



Program
on Extremism

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Islamic Relief Worldwide Under Pressure

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In recent months, Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) and several of its branches throughout the West have suffered various setbacks, largely stemming from increasing concerns related to both extremism links and poor accounting from governments that have historically funded the organization. This short report examines these dynamics.

What is Islamic Relief?

Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) is one of the world's largest faith-based charities. Founded in 1984 and "inspired by our Islamic faith and the teachings of the Qur'an," it has a budget of almost 300 million US dollars a year.¹ Based out of Birmingham, UK, it has offices in 45 countries worldwide, where local branches of the mother organization operate. IRW boasts partnership agreements with prominent entities like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Program, the European Commission and many governmental and non-governmental agencies throughout the world.²

But the organization is no stranger to controversy and IRW has long been the target of intense scrutiny. Various non-European governments have designated it as a terrorist organization or banned it from operating on their territory,³ and critics have accused it of links to the Muslim Brotherhood and extremism — accusations IRW has always staunchly denied.⁴

The 2020 Antisemitism Scandal and its Consequences

In 2020, IRW was at the center of a global row after journalistic inquiries brought to light a disturbing pattern of virulently antisemitic and pro-extremist

¹ In 2024, the latest year for which a budget was publicly available, the number was 275.6 million British pounds. See <https://islamic-relief.org/about-us/>; <https://annualreport.islamic-relief.org/2024/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/IRW-AR2024-FINAL-14072025.pdf>

² Islamic Relief Worldwide. *Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019*. Birmingham, UK: Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2020. <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annual-Report-2019.pdf>; Islamic Relief Worldwide. "History." <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/about-us/history/>.

³ Emirates News Agency (WAM), "UAE Cabinet Approves List of Designated Terrorist Organisations," WAM, November 15, 2014, <https://www.wam.ae/en/article/hsz97ivy-uae-cabinet-approves-list-designated-terrorist>

⁴ Islamic Relief Worldwide. "Response to Allegations of Links to Muslim Brotherhood." April 18, 2019. <https://www.islamic-relief.org/response-to-allegations-of-links-to-muslim-brotherhood/>.

social media postings among the upper echelons of the organization. The controversy began in July 2020, when *The Times* released a story detailing its discovery of antisemitic posts made by Heshmat Khalifa, then trustee and director of IRW, on his personal Facebook account.⁵ The posts included insults directed at Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, whom Khalifa labeled a “pimp son of the Jews,” “Zionist pig,” “Zionist traitor,” and “Zionist criminal.” In his soon after deleted account, Khalifa also described Jews as “the grandchildren of monkeys and pigs.” In addition, Khalifa made multiple positive comments 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.”

The *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.⁶ 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 Khalifa’s social media posts and the views expressed in them.⁷ The statement added that Khalifa had resigned from his position on the board of trustees. Islamic Relief clearly distanced itself from Khalifa’s statements, arguing that they “have no place in our organisation” and that it was “appalled by the hateful comments he made and unreservedly condemn all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism.”⁸ Moreover, it 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.”⁹

⁵ Norfolk, Andrew, and Ryan Watts. “Islamic Relief Leader Quits as *The Times* Discovers Antisemitic Posts.” *The Times*. July 24, 2020. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamic-relief-leader-quits-as-times-discovers-antisemitic-posts-5dplrw9vv>.

⁶ United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. “Press Statement on Combating Antisemitism.” July 28, 2020. <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/07/press-statement-on-combating-antisemitism/>.

⁷ Islamic Relief Worldwide. “Statement from Islamic Relief Worldwide.” July 22, 2020. <https://www.islamic-relief.org/news/statement-from-islamic-relief-worldwide/>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

Yet, as it turned out, the incident related to Khalifa's posts was hardly isolated. In July, days before *The Times'* article, Khalifa was replaced as director of the International Waqf Fund (a subsidiary of Islamic Relief) by Almoutaz Tayara.¹⁰ Tayara was 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 Times* showed that Tayara also had a long history of problematic social media postings similar to Khalifa's.¹¹ In 2017, in fact, German researcher Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall had denounced various extremist Facebook postings made by Tayara, which he had since removed.¹² 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 Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of US and EU designated terrorist group Hamas, who Tayara saw as graduating "from the school of the Muslim Brotherhood."

Given IRW's profile, the *Times'* two-pronged investigation had a global echo and triggered significant consequences. The first were inside IRW itself, as on August 22, 2020 it was announced the organization's entire board of trustees resigned.¹³ In September, IRW recruited former UK Attorney General Dominic Grieve to head an *Independent Commission into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief*, with Sir Clive Jones CBE serving as an expert advisor to the Independent Commission. Grieve published his findings on January 14, 2021.¹⁴

The utilization of an 'independent commission' to investigate claims against IRW is one that the organization had used previously. In June 2014, Israel declared IRW a proscribed organization and banned it from working in Israel

¹⁰ Companies House. "ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE (Company No. 02365572): Filing History." GOV.UK. <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02365572/filing-history>.

¹¹ Norfolk, Andrew. "Entire Board Resigns at Muslim Charity." *The Times*. August 22, 2020. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/entire-board-resigns-at-muslim-charity-tnktpgb2g>.

¹² Herrmann, Sigrid. "Antisemitismus-Skandal bei Islamic Relief." *Islamismus und Gesellschaft*. July 27, 2020. <https://vunv1863.wordpress.com/2020/07/27/antisemitismus-skandal-bei-islamic-relief/>.

¹³ Andrew Norfolk, Entire board resigns at Islamic Relief Worldwide, *The Times*, 22 August 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/entire-board-resigns-at-muslim-charity-tnktpgb2g>

¹⁴ Dominic Grieve. *Independent Commission into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief*. Temple Garden Chambers, January 14, 2021. <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Independent-Commission-Report-29.01.2021.pdf>.

and the West Bank, accusing it of fundraising for Hamas.¹⁵ Islamic Relief responded a few months later by announcing that an independent investigation of its “projects, partnerships, finances and staffing in the West Bank” had been conducted and had found that “those systems and processes are working well and there is absolutely no evidence of any links with terrorism.”¹⁶

In substance, Grieve’s *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”¹⁷ 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 and the published report of the Independent Commission seemed to have helped calm opinion in the UK, as there appeared to have been no repercussions for IRW from British authorities. On January 20, 2021, just six days after the Independent Commission report, a statement by the Charity Commission declared that the antisemitic statements made by senior figures at Islamic Relief risked undermining the charity’s work. It also expressed satisfaction at the review Islamic Relief had conducted of its governance, and that it would continue to monitor its progress.¹⁸

Authorities in other Western countries, though, appeared to have drawn significantly different conclusions and taken very different actions:

- 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

¹⁵ JPost.com Staff. “Israel Bans Islamic Relief Worldwide from West Bank Due to Hamas Ties.” *The Jerusalem Post*, June 19, 2014. <https://www.jpost.com/operation-brothers-keeper/israel-bans-islamic-relief-worldwide-from-west-bank-due-to-hamas-ties-359934>.

¹⁶ Islamic Relief Worldwide. “Independent Investigation of Islamic Relief Operations.” *Islamic Relief UK*, January 29, 2021. <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/independent-investigation-of-islamic-relief-operations/>.

¹⁷ Grieve Report, 12.

¹⁸ Charity Commission. “Regulator Oversees Governance Improvements after Senior Figures in Development Charity Post Anti-Semitic and Offensive Social Media Comments.” *GOV.UK*, January 20, 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-oversees-governance-improvements-after-senior-figures-in-development-charity-post-anti-semitic-and-offensive-social-media-comments>.

USAID should act with extreme caution and avoid partnering with IRW in the future.”¹⁹

- In December 2020, the German government announced that it would no longer fund the local branch of IRW (Islamic Relief Deutschland). The Grieve *Independent Commission* report stated that “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.”²⁰ While this might be the case, the German government’s announcement on the matter did not mention anything about antisemitism or *The Times* articles, which had been the focus of the Grieve report. 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.²¹
- In January 2021, the Dutch government announced its decision to no longer fund the local branch of Islamic Relief. Explaining her decision, then 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 decided not to subsidize Islamic Relief Worldwide.”²²
- In Sweden, as noted by Grieve’s *Independent Commission* in January 2021, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) said it “is carrying out a review of whether or not it should continue to use IR Sweden as a partner in delivering aid.”²³ In May 2021, however, SIDA began a joint “Covid-19 Support” project with Islamic Relief in Pakistan, Gaza, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

¹⁹ Kredo, Adam. “State Department Cuts Ties With Islamic Charity Over Anti-Semitism.” *Washington Free Beacon*, January 18, 2021. <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/state-department-cuts-ties-with-islamic-charity-over-anti-semitism/>.

²⁰ Grieve Report, 28.

²¹ German Bundestag. “Zuwendungen an ‘Islamic Relief Deutschland.’” *Heute im Bundestag (hib)*, December 3, 2020. <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/811522-811522>.

²² Isitman, Elif. “Kaag: geen Nederlands belastinggeld voor islamclub.” *De Telegraaf*, January 19, 2021. <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/865347039/kaag-geen-nederlands-belastinggeld-voor-islamclub>.

²³ Grieve Report, 28.

While these consequences immediately followed the 2020 scandal, some of its ramifications appear to have extended until today. IRW's budget does not seem to have suffered, as it actually doubled from 149 million pounds in 2020 to 275 million in 2024.²⁴ But the organization arguably suffered an extended reputational damage, particularly with institutional donors. This report outlines some of the most recent.

Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA)

Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA) is the largest Muslim charity in the United States, raising approximately \$150 million annually.²⁵ The organization currently holds 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, a designation that confers substantial financial and reputational benefits. It exempts the organization from state corporate income, franchise, use, excise, and sales taxes, provides its donors with a corresponding tax deduction, and affords the organization a savings of between 15 and 35 percent on its taxable income.²⁶ Beyond the financial advantages, 501(c)(3) status serves to legitimize an organization in the eyes of the public and bolster its standing among institutional donors and government partners alike.

IRUSA represents one of the largest sources of revenue for IRW. In 2024 alone, IRUSA generated £50.4 million in income to IRW, accounting for nearly one-fifth of IRW's total global income.²⁷ The organization maintains its headquarters in Alexandria, VA, and operates branch offices in Richardson, TX, Buena Park, CA, Alsip, IL, and Saddle Brook, NJ.²⁸

²⁴ Islamic Relief Worldwide. *Annual Report and Financial Statements 2020*. Birmingham, UK: Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2021. <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IRW-AnnualReport2020-SignedLowRes-1.pdf>.

²⁵ Global Impact, "Engaging Private Sector Donors to Create a World Free of Poverty," <https://charity.org/case-study/maximizing-funding-strengthen-islamic-relief-usas-programs-0/>.

²⁶ Alliance for Justice, *The Benefits of Obtaining 501(c)(3) Tax Exemption*, June 2012, https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/The_Benefits_of_Obtaining_501c3_Tax_Exemption-2.pdf.

²⁷ Islamic Relief Worldwide. *Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024*. Birmingham, UK: Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2025. <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/IRW-AR2024-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁸ Islamic Relief USA. "Contact Us." <https://irusa.org/contact-us/>.

The House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee Asks the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to Investigate IRUSA

The House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee serves as the chamber's principal body for matters concerning taxation, trade policy, and major federal programs, including Social Security and Medicare.²⁹ On September 24, 2024, Committee Chairman Jason Smith submitted a request to then-IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel to investigate and revoke the tax-exempt status of IRUSA.³⁰ Smith stated in his letter that the organization had allegedly "engaged in conduct that appears to provide support for a designated terrorist organization and other conduct designed to incite chaos in a way that is contrary to the public good, despite its stated tax-exempt purpose of alleviating poverty and suffering in the world."³¹ Under Section 7803 of the Internal Revenue Code, the IRS holds the authority to enforce all internal revenue laws.³² Section 501 requires that all 501(c)(3) organizations be organized and operated exclusively for their stated charitable or educational purposes.³³ Any nonprofit that conducts itself in a manner inconsistent with those requirements is subject to revocation of its tax-exempt status. Smith's letter urged the IRS to act "as quickly as possible to examine this activity and revoke the tax-exempt status of Islamic Relief USA."³⁴

The appendix of Smith's initial letter alleges that the Islamic Relief branch based in Gaza "openly works with proxy organizations" for Hamas.³⁵ It further notes that IRW was a founding member of the Union of Good,³⁶ an entity designated by the United States government under Executive Order 13224

²⁹ House Committee on Ways and Means, "About the Committee," <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/about/>.

³⁰ House Committee on Ways and Means, *Tax-Exempt Status Revocation Letters*, September 2024, <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Tax-Exempt-Status-Revocation-Letters.pdf>

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Internal Revenue Service. "The Agency, Its Mission and Statutory Authority." March 18, 2026. <https://www.irs.gov/about-irs/the-agency-its-mission-and-statutory-authority>.

³³ Internal Revenue Service. "Exemption Requirements – 501(c)(3) Organizations." January 30, 2026. <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-501c3-organizations>.

³⁴ House Committee on Ways and Means, *Tax-Exempt Status Revocation Letters*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

as "an organization created by Hamas leadership to transfer funds to the terrorist organization."³⁷

On October 6, 2025, Chairman Smith sent a follow-up letter to Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent—who was temporarily serving as Acting IRS Commissioner—and IRS CEO Frank Bisignano, directing them to prioritize examinations of organizations previously referred for revocation during the 118th Congress.³⁸ Smith cited the anniversary of the October 7th terrorist attack and recent incidents of political violence across the country as catalysts for the letter.³⁹ He noted that the organizations flagged in the 2024 referral had demonstrated ties to foreign terrorist organizations, engaged in illegal activity on American soil, and failed to operate in accordance with their stated tax-exempt purposes.⁴⁰ Less than two weeks before Smith's letter, President Trump issued a National Security Presidential Memorandum directing Treasury Secretary Bessent and other senior administration officials to counter domestic terrorism and organized political violence.⁴¹ Section 2(j) of the memorandum instructed the IRS to ensure that no tax-exempt entity was directly or indirectly financing political violence or domestic terrorism, and to refer any such organizations to the Department of Justice for further investigation and possible prosecution.⁴²

IRUSA Sues Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW)

On March 23, 2026, Islamic Relief USA filed a complaint against Islamic Relief Worldwide in the United States District Court, the Southern District of New York.⁴³ The suit sought to formalize IRUSA's separation from IRW while alleging

³⁷ U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Designates Five Charities Funding Hamas and Six Senior Hamas Leaders as Terrorist Entities," August 22, 2003, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/hp1267>.

³⁸ House Committee on Ways and Means, "Letter to Acting IRS Commissioner Scott Bessent and IRS CEO Frank Bisignano," October 6, 2025, <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/10.6.25-Letter-to-IRS.pdf>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴¹ The White House, "Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence," September 25, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Complaint. Filed March 23, 2026, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.1.0.pdf>.

unauthorized donor solicitation, trademark infringement, and misuse of grant funds on the part of IRW.

IRUSA's complaint alleged three violations. First, that IRW had illegally solicited American donors across multiple states in breach of the Members' and License Agreements.⁴⁴ According to the complaint, between November 20, 2025 and February 18, 2026, approximately 25 percent of IRW's internet traffic originated from US-based addresses, with IRW actively purchasing advertisements on Meta and Google targeting American donors.⁴⁵ Second, that IRW had fraudulently fabricated records intended to create the false impression that IRUSA had independently canceled hundreds of orphan sponsorships.⁴⁶ Third, IRW had exported sewing machines from Iran to Afghanistan in connection with an earthquake relief project and refused to comply with audit requests, which IRUSA characterized as a potential sanctions violation.⁴⁷

The lawsuit is the culmination of months of tensions between IRUSA and IRW. On July 10, 2025, IRUSA had sent IRW a formal termination letter alleging material breaches of the Grant Agreements.⁴⁸ IRW contested the sanctions allegation, maintaining that the machines were manufactured in China and that the confusion stemmed from an erroneous statement made by a staff member who mistakenly believed that the machines had been sourced from Iran.⁴⁹ IRW subsequently offered to refund \$28,443, representing the full cost of the machines in question.⁵⁰ On September 19, 2025, IRUSA formally requested audits of four Afghanistan grants covering food insecurity, health education, women's entrepreneurship, and earthquake recovery.⁵¹ IRW declined to engage.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9, 54.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁹ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Attachment 2 (Exhibit B) to Amended Complaint, Document No. 16. <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.16.2.pdf>.

⁵⁰ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Attachment 3 (Exhibit C) to Amended Complaint, Document No. 16. <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.16.3.pdf>.

⁵¹ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Attachment 4 (Exhibit D) to Amended Complaint, Document No. 16. <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.16.4.pdf>.

As tensions escalated, IRUSA's board determined by October 12, 2025, that continued participation in the relationship "presents an immediate threat to the reputation, integrity or operation" of IRUSA.⁵² The board's letter cited the House Ways and Means Committee's referral to the IRS, noting that the committee's accusations were grounded solely in IRUSA's financial relationship with IRW.⁵³

On December 7, 2025, IRUSA notified IRW of its intent to disassociate, citing audit obstruction and the return of at least \$3.6 million in residual project funds.⁵⁴ A subsequent letter dated December 24, 2025, provided formal notice of the termination of the Members' Agreement and all existing contractual relations.⁵⁵

On April 23, 2026, IRW filed a motion to compel arbitration, arguing that the Members' Agreement required all disputes to be resolved through arbitration in Birmingham, England.⁵⁶ IRUSA countered in its subsequent amended complaint, filed on May 14, that IRW had forfeited that right by refusing to participate in the agreed dispute resolution process.⁵⁷ In that amended complaint, IRUSA asserted four counts: interference with prospective donor relationships through the use of the "Islamic Relief" trademark;⁵⁸ a Lanham Act violation for creating the misleading impression that IRW and IRUSA were the same entity;⁵⁹ a violation of New York General Business Law Section 349 for deceiving the public;⁶⁰ and unjust enrichment through the receipt of

⁵² *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Attachment 8 (Exhibit H) to Amended Complaint, Document No. 16. <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.16.8.pdf>

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁴ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Complaint ¶ 48, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.1.0.pdf>.

⁵⁵ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Attachment 11 (Exhibit K) to Amended Complaint, Document No. 16. <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.16.11.pdf>.

⁵⁶ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Memorandum in Support of Defendant's Motions to Compel Arbitration or Dismiss Complaint, April 23, 2026, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.13.0.pdf>

⁵⁷ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Amended Complaint ¶ 69, May 14, 2026, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.16.0.pdf>

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶ 102, 104 - 105.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 108 - 110.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ¶ 113 - 115.

donations intended for IRUSA.⁶¹ On June 4, 2026, IRW filed a renewed motion to compel arbitration.⁶²

IRW has characterized the lawsuit as a bad faith effort by IRUSA to avoid contractual obligations, describing it as a "publicity stunt directed to Congress and the media."⁶³ IRW has further noted that its annual statutory audits, publicly available through the United Kingdom's Charity Commission, have never produced findings of any connection to terrorism or terrorist financing.⁶⁴

Islamic Relief Deutschland (IRD)

Islamic Relief Deutschland (IRD), the German affiliate of Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), is one of the network's most important financial pillars. In 2024 alone it contributed approximately £20 million (about \$27 million) to the mother organization – roughly seven percent of IRW's total income.⁶⁵ Similar to its American counterpart, IRD has recently suffered significant institutional setbacks tied to financial management and its relationship with IRW.

A report authored by German researchers Seyran Ateş and Sigrid Hermann-Marschall for German think-tank AK Polis analyzed recently disclosed audits by the German government pointing to wrongdoing in granting funding to IRD to carry out various projects. In early 2021, Ateş had submitted a request to access the findings of the Federal Court of Auditors (BRH) audit reports relating to the German government's funding of IRD projects.⁶⁶ The request was denied on the grounds that disclosure risked "misleading public presentation" that could "disproportionately burden" Germany's global partnerships.⁶⁷ Before the Administrative Court of Berlin, federal authorities went further, arguing that

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 118 - 120.

⁶² *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Defendant Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.'s Notice of Renewed Motion to Compel Arbitration, June 4, 2026, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.19.0.pdf>

⁶³ *Islamic Relief USA v. Islamic Relief Worldwide, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-02367 (S.D.N.Y.), Memorandum in Support of Defendant's Renewed Motion to Compel Arbitration, June 4, 2026, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321/gov.uscourts.nysd.660321.20.0.pdf>

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁵ Islamic Relief Worldwide, *Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024*, 12.

⁶⁶ Ateş, Seyran, and Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall. "Deutsche Steuermillionen 'im Blindflug' in die Kriegsregion Nahost." AK Polis (Arbeitskreis Politischer Islam), May 23, 2026. <https://www.ak-polis.de/brh-aa-giz-ird-irw-dsv-blindflug/>.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

releasing the reports “could lead to polemics,” and discussions might be “steered in a particular direction not conducive to the well-being of the Federation.”⁶⁸

In response, Ateş filed a lawsuit, insisting that “misleading public presentation” is not a legally recognized ground for denying access to information.⁶⁹ The two audit reports became available in February 2026, and contained redacted portions.⁷⁰ The audits revealed that between 2011 and 2025, IRD transferred approximately €152 million to IRW, and also documented years of disregard for core grant compliance requirements.⁷¹ The German government had provided €16 million to the Islamic Relief network during this period, accounting for more than ten percent of the donation income referenced in the audits.⁷²

Between 2013 and 2020, the Federal Foreign Office (AA) paid IRD roughly €15 million for humanitarian projects in Syria; a further €965,040 flowed from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in separate funding lines, including €632,926 from Societal Crisis Response and Stabilization Aid and €332,114 from Bilateral Technical Cooperation.⁷³ The state-owned German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) was mandated to audit those Syria projects, and subsequently identified numerous grant violations, including undocumented expenses, missing receipts, and unjustified payments.⁷⁴ Where final recipients in Turkey and Syria submitted no records at all, GIZ simply assumed “in favor of” the grantee that IRD had checked everything internally, elevating the audited party to the rank of its own auditor.⁷⁵ In one project, GIZ’s review even proceeded on the assumption that IRD had not forwarded the funds to partners at all: “quality defects,” as the BRH put it, that the ministry must not simply accept.⁷⁶ The AA has since demanded €155,000 with added interest.⁷⁷ The

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

audit alleges “expense allowances and ancillary wage costs were paid without a contractual basis; flight tickets were missing; translations were lacking; no information was provided on exchange rates; lump-sum payments of meal allowances were made; taxi fares were reimbursed without justification of necessity; the underlying service contract for a payment was missing.”⁷⁸

Over the same seven year period, the IRD received approximately €15 million from the Foreign Office for Syria-related projects, administered through IRW and Islamic Relief Turkey with the help of the German-Syrian Association for the Promotion of Freedom and Human Rights (DSV).⁷⁹ Notably, in 2013, the same year that the Foreign Office began disbursing the confirmed funds for the first project, Volume 1 of the IRD's principal administrative file was destroyed.⁸⁰ The volume covered the organization's records from 1994 to 2006 and is no longer recoverable.⁸¹

Since travel to Syria was not possible at the time, the DSV proposed transporting the cash in a suitcase through Turkey.⁸² Customs declarations later documented that cash transfers from Germany to Turkey by air totaling €240,000 were carried out.⁸³ The report concluded that there is no documentation of what happened to the money after it reached Turkey, in the Syrian civil war zone, or elsewhere.⁸⁴

The Foreign Office's own Syria desk had warned in October 2018 that the funding risked the “unintended promotion of MB [Muslim Brotherhood] charitable structures in Syria” and the “unintended political strengthening of the MB [Muslim Brotherhood] as a political actor in Syria.”⁸⁵

It is noteworthy that Germany's Federal Intelligence Service (BND) and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), among others, had warned the Federal Foreign Office (AA) against funding any projects associated

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

with IRD.⁸⁶ The German Federal Government stated in front of parliament in November 2020 that “both Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) and Islamic Relief Deutschland (IRD)...have significant personnel links to the Muslim Brotherhood or organizations affiliated with it.”⁸⁷ Despite these warnings, funding continued.

Commenting on the findings at a public event in June 2026, former Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office Michael Roth (SPD) stated that “staff [of the Federal Foreign Office] acted against the ministry's directives, they evidently knew what they were doing.”⁸⁸

Islamic Relief Sverige (IRS)

Islamic Relief Sverige (IRS) contributed £16.6 million to IRW's 2024 global income.⁸⁹ Over the past decade, IRS received approximately SEK 1.3 billion (roughly \$133 million) in aid from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Swedish government's primary foreign aid agency.⁹⁰ In 2024 alone, SIDA allocated SEK 191 million (approximately \$19.5 million) to IRS, constituting roughly 70 percent of the organization's total revenue from both private fundraising and public funding.⁹¹

On January 20, 2026, SIDA announced that it would not approve any new grants to IRS.⁹² SIDA explained that it could not determine with sufficient certainty that IRS met the requirements designed to ensure the absence of links to violent extremism or anti-democratic activities.⁹³ The decision followed a review conducted by the Center for Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE),

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Deutscher Bundestag. *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Stephan Thomae, Renata Alt, Nicole Bauer, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP – Drucksache 19/23023 – Islamic Relief*. Drucksache 19/24269. Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, November 13, 2020. <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/242/1924269.pdf>.

⁸⁸ AK Polis. “Was folgt aus dem Förderskandal um Islamic Relief?” X (formerly Twitter), July 1, 2026. https://x.com/AK_Polis/status/2072330352220139985.

⁸⁹ Islamic Relief Worldwide, *Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024*, Page 18.

⁹⁰ Expressen, “Från en miljard till 0 kronor i bidrag för islamiska biståndsorganisationen,” January 20, 2026, <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/sverige/fran-en-miljard-till-0-kronor-i-bidrag-for-islamiska-bistandsorganisationen/>.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Svensson, Olof. “Islamic Relief får indraget miljonbidrag: ‘Försiktighetsprincip.’” *Aftonbladet*, January 20, 2026. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/y5RjqK/islamic-reliefs-bistand-dras-in>.

⁹³ Expressen, “Från en miljard till 0 kronor i bidrag för islamiska biståndsorganisationen,” January 20, 2026.

which identified individuals within IRS and affiliated networks who had current or past connections to such environments.⁹⁴ The CVE, in fact, found that a small number of individuals within IRS and two affiliated organizations—the United Islamic Associations in Sweden (FIFS) and the Islamic Association in Sweden (IFiS)—had “links to violent extremism or anti-democratic environments, in some cases through their relatives.”⁹⁵

IRS rejected the findings, stating: “Islamic Relief has no links to any external political groups. We are a humanitarian actor, and our main mission is to reduce suffering, promote social justice, and support sustainable global development.”⁹⁶ Nonetheless, SIDA stated that the existing funding agreement would be allowed to run its course, but that no new funding would be awarded.⁹⁷

Conclusion

This report has documented a series of scandals involving Islamic Relief, drawing on cases from its affiliates in the United States, Germany, and Sweden. Given this track record and other indicators—in particular the Trump’s administration’s heightened focus on Islamism and charities—it is not unlikely that the pressure on the IRW network is likely to continue in coming months.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ The European Conservative, “Sweden Cuts Islamic Relief Funding to Zero,” January 21, 2026, <https://europeanconservative.com/articles/news/sweden-cuts-islamic-relief-funding-to-zero/>.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*



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