

Video: "Qatar and North Korea: Partners in Terror?"

The Qatar Insider



Charity investigated for terror ties received Qatar funding

New Europe

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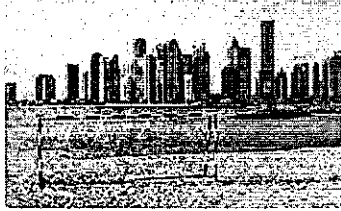
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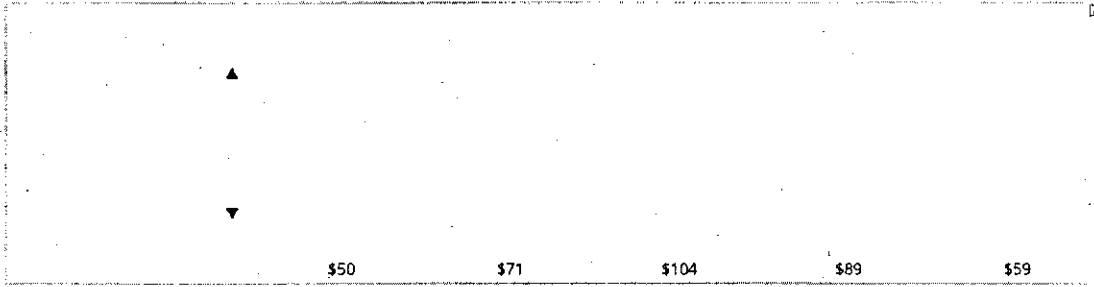


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Voices

How Qatar being forced to stop funding terrorism led to Hamas and Fatah reconciling

For years, Egypt has sought to improve relations between both parties operating in the Palestinian territories. Now it seems like something has actually changed – but what will Qatar do next?

Abdellatif El-Menawy | Thursday 21 September 2017 14:29 BST | 14 comments





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 Hamas' announcement last week that it would be willing to hold talks with the rival Fatah was unexpected but not surprising. For weeks now, Palestinian political commentators have judged that Hamas' position in Gaza would become increasingly precarious as Qatar, the group's principal benefactor, began to feel the political and economic pressures of the Anti-Terror Quartet's sanctions.

The rapprochement is certainly welcome – an end to the violent, decade-long feud between both Palestinian parties may well bring fresh impetus to the conflict resolution efforts with Israel. Yet the timing is significant: the cessation of Qatar's financial and military aid to Hamas comes at a moment when Islamist extremist rebels in the region appear to be in retreat.

Hardline Islamist militias are collapsing in Syria and only last month the Iraqi army reclaimed Tal Afar, the former Isis stronghold, having defeated Isis forces in Mosul in July. It is no coincidence that these gains have increased as the longer sanctions against Qatar have continued. This is perhaps the first major policy success of the boycott: it has forced Qatar to rein in its pragmatic support for extremist groups as the world's spotlight is fixed on Doha.

The political implications of the Hamas-Fatah rapprochement extend beyond Gaza. For years, Egypt has sought to improve relations between both parties following the split in summer 2007. Yet efforts at reconciliation foundered repeatedly on the rock of Hamas' intransigence and were intensified further by orders from Doha.

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Hamas seeks to mend relations with Egypt

In this respect, Egypt's role in progressing the rapprochement through brokering talks between Hamas and Mohammed Dahlan, the exiled former Fatah leader currently residing in the UAE, is instructive.

Hamas' close ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, a Qatari-funded extremist organisation, has long been a cause for concern in Egypt where the Sisi government has conducted tough crackdowns on the organisation since coming to power in 2014. The recent decline in Qatar's regional influence is likely to curtail the Muslim Brotherhood's operations significantly, leaving Egypt free to play a more active role in the peace process between Israel and Palestine.

Elsewhere, Hamas has sought to strengthen regional ties as other Arab countries have overwhelmingly lent their support to Egypt-led efforts by the Quartet to broker peace between Gaza and Israel. None of Hamas' former allies, including the Muslim Brotherhood and Qatar,

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have a vested interest in seeing the conclusion of a successful peace process between Hamas and Fatah, let alone with Israel – given their staunch opposition to the Quartet’s regional influence.

Nonetheless, the GCC’s sanctions on Qatar severely weakened Hamas’ strongest supporters and put the group under significant pressure in Gaza. Faced with growing unpopularity due to Fatah’s cuts to Gaza’s electricity supply in a climate of Fatah-imposed salary cuts on Gaza government employees and high levels of unemployment, Hamas had little choice but to reconcile with Fatah.



UAE: Diplomacy will be given 'one or two more chances' before they 'part ways' with Qatar

Yet the reconciliation may well be a precursor of things to come. Qatar’s regional proxies are coming under increasing pressure as the country itself can no longer afford to fund their operations.

Under these circumstances, the question remains: what will Qatar do next? If it has no intention of taking steps to reverse its diplomatic isolation, it may decide to re-engage with these extremist groups the moment the spotlight moves elsewhere. That would be a dangerous outcome that must be avoided at all costs.

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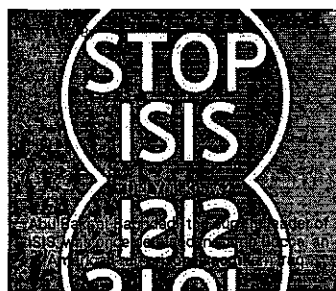
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Charity investigated for terror ties received Qatar funding

By Luigi Baresi (<https://www.neweurope.eu/author/luigi-baresi/>)

International Affairs, New Europe

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"This article has been edited to add more accurate information."

A controversial charity that has been investigated by several countries for its links to extremism appears to be bankrolled by the State of Qatar. Muslim Aid (<https://www.muslimaid.org/>), a London-based charity with thirteen offices around the world, has received at least a million euros since 2011 from the Qatari government or one of its state-supported charities. In the past, the organisation has been investigated by the governments of England, Wales (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11263309/Terror-link-charities-get-British-millions-in-Gift-Aid.html>), Spain (<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/12/08/spain.alqaeda/>) and Bangladesh (<http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-80287>) over its alleged funding of terrorist movements. Muslim Aid was also banned in Israel ([http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/pressroom/2008/pages/defense%20minister%](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/pressroom/2008/pages/defense%20minister%20press%20conference%2020080901)

20signs%20order%20banning%20hamas-affiliated%20charitable%20organizations%207-jul-2008.aspx) in 2008 for supporting Hamas' fundraising network, designated a terrorist group in the West (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_designated_terrorist_groups). According to information provided by Muslim Aid's legal representatives, the UK government did not find "any evidence that it had illegally funded any proscribed or designated entities".

In the UK, Muslim Aid was cleared by the first investigation into the charity, finding that there was no link to Syria or terrorism-related activity. Michelle Russell, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said at the time of the announcement, "It is important for the public to understand that opening an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrong doing".

But as a result of that investigation, the Commission appointed an Interim Manager in order to assist Muslim Aid in improving its governance and financial management.

And even though the Spanish government has not, to New Europe's knowledge, found links of Muslim Aid to terrorist activities, the history of allegations and ban in Israel may be particularly distressing for Spain, which has allowed Qatar to build up to 150 mosques in the country until 2020. In 2002, a Spanish police report found that Muslim Aid sent funds to Mujahideen fighters in Bosnia, which Spanish troops had fought to pacify in the decade preceding. Spain has recently had to deal with its own radicalization issues, and its leaders may be disconcerted that so many new mosques are under construction with oversight from Muslim Aid.

The State of Qatar gave almost 150,000 euros to Muslim Aid in 2011, at exactly the moment that Doha became emboldened by an Arab Spring it thought would help it overthrow rival regimes in the region. When protests erupted on Middle Eastern streets, the then Qatari emir, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, is seen as having found an opportunity to establish a new regional order, with himself at its apex. Qatar is accused of seeking to generate and benefit from pockets of unrest (<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/8/16/bahrain-state-tv-accuses-qatar-of-leading-anti-government-protests>) in the region. In 2012, the emir pledged (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/world/middleeast/pledging-400-million-qatari-emir-makes-historic-visit-to-gaza-strip.html?mcubz=3&mtrref=www.google.com>) \$400 million to Hamas and became the first head of state to visit the Gaza Strip since Hamas took full control of it in 2007. Sources say the former fuelled local militias with guns and money, no matter how radical, to support this enterprise.

By 2013, it was clear the strategy had failed. But Qatar continued to channel money to Muslim Aid via a charity called Al Asmakh, which is based out of Doha and has strong ties to the government. Al Asmakh gave almost a million euros over the next two years. In the UK Muslim Aid formed the basis of a second inquiry. The results of the statutory inquiry were never published

Qatar is currently the subject of a three-and-a-half month boycott

([http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?](http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1235506107&Country=Qatar&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast&subsubt)

[articleid=1235506107&Country=Qatar&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast&subsubt](http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1235506107&Country=Qatar&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast&subsubt) by its former Gulf allies. They accuse it of supporting terrorist groups like Hamas and the Nusra Front, and fomenting extremism through a national broadcaster (Al Jazeera Arabic) that cynically incites sectarian tensions for political purposes. Qatar denies these charges. However, this week Hamas announced a rapprochement (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/17/palestinian->

elections-hamas-fatah-gaza-feud) with its bitter Palestinian rival, Fatah. Many commentators view this as a direct result of the pressure placed on Qatar to end its support for Hamas, which has no option but to return to the negotiating table now that it has lost its principal backer.

See also: Qatar set to try to dominate UN General Assembly
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