



BRAD SHERMAN
UNITED STATES CONGRESS

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December 1, 2009

Commissioner Douglas Shulman
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Douglas Shulman:

It has been brought to my attention that the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), a 501(c)(3) entity, may be raising funds for Hamas, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1189. Clearly, this allegation is most serious, and I request that you investigate it immediately to determine whether the Internal Revenue Service should revoke IFCO's 501(c)(3) status pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 501(p).

My concerns focus on IFCO's fundraising on behalf of an entity called Viva Palestina. According to Viva Palestina's website, "In order for [the donor] to have the maximum benefit for [his or her] contribution, we have formed a fiduciary partnership with the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations/Pastors for Peace (IFCO). . . . [The] donation to Viva Palestina - IFCO is fully tax deductible under IFCO's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status."¹ The assumption follows that IFCO is cooperating with Viva Palestina; however, an investigation is required to confirm that IFCO is actually sending money back to Viva Palestina.

Viva Palestina itself is not a 501(c)(3) entity and my staff could not determine whether the organization has any legal status in the United States. According to its website, Viva Palestina seeks fundraising to "plan and execute a North American Aid Convoy to Gaza".²

George Galloway, a member of the British Parliament, is the leader of the Viva Palestina convoys and has spoken publicly on the organization's behalf.³ During one of the organization's Gaza convoys on March 10, 2009, George Galloway made the following statement to what is presumably a delegation of Hamas officials:

¹ <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org/donate> (accessed on October 20, 2009)

² <http://www.vivapalestina-us.org/about> (accessed on October 20, 2009)

³ <http://vivapalestina-us.org/register/conditions> (accessed on October 20, 2009); "The Convoy Leaders are identified as follows: Mr. George Galloway MP, and in his absence, Mr. Ron Kovic, and in his absence, Mr. Kevin Ovenden."

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, to Prime Minister Ismail Haniya.⁴ Here is the money. **This is not charity. This is politics.** The government of Palestine is the best people where this money is needed. We are giving this money now to the government of Palestine. If I could, I would give them 10 times, 100 times, more. [emphasis added]⁵

This statement, which is widely available to the public on YouTube, is compelling evidence that the major purpose of Viva Palestina is to provide material support to Hamas. Please take steps to confirm whether IFCO has (or has not) acted as fundraising conduit for Viva Palestina. If so, IFCO's status as a 501(c)(3) entity must be revoked. *The taxpayers of the United States should not and cannot support the activities of recognized terror organizations.*

Please have your staff contact Marc Berkman of my staff at (202)225-5911 or at marc.berkman@mail.house.gov with any questions and to keep him and me updated.

Sincerely,



BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress

⁴ According to the United States Department of State, Mr. Haniya is not a Prime Minister of any government. He is considered a high-ranking official of Hamas, a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYFGIbaabTU> (accessed on October 20, 2009)