIB).<sup>315</sup> Playing key roles in LMB and its many satellite entities are two individuals: Syrian national Bassem Hatahet and Moroccan national Karim Chemlal. The two men, respectively Brussels and Antwerp-based, occupy leadership positions in a complex web of NGOs and businesses throughout Belgium and are arguably the most visible activists of the Belgian Brotherhood milieu.

Tellingly, the two have occupied administrative and caretaker-like positions for FIOE and FEMYSO. As the two pan-European entities are headed by individuals that hail from all over Europe, Belgian residents Hatahet and Chemlal have often registered in their name contracts and filings for the two organizations. Following a logical pattern, LMB is Belgium’s FIOE member and its youth and student section is FEMYSO’s. It should also be noted that the Belgian Brotherhood milieu appears to be the recipient of significant funding from Arab Gulf foundations (in particular, in 2014 LMB reportedly received more than one million Euros from Qatar Charity and some 150.000 Euros from Kuwait Charity).<sup>316</sup>

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

Islamist extremism has been, in recent years, a prominent topic of debate in Belgium, but most of it has focused on Salafism and jihadism. The Muslim Brotherhood is only occasionally debat-

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<sup>314</sup> Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Rapport d’activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité (Comité R), Session of July 19, 2002.

<sup>315</sup> Samir Amghar, “L’Europe, terre d’influence des Frères musulmans,” *Politique étrangère*, 2009/2; Brigitte Maréchal, “Courants Fondamentalistes en Belgique,” MERIA, Volume 3, March 2008; Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Rapport d’activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité (Comité R), Session of July 19, 2002.

<sup>316</sup> Marie-Cecile Royen, “Le Qatar et le Koweït financent la Ligue des musulmans de Belgique,” *Le Vif/L’Express*, March 10, 2016. Retrieved from: [https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/le-qatar-et-le-koweit-financent-la-ligue-des-musulmans-de-belgique/article-normal-476829.html?cookie\\_check=1624259790](https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/le-qatar-et-le-koweit-financent-la-ligue-des-musulmans-de-belgique/article-normal-476829.html?cookie_check=1624259790) (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

ed in Belgian media and, like elsewhere, with divergent opinions.

Belgian security services, on the other hand, have long monitored the domestic Brotherhood milieu and, while not linking it to violence, have adopted a fairly negative view of it. The views expressed by the Sûreté de l'État, Belgium's domestic intelligence agency, in this 2002 report to the Belgian Parliament, perfectly encapsulate their views, which have not substantially changed –as seen below– over the last twenty years:

“The State Security [Sûreté de l'État] has been following the activities of the Internationalist Muslim Brothers in Belgium since 1982. The Internationalist Muslim Brothers have possessed a clandestine structure in Belgium for more than 20 years. The identity of the members is secret; they operate in the greatest discretion. They seek to spread their ideology within Belgium's Muslim community and they aim in particular at young, second and third generation immigrants. In Belgium as in other Eu-

ropean countries, they seek to take control of sport, religious and social associations, and they seek to establish themselves as privileged interlocutors of national and even European authorities in order to manage Islamic affairs. The Muslim Brothers estimate that national authorities will increasingly rely on the representatives of the Islamic community for the management of Islam. Within this framework, they try to impose the designation of people influenced by their ideology in representative bodies. In order to do so they were very active in the electoral process for the members of the body for the management of Islam [in Belgium]. Another aspect of this strategy is to cause or maintain tensions in which they consider that a Muslim or a Muslim organization is victim of Western values, hence the affair over the Muslim headscarf in public schools.”<sup>317</sup>

In 2021, the Sûreté de l'État confirmed its negative views of the Belgian Brotherhood's aims in a note related to Ihsane Haouach, who served for a short time as Governmental Commissioner at the

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<sup>317</sup> “Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Rapport d'activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité (Comité R), Session of July 19, 2002. Retrieved from: <https://www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/publications/viewPub.html&COLL=S&LEG=2&NR=1171&VOLGNR=1&LANG=fr>”

Institute for the Equality of Women and Men.<sup>318</sup> It stated:

“The Muslim Brotherhood is branched out worldwide and has a presence in Belgium. Besides the purely national implants in the Arab world, an ‘international’ tendency strongly represented in countries with an Islamic minority and which develops its own dynamic has also arisen. In our country, the League of Muslims in Belgium (LMB) can be regarded as the Belgian branch of the international Muslim Brotherhood. The LMB and the Belgian Muslim Brothers are usually part of an overarching structure, a transnational network that tries to a certain extent to direct and coordinate the activities of the national branches and organizations affiliated with the Muslim Brothers. [...]”

“In Europe and in Belgium, the Muslim Brotherhood strives in the long term for the gradual Islamization of European societies. In the shorter term, their primary goal is to protect and strengthen the Islamic identity and the social anchoring of Islam, which is interpreted in an orthodox way. Their strategy to achieve these goals is based mainly on political-social activism, lobbying and entryism and is driven by an ‘elitist vanguard’ of well-trained Muslim Brotherhood militants. The European Muslim Brothers opt for a gradual and extremely pragmatic approach. dealing flexibly with certain orthodox Islamic precepts, adapting their discourse to their audience and hiding their true intentions and beliefs. [...] The main danger, in the shorter term, posed by the Muslim Brotherhood is that they create a climate of segregation and polarization, which in turn can be fertile ground for further (violent) radicalisation.”<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Himad Messoudi, “Affaire Haouach : nous avons lu la note de la Sûreté de l’Etat, voici ce qu’elle dit”, *Radio Télévision Belge de la Communauté Française*, July 13, 2021. Retrieved from: [https://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail\\_affaire-haouach-nous-avons-lu-la-note-de-la-surete-de-l-etat-voici-ce-qu-elle-dit?id=10803432](https://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail_affaire-haouach-nous-avons-lu-la-note-de-la-surete-de-l-etat-voici-ce-qu-elle-dit?id=10803432) (Accessed: September 2, 2021). Ihsane Haouach was a Government Commissioner at the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men. She is also a strong advocate of the veil in the public sphere and, according to the note, she is close to the LIIB (later LMB).

<sup>319</sup> Ibid; document in the possession of the authors.

## DENMARK

The Brotherhood's presence in Denmark is quite small. The pioneers who founded the network between the 1970s and 1980s were mostly Brotherhood activists from Syria and other Levantine countries who came to Denmark either as political refugees or students. They settled not just in Copenhagen but also in smaller Danish cities, where they established their own mosques and related influence infrastructures. According to Ahmed Akkari, a former member of the Danish Brotherhood milieu who left the organization in the late 2000s, the network has some one hundred members.<sup>320</sup>

In recent years, after some internal disputes, Copenhagen-based physician of Syrian origin Jihad al Farra emerged as the leader of the Danish Brotherhood milieu. Farra founded the Danish Islamic Council (Dansk Islamisk Råd), the country's Brotherhood-linked umbrella organization and Denmark's FIOE member. The Council is based out of the Hamad bin Khalifa Mosque in the

Copenhagen neighbourhood of Nørrebro. The construction of the 6800 square meter mosque was supported by the Qatar Charity through a 150 million Danish Krone donation (roughly 20 million Euros). Farra, who fled to Denmark after being persecuted in his native Syria because of his Brotherhood links, openly admitted of being connected to the Brotherhood.<sup>321</sup> But, in interviews he gave as controversy around the construction of the mosque arose, he stated that the organization he founded is "independent and represents various Muslim trends."<sup>322</sup>

### Government and civil society attitudes

Denmark has been actively debating Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood since 2001. The turmoil related to the cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed published by Danish daily Jyllands-Posten in 2005 has significantly influenced the debate. While not those who initially started the controversy, individuals linked to the Danish Brotherhood milieu played a key role in mo-

<sup>320</sup> Interviewed in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

<sup>321</sup> Lene Kühle and Malik Larsen, "Moskéeri Danmark II, En ny kortlægning af danske moskéer og muslimske bedesteder," Aarhus University, 2019-2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20191/almdel/uui/spm/479/svar/1704543/2268106.pdf> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>322</sup> Britta Søndergaard, "Imam i ny stormoské har rødder i Det Muslimske Broderskab," *Kristeligt Dagblad*, August 23, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/imam-i-ny-stormoske%C3%A9-har-r%C3%B8dder-i-det-muslimske-broderskab> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

bilizing the global Muslim Brotherhood network against Denmark, triggering what many Danes consider the country's biggest foreign policy crisis since World War II.<sup>323</sup>

Since then, the topic of the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the group's small presence in the country, routinely appears in public and policy debates. In recent years, the construction of the Hamad bin Khalifa Mosque has attracted significant controversy. Government ministers have expressed concerns about "forces with a medieval view on democracy, freedom and equality trying to buy influence in Denmark through economic donations"<sup>324</sup> and have stated that they "consider the Muslim Brotherhood to be a deeply problematic organization" whose activities within Denmark are of concern.<sup>325</sup>

Others, such as bishop of Copenhagen Peter Skov-Jakobsen, have dismissed these fears arguing that their conversations with the late Jihad al Farra and others give them "great confidence in the fact that our democratic traditions are so convincing that many Muslims will also find those values interesting."<sup>326</sup>

It is noteworthy that these debates are not accompanied by widespread knowledge of what the Brotherhood in Denmark is, how its membership can be assessed, what it seeks and so on. While that knowledge might be present within the security services, there is no publicly available study on the matter and reporting on it tends to lack precision.

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<sup>323</sup> Ahmed Akkari, *Min afsked med islamismen: Muhammedkrisen, dobbeltspillet og kampen mod Danmark*, ArtPeople, 2014.

<sup>324</sup> Question S 794 to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Parliament of Denmark, March 11, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20191/spoergsmaal/s794/svar/1641735/2161893/index.htm> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>325</sup> Question no. 1010, by the Danish Minister of Immigration and Housing, Parliament of Denmark, October 21, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20151/almdel/uii/spm/1011/svar/1352717/1679027/index.htm> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>326</sup> Britta Søndergaard, "Imam i ny stormoské har rødder i Det Muslimske Broderskab," *Kristeligt Dagblad*, August 23, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/imam-i-ny-stormoske%C3%A9-har-r%C3%B8dder-i-det-muslimske-broderskab> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

## EASTERN EUROPE

Despite the paucity of publicly available information on the subject and the important differences from country to country, it is fair to assess the presence of Muslim Brotherhood network in Eastern Europe as, overall, quite limited.

This is particularly true when it comes to countries with very limited or virtually no indigenous Muslim population. In these countries, the Brotherhood presence is somewhat reminiscent of dynamics observed in Western European countries some decades ago, when handfuls of Brotherhood-linked activists, most of them students, established the first organizations. In countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Romania, in fact, scattered Brotherhood-linked activists (their proximity to any established Brotherhood branch varying from close to purely ideological) have created the embryos of a Brotherhood presence—often establishing, in typical Brotherhood fashion, several organizations that have virtually no membership beyond a handful of individuals.<sup>327</sup> Some of these entities, despite their small

size, are formal members of FIOE and FEMYSO.

Arguably the most active and best connected, at least in comparative terms, of the Brotherhood clusters in the Eastern European countries without a large Muslim population is the Polish. The Polish milieu was established in the late 1990s/early 2000s largely by students from the Middle East (with a large Palestinian component) and sees its formal centre in the Muslim League (*Liga Muzułmańska w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*) and its many satellite entities (which are FIOE and FEMYSO members). In a marked difference from other Eastern European milieus, some of the activists from the Polish Brotherhood milieu have served in leadership positions in pan-European Brotherhood entities (in particular, Abdul Jabbar Koubaisy served on the board of Europe Trust). The milieu has been at the centre of the debate within Poland for various controversies, including the construction of a large Islamic centre in Warsaw.<sup>328</sup>

But dynamics are not very different in those Eastern European countries with a significant indigenous Muslim popula-

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<sup>327</sup> *CEE activities of the Muslim Brotherhood – Czech Republic, Poland and Serbia*, Globsec and Counter-Extremism Project, 2020.

<sup>328</sup> Agnieszka Rybak, Aleksandra Rybińska, “Meczet, pediatra i radykalni islamisci,” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 5, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.rp.pl/artykul/489702-Meczet--pediatra--i-radykalni-islamisci.html> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).



tion. In countries like Albania or Kosovo, in fact, the Brotherhood presence is also limited, and the entities that through various elements (including their membership in FIOE and FEMYSO) and with different degrees of intensity can be traced to the Brotherhood are small in size and mobilization ability. An only partial exception is Bosnia-Herzegovina. Networks close to the Brotherhood have created a presence in the country and neighbouring regions since the early 1990s, when they established NGOs that operated humanitarian services and, in some cases, provided support to fighters involved in the conflict that bloodied the country at the time (as the abovementioned case of Ayman Ali exemplifies).

Most Brothers who operated in and around Bosnia during the war left after the conflict ended. Nonetheless, global Brotherhood networks found allies in prominent local personalities, such as former president Alija Izetbegović and former and current Grand Muftis of the country, Mustafa Cerić and Husein Kavazović respectively, who also served as ECFR members. Nonetheless, despite these connections and the presence of

various organizations in the FIOE/FEMYSO orbit, the Brotherhood presence in the country appears to be relatively small in size and influence.<sup>329</sup>

Finally, there are strong indications that the Brotherhood milieu in Ukraine has come to play a relatively important role in the Brotherhood's pan-European structure. The local Brotherhood-leaning organization, Arraid, was created and is led by immigrants from the Middle East who mostly came to Ukraine (many at a time in which it was still part of the Soviet Union) as students, but has aimed to expand its reach to the indigenous Tatar Muslim population.<sup>330</sup> Arraid is a member of both FIOE and FEMYSO and Basil Marei, one of Arraid's top leaders, has served in key positions in both FIOE and Europe Trust.

Despite this small presence, there are indications that the European Brotherhood network has an interest in expanding its influence in Eastern Europe. This is demonstrated by the growing number of events the network is organizing in the region and the growing role given to organizations and activists from the region.

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<sup>329</sup> *CEE activities of the Muslim Brotherhood – Final Report: North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina & Region's Conclusions*, Globsec and Counter-Extremism Project, 2020.

<sup>330</sup> Anya Munster, "Islamisation in Eastern Europe, a case study of Arraid in Ukraine," *Institut für Islamfragen*, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.islaminstitut.de/en/2009/english-islamisation-in-eastern-europe-a-case-study-of-arraid-in-ukraine/> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

## FRANCE

The presence of Muslim Brotherhood-linked networks in France is one of Europe's most important.<sup>331</sup> As in the UK, it was colonial ties and admissions to universities that brought the first pioneers of the Brotherhood to France in the 1960s and '70s. Some high-profile activists, like the future heads of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon and Sudan respectively, Fayçal Mawlawi and Hassan al Turabi, were active in Muslim student organizations during their time in France but then returned to their countries. Others stayed on and played a key role in expanding the French Brotherhood milieu.

A crucial role in the development of the

milieu was played by Tunisian activists linked to the Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (MTI), the forerunner of today's Ennahdha Movement.<sup>332</sup> Several key MTI members, who have since gone on to play major institutional roles in post-Arab Spring Tunisia, were active on the French student scene in the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>333</sup> Due to similarly strong historical ties, Algerian and Moroccan activists also represented relatively large constituencies. As a logical consequence of this dynamic, which is somewhat of a peculiarity of the French Brotherhood, it was predominantly North African activists (with the notable exception of Iraqi-born Sorbonne student Mahmoud Zouhair) that in 1983 formed the Union des Organisations Islamiques en France (UOIF—which in

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<sup>331</sup> A 2020 French Senate report suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood “counts around 50,000 people.” The estimate likely refers to the individuals in various ways involved in organizations linked to the movement. The number of individuals who are full-fledged Brotherhood members in the country is likely to be significantly smaller (according to estimates by former members, between one and two thousand). See Sénat, *Rapport au nom de la commission d'enquête sur les réponses apportées par les autorités publiques au développement de la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre*, July 7, 2020. Retrieved from: [http://www.senat.fr/espace\\_presse/actualites/202007/rapport\\_de\\_la\\_commission\\_denquete\\_sur\\_les\\_reponses\\_apportees\\_par\\_les\\_autorites\\_publiques\\_au\\_developpement\\_de\\_la\\_radicalisation\\_islamiste\\_et\\_les\\_moyens\\_de\\_la\\_combattre.html](http://www.senat.fr/espace_presse/actualites/202007/rapport_de_la_commission_denquete_sur_les_reponses_apportees_par_les_autorites_publiques_au_developpement_de_la_radicalisation_islamiste_et_les_moyens_de_la_combattre.html) (Accessed: June 19, 2021); For interviews with former members, see Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

<sup>332</sup> Samir Amghar, “Europe Puts Islamists to the Test: the Muslim Brotherhood (France, Belgium, Switzerland),” *Mediterranean Politics*, 13(1):63-77, 2008; Anne Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia: The History of Ennahda*, London: Hurst, 2017.

<sup>333</sup> “Retour sur le parcours politique de Hamadi Jebali,” *Leaders*, December 14, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/7198-retour-sur-le-parcours-politique-de-hamadi-jebali> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

2017 changed its name to Musulmans de France, MF).<sup>334</sup>

UOIF/MF is one of the largest and most influential Brotherhood-linked organizations in Europe. Within France, perfecting the typical pattern of all European Brotherhood-linked entities, UOIF/MF has created a broad network of entities that fulfill various tasks: youth (Jeunes Musulmans de France), student (Etudiants Musulmans de France), and women (Ligue Française de la Femme Musulmane) organizations, various schools (such as the Lycée-Collège Averroès in Lille, France's first Islamic high school), publishing and event organization companies (Gedis and Bayane Editions), an entity to manage its properties (Al Waqf France), and several other commercial ventures. Many of these entities are headquartered and/or registered at UOIF/MF's large facility in La Courneuve, on the northern outskirts of Paris. Moreover, UOIF/MF is also a federation of local entities (mosques, Islamic organizations...) scattered throughout the French territory.<sup>335</sup>

But it is at the European level that the importance of the French Brotherhood

milieu becomes particularly evident. The small cluster of individuals that, since its foundation, have led the French milieu have played a disproportionate role in creating and running the Brotherhood's pan-European structure. As seen above, in fact, the French Brotherhood milieu was instrumental in the founding of FIOE, attending the 1984 Madrid meeting that constituted the first step in forming the organization and then being intimately involved in the dynamics that led to the 1989 foundation. Tellingly, four of the eight initial FIOE directors (Ahmed Jaballah and his wife Noura, Fouad Alaoui, and Abdallah ben Mansour) were top leaders of the UOIF. And, equally tellingly, the address provided by FIOE (even after changing its name to Conseil des Musulmans d'Europe in 2020) in its filings in Belgium, where it has its main office, is that of UOIF's headquarters (20, rue de la Prévôté, 93120-La Courneuve), a fact that shows undeniable interdependence. Unsurprisingly, Musulmans de France (UOIF's successor organization) is, along with the related Muslim Women Association and the Iben Sina Medical Society, the French FIOE member.

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<sup>334</sup> Samir Amghar, "Europe Puts Islamists to the Test: the Muslim Brotherhood (France, Belgium, Switzerland)," *Mediterranean Politics*, 13(1):63-77, 2008; Hakim el Karoui, *La Fabrique de l'Islamisme*, report by the Institut Montaigne, September 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/publications/la-fabrique-de-lislamisme> (Accessed: June 19, 201).

<sup>335</sup> Hakim el Karoui, *La Fabrique de l'Islamisme*, report by the Institut Montaigne, September 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/publications/la-fabrique-de-lislamisme> (Accessed: June 19, 201).

The French milieu played a similarly important role in the formation of FEMYSO. As seen, JMF (Jeunes Musulmans de France) was one of the three European youth organizations that “were given the responsibility” to create a pan-European youth organization at the 1995 Stockholm meeting and participated to the following Birmingham meeting, where FEMYSO was created.<sup>336</sup> Etudiants Musulmans de France (EMF) and the Paris section of IESH are the other two French members of FEMYSO.<sup>337</sup>

Moreover, IESH is a quintessential creation of the French Brotherhood milieu. The original branch of the school was founded in the countryside (in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region) and over time, another large campus in the Paris area was added. Senior French Brotherhood figures occupy most leadership positions in IESH’s management. Similarly, several senior members of the French Brotherhood milieu, many of them the very same individuals, serve in

senior positions with ECFR and Europe Trust. Tellingly, Ahmed Jaballah has at some point served in a position in all five pan-European organizations.

Arguably, one of the main reasons why the French milieu has played this role is its access to funding, most of which originates from the Arab Gulf. French security services, in fact, speak of large financing particularly in the construction of Islamic centres.<sup>338</sup> Some of these dynamics were perfectly captured in leaked Qatar Charity documents published in the 2019 investigative book *Qatar Papers*.<sup>339</sup> The documents show that the charity spent some 14 million Euros just in 2014 on 15 projects in France that ranged from the construction of small and large mosques to the funding of IESH (to the tune, according to internal documents, of millions of Euros).<sup>340</sup>

Confirming the milieu’s international prominence, the role of French activists in the leadership of the London office of

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<sup>336</sup> History, The Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations. Retrieved from: <https://femyso.org/history/> (Accessed: December 19, 2019).

<sup>337</sup> See for reference: “A list of FEMYSO’S member organisations,” FEMYSO. Retrieved from: <https://femyso.org/we-are-femyso/member-organisations/> (Accessed: June 22, 2021).

<sup>338</sup> Sénat, *Rapport au nom de la commission d’enquête sur les réponses apportées par les autorités publiques au développement de la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre*, July 7, 2020.

<sup>339</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l’émirat finance l’islam de France et d’Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

<sup>340</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l’émirat finance l’islam de France et d’Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

Qatar Charity, the one deputed to make donations for Europe is, unsurprisingly, very important. Documents filed in 2017 by Nectar Trust (as Qatar Charity UK came to be known after officially filing a name change the same year) show that two of the Trust's trustees are French-based.<sup>341</sup> The two, Mahfoud Zaoui and Ayyoub Abouliaqin, are also trustees of a French-based company called Passerelles. The Nectar documents further indicate that Passerelles received some 8 million pounds "for two community centre projects in Mulhouse and Strasbourg during 2016/17." Zaoui is an Algerian-born pulmonologist who sits on the board of Al Wakf France, the UOIF's financial arm.<sup>342</sup> He is based in Mulhouse, where Nectar Trust is funding, through Passerelles, an Islamic centre Qatari media described as "the largest such facility

in Europe," strategically located on the border between France, Germany and Switzerland.<sup>343</sup> The centre is managed by the Muslim Association of Alsace (AMAL), the local affiliate of the UOIF. Ayyoub Abouliaqin, the other French trustee of Nectar, has in the past served as secretary general of AMAL.<sup>344</sup>

While UOIF/Musulmans de France is the "Brotherhood powerhouse" in France, recent years have seen the emergence of activists and organizations whose connections to the UOIF and the "mainstream" French Brotherhood milieu are only partial and indirect.<sup>345</sup> Among these entities, many of which created and/or run, unlike UOIF, by French-born activists, some of the most prominent are the Comité Contre l'islamophobie en France (CCIF) and Barakacity.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Nectar Trust, Trustees' report for the year ended March 31, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5024715/accounts-and-annual-returns> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>342</sup> Rapport d'Activité du Fonds de Dotation Al Wakf France, 2014. Retrieved from: [https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/document/associations\\_a/794458620\\_31122014](https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/document/associations_a/794458620_31122014) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>343</sup> "Qatar Charity building QR110m Islamic centre in France," *The Peninsula*, June 16, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/385133/qatar-charity-building-qr110m-islamic-centre-in-france> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>344</sup> Frédérique Meichler, "Mosquée An-Nour : reprise du chantier," *L'Alsace*, April 30 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.lalsace.fr/haut-rhin/2015/04/30/mosquee-an-nour-reprise-du-chantier#:~:text=Apr%C3%A8s%20quelques%20d%C3%A9boires%20et%20une,%C3%A0%20%C3%AAtre%20visibles%20en%20surface.> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>345</sup> Authors interview with French government official, Paris, November 2019.

<sup>346</sup> It should be noted that both entities deny links of any sort to the Brotherhood. See Sénat, *Rapport au nom de la commission d'enquête sur les réponses apportées par les autorités publiques au développement de la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre*, July 7, 2020; Hakim el Karoui, *La Fabrique de l'Islamisme*, report by the Institut Montaigne, September 2018.

It should also be noted that several charismatic figures belonging to the Brotherhood in their countries of origin and with varying degrees (including none) of connectivity to the French Brotherhood milieu have for decades created small networks of influence at the local level. Several of these individuals, often operating out of improvised prayer halls in mostly disenfranchised neighbourhoods of French cities, attracted small congregations of followers. These preachers often infused their Brotherhood background with Salafist views and preaching style and, in some cases, the clusters that formed around them further radicalised into jihadist militancy.<sup>347</sup>

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

The proximity of the UOIF/Musulmans de France to the Muslim Brotherhood is not very contested, if not in seman-

tical details, and it is routine for French authorities to refer to it as “linked to” or “emanation of” the Brotherhood. Even most senior members of the milieu admit the connection. Tareq Oubrou, a prominent Bordeaux-based imam who was for a long time affiliated to the UOIF, has admitted that the organization’s 2017 decision to change its name to *Musulmans de France* was an attempt to “distance itself” from the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>348</sup> Similarly, UOIF former president Amar Lasfar has declared: “We are not part of the Muslim Brotherhood; on the other hand, we ascribe to their current of thought.”<sup>349</sup>

The relationship between the UOIF/MF and the French state has been a complex one. A key point in it was marked by the protests that the UOIF, at the time a fairly unknown entity, launched in 1989 against the decision of a high school in the town of Creil to suspend three female Muslim students for refusing to

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<sup>347</sup> For a revealing case study of this dynamic, see Hugo Micheron, “Toulouse: la machine de prédication ou la fabrication sociale du jihadisme,” in Bernard Rougier, *Les territoires conquis de l’islamisme*, Paris: PUF, 2020. Pp. 225-51.

<sup>348</sup> Loup Besmond de Senneville, “L’UOIF devient ‘Musulmans de France,’” *La Croix*, February 28, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Islam/LUOIF-devient-Musulmans-France-2017-02-28-1200828273> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>349</sup> Élise Racque, “L’Union des organisations islamiques de France change de nom pour redorer son image,” *La Croix*, April 17, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Islam/LUnion-organisations-islamiques-France-change-pour-redorer-image-2017-04-17-1200840107> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

remove their hijab.<sup>350</sup> The incident propelled UOIF to nationwide notoriety and led it to portray itself as the defender of the rights of French Muslims against the French state. It was also the beginning of a seemingly unending confrontation between the French Brotherhood milieu and the French state over the concept of laïcité and its practical implementations.

The relationship has since then been mostly conflictual, but, at the same time, the UOIF has been increasingly accepted by the French state as an interlocutor. In 1999, the French Conseil d'Etat denied one of UOIF's leaders' (Abdallah ben Mansour) request to obtain French citizenship on the grounds that UOIF was a "federation to which several extremist movements were affiliated advocating the rejection of the essential values of French society".<sup>351</sup> The very same year, UOIF was invited for the first time to par-

ticipate to the complex dialogue over the institutionalization of Islam and in 2003 Nicolas Sarkozy included it in the newly formed Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM), the body the then French president created with the goal of providing French Muslims with an official representation.<sup>352</sup> The decision to include UOIF was criticised by many, but Sarkozy argued "that once a 'radical' is integrated in an official structure, he loses his radicalism because he becomes part of a dialogue".<sup>353</sup>

UOIF's integration culminated the organization's decade-long strategy of being seen as a moderate and reliable interlocutor of the state.<sup>354</sup> Therefore, in March 2004, when the French Parliament passed a new controversial law banning all religious symbols and apparel in public schools, the UOIF kept remarkably quiet, abstaining from par-

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<sup>350</sup> Yohan Blavignat, "L'affaire des «foulards de Creil» : la République laïque face au voile islamique," *Le Figaro*, July 27, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2018/07/27/01016-20180727ARTFIG00053-l-affaire-des-foulards-de-creil-la-republique-laique-face-au-voile-islamique.php> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>351</sup> Conseil d'Etat, 7 juin 1999, n° 178449, Ben Mansour. *Revue de l'Actualité Juridique Française*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rajf.org/spip.php?article330> (Accessed: April 24, 2021).

<sup>352</sup> Sénat, *Rapport au nom de la commission d'enquête sur les réponses apportées par les autorités publiques au développement de la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre*, July 7, 2020.

<sup>353</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy, *La République, les Religions, l'Espérance*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004, page 100.

<sup>354</sup> *La France Face à ses Musulmans: Émeutes, Jihadisme et Dépolitisation*, report by the International Crisis Group, March 9, 2006. Pp. 6-9. Retrieved from: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/france/france-and-its-muslims-riots-jihadism-and-depoliticisation> (Accessed: June 19, 2021); Frank Peter, "Leading the Community of the Middle Way: A Study of the Muslim Field in France," *The Muslim World*, Volume 96, October 2006, page 714.

ticipating in the protests that were organised not only in France but throughout the world.<sup>355</sup> Azzam Tamimi, a leader of the British Brotherhood milieu who was harshly critical of this decision, explained that the UOIF opted for this more moderate position as it is “against any activity that could cause a confrontation with the public powers.”<sup>356</sup> Whereas in 1989 the issue of the hijab constituted a perfect opportunity to make the UOIF known to the French Muslim community as a strenuous defender of the “dignity of Muslims,” fifteen years later it constituted a dangerous trap to avoid.<sup>357</sup> Since the law passed with overwhelming support of most political forces, the UOIF saw no practical gain in challenging the establishment.

Since then, the relationship between the UOIF/Musulmans de France milieu and the French state has had ups and downs. On one hand, its affiliates are often included in public initiatives and are

seen as reliable partners by many municipalities at the local level. On the other, it has routinely come under scrutiny from French media and politicians for its positions on laïcité or for the controversial statements of preachers affiliated with it.

Tensions have escalated significantly since 2019, as the government of Emmanuel Macron has identified Islamism, separatism and communitarianism as incompatible with French Republican values. This coincided with a growing public discourse, which finds a broad consensus across the French political spectrum, that sees all forms of Islamism, including non-violent ones, as highly problematic. The French Brotherhood milieu has therefore been at the centre of a barrage of criticism from various quarters of French society, which are well outlined in a 2020 report by the French Senate.<sup>358</sup> The report warned that the Brothers pose the most acute threat to France because of their apparent moderation, as it is simply a tactic

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<sup>355</sup> Interview with UOIF president Lhaj Thami Breze, La Courneuve, May 2009; Xavier Ternisien, “‘Prière Nationale’ Musulmane à La Courneuve pour Concilier Solidarité et Revendication du Voile,” *Le Monde*, September 5, 2004. Retrieved from: [https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/09/04/priere-nationale-musulmane-a-la-courneuve-pour-concilier-solidarite-et-revendication-du-voile\\_377862\\_1819218.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/09/04/priere-nationale-musulmane-a-la-courneuve-pour-concilier-solidarite-et-revendication-du-voile_377862_1819218.html) (Accessed: June 19, 2021); Vincent Geisser and Aziz Zemouri, *Marianne et Allah: Les Politiques Français face à la “Question Musulmane”*, Paris: La Découverte, 2007, page 116.

<sup>356</sup> Xavier Ternisien, *Les Frères Musulmans*, Paris: Fayard, 2005, page 127.

<sup>357</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, page 187.

<sup>358</sup> Sénat, *Rapport au nom de la commission d’enquête sur les réponses apportées par les autorités publiques au développement de la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre*, July 7, 2020.



they use to dupe the system and engage in “entrisme.” “The Muslim Brotherhood,” argues the report, “carries out a Salafist project under the guise of an appearance of modernity.”<sup>359</sup> Moreover, the report endorses the theory of prominent French scholars such as Bernard Rougier, Gilles Kepel and Hugo Micheron who argue that the Brothers, together with Salafists, create an “écosystème islamiste” which, at best, alienates French Muslims from the rest of society but often also constitutes a breeding ground for violent radicalization.

This approach has been adopted also by French president Emmanuel Macron. In a landmark speech given in April 2019, Macron first introduced his concerns about “the communitarianism that has taken hold in certain quarters of the Republic. We are talking about people who, in the name of a religion, are pursuing a political project—that of a political Islam that wants to secede from our Republic. And on that, I asked the government to be intractable.”<sup>360</sup> Macron reinforced this point in a second speech almost a year later in

which he detailed a set of initiatives to counter the domestic appeal of Islamism in France. “We must never accept that the laws of religion can be superior to those of the Republic,” he stated. “Islamist separatism is incompatible with freedom and equality, incompatible with the indivisibility of the Republic and the necessary unity of the nation.”<sup>361</sup>

Since then, various bills introduced by the government and other political forces aimed at tackling the influence of Islamism in French society have been discussed in the French Parliament—at the time of writing none of them has reached the end of its parliamentary trajectory. In the meanwhile, and particularly after the assassination of French high school teacher Samuel Paty, French authorities have also acted against various Brotherhood-linked organizations they considered extremist. In particular, authorities dissolved BarakaCity and CCIF dissolved itself shortly before French authorities issued a decree to dissolve it (CCIF has since relocated to Brussels).<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Conférence de presse à l’issue du Grand Débat National, Présidence de la République Française, April 25, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2019/04/25/conference-de-presse-grand-debat-national> (Accessed: August 26, 2021).

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> JORF n°0292 du 3 décembre 2020: Décret du 2 décembre 2020 portant dissolution d’un groupe-ment de fait. Journal Officiel de la République Française. Retrieved from: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000042602019> (Accessed: June 19, 2021); Paule Gonzales, “Islamisme: le Conseil d’État confirme la dissolution de l’association BarakaCity,” *Le Figaro*, November 25, 2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.islamophobie.net/les-nombreuses-contre-verites-sur-le-ccif/> (Accessed: May 27, 2021).

## GERMANY

Germany is home to one of the oldest and most high-profile Muslim Brotherhood presences in Europe, arguably second only to the UK's and France's. Its history dates back to the late 1950s, when Said Ramadan, Hassan al Banna's son-in-law and one of the most important pioneers of the Brotherhood in Europe, first studied in Cologne and then played a key role in the construction of a large mosque in Munich, one of Europe's first such enterprises.<sup>363</sup> Since then, the Islamic Centre of Munich (IZM) has become a key hub for the Brotherhood not just in Germany but worldwide—tellingly three of the eight General Guides of the Egyptian Brotherhood have spent extensive time in Munich.<sup>364</sup>

Equally important in the history of the Brotherhood in both Germany and Europe is the role that the organization that first started out of the Munich mosque

(in its various iterations: first Islamische Gemeinschaft Süddeutschland, then Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland, IGD, and finally, in 2018, Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft, DMG) has come to occupy over time as the Brotherhood's main public organization in Germany.<sup>365</sup> An analysis of the six presidents that IGD/DMG has had since its foundation clearly shows the organization's high-profile links to the Brotherhood. After Said Ramadan and a brief parenthesis in which it was run by a Pakistani student, IGD was headed for 29 years by the abovementioned Ghaleb Himmat, Yusuf Nada's long-time business partner and another of the Brotherhood's historical pioneers in Europe (and the father of one FEMYSO president and one vice-president).

In 2002, after Himmat was forced to resign after being designated as a terrorism financier by the United Nations,<sup>366</sup> IGD's chairmanship passed to Ibrahim el

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<sup>363</sup> Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade), 2010; *Zwischen Halbmond und Hakenkreuz*, ARD documentary, July 19, 2006; filing of the Moscheebau Kommission, Munich Amtsgericht, March 29, 1960.

<sup>364</sup> *Islamistische Organisationen in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, report by the Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2009, page 44; Ian Johnson, "The Brotherhood's Westward Expansion," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, February 5, 2008.

<sup>365</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht, Baden-Württemberg. Ministerium für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Migration, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/publikationen/20200615\\_Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2019.pdf](https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/publikationen/20200615_Verfassungsschutzbericht_2019.pdf) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>366</sup> The accusation, as seen, was dropped years later.

Zayat, the activist German security services dub “the spider in the web of Islamist organizations” and one of the most prominent leaders of the European Brotherhood, with leadership positions in virtually every pan-European entity.<sup>367</sup> In 2009, El Zayat passed the helm to Samir Falah, who in turn passed it to Khallad Swaid in 2017. Following the typical European Brotherhood pattern, both Falah and Swaid have occupied leadership positions in various German youth organizations and internationally (specifically, Falah is the current president of FIOE/CEM and Swaid was president of FEMYSO from 2002 to 2006 and IIFSO).

In typical Brotherhood mode, the IGD/DMG galaxy includes many local and specialised entities often run by a small clique of activists and their relatives (in that regard the El Zayat family is particu-

larly noteworthy for its ubiquity). Moreover, other Brotherhood-linked clusters with varying degrees of connectivity dot the complex panorama of the German Brotherhood. Among them, one of the oldest is the one revolving around the Bilal mosque in Aachen. Established in 1978 by Issam al Attar, it has been one of the main hubs of the Syrian branch of the Brotherhood for decades.<sup>368</sup> Much more recent is the hub in Dresden, revolving around the now dissolved Sächsische Begegnungsstätte and the Marwa Elsherbiny Kultur und Bildungszentrum, one of the first Brotherhood-linked entities in the eastern parts of Germany.<sup>369</sup>

Confirming the milieu’s importance, many German Brotherhood-linked leaders have frequently occupied top positions in the network’s pan-European entities. IGD is a founding member of FIOE and while Ibrahim el Zayat served as

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<sup>367</sup> Uta Rasche, “Spinne im Netz der Muslime in Deutschland: Die Macht des Ibrahim El Zayat.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007; Andrea Brandt, “Wendiger Weltmann,” *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2008; Helmut Frangenberg and Detlef Schmalenberg, “El-Zayat, der Herr der Moscheen,” *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 20, 2009.

<sup>368</sup> Guido Steinberg, “Germany and the Muslim Brotherhood,” in *The West and the Muslim Brotherhood After the Arab Spring*, Al-Mesbar Center for Research and Studies and the Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2013; *Die Muslimbruderschaft in Deutschland*, report by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019.

<sup>369</sup> Verfassungsschutz, Freistaat Sachsen, Sächsisches Staatsministerium des Innern, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20201020231252/https://www.verfassungsschutz.sachsen.de/1913.htm> (Accessed: June 19, 2021); Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration Verfassungsschutzbericht Bavaria 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.stmi.bayern.de/med/pressemitteilungen/pressearchiv/2020/119c/index.php> (Accessed: June 19, 2021); *Die Muslimbruderschaft in Deutschland*, report by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/islamismus/290422/die-muslimbruderschaft-in-deutschland> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

its board member while serving as IGD president, the former chairman of IGD, Samir Falah, is currently the president of FIOE/CEM. Similarly, Ibrahim el Zayat and current head of IGD/DMG Khallad Swaid have both served as presidents of FEMYSO.

Germany is also home to a local branch of IESH, the Frankfurt-based Europäisches Institut für Humanwissenschaften (EIHW). EIHW is headed by Khaled Hanafy, a prominent cleric who serves on various jurisprudential bodies in Germany (such as the Rat der Imame und Gelehrten in Deutschland, RIGD, and the Fatwa-Ausschuss Deutschland, FAD) and at the pan-European level (ECFR, of which he is Assistant Secretary).<sup>370</sup> Three German-based activists have occupied positions with Europe Trust: Salah Bouabdallah from Berlin's Inssan, Faical Salhi of the Islamic Federation in Berlin and the ubiquitous Ibrahim el Zayat. Moreover, the building that serves as the headquarters of DMG, located in Drontheimerstrasse 32A, in Berlin's

Wedding district, is owned by Europe Trust.<sup>371</sup>

Finally, Germany is home to an important branch of Islamic Relief and Ibrahim el Zayat has served for years as Chair of IRW's Board of Trustees.<sup>372</sup> It should be noted that, in November 2020, the German government announced it had stopped funding IRW and its German branch because of its "significant connections to the Muslim Brotherhood or related organisations".<sup>373</sup>

Two additional dynamics are noteworthy. First, over time the German Brotherhood milieu has developed a close relationship with Turkish Islamist actors and, in particular, Millî Görüş. Ibrahim el Zayat personifies this development, having married the niece of Turkish Islamism's godfather Necmettin Erbakan and sitting on the board of the Europäische Moscheebau und Unterstützungs Gemeinschaft (EMUG), the German-based company that controls and manages Millî Görüş' mosques throughout Eu-

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<sup>370</sup> Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration, Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019; *Die Muslimbruderschaft in Deutschland*, report by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019;

<sup>371</sup> Information from the Berlin Grundbuchauszug.

<sup>372</sup> IRW annual report, 2013. Page 5. Retrieved from: [https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRW\\_AR2013\\_2-3.pdf](https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRW_AR2013_2-3.pdf) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>373</sup> *Zuwendungen an "Islamic Relief Deutschland"*, German Parliament, December 3, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/811522-811522> (Accessed: April 26, 2021).

rope.<sup>374</sup> Second, it should be highlighted that the German Brotherhood milieu is a recipient of large funding from the Qatar Charity.<sup>375</sup>

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

The German debate on the Brotherhood is characterised by a uniquely intense interest in the group by the federal security services and those of each of the sixteen German states. Every year, each publishes an annual report (Bericht), built on a regular monitoring of the milieu, that identifies the various organizations linked to the Brotherhood operating in the country and describes their activities—the reports even provide an estimate of Brotherhood members in the country (1350 in 2019).<sup>376</sup> To distinguish them from terrorist/violent groups, Ger-

man authorities use the term “legalistic” for those groups that, like the Brotherhood, “attempt to enforce what they interpret as an Islamic order through political and social influence.”<sup>377</sup> The distinction has practical implications: while the former are illegal and joining or providing support to them is a crime, the latter are tolerated but kept under observation.

But the language consistently used by all federal and state agencies to describe the nature and aims of the Brotherhood milieu in Germany is uncompromising, putting them among the most “pessimist” of European observers. Firstly, German intelligence agencies openly identify IGD/DMG as “the largest and most influential organization of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Germany,”<sup>378</sup> “the most important and central or-

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<sup>374</sup> Helmut Frangenberg and Detlef Schmalenberg, “El-Zayat, der Herr der Moscheen,” *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 20, 2009; *Islamistische Organisationen in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, report by the Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2009, page 44.

<sup>375</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

<sup>376</sup> Bundesverfassungsschutz, 2019, Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat. Retrieved from: [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/vsb-2019-gesamt.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=10](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/vsb-2019-gesamt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>377</sup> Bundesverfassungsschutz, 2014, Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat. Page 86. Retrieved from: [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/vsb-2014.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=1](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/vsb-2014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1) (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

<sup>378</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht, Baden-Württemberg. Ministerium für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Migration, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/publikationen/20200615\\_Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2019.pdf](https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-im/intern/dateien/publikationen/20200615_Verfassungsschutzbericht_2019.pdf) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

ganization of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Germany”<sup>379</sup> or similar formulations, and assessing the name change from IGD to DMG as entirely nominal and inconsequential.<sup>380</sup>

German intelligence reports are also extremely specific in their assessment. The Brothers and other “legalistic Islamist groups,” argues a 2005 Bundesverfassungsschutz report, “represent an especial threat to the internal cohesion of our society.” “Among other things,” it continues, “their wide range of Islamist-oriented educational and support activities, especially for children and adolescents from immigrant families, are used to promote the creation and proliferation of an Islamist milieu in Germany. These endeavours run counter to the efforts undertaken by the federal administration and the Länder [states] to integrate immigrants. There is the risk that such milieus could also form the breeding ground for further radicalization.”<sup>381</sup>

One of the most recent and complete public assessments of the group and its impact on German society comes

from the 2018 annual report of the Verfassungsschutz of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany’s most populous state. It reads:

“The relatively small number of sympathisers [of the Muslim Brotherhood in Germany] must not obscure the fact that some of them have considerable influence. They can usually boast an academic education, are employed in well-paid and responsible occupations and well-connected both in Germany and internationally. By their own understanding, the Muslim Brotherhood represents an “Islam of the Middle,” which separates itself from the two poles of Jihadism on the one hand and a liberal, on the other hand, Western Islam adapted to Western ideals. Their goal is an Islamist society in which political interests are ultimately regulated according to the religion. For this purpose, a strategy of “Islamization from below” is pursued, which first addresses the individual and aims at a change of consciousness towards a lifestyle shaped by religion. The individuals trained in this way should then work their way into society and make sure that in the long term it ap-

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht, Bavaria. Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration Verfassungsschutzbericht, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/mam/anlagen/vsb-2019\\_bf.pdf](https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/mam/anlagen/vsb-2019_bf.pdf) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>381</sup> Bundesverfassungsschutz 2005, Bundesministerium des Innern. Page 190. Retrieved from: [https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/63244/Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2005\\_de.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/63244/Verfassungsschutzbericht_2005_de.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

proaches the religious understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>382</sup>

The report goes further, arguing that “In the long run, the threat posed by legalistic Islamism to the liberal democratic system is greater than that of jihadism, which will always outnumber numerically. They aspire to an Islamist order, but are prepared to allow certain democratic elements within that framework. For this reason, their extremism is often barely recognizable at first glance.” Assessments from agencies from most other German states substantially concur.<sup>383</sup>

On various occasions, German administrative courts confirmed what German security services describe as “Islamist-anti constitutional aspirations” and “efforts directed against the free

democratic order” of the IGD/DMG milieu.<sup>384</sup> Yet various actors from the milieu challenge allegations of connections to the Brotherhood and negative assessments of their aims, not rarely through the court system.<sup>385</sup> Ibrahim el Zayat, for example, has sued a member of the German Parliament who had called him “an official of the Muslim Brotherhood” (the court rejected his claim).<sup>386</sup>

Somewhat counterintuitively and perfectly encapsulating the complexity of the topic, organizations that German security services indicate as being part of the Brotherhood are regularly engaged by German policymakers and governmental agencies, from the local level all the way up to the federal chancellery. Organizations from the German Brotherhood milieu, in fact, have historically been the main partici-

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<sup>382</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht, Nordrhein-Westfalen. Ministerium für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Migration, 2018. Retrieved from: [https://www.im.nrw/system/files/media/document/file/VS\\_Bericht\\_2018.pdf](https://www.im.nrw/system/files/media/document/file/VS_Bericht_2018.pdf) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>383</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht, Bavaria. Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration Verfassungsschutzbericht, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/mam/anlagen/vsb-2019\\_bf.pdf](https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/mam/anlagen/vsb-2019_bf.pdf) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>384</sup> VGH Kassel, judgment of 21.11.2017 - 5 A 2126/16; VG Ansbach, judgment of 19.11.2003 -AN 15 K 02.01202 -, juris, paragraph 42 et seq.

<sup>385</sup> In 2018, for example, IGD’s website openly stated that the organization was not and had never been “*part of the Muslim Brotherhood*.” See for reference: *Die Muslimbruderschaft in Deutschland*, report by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/islamismus/290422/die-muslimbruderschaft-in-deutschland> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>386</sup> “Kristina Köhler gewinnt Verfahren gegen El Zayat,” press release on Kristina Köhler’s website, November 16, 2005. Retrieved from: <https://www.kristinaschroeder.de/aktuelles/archiv/kristina-koehler-gewinnt-verfa/> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

pants in the Deutsche Islam Konferenz, a long-time effort by the federal government to create a stable dialogue with German Muslims. And they have been engagement partners even in some of the states that have been most vocal about the threat posed by Islamism, like North Rhine-Westphalia. Despite the abovementioned assessment by North Rhine-Westphalia state security services arguing that Islamism poses a greater threat than jihadism and the fact that the state Interior Minister Herbert Reul describes Islamism as a “danger to democracy,” Islamist organizations specifically mentioned by the security services have been included in outreach programs by various state actors.<sup>387</sup> By the same token, several Brotherhood-leaning organizations listed by German security services have long been receiving substantial funding from various federal and state entities for activities on integration, against racism or to prevent radicalization.<sup>388</sup> These dynamics lead to a very intense and mainstream debate on the matter, more than in most European countries.

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<sup>387</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht: Verschwörungsideologien sind Gefahr für die Demokratie, Sicherheit für Nordrhein-Westfalen, June 6, 2020. Retrieved from: [www.im.nrw/verfassungsschutzbericht-verschwörungsideologien-sind-gefahr-fuer-die-demokratie](http://www.im.nrw/verfassungsschutzbericht-verschwörungsideologien-sind-gefahr-fuer-die-demokratie) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>388</sup> See, for example, Frederik Schindler, “Hinter der freundlichen Fassade,” *Die Welt*, March 2, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/plus206227633/Zentralrat-der-Muslime-Zwielichtiger-Partner-der-deutschen-Islam-Politik.html> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).



## ITALY

The first embryo of Brotherhood-linked activities in Italy started in the late 1960s, when a small group of students mostly from Syria, Jordan and the Palestinian territories created the *Unione degli Studenti Musulmani in Italia* (USMI). In 1990, activists from USMI, the Islamic Cultural Centre of Milan and a few other entities formed the *Unione delle Comunità e delle Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia* (UCOII), ever since the flagship public organization of the Brotherhood milieu in Italy. Rome-based, UCOII controls a broad network of mosques and Islamic centres, not all Brotherhood-influenced, and has consistently sought to present itself as the main representative of Islam in Italy.

Sharing many of UCOII's leaders and activities is a sister entity, the Milan-based *Alleanza Islamica in Italia*, which often goes by its Arabic name *Al Rabitah al Islamiyya fi Italia*. Unlike UCOII, the *Alleanza Islamica* is not very public, but represents the inner core of the Brotherhood milieu in Italy. Over time, following the common pattern of each branch of the European Brotherhood, the milieu has spawned various entities. Some are devoted to specific activities, such as youth and imam training. Others focus on specific geographical areas (among

them particularly noteworthy is the *Coordinamento Associazioni Islamiche di Milano*, CAIM).

As in other European countries, a small group of individuals occupy multiple management positions in these entities. This phenomenon is particularly marked in Italy, where a disproportionate number of the leadership positions have also been historically held by children of the founders of the Italian Brotherhood milieu. This dynamic has triggered accusations of nepotism and ethnic bias from some of the milieu's activists, who have argued that the milieu's organizations did not reflect the demographics of Italian Islam, which is dominated by immigrants from North Africa and the Balkans.<sup>389</sup> This dynamic has partially changed in recent years.

The Italian milieu is well positioned within the Brotherhood's pan-European structure. UCOII, *Alleanza Islamica* and *Waqf Islamico* (the entity that manages the network's real estate assets) are members of FIOE. *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia* (GMI) is the local FEMYSO affiliate. Various leaders of the Italian milieu have occupied important positions at the European level. Most prominent among them is Jordanian native Ali Abu Shwaima, whose omnipresence in both Italian and European institutions of the

<sup>389</sup> Khalid Chaouki, *Salaam, Italia!* (Aliberti, 2005).

network exemplifies its circularity. In Italy, Abu Shwaima was a founding member of USMI; the founder and president of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Milan; a founding member and the first secretary general of UCOII; and the first president of the Waqf Islamico.<sup>390</sup> In Europe, Abu Shwaima has been on the board of FIOE, where he was also in charge of the culture portfolio and the editor of the organization's official magazine, *al Europiya*; on the board of Europe Trust; and a founding member of IESH.<sup>391</sup> Italy is also home to an active branch of Islamic Relief Worldwide. Many of the top officials at IR Italia have occupied leadership positions in various organizations of the Italian milieu.

The Italian milieu has also historically been very well connected beyond Europe. Italy has long been home to Yusuf Nada and Ghaleb Himmat, the above-mentioned prominent (and, unusually, self-admitted) Muslim Brotherhood financiers that funded the movement's

global network for decades. Before his 2001 designation as a terrorism financier by the United Nations, Nada's home in Campione d'Italia was often the venue for meetings of the top leaders of the global Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>392</sup> As seen, two of Himmat's children, Hadia and Youssef, have served respectively as FEMYSO vice-president and president. A third, prominent financier of the Muslim Brotherhood at the global level was the late Ahmed Idriss Nasreddin. Milan-based, he was the business partner of Nada and Himmat on many financial activities and served as president of both Abu Shwaima's Islamic Centre of Milan and Lombardy (in Segrate) and the first President of the Islamic Community in the Canton Ticino.<sup>393</sup>

Also noteworthy are networks linked to Tunisia's Ennahdha. For example, in 2011 the son of the head of Rome's Centocelle mosque, former GMI president Osama Saghir, won a seat in the Tunisian parliament with votes of Tunisians

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<sup>390</sup> Chi è Ali Abu Shwaima, Centro Islamico di Milano e Lombardia. Retrieved from: <https://centroislamico.it/centro/biogr/shwaima.htm> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Author interview with Yusuf Nada, featured in Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

<sup>393</sup> "Ahmed Nasreddin has passed away, Milan's first mosque was set up in the hotel he owned," *La Luce*, May 24, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.laluce.news/2021/05/24/ahmed-nasreddin-has-passed-away/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

abroad and went on to become Ennahdha's spokesperson.<sup>394</sup> Finally, further indicating the country's importance, records from the Qatar Papers show that Italy was the European country in which the Qatar Charity invested the most in the mid-2010s.<sup>395</sup> In 2014 alone, Qatar Charity allocated almost 23 million Euros for Italy, which former UCOII president Izzedin Elzir confirms "were used to build 43 mosques" linked to the organization.<sup>396</sup>

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

Since its foundation, UCOII has been extremely active on the political scene, attempting to become the main, if not the only, interlocutor of the Italian state. Responses from Italian authorities, whether at the local or central level, have been mixed, as many voices have expressed

concerns over the organization's claims of representativeness and true nature.

This dynamic has been particularly evident in the long-standing and complex dialogue between the Italian state and its Muslim community to officially recognise Islam, a legal step that would grant the Muslim community the status and the privileges the Catholic Church and many other religious groups have long enjoyed. UCOII has been included in most of the Italian governments' effort to conclude an agreement with Italian Muslims, but the deep divisions among various Italian Muslim organizations and a degree of diffidence towards UCOII on the part of many Italian policymakers have always prevented the signing of the intesa. At the same time, UCOII has successfully entered into partnerships with local and national institutions. In 2015, for example, it signed an agreement with

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<sup>394</sup> "Ho 28 anni, sono italiano, e guido la lista degli islamici in Tunisia," *Linkiesta*, October 23, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.linkiesta.it/2011/10/ho-28-anni-sono-italiano-e-guido-la-lista-degli-islamici-in-tunisia/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Cristina Giudici, "Chi è il portavoce del Partito islamico tunisino Ennahda che parla italiano," *Il Foglio*, July 5, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.ilfoglio.it/esteri/2015/07/05/news/chi-e-il-portavoce-del-partito-islamico-tunisino-ennahda-che-parla-italiano-85390/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>395</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

<sup>396</sup> Vladimiro Polchi, "Chi finanzia le moschee. Dal Qatar alla Turchia: fondazioni e (tanti) soldi per l'Islam italiano," *La Repubblica*, August 4, 2016. Retrieved from: [https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2016/08/04/news/chi\\_finanzia\\_le\\_moschee\\_dal\\_qatar\\_alla\\_turchia\\_fondazioni\\_e\\_tanti\\_soldi\\_per\\_l\\_islam\\_italiano-145334232/](https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2016/08/04/news/chi_finanzia_le_moschee_dal_qatar_alla_turchia_fondazioni_e_tanti_soldi_per_l_islam_italiano-145334232/) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

the Ministry of Justice to send imams and cultural mediators into prisons.<sup>397</sup> In 2017, UCOII was among the signatories of the Patto Nazionale per un Islam italiano, an agreement between the Ministry of Interior and various Muslim organizations in which the latter pledged to fight radicalism, promote integration, and guarantee governance and financial transparency.<sup>398</sup>

While the topic of Islamism does not feature in the Italian public debate as prominently it does in many other European countries, organizations and individuals close to the Italian Brotherhood milieu are not infrequently at the centre of controversies for problematic statements they or foreign speakers they invited at their events made. In 2019, for example, the Lombardy Regional Council took a unanimous vote to condemn the presence of a preacher who advocated

beating one's wife gently, "to show her who's in charge," at an event organised by Islamic Relief Italia in Milan.<sup>399</sup> And in 2020, UCOII secretary general and Islamic Relief Italia media manager Yassin Baradai was at the centre of controversy for having written on Facebook that Christianity and Judaism were "a heresy, a deviation from the original message of the prophets."<sup>400</sup>

Organizations and individuals close to the Italian Brotherhood milieu have often resorted to legal recourses to challenge critics' accusations of extremism and connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. When it comes to the latter, it is noteworthy that, in 2019, an Italian court dismissed a suit brought by Sumaya Abdel Qader, daughter of one of the founders of UCOII and a member of the Milan city council. Abdel Qader, who previously had served as board member

<sup>397</sup> Protocollo d'intesa tra il Ministero della Giustizia Dipartimento dell'Amministrazione Penitenziaria e l'Unione delle Comunità e delle Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia, document in possession of the authors. Undated; see also <https://ucoii.org/tag/protocollo-intesa-dap/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); "Carceri: Ucoii, rinnovato il protocollo con il Dap del Ministero della giustizia," Agensir, June 6, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2020/6/6/carceri-ucioii-rinnovato-il-protocollo-con-il-dap-del-ministero-della-giustizia/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>398</sup> Patto nazionale per un Islam italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, November 2017. Retrieved from: <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/pubblicazioni/patto-nazionale-islam-italiano> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>399</sup> "Consiglio approva mozione a unanimità su evento Islamic Relief," ANSA, April 2, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.ansa.it/lombardia/notizie/consiglio\\_lombardia/2019/04/02/\\_fa341090-8ff7-4ca7-93dd-1d68a97b8f98.html](https://www.ansa.it/lombardia/notizie/consiglio_lombardia/2019/04/02/_fa341090-8ff7-4ca7-93dd-1d68a97b8f98.html) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>400</sup> Giovanni Giacalone, "Le accuse del leader islamico: cristiani ed ebrei sono 'eretici,'" *Il Giornale*, August 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/segretario-ucioii-ebraismo-e-cristianesimo-storpiature-ed-1886534.html> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

of FEMYSO<sup>401</sup> and head of youth department at FIOE,<sup>402</sup> challenged the accusation made by various Italian media outlets that she and her husband, himself the son of former UCOII vice-president Maher Kabakebbji, were linked to the Brotherhood. The judge dismissed the claim arguing that there is a wide body of literature that “confirms the link between FIOE and the Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>403</sup>

At times, members of the Italian milieu are more candid about the relationship between their and the European structures and the Brotherhood. Former GMI spokesperson Ahmed Abdel Aziz, for example, has stated that “the Muslim Brotherhood does not exist in Italy” but, in the same interview, has admitted that entities such as UCOII, Alleanza Islamica, GMI and FIOE “have no organic or hierarchical relationship with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood” but “there is a common trait that links these organ-

izations; an ideology that each group interprets differently depending on the reality it has to face.”<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> “FEMYSO representative participated in OSCE Conference on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination,” FEMYSO, October 29, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://femyso.org/femyso-representative-participated-in-osce-conference-on-combating-intolerance-and-discrimination/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>402</sup> See for reference: <https://www.facebook.com/240300890111/posts/sumaya-abdel-qader-pergegese-e-departamentit-te-rinise-tek-fioe-federation-of-/10155810722875112/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>403</sup> Mario Consani, “Caso Sumaya: ‘Non c’è diffamazione, quel gruppo era vicino ai Fratelli Musulmani!,” *Il Giorno*, March 7, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/sumaya-fratelli-musulmani-1.4477976> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>404</sup> Enrico Casale, “Fratelli (musulmani) d’Italia,” *Popoli*, June 19, 2014. Retrieved from: [http://www.popoli.info/easnye2/Articolo/Fratelli\\_musulmani\\_d\\_Italia.aspx](http://www.popoli.info/easnye2/Articolo/Fratelli_musulmani_d_Italia.aspx) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

## THE NETHERLANDS

The presence of individuals and networks linked to the Brotherhood in the Netherlands is relatively recent and limited, mostly because, for linguistic reasons, the country's universities did not historically attract as many students linked to the movement as those of many other European countries did.<sup>405</sup> The AIVD, Dutch security services, estimate that actual members are only "a few dozen".<sup>406</sup>

The first public entity close to the network to operate in the country was the Liga van de Islamitische Gemeenschap in Nederland (LIGN), founded in The Hague in 1996. By the mid-2000s, LIGN became inactive and some of the same individuals behind it started the Fed-

eratie Islamitische Organisaties Nederland (FION).<sup>407</sup> Around the same time, the same activists also established Europe Trust Nederland, an entity that over time purchased various properties throughout the country to build some of its most prominent mosques (including Amsterdam's Blue Mosque and Rotterdam's Centrum De Middenweg). Records indicate that ETN has been the recipient of substantial funding from Qatar Charity and that a prominent member of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood served as ETN's chairman – examples of a long-documented pattern of Gulf funds funding the Dutch network.<sup>408</sup>

Entities and individuals of the Dutch Brotherhood milieu are connected to the group's pan-European structure, even though they play secondary roles

<sup>405</sup> Edwin Bakker, "The Public Image of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands," in Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, eds., *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>406</sup> Brief regering; "Conclusies onderzoek Moslimbroederschap in Nederland - Grondrechten in een pluriforme samenleving," Parlementaire Monitor, KST2961426. May 26, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vwij5epmj1ey0/vipncvj8czn> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Interviews with AIVD officials, June 2015.

<sup>407</sup> Ronald Sandee, *The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands*, NEFA Foundation, 2007. Retrieved from: <https://www.globalmbwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/The-Influence-of-the-Muslim-Brotherhood-in-the-Netherlands.pdf> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Brief regering; Conclusies onderzoek Moslimbroederschap in Nederland - Grondrechten in een pluriforme samenleving, Parlementaire Monitor, KST2961426. May 26, 2011.

<sup>408</sup> "(On)zichtbare invloed verslag parlementaire ondervragingscommissie naar ongewenste beïnvloeding uit onvrije landen," Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, June 25, 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/verslag\\_pocob.pdf](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/verslag_pocob.pdf) (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Uittreksel Handelsregister Kamer van Koophandel, March 25, 2014; Brief regering; "Conclusies onderzoek Moslimbroederschap in Nederland - Grondrechten in een pluriforme samenleving," Parlementaire Monitor, KST2961426. May 26, 2011.

in it. LIGN first and then FION were members of FIOE.<sup>409</sup> The website of the Council of European Muslims, FIOE's successor organization, lists the "Dutch Islamic Society" as its member from the Netherlands (no organization under that name is registered in the Netherlands).<sup>410</sup> As for FEMYSO, in October 2019 the organization announced that it "welcome[d] Moslimstudenten Associatie Nederland - MSA Nederland as a member organisation"<sup>411</sup> and pictures showed some MSA Nederland members at FEMYSO's 23rd General Assembly in Dublin. In October 2020, MSA Nederland was given FEMYSO's Robert Schuman Award.<sup>412</sup> As of June 2021, FEMYSO's website also listed Mashriq as its member; Masriq is a MSA Nederland member but a separate and smaller organization mostly operating in the The Hague area.<sup>413</sup>

As seen in the Europe Trust section of this report, ETN is a formally independent entity but is substantially controlled

by Europe Trust, with the latter having the power to appoint and approve the former's board members and being the ultimate recipient of ETN's assets were ETN to dissolve. Finally, a local branch of Islamic Relief has long been active in the country, run by some of the very same activists behind the network's other organizations in the Netherlands.

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

Despite the group's small presence, Dutch authorities and public have historically devoted substantial attention to the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands. The AIVD has investigated the Dutch milieu for decades, over time releasing some of its assessments to the public. In 2007, as part of an analysis of various Islamist groups operating in the country, the AIVD stated that:

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid; Ronald Sandee, *The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands*, NEFA Foundation, 2007.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> See for reference: <https://www.facebook.com/femyso.org/posts/we-would-like-to-welcome-moslimstudenten-associatie-nederland-msa-nederland-as-a/2686932808017613/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); See also "Nederlandse studentenkoepel sluit zich aan bij jeugdorganisatie Moslimbroeders"; Carel Brendel, October 23, 2019. Retrieved from: <http://www.carelbrendel.nl/2019/10/23/nederlandse-studentenkoepel-sluit-zich-aan-bij-jeugdorganisatie-moslimbroeders/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>412</sup> See for reference: <https://www.facebook.com/femyso.org/posts/3587719284605623/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>413</sup> See for reference: <http://www.mashriq.nl/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

“Not all Muslim Brothers or their sympathisers are recognisable as such. They do not always reveal their religious loyalties and ultra-orthodox agenda to outsiders. Apparently co-operative and moderate in their attitude to Western society, they certainly have no violent intent. But they are trying to pave the way for ultra-orthodox Islam to play a greater role in the Western world by exercising religious influence over Muslim immigrant communities and by forging good relations with relevant opinion leaders: politicians, civil servants, mainstream social organisations, non-Islamic clerics, academics, journalists and so on. This policy of engagement has been more noticeable in recent years, and might possibly herald a certain liberalisation of the movement’s ideas. It presents itself as a widely supported advocate and legitimate representative of the Islamic community. But the ultimate aim – although never stated openly – is to create, then implant and expand, an ultra-orthodox Muslim bloc inside Western Europe.”<sup>414</sup>

In 2011, the AIVD presented the findings of a new investigation on the Brotherhood in the country to the Dutch Parliament.<sup>415</sup> Confirming that the small milieu of the Dutch Brotherhood operated through a secret and a public structure, it assessed it to have limited, albeit growing influence in the country. It stated that the group “currently does not pose a direct threat to the democratic legal order or the national security of our country” due to its small size, resilience of Dutch society, and “no indications that the recognised objectives and activities of the Muslim Brotherhood conflict with the democratic legal order in the Netherlands.”<sup>416</sup>

At the same time, the AIVD argued that the “Brotherhood can eventually pose a risk to the democratic legal order in the Netherlands” because of four overlapping reasons:

- “The Muslim Brotherhood’s aim to let Islam lead the way in all aspects of the life of Muslims can contribute

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<sup>414</sup> *The radical dawa in transition, The Rise of Islamic Neoradicalism in the Netherlands*, AIVD, October 2007. Retrieved from: <https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2007/10/09/the-radical-dawa-in-transition> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>415</sup> Brief regering; Conclusies onderzoek Moslimbroederschap in Nederland - Grondrechten in een pluriforme samenleving, Parlementaire Monitor, KST2961426. May 26, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vwij5epmj1ey0/vipncvj8czzn> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>416</sup> “*Geen directe dreiging vanuit Moslimbroederschap in Nederland*,” Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, April 12, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.aivd.nl/actueel/nieuws/2011/04/12/geen-directe-dreiging-vanuit-moslimbroederschap-in-nederland> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)



to a breeding ground for (intolerant) isolationism and polarization.

- Due to the security-conscious and covert actions of the Dutch Muslim Brothers, it cannot be ruled out that, in addition to the intentions identified, there may be other objectives that may conflict with the democratic legal order in the Netherlands.
- The Dutch Muslim Brothers are trying to gain influence in civil society. If they also participate in political decision-making without being open about their signature and thus their interests and intentions, this can lead to an undesirable situation.
- They have a wide international network and ample financial resources.”<sup>417</sup>

More recently, in 2019-20, the Dutch Brotherhood milieu has been among the key focuses of a special commission on “undue influence from unfree countries” at the Tweede Kamer, the coun-

try’s Parliament.<sup>418</sup> The commission investigated the ample sources of funding of various Brotherhood-linked entities in the country (all individuals heard by the commission denied any relation to the Brotherhood).

More broadly, the Dutch Brotherhood milieu is fairly frequently discussed in local media.<sup>419</sup> Topics often dealt with relate to foreign funding and the tendency of Brotherhood networks to regularly invite foreign speakers with problematic views, particularly on matters such as Jews and homosexuality.<sup>420</sup> The debate often takes heated tones and not rarely stumbles upon whether a certain individual or organization can be properly identified as belonging or connected to the Brotherhood.

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<sup>417</sup> Brief regering; “*Conclusies onderzoek Moslimbroederschap in Nederland - Grondrechten in een pluriforme samenleving*,” Parlementaire Monitor, KST2961426. May 26, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vvij5epmj1ey0/vipncvj8czzn> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>418</sup> “(On)zichtbare invloed verslag parlementaire ondervragingscommissie naar ongewenste beïnvloeding uit onvrije landen,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, June 25, 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/verslag\\_pocob.pdf](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/verslag_pocob.pdf) (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>419</sup> Edwin Bakker, “The Public Image of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands,” in Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, eds., *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>420</sup> Bas Soetenhorst, “Blauwe Moskee biedt podium aan radicale prediker,” *Het Parool*, May 14, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/blauwe-moskee-biedt-podium-aan-radical-prediker-~bec57be2/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

## SPAIN

In line with the development in the rest of Europe, the first Brotherhood members began to arrive in Spain in the 1960s. They consisted mainly of members of the Syrian branch of the Brotherhood fleeing repression and students from other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>421</sup>

Some of the first entities founded by these pioneers –mainly dedicated to the student sphere– ended up becoming the organizations representing the Muslim community at the local level and, in some cases, the main interlocutors with public institutions at the national level.

Founded in Granada in the early 1970s and later established in Madrid, the Spanish Muslim Association (Asociación Musulmana en España, AME) constitutes the initial cornerstone from which different Brotherhood-related entities subse-

quently arose. AME's original structure included individuals with close ties to Issam al Attar's wing of the Syrian Brotherhood, such as Riay Tatary, the ubiquitous long time Spanish Islamic Council president, and Salah Eddine Nakdali, who later became director of the Islamic Centre of Aachen.<sup>422</sup>

The fragmentation of the Brotherhood's leadership that took place in Syria between the late 1970s and early 1980s had repercussions also in Spain. In 1978, a group of AME members decided to split from the association to establish the Centro Islámico en España (CIE). Individuals active in the CIE, particularly Mulla Huech,<sup>423</sup> played a key role in the organization of meetings in different European countries that crystallised in the 1984 Madrid conference and the subsequent creation of the Association of Muslim Students of Europe, FIOE's em-

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<sup>421</sup> Ana B. Díaz y Bárbara Azaola, "La política de becas y la formación de arabistas e hispanistas" in Miguel Hernando de Larramendi, Irene González González and Bernabé López García (Eds.), *El Instituto Hispano Árabe de Cultura. Orígenes y evolución de la diplomacia pública española hacia el mundo árabe*, Madrid, AECID, 2015, pp. 227- 238.

<sup>422</sup> "Islamische Organisationen in Deutschland, Organisationsstruktur, Vernetzungen und Positionen zur Stellung der Frau sowie zur Religionsfreiheit". Deutscher Bundestag, 2005. Page. 49. Retrieved from: <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/405162/80a4e1e0a231dc5555afba8f0cab9b90/wd-1-004-15-pdf-data.pdf> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>423</sup> Dr. Bahige Mulla Huech was, among others, Secretary General of the Spanish Islamic Council, Secretary General of the European Council of Mosques, member of the World Council of Mosques and the Muslim World League and European representative in the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. See for reference: Nuestro Fundador: Fundación Dr. Bahige Mullah Huech para el entendimiento de civilizaciones. Retrieved from: <http://www.fbmh.org/es/la-fundacion/nuestro-fundador> (Accessed: May 26, 2021).

bryo.<sup>424</sup> In the words of the Federation itself years later: “Madrid was the starting point for the constitution of a European Islamic work that started from the idea of settling the Islamic presence.”<sup>425</sup>

The initial organizations created by the first Brothers expanded over the years, both in terms of influence and geography, going well beyond the initial hubs in Madrid and Granada and establishing a presence in several parts of Spain. Nowadays, the most active organizations of the Spanish Brotherhood milieu include FIOE’s only official Spanish member, the Liga Islámica para el Diálogo y la Convivencia en España (LIDCOE), spearheaded by the Valencian Islamic Cultural Centre (CCIV) and the Barcelona-based Catalan Islamic Cultural Centre (CCIC).

The Spanish Brotherhood milieu has historically been able to draw from ample financial support from abroad. If in the past Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were the main patrons, in recent years Qatar has arguably become the most important funder. Spain (with 11 projects financed) ranks third, behind France (47) and Italy (22), when it comes to projects funded under the Qatar Charity’s Ghaith funding program.<sup>426</sup> Until 2015, Qatar Charity had reportedly channelled approximately € 17,000,000 euros to different projects in Spain.<sup>427</sup>

<sup>424</sup> Bassem Dhuihi, “On the life of the late Bahige Mullah Huech [موجز عن حياة المرحوم د. بهيج ملا حويش]”, *Levant Writers Association*, February 14, 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.odabasham.net/%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A1/2152-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B2-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AC-%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B4> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>425</sup> Historical contextualization, Council of European Muslims. Retrieved from: <http://eumuslims.org/ar/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>426</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l’émirat finance l’islam de France et d’Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

<sup>427</sup> Qatar Charity internal document dated June 22, 2015, entitled “List of projects in Spain developed by the LICOE [قائمة بمشاريع إسبانيا، الجهة المنفذة: الرابطة الإسلامية للحوار والتعايش]”. Authors’ personal archive.

Some members of the Spanish Brotherhood milieu have held important positions in the pan-European structures of the Brotherhood. One of the most important is Imad al Naddaf Yalouk, one of the founders of CIE, who served on Europe Trust's board of directors for more than a decade. Abderrahim Tawil, imam at the Great Mosque of Valencia, serves as ECFR member, which held its 8th ordinary meeting in Valencia in 2001. Moreover, Spain is also home to a young but very active branch of Islamic Relief.

A troubling peculiarity of the Muslim Brotherhood in Spain is the decade-long pattern of involvement in terrorist activities by a non negligible number of its members. The Madrid-based Abu Dahdah network, which would eventually become one of the largest, most sophisticated, and better-connected jihadist clusters in Europe of the last thirty years, is undoubtedly the best-known example of this dynamic.<sup>428</sup> Established in the

early 1990s by a tight network of members of the Syrian Brotherhood living in Spain, it was intimately tied to al Qaeda and some of its members had close operational ties to perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the March 11, 2004 Madrid bombings.<sup>429</sup>

A more recent episode confirms this trend and points to a troubling involvement in terrorism of some of the highest institutional representatives of Islam in Spain. In fact, key members of the Islamic Commission of Spain including its president—later released on bail<sup>430</sup> have been arrested and accused of belonging to a criminal organisation, collaboration with a terrorist organisation, terrorist financing, money laundering, tax fraud, document falsification and illegal immigration. Operation WAMOR, which saw a first round of arrests in 2019, started when the son of a senior CIE member was arrested for his alleged militancy in Fatah al Islām, an al Qaeda-linked group in Syria. Later stages of the investigation also alleged strong ties between mem-

<sup>428</sup> Summary (Ordinary Process 0000035 /2001 E). Central Court of Instruction n° 005, Madrid, September 17, 2003. Retrieved from: [https://e00-elmundo.uecdn.es/documentos/2003/09/garzon\\_binladen/auto\\_1.pdf](https://e00-elmundo.uecdn.es/documentos/2003/09/garzon_binladen/auto_1.pdf) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>429</sup> Fernando Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge: The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

<sup>430</sup> Patricia Ortega Dolz, "Detenido el principal representante del islam en España en una operación que investiga una trama de financiación yihadista", *Diario El País*, March, 24, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://elpais.com/espana/2021-03-24/detenido-el-principal-representante-del-islam-en-espana-en-una-operacion-que-investiga-una-trama-de-financiacion-yihadista.html> (Accessed: September 2, 2021).



18000/1327  
19/03/2013

**قطر الخيرية**  
Qatar Charity

**المحترمين / السادة / الرابطة الإسلامية للحوار والتعايش - اسبانيا**

السار عليكم وبرحمة الله وبركاته - وود ،

**الغرض: التحويلات المالية 2012 م**

تسديكم قطر الخيرية أطيب تحياتها وتمنياتها لكم بسلامة الصحة والعافية في دينكم ودنياهم ودينكم العامرة المزبد من التقدم والازدهار. بالإنارة إلى المصنوع اعلاء وإيماناً منا بالتعاون اليأس بين قطر الخيرية ومؤسساتكم المسورة لكي يعصل السدم إلى مستحقه، يشرفنا أن نرفق لكم بيان تفصيلي بالبالع الحولة السبكم خلال السنة المالية 2012 م، والبالع قيمتها الإجمالية (6,957,450 ريال قطري) فقط وقدره ستة ملايين وتسعمائة وسبعة وخمسون ألفاً واربعمائة وخمسون ريالاً قطرياً لا غير ، ونسلك في الفترة من 2012/01/01 م وحتى 2012/12/31 م. أمسن منكم التكرم وإرسال التقرير المالي عن ووجه الصفر مدعوماً بالستندات التوتية للصفر (على أن تكون موهبة ومحتوية بختم مؤسساتكم المسورة) في موعد القصاد يوم 2013/03/31 م، على العوان التالي:

العوان: القطر الخيرية، الموحة - قطر، ص.ب. 1224

كلما یرجى موافقتنا بما يلي:

- 1- تقریر من مكتب مسدق خارجی معتمد في الدولة لمرأجة تحویلات قطر الخيرية وتالیق التقریر.
- 2- نسخة مصدقة من العقد المبرم مع مكتب التسلیق.
- 3- صورة شهادة مزولة المهنة للمدقق المالي.



**قطر الخيرية**  
Qatar Charity

4- يتم خصم التعاب مواقب الحسابات من المصروفات الإرابية المؤسسة طكل ثلاثة اشهر، على أن یتم موافقتنا بمسورة من تقریر المرأجة.

وبه حالة وجود أي استفسارات لسديكم یرجى التواصل مع الأخوة التالية أسماهم:

السید / أحمد امین  
هاتف: 44594746  
السید / أنس النجمی  
هاتف: 44594751

یورید الإلكتروني: [ahmedmeen@qcharity.org](mailto:ahmedmeen@qcharity.org)  
یورید الإلكتروني: [ahmaidi@qcharity.org](mailto:ahmaidi@qcharity.org)

وختلوا یسأل فانی الاحترام والتقدير،،

  
**عبد الناصر محمد الزهر الیاعفی**  
المدر التفتیدی للظنون المساندة

العوان: القطر الخيرية، الموحة - قطر، ص.ب. 1224

التقریر من مكتب مسدق خارجی معتمد في الدولة لمرأجة تحویلات قطر الخيرية وتالیق التقریر.

نسخة مصدقة من العقد المبرم مع مكتب التسلیق.

صورة شهادة مزولة المهنة للمدقق المالي.

العوان: القطر الخيرية، الموحة - قطر، ص.ب. 1224

التقریر من مكتب مسدق خارجی معتمد في الدولة لمرأجة تحویلات قطر الخيرية وتالیق التقریر.

نسخة مصدقة من العقد المبرم مع مكتب التسلیق.

صورة شهادة مزولة المهنة للمدقق المالي.

العوان: القطر الخيرية، الموحة - قطر، ص.ب. 1224

التقریر من مكتب مسدق خارجی معتمد في الدولة لمرأجة تحویلات قطر الخيرية وتالیق التقریر.

نسخة مصدقة من العقد المبرم مع مكتب التسلیق.

صورة شهادة مزولة المهنة للمدقق المالي.

التاريخ	الوصف	المبلغ (ريال قطري)	الموالية
18/03/2012	10991	1,000,000.00	اسبانيا
18/03/2012	10992	489,550.00	اسبانيا
18/06/2012	11245	378,000.00	اسبانيا
23/07/2012	11436	1,000,000.00	اسبانيا
04/09/2012	11506	638,400.00	اسبانيا
15/11/2012	11690	1,000,000.00	اسبانيا
15/11/2012	11691	1,000,000.00	اسبانيا
15/11/2012	11692	493,750.00	اسبانيا
15/11/2012	11697	498,750.00	اسبانيا
23/07/2012	11437	482,000.00	اسبانيا
		<b>6,957,450.00</b>	الإجمالي

Picture 14: Detail of the transfers made by Qatar Charity to LICDOE during 2012. A total of 6,957,450 Qatari Riyals (€ 1.6M approx.)<sup>428</sup>

bers of the Spanish Brotherhood milieu and Hay'at Tahrir al Shām.<sup>431</sup> Only a trial, which has not yet taken place, will confirm the veracity of the charges, but the case has already had a strong impact on the Spanish Brotherhood milieu and has led to a public debate about its disproportionate role in representing Spanish Muslims.

has rarely been discussed in the mainstream, the arrests of operation WAMOR being a notable exception.

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

While Spanish authorities and society have devoted substantial attention to jihadism over the last twenty years, the debate on Islamism and the Brotherhood in the country has been extremely limited. Authorities have at times expressed concerns about the influence of political Islam, like when in 2011 the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) distributed a classified report among different concerned ministries warning them about “the uncontrolled influx of funds from the Gulf to different Islamic projects in Spain [...] and the negative impact on coexistence that these funds, which use alternative channels beyond the control of the Spanish financial system, could cause”.<sup>432</sup> However, the issue

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<sup>431</sup> Pelayo Barro and Teresa Gómez, “Uno de los cerebros financieros del 11-S entre los yihadistas detenidos en Madrid,” *OK Diario*, June 23, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://okdiario.com/espana/uno-cerebros-financieros-del-11-s-yihadistas-detenidos-madrid-4282115> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>432</sup> Ignacio Cembrero, “El CNI alerta de que seis países musulmanes financian al islamismo,” *Diario El País*, July 31, 2011. Retrieved from: [https://elpais.com/politica/2011/07/31/actualidad/1312140952\\_655494.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2011/07/31/actualidad/1312140952_655494.html) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

## SWEDEN

Sweden's Muslim Brotherhood milieu is not particularly large number-wise, but exerts a substantial influence in the country and within the Brotherhood's pan-European network. As in many other European countries, the first Brothers arrived in Sweden in the 1970s from various Arab countries, without the strong predominance of a single nationality. They soon created the first Brotherhood-linked organizations, which with time have gained substantial traction.

The network's flagship organization is

represented by the Stockholm-based Islamic Federation in Sweden (Islamska Förbundet i Sverige, IFIS).<sup>433</sup> IFIS's headquarters are located in a building in Stockholm's central Södermalm district, within walking distance from most Swedish political institutions and media outlets. The same building houses many other organizations that serve different purposes but are all part of the network and see the same individuals rotating through them in various leadership positions. Organizations belonging to the Swedish Brotherhood's milieu are also present in other cities, particularly in Gothenburg and Malmö.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Information on the organizations linked to the network are taken directly from IFIS' old website. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120823055805/http://islamiskaforbundet.se/sv/om-ifis/ifis-historia.html> (Accessed: March 29, 2021).

<sup>434</sup> In 2013, Jordanian-born Mahmoud Aldebe, one of the historical leaders of the Swedish Brotherhood milieu, published an open letter to reveal his involvement in the organization and to criticise its aims. He wrote: "*I, Mahmoud Aldebe [...] was one of those who established the Swedish branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden and who wrote its statutes. I abandoned my commitment to the Islamic Federation in Sweden (IFIS) and the Muslim Brotherhood in 2010, after over 25 years as a leading figure for the organization. I'm not saying this to besmirch anyone, but the truth should come forward. The problem is not the movement per se, but those who rule over it. I devoted my whole adult life to defending the Islamic Federation in Sweden, but realized I was its tool—and thus decided to leave all my positions of responsibility in the federation and the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden. This move cost me much, but I sacrificed it all to save myself from the dark tunnel. Now the truth must come to light, and I chose to go out and describe the true picture of the Islamic Federation in Sweden [...]. The problem we are facing is the double message, which is more harmful than beneficial. Dialogue is pursued with Christian and Jewish groups in official forums, but internally they spread fears regarding them. They speak of democracy, but actually do the opposite. The Federation managed to deceive those who want to have dialogue with them in Sweden[.]*" Aldebe continued with a long list of institutions (among others, Ibn Rushd Study Association, Swedish Young Muslims, the Stockholm mosque, and the Gothenburg mosque) and individuals (Chakib Benmakhlof, Mostafa Kharraki, Khemais Bassomi, Mohammad Amin Kharraki, Omar Mustafa, and Mahmoud Khal-fi) that he, like Pierre, claimed are associated with the Brotherhood. Aldebe concluded his letter with a sharp critique of the Brotherhood: "*Today, the Federation uses its conferences to prove to Swedish politicians that it controls Islam in Sweden. The Federation also works to make Sweden accept its order for Muslims. The division is sharp and clear: the enemies of Islam cannot be tolerated. Its representatives are active in large parts of organized Islam in Sweden... [D]emocracy, equality, and freedom of speech are met with great dislike. They speak of democracy to achieve their own goals and to exert power over Islam in Sweden.*" The letter is quoted in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

The Swedish milieu is well plugged into the Brotherhood's pan-European network. IFiS is a founding member of FIOE and its bylaws indicate that "upon a possible dissolution of the association, assets shall be transferred to FIOE".<sup>435</sup> Chakib Benmakhlouf, who has served in leadership positions of various Swedish organizations, was president of FIOE until 2014. The current treasurer of FIOE is Hassan Mahmoud Keliem, who has various financial connections to the Swedish milieu.

Sweden's links to FEMYSO are equally high-profile. Not only was FEMYSO's founding meeting, as seen, held in Stockholm and organised by Sveriges Unga Muslimer (SUM, Sweden's FEMYSO member), but two members of the Swedish milieu, Omar Mustafa and Abdizak Waberi, have served respectively as FEMYSO board member and vice-president.

Finally, Sweden is home to a very active branch of Islamic Relief and a Swedish woman, Lamia el Amri, was appointed

chair of Islamic Relief Worldwide after the organization's entire board was engulfed in an anti-Semitism scandal and resigned.<sup>436</sup> El Amri, who served as administrative head of Ibn Rushd and is married to the former chairman of IFiS, also served as president of the European Forum of Muslim Women,<sup>437</sup> FIOE's women organization.

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

While the Swedish Brotherhood milieu is not, in comparative terms, particularly large, it has managed to obtain a position of influence within its country that few of the other European Brotherhood milieus have. One of the main reasons that explain this dynamic is the particularly favourable environment in which it has historically operated. Sweden, in fact, has long adopted a policy of very pronounced multiculturalism and generously subsidises organizations that purport to advance the interests of minority groups. Moreover, Sweden's public debate has arguably been char-

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<sup>435</sup> Aje Carlbon, *Islamic activism in a multicultural context – ideological continuity or change?*, report by the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency and Malmö University, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.msb.se/siteassets/dokument/publikationer/english-publications/islamic-activism-in-a-multicultural-context-ideological-continuity-or-change.pdf> (Accessed: June 21, 2021).

<sup>436</sup> "*Lamia el Amri Appointed Acting Chair of Islamic Relief*," Islamic Relief official website. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/lamia-el-amri-appointed-acting-chair-of-islamic-relief/> (Accessed: March 29, 2021).

<sup>437</sup> See for reference: EFOMW Annual Report 2016. Retrieved from: <https://efomw.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EFOMW-Annual-Report-2016-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).



acterised by a high level of political correctness, making it easy for Brotherhood-linked actors to label any criticism of their activities as bigoted.

These overlapping factors have allowed the Swedish Brothers to credibly present themselves as representatives of a minority group that seeks special recognition and should be funded by the Swedish state. In 2006, for example, organizations close to it asked for separate laws on marriage and divorce for Muslims.<sup>438</sup> And while this demand was not met, various governmental agencies do regularly fund with large amounts entities belonging to the Swedish Brotherhood milieu. In recent years, there has been growing criticism of this dynamic. The Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), for example, decided to withdraw its funding of Sweden Young Muslims (SUM), the youth organization that co-founded FEMYSO, because, according to the agency, SUM did not “fulfil the democracy requirement”.<sup>439</sup> In 2019, an administrative court validated MUCF’s reasoning that SUM’s extensive Islamist connections and consistent invitations

to preachers who espoused extremist ideas made its commitment to democracy, a crucial element to obtain public funding, questionable.

Another notable element is the Swedish Brotherhood milieu’s proximity to various political parties. The first party with which the Brotherhood milieu formed a relationship was the Social Democrat Party (Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, SAP), the oldest and largest political party in Sweden. In 1999, SAP entered into an agreement with the Brotherhood-dominated Muslim Council of Sweden (Sveriges Muslimska Råd, SMR) with precise numerical benchmarks for the participation of Muslims as candidates for the party.<sup>440</sup> The relationship between SAP and the Brotherhood milieu has remained firm ever since. Tellingly, one of the rising stars of the milieu, Omar Mustafa (who has served as president of IFIS, director of Ibn Rushd, and vice president of Islamic Relief Sverige) was elected to SAP’s national governing board in 2013. Media exposés of the links between the organizations he was involved in and misogynistic and

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<sup>438</sup> *The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden*, by Magnus Norell, Aje Carlbom and Pierre Durrani, report commissioned by MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency), November-December 2016. Page 20. Retrieved from: <https://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Muslim-Brotherhood-Sweden-Magnus-Norrell.pdf> (Accessed: August 27, 2021).

<sup>439</sup> Stockholm’s administrative court, Case 1383-19, October 31, 2019.

<sup>440</sup> Karl-Johan Karlsson, “Slovar att samarbeta med Sveriges muslimska råd,” *Expressen*, January 29, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/s-lovar-att-samarbeta-med-sveriges-muslimska-rad/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

anti-Semitic views forced him to resign only a few days after his election.<sup>441</sup>

But the Swedish Brotherhood's milieu has good relations with other parties. In 2010, Abdirizak Waberi, a prominent member of the milieu who has served as president of IFiS and vice president of FIOE, was elected to the Swedish Parliament for the Moderate Party, the historical centre-right rival of the Social-Democrats, and served on the Defence Committee and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Mehmet Kaplan, one of the top leaders of Sweden Young Muslims (SUM), rose through the ranks of the Green Party, serving in Parliament between 2006 and 2014 and as housing minister between 2014 and 2016 in the Social Democrat–Green Party government. In an interview with Arabic-language media, Mahmoud Khalfi, the imam of Stockholm's IFiS-controlled mosque and, like Pierre, a graduate of IESH, called it “a

breakthrough for Islamists in Sweden” and complimented Swedish politicians for “having normalised relations with the Islamic association known for its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>442</sup> Despite this enthusiasm, Kaplan's time in government was short and troubled. As the media uncovered his close ties to both the Turkish ultra-nationalist group Grey Wolves and Millî Görüş, Kaplan was forced to resign in April 2016.<sup>443</sup>

In recent years, various elements within Swedish politics, media, and academia have started raising concerns about the Brotherhood in Sweden and the debate has become significantly more mainstream than in the past.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> “Social Democrats force out Mustafa over ‘values,’” *The Local*, April 13, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.thelocal.se/20130413/47320/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>442</sup> Aje Carlbon, “*Mångkulturalismen och den politiska mobiliseringen av islam*,” *Invandrare och integration i Danmark*. Stockholm: Makadam Förlag, 2006.

<sup>443</sup> “Sweden's housing minister quits after extremism row,” *The Local*, April 18, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.thelocal.se/20160418/swedens-housing-minister-quits-after-row/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>444</sup> Evin Ismail, “Sverige behöver tydlighet om islamism,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 11, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.svd.se/sverige-behoover-osterrikes-tydlighet-om-islamism> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); “Ibn Rushd är fortsatt kopplat till islamister,” *Expressen*, October 1, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/ibn-rushd-ar-fortsatt-kopplat-till-islamister/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

## SWITZERLAND

The history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Switzerland is somewhat peculiar. On one hand, Switzerland did not experience the arrival of a substantial number of foreign students linked to the movement in previous decades, as other countries did. Probably as a consequence of this dynamic, it does not have a leading and highly organised Brotherhood-linked entity like UOIF or UCOII in neighbouring France and Italy respectively, which can stake a claim at representing Swiss Muslims. But, at the same time, Switzerland has historically been home to a handful of the most senior “pioneers” of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe who have used the country as a sanctuary from which they played a key role in supporting the movement’s expansion throughout the continent. Moreover, Switzerland hosted clusters of prominent Brotherhood activists from various North African countries who for the most part did not engage with the

local Muslim community but used the country as a sanctuary to pursue activities aimed at their countries of origin.

Arguably the most prominent example of this dynamic is the story of Said Ramadan, one of the Egyptian Brotherhood’s most important thinkers who had served as the personal secretary of Brotherhood’s founder Hassan al Banna and married his daughter before leaving Egypt in the 1950s.<sup>445</sup> After a short stint in Cologne, Ramadan settled in Geneva, opening the city’s first Islamic centre and using it as a base from which he facilitated the creation of some of the first Brotherhood-linked entities in other European countries (most famously, the large mosque in Munich and the organization that still today runs it, the IGD) and connected other Brotherhood pioneers throughout the continent.<sup>446</sup> In doing so, Ramadan could count on the broad financial support of the Muslim World League, the Saudi government-funded transnational body created with the aim

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<sup>445</sup> For the life of Said Ramadan, see: M. H. Faruqi, “*Les Frères Musulmans: Politique de ‘Rabbaniyya,’ les Prières avant le Pouvoir,*” Historique du Centre Islamique, Islamic Center of Geneva. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20070203160725/http://www.cige.org/historique.htm> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Tariq Ramadan, “Une Vie Entière,” Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20080803083917/http://membres.lycos.fr/oasislam/personnages/tariq/tariq.html> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Tariq Ramadan, “4th August...10 Years,” Tariq Ramadan official website, August 4, 2005). Retrieved from: <https://tariqramadan.com/arabic/2005/08/04/4th-august-10-years/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>446</sup> Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade, 2010).

of spreading the Saudi interpretation of Islam worldwide.<sup>447</sup> After his death in 1995, his son Hani took the helm of the Islamic Centre of Geneva. Hani's younger brother Tariq was active in various Islamic activities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland in the 1990s and early 2000s, but then left the country and became one of the world's most celebrated and controversial Muslim intellectuals until serious charges of sexual misbehaviour caused his downfall.<sup>448</sup>

No less important than Said Ramadan in shaping the activities of the Brotherhood in Europe in its early days were Yusuf Nada and Ghaleb Himmat. While technically domiciled in the Italian enclave in Swiss territory of Campione d'Italia, Nada and Himmat conducted many of their high-profile financial activities in Switzerland and neighbouring Liechtenstein. The duo was also active in funding various Islamic activities in

Ticino: Himmat, for example, founded and headed the Comunità Islamica nel Cantone Ticino.<sup>449</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, various Brotherhood activists from North African countries established a presence in Switzerland after fleeing their countries of origin. Several members of the Tunisian Ennahdha, for example, settled in the French speaking part of the country and established a broad array of NGOs there.<sup>450</sup> In 2006, Ennahdha even hosted its European congress in the bucolic canton of Obwalden.<sup>451</sup> Many Ennahdha activists left Switzerland after the Arab Spring.

Many Algerian Brotherhood activists also found refuge in the French speaking part of Switzerland. Most prominent among them were Ahmed Zaoui and Mourad Dhina. The former was one of the founders of the Islamic Salvation Front's (Front

<sup>447</sup> Ian Johnson, "The Brotherhood's Westward Expansion," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, February 5, 2008.

<sup>448</sup> "Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan faces new rape charge," *AFP-Swiss Info*, October 23, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/islamic-scholar-tariq-ramadan-faces-new-rape-charge/46116152> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>449</sup> For further reference see: Comunità Islamica nel Cantone Ticino, *Swiss Business Monitor*. Retrieved from: <https://business-monitor.ch/en/companies/96098-comunita-islamica-nel-cantone-ticino/management> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>450</sup> Ferial Mestiri, "L'opposant tunisien attaché à la Suisse," *Le Temps*, January 20, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.letemps.ch/suisse/lopposant-tunisien-attache-suisse> (Accessed: June 20, 2021); Daniel Rickenbacher, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Switzerland: Part Two," *European Eye on Radicalization*, June 11, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://eeradicalization.com/the-muslim-brotherhood-in-switzerland-part-two/>

<sup>451</sup> DAP annual report, 2006, p. 31.

Islamique du Salut, FIS) Coordination Council. Having entered the country illegally, Zaoui was deported to Burkina Faso in 1998 for having compromised Switzerland's internal and external security.<sup>452</sup> Dhina was elected head of FIS' Executive Office from October 2002 to October 2004 and the group held many activities on Swiss territory during his tenure, including a secret meeting held in an Alpine chalet in canton Vaud in July 2004.<sup>453</sup>

Libyan Brotherhood activists, on the other hand, settled mostly in the German speaking part of Switzerland. In particular, two high-profile activists settled in the Zurich area. The first is Emad Elbannani, one of the founders of the Brotherhood in the Benghazi area who also served as FIOE's Secretary General in the organization's early days. The second is Suleiman Abdelkader, who served as general overseer of the Libyan Brotherhood. Given their presence, it is not surprising that in early 2011 the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood met twice in Zurich to deliberate its pos-

ture towards the Libyan revolution.<sup>454</sup>

These Brotherhood networks have historically used Switzerland as a quintessential sanctuary, and the fact that many of them used Swiss territory to organise international meetings of their national branches is telling of how they perceive Switzerland as a relatively safe place. They have also used the country, and particularly the Geneva area, to operate charitable organizations, NGOs, financial activities—and related bank accounts. But it is noteworthy that the vast majority of these activities have historically been aimed at supporting Brotherhood activities outside of Switzerland and, in most cases, Europe. For various reasons, most of these high-profile Brotherhood clusters appeared to devote little energy to the sizeable Swiss Muslim population.

The exception to this dynamic is the Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse (LMS, also known as Rabita). Switzerland's FIOE member, the LMS was created by Tunisian-born Mohamed Karmous in

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<sup>452</sup> DAP annual report, 2004, p. 33; DAP annual report, 2006, p. 31; Response of the Federal Council to a question posed by Didier Berberat (Frais d'hébergement de Ahmed Zaoui au Burkina Faso), September 2, 1999. Retrieved from: at [http://www.parlament.ch/f/suche/pages/geschaefte.aspx?gesch\\_id=19991122](http://www.parlament.ch/f/suche/pages/geschaefte.aspx?gesch_id=19991122) (Accessed: March 14, 2021).

<sup>453</sup> DAP annual report, 2002, p. 38; DAP annual report, 2004, p. 33.

<sup>454</sup> Omar Ashour, "Between ISIS and a Failed State: The Saga of Libyan Islamists." Rethinking Political Islam Series, The Brookings Institution, 2015; Alison Pargeter, *Return to the Shadows: The Muslim Brotherhood and An-Nahda since the Arab Spring*, London: Saqi, 2016, page 127.

1994.<sup>455</sup> Based in the French-speaking part of the country, Karmous and his wife Nadia are central figures in Switzerland's Brotherhood-leaning milieu, well connected both nationally and internationally. Between them, they run an array of organizations that include, aside from the LMS, the Musée des Civilisations de l'Islam in la Chaux-de-Fonds, the Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes de Suisse (ACFMS, a member of the European Forum for Muslim Women), the Centre Culturel des Musulmans de Lausanne, the Wakef Suisse, and several other entities.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, documents uncovered by the Qatar Papers investigation have revealed how the Karmouses were key recipients of significant funds from Qatar Charity. The couple received almost 1.4 million Swiss Francs for their museum of Islamic civilization between 2011 and 2014, 1,589,639 Francs for the Islamic centre in Lausanne, and at least 159,000 for the Islamic centre of Lugano, where Karmous sits on the board

(showing a connection with the network of Nada and Himmat, which the former openly admits). The couple received an estimated total of at least 3.66 million Euros from the Qatar Charity.<sup>456</sup> It is noteworthy that in 2007 Mohamed Karmous was stopped by French customs authorities with 50,000 Euros in cash destined for IESH (Karmous is the treasurer of the Paris branch of IESH).<sup>457</sup> Despite this access to large funds, the LMS, unlike many national FIOE member organizations in other European countries, plays only a marginal role within Swiss Islam, and particularly in the German speaking part.

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

Switzerland's policy towards the presence of Muslim Brotherhood networks on its soil has historically been one of laissez faire.<sup>458</sup> While there have been instances in which individual activists were expelled or denied access to the country, for the most part Swiss author-

<sup>455</sup> *Islambezogene Weiterbildung in der Schweiz – Bestandsaufnahme und Bedarfsanalyse*, study by the Schweizerischen Zentrums für Islam und Gesellschaft (SZIG) at the Universität Freiburg, April 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.unifr.ch/szig/de/weiterbildung/moga/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>456</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l'émirat finance l'islam de France et d'Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Daniel Rickenbacher, "The Beginnings of Political Islam in Switzerland: Said Ramadan's Muslim Brotherhood Mosque in Geneva and the Swiss Authorities," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Volume 11, 2020 - Issue 2. June 10, 2020. Pp. 179-202.

ities allowed for Brotherhood networks to settle and carry out their operations in the country.

That is not to say that the issue has not been at times debated in political settings and the public arena, albeit with a very broad array of opinions, as in all European countries. But the debate seems to focus on specific individuals (such as the Ramadan brothers, who have routinely been under the spotlight for their controversial positions) and/or controversies (such as the funding of Swiss mosques by Qatar) and not expand into a broader assessment of the presence of the Brotherhood in the country and what that entails. There is also little publicly available knowledge about the exact activities of the Brotherhood in the country.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Forschung zur Unterwanderung von religiösen und politischen Institutionen durch legalistisch operierende islamistische Organisationen in der Schweiz, insbesondere auch durch Mitglieder der Muslimbruderschaft, Q&A at the Nationalrat, December 18, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefft?AffairId=20204706> (Accessed: March 14, 2021).

## UNITED KINGDOM

Arguably no other European country has a presence of Muslim Brotherhood networks that is historically, quantitatively and qualitatively more important than the United Kingdom. Deep historical ties dating back to the colonial times between the UK and many Middle Eastern countries, the country's large number of prestigious universities teaching in a language many in the Arab world were fluent in, generous asylum policies and the domino effect that led more activists to join already existed clusters are the overlapping reasons that explain the disproportionate presence of the Brotherhood in the UK.

In substance, starting in the 1960s, virtually every Middle Eastern and North African branch of the Brotherhood established some presence in the UK. The Egyptian branch has historically been one of the oldest and largest to operate in the country. In the mid-1990s, one of its most senior members, then Shura

Council member Kamal Helbawy, even opened an official media centre for the Brotherhood and became the organization's official spokesperson in the West.<sup>460</sup> In 2013, after the government of Mohammed Mursi was removed, many senior Brotherhood activists found refuge in the UK and London became a key hub for the group to reorganise its activities outside of Egypt.<sup>461</sup> Telling of how crucial its UK presence is for the Egyptian Brotherhood, in September 2020 Secretary General of the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood and long-time London resident Ibrahim Munir became the acting general leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>462</sup>

A similarly high-profile presence has historically been created by the Libyan Brotherhood. In 1970, one of the branch's pioneers, Ashur Shamis, set up the Muslim Welfare House, the Brotherhood's first guest house in London and now a FIOE member organization.<sup>463</sup> But the Libyans' main hub in the UK is Manchester, where they created a network

<sup>460</sup> Alison Pargeater, *The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power*, London: Saqi Books, 2013.

<sup>461</sup> *Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings*, House of Commons, December 17, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/muslim-brotherhood-review-main-findings> (Accessed: April 11, 2021).

<sup>462</sup> Ayman Meka, "In a statement, the Brotherhood recognizes the rebellion of the group's youth because of Ibrahim Mounir [إبراهيم منير] الجماعة بسبب إرهاب منير," *Mobtada*, September 4, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200906112319/https://www.mobtada.com/details/965377> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>463</sup> Innes Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam*, London: Hurst, 2014. Page 103.



of mosques, businesses and organizations. Many members of the milieu returned to Libya during or right after the conflict that led to the end of the regime of Muammar Qaddafi, engaging in fighting and occupying senior positions in Libya's Brotherhood-leaning post-revolutionary government. Similarly, several members of the Tunisian branch, including its long-time spiritual leader Rached Ghannouchi, left the UK after many years of residency during the Arab Spring to participate in the political process that their home country was about to start.

The Iraqi branch of the Brotherhood also has a long history in the UK. Some of its most important activists studied in the UK but then left the country: individuals like Hisham al Talib, Jamal Barzinji and Ahmed Totonji for the US, Nooh al Kaddo for Ireland. But some remained and became key players of the UK scene. Among them, the abovementioned Ahmed al Rawi, president of the Muslim Association of Britain and FIOE, and board member of Europe Trust. Also prominent are individuals like Omer el Hamdoon and Anas al Tikriti, children of leaders of the Iraqi Brotherhood who fled to the UK in the 1970s, and then both presidents of the Muslim Association of Britain. Other prominent branches are the Palestinian, whose members have often been accused of funding Ha-

mas from the UK; the Syrian; the Sudanese; and those from various Arab Gulf countries (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain), some of which have grown in size in recent years after local regimes began cracking down on their domestic Brotherhood networks.

In substance, over the last sixty years the UK has been home, whether temporarily or permanently, to some of not just Europe's, but the world's most prominent Islamist leaders and to extensive Brotherhood network, becoming one of the main meeting points for leaders of the branches from all over the world. Each of these networks set up its own infrastructure, conducting a broad array of activities to support the group in their countries of origin. Yet, while the divide among nationalities has always been important, a web of personal and organisational connections has made the members of the various "Brotherhoods" operating in the UK part of a cohesive milieu.

Some of these networks remained insular, focused exclusively on supporting the struggle in their home countries and not involving themselves in activities and debates related to Islam in Britain. Others, while never forgetting the vicissitudes of their countries of origin and the region, eventually decided to focus a significant part of their energies on British

Muslim communities and British society and politics more broadly. They founded a broad array of organizations, think tanks, charities, television channels, and engaged in many forms of political activism. Arguably the most important of these mobilization platforms is the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB). Established in 1997, it had among its founders and main activists prominent individuals with deep links to the Egyptian (Kamal Helbawy), Iraqi (Anas al Tikriti and Omar el Hamdoun), Palestinian (Azzam Tamimi and Mohammed Sawalha), Libyan (El Amin Belhaj) and Tunisian (Said Ferjani) branches of the Brotherhood.

MAB was extremely influential both within the British Muslim community and in the public debate in the mid-2000s, but, as many other public faces of the British Brotherhood milieu, it seems to have lost much of its influence in recent years. While some of the “national” and more inward-looking branches of the Brotherhood are still very active, the public face of the UK Brotherhood milieu seems in crisis, gutted by the departure of many of its charismatic leaders who returned to their home countries during the Arab Spring.

More influential have become, on the other hand, networks linked to Jamat-e-Islami (Jel), the Brotherhood’s twin organization in South Asia. As seen,

the two groups have long worked hand-in-hand in the UK and their cooperation was also crucial for the formation of FIOE. Moreover, Jel and Brotherhood leaders played a key role in the creation in 1997 of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the organization theoretically deputized to represent all British Muslims.

Given the extremely high profile of the UK Brotherhood milieu, it is not surprising that it has played a key role in the network’s pan-European structures. As seen, FIOE’s first headquarters were in Markfield, hosted by the Jel’s Islamic Foundation, and its first president was Ahmed al Rawi, a prominent member of the UK-based Iraqi Brotherhood milieu. Three British organizations are currently members of FIOE: MAB, which was a founding member, the abovementioned Muslim Welfare House and the Muslim Women Society for the Future. Similarly, Young Muslims UK, a Jel-linked organization, was a founding member of FEMYSO and, according to FEMYSO’s own literature, the Jel-linked Islamic Foundation played a role in its foundation. Five British organizations are FEMYSO members: the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS, which over the years has seen some of the world’s most famous Islamist leaders hold leadership positions in it during their time in British universities), the Youth section of MAB, the Muslim Scout Fellowship, Young

Muslims UK and the Islamic Foundation. Moreover, as seen, Europe Trust is based in the UK and several members of the UK Brotherhood milieu have served on its board. In addition, ECFR is dominated by scholars residing in the UK, which contributes with 6 members to the Council, among them the current President, Abdullah al Judai.<sup>464</sup> Finally, Islamic Relief Worldwide is also based in the UK (in Birmingham) and IESH has campuses in Wales and England.

### **Government and civil society attitudes**

The British government's approach towards the presence on UK soil of Brotherhood and, more broadly, Islamist actors was for decades one of, in general terms, laissez-faire and this, coupled with the country's generous asylum laws, constituted the main reason for the formation of such a large milieu in the country. Moreover, substantial elements within the British foreign policy and intelligence establishments have

traditionally seen the Brothers as assets to achieve their goals.

A 2005 internal memorandum from the Foreign Office on the visit to London of global Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader Yusuf al Qaradawi perfectly exemplifies this line of thinking. While the Foreign Office admitted that Qaradawi's open support for suicide bombings in Iraq and Palestine was troubling, it also acknowledged that "they are not unusual or even exceptional amongst Muslims," both in the Middle East and the United Kingdom. Endorsing the cleric's visit to the UK, the Foreign Office praised al Qaradawi's role in "promoting mainstream Islam" and suggested that "having individuals like Qaradawi on our side should be our aim."<sup>465</sup>

The belief in Whitehall and throughout the British government was that "radicals can be controlled, and that they, in turn, can control angry young men," and this, shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, led to important policy

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<sup>464</sup> See for reference: Members of the Council, the European Council for Fatwa and Research. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/category/الأعضاء/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>465</sup> British Foreign Office internal memo on Yusuf al Qaradawi, July 14th, 2005, published in appendix of Martin Bright, *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State's Flirtation with Radical Islam*, report published by the Policy Exchange, 2006. Retrieved from: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/when-progressives-treat-with-reactionaries-the-british-states-flirtation-with-radical-islamism/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

decisions.<sup>466</sup> To implement “police negotiation leading to partnership with Muslim groups conventionally deemed to be subversive to democracy,” shortly after 9/11 Scotland Yard created the Muslim Contact Unit (MCU).<sup>467</sup> Guided by this philosophy, the MCU formed the “London partnerships,”<sup>468</sup> including a partnership with activists from the Muslim Welfare House and the Muslim Association of Britain to counter the appeal of notorious jihadist cleric Abu Hamza in the Finsbury Park neighbourhood. “Salafis and Islamists,” argued MCU head Bob Lambert, “often have the best antidotes to al Qaida propaganda once it has taken hold.”<sup>469</sup>

During those years, British authorities frequently partnered with and funded a broad array of Brotherhood-linked organizations. In some cases, as exemplified by the MCU, this approach was driven by a careful assessment of the Islamist nature of their partners and the deeply held belief that they constituted the best suited partners. In other cases,

for example in instances of funding by some local councils, partnerships were established without much knowledge of the partners’ nature.

By the second half of the 2000s, the Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown progressively abandoned positive views of non-violent Islamists, including any role they could play in countering radicalization, and decided to de-platform and de-fund them. The perception and policy shift were even more dramatic in the early 2010s under David Cameron’s Conservative government. In a landmark speech addressing the issue, Cameron argued that:

“Some organisations that seek to present themselves as a gateway to the Muslim community are showered with public money despite doing little to combat extremism. As others have observed, this is like turning to a right-wing fascist party to fight a violent white supremacist movement. So we should properly judge these organisations: do they

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<sup>466</sup> Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton, *Choosing our friends wisely Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups*, Policy Exchange, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/choosing-our-friends-wisely-criteria-for-engagement-with-muslim-groups/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>467</sup> Robert Lambert, “Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case Study,” *Political Science & Politics*, 41: 31-35, 2008.

<sup>468</sup> Robert Lambert, *Countering Al-Qaeda in London: Police and Muslims in Partnership* (London: Hurst, 2011).

<sup>469</sup> Robert Lambert, “Ignoring the lessons of the past,” *Criminal Justice Matters*, 73, September 2008, p. 23.

believe in universal human rights – including for women and people of other faiths? Do they believe in equality of all before the law? Do they believe in democracy and the right of people to elect their own government? Do they encourage integration or separation? These are the sorts of questions we need to ask.”<sup>470</sup>

In 2014, as a continuation of this approach, Cameron ordered a high-profile government-wide review of “the philosophy, activities, impact and influence on UK national interests, at home and abroad, of the Muslim Brotherhood and of government policy towards the organisation”—a first of its kind in the West. The process went on for months, not without controversies and difficulties, and a two-hundred-page report was presented to the prime minister. While the report has not been released, in December 2015 the British government published an executive summary of its findings.<sup>471</sup>

Addressing the presence in the UK, the Review stated that:

“In the 1990s the Muslim Brotherhood and their associates established public facing and apparently national organi-

sations in the UK to promote their views. None were openly identified with the Muslim Brotherhood and membership of the Muslim Brotherhood remained (and still remains) a secret. But for some years the Muslim Brotherhood shaped the new Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), dominated the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and played an important role in establishing and then running the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)”.

It also found that:

“... as of mid-2014 the Brotherhood in the UK comprised a range of organisations, loosely associated together but without common command and control or a single leader. Some of these organisations had emerged in and from the UK. Others represented third country Brotherhood organisations using London as a base for overseas activities. The most senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood permanently resident in the UK told the review team that he coordinated some Muslim Brotherhood international activity, but not Muslim Brotherhood activity in this country.”

The Review noted the presence of a wide web of charities linked to the net-

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<sup>470</sup> “David Cameron’s Speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism”, *New Statesman*, February 5, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>471</sup> *Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings*, House of Commons, December 17, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/muslim-brotherhood-review-main-findings> (Accessed: April 11, 2021).

work, some of which were involved in funding Hamas. It did state clearly that the Brotherhood network was not engaged in any kind of terrorist activity in the country, and noted that “[t]he Muslim Brotherhood in the UK (eg MAB) has often condemned terrorist related activity in the UK associated with al Qai’da.” But the Review also noted that “[l]iterature in the Muslim Brotherhood movement in this country continues to reflect some of the concerns of the foundational Muslim Brotherhood ideology, notably that western society is inherently hostile to Muslim faith and interests and that Muslims must respond by maintaining their distance and autonomy.” “Material still being promoted by UKIM as of July 2014,” the Review brought as example, “continued to explicitly claim that it is not possible for an observant Muslim to live under a non-Islamic system of government (and anticipated the forthcoming ‘victory’ of Islam over communism, capitalist democracy and secular materialism).” The Review’s overall assessment was that “aspects of Muslim Brotherhood ideology and tactics, in this country and overseas, are contrary to our values

and have been contrary to our national interests and our national security.”

The Review triggered mixed reactions and, predictably, strong criticisms. Brotherhood-linked actors criticised various aspects of it. MAB, for example, called it “a flawed, misinformed and skewed report which contained many falsehoods” and stated that claims of “any administrative, organisational or financial connection” of MAB with the Brotherhood were “absurd and will be legally contested.”<sup>472</sup> Strong criticism of the Review’s findings also came from the House of Commons’ Foreign Affairs Committee, which in 2017 issued its own report that criticised both the process and many of the findings of the Review.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> “*Response to Telegraph’s attack on Muslim Scout groups*,” News & Events, the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, February 8, 2019. Retrieved from: <http://euomuslims.org/en/category/news-amp-events/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).”

<sup>473</sup> “*Political Islam; and the Muslim Brotherhood Review*,” Sixth Report of Session 2016-2017, Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, November 1, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaaff/118/118.pdf> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).”









PART  
**FOUR**

## NARRATIVES

The European Brotherhood is often accused of using a deceptive double discourse, showing a moderate and friendly face when dealing with European establishments but expressing significantly different views in venues or on platforms they assume only internal audiences would access. Making a clear judgment about the Brothers' speech in Europe is by no means simple. Do they change register depending on the audience? Is the message different depending on the language used? Do controversial statements constitute an exception or a widespread current of thought within the movement that should not be made visible? These complex issues need a sober analysis and not a tabloid-style approach. Accusations of double discourse, in fact, have been at times unfair, cherry-picking and decontextualizing statements by members of Brotherhood milieus.

Yet the issue is unquestionably of concern, as the instances, in which the Brothers use dual narratives, sending different messages to different audiences, are not uncommon. It is arguable that this dynamic largely stems from the difficult position the European Brothers have carved out for themselves. Even though many of the core elements of

the Brotherhood's discourse are based on a shared cultural and historical baggage, the incorporation of new elements is part of a dynamic process of evolution and adaptation to the context that is common to all branches of the group worldwide.<sup>475</sup> This phenomenon is particularly acute in Europe, where the adaptation of parts of the classical discourse of the Brotherhood to the European context and culture requires an additional effort. This is due to the context of non-Muslim majority societies in which the European Brothers operate and their strategy to present themselves as moderate and legitimate interlocutors.

European Brothers, in fact, have to simultaneously speak to very different audiences. Their desire to become privileged interlocutors of European establishments leads them to adopt the language of democracy, human rights, interreligious dialogue, integration and active citizenship. At the same time, the European Brothers do need to maintain the loyalty and respect of the more conservative segments of the Muslim community, their natural audience. To do so, they do need to adopt views on issues such as, for example, homosexuality or women rights, which are severely at odds with those adopted by European

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<sup>475</sup> Nathan C. Funky Abdul Aziz Said, "Islam and the West: Narratives of Conflict and Conflict Transformation," *International Journal of Peace Studies*, issue 9-1, 2004, pp. 1-28.

governments. In substance, the European Brothers are engaged in a constant rhetorical tightrope walking exercise, which often fails.

Irrespective of its causes, as understandable as they might be, this balancing act has problematic consequences. The European Brothers' dissemination of views that are not rarely at odds with human rights and democratic values to its wide audience is something European societies should not take lightly. The risk that, thanks to the Brothers' broad dissemination apparatus, these views could gain traction within large sections of Europe's Muslim communities is something that is of concern to most European governments.

Indeed, top leaders of the European Brotherhood have a long track record of making problematic statements on various topics. Arguably, one of the issues on which the positions they expressed in some venues are severely at odds with those expressed in others is religious tolerance. For years the European Brothers have enthusiastically engaged in interreligious dialogue, often establishing various forms of communication and cooperation with representatives of various

religious groups, and in particular of the other two large monotheistic religions, Christianity and Judaism.

Yet, it is not difficult to find statement from top leaders of the movement that indicate negative characterizations of and antagonistic views towards other religions and religious groups. For example, in 2000 Ali Abu Shwaima, former FIOE board member, IESH founding member and Europe Trust board member, in an op-ed from his pulpit as editor of *Al Europiya*, FIOE's official magazine, argued that the goal of interfaith dialogue was "the collaboration [of all 3 religions] against atheism and pornography, the enemies of faith", and that even if that is a common ground from where to start debating, "you have to know that our book [the Quran] is rightly guided and theirs, either the Torah or the Bible, have been distorted".<sup>476</sup> Twenty years later, Yassin Baradai, who succeeded Abu Shwaima in leading UCOII, the main organization of the Italian Brotherhood milieu, and works as media manager for Islamic Relief Italia, similarly argued on his Facebook page that Christianity and Judaism were "a heresy, a deviation from the original message of the prophets."<sup>477</sup>

<sup>476</sup> *Al Europiya* magazine, issue 18 [مجلة الاوروبيا], June 2000, page 16.

<sup>477</sup> Giovanni Giacalone, "Le accuse del leader islamico: cristiani ed ebrei sono 'eretici'", *Il Giornale*, August 31, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/segretario-ucouii-ebraismo-e-cristianesimo-storpiature-ed-1886534.html> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

It is also noteworthy that ECFR, the main jurisprudential body of the Brotherhood's pan-European structure deputed to issue religious advice to all European Muslims, has taken a controversial position, in line with some of the most conservative lines of thinking within Islamic law, in relation the celebration of non-Muslim holidays, an issue that is quite relevant in a European setting. "We agree with them [medieval Islamic scholars Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al Qayyim] on objecting to Muslims celebrating the festivals of polytheists and the people of the Book," stated a 2000 fatwa by ECFR. "This is impermissible, for we have our own festivals and they have theirs". The resolution continues delving into holiday greetings, clarifying that "it is permissible for a Muslim [...] to congratulate them [non-Muslims] on their festivities verbally or through cards that do not contain a sign or religious statements that disagree with Islamic tenets, such as the Cross, for Islam denies the very concept of the Cross [...] And provid-

ed the words of congratulation on such occasions do not include any approval of their religion or satisfaction with it".<sup>478</sup>

Negative views on other religious groups have not been limited to Christians. Minority religious groups from the Middle East – in substance, non-Sunni Muslims – are often the target of disparaging comments. For example, Moncef Zenati, a national executive UOIF/MF bureau member in charge of distance learning at IESH Château-Chinon describes Yazidis as "a deviant group [...] of Satan worshippers,"<sup>479</sup> Alawites as "a sect whose ultimate goal is the destruction of Sunni Islam [...] that has always supported the invaders of the Muslim world"<sup>480</sup> and even gives tips and advice to his audience in order to identify and "unmask" hidden Shiites among the Sunni community.<sup>481</sup> Similarly, IRW founder Hany el Banna has referred to Yazidis as "devil worshippers," a particularly odious slur also used by ISIS while justifying their

<sup>478</sup> Resolution 3/6. Congratulating non-Muslims on their festivals. The Sixth Ordinary Session of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, August-September 2000. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2014/01/31/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%89-6-2/> (Accessed: June 5, 2021).

<sup>479</sup> Conference entitled "*Le dogme des Yazidites*," Havre De Savoir, June 11, 2015. Retrieved from: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-zSWp171Og](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-zSWp171Og) (Accessed: June 9, 2021).

<sup>480</sup> Conference entitled "*Le dogme des Alaouites (Nouçayrites)*," Havre De Savoir, June 11, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMCjxkg6Reo> (Accessed: June 9, 2021).

<sup>481</sup> Vincent Geisser, "Le chiite imaginaire, Nouvelle figure de l'altérité dans l'islam de France?" *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 145 | 2019, pp. 145-170.

slaughter of members of the religious community in Iraq.<sup>482</sup>

Arguably the group that most commonly is the target of highly offensive comments by European Brothers is Jews. Yusuf al Qaradawi, spiritual leader of the global Muslim Brotherhood and key drive behind the creation of many of the Brotherhood's pan-European organizations, is notorious for his anti-Semitic views and even described Hitler as one of the many carrying out God's commands of punishing Jews for their corruption throughout history.<sup>483</sup> "Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the Jews people who would punish them for their corruption," "The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. By means of all the things he did to them – even though they exaggerated this issue – he managed to put them in their place. This was divine punishment for them... Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the [Muslim] believers."<sup>484</sup>

Despite these views, repeated on multiple occasions, the European Brotherhood has never distanced itself from Qaradawi, which is still the network's undisputed spiritual leader. To the contrary, the positions of many of its leaders and institutions mirror Qaradawi's and take strongly anti-Semitic tones. A recent controversy that engulfed Islamic Relief Worldwide provides a good evidence-based example of this dynamic.

In July 2020, in fact, The London Times released a story detailing its discovery of antisemitic posts made by Heshmat Khalifa, trustee and director of IRW, on his personal Facebook account.<sup>485</sup> They included insults directed at Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al Sisi, whom Mr. Khalifa labelled a "pimp son of the Jews," "Zionist pig," "Zionist traitor," and "Zionist criminal." Mr. Khalifa also described Jews as "the grandchildren of monkeys and pigs". In addition, Mr. Khalifa made multiple positive comments

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<sup>482</sup> "Islamic Relief founder Hany El Banna called Yazidis 'devil worshippers'," *The National*, November 18, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/islamic-relief-founder-hany-el-banna-called-yazidis-devil-worshippers-1.1113277> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>483</sup> Excerpt from Yusuf al Qaradawi's speech, Al Jazeera TV, January 30, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xq560g> (Accessed: May 24, 2021).

<sup>484</sup> "Sheik Yousuf Al-Qaradhawi: Allah Imposed Hitler upon the Jews to Punish Them – 'Allah Willing, the Next Time Will Be at the Hand of the Believers,'" MEMRI TV, Clip number 2005, Al Jazeera TV (Qatar) – 28–30 January 28–30, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.memri.org/tv/sheik-yousuf-al-qaradhawi-allah-imposed-hitler-upon-jews-punish-them-allah-willing-next-time-will> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>485</sup> Andrew Norfolk & Ryan Watts, "Islamic Relief leader quits as Times discovers antisemitic posts," *The Sunday Times*, July 24, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamic-relief-leader-quits-as-times-discovers-antisemitic-posts-5dplrw9w> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

regarding Hamas, a group designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union. He

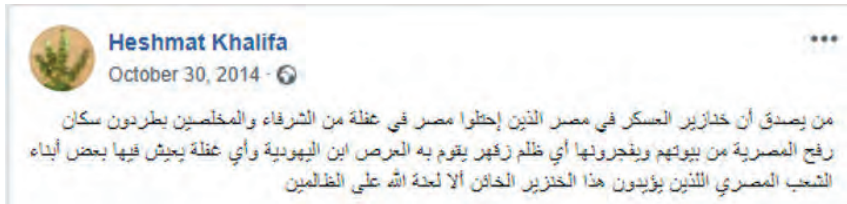
called the group, “the purest resistance movement in modern history.”



Picture 15: Heshmat Khalifa’s Facebook post insulting Jews.<sup>486</sup>

Translation:

“For the first time in modern history prayers in al Aqsa Mosque are forbidden and those who close it are the grandchildren of monkeys and pigs in collusion with Egypt”



Picture 16: Heshmat Khalifa’s Facebook post insulting the Egyptian army and the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah al Sisi.<sup>487</sup>

Translation:

“Who would believe that the pigs of the military in Egypt, and who occupied Egypt in a moment’s inattention from the honourable and the faithful, are evicting the Egyptian residents of Rafah [a city in Sinai] from their homes and reducing these to rubble? What injustice and subjugation is being imposed by the pimp son of the Jews, and what heedlessness are we seeing among some Egyptians who support this traitorous pig. May God damn the oppressors.”

<sup>486</sup> Heshmat Khalifa’s Facebook page was closed following the controversy after The London Times investigation. Screenshot in possession of the authors.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.



Picture 17: Heshmat Khalifa's Facebook post mocking the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah al Sisi.<sup>488</sup>

Translation:

"Al Jazeera will release a new leak for you today... don't worry... we've got your back. Afif Kohfafi489 sends his regards and has this message for you: Go easy with the foolishness a little... you have exposed us."

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Afif Kohfafi was the head of the Israeli intelligence services.



Picture 18: Heshmat Khalifa's Facebook post mocking the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah al Sisi.<sup>490</sup>

Translation:

“This is the exact situation of the country now, dear al Sisi supporters. Wake up, you are losing your country”.

In al Sisi's boots:

Left: the Judiciary; Right: the Media

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.





Picture 19: Heshmat Khalifa's Facebook post showing sympathy towards Hamas.<sup>491</sup>

Translation:

“Historical photos from #AlQassam Brigades’ greatest military show #Hamas\_27

#Made\_in\_Palestine #Ababil\_Aircraft – reconnaissance and combat [Iranian] aircraft flying in the sky of #Gaza during the show

- New missiles enter service and others whose range has not been revealed will cause unprecedented terror among the Zionist.

- Al Qassam Shields... And Al Qassam Elite Unit and Diving Squad.

In the presence of a large crowd and with a huge military march, with the participation of the political leadership of the Movement [Hamas].”

<sup>491</sup> Op. Cit.



Heshmat Khalifa

February 28, 2015 · 🌐

حماس يا شرف الأمة ستظلتي أبقى حركة مقاومة في التاريخ الحديث وستظلتي رمزا للشرف والمقاومة والإسلام الصحيح نعتز كمصريين أن تولوا الحكم في مصر تحت رعاية ابن الموساد السيبي تولى مجموعة من الفاسدين ومعهم قضاه لا يوصفون إلا بأنهم عاهرين فاسدين مجرمين فالفه حسينا ونعم الوكيل أرجو من الجميع أن يدعوا على السيبي ونظامه وقضائه ومن والآه ومن فوضه بدعوة سيدنا موسى على فرعون وقومه ألا يؤمنوا حتى يروا العذاب الأليم آمين يارب

👍 16

1 Comment

Picture 20: Heshmat Khalifa's Facebook post showing his support for Hamas.<sup>492</sup>

Translation:

“Hamas, honour of the Umma [Nation of Islam], you will remain the purest resistance movement in modern history, a symbol of honour, resistance and authentic Islam. We apologise as Egyptians that we are ruled in Egypt, under the guidance of Mos-sad’s son Al Sisi, by a group of corrupt individuals along with judges who can only be described as immoral, corrupt and criminal. Allah is Sufficient for Us and the Best Disposer of Affairs. I call on everyone to curse Al Sisi and his regime, his judges and his supporters with the same curse that the Prophet Moses pronounced against the Pharaoh and his people: that they may not believe until they see the painful torment [of hell]. Amen o Lord.”

<sup>492</sup> Op. Cit.



Picture 21: Heshmat Khalifa's Facebook post showing his support for Al Qassam Brigades and insulting the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah al Sisi.<sup>493</sup>

Translation:

“An immoral court in Egypt issues a verdict that is a disgrace to all Muslims and Egyptians as it declares Al Qassam Brigades a terrorist organization. Do you see the immorality and corruption of the judiciary in this era of occupation led by the pig Al Sisi!!

Do you, supporters of this Zionist traitor, still not understand? Then you are pigs and not humans.<sup>494</sup> If you refuse to understand and accept then you are worse than pigs. Allah is Sufficient for Us and the Best Disposer of Affairs. May Allah save Egypt and the blood of Egyptians any place any time, and free Egypt from its usurpers.”

<sup>493</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>494</sup> Original post by Heshmat Khalifa makes a mistake on the word [نشر], misspelling [نشر] instead of [بشر]. The translation corrects the mistake while maintaining the logical meaning of the quote.

The London Times' article was widely covered and triggered reactions among various segments of civil society and the aid community. The High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) released a statement on behalf of High Representative Miguel Moratinos condemning Mr. Khalifa's comments.<sup>495</sup> The statement reiterated the imperative for civil society organizations and faith-based actors to commit to, exhibit, and enforce zero-tolerance policies towards antisemitism and to review their accountability processes.

Shortly after The Times story broke, Islamic Relief issued a statement on its website condemning Mr. Khalifa's social media posts and the views expressed by them.<sup>496</sup> The statement added that Mr. Khalifa had resigned from his position on the Board of Trustees. Islamic Relief clearly distanced itself from Mr. Khalifa's statements, arguing that they "have no place in our organization" and that it

was "appalled by the hateful comments he made and unreservedly condemn all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism." Moreover, Islamic Relief stated that it was "fully committed to reviewing our processes for screening trustees and senior executives' social media posts to ensure that this will not happen again."

Yet, as it turned out, the incident related to Mr. Khalifa's posts was hardly isolated. In July, days before the London Times' article, Khalifa was replaced as director of the International Waqf Fund (a subsidiary of Islamic Relief) by Al-moutaz Tayara.<sup>497</sup> Tayara is a Member of the Board of Trustees of Islamic Relief and Chair of Islamic Relief Germany's Board of Trustees. A new investigation by the London Times showed that also Tayara had a long history of problematic social media postings similar to Mr. Khalifa's.<sup>498</sup> In 2017, in fact, German researcher Sigridd Herrmann-Marschall

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<sup>495</sup> Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson of the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) On Combating Antisemitism, UNAOC, July 28, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/07/press-statement-on-combating-antisemitism/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>496</sup> "Islamic Relief Worldwide strongly condemns anti-semitic posts and removes trustee," Islamic Relief Worldwide, July 24, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/statement-from-islamic-relief-worldwide/%25255d> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>497</sup> International Waqf Fund filing history, Companies House UK. Retrieved from: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/08612172/filing-history> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>498</sup> Andrew Norfolk, "Entire board resigns at Islamic Relief Worldwide," *The Sunday Times*, August 22, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/entire-board-resigns-at-muslim-charity-tknktpgb2g> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

had denounced various extremist Facebook postings made by Dr. Tayara, which he had since removed.<sup>499</sup> The posts included a cartoon of US President Barack Obama wearing a tie with

the Star of David, a clear antisemitic innuendo. Other posts glorified the Izzedin al Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of US- and EU- designated terrorist group Hamas.



Picture 22: Dr. Almoutaz Tayara’s Facebook post portraying a cartoon of US President Barack Obama.<sup>500</sup>

Translation:

Sitting on Barack Obama’s lap:

Right – Ayatollah Ali Khamenei “Death to America... Death to Israel”

Left – Abdul-Malik al Houthi “Death to America”

Centre – Bashar al Assad “Death... Death”

<sup>499</sup> „Antisemitismus-Skandal bei Islamic Relief“, *Islamismus und Gesellschaft*, July 27, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://vunv1863.wordpress.com/2020/07/27/antisemitismus-skandal-bei-islamic-relief/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021)

<sup>500</sup> Dr. Almoutaz Tayara’s Facebook page was closed following the controversy after The London Times investigation. Screenshot in possession of the authors.



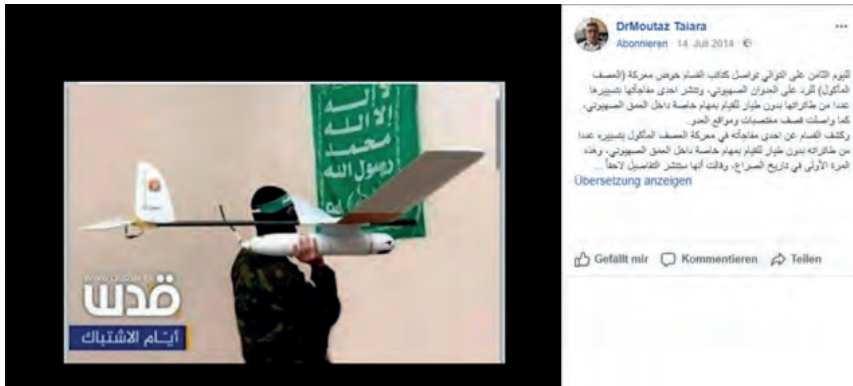
Picture 23: Dr. Almoutaz Tayara’s Facebook post glorifying the Al Qassam brigades.<sup>501</sup>

Translation:

“The Al Qassam heroes did not graduate from the military academies of the UK and the US, unlike the rulers and royals of the Arab world who, there, were nurtured on cowardice and allegiance to the foreigners – the UK and the US, the descendants of the Franks.

The Al Qassam heroes graduated from the school of the Muslim Brotherhood and the school of Prophethood and learnt the art of war from the military school of Khalid ibn al Waleed”.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.



Picture 24: *Dr. Almutaz Tayara’s Facebook post showing support for the Al Qassam brigades.*<sup>502</sup>

Translation:

“For the eighth consecutive day, the Al Qassam Brigades have engaged in the Battle of the Eaten Straw in response to the Zionist aggression. They revealed one of their surprises to be the dispatch of a number of their unmanned aerial vehicles to carry out special missions in the heart of Zionist territory, while continuing to strike the enemy’s spoils and positions.

Al Qassam revealed one of its surprises in the Battle of the Eaten Straw to be the dispatch of a number of its unmanned aerial vehicles to carry out special missions in the heart of Zionist territory – a first in the struggle’s history – and said it would publish the details at a later stage”.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

Support for Hamas and terrorist actions that the group carries out is widespread throughout the European Brotherhood network. Tellingly

,ECFR has stated that “jihad with its conditions, rulings and restrictions cannot be incorporated in the framework of what is called today ‘terrorism’”. The jurisprudential body goes further and legitimises armed jihad as a lawful means “to resist all types of oppression, such as ethnic cleansing, military occupation of their lands, as well as religious persecution,” defining this type of jihad as “closely related to the legal human rights of all mankind, particularly in our contemporary age, for both purposes of resisting aggression and stopping oppression”.<sup>503</sup>

In other documents, ECFR goes as far as to declare Palestine –“a Holy Land plagued by the most vile, wicked and vicious forms of colonialism: the racist,

brutal and terrorist Zionism colonization”<sup>504</sup> as the first place where jihad to liberate it from the oppressors and return it to Dar al Islam is compulsory upon Muslims. Furthermore, ECFR lionises the Palestinian resistance movement, praising “their amazing heroism and steadfastness and their martyrdom operations”.<sup>505</sup>

Several pan-European institution’s officials have expressed similar views. Basil Marei, FIOE/CEM’s current Secretary General, praised terrorist attacks in Tel Aviv in 2014 in the following terms: “Although some things never change the rules of the game have changed. [...] Yes, Israel’s missiles are more effective than Hamas’ missiles, but terror in Tel Aviv is greater. May God help them and grant them victory”.<sup>506</sup>

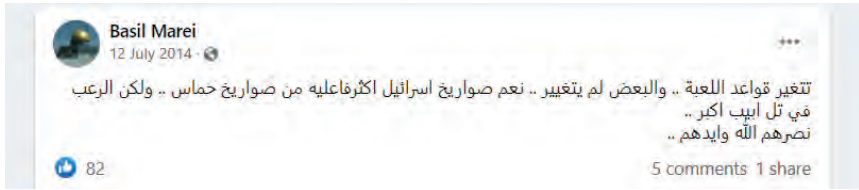
<sup>503</sup> Resolution 40, 11/6 “*Jihad and denying its connection to terrorism* [الجهاد ونفي علاقته بالإرهاب],” the European Council for Fatwa and Research, July 1-7, 2003. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2017/05/12/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%af-%d9%88%d9%86%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%b9%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%82%d8%aa%d9%87-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d8%b1%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%a8-2/> (Accessed: June 14, 2021)

<sup>504</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, “*Jihad... its truth and wisdom* [الجهاد.. حقيقته وحكمه],” The European Council for Fatwa and Research. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2020/11/28/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%af-%d8%ad%d9%82%d9%8a%d9%82%d8%aa%d9%87-%d9%88%d8%ad%d9%83%d9%85%d9%87/> (Accessed: June 14, 2021).

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Basil Marei Facebook Page. Post dating from July 12, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/mmbassil/posts/675644455849098> (Accessed: June 7, 2021).





Picture 25: *Basil Marei's Facebook post praising terrorist attacks in Tel Aviv (2014).*<sup>507</sup>

Tahir Aydarus, currently a Europe Trust director, called for the destruction of Israel quoting the Quran: “And you threw not [oh, Muhammad] when you threw, but it was Allah who threw [Quran 8:17]. May God facilitate them to hit their target and cast terror into the hearts of the Zionists until they live Palestine humiliated”<sup>508</sup> also adding the link to a video in which the Qassam Brigades – Hamas’ military wing, listed as a terrorist entity by the European Union–<sup>509</sup> attacked two F-16 warplanes.<sup>510</sup>



Picture 26: *Tahir Aydarus Facebook post calling for the destruction of Israel (2012).*<sup>511</sup>

<sup>507</sup> Basil Marei's Facebook Page. Post dating from July 12, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/mmbassil/posts/675644455849098> (Accessed: August 27, 2021).

<sup>508</sup> Tahir Aydarus Facebook Page. Post dating from November 18, 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/taidarus/posts/278334715602631> (Accessed: June 7, 2021).

<sup>509</sup> EU terrorist list, Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L:2021:043:FULL&from=es> (Accessed: June 14, 2021).

<sup>510</sup> Video no longer available.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, problematic positions in the field of inter-faith dialogue also include the European Brothers' views on religious freedom. While the Brothers have for decades freely and enthusiastically engaged in proselytism activities in the West, even defining the West itself as dar al da'wah (land of proselytism), their position is quite different when it comes to the possibility of Muslims converting to other religions. In his writings, widely disseminated by the pan-European network, Qaradawi identified religious proselytism among Muslims as a Western conspiracy, indicating "the ugliest intrigue the enemies of Islam have plotted against Islam has been to try to lure its followers away from it."<sup>512</sup> He then strongly criticised Christian "missionary invaders" who attempt to convert Muslims to Christianity.

The most revealing part of Qaradawi's thinking on freedom of religion, which summarises the views he expressed in a book published in Arabic in 1996, comes when he clearly identifies leaving Islam with either minor or major apostasy.<sup>513</sup> The former is committed by those who

leave Islam as a private matter. In that case, Qaradawi says the apostate should be punished only with a "discretionary punishment." But he is inflexible against those who commit major apostasy: that is, those who publicise their conversion and, even worse, attempt to persuade others to leave Islam. Such individuals, argues Qaradawi, must receive the death penalty. The reasoning behind this punishment shows that Qaradawi sees Islam as a political community, not as a religion. "No community accepts that a member thereof changes its identity or turns his or her loyalty to its enemies," states Qaradawi. "They consider betrayal of one's country a serious crime, and no one has ever called for giving people a right to change their loyalty from a country to another whenever they like."<sup>514</sup> To him, leaving Islam is like committing treason, because Islam is not a religion, the choice of which, in European societies, is left to the individual. Leaving Islam is committing treason against a political community and Qaradawi goes even further, stating that negligence in punishing apostates jeopardises the whole community.

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<sup>512</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, "Apostasy: Major and Minor," *IslamOnline*, April 13, 2006. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20080422164458/https://islamonline.net/English/contemporary/2006/04/article01c.shtml> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>513</sup> Gudrun Krämer, "Drawing Boundaries: Yusuf al-Qaradawi on Apostasy," in Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke, *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 200-9.

<sup>514</sup> Op. Cit.

If Qaradawi is adamant that apostates should be killed, the European Brothers have consistently stated that such doctrine is not applicable in the West. However, they have not repudiated Qaradawi's analysis, expressly or, more often, tacitly, endorsing his view that those who leave Islam should be killed because they commit a sort of treason. They have simply stated that such punishment is only to be applied in an Islamic state and not in the West. Tellingly, in fact, a fatwa issued by ECFR stated that "executing whoever reverts from Islam is the responsibility of the state and is so to be decided by Islamic governments alone".<sup>515</sup>

Problematic views at odds with the constitutional values of all European countries and universal human rights have also been expressed on the matter of gender. Even though, over the years, the Brotherhood has accepted certain adaptations in women's roles to accommodate ongoing socio-economic and po-

litical changes, their approach remains a traditionalist one that strictly upholds gender hierarchy or qiwāma.<sup>516</sup>

ECFR devotes special attention to family and women issues. One of the most problematic resolutions in this regard establishes that "European norms and traditions are valueless if they contradict clear Islamic texts such as calling for equality between man and woman in inheritance under the guise of the change of time and place".<sup>517</sup> Other ECFR's fatwas delve into issues that are more specific. One, for example, discusses women's haircuts and argues that:

"[...] there is a type of haircut that changes the features of a woman to which her husband may have become used to over time. Radical changes in the length or the colour of the hair need a mutual agreement beforehand to preserve harmony between them. The Muslim woman should not uncover her hair neither outside nor in front of other

<sup>515</sup> See for reference: *First Collection of Fatwas*, European Council for Fatwa and Research, fatwa 4, page 16. Date unspecified. Retrieved from: <https://boiv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ECFR-Fatawa-Coollection-01-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>516</sup> Male superiority, referring to the scriptures [Quran 4:34] as an argument; see for example, Yussuf Qaradawi, "The family as wished-for by Islam [الأسرة كما يريدّها الإسلام]," Wahba Library: Cairo, 2005.

<sup>517</sup> Resolution 24/9, The European Council for Fatwa and Research, August 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2017/05/17/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%AB%D8%B1%D9%87-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85/> (Accessed: June 9, 2021).

men she does not know. It should be her husband the first to enjoy her hair and its beauty and he has to find an image he likes in her. A good wife is the one who is keen on every reason that keeps love and good deeds between her and her husband and her development, for this is the base of good homes that are the basis of a good society.”<sup>518</sup>

Similarly, the Council authorises the husband to prevent his wife from visiting another woman, even if Muslim, “if he felt that this relationship has an adverse effect on his wife, children or marital life in general.”<sup>519</sup> On divorce, ECFR argues that it “encourages using the woman’s body in advertisements and commercials and contributes to degradation of manners that leads to sexual intercourse outside marriage, homosexuality and lesbianism widely spread among teen-

agers causing serious psychological and sexual problems e.g. AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, spread of abortion and girls’ school evasiveness”.<sup>520</sup> Similar views that diminish the role of the woman are also disseminated by the speakers who are frequently invited as guests by organizations of the pan-European network. An example is Jassem al Mutawa, who has been invited as a speaker by Islamic Relief and other entities, who is known to advocate beating one’s wife, but gently “to show her who’s in charge” without hurting her needlessly.<sup>521</sup>

Positions are markedly harsher when it comes to homosexuality. Qaradawi has repeatedly condemned it, arguing against LGBT rights and providing fatwas that call for a divine punishment for the gay community.<sup>522</sup> Answering the question of an Austrian Muslim who

<sup>518</sup> Al Europiya magazine, issue 15 [مجلة الأوروبيا], November 1999, page 44.

<sup>519</sup> *First Collection of Fatwas*, European Council for Fatwa and Research, fatwa 32, page 38. Retrieved from: <https://boiv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ECFR-Fatawa-Collection-01-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 18, 2021).

<sup>520</sup> Resolution 5/14. The European Council for Fatwa and Research, February 2005. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2014/01/31/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%89-14-2/> (Accessed: June 9, 2021)

<sup>521</sup> “Consiglio approva mozione a unanimità su evento Islamic Relief,” ANSA, April 2, 2019. Retrieved from: [https://www.ansa.it/lombardia/notizie/consiglio\\_lombardia/2019/04/02/\\_fa341090-8ff7-4ca7-93dd-1d68a97b8f98.html](https://www.ansa.it/lombardia/notizie/consiglio_lombardia/2019/04/02/_fa341090-8ff7-4ca7-93dd-1d68a97b8f98.html) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>522</sup> See for reference: Yusuf al Qaradawi “Homosexuality Is a Major Sin,” *Fatwa Bank, IslamOnline Archive*, December 6, 2003. Retrieved from: [https://web.archive.org/web/20070429131433/http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask\\_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503543878](https://web.archive.org/web/20070429131433/http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503543878) (Accessed: May 24, 2021); and Yusuf al Qaradawi on Homosexuals, Al Jazeera TV, June 5, 2006. Retrieved from: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxnVSnnZs0Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxnVSnnZs0Q) (Accessed: May 24, 2021).

had asked him about the sharia's position regarding gays, Qaradawi stated on the extremely popular website Islam-Online that those who engage in such "depraved practice" should be punished physically, even with the death penalty in some cases. "Such punishments may seem cruel," stated Qaradawi, but "they have been suggested to maintain the purity of the Islamic society and to keep it clean of perverted elements."<sup>523</sup> These positions, adopted by the undisputed spiritual leader of the network, do not prevent European Brotherhood organizations to increasingly seek alliances with LGBT organizations to fight all forms of discrimination—a dynamic observable throughout Europe.

Similarly different from its public stance is the European Brothers' position on integration, in interactions with European stakeholders and in official documents the European Brotherhood network regularly talks about its commitment to furthering the integration of Muslims into European society. Yet, internally, and

mostly in statements made in Arabic, the position appears to be quite different.

Qaradawi, setting a general tone, has famously exhorted: "try to have your small society within the larger society, otherwise you will melt in it like salt in water."<sup>524</sup> Similarly, ECFR has stated that "we have to change the style of Islamic rhetoric in the age of globalization". However, it continues, "this does not mean introducing Islam broken-winged or disarmed, or just as a relationship between the individual and his Lord and not a perfect life program for the individual, the family, the society and the state. Nor does it mean the omission of the Quranic verses talking about those who differ with us, or the omission of the fixed penalties in the criminal law, or the omission of Jihad from international relations".<sup>525</sup>

Research papers submitted to ECFR in 2007 by Fayçal Mawlawi and Hussein Halawa, former vice-president and secretary general respectively, pointed in the same direction:

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<sup>523</sup> "Homosexuality is a Major Sin," Fatwa Session with Sheik Yusuf al Qaradawi on *IslamOnline*, December 6, 2003. Retrieved from: [https://web.archive.org/web/20070430190435/https://islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask\\_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503543878](https://web.archive.org/web/20070430190435/https://islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503543878) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>524</sup> Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*. (Swansea, UK: Awakening Publications, 2000), Page 7.

<sup>525</sup> Resolution 11/5. Final Statement of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2003. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2014/01/31/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a7%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ae%d8%aa%d8%a7%d9%85%d9%89-11-2/> (Accessed: June 9, 2021).

“Integration is fraught with traps and could end up instead as assimilation as was the case for some Muslims. Hence, regulations and rules that organize the process of integration in the right, moderate and productive channel should be set to prevent isolation, as well as assimilation”.<sup>526</sup>

Amar Lasfar, president of Musulmans de France until June 2021, outlined the idea of community integration as follows:

“In Islam the notion of citizenship does not exist, but that of community is very important, because to recognise a community is to recognise the laws that govern it. We are working to ensure that the notion of community is recognised by the (French) Republic. Then, we will be able to constitute an Islamic community based on the laws that we have in common with the Republic and then apply our own laws to our community”.<sup>527</sup>

Chakib Benmakhlouf, former FIOE president, in an interview with a Saudi newspaper, recognised that the legal framework they have in Europe was the

perfect means to advance their agenda and “to present the model of a decent Muslim who is considered a good role model for spreading Islam in a positive manner without attracting attention [...]. We do not want to draw attention on the fact that we are Islamizing the West”.<sup>528</sup>

A comment about a president of FIOE arguing, in Arabic, that the movement should not “draw attention on the fact that we are Islamizing the West” lends itself to be used by some of the most pessimist among the critics of the European Brothers. Nevertheless, the list of statements by top European Brotherhood institutions and leaders that reveal an evident discrepancy between what the movement says when engaging with European establishments and internally is a long one. European Brotherhood often fight these accusations, arguing alternatively that statements were poorly translated or taken out of context, that they do not represent the views of the larger movement or question the motives of those who revealed them. These defences are at times correct. However, overall,

<sup>526</sup> “*Means and mechanisms of integration*”, Final Statement of the Seventeenth Ordinary Session of The European Council for Fatwa and Research, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July 2007. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2017/11/04/seventeenth-ordinary-session-europe-an-council-fatwa-research/> (Accessed: June 10, 2021).

<sup>527</sup> “La cité mode d’emploi”, *Hommes et Migration*, n° 1218, March-April 1999, page 55.

<sup>528</sup> “A word of truth meant to be false [كلمة حق يراد بها باطل]”, *Okaz Newspaper*, December 11, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.okaz.com.sa/article/442736> (Accessed: June 10, 2021).

it is quite clear that statements revealing the pervasive diffusion of problematic views among leaders of the movement constitute a pattern and not isolated episodes.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN BROTHERHOOD'S FUNDING MECHANISMS**

There are various overlapping reasons that explain how a relatively small group of activists such as those that compose the Muslim Brotherhood milieu in both individual European countries and at the European level have managed to gain such disproportionate influence, creating an impressive infrastructure composed of a seemingly endless litany of organizations and often becoming the formal or de facto representatives of Muslim communities in the eyes of European establishments.

Unquestionably, the unwavering activism and commitment to their vision of the milieu's members is a crucial factor. Moreover, the vast majority of members of the European Brotherhood's network are highly educated individuals with skills that allow them to simultaneously conduct large-scale grassroots campaigns, confidently mingle with European elites, and preside over a web of transnational organizations. With exceptions, this combination of ideological drive and competence is hard to find in most other European Muslim organizations, which tend to be small entities, operating locally, and headed by individuals who often possess characteristics similar to the Brothers.

An additional element that has allowed the European Brothers to exert substantially disproportionate influence is the general approach of most European establishments, which have, with notable exceptions, often accepted the Brothers as interlocutors or least not antagonised them. Desperate to find partners within their burgeoning Muslim communities, many European authorities (whether at the central/federal or local level) and civil society organizations (media outlets, faith and rights groups...) have often embraced individuals and entities linked to the local Brotherhood milieus as moderate and legitimate representatives. These dynamics are extremely complex, shaped by overlapping and at times conflicting interests, and have been dissected in a previous study. Let it suffice to say that, in general terms, the tolerance, if not acceptance of Brotherhood entities on the part of European establishments has been one of the factors contributing to the formers' success.

The one factor that arguably trumps all the others in explaining why the European Brothers have achieved this disproportionate influence is funding. In most European countries, in fact, Brotherhood milieus have historically been able to count on financial resources that vastly exceed those of any other Muslim organization. The Broth-



ers' passion and skills would have gone only so far if not boosted by the ample funds that allowed to operate on levels –acquiring land and buildings to create mosques, creating sprawling webs of organizations, constantly organizing events and campaigns, mass printing literature – unimaginable to other movements.

The European Brotherhood's world of financing is complex and its exact dynamics are known only to the top leaders of the milieu. Moreover, its funding come from a diverse array of sources, which can be divided into four broad categories: donations from the Muslim community, the group's own financial activities, foreign donations and grants from European governments and the European Union.

### **Donations from the Muslim community**

When asked about the sources of their funds, Brotherhood leaders, eager to boost their credentials as community leaders, usually assert that most or all their financial resources come from donations from the local Muslim community. The story is often more complex than that, as other sources of funding, as we will see, are equally if not more important. But there is no question that donations from the Muslim community

are a very significant source of revenue for Brotherhood milieus throughout Europe.

European Brotherhood milieus collect donations through charities that are technically independent but almost inevitably founded and run by their top leaders. Some of these charities are local, operating just in one country, some are transnational or even global. They collect donations in ways that range from zakat boxes in mosques to online crowdfunding mechanisms. The causes they advertise range from the construction of a new mosque to, in many cases, aid to needy populations in areas plagued by wars, poverty or natural disasters.

Collecting funds, it should be noted, is only one of the purposes of the Brothers' charitable organizations. Their fundraising efforts often take the form of big events that bring together large swaths of the Muslim community, well beyond the Brothers' small circle of members and sympathisers, therefore allowing the group to expand its influence. Activities aimed at providing aid to disadvantaged populations can also allow the Brothers to establish connections to governmental agencies and non-Muslim aid organizations. In substance, while bringing funds to the organization, charitable work also provides political capital.

Charities linked to the European Brotherhood have at times been accused of loose accounting, collecting funds for projects such as helping children in war-torn areas and then diverting them to other purposes. By the same token, various European Brotherhood-linked entities have been suspected of funnelling money to Hamas and other terrorist or extremist organizations. Criminal prosecutions have had mixed results, partially due to the evidentiary challenges of terrorism financing cases in most legislations.

The scrutiny of and level of transparency requested from charities (of all kinds) varies significantly throughout Europe, leading for calls for more stringent requirements and enforcement in some countries. In recent years, to challenge accusations, some of the largest Brotherhood-linked charitable organizations have resorted to getting their budgets certified by prominent accounting firms even though there are questions about the accountability of affiliates and subcontractors in non-European countries once they receive funds from Europe.

### **Own financial activities**

Most Brotherhood activists, whether in the Middle East or in Europe, are highly educated individuals and many of them

are accomplished professionals and businessmen. According to its rules, full-fledged, sworn Brotherhood members devote a fraction (generally around 5%) of their income to the group.

Moreover, European Brotherhood milieus have created more or less sophisticated webs of private enterprises that, while in most cases not formally connected to their public organizations, finance the group's activities. Dynamics vary, but generally top members of the group will operate various businesses that are formally independent but will donate to organizations of the local Brotherhood milieu, sponsor one of its events, pay the rent for its offices or, more broadly, find indirect ways to support it.

Some of the financial activities in which European Brotherhood milieus engage in are related to religious practices. They, for example, often open businesses that seek to have the monopoly on activities such as certification of halal meat, Islamic burials, and travel for religious purposes to Mecca and other holy sites. Other businesses are conducted purely to raise funds that are then utilised for some of the group's activities. That is, as seen, how Europe Trust operates, having purchased and renting out flats in the area near the University of Leeds to then fund the purchase of Islamic centres throughout Europe.

The level of sophistication of the financial activities carried out by the European Brothers varies significantly. In some cases, it is fairly primitive, consisting in small businesses that not rarely go bankrupt. But there are examples of financial structures of remarkable complexity. One of them is the case of the network set up in the 1980-90s by European Brotherhood pioneers Yusuf Nada and Ghaleb Himmat. Based in an Italian enclave in Swiss territory, the two played a key role in setting up, financing and heading some of the first and most important Brotherhood organizations in Europe.

At the same time, and partially to support said effort, they created a complex financial structure that included some one hundred companies located throughout the world and in particular in fiscal paradises such as the Bahamas, Panama and Liechtenstein. Most prominent among them was a Bahamas-incorporated bank, Bank Al Taqwa, which had a registered capital of 50 million US dollars and featured among its shareholders members of some of the most prominent families of the Arab Gulf and a few senior members of the European Brotherhood milieu such as Germany's Ibrahim el Zayat and Italy's Abdulkehir Breigheche.<sup>529</sup> As seen, the charges brought by the United Nations and

various Western governments against Nada and Himmat after 9/11 fell apart. But the investigation demonstrated the remarkable sophistication of some Brotherhood financial networks, which often create elaborate architectures with overlapping and connected companies, NGOs and hybrid legal structures operating in various jurisdictions and often testing the limits of how they can raise and transfer funds.

### **Foreign donations**

It is virtually impossible to even approximately quantify the amounts of funds European Brotherhood networks have received over the years from foreign donors and what percentage of its total funding they have constituted. It is nonetheless clearly understood by most European authorities, scholars and many Brotherhood members that foreign funding has historically flown into the European Brotherhood's coffers in extremely high amounts and have constituted the bulk of the resources that have allowed the movement to create its sprawling infrastructure.

Historically, most of the foreign funding to European Brotherhood networks has come from all countries in the Arab Gulf. The donations can come directly from the governments of Gulf countries,

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<sup>529</sup> Al Taqwa shareholders' list, document in possession of the authors.

through specific ministries or governmental agencies or their embassies in Europe. Alternatively, they can come through non-governmental organizations (which, to be sure, in most Gulf countries tend to have strong connections to and be heavily controlled by the government) or individual donors. Since the early days of their presence on the continent, European Brothers have developed their own fundraising networks in the Gulf. While part of this effort is based on personal connections, the process can also be very professional and bureaucratic. In substance, the donation can take the form of envelopes (if not suitcases) of cash informally handed out by a long-time supporter or a complex and very formal application process no different from one would submit to any grant-giving entity.

If it is true that, until a decade ago, the European Brothers could count on support from all Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia

has historically taken the lion's share. From the network's heydays, the Saudi government richly supported the European Brothers, not just with funds but also through other means. Tellingly, for example, Said Ramadan received ample funding from the country and travelled with a Saudi diplomatic passport when, upon settling in Geneva in the 1960s, began to organise the scattered groups of refugee Brothers and sympathetic students who had settled in various European countries.<sup>530</sup> And it was the Saudi Embassy in London that, in 1973, organised the first gathering of Brotherhood leaders living in Europe and united them under the Islamic Council of Europe, an entity that throughout the 1970s and 1980s coordinated their efforts.<sup>531</sup>

A particularly important role in conveying Saudi support to European Brotherhood networks was historically played by the Muslim World League (MWL, founded in 1962) and the World Assem-

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<sup>530</sup> Ian Johnson, "The Brotherhood's Westward Expansion," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, February 5, 2008; interview with Ian Johnson, Berlin, November 2008; interview with Stefan Meining, Munich, May 2009; interview with Bavarian Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz officials, Munich, May 2009.

<sup>531</sup> "London Conference of Islamic Centres and Bodies in Europe," *Impact International*, May 25-June 7, 1973; John Lawton, "Muslims in Europe: The Presence," *Saudi Aramco World*, January/February 1979, pp. 3-8; "Islamic Council of Europe: 'Foundations Well Laid,'" *Impact International*, May 26-June 8, 1978.

bly of Muslim Youth (WAMY, founded ten years later).<sup>532</sup> MWL and WAMY were the brainchildren of the alliance between the Saudi regime and the Brothers that was formed in those years and were tasked with spreading worldwide an ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam. As Kamal Helbawy, who ran the Egyptian's Brotherhood office in London and also served as one of the first directors of WAMY, Brotherhood networks in Europe were among the main recipients of MWL/WAMY largesse.<sup>533</sup> In the words of the Pew Research Center, "Between the 1970s and 1990s, the European activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth became so intertwined that it was often difficult to tell them apart."<sup>534</sup>

Saudi money allowed the European Brothers to build mosques, publish and

widely disseminate literature, organise large-scale events, travel to meet one another and, more broadly, operate in ways other Muslim organizations could not. These dynamics have been evident in both individual European countries and at the pan-European level, where Saudi support played a key role in the formation of the network's structures. As seen, in fact, the 1996 founding meeting of FEMYSO had been organised by FIOE together with WAMY and FEMYSO's first president was Ibrahim el Zayat, who also served in the important position of WAMY representative in Europe.<sup>535</sup> Many activities of the pan-European structure have also been funded by various Saudi entities.

While the Saudis played a crucial role in supporting and developing the Brotherhood network in Europe, as in many other parts of the world, for decades, its re-

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<sup>532</sup> For an extensive history of the founding of the Muslim World League and other pan-Islamic organizations, see Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Islamischen Weltliga*, Leiden: Brill, 1990; see also John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Volume 2, pp. 207-9. A detailed list of *da'wah* projects financed by the MWL since the 1960s can also be found in most issues of the *Muslim World League Journal*.

<sup>533</sup> As interviewed in Lorenzo Vidino, *The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

<sup>534</sup> Muslim World League and World Assembly of Muslim Youth, part of the *Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe* project, Pew Research Center, September 15, 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/15/muslim-networks-and-movements-in-western-europe-muslim-world-league-and-world-assembly-of-muslim-youth/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>535</sup> "Islamistische Bestrebungen in Deutschland," Antwort der Bundesregierung 15/1820, Deutscher Bundestag, October 23, 2003. Retrieved from: <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/15/018/1501820.pdf>

lationship with the movement has never been linear. As all other Gulf countries, cooperation and mutual co-optation between the two parties was based on a similar (though not identical) approach to the faith, but some mutual suspicions always remained. In particular, most Gulf countries have always been wary of, and in some cases flatly prohibited, the Brothers' establishing too strong an influence within their borders. While lavishly supporting their efforts outside the region, the Gulf monarchies, to varying degrees, perceived the Brothers as a threat to their power, as a potentially subversive force competing with them for their citizens' loyalty.

Cracks in the relationship appeared in 1991, when important segments of the Brotherhood supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, and throughout the 1990s, when the Brotherhood-influenced Sahwa movement challenged the legitimacy of the Saudi monarchy.<sup>536</sup> After the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States the relationship grew even more strained, but the Saudi state had no unified response. Part of the Saudi establishment began to reconsider seriously

the support the kingdom had historically provided to the group. Most famously, Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, then minister of the interior, accused the Muslim Brotherhood of being the "source of all evils" and the root of many problems in the Arab world.<sup>537</sup> Still, other parts of the Saudi establishment continued their financial support of the group or, in any case, refused to crack down on it. European Brotherhood organizations, for decades among the primary beneficiaries of Saudi largesse, still received substantial financial backing from various sources in the kingdom.

While the dynamics varied from country to country, these fears intensified significantly with the arrival of the Arab Spring, as what appeared then to be the Brothers' unstoppable rise to power came to be seen in the royal palaces of all GCC countries – with one notable exception – as a vital threat to the survival of the established order of the regime and the entire region. In March 2014, the Saudi government declared the Muslim Brotherhood to be a terrorist organization, and extended the designation to groups that resemble it "in ideology, word or

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<sup>536</sup> Matthew Hedges and Giorgio Cafiero, "The GCC and the Muslim Brotherhood: What Does the Future Hold?" *Middle East Policy Council*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Spring 2017.

<sup>537</sup> "Saudi and the Brotherhood: From friends to foes," Al Jazeera June 23, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/6/23/saudi-and-the-brotherhood-from-friends-to-foes> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

action.”<sup>538</sup> There followed a variety of measures aimed at eliminating the Brotherhood’s influence in the kingdom, from purging the group’s supporters from its academic institutions to removing books by Brotherhood authors from Saudi schools.<sup>539</sup> The implementation of this new course on the Brotherhood has not been easy, for it requires reversing and undoing decades of cooperation and connections. Unsurprisingly, the policy has been applied at times inconsistently, as some sections of the Saudi non-state establishment still engage in activities supportive of the Brotherhood.<sup>540</sup> Yet, overall, it is clear that Saudi Arabia has become a hostile country for the Brothers. This development has had a direct impact on European Brotherhood organizations. While some individual donors within the country still fund them, the amount of money flowing to the West from the Saudi state, the Saudi establishment, and many of its citizens has severely dwindled.

An even more aggressive approach toward the Brotherhood has been adopted by Saudi Arabia’s strategic partner in the region, the United Arab Emirates. Like Saudi Arabia, the UAE attracted scores of Brothers in the second half of the twentieth century, many of whom enriched themselves and played an important role in shaping the institutions of the nascent confederation. Distrust of the Brotherhood began in the 1990s, when the government started to perceive Islah, the domestic branch of the group, as a subversive threat, particularly in the poorer and more religiously conservative northern emirates.<sup>541</sup>

As in Saudi Arabia, the developments of the Arab Spring brought about a dramatic hardening of the Emirati attitude toward the Brotherhood, which led to the group’s designation as a terrorist organization. The Emiratis’ opposition to the group also appears to be more consistent and proactive than the Saudis’. Tellingly,

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<sup>538</sup> Stéphane Lacroix, “Saudi Arabia’s Muslim Brotherhood predicament,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 2014. Retrieved from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next\\_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fnews%2fmonkey-cage%2fwp%2f2014%2f03%2f20%2fsaudi-arabias-muslim-brotherhood-predicament%2f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fnews%2fmonkey-cage%2fwp%2f2014%2f03%2f20%2fsaudi-arabias-muslim-brotherhood-predicament%2f) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>539</sup> Habib Toumi, “Muslim Brotherhood books pulled out of Saudi schools,” *Gulf News*, December 1, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/muslim-brotherhood-books-pulled-out-of-saudi-schools-1.1629853> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>540</sup> Matthew Hedges and Giorgio Cafiero, “The GCC and the Muslim Brotherhood: What Does the Future Hold?” *Middle East Policy Council*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Spring 2017.

<sup>541</sup> Samir Salama, “Rise and fall of Muslim Brotherhood in UAE,” *Gulf News*, April 13, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://gulfnews.com/world/mena/rise-and-fall-of-muslim-brotherhood-in-uae-1.1170002> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

in November 2014 the UAE government decided to include on its list of 82 designated terrorist organizations, along with groups like al Qaeda and the Islamic State, not just the Muslim Brotherhood in general but also many European Brotherhood entities. Indeed, some of the leading Brotherhood-leaning organizations in the United Kingdom (Cordoba Foundation and MAB), Germany (IGD), France (UOIF), Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Belgium, and Finland were blacklisted by the UAE government. The list also included two transnational organizations linked to the European Brotherhood milieu, FIOE and Islamic Relief.<sup>542</sup>

The UAE government's decision shocked many in the West, from Brotherhood leaders and their supporters to governments. The full impact of the designation is difficult to assess. On one hand, no Western country has taken any measure against the organizations included in the list. On the contrary, some Western governments, particularly those of the United States and Sweden, protested with their Emirati counterparts, demanding—to no avail—that the organizations based in their countries be removed from the list.<sup>543</sup> On the other hand, being labelled a terrorist organization by an

Arab country that enjoys excellent credentials and relationships in the West has unquestionably brought negative attention to the various European Brotherhood organizations named, arguably harming their credibility and prestige. And, without question, it has virtually eliminated the ability of European Brotherhood organizations to fundraise in the UAE and made fund-raising more difficult throughout the Gulf.

Not all GCC countries have followed the lead of Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the Brotherhood. Several Kuwaiti charities, NGOs and individuals, including some who hold important positions in governmental or para-governmental entities, still fund Brotherhood networks in various European countries. But unquestionably the largest percentage of foreign financial support to European Brotherhood networks over the last ten years has come from Qatar. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, in fact, the Qatari government has not only maintained its ties to the global Muslim Brotherhood movement but has actually strengthened them. Qatari funds have gone to support the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahdha in Tunisia, various Islamist forces (including but

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<sup>542</sup> "List of groups designated terrorist organisations by the UAE," *The National*, November 16, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/list-of-groups-designated-terrorist-organisations-by-the-uae-1.270037> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>543</sup> Interview with UAE officials, Abu Dhabi, March 2018.



not limited to the Muslim Brotherhood) in Libya and Syria, Hamas in Palestine, and a broader array of Islamist groups throughout the world—in effect picking the side opposite to that favoured by its GCC partners in every country. Whereas at the onset of the Arab Spring Saudi Arabia and the UAE became the self-appointed defenders of stability and continuity in the region, Qatar actively promoted Islamist-inspired regime change. And showing another important difference, Qatar opted for a policy of détente with Iran that clashed with the hard line chosen by the rest of the GCC.

The reasons for Qatar's positions are complex. Without question, the deep historical links between the country's leadership and the Muslim Brotherhood are a factor. The status of Qaradawi, who has called Qatar home since the 1960s and has played a key role in building the country's religious education system while becoming a global theological and political celebrity (also thanks to

the Qatar-funded and -based Al Jazeera television channel), is just one of the many examples of the deep entrenchment of the Brotherhood in Qatari society.<sup>544</sup> Yet, though the links between the Brotherhood and the ruling family might be somewhat deeper in Qatar, these dynamics are common throughout the Gulf.

The difference seems to lie in a policy that Courtney Freer calls “cooperative co-optation,” adopted by Qatar well before the Arab Spring.<sup>545</sup> Since the mid-1990s, in fact, Qatar has sought to challenge Saudi-Emirati hegemony in the region and become a competing regional player.<sup>546</sup> Among their tactics to achieve this goal are strategic financial investments (including in the West), massive soft power (through Al Jazeera and other media endeavours) and lobbying efforts, high-profile ventures to acquire maximum visibility (such as hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup), and strong military ties with the West (epit-

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<sup>544</sup> David B. Roberts, “Qatar, the Ikhwan, and transnational relations in the Gulf,” *Project on Middle East Political Science*, March 9, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://pomeps.org/qatar-the-ikhwan-and-transnational-relations-in-the-gulf> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>545</sup> Courtney Freer, “From Co-optation to Crackdown: Gulf States’ reactions to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood during the Arab Spring,” *Project on Middle East Political Science*, May 3-4, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://pomeps.org/from-co-optation-to-crackdown-gulf-states-reactions-to-the-rise-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-during-the-arab-spring> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>546</sup> Marc Lynch, “How Trump’s alignment with Saudi Arabia and the UAE is inflaming the Middle East,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 2017. Retrieved from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next\\_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fnews%2fmonkey-cage%2fwp%2f2017%2f06%2f07%2fhow-trumps-alignment-with-saudi-arabia-and-the-uae-is-inflaming-the-middle-east%2f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fnews%2fmonkey-cage%2fwp%2f2017%2f06%2f07%2fhow-trumps-alignment-with-saudi-arabia-and-the-uae-is-inflaming-the-middle-east%2f) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

omised by the al Udeid Air Base, which hosts a massive US military presence). But Qatar's strategy also includes close cooperation with Islamist forces, mostly with ties to the Brotherhood.<sup>547</sup> Simply put, the Qataris have made a very calculated, strategic decision to use the Brotherhood as a tool to project geopolitical influence worldwide. As the Arab Spring began, and the Brothers initially appeared to have a winning hand, the Qataris doubled down on this policy.

This disagreement over policy on the Brotherhood has led to ever-increasing friction between Qatar and the other GCC countries, which culminated in June 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt decided to sever all ties with Qatar and impose a strict land, sea, and air blockade on the country that was lifted only in early 2021.<sup>548</sup> But it has also had major implications for the Muslim Brotherhood both in the East and the West. While the other Gulf countries stopped their direct support and severely curtailed the ability of their citizens and private or semi-private charities to provide funds to European Brotherhood organizations, Qatar stepped in

and increased its giving. Whether provided by the Qatari government directly, by organizations that are formally independent yet closely linked to the upper echelons of the Qatari establishment (e.g., the Qatar Charity or the Qatar Foundation), or by high-ranking members of the Qatari ruling family or government individually, Qatari funding has become the main financial backing of the European Brotherhood.

A project overseen by the Qatar Charity (QC) reveals these dynamics very clearly. Headed by Sheikh Hamad bin Nasser bin Jassim al Thani, a member of the Qatari ruling family, QC is the largest charitable organization in the country. It has also a long history of accusations of links to extremism. A 2009 classified US intelligence cable, made public by Wikileaks, describes QC as "an entity of concern to the USG [United States government] due to some of its suspect activities abroad and reported links to terrorism," adding that in March 2008 QC had been "listed as a priority III terrorism support entity (TSE) by the Interagency Intelligence Committee on Terrorism."<sup>549</sup> QC was also a member of the Union of Good, a transnational um-

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<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> Eric Trager, "The Muslim Brotherhood Is the Root of the Qatar Crisis," *The Atlantic*, July 2, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/muslim-brotherhood-qatar/532380/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>549</sup> "Qatar Commits USD 40 Million for UN Operations in Gaza" *Wikileaks*, May 12, 2009. Retrieved from: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09DOHA314\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09DOHA314_a.html) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

brella of charitable organizations linked to the Brotherhood and headed by Qaradawi that was designated by the US government in 2008 for its alleged funding of Hamas.<sup>550</sup> At the same time, QC, particularly over the past decade, has delivered hundreds of millions of Dollars to indisputably humanitarian causes and has partnered with highly respected organizations such as UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In 2015 QC launched a multimillion-dollar project called the Gaith Initiative to “introduce Islamic culture and strengthen its presence among Western communities in particular, and the world in general.”<sup>551</sup> The initiative is a continuation of the projects established and supported by QC in the past and supervised by the Qatari scholar Dr. Ahmed al Hammad.<sup>552</sup> It was widely publicised in the media, on QC’s website and via a specific Twitter account, and has since funded

dozens of projects in various European countries, from the construction of new mosques to providing support to local Muslim organizations, from inter-faith dialogue to refugee relief. Geographically, the projects funded range from Spain to Ukraine, from Norway to Sicily.

What is arguably most noteworthy are the substantial amounts QC provided to the organizations it supported. According to the internal QC data obtained by Christian Chesnot, Georges Malbrunot and published in their 2019 book *Qatar Papers*, in 2014 QC was funding 8.148 mosques and 490 Quran study centres worldwide.<sup>553</sup> In Europe alone, QC was funding 138 projects with more than 70 million Euros according to this breakdown: Italy: 45 projects (Euros 22.898.000); France: 15 projects (Euros 14.465.000); Spain: 12 projects (Euros 6.998.000); Germany: 3 projects (Euros 5.100.000); UK: 7 projects (Euros 4.070.000); Norway: 4 projects (Euros

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<sup>550</sup> “*Union of Good*,” U.S. Treasury Department, December 11, 2008. Retrieved from: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Pages/protecting-union-of-good.aspx> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>551</sup> “Qatar Charity opens first Islamic centre in Luxembourg,” *The Gulf Times*, June 2, 2015. Retrieved from: [https://www.gulf-times.com/story/441601/Qatar-Charity-opens-first-Islamic-centre-in-Luxemb#:~:text=Qatar%20Charity%20\(QC\)%20has%20announced,Muslims%2C%20according%20to%20a%20statement.](https://www.gulf-times.com/story/441601/Qatar-Charity-opens-first-Islamic-centre-in-Luxemb#:~:text=Qatar%20Charity%20(QC)%20has%20announced,Muslims%2C%20according%20to%20a%20statement.) (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>552</sup> “*Qatar Charity Launches “Gaith” (Rain) Initiative for Islamic Projects Worldwide*,” Qatar Charity, October 8, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.qcharity.org/en/global/news/details/2400-qatar-charity-launches> Accessed: April 9, 2021).

<sup>553</sup> Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, *Qatar papers: Comment l’émirat finance l’islam de France et d’Europe*, Michel Lafon Editorial: 2019.

2.800.000); the Netherlands: 2 projects (Euros 1.350.000); Hungary: 1 project (Euros 425.000); Switzerland: 5 projects (Euros 3.660.000); Ireland: 2 projects (Euros 2.350.000); Ukraine: 7 projects (Euros 1.860.000); Belgium: 3 projects (2.547.000); Poland: 6 projects (Euros 2.000.000); Luxembourg: 1 project (Euros 1.300.000).

The vast majority of entities that received funding from QC belonged, according to the data revealed in Qatar Papers, to the Brotherhood milieu of each country. Therefore, for example, QC funded entities belonging to UCOII in Italy, UOIF in France, LICDOE in Spain, Europe Trust Nederland in the Netherlands and so on. By the same token, QC generously funded various organizations of the Brotherhood's pan-European network. According to available information, for example, in 2014 QC gave the European Forum of Muslim Women, FIOE's women organization, 214.000 Euros to purchase a building in Paris area and to organise

Ramadan celebrations. Moreover, as seen, QC has historically funded with large amounts also IESH.

These dynamics are unsurprising if one considers who sits on the board of QC's European office (which, since October 2017, has been renamed Nectar Trust).<sup>554</sup> Nectar Trust, in fact, has three trustees, all of them European. Two, Mahfoud Zaoui and Ayyoub Abouliaqin (who also serves as Nectar's director general), are France-based. Mahfoud Zaoui is an Algerian-born pulmonologist who sits on the board of Al Wakf France, the UOIF's financial arm (its twenty-six board members are selected by UOIF).<sup>555</sup> He is based in Mulhouse, where Nectar Trust is funding an Islamic centre Qatari media described as "the largest such facility in Europe," strategically located on the border between France, Germany and Switzerland.<sup>556</sup> The centre is managed by the Muslim Association of Alsace (AMAL), the local affiliate of the UOIF. Ayyoub Abouliaqin, the other French trustee of Nectar,

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<sup>554</sup> Nectar Trust, Trustees' report for the year ended March 31, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5024715/accounts-and-annual-returns> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>555</sup> Rapport d'Activité du Fonds de Dotation Al Wakf France, 2014. Retrieved from: [https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/document/associations\\_a/794458620\\_31122014](https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/document/associations_a/794458620_31122014) (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

<sup>556</sup> "Qatar Charity building QR110m Islamic centre in France," *The Peninsula*, June 16, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/385133/qatar-charity-building-qr110m-islamic-centre-in-france> (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

has in the past served as secretary general of AMAL.<sup>557</sup> The third trustee is Mohammed Ibrahim, a leading member of UCOII and Alleanza Islamica, leading organizations of the Italian Brotherhood milieu. The fact that three individuals with deep ties to the European Brotherhood milieu are the sole trustees of QC/Nectar Trust guarantees the milieu a strong ability to direct its funds almost exclusively to its affiliates.

If Qatar has played a major role in bankrolling it, arguably an equally crucial support to the European Brotherhood network has come in recent years from Turkey. While solidifying their now almost twenty-yearlong hold on power domestically, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) have progressively increased their support of like-minded networks abroad, including in Europe. To that effect, particularly over the last ten years, the Turkish government has provided ample support to both European-based affiliates of the Diyanet—the Turkish governmental agency for religious affairs—and Millî Görüş, the Turkish sister movement of the Brotherhood founded by Erdoğan's political mentor, the late Necmettin Erbakan.

This policy has a number of aims, but arguably one of the most important is to persuade as large of a segment as possible of the sizable Turkish population in the West to vote for the AKP—a strategy that, judging from how Turks in Europe have voted in recent years, has completely succeeded. However, lately the AKP's attempts to exert influence on European Muslim communities have gone beyond taking over Turkish diaspora organizations and extended to forming a close partnership with European Brotherhood organizations. The links between Turkish Islamism and the Brotherhood are extensive and well documented. In short, despite some ideological differences, the Brotherhood and Turkish Islamism are fellow travellers. The relationship has been further cemented in recent years, as Erdoğan has provided refuge to hundreds of Brotherhood members fleeing Egypt after the fall of the Mursi regime and Istanbul has de facto become the new centre of gravity for the global Muslim Brotherhood. As a result of these changes, the Turkish government or NGOs and financial institutions close to the government and the AKP have begun to provide ever-growing support to European Brotherhood organizations. European Brotherhood

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<sup>557</sup> Frédérique Meichler, "Mosquée An-Nour : reprise du chantier," *L'Alsace*, April 30 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.lalsace.fr/haut-rhin/2015/04/30/mosquee-an-nour-reprise-du-chantier#:~:text=Apr%C3%A8s%20quelques%20d%C3%A9boires%20et%20une,%C3%A0%20%C3%AAtre%20visibles%20en%20surface>. (Accessed: June 19, 2021).

organizations have increasingly received Turkish funding, engaged in joint activities with Turkish Islamist outlets, and vocally expressed support and lobbied for the AKP government.

### **Grants from European governments and the EU**

A fourth, and increasingly important source of funding for European Brotherhood networks is represented by grants, donations and contracts received from a broad array of public actors both at the national (from ministries to specialised agencies to municipalities) and European Union level. It is not uncommon, in fact, for organizations that belong to the milieu (or that have been ad hoc incorporated) to receive public funds for activities such as integration work, radicalization prevention, anti-racism/ Islamophobia. In some cases, charities linked to the Brotherhood milieu also act as contractors for European governmental aid agencies, carrying out projects for them in particularly challenging regions of Africa, the Middle East or Asia. This report has provided examples of funding coming from EU and national institutions going to FEMYSO, IRW and entities of local Brotherhood milieus.

The fact that public bodies would fund organizations linked to the European network of the Muslim Brotherhood might be at first, particularly for laypeople, puzzling. The reasons that explain these dynamics are complex and each case should be assessed individually. In many cases, given the complexity of even identifying Brotherhood entities (as seen in Chapter 1), the funding body might not be aware that it is dealing with an organization that belongs to the Brotherhood milieu. In other cases, it might, but it might not judge the thing to be problematic. The fact that Brotherhood entities, given their relatively high level of professionalism, tend to be good performers also plays a role in a bureaucracy's decision to fund them.

Many of these issues surfaced in relations to Islamic Relief Worldwide, the European Brotherhood network's charity of choice, after the antisemitism scandal that engulfed the organization in late 2020. As seen, in 2020 a London Times investigation uncovered a pattern of virulently antisemitic social media posts by two top officials at IRW. The investigation had a global echo and triggered significant consequences. The first were inside IRW itself, as the organization's entire board of trustees resigned.<sup>558</sup> IRW

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<sup>558</sup> Andrew Norfolk, "Entire board resigns at Islamic Relief Worldwide," *The Sunday Times*, August 22, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/entire-board-resigns-at-muslim-charity-tknktpgb2g> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

also recruited former Attorney General Dominic Grieve to head an Independent Commission into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief, which published its findings in January 2021.<sup>559</sup> In substance, the Independent Commission argued that the episodes regarding Khalifa and Tayara were regrettable but not indicative of a broader problem within IRW. Moreover, it indicated that the organization had put in place “new policies on personal social media use” and a better vetting system which, together with the pre-existing IRW Code of Conduct, should prevent similar problems from occurring again.

The assurances from IRW appear to have convinced authorities in the UK, where the organization is headquartered, as there appear to have been no repercussions for IRW from British authorities. Authorities in other Western countries drew significantly different conclusions and accordingly took very different actions:

- In December 2020, the German government announced that it would no longer fund the local branch of IRW (Islamic Relief Deutschland). Grieve’s

Independent Commission stated “IR Germany is currently being denied institutional funding by the German government because of what has occurred, despite having previously been a close partner in delivering projects.” While this might be the case, the German government’s announcement on the matter did not mention anything about antisemitism or the Times articles. Rather, it simply stated that both IRW and IR Germany have “significant personal connections to the Muslim Brotherhood or related organizations,” a claim both organizations have always staunchly denied.<sup>560</sup>

- In January 2021, the Dutch government announced its decision to no longer fund the local branch of Islamic Relief. Explaining her decision, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Sigrid Agnes Maria Kaag stated that she learned for the first time in December through the media that Islamic Relief might have links with the Muslim Brotherhood. She then made inquiries and then, “based on this information, I have de-

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<sup>559</sup> Dominic Grieve, Independent Commission into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief, Temple Garden Chambers, January 14, 2021.

<sup>560</sup> “Press statement on Islamic Relief Deutschland”, Deutscher Bundestag, December 3, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/811522-811522> (Accessed: March 30, 2021).

cided not to subsidize Islamic Relief Worldwide.”<sup>561</sup>

- In Sweden, as confirmed Grieve’s Independent Commission, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), “is carrying out a review of whether or not it should continue to use IR Sweden as a partner in delivering aid.”<sup>562</sup>
- In the United States, the State Department’s Office of Foreign Assistance announced in January 2021 that IRW was no longer a partner charity. “Given what we know about IRW,” stated its director, “the Department and US-AID should act with extreme caution and avoid partnering with IRW in the future.”<sup>563</sup>

In substance, the revelations by the Times’ investigation led various Western governments to re-assess their relationship with IRW and their local affiliates, many of which have received public funding to carry out aid work. Some governments apparently decided to maintain the relationship. Others decided to

rescind it, whether they cited concerns about antisemitism within IRW’s leadership, as the US government did, or, as in the case of Germany and the Netherlands, alleged links between IRW and the Muslim Brotherhood.

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<sup>561</sup> Elif Isitman, “Kaag: geen Nederlands belastinggeld voor islamclub,” *Telegraaf*, January 19, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/1377055849/kaag-geen-nederlands-belastinggeld-voor-islamclub> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).

<sup>562</sup> Dominic Grieve, Independent Commission into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief, Temple Garden Chambers, January 14, 2021.

<sup>563</sup> Adam Kredo, “State Department Cuts Ties with Islamic Charity Over Anti-Semitism,” *The Washington Free Beacon*, January 18, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/state-department-cuts-ties-with-islamic-charity-over-anti-semitism/> (Accessed: June 20, 2021).



## **CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report demonstrated that:

- in virtually every European country there is a cluster of activists and organizations linked to the Muslim Brotherhood
- there is a pan-European structure to which the clusters of each European country belong and that allows for a degree of coordination and communication
- both the individual countries and pan-European structures were created and are run by a small cadre of leaders, the same few hundred highly skilled and interconnected activists, a powerful nomenklatura of self-appointed leaders of organised Islam in Europe
- thanks to their mobilization skills and access to ample resources, these Brotherhood milieus have been able to exert a disproportionate influence on local Muslim communities and, to some degree, convince European establishments of seeing them as legitimate representatives of European Muslims
- while not posing a direct security threat, their views on several key issues are highly problematic and run counter human rights and European constitutions

These dynamics logically lead to several policy questions. The first has to do with the relevance of the matter. Why should policymakers and, more broadly, public opinion care about a network that this report indicated as having just a few hundred leaders and a few thousand followers throughout Europe? Moreover, this report also stated that the Brothers do not pose a direct security threat and that most of their activities are legal. Why be concerned about them?

The answer lays in the status of disproportionate influence that Brotherhood milieus in most European countries and at the pan-European level have achieved. The problematic views they express are generally not illegal. Save for the cases in which they meet the threshold of hate speech, as they sometimes do in certain jurisdictions, they tend to be constitutionally protected speech. Nor are they unique. Other Islamist groups, such as many belonging to the Salafist movement, express similar if not more problematic views on Jews, women or homosexuals. And so do various extreme right wing groups.

But the difference is that, unlike the other groups who hold and disseminate said views, the European Brothers have somewhat successfully claimed a stake at the representation of an entire community. Few governments, media

outlets, church leaders, universities and other European institutions would engage with individuals and organizations that consistently espouse such problematic views. But that does in many cases happen with the European Brothers, who are often treated as moderate and legitimate interlocutors despite limited evidence of their representative nature and ample yet often overlooked evidence of their problematic views. In substance, and with a certain degree of oversimplification, European establishments positively engage, legitimise and at times even fund entities that push highly problematic values and run counter efforts to integrate European Muslims.

Established relevance, it then becomes important to suggest a course of action. Yet policy recommendations are particularly challenging to provide on this topic. No blanket approach can or should be adopted, for various and overlapping reasons. Firstly, each European country's approach is influenced by its own cultural, historical and political dynamics. Moreover, the issue of the Brotherhood plays out many different levels, from integration to security, from education to religious affairs. A certain policy might be advisable in one field but not in another. Each actor –political party, government agency, media outlet, civil society organization– potentially

engaging Brotherhood entities has its own views and goals. In substance, no recommendation, no matter how sophisticated, can capture all the aspects and nuances of the individual cases, each of which has its own peculiarities.

Notwithstanding these difficulties in getting into anything overly specific, it is still possible to provide three general policy recommendations that are arguably applicable to any European actor (politician, government agency, civil society organization) dealing, for whatever reason, with individuals or organizations linked to the European Brotherhood network.

The first recommendation is as basic as crucial: build knowledge. It is an uncontroversial fact to state that no policy, on any topic, not just Islamism, is likely to be successful if not backed by some degree of understanding of the issue at hand. Ideally, every interaction and, before that, the very decision on whether to interact at all with the European Brotherhood should therefore be grounded on sound knowledge of its nature and aims and awareness of all the implications stemming from any engagement decision. While this does, of course, happen in many cases, in many others European actors that engage, partner with and even fund Brotherhood entities do so with very limited knowledge

of their interlocutors—not rarely even ignoring that it has Brotherhood connections. Creating a widespread reservoir of knowledge not just on Brotherhood milieus but, more broadly, on local Muslim communities and their enormous diversity and fragmentation, should therefore be an important precondition to any decision on the matter.

The second recommendation assumes that this report's view that the European Brotherhood network holds problematic views and therefore plays a negative role in social cohesion and the integration process of European Muslims. As seen, this view is adopted by the security services of most European countries. Governments adopting this view can and should take various actions to stem the influence of European Brotherhood networks. The options vary, depending on legal frameworks, political will, and specific circumstances. Some of the more aggressive measures can include criminal prosecution for behaviours that violate the law (such as hate speech, funding of terrorist entities in the Middle East...) and administrative measures (such as disbanding organizations and closing down mosques, as France recently did with various Islamist outfits, or expelling some of the network's members who do not hold local citizenship).

These measures might not always be politically palatable, legally feasible, or strategically sound. But one measure that seems to be advisable to all European governments and, more broadly, establishments, is that of not having their engagement efforts with Brotherhood actors (assuming they do decide to engage them) transcend into empowerment.

After acquiring the proper knowledge on its interlocutors, a governmental actor might have good reasons to decide to engage with a Brotherhood actor. Indeed outright refusal to ever engage them seems an unrealistic policy only the most rabid and non-pragmatic critic of the group would suggest. It should be very clear however, that engagement should not become empowerment. Doing so, in fact, would be engagement for engagement's sake, an exercise conducted without much thought about its wide-ranging consequences. While the line between engagement and empowerment is often, in reality, a very subtle one, public actors should make sure that, when they happen, their interactions with Brotherhood actors should not provide the latter with the legitimacy they crave, artificially elevating them to representatives of the Muslim community. A flexible no platform policy seems, in substance, a sensible approach.

Finally, if not empowering them through engagement seems a correct policy, so is, a fortiori, not funding European Brotherhood networks. As seen, financial resources are one of the main factors that have allowed the European Brothers to gain disproportionate influence. Over the last few years, therefore, various European countries have moved to stem the Brothers' sources of funding. Some have considered limitations (Denmark, France) or outright bans (Austria) to foreign funding. Many have sought to enforce more stringent control over and ensure greater transparency of charities and other organizations linked to the Brotherhood milieu.

Naturally, these measures are useful but can be implemented only if there is strong political will and if they are legally possible. It is significantly easier for European governments and public institutions to take a different step related to Brotherhood funding: stop funding it themselves. As seen, over the last few years, Brotherhood organizations have become particularly skilled at obtaining public funding to conduct a broad variety of activities. Public actors can easily end any form of financial support

for Islamist actors. In most cases, this decision can be purely political and discretionary, not needing any kind of formal or legal explanation. In some other cases the decision might require a more formal process and can be challenged by Brotherhood-linked entities that.<sup>564</sup> However, in substance, European public actors should stop providing funding for Brotherhood organizations, making criteria for funding not purely formal but assessing a potential recipient's system of values.

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<sup>564</sup> See, in that regard, the case between Sweden Young Muslims (SUM) and the Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), as described in the chapter on Sweden.



ACRO  
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## ACRONYMS

**ACFMS** – Cultural Association of Muslim Women of Switzerland (in French, Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes de Suisse)

**AHPJ** – Humanitarian Association for the Promotion of Youth (in French, Association Humanitaire pour la Promotion de la Jeunesse)

**AIVD** – The General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands (in Dutch, Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst)

**AKP** – Justice and Development Party (in Turkish, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)

**AMAL** – Muslim Association of Alsace (in French, Association des Musulmans d'Alsace)

**AME** – Spanish Muslim Association (in Spanish, Asociación Musulmana en España)

**AMSSUK** – Association of Muslim Social Scientists UK

**ARRAID** – All-Ukraine Association of Social Organizations (in Ukrainian, Всеукраїнська асоціація громадських організацій “Альраїд”)

**BVT** – The Austrian Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counterterrorism (in German, Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung)

**CAIM** – Directorate of Islamic Associations of Milan (in Italian, Coordinamento Associazioni Islamiche di Milano)

**CCIC** – Catalan Islamic Cultural Centre (in Spanish, Centro Cultural Islámico Catalán)

**CCIF** – Collective Against Islamophobia in France (in French, Comité Contre l'Islamophobie en France)

**CCIV** – Valencian Islamic Cultural Centre (in Spanish, Centro Cultural Islámico Valenciano)

**CECIV** – Islamic Educational and Cultural Complex of Verviers (in French, Complex Éducatif et Culturel Islamique de Verviers)

**CEM** – Council of European Muslims (former FIOE - Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe)

**CFCM** – French Council of the Muslim Faith (in French, Conseil Français du Culte Musulman)

**CIE** – Islamic Centre in Spain (in Spanish, Centro Islámico en España)

**DAP** – Swiss Service for Analysis and Prevention (in German, Dienstes für Analyse und Prävention)

**DMG** – German Muslim Community, formerly Islamic Community of Germany (in German, Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft)

**ECFR** – European Council for Fatwa and Research

**EFOMW** – European Forum of Muslim Women

**EIHW** – German branch of the European Institute of Human Sciences, (in German, Europäisches Institut für Humanwissenschaften)

**EMF** – Muslim French Students (in French Étudiants Musulmans de France)

**EMUG** – European Mosque Construction and Support Community (in German, Europäische Moscheebau und Unterstützungs Gemeinschaft)

**ETN** – Europe Trust Netherlands (in Dutch, Stichting Europe Trust Nederland)

**FAD** – Fatwa Committee in Germany (in German, Fatwa-Ausschuss Deutschland)

**FEFM** – European Forum of Muslim Women (in French, Forum Européen des Femmes Musulmanes)

**FEMYSO** – Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations

**FION** – Federation of Islamic Organizations in the Netherlands (in Dutch, Federatie Islamitische Organisaties Nederland)

**FIS** – the Islamic Salvation Front (in French, Front Islamique du Salut)

**GCC** – Gulf Cooperation Council

**GMI** – Young Muslims of Italy (in Italian, Giovani Musulmani d'Italia)

**ICCI** – Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland

**IESH** – European Institute of Human Sciences (in French, Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines)

**IFIS** – Islamic Association in Sweden (in Swedish, Islamiska Förbundet i Sverige)

**IGD** – Islamic Community of Germany (in German, Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland)

**IGGiÖ** – Islamic Community of Austria (in German, Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich)

**IGS** – Islamic Community of Southern Germany (in German, Islamische Gemeinschaft Süddeutschland)

**IIFSO** – International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations

**IMAN** – the Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network

**IRPA** – Islamic Religious Academy (in German, Islamische Religionspädagogische Akademie)

**IRW** – Islamic Relief Worldwide

**IUMS** – International Union of Muslim Scholars

**IZM** – Islamic Centre of Munich (in German, Islamisches Zentrum München)

**Jel** – Jamat-e-Islami

**JMF** – France's Muslim Youth (in French, Jeunes Musulmans de France)

**FIOE** – Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (now CEM - Council of European Muslims)

**FOSIS** – Federation of Student Islamic Societies

**LDI** – Lajnat al-Dawa al-Islamiya (Islamic Call Committee)

**LFFM** – French League of Muslim Women (in French, Ligue Française des Femmes Musulmanes)

**LGBT** – lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

**LIIB** – Intercultural Islamic League of Belgium (in French, Ligue Islamique Interculturelle De Belgique)

**LIDCOE** – The Islamic League for Dialogue and Coexistence in Spain (in Spanish, Liga Islámica para el Diálogo y la Convivencia en España)

**LIGN** – Islamic Community League in the Netherlands (in Dutch, Liga van de Islamitische Gemeenschap in Nederland)

**LMB** – The Belgian Muslim League (in French, Ligue des Musulmans de Belgique)

**LMS** – The Swiss Muslim League (in French, Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse)



**MAB** – The Muslim Association of Britain

**MCB** – Muslim Council of Britain

**MCU** – Scotland Yard’s Muslim Contact Unit

**MENA** – Middle East and North Africa

**MF** – France’s Muslims (in French, Musulmans de France, former UOIF)

**MJD** – Muslim Youth in Germany (in German, Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland)

**MJÖ** – Muslim Youth Austria (in German, Muslimische Jugend Österreich)

**MSA** – Muslim Students Association Netherlands (in Dutch, Moslimstudenten Associatie Nederland)

**MSV** – Muslim Student Association Karlsruhe (in German, Muslimischer Studentenverein Karlsruhe e.V.)

**MTI** – The Movement of Islamic Tendency (in French, Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique)

**MUCF** – Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (in Swedish Myndigheten för Ungdoms- och Civilsamhällesfrågor)

**MÜSIAD** – Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association, (in Turkish, Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği)

**MWH** – Muslim Welfare House

**MWL** – Muslim World League

**ÖVP** – Austrian People’s Party (in German, Österreichische Volkspartei)

**QC** – Qatar Charity

**RIGD** – Council of Imams and Scholars in Germany (in German, Der Rat der Imame und Gelehrten in Deutschland)

**SAP** – Swedish Social Democrat Party (in Swedish, Sveriges Socialdemokratis-ka Arbetareparti)

**SIF** – formerly the French branch of Islamic Relief Worldwide (in French, Secours Islamique France)

**SMR** – Muslim Council of Sweden (in Swedish, Sveriges Muslimska Råd)

**SUM** – Sweden’s Young Muslims (in Swedish, Sveriges Unga Muslimer)

**YMUk** – Young Muslims UK

**UAE** – United Arab Emirates

**UCOII** – Islamic Italian Communities Union (in Italian, Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia)

**UIEM** – International Union of Muslim Students (in French, Union Internationale des Étudiants Musulmans)

**UKIM** – United Kingdom Islamic Mission

**UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**UNICEF** – United Nations Children's Fund

**UOIF** – Union of Islamic Organisations of France (in French, Union des Organisations Islamiques en France, now Musulmans de France)

**USMI** – Union of Muslim Students in Italy (in Italian, Unione degli Studenti Musulmani in Italia)

**WAMY** – World Assembly of Muslim Youth

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LITERA  
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