

# Hamas's Influence on US Campuses:

A Study of Networks, Strategies,  
and Ideological Advocacy



All rights reserved. ©2024  
Program on Extremism at George Washington University  
2000 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Cover: ©Montecruz Foto, CC BY-SA 3.0



## SECTION 1

■ Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

■ The Muslim Brotherhood in America

■ Hamas in the US

■ Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

■ The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

■ The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies

■ The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

■ Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm

■ Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

■ Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

■ Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun

■ Iran's influence on US Campuses

■ Conclusion

**Hamas has operated for decades in the US through fundraising, influence operations, and strategic adaptation, using charities and neutral rhetoric to conceal its true objectives. On college campuses, Hamas-linked networks have exploited academic freedom to further their agenda, a strategy that is the latest iteration of plans conceived as far back as the early 1990s. Groups like Samidoun and actors linked to the Iranian regime have cooperated with US-based Hamas networks, conducting similar influence and fundraising operations.**

### **Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)**

The MB, founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt, is the world's oldest and one of the most influential Islamist movements. It advocates for Islam as a complete and all-encompassing system that governs every aspect of both private and public life.

The MB adopts various tactics to advance its goals, generally prioritizing proselytism and the provision of social services but uses violence when it deems it advantageous. The MB's motto is "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

The MB has branches throughout the Middle East, including the Palestinian territories. In 1987, the Palestinian MB capitalized on the First Intifada or "uprising" and created Hamas, known as the Islamic Resistance Movement. The international MB leadership approved the formation of Hamas and ordered MB branches worldwide to support it.

### **The Muslim Brotherhood in America**

By the 1960s, members of the MB had established a presence in America, with many of them arriving from the Middle East to study at US universities. By the 1980s, the US-based MB chapter was operational, structured with a shura council (executive board) and Emir (chairman), and operated through various front organizations.

## Hamas in the US

When Hamas was created in the Gaza Strip and the MB ordered its chapters to support it, the US MB branch was quick to react. At the time the US MB was led by Mousa Abu Marzook, who also quickly became the head of the Hamas Political Bureau in the early 1990s. Under Marzook's helm, the US MB's Palestine Committee became, in effect, the US-based Hamas infrastructure. Marzook and the Palestine Committee oversaw three organizations who were outfitted to support Hamas in specific ways:

- 1) the fundraising entity, the Holy Land Foundation (HLF) in Dallas, Texas;
- 2) the propaganda entity, Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) in Chicago, Illinois;
- 3) the political entity, United Association for Studies and Research (UASR), a think tank in Northern Virginia.

## Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

Hamas rhetoric is unapologetically antisemitic, framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in religious terms, as illustrated in the Hamas Charter:

- Article 7: "The Day of Judgment will not come until Muslims fight the Jews... when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees."
- Article 28 compares Jews to Nazis, portraying them as inherently evil and framing the conflict as a religious duty to eliminate them.

An October 1992 internal memorandum of the US Palestine Committee refers to Palestine as land to be liberated from the "defilement of the children of the Jews."



## SECTION 2

■ Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

■ The Muslim Brotherhood in America

■ Hamas in the US

■ Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

■ The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

■ The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies

■ The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

■ Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm

■ Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

■ Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

■ Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun

■ Iran's influence on US Campuses

■ Conclusion

### **The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition**

In September 1993, the US-brokered Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) outlined a pathway to peace. However, Hamas vowed to disrupt the peace process through any means necessary, including terrorism. US-based Hamas leaders responded similarly, holding an emergency meeting from October 1-3, 1993, in Philadelphia. During this FBI wiretapped meeting, they strategized on how to undermine the peace accords without drawing attention from the US government.

### **The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies**

The emergency meeting in Philadelphia led to the US-based Hamas network adopting a two-pronged strategy, combining internal and external approaches, particularly in the post-Oslo Accord period and in the face of increasing scrutiny in the US. This dual approach was driven by the need to balance the organization's internal support among Palestinian and Muslim communities while externally managing its image and avoiding legal consequences.

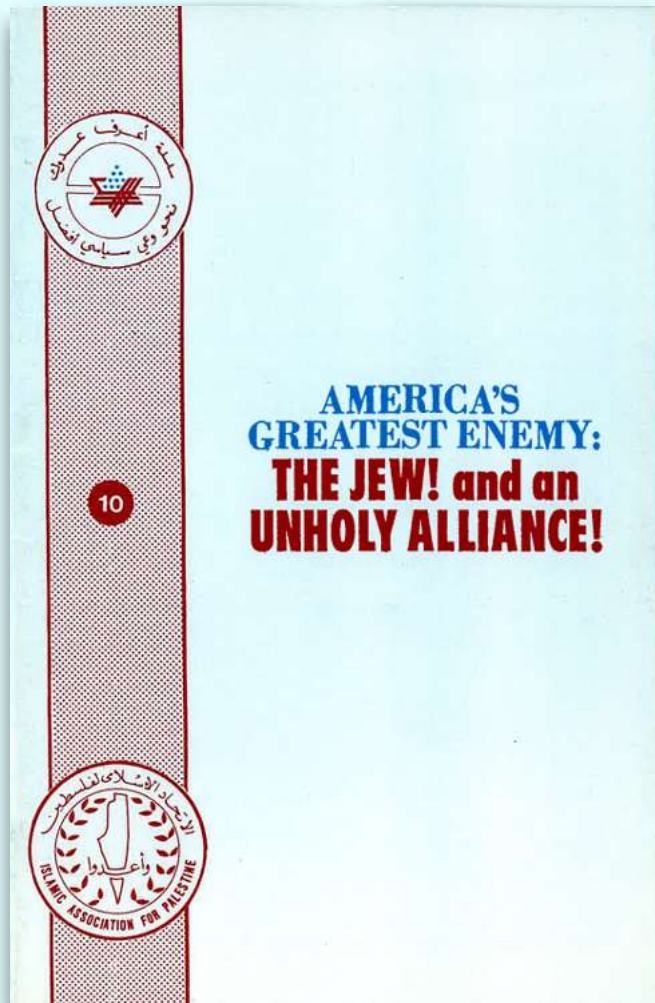
Internally, Hamas operatives and sympathizers focused on maintaining unwavering support for Hamas and its ideology within Islamist communities in America. The rhetoric within these groups emphasized the continuation of armed struggle (Jihad) in Palestine as a primary means of resisting peace agreements.

Fostering a long-term ideological commitment to resisting any form of reconciliation among the younger generations of American Muslims was considered a priority. In the words of top Hamas leader recorded by the FBI at the Philadelphia meeting:

*"We don't want the children of the [American Muslim] community who are raised here in schools and in Islamic schools and non-Islamic schools to grow up surrendering to the issue of peace with Jews. I mean, we don't see in ten years the growing generation in America surrendering to peace with Jews. Therefore, there must be curricula and teaching materials which spread in Islamic schools and in weekend schools."*

Hamas's external strategy aimed at influencing US policy and public opinion. US-based Hamas members





**IMAGE 1:** "America's Greatest Enemy: The Jew! and an Unholy Alliance!" by the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP)

were acutely aware of the need to avoid direct association with the organization in public contexts due to the risk of being labeled as supporters of terrorism. This resulted in efforts to subtly influence American public opinion and policymakers, without explicitly acknowledging ties to Hamas. Participants at meetings stressed the importance of "infiltrating" American media, universities, and research centers. This involved a form of strategic deception, with leaders urging that outward appearances be carefully managed to avoid scrutiny while continuing to support Hamas's objectives behind the scenes. "I swear by Allah that war is deception, we are fighting our enemy with a kind heart," argued a senior Hamas official at the Philadelphia meeting, "Deceive, camouflage, pretend that you're leaving while you're walking that way. Deceive your enemy."

### Textbox 1

The Philadelphia meeting set a dual strategy for Hamas in the US: fostering internal support within Muslim communities while discreetly influencing public opinion and policy externally.

**Internal efforts** focused on instilling anti-reconciliation ideology, especially among youth, through targeted education.

**Externally**, members sought to influence American institutions and media subtly, using strategic deception to avoid scrutiny and continue supporting Hamas's objectives.

**Importance of the Meeting:** The Philadelphia meeting was pivotal in setting forth a covert, dual-focused approach for Hamas affiliates in the US, combining ideological reinforcement internally and cautious, deceptive tactics externally. This approach aimed at embedding Hamas sympathies within American institutions while minimizing exposure to legal risks, allowing Hamas to sustain influence without direct confrontation.



## SECTION 3

Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

The Muslim Brotherhood in America

Hamas in the US

Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies

The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm

Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun

Iran's influence on US Campuses

Conclusion



### **The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)**

The strategies that came out of the 1993 Philadelphia meeting resulted in the creation of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Participants at the Philadelphia meeting, concerned about being identified and scrutinized for their ties to Hamas, proposed forming a new organization to serve as a neutral front that would claim to represent the broader Muslim community in the US. The goal was to create an official cover for existing organizations, should they face dissolution or bans due to their affiliations.

HLF leader, Shukri Abu Baker, and others discussed the need for this new group to avoid overt Islamic symbolism and Arabic names, suggesting a more neutral, American-friendly image to avoid raising suspicion. This idea took shape in CAIR, which was established shortly after the Philadelphia meeting by attendees Nihad Awad and Omar Ahmad, who aimed to create an organization that would advocate for Muslims in the US while distancing itself from Hamas to avoid legal and political repercussions.

### **Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm**

After Hamas was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization, the HLF tried to evade US oversight by using foreign accounts and distributing funds in cash. Despite these efforts, HLF continued to fund Hamas during the 1990s through 2001, while Hamas conducted numerous suicide bombings in Israel. Among the HLF's recipients were schools, including kindergartens, where Hamas propaganda was fed to children in an effort to radicalize them. Following the Second Intifada and the 9/11 attacks, the US government designated HLF a Specially Designated Terrorist Entity in 2001, leading to its closure.

As HLF was shut down, individuals affiliated with the original US-based Hamas infrastructure were involved in the opening and/or operating of new organizations who sought to provide aid similar to the HLF.

## 1960s Establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood Presence in the US

- MB members begin arriving in America, initially as students.
- The US MB network begins forming, later setting up organizational structures by the 1980s.

## Rise of Mousa Abu Marzook in the US MB and Hamas

- Marzook becomes the head of the Hamas Political Bureau.
- Under Marzook, the US MB's Palestine Committee structures US-based support for Hamas via:
  - The Holy Land Foundation (HLF) for fundraising (TX).
  - The Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) for propaganda (IL)
  - The United Association for Studies and Research (UASR) for political strategy (VA)

## Early 1990s

## 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

- September 1993: The Oslo Accords aim for peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA).
- October 1993: Hamas and US-based leaders hold an emergency meeting (October 1-3), strategizing on disrupting the accords.
- The FBI wiretaps this meeting, revealing Hamas's intent to undermine the peace process through terrorism, while attempting to avoid US government attention.

## 2001 HLF Designated as a Terrorist Entity

- In 2001, the US government designates HLF a Specially Designated Terrorist Entity.

## 2000-2001 Second Intifada and Post-9/11 Period

- Hamas escalates its activities, including numerous suicide bombings in Israel, intensifying scrutiny on groups providing financial support.
- Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US intensifies efforts to monitor and dismantle terrorist funding networks.

## 1994 CAIR Created

## 1987 Creation of Hamas

- The Palestinian branch of the MB capitalizes on the First Intifada, creating Hamas as the "Islamic Resistance Movement."
- MB branches, including the US, are instructed to support Hamas.





## SECTION 4

■ Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

■ The Muslim Brotherhood in America

■ Hamas in the US

■ Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

■ The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

■ The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies

■ The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

■ Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm

■ Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

■ Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

■ Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun

■ Iran's influence on US Campuses

■ Conclusion



### **Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)**

The Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) was the primary organization providing political and ideological support for Hamas in the US. After the post 9/11 US government's crackdown on Hamas-affiliated groups, and particularly the designation of HLF as a terrorist entity, many IAP affiliates transitioned to new organizations.

Many claim American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) was created as a successor to IAP, continuing its work under a different banner. AMP was formed by individuals who played important roles in IAP and HLF, ensuring that the advocacy and support for their cause would continue while distancing themselves from the legal issues that plagued the HLF and IAP.

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) is closely affiliated with AMP and is seen as one of its offshoots. SJP focuses on organizing student activism on college campuses in the US, advocating for Palestinian rights and supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and

Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. The current chairman of AMP also played a significant role in the creation of SJP, further cementing the connection between the two organizations.

### **Key Figures Bridging IAP, HLF, and AMP: Evolving Networks and Ongoing Advocacy**

Many individuals who were involved in core Hamas organizations IAP and HLF transitioned to roles within AMP or organizations closely aligned with it, like CAIR. These individuals continued their advocacy through new platforms, ensuring that their influence and work remained active despite legal and political pressures.

The family of US citizen David Boim, a victim of a Hamas attack, filed a federal lawsuit under the Anti-Terrorism Act against HLF, IAP, and other organizations for supporting Hamas. They won the case in the mid-2000s, with a verdict of 156 million in damages, unanimously affirmed on appeal. By then, HLF had been shut down, and IAP dissolved to avoid payment. The Boim family argued in a second lawsuit against AMP and others that AMP is essentially a continuation of IAP, using a new name but

maintaining the same leadership, purpose, and operational structure, making AMP potentially liable for the monetary judgment previously imposed on IAP. A federal judge in Chicago ruled in 2022 that the Boim case could proceed, finding sufficient evidence that AMP and related organizations may be alter egos of IAP, allowing the Boim family to pursue compensation from these groups.

In summary, AMP was created as a rebranding and continuation of IAP's mission after it dissolved. It extended its reach by fostering SJP, which has become a powerful voice for Palestinian activism on US college campuses. Key individuals involved in both IAP and HLF played crucial roles in establishing and running AMP, continuing their advocacy despite the legal challenges faced by their previous organizations.

### Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

Groups like AMP and SJP repurpose Hamas's narrative for global movements by framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a struggle against colonialism and oppression. Instead of directly supporting Hamas, they talk about "resistance" and "liberation." This approach allows

them to align with Hamas's goals, such as eliminating Israel, without explicitly associating with terrorism.

After the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, the National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP) organized a "National Day of Resistance" and circulated a "Resistance Toolkit" to frame the attacks as part of the justified Palestinian struggle. This narrative encouraged campus demonstrations and amplified anti-Israel sentiment, further pushing the agenda consistent with Hamas's underlying goals.



## SECTION 5

Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

The Muslim Brotherhood in America

Hamas in the US

Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies

The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm

Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun

Iran's influence on US Campuses

Conclusion



## **Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun**

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is a Marxist-Leninist organization founded in 1967 by George Habash, merging Palestinian guerrilla groups. It is known for violent attacks against Israel and Western interests, including high-profile hijackings in the 1960s and 1970s. Rejecting peace talks with Israel, the PFLP calls for the establishment of a secular, democratic state in Palestine. After internal leadership changes and Israeli targeted killings, the group continued its militant activities, primarily through rocket attacks, bombings, and shootings. The PFLP has been designated a terrorist organization by the US since 1997, and it maintains close ties with Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), receiving financial, military, and strategic support.

### **Samidoun**

Samidoun, a group linked to the PFLP, is dedicated to supporting Palestinian prisoners, many of whom are affiliated with the PFLP. Its founder, Khaled Barakat, a

Canadian citizen, is a prominent figure in the PFLP. Israeli authorities have designated Samidoun as a terrorist organization, accusing it of serving as a front for PFLP activities, including recruitment, fundraising, and promoting militant actions. Germany and the Netherlands have also followed Israel's lead in banning Samidoun. In the US, the group has been accused of promoting antisemitic rhetoric and violent activities, organizing events on college campuses where PFLP-affiliated materials, such as posters of convicted terrorists, are displayed, and advocating "resistance" among student groups.

On October 15, 2024, the US and Canada took decisive action by designating Samidoun as a terrorist entity and sham charity, aiming to dismantle its funding operations. Barakat was also sanctioned for his pivotal role in fundraising and recruitment efforts.

### **Iran's influence on US Campuses**

Iran has leveraged front organizations in the US to funnel money and provide ideological support to anti-Israel protests on campuses. These protests are often marked by chants like "Death to America" and "Death to Israel," reflecting Iran's broader revolutionary

narrative. Iranian leaders, including IRGC Commander Hossein Salami and Ayatollah Khamenei, have publicly praised these movements as evidence of Iran's growing influence abroad, particularly on American campuses.

In a July 2024 statement, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) noted that “Iran is becoming increasingly aggressive in their foreign influence efforts, seeking to stoke discord and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions, as we have seen them do in the past, including in prior election cycles. They continue to adapt their cyber and influence activities, using social media platforms and issuing threats.” Additionally, the DNI addressed Iran's efforts to exploit current events, stating, “In recent weeks, Iranian government actors have sought to opportunistically take advantage of ongoing protests regarding the war in Gaza, using a playbook we’ve seen other actors use over the years. We have observed actors tied to Iran’s government posing as activists online, seeking to encourage protests, and even providing financial support to protesters.”



**Khamenei.ir** @khamenei\_ir · 58m

Western governments say the Resistance Front is terrorism. This comes at a time when people flew Hezbollah's flag in a street in the US. The people of the world are supporting the Resistance Front because they are resisting & because they are against oppression.



## SECTION 6

■ Hamas's Roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

■ The Muslim Brotherhood in America

■ Hamas in the US

■ Antisemitism in Hamas's Ideology

■ The 1993 Oslo Accords and Hamas's Opposition

■ The Philadelphia Meeting: Internal and External Strategies

■ The creation of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

■ Holy Land Foundation (HLF): Hamas's Financial Arm

■ Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), and the Emergence of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

■ Repackaging the Hamas Narrative

■ Other Key Players on US Campuses: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Samidoun

■ Iran's influence on US Campuses

■ Conclusion



## Conclusion

The influence of Hamas and its associated networks on US campuses represents a strategic adaptation that exploits academic freedom and civil liberties to further its extremist agenda. These groups, often operating under seemingly benign fronts, like AMP and SJP, continue to propagate Hamas's core ideologies while distancing themselves publicly from overt connections to terrorism. Hamas's deep ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, its unwavering opposition to peace with Israel, and the active cooperation with other militant organizations like the PFLP and Iranian-backed groups, highlight the multifaceted approach to promoting anti-Israel sentiment. As this document illustrates, the networks' ability to rebrand and embed themselves within Western institutions remains a persistent challenge.

**Image page 4:** ©Fars Media Corporation, CC BY 4.0

**Image page 7:** ©Government Press Office (GPO), CC BY-SA 3.0

**Image page 14:** ©Stephen Melkisetian, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

**Image page 17:** ©Richard Ashurst, CC BY 2.0

All rights reserved. ©2024

Program on Extremism at George Washington University

2000 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, D.C. 20006



# Program on Extremism

---

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

---