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Islamic Society of
North America

An IPT Investigative Report



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The Islamic Society of North America

Introduction

ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America, is one of America's most prominent and active Muslim organizations. While it enjoys a generally positive public image from its religious endeavors and huge annual conference, ISNA's extremist origins and continuing ideological support for radicalism make it an inappropriate partner for government outreach. As the information detailed in this report will show, ISNA's ideology has been rooted in radicalism since its foundation.

Among the findings:

- ISNA remains an unindicted co-conspirator in the Hamas-support prosecution of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), despite its appeals to the court to remove that status.
- ISNA was created by members of the Muslim Brotherhood – a radical Egyptian movement that seeks to spread Shariah law globally – in the U.S. Many of those founders remain in leadership positions with ISNA.
- It invites controversial speakers to its nationwide conferences, including some of the world famous Islamists and advocates of Jihad.
- Speakers at ISNA conferences make radical statements, often in contradiction of ISNA's cultivated public image.

Origins in the Muslim Brotherhood

ISNA was founded in 1981¹ by American-based members of the Muslim Brotherhood.² In its early years, ISNA's leadership was dominated by people tied to the Brotherhood. For example, Ahmed Elkadi, who headed the Muslim Brotherhood in the US from 1984 to 1994³ served on ISNA's Executive Council in 1984.⁴

Similarly, Jamal Badawi, a founder of the Muslim American Society (MAS) (along with Elkadi),⁵ serves on ISNA's Majlis Ash-Shura, or board of directors.⁶ MAS was co-

¹ Office of the Secretary of State of Indiana, "Articles of Incorporation, Islamic Society of North America," filed July 14, 1981.

² *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit Elbarasse Search 1.

³ Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah, Sam Roe and Laurie Cohen, "A Rare Look at Secretive Brotherhood in America," *The Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2004, C1.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/specials/chi-0409190261sep19,0,5695696.story?page=1>

⁴ List of Executive Council Members, "ISNA Executive Council," *Islamic Horizons*, January 1984, 2.

⁵ Office of the Secretary of State of Illinois, "Articles of Incorporation, Muslim American Society," filed June 11, 1993.

⁶ ISNA Website, "ISNA Board of Directors," <http://www.isna.net/ISNAHQ/pages/Board-of-Directors.aspx>, (accessed June 29, 2009).

founded by the current head of the international Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Mahdi Akef.⁷ It was created to be the Brotherhood's arm in the United States.⁸

The Muslim Brotherhood created the Hamas terrorist group in 1987 to wage a violent jihad against Israel.⁹ Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, had been a Brotherhood leader in Gaza for years prior to becoming Hamas' spiritual founder.¹⁰ Like Hamas, the Brotherhood refuses to consider peaceful settlements to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and routinely engages in anti-Semitism to foment anti-Israeli sentiment.¹¹

Federal prosecutors named ISNA an unindicted co-conspirator in the prosecution of five officials at the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), considered the largest terror-financing trial in U.S. history. ISNA is listed among "individuals/entities who are and/or were members of the US Muslim Brotherhood."¹² In addition, the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), an ISNA subsidiary, was included in the same section of the co-conspirator list. A July 2008 appeal by ISNA and NAIT to be removed from the co-conspirator list has never been ruled upon. In it, ISNA argued the designation violated Fifth Amendment protections by casting a smear on the organizations without proof, and without the opportunity for a defense. This, they claim, has deeply tarnished the groups' reputations with government agencies and other religious organizations.¹³

A government memo explains how NAIT was used to funnel money to Hamas:

"ISNA checks deposited into the ISNA/NAIT account for the HLF were often made payable to "the Palestinian Mujahadeen," the original name for the HAMAS military wing. Govt. Exh. 1-174. From that ISNA/NAIT account, the HLF sent hundreds of thousands of dollars to HAMAS leader

7 Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah, Sam Roe and Laurie Cohen, "A Rare Look at Secretive Brotherhood in America," *The Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2004, C1.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/specials/chi-0409190261sep19,0,5695696.story?page=1>

8 Ibid.

9 Hamas Charter, Article Two states: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine." Article Seven adds: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the links in the chain of the struggle against the Zionist invaders. It goes back to 1939, to the emergence of the martyr Izz al-Din al-Kissam and his brethren the fighters, members of Moslem Brotherhood. It goes on to reach out and become one with another chain that includes the struggle of the Palestinians and Moslem Brotherhood in the 1948 war and the Jihad operations of the Moslem Brotherhood in 1968 and after."

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

See also, Ziad Abu Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, p. 63, Indiana University Press, 1994.

¹⁰ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Superseding Indictment, Nov. 30, 2005. See also, Abu Amr, p. 64.

¹¹ See: "Arab Islamist Clerics to Palestinians: Slaughter the Jews Like You Did in 1929; Blow Yourself Up in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv." Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), December 10, 2008. <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1940.htm> See also: "Islamists call for ending peace talks with Israel," *Jordan Times*, May 19, 2009.

¹² *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), List of Unindicted Co-Conspirators and Joint Venturers, p. 8.

¹³ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Petitioners' Memorandum of Law in Support of their Motion for Equitable Relief from the Government's Public Naming of them as Unindicted Co-Conspirators," June 18, 2008.

Mousa Abu Marzook, Nadia Elashi (defendant Ghassan Elashi's cousin and Marzook's wife), Sheikh Ahmed Yassin's Islamic Center of Gaza, the Islamic University, and a number of other individuals associated with HAMAS. Govt. Exh. 20-55, 20-56.”¹⁴

The boards of NAIT and ISNA overlap, as members of ISNA have often functioned as NAIT trustees, including current ISNA President Ingrid Mattson.¹⁵ Through this connection, an FBI investigation in the 1980s concluded that the policies of NAIT were then set by the Muslim Brotherhood:

“The leaders and organizers of NAIT and also the leaders of various sponsoring organizations have been identified as members of the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen, also known as the Muslim Brotherhood. Muslim activities and policies controlled and directed by NAIT are in fact set by its leadership who are members of the Ikhwan.”¹⁶

ISNA officials claim the organization has moved beyond its Muslim Brotherhood roots to evolve into a more mainstream American organization. And ISNA’s leadership has changed somewhat. For example, President Ingrid Mattson had not converted to Islam when ISNA was founded. She became vice president in 2001 and president in 2006.¹⁷ However, many other original leaders remain actively involved, begging the question of how much it has severed from ideologies of the Muslim Brotherhood.

For example, **Muzammil Siddiqi** was a co-founder of ISNA in 1981.¹⁸ He also served two terms as ISNA’s president from 1997-2001.¹⁹ He has been heavily involved with other umbrella organizations under ISNA, including his position as chairman of the Fiqh Council of North America. He “served as chairman of the Religious Affairs Committee and has been a member of the Board of Trustees” with the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT).²⁰ He still holds a position on the NAIT and ISNA governing boards.²¹

Sayyid M. Syeed was an influential member of ISNA’s founding Board of Directors.²² He became ISNA’s Secretary-General in 1994 and kept the position until 2006,²³ when

¹⁴ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al.*, 3:04-CR-240-G, Government’s Memorandum in Opposition to Petitioners Islamic Society of North America and North American Islamic Trust’s Motion for Equitable Relief, (N.D. Tex. July 10, 2008).

¹⁵ NAIT board of Trustees, http://www.nait.net/NAIT_about_%20us.htm (accessed July 1, 2009).

¹⁶ Federal Bureau of Investigation, FOIA Documents, Case ID: 1111944-000, Release Date: April 29, 2008.

¹⁷ Faculty Profile of Ingrid Mattson, Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Hartford Seminary. <http://macdonald.hartsem.edu/mattson.htm>.

¹⁸ Indiana Secretary of State, “Articles of Incorporation, Islamic Society of North America,” filed July 14, 1981.

¹⁹ “About Us: Board of Directors,” http://www.isna.net/majlis/Muzammil_Siddiqi.asp. Accessed June 29, 2009.

²⁰ “Speakers Information,” Islamic Society of North America, <http://www.isna.net/Programs/pages/Speakers-Services.aspx#66> Accessed June 29, 2009.

²¹ “NAIT Board of Trustees,” http://www.nait.net/NAIT_about_%20us.htm Accessed June 29, 2009.

²² Islamic Society of North America, Articles of Incorporation, State of Indiana, 1981.

he became the head of ISNA's center for interfaith and community outreach in Washington, DC, where he remains as of 2009.²⁴ His official title remains as National Director, Interfaith and Community Alliances with ISNA.²⁵

Previously, he served as the Secretary-General for the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), which ISNA describes as a constituent group.²⁶ The AMSS is the fourth group mentioned on a Muslim Brotherhood list of "our organizations and the organizations of our friends," seized by federal investigators in the Holy Land case.²⁷

While at AMSS, Syeed co-founded and served as editor-in-chief of the joint IIIT-AMSS publication,²⁸ the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS).²⁹ As of 2008, he remains on the AJISS International Advisory Board.³⁰

Iqbal Unus was an ISNA founder in 1981³¹ and serves on the board of directors today.³² He served as Managing Editor for ISNA's periodical, *Islamic Horizons*.³³ He also held the title of Acting Secretary General for ISNA in January 1984 after serving at the General Secretariat since January 1977 for MSA, and later ISNA. He also functioned as the Director of Administration and Assistant Secretary General for ISNA.³⁴ He also served as the President of the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE), a subsidiary of ISNA.³⁵ In 1989, he left ISNA to work for the International Institute of Islamic Thought.³⁶

²³ M.M. Ali, "Personality: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed," Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April 1998, pp. 35, 102, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0498/9804035.html> Accessed June 29, 2009.

²⁴ "Speakers Info" <http://www.isna.net/Programs/pages/Speakers-Services.aspx#69>. Accessed June 29, 2009. "About the IOICA" <http://www.isna.net/Interfaith/pages/IOICA-Staff.aspx>. Accessed June 29, 2009.

²⁵ "IOICA Staff: ISNA" <http://www.isna.net/Interfaith/pages/IOICA-Staff.aspx>. Accessed June 29, 2009.

²⁶ "ISNA in Numbers" *Az-Zaitonah Chicago Edition*. August 11, 1994. p 8. Translated from Arabic. And M.M. Ali, "Personality: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed," Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April 1998, pp. 35, 102, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0498/9804035.html> Accessed June 29, 2009.

²⁷ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit Elbarasse Search 3.

²⁸ "Editorial Structure," Association of Muslim Social Scientists Website, <http://208.106.208.252/AJISS/EditorialStructure.aspx> Accessed June 29, 2009.

²⁹ "Activities," Association of Muslim Social Scientists Website, <http://208.106.208.252/WhoWeAre/Activities.aspx> Accessed June 29, 2009.; M.M. Ali, "Personality: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed." Thomas G. Whittle, "Ambassador for Freedom Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed."

³⁰ "Editorial Structure," Association of Muslim Social Scientists Website, <http://208.106.208.252/AJISS/EditorialStructure.aspx> Accessed June 29, 2009.

³¹ Indiana Secretary of State, "Articles of Incorporation, Islamic Society of North America," filed July 14, 1981.

³² "ISNA Board of Directors." <http://www.isna.net/ISNAHQ/pages/Board-of-Directors.aspx>. Accessed June 29, 2009.

³³ "Board of Editors" *Islamic Horizons*. January/February 1986. p. 2.

³⁴ "Islamic Horizons." January 1984. p 1.

³⁵ "Iqbal Unus Biography." IIIT. http://www.islamophobiaconference.org/cv/BIO-Iqbal_UNUS.doc. Accessed June 29, 2009.

³⁶ "Iqbal Unus Biography." IIIT. http://www.islamophobiaconference.org/cv/BIO-Iqbal_UNUS.doc. Accessed June 29, 2009.

Details on other key ISNA leaders will appear later in this report.

A look at the roster for ISNA's 46th annual conference beginning July 2 in Washington, D.C., meanwhile, shows a host of speakers from other Muslim Brotherhood-rooted groups like the Muslim Students Association (MSA),³⁷ the Muslim American Society (MAS),³⁸ the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)³⁹ and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).^{40 41} They complement ISNA founders like Syeed, Siddiqi and Unus.

FBI agents concluded that the IIIT board members Jamal Barzinji and Yaqub Mirza were among "members and leaders of the IKHWAN" and that the IIIT itself was a Brotherhood arm.⁴²

Rhetoric by ISNA Speakers

In previous years, ISNA conferences featured numerous comments calling for jihad, support for terrorism, radical Islam and criticism of U.S. government investigations, including expressions of doubt whether 9/11 was carried out by Muslims.

In recent years, ISNA officials have been careful to avoid militant rhetoric and focused instead on remaking itself as an interfaith outreach entity. Speakers at ISNA conferences, however, often are not as judicious. The Investigative Project on Terrorism has documented the following examples of radical statements coming from speakers during recent ISNA-sponsored conferences:

- During the 45th ISNA annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, **Rick Hannis**, a Christian and member of the Christian Peacemakers Team, a group founded by Quakers and Menonites with a stated purpose of working toward "nonviolent alternative to war," spoke.⁴³ He described the "amazing work" Hamas does in West Bank education and health care and supposedly non-violent leaders of that organization:

³⁷ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit Elbarasse Search 1.

³⁸ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit 3-79, Articles of Incorporation, Muslim American Society, State of Illinois, June 11, 1993.

³⁹ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), List of Unindicted Co-Conspirators and Joint Venturers, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, FOIA Documents, Case ID: 1111944-000, Release Date: April 29, 2008

⁴¹ ISNA Website, Speakers Information, Short Biographies, <http://www.isna.net/Programs/pages/Speakers-Services.aspx> (accessed June 29, 2009). CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad, former MAS President Esam Omeish and MAS-Freedom Director Mahdi Bray, former MSA President Altaf Husain, and at least three people tied to the IIIT are scheduled to speak.

⁴² Federal Bureau of Investigation, FOIA Documents, Case ID: 1111944-000, Release Date: April 29, 2008. An excerpt can be seen at <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/159.pdf>.

⁴³ "About CPT," Christian Peacemaker Teams website, http://www.cpt.org/about_cpt, (accessed July 1, 2009).

“Now, most people only know about the militant part of Hamas. They don’t know about the education or healthcare issued in the West Bank part. It really does amazing work.”

“If there is a suicide bombing or something their militant wing has done, often Hamas leaders who promote non violence, will be assassinated, and then, of course, it is put in the paper that Hamas did this violent act-Hamas leader was assassinated as if that was an [unintelligible]. The people that know this leader, they are disenfranchised even more.”⁴⁴

- On the same 2008 panel, Hatem Bazian, a professor of Near East Studies at UC Berkeley, blamed Palestinian terrorism on Israel:

“The violence is not a genetic motivation or a genetically defined in the Palestinians. The Palestinians don’t wake up in the morning and think yeah, I’m inclined towards violence. The Palestinians when they woke up they see that their land has been taken from underneath them, that they have to go through five or six checkpoints before they get to school, that they are no longer able to use the hospital, that they are seeing a new settlement being built every other day, and they wake up in the morning and see that it’s a land grab day, all these factors, including the diminishing return of the so called peace process.”⁴⁵

In that same panel, Palestinian **Jamal Dajani** moderated the discussion and echoed Bazian’s false version of history:

“Palestinians are sick and tired of dialogue. I mean they’ve been listening to dialogue for six decades. It is great to have people from different places and come and interfere and put themselves between the occupier and the victim, and Palestinians listening to promises, and they see their future disappear right in front of their eyes.”⁴⁶

In fact, Palestinians have rejected dialogue and land-for-peace settlements since Israel’s creation in 1948. The PLO agreed to renounce terror and joined in President Clinton’s peace efforts in the early 1990s, resulting in Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. The refusal of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to recognize that agreement, and the wave of terrorist attacks they launched in the agreement’s wake, doomed the U.S.-led peace effort.

Such factual contortions to rationalize terror and promote an Islamist agenda are consistent with the ideological objectives of ISNA’s founders.

⁴⁴ Rick Hannis, “Toward a Just and Lasting Peace in Palestine and Israel,” ISNA 45th Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, August 29-September 1, 2008.

⁴⁵ Hatem Bazian, “Toward a Just and Lasting Peace in Palestine and Israel,” ISNA 45th Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, August 29-September 1, 2008.

⁴⁶ Jamal Dajani, “Toward a Just and Lasting Peace in Palestine and Israel,” ISNA 45th Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, August 29-September 1, 2008.

- At the ISNA 44th Annual Conference in Rosemont, Illinois, Aug. 31 – Sep. 3, 2007, **Parvez Ahmed** of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) defended “resistance” to occupation. He also tried to distinguish between Al Qaeda and terrorist groups with political wings like Hamas and Hizballah:

“One of the most difficult topics for the Muslim community to talk about is the question about Hamas and Hizballah. Hamas and Hizballah are both on the U.S. State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organizations. But Hamas and Hizballah are also part of their democratic governments. They’re elected representatives of their own people. So this presents a problem.

... And when you look at historical precedent, there is historical precedence in trying to make that distinction [among terrorist groups]. And historical precedence is in Ireland, where Irish Republican Army and Sein Finn, they were, one part was terrorist; the other part was political. And ultimately, the solution to the problem in Ireland did not come until Britain negotiated with the Irish Republican Army. And that is a lesson that is often lost over here, not to mention that resistance to occupation is a legitimate right. It is, you can say it’s a God-given right.”⁴⁷

- At the 43rd ISNA Conference, **Salam al-Marayati**, the Executive Director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), complained that Middle East policy was not being dictated by the struggle against al-Qaeda but by Israel in trying to eliminate all of its enemies in the region.

“And I think what has happened is that there is now this political shift to change this from a fight against al-Qaeda to this whole creation of a new Middle East that they have. So the issue is not centered around al-Qaeda as much as it is centered around whatever the powers that be in the Middle East, with the power obviously centered around the government of Israel and eliminating all of its adversaries in the region one by one, step by step. That is what the new Middle East now is beginning to look like in terms of the policy of the United States.”⁴⁸

- During ISNA’s 2006 convention, **Kamran Memon**, an attorney from Muslims for a Safe America, asked the audience to raise their hands if they believed Al Qaeda committed the 9/11 attacks. In response to their raised hands, he helped to justify Al Qaeda’s actions by discussing how America’s foreign policy helped to infuriate Muslims around the world.

“Some Muslims in the Muslim world decided that they were just not going to take it anymore. They were angry at our ongoing support from their

⁴⁷ Parvez Ahmed , ISNA 44th Annual Conference, Rosemont, Illinois, Aug. 31 – Sep. 3, 2007.

⁴⁸ Salam Al-Marayati. “Muslims for a Safe America,” ISNA 43rd Annual Conference, Rosemont Convention Center, Chicago, IL, September 1-4, 2006.

enemies, so they began to attack American targets to pressure our government to change its foreign policy. They attacked American targets in 1992 in Somalia; in 1993 in New York; in 1995 and 1996 in Saudi Arabia; 1998 in Tanzania and Kenya; and 2000 in Yemen. But the U.S. government did not change its foreign policy, so those Muslims who decided that they weren't going to take it anymore attacked America on September 11.

...They are also angry at us because they look at us, the elder generations, and they see us sitting on our hands not doing anything serious to alleviate the suffering of Muslims in the Muslim world. And when they get that angry, then they do things, like if you believe that Muslims did it, they do things like the London bombings in July 2005; because they see no other way to change American foreign policy other than violence.”⁴⁹

- MPAC Executive Director **Salam al-Marayati** denigrated Muslims who provide tips to law enforcement and criticized law enforcement investigations that involved informants at the 2005 ISNA Dallas Conference at a session entitled “The Muslim Political Outreach Agenda (Constructive engagement of Muslims with other Americans in these challenging times):”

“Counter-terrorism and counter-violence should be defined by us. We should define how an effective counter-terrorism policy should be pursued in this country. So, number one, we reject any effort, notion, suggestion that Muslims should start spying on one another ... Law enforcement is going to come to your mosque; it already has as far as I can tell. Everywhere I go either somebody tells me that officials have met with them publicly or they tell me that they know who those folks are that are representing law enforcement. So we know they have communicated one way or the other with the Muslim community. The question is how do you deal with it in a healthy, open, transparent manner. That is why we are saying have them come in community forums, in open-dialogues, so they come through the front door and you prevent them having to come from the back door. This transparent policy will then set the Muslim American community to be a community that has the image of being part of the solution in counterterrorism not part of the problem.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Kamran Memon, “Muslims for a Safe America,” ISNA 43rd Annual Conference. September 1-4, 2006.

⁵⁰ Salam al-Marayati, ISNA 42nd Annual Conference, Dallas, Texas, July 1, 2005. For more recent developments on this theme, see “Fact Checking the Mosque Infiltration Kerfuffle,” IPT News, April 24, 2009. <http://www.investigativeproject.org/1024/fact-checking-the-mosque-infiltration-kerfuffle>.

Until recently, ISNA leaders and publications offered their own radical sentiment. At a 2004 forum at Georgetown University titled, “War and Violence: Islam’s Perspective,” ISNA Vice President **Mohamed Magid** claimed the the Darfur genocide was exaggerated:

“There are two kinds of conflict in Sudan ... the word Arabs vs. Black African is a myth ... Darfur issue, the United Nations representative in Khartoum said not 50,000 people died, although I said life matters, even one person is too many for me, they said about 5,000 have died. I think somebody made a mistake and put a zero, they had no problem. But what happened in this issue here, things escalated and people called it genocide. There is a fight, people have been displaced, people lost their homes and they need help but at the same time I want to say there is some kind of exaggeration of the some of the problems.”⁵¹

ISNA President Mattson typically is milder in her rhetoric and avoids embracing extremism. Yet, she still would not offer any criticism of Wahhabism,⁵² the austere Saudi interpretation of Islam, which she compared to Protestant Christianity. For example, in response to a question of whether Wahhabism is “an extremely right wing sect,” she told a *CNN*-sponsored town hall forum in October 2000 that:

“This is not a sect. It is the name of a reform movement that began 200 years ago to rid Islamic societies of cultural practices and rigid interpretation that had acquired over the centuries. **It really was analogous to the European protestant reformation.** Because the Wahhabi scholars became intergrated [sic] into the Saudi state, there has been some difficulty keeping that particular interpretation of religion from being enforced too broadly on the population as a whole. However, the Saudi scholars who are Wahhabi have denounced terrorism and denounced in particular the acts of September 11. Those statements are available publicly.

This question [sic] has arisen because last week there were a number of newspaper reports that were dealing with this. They raised the issue of the role of Saudi Arabia and the ideology there. **Frankly, I think in a way it was a reaction to the attempts of many people to look for the roots of terrorism in misguided foreign policy. It's not helpful, I believe, to create another broad category that that becomes the scape goat [sic] for terrorism.**”⁵³ [emphasis added]

Federal Investigation Identifies ISNA’s MB Ties

⁵¹ “War and Violence: Islam’s Perspective,” Georgetown University, October 6, 2004.

⁵² Wahhabism is the Saudi brand of Salafism, which is a movement within Islam that seeks to realize Islam as it was practiced by Muhammad and his Companions.

⁵³ “Ingrid Mattson: What is Islam,” October 18, 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/COMMUNITY/10/18/mattson.cnn/> (accessed February 13, 2007).

Speaker comments are not the only evidence that ISNA maintains radical associations. Federal investigators also have documented ISNA's ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, FBI agents in Indianapolis began investigating NAIT and ISNA during the late 80s for possible "violation of IRS statutes, INS laws, Customs as well as state laws."⁵⁴ While no charges were filed, the FBI discovered that the founders of MSA, which also was founded by Brotherhood members in the U.S., and later launched ISNA, were supporters of the Islamic revolution and violent jihad:

"The 23rd and 24th Annual ISNA conferences provided opportunities for the extreme fundamentalist Muslims to meet with their supporters ... The annual conferences are used for both religious and political purposes. The political purpose is to further the Islamic revolution, which includes the providing of anti-U.S. and Israel publications, and publications that support the war effort of Iran in the Iran-Iraq war and the Persian Gulf."⁵⁵

Even today, ISNA lists the MSA among its "constituent organizations,"⁵⁶ and the 2009 ISNA conference features break-out sessions for MSA.⁵⁷

According to a Government Memorandum in response to ISNA's petition to be removed from the list of unindicted co-conspirators in the HLF case, prosecutors "entered into evidence a wide array of testimonial and documentary **evidence expressly linking ISNA and NAIT to the HLF and its principals; the Islamic Association for Palestine and its principles; the Muslim Brotherhood in the United States and its Palestine Committee, headed by HAMAS official Mousa Abu Marzook; and the greater HAMAS-affiliated conspiracy described in the Government's case-in-chief.**"⁵⁸
[Emphasis added]

The exhibits include an expense voucher from the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), made out for \$10,000 in the name of Mousa Abu Marzook, as well as a check drawn on a NAIT account in the same amount made out to Marzook. Another check for \$10,000 on the same account was made out to Marzook's wife, Nadia Elashi. Another check for \$30,000 was made out to the Islamic University of Gaza (and has Shukri Abu Baker/OLF written on the memo line), a school long known to be controlled by HAMAS, and which counted such notables as former HAMAS leader Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantissi and current HAMAS leader Dr. Mahmoud Al-Zahar as professors, and the recently deposed HAMAS Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh is a former dean of the University.

ISNA Leadership

⁵⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, FOIA Documents, Case ID: 1111944-000, Release Date: April 29, 2008

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ ISNA Web page, "About Us, Constituent Organizations,"

<http://www.isna.net/ISNAHQ/pages/Constituent-Organizations.aspx>.

⁵⁷ ISNA Web page, , 46th Annual ISNA Convention, <http://www.isna.net/Conferences/pages/Annual-Convention.aspx>.

⁵⁸ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al.*, 3:04-CR-240-P, "Government's Memorandum in Opposition to Petitioners Islamic Society of North America and North American Islamic Trust's Motion for Equitable Relief," (N.D. Tex. July 10, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, many ISNA officers date back to the organization's foundation by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. This section offers more details on those founders who remain active.

Muzzamil Siddiqi

As mentioned earlier, Muzammil Siddiqi is an ISNA founder and past president who remains active with ISNA subsidiaries the Fiqh Council of North American and NAIT.

In July 2008, he spoke at a regional ISNA conference where he stated that there are three sets of rules that American Muslims must follow. Shariah, or Islamic law, is above all others.⁵⁹ American laws are second:

“So you have certain rules to follow, and I say here in America you have three sets of rules that you should follow. One is the rule of Shariah, the rules of Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala at the top. Second is the law of the land. And the third is your own organization's laws, whatever bylaws you make for your organization. Now of course the top is the rule of Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala.”⁶⁰

This is consistent with what Siddiqi wrote in the May/June 1986 issue of *Islamic Horizons*. Muslims, he wrote, have a duty to try to bring the country they live in to an Islamic state governed by religious doctrine.

“Muslim jurists (fuqaha'), after careful consideration of various rules and principles of the Qur'an and sunnah [sic], said (several centuries ago), that in the world, there must exist two realms: Darul-Islam and Darul-kufr. Darul-Islam is the land where Islamic laws are applied, where Islam prevails in every aspect of life: social, economic, judicial, educational, political, national, and international. Everything is governed by Islam. Islam being a complete system of life, it gives guidance in every aspect of life and demands that every aspect be ruled and governed by the commands of Allah according to the sunnah[sic] of His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Darul-kufr, on the other hand, is a land where these principles are not accepted, where supremacy is not given to the laws of Allah and they are neither applied nor recognized in the lives of individuals or in society.

⁵⁹ Muzammil Siddiqi, 46th Annual ISNA Convention, “Building Our Communities, Brick by Brick,” ISNA South Central Regional Conference, Houston, TX, July 5, 2008.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

A Muslim is, naturally, expected to reside in Darul-Islam. Wherever he is, he must try to establish Darul-Islam.”⁶¹

In the same article, Siddiqi issued a warning to American Muslims about over-assimilating:

“Our Islam is gradually being diluted and is in danger of being changed to a mere personal faith without rules of halal and haram, obligations and duties, any social norms, or cultural values. Islam is in danger of becoming a religion without shariah just as Christianity is.”⁶²

Sayyid Syeed

As mentioned earlier, Syeed is an ISNA founder, past secretary general and remains the national director for Interfaith and Community Alliances. When ISNA was founded, Syeed was president of the Muslim Students Association (MSA).⁶³ From at least January 1984 until September 1985, he served on the board of editors of ISNA’s publication, *Islamic Horizons*.⁶⁴

He then joined the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), where he was director of national outreach until 1994.⁶⁵ During this time, he also headed the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), an organization with ties to ISNA and IIIT.⁶⁶ According to an ISNA annual report, AMSS is an ISNA affiliate.

While at ISNA, he has served on the executive boards of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), and the American Muslim Council (AMC).⁶⁷

Like Safi, Syeed served on the Board of Advisory Editors of the publication of the United Association for Studies and Research, the *Middle East Affairs Journal*.⁶⁸

Evidence in the HLF prosecution shows the UASR played a key role in the Muslim

⁶¹ Muzammil H. Siddiqi, “Muslims in a Non-Muslim Society,” *Islamic Horizons*, May/June 1986, p. 22.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ M.M. Ali, “Personality: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed,” Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April 1998, pp. 35, 102, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0498/9804035.html> (Accessed June 29, 2009)

⁶⁴ *Islamic Horizons*, January 1984, p. 2.; *Islamic Horizons*, September 1985, p. 2.

⁶⁵ M.M. Ali, “Personality: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed,” Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April 1998, pp. 35, 102, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0498/9804035.html> (Accessed June 29, 2009)

⁶⁶ “Historical Background,” Association of Muslim Social Scientists Website, <http://208.106.208.252/WhoWeAre/HistoricalBackground.aspx> (Accessed August 8, 2008). Islamic Society of North America, Annual Report, 2002, pp. 3, 25-26.

⁶⁷ M.M. Ali, “Personality: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed,” Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April 1998, pp. 35, 102, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0498/9804035.html> (Accessed June 29, 2009)

⁶⁸ See: *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Spring/Summer 1993 through Winter-Spring 2003.

Brotherhood's U.S. support network for Hamas.⁶⁹ All journal issues between 1993 and 2003 list Syeed on the masthead.⁷⁰

When President Clinton froze assets of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and banned financial support of these groups in 1995, Syeed was among many American Muslim figures that condemned the move. In an interview with the *National Catholic Reporter*, Syeed was quoted comparing the order to "another form of McCarthyism."⁷¹

As mentioned earlier, ISNA has seen new faces rise to leadership who aren't known to be tied to the Muslim Brotherhood. Some have exhibited their own ties to radicals as detailed next.

Louay Safi

Louay Safi directs the ISNA Leadership Development Center.⁷² He has a history of close relations with U.S. fronts for Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. He served on the board of advisory editors for the [Middle East Affairs Journal](#), which was published by the United Association for Studies and Research (UASR).⁷³ Its editor, Ahmed Yousef, is the spokesman for deposed Hamas Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh.⁷⁴ The UASR was founded by Hamas political leader Mousa Abu Marzook and was part of a Muslim Brotherhood-created Hamas support network in the U.S.⁷⁵

He also worked as [research director](#) at the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in Herndon, VA. The IIIT has been under investigation for terror financing, including at least \$50,000 sent to a think-tank run by Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) board member Sami Al-Arian.⁷⁶ The think tank employed at least four members of the PIJ governing board in the early 1990s.⁷⁷ No charges have been filed in the IIIT investigation.

Safi's knowledge of Al-Arian's terrorist ties was demonstrated in a 1995 telephone call. In it, Safi and Al-Arian spoke about a new presidential executive order prohibiting support to terrorist groups including Hamas and the PIJ. Clinton signed the order saying

⁶⁹ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit Elbarasse Search 10.

⁷⁰ See: *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Spring/Summer 1993 through Winter-Spring 2003.

⁷¹ Jane Hunter, "Critics call Clinton's ban on funding to Middle East groups biased, illegal," *National Catholic Reporter*, February 10, 1995.

⁷² ILDC Board of Directors, <http://www.ildc.net/board-of-directors/>

⁷³ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit HLF Search 107.

⁷⁴ Ahmed Yousef, "Engage With Hamas, We Earned Our Support," *Washington Post*, June 20, 2007.

⁷⁵ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), Government Exhibit Elbarasse Search 13.

⁷⁶ Affidavit in Support of Application for Search Warrant, David Kane, U.S. Customs Service, March 2002.

⁷⁷ Government documents in the prosecution of Sami Al-Arian showed Al-Arian, Mazen Al-Najjar, Basheer Nafi and Ramadan Shallah, all employees of the World and Islam Studies think tank, were members of the PIJ governing board. See *USA v. Al Arian, et al*, 03-CR-77, Superseding Indictment.

terrorist violence threatened U.S. security by thwarting peace initiatives.⁷⁸ Safi wanted to know if the order would affect Al-Arian, who also ran a charity suspected of supporting the PIJ. But Al-Arian dismissed it as empty political posturing:

Safi: Did it affect you, right?

Al-Arian: No, not at all, I am telling you, just a propaganda, that's to say. He chose organizations in the Middle East, the big organizations, and the prominent people like George Habash [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] and Fathi Shiqaqi [Palestinian Islamic Jihad] and Ahmad Yassin [Hamas], that's to say, it is just nonsense.

Safi: I got you. Practically, inside, there is nothing, they do not exist ... It is strange that it reached the point of an Executive Order.

Al-Arian: My brother, it is a war, a war waged by the Zionists. They are controlling the White House and the State Department, they are in control in the era of the Democrats. They are in control in a way they have never been before, definitely not. In the past they used to have people who worked for them. But now, they, themselves are in charge.

Safi: Yes, yes.⁷⁹

Speaking at the 39th Annual ISNA conference in 2002, Safi condemned the Israeli government as terrorists. He said that America has chosen to pick on the underdog using its definition of terrorism throughout the world against any liberation group.

“And so the first step I think in confronting terrorism is to be clear about who are the terrorists. When, for example, when we hold Palestinians as terrorists when they attack civilians, but fail to hold the Israeli government as involved in terrorist acts when it kills through its military forces Palestinians through Apache [helicopters] or through assassination, through military forces, then I think we are going to make the whole issue less clear.”⁸⁰

Jamal Badawi

Jamal Badawi is a member of Fiqh Council of North America's Executive Council and a member at large on ISNA's Board of Directors (Majlis Ash-Shura).⁸¹ In addition, he is individually listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in the HLF trial, included among individuals who raised money for the Hamas-tied charity.⁸² His number appears in a

⁷⁸ Executive Order Prohibiting Transactions with Terrorists who Threaten to Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process, January 24, 1995.

⁷⁹ *US v. Al Arian, et al*, 03-CR-77 (FL MD), Government Exhibit T-924.

⁸⁰ Louay Safi. 39th Annual ISNA Convention September 1, 2002.

⁸¹ “Board of Directors” ISNA Website. <http://www.isna.net/ISNAHQ/pages/Board-of-Directors.aspx>. Accessed November 17, 2008.

⁸² *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240-G (TX ND), List of Unindicted Co-Conspirators and Joint Venturers,

telephone book of U.S.-based Muslim Brotherhood members in evidence in the original HLF prosecution, which ended in a mistrial in November 2007.⁸³

During the HLF prosecution, FBI agent Lara Burns testified that this phone book was found at the home of Ismail Elbarrasse, an un-indicted co-conspirator and former assistant to Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook. On the first page of the phonebook under the title "Members of the Board of Directors" were fifteen names. Among those names are Ahmad Elkadi, Gadoor Saidi, Bassam Othman, who all were officers with ISNA or NAIT.⁸⁴

In an IslamOnline moderated chat with Badawi on May 19th, 2005, Badawi questioned the compatibility of democracy and Islam:

"...there is no separation between religion and politics in Islam, thus to give one preference over the other is against Islam in the first place."⁸⁵

He elaborated on this in an article he wrote in 2004. He states that democracy and Islam are not synonymous and the Qur'an is the only constitution that Muslims require.

"When saying that Islam is similar to democracy, this seems to carry an implication that democracy is 'the way,' 'the ideal,' and then we go back to Islam to find out whether it meets these ideals or measures up to these standards or not. And that is almost like saying: Let's take God's ordained way of life and judge it in accordance with the criteria established by humans. Therefore, democracy and the political system in Islam, although they may have some similarities, are not really synonymous....The Qur'an and Prophetic tradition are the ultimate constitution..."⁸⁶

During a 1999 lecture, Badawi was asked about suicide bombers. He said their actions are not really suicide and therefore not forbidden by the Quran, but acts of heroism.

"So when an act of heroism like that is required to save others it is self-sacrifice you cannot really call it suicide. What Islam condemns is suicide in the negative sense. That's my understanding."⁸⁷

⁸³ *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al*, 3:04-CR-240 (TX ND), Government Exhibit 3-79, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Ahmed Elkadi served on ISNA's Executive Council in 1984 (see footnote 4) and also served as the president of NAIT.

⁸⁵ www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Browse.asp?hGuestID=8fE7H1. Accessed November 17, 2008.

⁸⁶ Dr. Jamal Badawi. "The Nature of the Islamic Political System," October 22, 2004. http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1154235111003&pagename=Zone-English-Discover_Islam%2FDIELayout. Accessed November 17, 2008.

⁸⁷ "Jihad and Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims" (collected at Muslim Students Association "Islam in America Conference," April 21, 1999).

In an analogy summarized in a 2005 *Saudi Gazette* report, Badawi compared Palestinian resistance to Israel to French resistance to Nazi Germany:

“Badawi said terrorists are the ones who occupy others land by force, subjugate people and take away their rights by killing them and destroying their property....

He said that the United Nations Charter and international law - allows people under occupation and oppression to resist by all means including the use of force. When the French people the freedom-fighters were fighting against the occupying Nazi forces, the Nazis considered them as terrorists but everybody else said they were freedom-fighters.”⁸⁸

In a chat on Islam Online a year later, Badawi was asked about the difference between a martyr and a suicide bomber. His answer:

“Not every “suicide” bomber is a martyr if that action violates any of the conditions detailed in the answers to the first question (Mr. Jacob). **It should be made clear that defense against unprovoked aggression and resistance to reduce oppression are legitimate causes for combative jihad provided that all other conditions, qualifiers and ethics of war are strictly observed.** It should also be noted that in all nations and according to the UN charter and international law, the Islamic causes are basically the same. Also, it should also be noted that all nations and peoples have lots of praises for those who not only put their lives on the line but also sacrifice their lives for what they consider as defense for their country or people.” [Emphasis added]⁸⁹

Conclusion

ISNA’s benign message is severely challenged by the presence of old-guard founders with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and its close ties to other radical groups.

The fact that ISNA calls its 2009 conference its 46th event further shows the continuity between it and the Muslim Brotherhood-founded Muslim Students Association. As stated earlier, ISNA was created in 1981 – or 28 years ago. But it includes previous MSA conferences in the 46-year tally. The April 1986 issue of ISNA’s magazine, *Islamic Horizons*, demonstrates this.⁹⁰ It also shows that past MSA presidents remain active in ISNA and its affiliated organizations:

⁸⁸ Irfan Iqbal Khan, “Terrorism not rampant in Muslim countries; ‘Cut-and-paste’ approach to interpreting the Qur’an is a dangerous tactic,” *The Saudi Gazette*, June 24, 2005. Available at www.saudigazette.com.sa/SGazetteArchive/Data/2005/6/24/Art_235210.XML

⁸⁹ Live Chat Session with Jamal Badawi, "Martyrdom in Islam: Let's Discuss It," Islam Online, June 29, 2006 <http://www.islamonline.net/LiveDialogue/English/Browse.asp?hGuestID=TbFHt0> accessed July 1, 2009.

⁹⁰ “A Brief History, the First 24 Annual Conventions of MSA/ISNA,” *Islamic Horizons*, April 1986.

A Brief History

The First 24 Annual Conventions of the MSA/ISNA

No.	Year	Place	President
1	April, 1963	Urbana, IL	Medhi Bahadori
2	August, 1964	Urbana, IL	Medhi Bahadori
3	August, 1965	Carbondale, IL	Ahmad Totonji
4	August, 1966	Ann Arbor, MI	Ahmad Sakr
5	August, 1967	Columbus, OH	Hussein Shahrestani
6	August, 1968	Green Lake, WI	Yunus Mukhtarzadeh (Succeeded by Ilyas BaYunus)
7	August, 1969	Alma, MI	Osman Ahmad
8	August, 1970	Green Lake, WI	Ibrahim Kellizy (Succeeded by Mozaffar Partowmah)
9	August, 1971	Green Lake, WI	Ahmad Sakr
10	August, 1972	St. Charles, MO	Jamal Barzinji
11	August, 1973	Lansing, MI	Tijani Abu Gedein
12	August, 1974	Toledo, OH	Mahmoud Rashdan
13	August, 1975	Toledo, OH	Iqbal J. Unus
14	May, 1976	Bloomington, IN	Ezzat Jaradat (Succeeded by Yaqub Mirza)
15	May, 1977	Bloomington, IN	Yaqub Mirza
16	May, 1978	Bloomington, IN	Rabie H. Ahmed
17	May, 1979	Oxford, OH	M. Naziruddin Ali
18	May, 1980	Oxford, OH	M. Naziruddin Ali
19	May, 1981	Bloomington, IN	Sayyid M. Syeed
20	May, 1982	Bloomington, IN	Sayyid M. Syeed
21	August, 1983	Louisville, KY	Ilyas BaYunus
22	August, 1984	Dayton, OH	Ilyas BaYunus
23	August, 1985	Louisville, KY	Gutbi ElMehdi Ahmed
24	August, 1986	Indianapolis, IN	Gutbi ElMehdi Ahmed

The presence of ISNA board members Iqbal Unus and Ilyas Ba Yunus (an ISNA founder and its first president⁹¹) along with IIIT officials Ahmad Totonji, Jamal Barzinji and Yaqub Mirza – identified by the FBI in the 1980s as Muslim Brotherhood leaders in the United States⁹² shows ISNA remains strongly tied to its Islamist roots.

⁹¹ “ISNA’s first president Ilyas Ba-Yunus passed away,” *American Muslim Perspective*, October 5, 2007. http://archives2007.ghazali.net/html/isna_president_passes_away.html

⁹² Federal Bureau of Investigation, FOIA Documents, Case ID: 1111944-000, Release Date: April 29, 2008.