

VIVA PALESTINA



An IPT Investigative Report

Viva Palestina: A Front for Hamas?



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Overview

Viva Palestina is the brainchild of former British Member of Parliament, George Galloway. The group claims to deliver “humanitarian aid” to the Palestinian people and “break the siege of Gaza.” Viva Palestina led three convoys to Gaza in 2009, including one from the U.S., and also participated in the May 2010 flotilla to Gaza.

The group, and its American affiliate, Viva Palestina US, claim to be involved in providing humanitarian donations to the Palestinian people. The operations of these two connected organizations, however, are clearly political in nature and have provided material and propaganda support to Hamas, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). The leadership of the organizations, several of whom “cross-serve” as officials for both groups, have acknowledged their political focus.

“This is not charity,” head of Viva Palestina, Galloway, said in March, 2009, as he held up a bag full of cash. “This is politics.” Galloway boasted that he was about to “break the sanctions on the elected government of Palestine” and “give the money to Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.”¹

Galloway says this does not make him a supporter of Hamas.²

Viva Palestina US is best described as a fundraising project. The Illinois Coalition for Justice, Peace and the Environment (ICJPE) (an organization of which Viva Palestina is a member), in an undated 2009 posting, described Viva Palestina US in this way: “Viva Palestina USA is not yet an organization, but is instead a project fundraising to collect medicine and medical supplies, vehicles and volunteers, and drive them into Gaza, Palestine in mid-July, 2009.”³

Viva Palestina originated in the United Kingdom in January 2009, with the stated purpose of sending a humanitarian convoy to Gaza. Viva Palestina US was launched a few months later, in April.⁴ Both versions carry the tag name, “A Lifeline From Britain (or USA) to Gaza.” Both are now under the umbrella of the original website <http://www.vivapalestina.org/>, and the U.S. branch also has its own website of <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org>.

There are local offshoots as well, such as <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org/california> and <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=86693806100>.

¹Video, George Galloway speech in Gaza, March 9, 2009, translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYFGIbaabTU> (accessed September 23, 2009).

²During a July 2, 2009 fundraiser in Overland Park, Kansas, Galloway said “I have never been a supporter of Hamas. I was with Arafat from the age of 23 and I was present in the hospital in Paris when he passed away. And I remain loyal to his message until this day.”

³Coalition for Justice, Peace and the Environment, undated 2009 posting, <http://icjpe.org/organizations/?org-id=1326> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴Hector Carreon, “Viva Palestina USA aid convoy to Gaza announced,” April 8, 2009, La Voz de Aztlan, http://www.aztlan.net/viva_palestina_usa.htm (accessed September 23, 2009).

The vivapalestina-us website (<http://www.vivapalestina-us.org>) was registered in May 2009 to Fatima Mohammadi.

The original Viva Palestina (UK) sent a convoy on February 14, 2009, traveling from the United Kingdom to Gaza. The convoy from the United States to Gaza departed on July 4th, 2009, with most members returning around July 26th. A third joint, “international” convoy plans to leave London on December 6, 2009, with hopes of arriving at the Rafah border crossing on December 26, 2009.⁵

The Investigative Project on Terrorism has uncovered evidence that the Viva Palestina campaign is more about supporting and legitimizing Hamas than it is about providing aid to the needy. In their speeches and in the delivery of their supplies, Viva Palestina’s most visible leaders call for the elimination of the State of Israel to pave the way for a “one state solution” to the conflict. They treat Hamas leaders as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and provide both material and moral support to the terrorist organization.

I. Conception of Viva Palestina

British MP (Member of Parliament) George Galloway⁶ of the Respect Party leads the UK Viva Palestina effort and is highly visible in raising funds for the US branch. His support for Hamas is so clear that Canadian officials cited it when denying him entry into the country in 2009.⁷

In describing Viva Palestina, Galloway claims the idea came to him in response to the latest Israeli-Palestinian fighting in Gaza.

“We decided in England on the 10th of January that actions speak louder than words and the end of a great demonstration of 100,000 people, we decided to convoy eight to Gaza and try to create a siege,” Galloway said on June 28, 2009 at American University’s School of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

A day earlier, however, a posting appeared on a Hamas website noting political plans for the future, including a humanitarian endeavor for “the children in the Gaza Strip.”⁸ The article appeared on the site of the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigade, which is the “military wing of the Hamas movement.”⁹

⁵“Viva Palestina Joins International Effort!,” Viva Palestina USA, <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org/> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁶“A brief biography of George Galloway,” GeorgeGalloway.com, <http://www.georgegalloway.com/page.php?page=content/biography.html> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁷“British MP Barred from Canada,” *CBC News*, March 20, 2009. <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/03/20/galloway-ban-canada-kenney.html> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁸“European political figures soon in Gaza,” *Al Qassam*, January 9, 2009, http://qassam.ps/news-1775-European_political_figures_soon_in_Gaza.html (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁹Banner from Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades website, martyr page, *Al Qassam* http://www.qassam.ps/statement-1308-Al_Qassam_Brigades_mourns_Sameh_Mustafa_Al_Betar.html (accessed January 9, 2009).



The article, under a headline reading, ‘European political figures soon in Gaza,’ posted on January 9, 2009, reads:

“01-09-2009,10:59

Al Qassam website - It is expected to arrive to the Gaza Strip early on October [*sic.*] parliamentary and political figures from around the world, especially European in the campaign of ‘international solidarity with the children in the Gaza Strip.’

The campaign launched by ‘Partners for Peace and the British Development’ Foundation in cooperation with the International Committee to lift the siege on Gaza and the International Committee for the ‘support of Palestine.’

Ali Al Nazli, the spokesman for the campaign, said on Monday that several European institutions wanted to form a front range of institutions and organizations to launch a campaign in solidarity with the children of the Gaza Strip who are suffering from poor conditions due to the blockade on the Gaza Strip three years ago.

He explained that the campaign, which will include about a hundred of political and parliamentary figures, particularly from Europe, will arrive [in] Egypt on September 25. It is expected to reach the strip on the Sixth of October through the Rafah crossing.

He pointed out that the campaign will include a hundred ambulances bought from Egypt and 375 electric cars for the disabled, in addition to special food for allergies and other medical equipment needed by the strip and will be dedicated to children.

The goal of the campaign is to highlight the suffering of Palestinian children, especially in the strip and highlight all the issues they face, as well as addressing all the rights the children are deprived because of the blockade and the Zionist aggression.

The spokesman for the campaign asked to pressure the Zionist entity to lift the siege imposed on the Gaza strip, ‘so that all the Palestinian people to attain their natural rights as the rest of the world.’

He hoped that the campaign of solidarity enters the Gaza Strip without any obstacles because they carry a humanitarian mission, hoping that the Egyptian authorities to deal positively with the campaign and do not hinder entry into the strip.”¹⁰

On the Al-Qassam posting above, Ali Al-Nazli is identified as the spokesman for the Popular Committee Against the Siege (PCAS). The same Al-Nazli is listed alongside Al-Awda: Palestine Right to Return Coalition-NY on the website’s Information Page.¹¹ [That September 2008 convoy, which included Muslim Brotherhood members, was subsequently cancelled due to trouble with authorities.]¹²

The Palestinian Ministry of the Interior website also quoted Ali Al-Nazli’s comments about a convoy in a February 2009 posting entitled, “International parliamentary and political delegation visits Gaza next October.”¹³ It is not clear which convoy it is referring to.

Links to the websites of both The Popular Committee Against the Siege and Viva Palestina appear on the Free Gaza Movement website “Links” page, with Viva Palestina listed in January 2009 as part of an “international campaign,” about a month before the Viva Palestina UK convoy took place.¹⁴

Galloway referred to his first convoy as a “lifeline convoy,” in an interview with Al Qassam¹⁵ and repeats the term for the Viva Palestina website.¹⁶

II. Viva Palestina US’ Financial Arrangement

Al-Awda/Palestine Right of Return Coalition and Viva Palestina member Lamis Deek (an attorney based in New York City) has acknowledged that Viva Palestina lacks formal corporate or non-profit status. Therefore, money collected for Viva Palestina is handled by another organization, the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations/Pastors for Peace (IFCO), Deek explained during a July fundraiser.

¹⁰“European political figures soon in Gaza,” *Al Qassam*, January 9, 2009, <http://qassam.ps/news-1775-European-political-figures-soon-in-Gaza.html> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹¹“Links,” Break the Siege on Gaza Coalition- New York, <http://www.bsg-ny.org/links.htm> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹²“Egypt blocks opposition convoy headed for Gaza,” *Al-Arabiya*, September 10, 2008, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/09/10/56330.html> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹³“International parliamentary and political delegation visits Gaza next October,” Palestinian Ministry of Interior, February 9, 2009, <http://www.moi.gov.ps/en/?page=633167343250594025&nid=11479> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹⁴“Links,” Free Gaza Movement, January 3, 2009, <http://freegaza.org/en/links-a-gaza-info/links> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹⁵“Viva Palestine (sic) convoy is just the beginning,” *Al Qassam*, March 13, 2009, <http://www.qassam.ps/interview-1482-Viva-Palestine-convoy-is-just-the-beginning.html> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹⁶“International convoy departs on December 5th 2009,” Viva Palestina USA, <http://www.vivapalestina.org> (accessed September 23, 2009).

Taking advantage of IFCO's tax exemption, Deek echoed Galloway by admitting that Viva Palestina is a political organization. She said, "It's not about charity... but in every way that we cut it, it is political."¹⁷

Deek thanked the head of IFCO/Pastors for Peace, Reverend Lucius Walker, "who made the actual funding possible, because as you know many people are too scared to send money that they know is going to Gaza or to Palestine."

IRS Form 990s (tax exempt form) for IFCO (also referred to as Pastors for Peace) show contributions for 2005 at \$805,544 and for 2007 at \$742, 812 (with no revenue for 2006). IFCO, based in New York City, is affiliated with the National Network on Cuba (NNOC), also called Cuba Solidarity, which embarks on convoys to Cuba.

Viva Palestina UK Investigation & the February 2009 Convoy to Gaza

The parent Viva Palestina in the United Kingdom, also known as Lifeline for Gaza, was under investigation by the UK's Charity Commission regarding its fundraising activities for a February 2009 convoy to Gaza.

A UK government website reported in March 23, 2009:

"The Commission has attempted to contact the appeal on repeated occasions over the last month in an effort to secure acknowledgement that the funds are held for charitable purposes. However, to date, the Commission has had no substantive response to the issues that have been raised, either from the appeal or individuals connected with it."

"In addition, the Commission has concerns over financial governance arrangements relating to the use of funds. These facts require further investigation, and given the failure to engage with the Commission, have now led to the opening of an Inquiry under Section 8 of the Charities Act 1993."¹⁸

In March 2010, the UK Charity Commission completed its investigation of Viva Palestina. The Commission expressed its concerns over Viva Palestina's conduct since its inception, but concluded that the organization did not provide money to Hamas.¹⁹

The connection between Viva Palestina US and its British counterpart is noted clearly in a letter handed out at a pre-convoy rally at House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn on July 3rd, 2009.

¹⁷Lamis Deek, Medical Aid Convoy to Gaza Sendoff Rally, Brooklyn, New York, July 3, 2009.

¹⁸"Charity Commission opens statutory Inquiry into the Lifeline for Gaza/Viva Palestina appeal," UK Charity Commission, March 23 2009, <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/news/gazapr.asp> (accessed September 23, 2009).

¹⁹"Viva Palestina formerly known as Lifeline for Gaza," Registered Charity number 1129092, UK Charity Commission, http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Our_regulatory_activity/Compliance_reports/inquiry_reports/viva.aspx#charstat (accessed July 30, 2010).

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The letter, with the letterhead reading, “Viva Palestina, A Lifeline from the United States to Gaza,” states: “Now, Galloway is heading a second convoy – this time from the USA.”²⁰

The letter directs that donations be may be made to Viva Palestina at its website, www.palestina-us.org or by writing checks payable to “Viva Palestina – IFCO” and to send them to: Viva Palestina USA, 47 West Polk Street, Suite 100-403, Chicago, IL 60605-2085. It provides a telephone number of (773) 226- 2742.

Another reference to this financial arrangement is at the Viva Palestina US website, <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org/topics/donate/>, that also gives the Polk Street address (above) as the Viva Palestina US address. The web page states:

*“The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), which has been working for racial, social, and economic justice since 1967, is serving as fiscal sponsor for Viva Palestina USA. Your donation to Viva Palestina - IFCO is fully tax deductible under IFCO’s 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.”*²¹

III. Viva Palestina Fundraisers & Events

As the following examples show, Viva Palestina raised money often by openly advocating that Hamas be recognized as the legitimate government leadership of the Palestinian people, and by rejecting negotiated settlements for a two state-solution. The statements are grouped together by the specific Viva Palestina event.

June 28th, 2009: Viva Palestina US fundraiser, American University, School of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

George Galloway spoke about Viva Palestina US, the pending convoy which would cross eight countries and travel 8,000 kilometers.

He complimented the state of Libya for its support:

“Heading across the land as fast as I could missing the towns and the people in case the people harm us, you understand, just in case we go into a traffic jam, well we were hundred and ten British vehicles, a convoy more than one mile long, when we reached Libya which I have to say was the only country where both the government and the people genuinely wanted us, they asked how many trucks do you have, I said one-hundred and ten, and he said now you have two-hundred and twenty they doubled the size of the convoy.”

²⁰“Viva Palestina, A Lifeline from the United States to Gaza” letter, undated, signed by Viva Palestina USA (no individual signature).

²¹“How to Donate,” Viva Palestina USA, <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org/topics/donate> (accessed September 23, 2009).

Galloway spoke of raising money in California, Houston and New Orleans:

“In all these meetings that I have done, we have now raised or will have by Saturday, \$2 million. Two hundred and fifty American citizens, \$2 million. If we keep the rate up from now until Saturday, hundreds of trucks bringing life to Gaza in the colors of the United States.”

And he discussed a financial arrangement for donating to Viva Palestina:

“You can do it online, we will not be crossing into Gaza until the 13th. Any penny you can send between now and then, which incidentally is not coming to us but to the respected Christian organization, Pastors for Peace, who are our sponsors, no breaking of the law here, all US laws have been observed here, and complied with here.”

The fundraiser also featured a spoken word poet named Ibrahim who praised Hamas terrorists:

“Let the message of shahid [martyr] Ahmed Yassin revive.” [Yassin is the founder of the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas.]

“I’m your everyday martyr, your everyday fedayeen, smashing away the Zionist dream.”

“Fists in the air if you are a believer. Viva Viva Palestina.”

July 2nd, 2009: Viva Palestina US fundraiser, Overland Park, Kansas

This fundraiser raised \$103,000.²²

Galloway described his path to supporting the “Palestinian resistance” movement, beginning almost 35 years ago in Scotland. A student from the General Union of Palestinian Students had told him of the plight of Palestinians. Galloway said:

“And by the end of that two hours, so mesmerizing was the story he told me and the way that he told it me, I was a signed up member of the Palestinian resistance which I have remained until this day.”

“Whilst there I met President Yasser Arafat. He took a shining to me. He liked me. He asked me to stay when the others left. I ended up staying for more than a year living amongst the Palestinian people, living in the camps, living with the leaders of the Palestinian resistance.”

[...]

²²Matt Quinn, “\$103,000 Pledged to Palestinian Relief,” *Kansas City Tribune*, July 9, 2009, http://www.kctribune.com/article/KC_News_Features/KCTribune/103000_Pledged_to_Palestinian_Relief_Largest_event_of_its_type_in_Kansas_or_Missouri_ever/18950 (accessed September 23, 2009).

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“Hugo Chavez has been elected more times than any politician in the world and still they call him a dictator [laughter]. And the Palestinian people held the only, only free and fair election ever held in any Arab country and we have besieged and starved and bombed them ever since because we didn’t like the result.”

Galloway also spoke about American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) as a major player in fundraising. AMP claims its mission is “to educate the public about the just cause of Palestine.”²³ Galloway noted AMP also has fundraising prowess:

“In a meeting there a couple of Sundays ago, organized by my friends in the AMP, the American Muslims for Palestine, who of all the organizations with which I’ve worked here in the United States are far and away producing the biggest meetings and the biggest fundraising, and I want to congratulate them on that [applause]. In New Jersey, they organized a fundraising dinner to which I spoke. We raised \$360,000 in two hours.”

Galloway again spoke about the conduit for accepting tax exempt contributions through IFCO. He instructed the audience to make checks out to IFCO, Interreligious Foundation of Christian Organizations-Viva Palestina:

“They are in control [of] the money. They will supervise its disbursement in aid in Gaza.”

[...]

“Now, we have taken the precaution of gaining the fiscal sponsorship of one the most respected Christian organizations in this country. And I want to salute Pastors for Peace, who are our fiscal sponsors, [applause] and who are receiving the money. You see, this Jewish Chronicle [an article questioning Viva Palestina] said – ‘Will the money be going to Hamas?’ Well, first of all there’s no money. The money is all being turned into trucks and medical aid. Secondly, the money that’s being raised doesn’t come to me or to Viva Palestina or AMP or anyone else.”

That statement contradicts what Galloway said in March of 2009, when he handed a bag of cash to a Hamas minister:

“We are giving you now 100 vehicles and all of the contents, and we make no apology for what I am about to say: We are giving them to the elected government of Palestine [Hamas]. Just in case the British government or the European Union want to face me in any court, let me tell them live on television: I personally am about to break the sanctions on the elected government of Palestine. Many of my friends have to give their cash to charities. By Allah, we carried a lot of cash here. You thought we were all fat. We are not fat. This is money that we have around our waists. And we have to give this... Some of my friends have to give this money to charities, and they will do this in private later this evening, because they need receipts and it’s not practical to do it here.”

²³“Our Mission,” American Muslims for Palestine, http://www.ampalastine.org/national/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=29 (accessed September 23, 2009).

“But I, now, here, on behalf of myself, my sister Yvonne Ridley, and the two Respect councilors – Muhammad Ishtiaq and Naim Khan – are giving three cars and £25,000 in cash to Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. Here is the money. This is not charity. This is politics.”²⁴

July 3rd, 2009: Pre-convoy rally, House of the Lord Church, Brooklyn, NY

The night before the U.S. convoy left, Viva Palestina US “delegates” gathered in a church where activist Rev. Herbert Daughtry is the pastor. In 1982 Daughtry founded the African People's Christian Organization, which sought to create an “African Christian nation.”²⁵ During the rally, Lamis Deek, Co-Chair of Al-Awda’s Palestine Right of Return Coalition, endorsed Hamas as a legitimate political entity:

“What this convoy seeks to do is to preserve, not seeks, but what it does effectively, is it preserves our most basic political rights, political rights that prevent and preclude the damages caused by imperialism, the damages cause by Zionism, the exploitation and abuse of people. The first and foremost among them with this convoy, without question supports is the rights of Palestinians to self-determination, the right the government to choose, not only the government under which they want to live, but **in choosing Hamas, what they chose was one united Palestinian state on all of the 1948 territories from the north to the very south. That is what Palestinians chose. And in supporting Palestinian choice we are saying we support their right to liberation from violent colonialism.**” [Emphasis added]

Also at the rally was Councilman Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn, District 42), a former Black Panther.²⁶ Barron acknowledged members of the New Black Panther Party in attendance. In addition to helping raise money, Barron was also a member of the convoy “delegation,” spending up to a month away from his duties in New York. Two of Barron’s staff members - Chief of Staff Nayo Joy Simmons and Lamont Carolina - joined him on the trip.

Councilman Charles Barron described himself this way:

“I am not a politician. I am an elected revolutionary.”

Former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney was supposed to appear at this convoy send-off, but she had just been taken into custody after the Israeli navy seized the Spirit of Humanity, a boat with McKinney and 20 others onboard. A message from McKinney was played for the Brooklyn gathering, in which she claimed to be bringing crayons to the children of Gaza.

²⁴Al-Jazeera, March 8-9, 2009, excerpt posted at: <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/2060.htm>. Transcript is posted at http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2060.htm (accessed September 23, 2009).

²⁵“Reverend Herbert Daughtry Biography,” The History Makers, September 19, 2006, <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=1631&category=Civilmakers&occupation=Minister%20%26%20Activist&name=Herbert%20Daughtry> (accessed September 23, 2009).

²⁶“Charles Barron, District 42 - New York City Council Member - Background Information,” The New York City Council, <http://council.nyc.gov/d42/html/members/home.shtml> (accessed September 23, 2009).

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Councilman Barron called the seizing of the boat “piracy,” and went on to criticize the U.S.’s recent killing of three Somali pirates who had kidnapped an American ship captain:

“And how dare you, Barack Obama, how dare you go to Africa, kill three Somalians for trying to protect their water when an American boat went into Somalian waters.”

Barron continued to say the Somalis were only protecting their waters from toxic waste being dumped.

Later, Father Luis Barrios told the convoy travelers to, “Break the law. Just break it. OK?” John Parker of the International Action Center in California argued Hamas was not to blame for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza:

“Is it Hamas that’s denying children IVs and medical supplies while they lie in hospitals dying? Is it Hamas that put these children in the hospitals in the first place? No. Is it Hamas that destroyed half of the hospitals in Gaza...and is it Hamas that put Cynthia McKinney in jail?”

Al-Awda’s Lamis Deek lauded Rev. Lucius Walker of Pastors for Peace for making funding possible for Viva Palestina’s convoy, since “people are too scared to send money that they know is going to Gaza or to Palestine.” Exactly what that fiscal arrangement was, Deek didn’t elaborate on, except to say:

“We are eternally grateful to Pastors for Peace and especially Father [sic] Reverend Lucius Walker, who has done what would have otherwise been tremendously dangerous for an Arab or a Muslim organization to do, and that is to allow their sponsorship to be used to raise funds, millions of dollars.”

In another reference to this curious financial arrangement, convoy leader Kevin Oviden also thanked Walker, saying:

“We didn’t have the tax-free status, as we applied for tax-free status or we get tax-free status. But in any case, Reverend Walker stood up for us and stood in for us.”

Walker, who told the audience he would be unable to join the Gaza convoy because he was making a similar trek to Cuba, told convoy participants that they could tell their children, “We were part of an effort to build a better world.” And who is his inspiration? “Fidel was right, is right,” adding, “A better world is possible. But that better world is not possible if we do not take bold and courageous and determined action.”

Attorney Danny Meyers, President of the New York Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, provided legal advice for those traveling to Gaza, saying:

“And if there is anything in your mind that seems to suggest that there’s a trick or something about that, don’t answer it. Don’t answer.”

“Do not speak rather than trying to say something to potentially get out of a difficult situation.”

Meyers assured convoy members that they would not be punished by the U.S. government for their “courageous commitment.”

“We’re also saying to the United States to keep their hands off.”

Galloway was supposed to appear at the Brooklyn July 3rd rally, but it was announced that he was held up at a fundraiser elsewhere in New York City. Convoy leader Kevin Ovenden told the rally, “I’m not going to go into too much detail, because it’s not politically wise to, but I’ll say this. We are going to go to El Arish. We are going to go to the Rafah Crossing. And we are going to go through that crossing.”

July 14, 2009: Report from Gaza and Roundtable Discussion, Brecht Forum, Manhattan, NY

This event was sponsored by Adalah-NY, Al-Awda NY, Brooklyn for Peace, Code Pink, Committee for Open Discussion of Zionism, Jews Against the Occupation, Jews Say No!, NY Community of Muslim Progressives, NYC United for Peace and Justice, WESPAC Middle East Committee and Women in Black.

Al-Awda member Andy Pollock reported that the convoy had been stuck in Cairo for 10 days due to interference by the Egyptian and American governments. The convoy would get into Gaza, he said, but would only be allowed to stay for 24 hours, meaning its members couldn’t meet with everyone it planned to see.

Pollock reported that the final agreement was that two of the ambulances could go into Gaza, but the 47 trucks that they were going to use to take the rest of the medical aid in could not. They had to leave them in Egypt:

“But at some point the Viva Palestina organization and all its supporters will find a way to get those trucks into Gaza, because they’re badly needed. And as you all know, I don’t have to tell you, so many things have been banned by Israel and Egypt from going into Gaza, with no logic even from their warped perspective.”

Sammer Aboelela, organizer of the NY Community of Muslim Progressives, discussed “propaganda” that’s “insidious” about Palestinians:

“What is it that Gazans are resisting? ... Gazans are basically, every single mode of sustenance in Gaza is under attack.”

Aboelela claimed that tunnels used for smuggling goods and weapons between Egypt and Gaza are a counter measure against the siege and they’re being bombed routinely:

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“And so I think it’s important to recognize that the forms of resistance that are on the ground, we need to recognize them as resistance.”

“Gaza’s actually a beautiful place if the bombing would stop and we would just let them be. And that’s actually what all that anybody asks of us – to go back and just don’t send food or don’t send money, just, one of the you know what they really want is for us to stop sending the money and the weapons that are used against them. That was the main concern.”

An audience questioner inferred from Aboelela’s comments that the Gazans don’t want humanitarian assistance. Aboelela responded:

“I think I mentioned that what Gazans are asking us for is to go back and explain to people what we saw, in the U.S. and to stop supporting the, stop financially supporting their destruction, and sending weapons over to Israel. I didn’t hear anybody asking for humanitarian aid, which does not by any stretch of the imagination mean that people don’t need it and that we don’t owe it to them for what we’ve done. I mean we have a certain amount of restitution to pay.”

Author and activist Norman Finkelstein, another speaker at the roundtable, claimed that the only weapons Palestinians have are “firecrackers and roman candles.” He added, “In my opinion, time doesn’t allow me, he would have, there is grounds in Gandhi for supporting the rocket attacks on Israel, which preceded the attack.”

Code Pink co-founder Medea Benjamin repeated the theme that the father of non-violent resistance would support Palestinian violence, while speaking about meeting with Hamas during a former trip she was on with Norman Finkelstein:

“There are Gandhis all over Gaza. Every time we go we meet Gandhis in Gaza, who preach love. Now of course there are people who hate. And there’s a lot of good reason to hate. But it’s not the general overall feeling when you are there. And in fact you know when you say that you’re Jewish they welcome you. Even when we met with Hamas they would talk about our Jewish friends. The only thing that Norm got annoyed about is they called him a survivor of the Holocaust, and he said – What do I look like, I’m in my 80s?”

Benjamin added:

“So let’s prove to our Congress, let’s give the White House the backing they need to make some policy changes. Let’s give George Mitchell the backing he needs to even go to Gaza and speak to Hamas.”

Finkelstein recognized a “comrade” in the audience, Abdeen Jabara, who spoke about his efforts:

“I headed up an Arab American organization, the largest in the country, and talk about hitting your head against the wall. It was just, I spent four years in Washington. And the Congress was Israeli occupied territory.”

Newspapers handed out at the Brecht Forum event include a *Workers Vanguard* front page reading, “Zionist Mass Murder, Defend the Palestinian People! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!” and “For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party in Iran to Fight for Workers Revolution!”

Another newspaper carries a column written by convicted cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal.

July 27, 2009: Eyewitness Reports from the Viva Palestina US Convoy to Gaza, Salam Arabic Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, NY

This post-convoy event was sponsored by the U.S. Palestine Conference Network and Al-Awda-NY.

Archbishop Atallah Hanna of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem spoke in Arabic. The Archbishop is on a nationwide tour, according to Viva Palestina, to focus on “Israel’s escalating oppression of the Palestinian people.”

Hanna’s remarks were summarized by an interpreter. The interpreter said that Archbishop Hanna spoke in favor of a one-state solution and insisted that the idea of a two-state solution is unjust and is an illusion. From the interpreter’s summary:

“We have to be patient. We are in no rush in any way to get to any solutions. We’re here to wait. We can wait another 50 years. We can wait another 100 years, as long as we find a just solution, which is a one-state solution, the right state for all its citizen, every person living there – Jews, Christians, Muslims, and see the end of the Zionist regime that racially discriminates and occupies Palestine now.”

The Investigative Project on Terrorism obtained a translation of Hanna’s full remarks. They included this:

“Historic Palestine from the river to the sea; that is Palestine. Therefore, friends, we must not talk about the people of '67 or the people of '48. The Palestinian people are one people, no matter where they are or where they are found. The Palestinian people are one people indivisible.”

Before introducing the archbishop, Al-Awda’s Lamis Deek said the movement was about more than just Gaza:

“This movement was born from the unmasked horrors and ugliness of the Israeli Zionist regime and the principles upon which that Zionist regime was founded.”

Deek asserted that, “Jerusalem must be the capital of Palestine,” adding, “We reject Zionism as a racist and criminal ideology.”

A flyer stated that the convoy return event was sponsored by the United States Palestine Conference Network (USPCN) and Al-Awda-NY. Lamis Deek is listed on USPCN’s website as a member of its Outreach Committee.²⁷

IV. Coalitions with Other Organizations

Viva Palestina US has formed coalitions with other organizations not only to receive funds, but also to increase its influence.

La Voz de Aztlan (The Voice of Aztlan)

Aztlan is a decades old radical Latino, anti-Semitic, anti-Anglo organization²⁸ that advocates the revolutionary overthrow of U.S. territory that it deems to have been stolen from Mexico. Aztlan encourages its members to participate in convoys to Gaza. Aztlan supplies donations directly to Viva Palestina through the IFCO and provides training supplies for education on Gaza.²⁹

Middle East Children’s Alliance (MECA)

Contributions for Viva Palestina were also collected by Middle East Children’s Alliance (MECA), under the direction of Barbara Lubin (MECA Director) “for Viva Palestina-US, Bay Area.”³⁰ The MECA website explains, “After meeting with British MP George Galloway in May, MECA decided to join this aid and solidarity effort. For the month of June we became home to the Northern California Viva Palestina-US organizing committee to raise funds for the convoy to Gaza. Committee members held events, sold T-shirts at community gatherings, got donations from local businesses and, ultimately. Through these efforts, a contribution from MECA general funds, which was matched by the Alalusi Foundation, we donated a total of \$70,000 towards the medical aid the convoy brought in.”³¹

Al-Awda, Palestine Right to Return Committee (PRRC)

Al-Awda and PRRC appear to be the same organization. Their names are often used together. There is no IRS Form 990 on file for Al-Awda. The Palestine Right to Return Committee

²⁷“Contact Us,” Palestine Conference Network, <http://www.palestineconference.org/contact.shtml> (accessed September 23, 2009).

²⁸La Voz de Aztlan, <http://www.aztlan.net> (accessed September 23, 2009).

²⁹“Lifeline from La Raza to Gaza,” 2009, La Voz de Aztlan, http://www.aztlan.net/la_raza_to_gaza.htm (accessed September 23, 2009).

³⁰“Viva Palestina: A Lifeline from the United States to Gaza,” MECA, <http://www.mecaforpeace.org/article.php?id=468> (accessed September 23, 2009).

³¹“Viva Palestina: A Lifeline from the United States to Gaza,” MECA, <http://www.mecaforpeace.org/article.php?id=468> (accessed September 23, 2009).

(PRRC) IRS Form 990 for 2006 report \$64,718 and \$68,693 for 2007, with an address of P.O. Box 131352, Carlsbad, CA 92013.

Al-Awda's homepage reads, 'Al Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition,' (as one entity).

³² The IFCO/Pastors for Peace organization has similarly become financially intertwined with Viva Palestina US by accepting donations through its 501(c)(3) tax exempt status.³³

Lamis Deek uses the Al-Awda name interchangeably with the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, such as in this statement at the July 3rd pre-convoy rally in Brooklyn:

“And the most fundamental right that we at Al Awda speaking to you, Al Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, who believe that these are the most basic and critical political points that must be supported ... the right to Palestinian self-determination and the right for every Palestinian refugee to return to their original homes and lands and in that path enforcing and supporting these political principles.”

Al-Awda-New York has accounts of the convoy posted at a blog site, Al Awda Viva Palestina US Convoy Blogspot. One convoy posting states that convoy participants watched a press conference of a meeting of certain members of the convoy with Haniyeh, the head of the Hamas government in Gaza. “Thursday started by watching a press conference featuring Gazan Prime minister Ismail Haniyeh.”³⁴

Most convoy participants did not personally meet with Haniyeh, so the blog post indicates that convoy participants watched a video while convoy leaders met with Hamas and Haniyeh. For instance, in the February UK convoy, Kevin Ovenden explained this was necessary for security reasons:

“And some of us were fortunate enough, privileged enough to meet the democratically elected Prime Minister of Palestine, Ismail Haniyeh. And I should explain about that. This was only the last night. It was not something which was possible for everybody to do, much as I would have liked everybody on the convoy to meet Ismail Haniyeh and the leadership of the government in Gaza. It's not possible, because virtually every leader of prominence in Hamas has been assassinated by the Israelis.”³⁵

Al Awda, LLC has a corporate record in Van Nuys, California listing Nidal A. Bakarar as the Registered Agent.³⁶

³² Palestine Right to Return Coalition, Al-Awda, <http://al-awda.org/> (accessed September 23, 2009).

³³ Viva Palestina Gaza convoy send-off rally, House of the Lord Church, Brooklyn, NY, July 3, 2009.

³⁴ Viva Palestina US Convoy Blogspot, Al Awda, <http://alawdavpusconvoy.blogspot.com> (accessed September 23, 2009).

³⁵ “Convoy leader Kevin Ovenden, Viva Palestina Reunion, Birmingham,” *YouTube*, posted: March 22, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtHgInovdAU&feature=related> (accessed September 23, 2009).

³⁶ California Business Search Results, <http://kepler.sos.ca.gov/corpdata/ShowLpIcAllList?QueryLpIcNumber=200602110007&printer=yes> (accessed September 23, 2009).

Public records on Palestine Right to Return (PRR) lists a Lancaster, PA address. Jess Ghannam and Mazin Unsiyeh are also listed to PRR at the noted Lancaster address. The property is listed as owned by Ahmad Sahtout.

PA corporate records for PRR list the following as officers: Samera Sood, Ahmad Sahtout, Dr. Jess Ghannam and Dr. Zahi Damuni.

U.S. Palestine Conference Network

Another organization noted in Al-Awda-NY handouts is the U.S. Palestine Conference Network (USPCN), a group that describes itself as an alliance that met in Chicago on August 8, 2008, at “the first Palestinian Conference in North America,” that calls for “ending Zionist occupation and colonization of Palestine.” The organization is noted as a co-sponsor of the Archbishop Hanna post-convoy event, along with Al-Awda New York.³⁷

V. July 2009 Convoy: 24 Hours in Gaza

Like its February predecessor, the Viva Palestina US convoy met with the Hamas leadership in Gaza. John Parker, who represented the International Action Center (IAC) at the pre-convoy rally on July 3rd, (praised by Lamis Deek as a great supporter of Viva Palestina) wrote an account of the convoy, saying the U.S. contingent carried more than \$1 million in “medical supplies,” which crossed the Rafah border into Gaza on July 15th.³⁸

There, Galloway and a crew of approximately 200 Americans met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who praised the U.S. convoy as “proof that the American people is not entirely a people of occupation and is not entirely on the side of the criminal Zionist regime.”³⁹

VI. New York City Involvement

Convoy participants included New York City Councilman Charles Barron (Brooklyn), his Chief of Staff, Nayo Joy Simmons and another Barron staffer, Lamont Carolina. According to Barron’s letter, Carolina was to be gone from July 4th through July 17th, while Barron and Simmons would leave July 9th and return the 17th.⁴⁰

³⁷U.S. Palestine Conference Network, *MySpace*, <http://www.myspace.com/palestineconference> (accessed September 23, 2009).

³⁸John Parker, “They Made It!, Viva Palestina delivers aid to Gaza,” *Workers World*, July 23, 2009, http://www.workers.org/2009/world/gaza_0730 (accessed September 23, 2009).

³⁹“Hamas PM Haniyeh: Jews are not our enemy,” *Ma’an News Agency*, July 16, 2009, <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=212510> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴⁰Letter from Karrie Ann Sheridan, Associate Counsel of the City of New York, Conflicts of Interest Board to Elizabeth R. Fine, General Counsel, The City of New York, Office of the General Counsel, City of New York, dated July 2, 2009.

Charles Barron's participation in the Viva Palestina convoy was approved by the New York City General Counsel and Counsel for Conflicts of Interest Board.

In a letter to Barron July 2, Associate Counsel Karrie Ann Sheridan wrote that, based upon Barron's representations, it was acceptable for Viva Palestina to cover the costs for him and two staffers:

“Please be advised that the Conflicts of Interest Board (“COIB”) is the agency charged under the New York City Charter with ensuring that the conduct of city officers does not conflict with their official duties. After reviewing the proposed trip mentioned in your inquiry, COIB determined that the trip served a city and not a private or personal purpose.”

[...]

“The Board is advised that Viva Palestina is an organization operated by volunteers interested in bringing medical aid and supplies to Gaza; that individuals and groups are organizing to generate support for the convoy, which aims to raise \$10 million for humanitarian aid and 500 vehicles with which to deliver the aid into Gaza; and that over 220 people will join the convoy leaving New York on July 4, 2009.”

[...]

“You are advised that, based on your representations, since it appears that the trip will serve a City purpose and will be no longer than reasonably necessary to accomplish that purpose, it would not violate Chapter 68 for the Council Member, Mr. Carolina, and Ms. Simmons to accept this trip as a gift to the City, provided that the travel arrangements are appropriate to the trip's City purpose. See Board Rules Section 1-01(h).”

The letter continues:

“While not a formal opinion of the Board, this letter expresses the views of counsel to the Board and is intended to provide information and guidance to you. These views are conditioned on the correctness and completeness of the facts supplied to us. If such facts are in any respect incorrect or incomplete, the advice we have given to you may not apply.”

City officials said they could not release Barron's original request to the Conflict of Interest Board.

After returning from the convoy, Barron was interviewed by South Bronx rapper Marcel Cartier. In the interview, Barron lived up to his self-described role of “revolutionary,” making anti-American and anti-Zionist remarks as the following excerpts show:

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Barron: “So I wanted to make a statement that we’re gonna break the siege. Barack Obama said the siege of Palestine is intolerable, then he shouldn’t tolerate it. And that’s why we went forward to say to the people of Gaza, we want our American dollars to go to the babies of Gaza, not the bombs of Israel.”

Cartier: “What was your experience like in Egypt? I know that there was a lot of turbulence a lot of roadblocks.”

Barron: “...We didn’t come this far to be stopped by Egypt because of their relationship with Israel and America... It is sickening that we can’t unite. Arab brothers need to unite just like African brothers need to unite in our struggle, brothers and sisters, to see that divide and conquer, that Zionism and imperialism and capitalism is able to institute in our movement and that retards our growth.”⁴¹

During the same interview, Barron stated the following about the participation of Mutulu Olugabala, a rapper who goes by the name of M-1, in the convoy:

Barron: “M-1, I know him personally, I’ve known him for years, he spends his entire life focusing on this. So have I. When you are focusing on Gaza, you are focusing on the hood. Because it’s the same struggle, same enemies, same fight. So any blow against imperialism, any blow against racism and capitalism, is a positive blow for all of us.”⁴²

VII. Major Viva Palestina Players

The following section offers a brief summary of the leading organizers and voices in the Viva Palestina effort.

George Galloway

A former member of British Parliament representing the Respect Party, Galloway leads Viva Palestina and traveled throughout the U.S. raising money for it during the spring and early summer of 2009.

Galloway has been admitted into the U.S. previously to engage in Viva Palestina fundraising. During those fundraising activities, Galloway has openly propagandized on behalf of Hamas leadership. He has delivered aid to Hamas leaders. See the video here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYFGIbaabTU>.

Provisions of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act prohibit the issuance of visas or the entry into the US of foreign nationals who support terrorism.⁴³ As such, it would appear Galloway is inadmissible into the U.S., due to his actions in support of Hamas.

⁴¹“Charles Barron Speaks With Marcel Cartier About Viva Palestina,” *YouTube*, July 2009, posted: August 4th, 2009), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qsc04iYRw> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴²“Charles Barron Speaks With Marcel Cartier About Viva Palestina,” *YouTube*, July 2009, posted: August 4th, 2009), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qsc04iYRw> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴³Title 8, United States Code, Section 1182, http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/8/usc_sec_08_00001182----000-.html.

Additionally, providing material and propaganda support for Hamas, even though it is purported to be “humanitarian” aid, also brings into question issues related to the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). The Act requires “persons acting as agents of foreign principals in a political or quasi-political capacity to make periodic public disclosure of their relationship with the foreign principal, as well as activities, receipts and disbursements in support of those activities.”⁴⁴

The behavior of Galloway and Viva Palestina in collecting cash and supplies, only to hand them off to officials of a designated terrorist organization, raise the question of whether they are acting in support of foreign principals.

Kevin Ovenden

Kevin Ovenden, a Parliamentary aide to Galloway and a Respect Party member,⁴⁵ also serves as a main leader for Viva Palestina. Ovenden also played a leadership role in the Viva Palestina UK convoy departing in February of 2009. He speaks about that convoy (including the fact that he met with Hamas leadership) in a March 21, 2009 YouTube posting:

“That night we went to the house of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, a man who was killed after fajr prayer in his wheelchair by a missile. We met one of the greatest heroes, greatest leaders that Palestine has ever known. We went to his house, Abdul Rantissi, who himself was assassinated. And we knew, and we know that Ismail Haniyeh is high up on Benjamin Netanyahu’s assassination list. And therefore it wasn’t possible for him to meet large numbers of us. We simply had to select ten people who could meet him secretly... And he was incredibly generous with his time. This is a man who hadn’t seen his family for 80 days. He’s been underground for 80 days. He’d not seen his close friends for 80 days. He’d only been surrounded by one or two people who knew his location at any particular time. We were privileged enough to meet him in his house, or his first half of his house, after 80 days, and the only day he will be in his house, if anybody from Israeli intelligence is listening, he gave us two hours of his time, two hours of his time. Every minute of that time he was at risk for assassination. And he didn’t just know that we’d led the convoy, he knew the detail [*sic.*] of the convoy.”⁴⁶

Ovenden, along with members of Neturei Karta, can be seen in photos meeting with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the July convoy at:

http://www.worldbulletin.net/news_detail.php?id=44946

⁴⁴“Foreign Agents Registration Act,” U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fara> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴⁵Liam Mac Uaid, “How do we take Respect forward?” July 2, 2008, <http://liammacuaid.wordpress.com/2008/07/02/how-do-we-take-respect-forward-kevin-ovenden> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴⁶“Convoy leader Kevin Ovenden at Viva Palestina Re-Union Birmingham 21.03.2009 Part 2,” YouTube, posted: March 22, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJBtLe0imQc&feature=related> (accessed September 23, 2009).

Lamis Deek

Lamis Deek is Co-Chair of Al-Awda-New York (Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition). She was the moderator and a high profile organizer in the Viva Palestina convoy that departed for Gaza in July, 2009. Deek, an attorney from New York but born in Nablus, is also a member of the National Council of Arab Americans.⁴⁷

While introducing Councilman Barron at the sendoff rally on July 3rd, 2009, Deek not only insulted Mayor Michael Bloomberg, but also Jewish New Yorkers:

“Our next, I won’t say guest, because we’re a guest of his actually, our next panelist who will share a few words before he leaves for Gaza and joins the people of Gaza, is the only government official who, while Mayor Bloomberg was visiting and checking in and left New York City during an economic crisis to go check on and support Jewish colonialist settlers from New York who left I’m sure very lavish homes to go and steal and occupy.”

Deek has also made Islamist “resistance” statements in other contexts, including about a Guantanamo detainee she is defending, a case in which a conviction of two Yemenis was overturned in appeal.

She called the ruling “a victory not only for their own rights, but a victory for the rights of all people, including the American people.” She said her clients:

“pled only to agreeing – not actually to giving – but only to agreeing to accept American money which they would then attempt to give to Hamas. And while they did not directly acknowledge that Hamas was a terrorist organization, they did acknowledge that Hamas engages in politically motivated acts of violence. They pled guilty to planning to fund a party that is supported and welcomed in Yemen, to an act that by Yemeni standards is an honor, not a crime. In accepting this plea, and by their great sacrifice, they stood against the criminalization of the Palestinian resistance to occupation.”⁴⁸

Deek also served as president of the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition at least during their 2006 tax reporting year.⁴⁹

Reverend Lucius Walker

Reverend Lucius Walker, a Baptist Minister, is Executive Director of IFCO, which is accepting donations on Viva Palestina’s behalf. He is also involved with National Network on Cuba (NNOC), also known as Cuba Solidarity. NNOC is pro-Castro, and maintains an anti-American policy toward Cuba. Walker has organized several convoys or “aid caravans” to Cuba. Such

⁴⁷“West Coast Regional Conference: Speaker/Organizer Bios,” Al-Awda http://www.al-awdasandiego.org/west_conf/speakers.html (accessed September 23, 2009) (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁴⁸Zaid al-Alaya’s “Arabic culture and Islamic religion put on trial in al-Moayed, Zayde case, American lawyers,” *Yemen Observer*, August 17, 2009.

⁴⁹2006 IRS Form 990 for the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition.

humanitarian aid must be in compliance with the Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control, including obtaining a license.⁵⁰

Walker openly discussed the financial agreement with Viva Palestina—that IFCO agreed to take donations for the organization—at a July 3rd send-off rally.

“And so we have been honored to be able to receive funds on behalf of this effort that we are here as a part of. So this is the second send-off that those of us connected with Pastors of Peace have been a part of for this week. Last night we had a send off of the Cuba 20th Cuba caravan over at the Brecht Forum.”⁵¹

Cynthia McKinney

Former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney joined the convoy after being released from an Israeli jail for being aboard a boat, named Spirit of Humanity, that the Israelis say sailed into restricted waters off the coast of Gaza, with individuals from the Free Gaza organization. A June 24, 2009 interview of McKinney regarding that event is posted at

<http://www.livestream.com/dignity> (WBAI Peace & Justice News & Information).

McKinney has blamed her reelection loss in 2006 (Georgia’s 4th Congressional District) on “Zionists.” According to the *Jewish Herald-Voice*, she said the following upon the convoy’s return, in Houston:

“And even that position made me, put me on a collision course with the Zionist lobby that rears its ugly head in too many facets of life in this country, particularly in political life. And so the Zionists were successful in kicking me out of Congress two times. And I would suggest that that community of people who are not Zionists, who are anti-Zionist, ought to put together the kind of committee to put me back into Congress.”⁵²

Fatima Mohammadi

Fatima Mohammadi, former Viva Palestina USA National Organizer, who is listed as the originator of the Viva Palestina-us.org website, was praised by Kevin Ovenden at the July 3rd event as “an absolute rock” in organizing the Viva Palestina U.S. trip.

A public record address search done for Viva Palestina uses the same address as the Illinois Coalition for Justice, Peace and the Environment (ICJPE). ICJPE’s website offers Mohammadi’s email address as a contact point (only in the cached version), and states:

“Dear Chicago Peace and Justice Activists,

⁵⁰ “Cuba: What You Need to Know About U.S. Sanctions Against Cuba,” OFAC, September 3, 2009.

⁵¹ “Report from Gaza and Roundtable Discussion,” *Brecht Forum*, New York, July 14, 2009.

⁵² Jewish Herald-Voice video recorded in Houston, Texas, dated Aug. 14, 2009, <http://www.jhvonline.com/default.asp?sourceid=&smenu=96&twindow=&mad=&sdetail=7376&wpage=1&skeywo rd=&sidate=&ccat=&ccatm=&restate=&restatus=&reoption=&retype=&repmin=&repmax=&rebed=&rebath=&sub name=&pform=&sc=1291&hn=jhvonline&he=.com> (accessed September 23, 2009).

[Viva Palestina US](#) is currently organizing to develop a convoy of hundreds of United States citizens to travel to Gaza on July 4th, 2009 to deliver millions of dollars of much needed aid for the people of Gaza. The US project is currently working to raise \$10 million in aid and 500 vehicles in a campaign in solidarity with the Palestinian people. A group of Chicago activists have begun to meet about this project and invite anyone who is interested in helping in any way (donations, funding a delegate to go etc). in order to build upon the success of the convoy. So please continue to donate and please ask your friends, family and workmates too.”⁵³

The posting gives information for the Chicago Chapter, which met in the basement of Grace Place, 637 S. Dearborn, Chicago IL 60606.

Yvonne Ridley

Yvonne Ridley, a British Muslim convert and journalist, hosted a Viva Palestina UK fundraiser in London on August 20, 2009, where she reminisced about the February 2009 convoy. She described going to Tunisia and Libya, where Moammar Qaddafi doubled the convoy’s size. Later, she led an auction that included personal items given to her from Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.⁵⁴

At a fundraiser in Bradford, England August 9th, Ridley urged people to boycott Israeli products, such as dates, and pro-Israel companies such as Coca-Cola. Pointing to an empty Coke bottle, Ridley said:

“I hope that this is the last battle of Coca-Cola I ever see when I visit the Islamic Republic of Bradford. Buying Coca-Cola, you may as well give the money directly to the Israeli soldiers to buy bullets to put into Palestinian children. Don’t buy Coca-Cola and other brands that support the Israeli state.”⁵⁵

VIII. Internal Concerns

In addition to the parent Viva Palestina website and the Viva Palestina US website, a third website with the name of Viva Palestina - <http://vivapalestina.us/> - posted this statement:

“This site no longer endorses or is associated with Viva Palestina, a Lifeline from Britain to Gaza and Lifeline from the United States to Gaza, or vivapalestina.org, all of which have been misrepresented (sic) as humanitarian rather than political projects or organizations, have violated the trust of donors by politicizing the humanitarian aid they collected for the people of Gaza, and have failed to be transparent in their expenditure of collected funds.”

⁵³Illinois Coalition for Justice, Peace and the Environment, cached version, http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache:jZ_DOZNG5fMJ:icjpe.org/+Illinois+Coalition+for+Justice+and+Peace&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁵⁴Viva Palestina fundraiser, London, UK, Aug. 20, 2009.

⁵⁵Yvonne Ridley, Viva Palestina fundraiser in Bradford, England, *YouTube*, August 9, 2009, posted: August 19, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-NzyTm6TPA> (accessed September 23, 2009).

This last website is registered to New Orleans resident Katherine Delia Labarre. Labarre told the Investigative Project on Terrorism that she was a Viva Palestina member, but has left the organization because she felt misled by Galloway over the effort's ties to Hamas. She said she was involved with the organization since February (when the first convoy left), but after the Charity Commission froze its assets, she "repeatedly asked for an accounting of how the money donated to them was actually spent." She said she learned that Kevin Ovenden would be running Viva Palestina US from New York City.

A Viva Palestina participant of the July convoy, and a member of LA Jews for Palestine, Jeff Warner, expressed his concern over Viva Palestina's financial arrangement. Warner, on a Middle East news blog, replied to "Saleema" who asked about it, in a blog posting.⁵⁶

"1 Saleema August 2, 2009 at 6:01 pm

Thank you.

When I listened to George Galloway's speech he said that Pastors for Peace would take care of the finance side for them. There were nods of approval and applause when he said that. A girl sitting next to me said that they are really good at doing that.

So then what happened?

2 Jeff Warner

August 3, 2009 at 11:20 am

Saleema

Indeed there was an organization in the U.S. that was a conduit for Viva Palestina donations, and that 501(c)(3) group allowed donations to be tax deductible (sic). This group was simply a pass-through for donation.

The accounting issue I mentioned has to do with Viva Palestina itself, and how it has not yet provided an accounting of donations and expenditures.

best jeff'

Warner wrote elsewhere in his blog:

⁵⁶Jeff Warner, "Mission Accomplished: A Report on the VIVA PALESTINA USA Convoy mission to break the Israeli Siege of Gaza," *Mondoweiss*, August 2, 2009, <http://mondoweiss.net/2009/08/mission-accomplished-a-report-on-the-viva-palestina-usa-convoy-mission-to-break-the-israeli-siege-of-gaza.html> (accessed September 23, 2009).

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“Noting that the Palestinian National Authority in the Gaza Strip is Hamas, and supporting Hamas is illegal for Americans because the U.S. Government considers Hamas a terrorist organization, I took care to distance myself from tour events that were not humanitarian in nature. I sat in the bus during meetings with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, at the bombed Parliament building, and at the Ministry of Detainees (the later with relatives of Hamas men who are prisoners in Israel). The following photo shows posters of Hamas Parliament members who are in Israeli prisons posted outside the bombed Parliament building.

[...]

“I did not witness the presentation of the ten truck-loads of medical aid that VIVA PALESTINA purchased in Cairo and was donated by Egyptian businesses. I was told by VIVA PALESTINA leaders that that aid was distributed to several NGOs. I wish that VIVA PALESTINA would report an inventory of the contents, of the trucks, and a list of the NGOs who received the aid.”

And Warner wrote, “The second announcement that George Galloway made at the Rafah Gate was an upcoming Hugo Chavez Viva Palestina Venezuela aid convoy to Gaza. This announcement was received with great enthusiasm and loud clapping.”⁵⁷

Another convoy participant, La Voz de Aztlan member Hector Carreon, reported that at one point, Galloway handed Barron the reins to the convoy. Barron, Galloway said, is “one of the most important new and rising voices in the Democratic Party.”⁵⁸

Carreon also reported that Viva Palestina US under Galloway’s leadership collected about \$1.2 million to buy “medical supplies and 47 new vehicles in Egypt to transport the supplies to Gaza.”⁵⁹

Carreon expressed concern the convoy might carry infiltrators:

“The next stop on the tour was a reception with the Prime Minister of Gaza Ismail Haniyeh at an extremely secured location. The convoy to the location was led by an escort of armed guards and police on motorcycles with sirens blaring. On the tour bus to the reception was one suspicious loud-mouth and ill mannered American Jew making obnoxious remarks about the Prime Minister. One statement he made in the presence of other delegates was, ‘Ismail Haniyeh must be feeling safe since he will have a group of Americans as human shields.’ This s [sic] one remark made one Palestinian-American uneasy and he made sure that the delegate of Jewish descent was not carrying a GPS device or anything else that would harm the Prime Minister. The incident makes clear the need for the careful screening of delegates in future aid missions to Gaza. After the

⁵⁷Hector Carreon, “Viva Palestina USA: only half of aid arrives at Gaza,” La Voz de Aztlan, July 21, 2009, http://www.aztlan.net/viva_palestina_gaza_report.htm (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

reception with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, the tour headed for the Gaza Legislative Parliament.”⁶⁰

A Viva Palestina member, Dan Winters, spoke to The Electronic Intifada about his life in activism, including going to Bosnia on a grant from George Soros in 1993 and 1995, and about his recent trip to Gaza. He said about \$16,000 was raised in Colorado for the convoy.⁶¹

The Ezzedeem Al-Qassam Brigades website, an arm of Hamas, re-published Winters’ interview.⁶²

IX. Convoy Difficulty

In February 2009, three men in the U.K. who planned to go on the first convoy were arrested (nine were taken into custody, and six released). London’s *Sunday Times* reported:

“Three Islamist terror suspects who were arrested in northwest England on Friday night planned to leave the country under the cover of a humanitarian convoy to Gaza led by George Galloway, the maverick MP, senior police sources said.”⁶³ They were arrested under anti-terror laws, in connection with sums of cash found, but were released a short time later.⁶⁴

Shortly before Galloway was to make a speech in Canada on March 30, 2009, its Citizenship and Immigration office deemed Galloway inadmissible to Canada on “national security grounds.” The *Guardian* reported that Canada’s immigration minister, Jason Kenney, chose to “decline to exercise that discretion,” that could have exempted Galloway from Canadian law that is “designed to protect Canadians from people who fund, support or engage in terrorism.”

“We’re going to uphold the law, not give special treatment to this infandous street-corner Cromwell who actually brags about giving ‘financial support’ to Hamas, a terrorist organisation banned in Canada,” a Kenney spokesman told the *Guardian*. “I’m sure Galloway has a large Rolodex of friends in regimes elsewhere in the world willing to roll out the red carpet for him. Canada, however, won’t be one of them.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ida Audeh, “Entering Gaza: an interview with Viva Palestina Activist,” *Electronic Intifada*, August 24, 2009, <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10721.shtml> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁶² “An interview with Viva Palestine (sic) activist,” Al Qassam, August 26, 2009, http://www.qassam.ps/interview-1748-An_interview_with_Viva_Palestine_activist.html (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁶³ “Terror Suspects in aid convoy,” *The Sunday Times*, February 15, 2009, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article5734097.ece> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁶⁴ Duncan Campbell, “Galloway seeks inquiry into convoy arrests,” *The Guardian*, February 21, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/feb/21/galloway-viva-palestina-arrests-aid> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁶⁵ Deborah Summers, “George Galloway banned from Canada,” *Guardian*, March 20, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/mar/20/george-galloway-banned-canada> (accessed September 23, 2009).

In an interview on the matter the following month, Kenney explained that it's not a matter of freedom of speech.⁶⁶

“Q: Why is a self-described free speech hawk banning George Galloway from Canada?
A: He's not. I reject the premise of your question. Mr. Galloway received a preliminary notice of determination by the Canadian Border Services Agency that he might be inadmissible to Canada, I gather based in large part on his public admission that he provided funds to Hamas, a banned illegal terrorist organization, which would seem—on the face of it—to constitute grounds for inadmissibility under Section 34(1)f of the Immigration Refugee Protection Act. He was invited to provide submissions to the CBSA to inform their consideration of his potential application to enter Canada. He never provided them with any such submissions and he never presented himself to a point of entry where he would have had, at that point, a final decision on his admissibility, and had he been determined to be inadmissible by an officer at a port of entry he would have been able to apply for an inadmissibility hearing. So there's a whole process that we have under our law to make determinations independently of politicians about admissibility. I simply said publicly that I would not use my extraordinary ministerial power to effectively overrule a decision of a CBSA officer on his admissibility. Why? Because I didn't see any compelling reason. And by the way, this had nothing to do with freedom of speech, he exercised his speech in Canada, volubly, as he does everywhere. That was never the issue. The issue was not about what he might do or say in Canada, it's what he did in making financial contributions to an organization that uses money to buy explosives and strap them to teenagers and send them into school buses and discos.”

That decision was upheld by Justice Luc Martineau, who ruled that the Canadian Border Services Agency acted within its authority in deciding to keep Galloway out.⁶⁷

X. International Expansion: Viva Palestina, Dec. 2009 – July 2010

In December 2009, Viva Palestina's third convoy departed from London. It was an international effort, with groups joining from the U.K., the U.S. and dozens of other countries. Most of Viva Palestina's fundraising efforts were conducted in the UK; at least one fundraising event was held in conjunction with Interpal,⁶⁸ a group designated by the U.S. Treasury in 2003 as a charity front for Hamas.⁶⁹ Viva Palestina also received donations from fundraisers held by Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed's Perdana Peace Foundation.⁷⁰ Mohamed has alleged that the 9/11 attacks included a “controlled demolition” by the “Jewish owner” of the third World

⁶⁶Kenneth Whyte, “Q & A: Jason Kenney on George Galloway and free speech,” *MacLeans*, April 23, 2009, <http://www2.macleans.ca/2009/04/23/qa-jason-kenney-on-george-galloway-and-free-speech> (accessed September 23, 2009).

⁶⁷Kenyon Wallace, Tonda MacCharles, “Judge Denies Galloway's Bid to enter Canada,” *Toronto Star*, March 30, 2009.

⁶⁸Video, “Return to Gaza Dinner” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ayy9fgacEcg> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁶⁹“U.S. Designates Five Charities Funding Hamas and Six Senior Hamas Leaders and Terrorist Entities,” August 22, 2003, <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/js672.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷⁰“Malysians in Viva Palestina international aid convoy to Gaza,” <http://www.perdana4peace.net/?p=1087> (accessed July 29, 2010).

Trade Center building that collapsed.⁷¹ Viva Palestina founder George Galloway also spoke with Mahathir at the October "Conference to Criminalize War." Viva Palestina's third convoy partnered with IHH, The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, which Galloway has hailed as "heroes."

IHH is a member of Union of the Good.⁷² IHH's ties to Hamas have recently been confirmed by U.S. government officials⁷³ and IHH is under investigation by the U.S. State Department.⁷⁴ French intelligence expert Jean Louis-Bruguere was cited in U.S. federal court documents in 2001 stating that IHH played an "important role" in the al-Qaida planned Millennium bomb plot.⁷⁵ In an interview with the Associated Press, Bruguere stated that IHH leaders "were basically helping al-Qaida when (Osama) bin Laden started to want to target U.S. soil."⁷⁶ In 1998, Bruguere was involved in a raid with French and Turkish police at IHH's headquarters in Istanbul. Bruguere found that IHH was "moving funds, weapons and mujahedeen to and from Bosnia and Afghanistan."⁷⁷ Despite IHH's terrorist connections, the group still enjoys Turkish political backing.

The third convoy made stops in Turkey, Syria and Jordan and received greetings and receptions by Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood officials.⁷⁸ Several participants, upon arriving in Egypt, clashed with the Egyptian police in protest to Egypt's refusal to let the entire convoy enter Gaza.⁷⁹ An Egyptian border guard was shot and killed during a demonstration organized by Hamas members.⁸⁰

⁷¹ "Former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad questions "controlled demolition" type collapses of World Trade Center Buildings," October 10, 2009 <http://noliesradio.org/archives/8179> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷² Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Defense Minister signs order banning Hamas-affiliated charitable organizations," July 7, 2008 <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2008/Defense+Minister+signs+order+banning+Hamas-affiliated+charitable+organizations+7-Jul-2008.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷³ Hilary Leila Krieger, "US Concerned over IHH-Hamas ties," The Jerusalem Post, June 3, 2010 <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=177328> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State, Daily Press Briefing with Mark C. Toner, July 7, 2010 <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2010/07/144116.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷⁵ United States of America v. Abdul Rahman Al-Amoudi, October, 2003 http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/312.pdf#page=17 (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷⁶ "Flotilla Organizer Has "Clear, Long-Standing Ties to Terrorism and Jihad," Foundation for Defense of Democracies website, June 4, 2010, http://www.defenddemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11790540&Itemid=361 (July, 29 2010).

⁷⁷ Evan F. Kohlmann, "The Role of Islamic Charities in International Terrorist Recruitment and Financing," 2006/7 *Danish Institute for International Studies* <http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/WP2006/DIIS%20WP%202006-7.web.pdf> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷⁸ "Hamas Leaders Warmly, Repeatedly Greet Viva Palestina Convoy," IPT News, January 8, 2010 <http://www.investigativeproject.org/1625/hamas-leaders-warmly-repeatedly-greet-viva> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁷⁹ Sheera Frenkel, "Egyptian soldier killed in clashes over George Galloway convoy," The Sunday Times, January 2, 2010, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6977949.ece (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁰ Ibid

When the convoy got into Gaza in January, 2010, IHH officials directly handed the keys to the convoy's vehicles to Ahmed al Kurd,⁸¹ a Hamas leader who has been designated by the U.S. Treasury Department as a terrorist in 2007.⁸² IHH and Viva Palestina leaders were thanked by Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who praised IHH, Turkey and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.⁸³

Whether money left behind by the convoy actually went to help Palestinians has been questioned. Ahmad al Ja'abari, a leading commander of Hamas' military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, engaged in a heated argument with Prime Minister Haniyeh over Viva Palestina's funds. According to a translation of an article that ran in Fatah's *Voice of Palestine* on January 19, 2010:

“al Ja'abari immediately removed \$600,000 and returned the rest. He said to Haniyeh 'We'll go with this amount for the time being. Don't forget that al Qassam's share is greater than your shares. What you collect from the people is enough for you...and don't forget our share of the vehicles.’”⁸⁴

For the May 2010 flotilla to Gaza, groups and individuals associated with Viva Palestina created their own initiatives and held fundraising events.⁸⁵ Much of the money raised was transferred directly to IHH. A delegation of Viva Palestina UK activists, led by Kevin Ovenden, attended the send off rally for IHH's Mavi Marmara ship in Istanbul on May 22, 2010.⁸⁶

On May 31st the IHH-sponsored Mavi Marmara was warned by the Israeli Navy that the vessel was in violation of the blockade on Gaza and must turn back.⁸⁷ When the Mavi Marmara refused, the ship was boarded by Israeli commandos. The self-billed “humanitarian” IHH operatives on board attacked the commandos with clubs, knives, and other makeshift weapons.⁸⁸ Israeli officials said the initial plan was to use paintball guns to gain control of the ship and that the navy teams had handguns for use only if their lives were threatened.⁸⁹ Flotilla members grabbed at least one gun from a soldier, contributing to the decision to fire back, Israeli military

⁸¹“Haniyeh thanks Palestine convoy” IHH Website, January 1, 2010, <http://www.ihh.org.tr/12692/en/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸² “Treasury Designates Al-Salah Society Key Support Node for Hamas,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, August 7, 2007 <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/hp531.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸³ “Haniyeh thanks Palestine convoy” IHH Website, January 1, 2010, <http://www.ihh.org.tr/12692/en/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁴ Voice of Palestine, “Al Ja'abari Bursts into Haniyeh's office and steals documents and files concerning huge amounts of money,” January 19, 2010, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/371.pdf> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁵ See for example, The Gaza Boat Convoy website <http://gazaboatconvoy.co.uk/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁶ Al Jazeera, translated from Arabic <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/B9B8DA0E-72C0-42E2-BEDA-9A2EE88CD9B9.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁷ Video, IDF Spokesperson's Unit <http://www.youtube.com/idfnadesk#p/a/u/2/qK0mLP4yHb4> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁸ EuropeNews, “Video: Close-Up Footage of Mavi Marmara Passengers Attacking IDF Soldiers,” May 31, 2010, <http://europenews.dk/en/node/32560> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁸⁹ “Israel Navy commandos: Gaza flotilla activists tried to lynch us” Haaretz, May 31, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-navy-commandos-gaza-flotilla-activists-tried-to-lynch-us-1.293089> (accessed July 29, 2010).

officials said.⁹⁰ Eight out of the 9 passengers killed were IHH activists or affiliated with the group. Seven out of the nine killed expressed their desire to die as martyrs (*shaheeds*).⁹¹

Former Viva Palestina USA coordinator, Fatima Mohammadi, as well as U.K. leader Kevin Ovenden, were on the ship.⁹²

At a protest held outside the Israeli Embassy in London on June 5, Galloway stated that he attended the funeral of the “martyrs” in Istanbul, and used the opportunity to announce Viva Palestina’s next initiative to Gaza—simultaneous convoys, by land and by sea—dubbed “Viva Palestina 5.”⁹³

The plan calls for three land convoys organized by Viva Palestina, one originating from London, one from Casablanca, and one from Doha to depart September 18 and meet at the Rafah land crossing. At the same time a sea convoy of 60 ships, organized by IHH, hopes to reach the shores of Gaza.⁹⁴

Viva Palestina has expanded its operations in 2010. In addition to branches in the United Kingdom and the U.S., Viva Palestina also created “Viva Palestina Arabia,” which is an arm of the organization based in Beirut, Lebanon. Viva Palestina Arabia and George Galloway hosted “The Summer University of Palestine,” held July 25 to August 1 in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. Among the speakers for the University are “the heroes of the flotilla,” including IHH leader Bulent Yildirim.⁹⁵

In addition to Viva Palestina UK, Viva Palestina US and Viva Palestina Arabia, Viva Palestina’s home page also links to “Viva Palestina Malaysia,” “A Lifeline from Turkey to Gaza” [the official IHH website], “Viva Palestina IT” [the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in Italy], and “Kiwi Aid to Gaza from New Zealand.”⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Video, IDF Spokesperson’s Unit <http://www.youtube.com/idfnadesk#p/a/u/1/TwoqGJJtPU> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁹¹ Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Report on Mavi Marmara, July 6, 2010 http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e103.pdf (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁹² Video, “Witness to State Terror: Aboard the Mavi Marmara (Fatima Mohammadi)” June 17, 2010 <http://gazaflotilla.delegitimize.com/video/witness-to-state-terror-aboard-the-mavi-marmara-fatima-mohammadi/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁹³ Video “National Demonstration Gaza Peace Flotilla,” June 5, 2010 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x00OoHYlx04&feature=player_embedded (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁹⁴ “Interview with Stuff on Kia Ora Gaza” July 14, 2010 <http://kiaoragaza.wordpress.com/2010/07/14/interview-with-stuff-on-kia-ora-gaza/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁹⁵ “About our Project,” Viva Palestina Arabia <http://www.vivapalestinaarabia.org/en/about> (accessed July 29, 2010).

⁹⁶ Viva Palestina homepage, <http://www.vivapalestina.org/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

XI. Appendix

Photos:



1. Viva Palestina – March 2009: George Galloway (left) embracing Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh (right)



2. July 2009 Convoy: VP Convoy Leader Kevin Ovenden, next to Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh



3. July 2009 Convoy: VP Convoy Leader Kevin Ovenden (looking down, smiling) at left, with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh



4. May 2010 Flotilla: Weapons aboard the Mavi Marmara ship