

March 4, 2019

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Democratic Leader
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Eliot Engel
U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Engel,

In light of Rep. Ilhan Omar's recent anti-Semitic tweets, statements, and address before Islamic Relief USA on Saturday, February 23rd, we, the undersigned organizations, request that you immediately remove her as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Speaker Pelosi, you demonstrated wisdom and leadership in rebuking Rep. Omar on February 11 following her use of anti-Semitic stereotypes, and Chairman Engel, your reaction to the classic anti-Semitic trope of the charge of "dual loyalty" about American Jews, that Rep. Omar uttered this weekend at a Washington establishment, was highly appropriate, and we applaud you both for that.

We hope you will continue to demonstrate your commitment to the high moral standards of your office by removing Rep. Omar, a woman who has repeatedly exhibited strong biases against the State of Israel and the Jewish people, from this critically important and sensitive committee.

Rep. Omar's presence as a keynote speaker to raise funds for Islamic Relief USA, whose parent organization and chapters have documented ties to terrorist organizations, demonstrates that she has learned next to nothing over the last few weeks when she was reprimanded by your office and by other Democrats for posting ugly, anti-Semitic attacks on Jews and their organizations.

For weeks articles have been published in the United States and abroad warning about Rep. Omar's upcoming speech before Islamic Relief USA and documenting the group's numerous ties to terrorist organizations and individuals as well as anti-Semitic views from its own leadership.

But Rep. Omar insisted on continuing to publicly ally herself with Islamic Relief, which only last month was criticized in a leaked Tunisian Commission document for allegedly providing funding to establish “logistical support” for Jihadist terrorists operating on the Libyan-Tunisian border.ⁱ

We believe her decision to speak before the group reflects poor judgment and shows she is unfit to sit on one of the most important committees in the United States Congress.

Islamic Relief’s ties to terrorist organizations are well established. The United Arab Emirates in 2014 designated Islamic Relief as a terrorist organization with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.ⁱⁱ

In 2016 the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency reported Haytham Rahmeh, a former imam of Stockholm’s mosque, “was long active in Islamic Relief, but in recent years he has been involved in supporting militias linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in the war in Syria through lobbying and weapons purchases.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Bangladesh relief authorities in 2017 banned Islamic Relief workers from assisting Rohingya Muslim refugees for fears of Islamic radicalization.^{iv}

In 2014 Israel, our strongest ally in the Middle East, banned Islamic Relief’s parent organization, stating it was posing as a charity but was funding Hamas, which refuses to recognize the existence of the State of Israel.^v

UBS, Credit Suisse^{vi} and HSBC^{vii}, all respected international financial institutions, have also closed down bank accounts with Islamic Relief over fears of terrorist financing.

The Middle East Forum (“MEF”), a respected research organization based in Philadelphia, in an exhaustive June 2018 report,^{viii} detailed Islamic Relief USA’s funding of projects that feature Hamas leaders.

MEF noted that Islamic Relief “maintains financial links with several terrorism-linked groups in the Middle East, including the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, which was founded by Al-Qaeda terrorist and 'Bin Laden loyalist' Abdul Majeed Al-Zindani.”

Islamic Relief USA’s projects in Gaza are managed by Unlimited Friends Association for Social Development (UFA), according to MEF. MEF stated in its June 2018 report that UFA “works closely with senior Hamas officials.”

MEF further noted that Abu-Shkian, who has been hailed by Hamas media as “Mohammed the Conqueror” is a featured guest at UFA who “frequently speaks at the graduation ceremonies of Hamas terror training programs and addresses crowds at ceremonies commemorating Hamas terrorists.”

Rep. Omar was scheduled to share the podium with Yousef Abdallah, an East Coast Islamic Relief USA staff member who has shared social media posts romanticizing “martyrs” who provide guns to “kill more than 20 jews [sic]” and “fire rockets at Tel Aviv.”

But at the last minute, Islamic Relief USA claimed that Abdallah was not speaking beside Omar, apparently clearing the way for her to continue her address.^{ix}

But the problem at Islamic Relief USA does not stop with Abdallah. Other top Islamic Relief leaders are sworn enemies of Israel and are closely allied with terrorist organizations.

The chairman of Islamic Relief USA’s board of directors is Khaled Lamada. He is the founder of Egyptian Americans for Democracy and Human Rights, one of the Muslim Brotherhood’s key lobbying arms in the United States.

MEF reported in its June report that Lamada’s Facebook posts, mostly in Arabic, have “circulated text praising the ‘jihad’ of the ‘Mujahidin of Egypt’ for ‘causing the Jews many defeats.’ He has republished claims on Facebook that praise Hamas for inflicting a “huge defeat” against the “Zionist entity.”

Essam El Haddad was the co-founder of Islamic Relief and now is serving a life sentence after working as the national security advisor to Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi.

Haddad, along with his co-defendants, was found guilty of passing “defense secrets” to “elements of the Iranian revolutionary guard,” and collaborating with terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah to “create a state of chaos” in order to seize power in Egypt.^x

The Egyptian newspaper Al-Yawm Al-Sabi reported that Haddad used the Islamic Relief branch in Cairo to finance the Muslim Brotherhood “under the guise of being monies destined for charitable purposes.”^{xi}

The Egyptian newspaper, El-Watan, also reported that Ibrahim Zayat, another trustee of Islamic Relief, was involved in financing the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.^{xii}

Until 2015 Omar Shahin served as Islamic Relief's public relations officer. In 2002 he preached: "You will keep on fighting with the Jews until the fight reaches the east of Jordan river then the stones and trees will say: oh Muslim, oh (servant) slaves of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him."^{xiii}

The current development coordinator for Islamic Relief USA is Saad Hassanin, according to MEF. Hassanin previously served as a senior representative of the Islamic Services Foundation, an educational organization led by several prominent Muslim Brotherhood leaders "which included Nabil Sadoun, who has since been deported after the U.S. government declared that he had ties to terrorist groups in the Middle East."

Rep. Omar has exhibited an extraordinary level of carelessness and poor judgement about the people and organizations she has chosen to endorse and publicly support. She also lacks the temperament for someone who is tasked with objectively addressing the volatile issues in the Middle East.

In our opinion, Rep. Omar has already acknowledged that she, herself, has a problem with anti-Semitism. Yet, even after her "apology" for her anti-Semitism, she went on to speak at a forum together with well-known anti-Semites who have known ties to terrorist organizations and those who seek harm to the Jewish people and the destruction of the State of Israel.

As the late Tom Lantos, a beloved mutual friend, former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Holocaust survivor, who experienced anti-Semitism, first hand, often used to say, "The veneer of civilization is paper thin."

We need to ensure that anti-Semitism has no place within the venerable House Foreign Affairs Committee.

We therefore respectfully request that Congresswoman Omar be removed, immediately, from the sensitive work of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Sincerely,

Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET), Sarah Stern, Founder and President

ACT For America, Lady Brigitte Gabrielle, Founder and Chairman

Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi), Andrew S. Borans, CEO

Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI), Helen Freedman and Judy Freedman Kadish, Executive Directors

Americans for Peace and Tolerance (APT), Charles Jacobs, Founder and President

Center for Security Policy (CSP) Fred Fleitz, President and CEO

Coalition for Jewish Values, Rabbi Pesach Lerner, President

Committee for Israel, Noah Pollak, President

The Jewish Policy Center, Shoshana Bryen, Senior Director

National Council of Young Israel, Farley Weiss, President

Zachor Legal Institute, Mark Greendorfer, President

ⁱ <https://www.rabwah.net/islamic-relief-and-qatar-implicated-in-tunisian-terror-finance-investigation/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/charity-banned-over-links-to-terrorism-hnj7rdr3qpz>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Muslim-Brotherhood-Sweden-Magnus-Norrell.pdf>

^{iv} <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4972726/Bangladesh-bans-three-charities-giving-Rohingya-aid.html>

^v <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/181938>

^{vi} <https://www.finews.com/news/english-news/21399-islamic-relief-charity-ubs-credit-suisse-postfinance-uk-hsbc-Israel>

^{vii} <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/hsbc-bank-cuts-services-islamic-relief-charity-160104152429151.html>

^{viii} <https://www.meforum.org/MiddleEastForum/media/MEFLibrary/pdf/Islamic-Relief-Dossier-v3.pdf>

^{ix} <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Feeble-attempt-made-to-cover-up-Ilhan-Omars-address-alongside-antisemite-580491>

^x “Court announces reasons behind lifetime sentence against Morsi and death sentences against 16 MB leaders,” State Information Service, July 2, 2015

^{xi} “Documents reveal links between the international organization of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Relief Association,” Al-Yawm Al-Sabi, February 27, 2014. <http://goo.gl/h2SpBk>

^{xii} Abdul Rahman Shalabi and Mohamed Ali Zidane, “Charities Funded by the Muslim Brotherhood from London,” El-Watan. May 2, 2014. <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/411039>

^{xiii} Omar Shahin, “Friday Lecture of October 4th, 2002 – Slaves of God,” Americans Against Hate. http://www.americansagainsthate.org/Omar_Shahin's_ICT_Lectures.htm.