

An IPT Investigative Report:

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*Hamza Yusuf*

**CO-FOUNDER, ZAYTUNA COLLEGE**



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Imam Hamza Yusuf is founder and president of Zaytuna College in Berkeley, Cal., which seeks to become “the first accredited Muslim college in the United States.”<sup>1</sup> A native of Washington State, Yusuf converted to Islam in 1977 at age 17.<sup>2</sup> He subsequently traveled to the Muslim world and spent a decade studying in Arab countries including the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Mauritania.<sup>3</sup> In 1996, Yusuf founded the Zaytuna Institute, which describes itself as having “established an international reputation for presenting a classical picture of Islam in the West which is dedicated to the revival of traditional study methods and the sciences of Islam.”<sup>4</sup> He founded Zaytuna College in 2009.<sup>5</sup> That year, Yusuf was ranked as “the Western world’s most influential Islamic scholar” by *The 500 Most Influential Muslims*, a book edited by John Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin.<sup>6</sup>

Yusuf is very popular with American Islamist organizations and has been a frequent speaker at their events.<sup>7</sup>

He also receives positive treatment from the news media. In 2006, the *New York Times* reported that Yusuf and his Zaytuna Institute colleague Zaid Shakir “are using their clout to create the first Islamic seminary in the United States, where they hope to train a new generation of imams and scholars who can reconcile Islam and American culture.”<sup>8</sup> The *Times* described the pair as “leading intellectual lights for a new generation of American Muslims looking for homegrown leaders who can help them learn how to live their faith without succumbing to American materialism or Islamic extremism.”<sup>9</sup>

Yet, there is something enigmatic about him. As this report will show, Yusuf tempered much of his radical ideology after 9/11 and often condemns terrorism. But he still sees the United States as an inherently hostile nation, one that “relishes war.”

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<sup>1</sup> Zaytuna College/About, “Why Zaytuna College?” <http://www.zaytunacollege.org/about>, (accessed April 4, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> “Zaytuna College Faculty: Shaykh Hamza Yusuf,” <http://www.zaytunacollege.org/academics/faculty>, (accessed March 8, 2011). See also <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=15977405611> (accessed March 8, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Zaytuna College/About, “Why Zaytuna College?” <http://www.zaytunacollege.org/about>, (accessed April 4, 2011.) See also Sheikh Hamza Yusuf’s Unofficial Biography, <http://sheikhhamza.com/biography.aspx>, (accessed Jan. 14, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Sandala Productions, “About Hamza Yusuf,” [Sandala Productions. About Hamza Yusuf http://www.sandalaproductions.com/AboutHamzaYusuf.aspx](http://www.sandalaproductions.com/AboutHamzaYusuf.aspx), (accessed Feb. 15, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Examples include CAIR-Chicago’s 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Banquet, March 7, 2009, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois; ISNA’s Annual Convention, Aug. 29-31, 2008, Columbus, Ohio; ISNA-MSA annual conference, Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2007 in Rosemont, Illinois; and ISNA’s 2002 convention, Aug. 31, 2002 in Washington, D.C.; ISNA Convention, Sept. 3, 1999, Chicago, Illinois; ISNA, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, Kansas City, Missouri, September 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Laurie Goodstein, “U.S. Muslim Clerics Seek a Modern Middle Ground,” *New York Times*, June 18, 2006; <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/18/us/18imams.html?pagewanted=3& r=1> (accessed March 8, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

On some occasions, Yusuf speaks with a careful, measured voice. When the issue of hate crimes in the United States came up during a recent interview with al-Jazeera, he noted that there were significantly more anti-Jewish crimes than anti-Muslim crimes.<sup>10</sup>

But in the same interview, Yusuf attacked Rep. Peter King (R-NY) for investigating American Muslim radicalization. He said supporters of King's recent congressional hearing on the subject used "scare tactics" that demonize innocent Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

Yusuf also has a long record of radical statements, some of which he has recanted.

He says the World War II bombing of Germany constituted a "war crime," and suggests that the United States is doing the same thing in the current war on terror. Yusuf describes Judaism as a "racist religion" and refers to the Bill of Rights and democracy as "false gods." He portrays as a "martyr" a member of the pro-Hamas Turkish organization IHH who was killed during a violent attack on Israeli naval commandos last May.

Yusuf accuses the United States and Israel of "war crimes."<sup>12</sup> He says Norman Finkelstein, an academic who likens Israelis to Nazis and endorses the terrorist group Hizballah,<sup>13</sup> has had his career ruined for speaking the "truth."<sup>14</sup> Finkelstein, who previously taught at schools including New York University, Rutgers and Hunter College, was denied tenure at DePaul University in 2007.<sup>15</sup>

Two days before 9/11, Yusuf spoke at a fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin, then on trial for murdering a policeman, where he portrayed the United States as a racist country and suggested that al-Amin was framed.<sup>16</sup> Al-Amin was convicted of murder the following year.<sup>17</sup>

He also said that Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, convicted in a conspiracy to bomb New York landmarks in the 1990s, was unjustly tried.<sup>18</sup> More recently, Yusuf has said President George W. Bush's Iraq policy was a crime and that the former president should be tried for felony murder.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Hamza Yusuf, "Riz Khan Show," Al-Jazeera Television (English), March 11, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkzDUJHEw8Q>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Speech by Hamza Yusuf to AMP-Chicago fundraiser, Chicago IL., Feb. 19, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> During Israel's 2006 war against Hizballah in Lebanon, Finkelstein accused Israel of using "Nazi language" to describe its "war of annihilation against the Lebanese people." He criticized members of Congress who expressed their support for Israel by declaring, "We are all Israelis now." "I beg to differ," Finkelstein said. "Right now, we are all Hizballah, all of us." He likened Hizballah victories over Israel to Red Army victories over Nazi Germany on the battlefield during World War II.

"Every victory of Hizballah over Israel is also a victory for liberty and a victory for freedom," Finkelstein said.

"Norman Finkelstein professes His Solidarity with Hezbollah," July 29, 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpFmxnwQ9Bw>, (accessed April 1, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Speech by Hamza Yusuf to AMP-Chicago fundraiser, Chicago IL., Feb. 19, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Ben Harris, "The Academic Exile of Norman Finkelstein," *New York Magazine*, December 8, 2007, <http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/41838>, (accessed April 4, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Speech by Hamza Yusuf at fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin, Irvine, Cal., Sept. 9, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> CNN, "Ex Black Panther Convicted of Murder," March 9, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/LAW/03/09/al.amin.verdict/index.html>.

## Pre-9/11 Radical

Prior to September 11, Yusuf expressed radical Islamist sentiments on numerous occasions.

On July 20, 1991, he was a featured speaker at the International Islamic Conference, held at the University of Southern California by the Los Angeles unit of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) – an organization with a long record of ideologically promoting jihad and martyrdom on behalf of Islam.<sup>20</sup>

*The Message International*, an ICNA publication, reported on Yusuf's remarks:

"...In the afternoon session, the focus switched to the always exciting topic of Jihad. Hamza Yusuf gave a provoking speech about why 'Jihad is the only way.'"<sup>21</sup> In the speech, Yusuf did not define "jihad," but referred to a series of places in which violence and armed insurgencies were occurring.

In a speech delivered at the 1993 annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America in Kansas City, Mo., Yusuf praised the idea that Islam could be a "threat to this society:"

"But Allah is calling us to jihad. And I, in all honesty, have to say that if Islam is not a threat to this society, than I am in the wrong religion. I don't believe that. I believe that Islam is in fact a threat to this society. It is not a threat in that we are going to blow up ourselves. This is my disclaimer. We're not going to blow up ourselves. You can rest assured people of Kansas [sic] or wherever we are, we are not going to blow up ourselves. We are not going to blow up ourselves but we are keeping a jihad. And Jihad is struggling in the way of Allah to bring down the warriors of injustice humanity from realizing their true potential which is to be slaves to Allah."<sup>22</sup>

In his ISNA speech, Yusuf depicted American culture as a spreading disease like cancer or AIDS and Islam as the cure:

"To use the biological term, [America] is one of the most virulent kufars [infidels] that has ever attacked the social body you see. And unfortunately, the defense - the Muslims that are really to extend this, are really the immune system of humanity. You see, we are the white cells. We are the leucocytes that come together to stop the destruction of the social body.

"If the immune system breaks down, for instance like in AIDS, then there's no defense system, you see ... What we are dealing with in the United States and really in the entire world, if we want to sum it up in

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<sup>18</sup> Speech by Hamza Yusuf at fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin, Irvine, Cal., Sept. 9, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Speech by Hamza Yusuf to Muslims United for Change event against Malaria, National Harbor, Md., Sept. 5, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> For example, the group has glorified the death of Lawrence Nicholas Thomas (also known as Jibril Abu-Adam), an American citizen killed while fighting alongside terrorists in Kashmir. See *The Message International*, "Actions Speak Louder Than Words," December 1997, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/348.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Islamic Circle of North America, *The Message International*, August 1991, "National" items section, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Hamza Yusuf, speech to Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, Kansas City, Mo., September 1993.

one word, I think the best term for it is nihilism of the self whereby the human being sees himself as something groundless, without meaning.”<sup>23</sup>

In a 1995 videotape, Yusuf railed against Judaism, calling it “racist”:

“...The Jews would have us believe that God had this bias to this small tribe in the middle of the Sinai Desert and all the rest of humanity is just rubbish. I mean that is the basic doctrine of the Jewish religion and that’s why it is a most racist religion, it really is.”<sup>24</sup>

“Yet the Christians say they’re [the Jews] these special people that we have to protect because they’re God’s Chosen People, and yet they rejected God and according to them they wanted him crucified and shouted for it. And they said his death in their gospel, his death is on our hands...and the hands of our progeny.”<sup>25</sup>

In a 1996 speech to an ICNA convention, Yusuf described the United States as “a country that has little to be proud of in its past and less to be proud of in the present.”<sup>26</sup>

Yusuf then went on to contrast his reverence for Islam with his disdain for American democracy:

“I am a citizen of this country not by choice but by birth. I reside in this country not by choice but by conviction in attempting to spread the message of Islam in this country. I became Muslim in part because I did not believe in the false gods of this society whether we call them Jesus or democracy or the Bill of Rights or any other element of this society that is held sacrosanct by the ill-informed peoples that make up this charade of a society... [F]undamentals of Islam are being compromised.”<sup>27</sup>

Convention resolutions are “meaningless Masonic exercises devised by men who desire to engage people in forums that would insure nothing changes,” Yusuf declared. He added that “[T]here should be no voting or debate ... [W]e have no room for ayes or nays.”<sup>28</sup>

### **From Jamil al-Amin to George W. Bush**

On Sept. 9, 2001, Yusuf spoke at a fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin’s legal defense in Irvine, Cal.<sup>29</sup> At the time, al-Amin (who had converted to Islam in the 1970s while serving time for robbery in New York),

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Hamza Yusuf, “Concept of Iman and Ihsan,” UK Islamic Video & Audio Service Centre, 1995.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Schwartz, “The ‘Sufi’ Master of Deceit: Hamza Yusuf Hanson, Family Security Matters, April 11, 2007 <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/244/the-sufi-master-of-deceit-hamza-yusuf-hanson>. (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Remarks by Hamza Yusuf at fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin, Irvine, Cal., Sept. 9, 2001.

was charged with murdering an Atlanta police officer and the attempted murder of a second officer in March 2000.<sup>30</sup>

Yusuf combined praise for al-Amin with a harsh attack on the United States, which he portrayed as a country plagued by anti-Muslim conspiracies:

“This is a courageous man,” Yusuf said of al-Amin. “His courage should instill courage in all of you.”<sup>31</sup> Al-Amin “is a dangerous man. It’s a dangerous man who will speak the truth.”<sup>32</sup> Yusuf suggested that al-Amin was the victim of a government conspiracy to “silence” him.<sup>33</sup> (In March 2002, a jury found al-Amin guilty on 13 counts, including four related to the murder of a Fulton County Sheriff’s deputy and the wounding of a second. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole.<sup>34</sup>) Georgia’s Supreme Court denied Al-Amin’s appeal in 2004.<sup>35</sup>

Citing former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark,<sup>36</sup> Yusuf claimed that Omar Abdel-Rahman, (AKA the “Blind Sheikh”) “was unjustly tried, [he] was condemned against any standards of justice in any legal system on this earth, and now he sits in a jail because it was already a foregone conclusion.” Abdel-Rahman is serving a sentence of life plus 65 years for crimes that include conspiring to murder former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and plotting to bomb the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels, the George Washington Bridge, the New York FBI headquarters, various military installations and the United Nations building.<sup>37</sup>

“In this country there is institutionalized racism,” Yusuf said. “We can’t buy the stale rhetoric of human rights because we have not seen the proof of it.”<sup>38</sup>

He hinted the United States could be headed for catastrophe: “We saw the destruction of Russia after its invasion of Afghanistan. This country [America] unfortunately has a great, a great tribulation coming to it. And much of it is here already, yet people are too ... illiterate to read the writing on the wall.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Al-Amin v. The State*, 278 Ga. 74, Supreme Court of Georgia, June 28, 2004. *See also*; Daniel Pipes, “The Curious Case of Jamil al-Amin,” *The American Spectator*, November-December 2001; <http://www.danielpipes.org/97/the-curious-case-of-jamil-al-amin>. (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Remarks by Hamza Yusuf at fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin, Irvine, Cal., Sept. 9, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Pipes, “Jamil al-Amin goes to Jail,” March 9, 2002, <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2002/03/jamil-al-amin-goes-to-jail> (accessed March 30, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Amin v. State*, 278 Ga. 74, (Ga. 2004). “Al-Amin’s guilt was overwhelmingly established through the eyewitness identification by Deputies Kinchen and English, as well ... as by the vast amount of physical evidence tying defendant to the crimes,” the court ruled. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to take up the case Nov. 15, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Clark founded the International Action Center, a self-described “anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist” organization that opposes virtually all U.S. government investigations of terrorism and military actions abroad. *See* <http://www.iacenter.org/> (accessed April 1, 2011).

<sup>37</sup> *USA vs. Omar Ahmed Ali Abdel Rahman*, judgment, Feb. 23, 1996, [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/1464.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1464.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> . Remarks by Hamza Yusuf at fundraiser for Jamil al-Amin, Irvine, Cal., Sept. 9, 2001.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Two days later came 9/11, when terrorists hijacked airplanes and carried out suicide attacks that killed close to 3,000 Americans. Hamza Yusuf's tone shifted dramatically. Within days, he was denouncing jihadists and warning Muslims not to follow their example.

In a September 16, 2001 interview with the San Jose *Mercury News*, Yusuf said the hijackers were not martyrs, but "mass murderers, pure and simple."<sup>40</sup>

"The fact that there are any Muslims – no matter how statistically insignificant their numbers – who consider these acts to be religious acts is in and of itself shocking. And therefore we as Muslims have to ask the question, 'How is it that our religious leadership has failed to reach these people with the true message of Islam?' Because the acts of these criminals have indicted an entire religion in the hearts and minds of millions. These people are so bankrupt that all they have to offer is destruction."<sup>41</sup>

"Suicide is haram in Islam. It's prohibited, like a mortal sin. And murder is haram. And to kill civilians is murder," Yusuf said. He quoted the Prophet Muhammad as saying that "there are people who kill in the name of Islam and go to hell. And when he was asked why, he said, 'Because they weren't fighting truly for the sake of God.'"<sup>42</sup>

Yusuf added that: "If there are any martyrs in this affair [9/11] it would certainly be those brave firefighters and police that went in there to save human lives and in that process lost their own."<sup>43</sup>

Yusuf said that upon hearing about the 9/11 attacks, "his first response was to pray that Muslims weren't involved," the *Wall Street Journal* reported.<sup>44</sup> When he realized that Muslims were responsible, Yusuf said he became aware of the "deep rage in parts of the Muslim community."<sup>45</sup>

Yusuf's record of radical speech was quickly forgotten, and he was invited to the White House to meet with President Bush.

Ironically, as Yusuf was meeting with Bush, FBI agents arrived at his home in Northern California to question him about remarks he made at the Jamil al-Amin fundraiser 11 days earlier.

"He's not home," Yusuf's wife told them. "He's with the president." The agents thought she was joking. But her husband was at the White House that day, "the only Muslim in a group of religious leaders invited to pray with President Bush, sing 'God Bless America' and endorse the president's plan for military action," the *Washington Post* reported.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Scheinin, "American scholar declares: Terrorists are mass murderers, not martyrs," San Jose *Mercury News*, Sept. 16, 2001, found at <http://www.uga.edu/islam/hamza.html> (accessed Jan. 14, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Kaufman, "Islamerican: Meet Hamza Yusuf, 'Rock Star' of a Leader Among U.S. Muslims," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 15, 2002, <http://www.paklinks.com/gs/religion-and-scripture/42913-humza-yusuf-rock-star-for-new-muslim-generation.html> (accessed April 12, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Hanna Rosin and John Mintz, "Muslim Leaders Struggle With Mixed messages," *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 2001.

“Hate knows no religion. Hate knows no country,” Yusuf said outside the White House. “Islam was hijacked on that September 11, 2001, on that plane as an innocent victim.”<sup>47</sup>

Yusuf attended the presidential address on Sept. 20, 2001, sitting near Laura Bush.<sup>48</sup>

In the aftermath of 9/11, Yusuf sounded nothing like the strident radical of the past decade. He is “fast becoming a world figure as Islam’s most able theological critic of the suicide hijacking,” the *Guardian* commented in October 2001.<sup>49</sup>

“Many Muslims seem to be in deep denial about what has happened,” Yusuf said. “They are coming up with different conspiracy theories and don’t entertain the real possibility that it was indeed Muslims who did this. Yet we do have people within our ranks who have reached that level of hatred and misguidance.”<sup>50</sup>

Yusuf’s “hardline attitude to extremists in Britain would be unsayable for any mainstream politician keen to retain any respectability,” the *Guardian* opined.<sup>51</sup> “I would say to them that if they are going to rant and rave about the West, they should emigrate to a Muslim country,” Yusuf told the British newspaper.<sup>52</sup>

“Many people in the West do not realize how oppressive some Muslim states are – both for men and for women,” he said. “I would rather live as a Muslim in the West than in most of the Muslim countries, because I think the way Muslims are allowed to live in the west is closer to the Muslim way. A lot of Muslim immigrants feel the same way, which is why they are here.”<sup>53</sup>

Yusuf expressed regret for calling Judaism “racist,” saying that “Anti-Semitism, anti-anything does not reflect my core values.” He urged people to “see my spiritual growth, as a person, as a religious scholar.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Hamza Yusuf Post- 9/11: Newborn Moderate or Closet Radical?**

As 9/11 became a more distant memory, Yusuf has given mixed signals about his interest in challenging radical Islam.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Kaufman, “Islamerican: Meet Hamza Yusuf, ‘Rock Star’ of a Leader Among U.S. Muslims,” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 15, 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Jack O’Sullivan, “If you hate the west, emigrate to a Muslim country,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 8, 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/08/religion.uk>.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Hanna Rosin and John Mintz, “Muslim Leaders Struggle With Mixed messages,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 2001; <http://www.hamline.edu/apakabar/basisdata/2001/10/02/0035.html> (accessed April 12, 2011).

At times, he has sounded a moderate tone. Yusuf was one of nine imams who appeared in a July 2010 anti-terrorism video released by the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) explaining that religiously motivated violence is wrong and contradicts the teachings of Islam:

“This religion is not our property. This religion we have no right to detract, to pollute, to sully the good name of Islam and the good name of our prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam. We are obliged to honor that name. If you go by the name Muslim, that is a very exalted status, to be one who submits to the will of God. And it’s important not to arrogate to oneself the idea that somehow you know what the will of God is.”<sup>55</sup>

In a *New York Times* story, reporter Laurie Goodstein wrote that “The video is one indication that American Muslim leaders are increasingly engaging the war of ideas being waged within Islam.”<sup>56</sup> Rep. Jane Harman (D-Cal.), then chairwoman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment, praised the film as part of an effort to “protect [Islam] from debasement by terror groups” along with “the false narrative of extremists.”<sup>57</sup>

On other occasions, however, Yusuf has sounded an angry tone and spoken dismissively of the concept that Muslims should speak out against co-religionists who engage in violence or depict the U.S. government as “hostile” to Islam. As we will see below, he has stridently attacked the way Washington has conducted the war on terrorism, claiming it tramples civil liberties, and suggesting the United States (and democratic allies like Israel) are guilty of terrorism and war crimes.

### **Whitewashing Radical Islam, Blaming America First**

In a Feb. 19, 2011 speech at a fundraiser for the American Muslims for Palestine’s Chicago chapter, the speakers included Yusuf and Ahmet Dogan, father of Furkan Dogan. Furkan was killed in the May 31, 2010 clash with Israeli troops as they boarded the Mavi Marmara, a ship that attempted to violate the Israeli blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza.<sup>58</sup>

The vessel was part of a flotilla put together by the Turkey-based charity IHH, which has a warm relationship with Hamas.<sup>59</sup> Ismail Haniyeh, president of Hamas-ruled Gaza, praised a visiting IHH

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<sup>55</sup> YouTube video, “Injustice Cannot Defeat Injustice,” Muslim Public Affairs Council, July 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lofpsHOosE>, (accessed Jan. 13, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Laurie Goodstein, “American Muslims Make Video To Rebut Militants,” *New York Times*, July 31, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/01/us/01imams.html> (accessed March 30, 2011).

<sup>57</sup> Rep. Jane Harman, press release, “Harman Applauds Muslim Scholars’ Video Countering Online Terror Magazine,” July 15, 2010, <http://harman.house.gov/2010/07/harman-applauds-muslim-scholars-video-countering-online-terror-magazine.shtml> (accessed Jan. 13, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> “Haniyeh thanks Palestine convoy,” <http://www.ihh.org.tr/12692/en> (accessed March 22, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* For more on Hamas’ relationship with IHH, see, IHH Website, ‘Erdogan has Become Our Voice,’ <http://www.ihh.org.tr/12701/en/> (accessed April 1, 2011).

delegation, telling them “All Palestinians respect you” and terming its help “a blessing from Allah.”<sup>60</sup> Hamas has been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. government.<sup>61</sup>

In his speech, Yusuf praised Furkan Dogan for dying aboard the IHH vessel in a clash with Israeli commandos. “Allah wanted Shehadah [martyrdom] for him,” Yusuf said, calling this “an amazing thing in and of itself.”<sup>62</sup> Yusuf vowed that he “would never forget as long as I live” the sacrifice made by Furkan Dogan.<sup>63</sup>

“Don’t waste your lives,” Yusuf said. “By all standards, [Furkan] had a bright future in front of him. But he chose to stand by oppressed people.”<sup>64</sup>

Yusuf accused unspecified Americans of “teaching the Israelis” about “how to cover their war crimes in Gaza.”<sup>65</sup> Apparently referring to the Obama Administration, he said that the United States has “an administration that is very adept” at hiding war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>66</sup>

In his AMP speech, Yusuf depicted academic Norman Finkelstein as a martyr who has seen his career destroyed for telling the truth.<sup>67</sup> He cited Finkelstein as someone who has “destroy[ed] their careers, because truth is more important than their career.”<sup>68</sup> Finkelstein likens Israelis to Nazis.<sup>69</sup> In a July 2006 speech, he referred to Israelis as “murderers” and “marauders” and endorsed the terrorist organization Hizballah during its war with Israel.<sup>70</sup> “Every victory by Hizballah over Israel is also a victory for liberty and a victory for freedom,” he said.<sup>71</sup>

In Yusuf’s view, excessive levels of defense spending are being “justified by the ‘war on terror,’” even though “more people died in the United States last year from dog bites than died from terrorist attacks.”<sup>72</sup>

Yusuf suggests that much of the homegrown terrorism problem in the United States results from “lone nut case[s]” and “individuals acting out.”<sup>73</sup> Instead of treating these attacks as a matter of “criminality” (Yusuf’s preference), he claims that the political right is attempting to lump together “small groups of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> The National Counterterrorism Center, Counterterrorism Calendar 2011, <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/hamas.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Speech by Hamza Yusuf to AMP-Chicago fundraiser, Chicago IL., Feb. 19, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Norman Finkelstein professes His Solidarity with Hezbollah,” July 29, 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpFmxnwQ9Bw> (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Hamza Yusuf, “Riz Khan Show,” Al-Jazeera Television (English), March 11, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkzDUJHEw8Q> (accessed April 1, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

disenfranchised, very angry, hateful people” and “the greater Islamic community.” He called this “unjust” and “deeply troubling.”<sup>74</sup>

On occasion, Yusuf denounces some forms of radical Islam in general terms but refuses to condemn specific jihadist acts or terrorist organizations by name.

“We have versions of Islam out there that are deeply troubling, that are very dangerous,” Yusuf said following the November 2009 Fort Hood massacre,<sup>75</sup> in which Nidal Hasan, an American jihadist, is accused of murdering 13 people.<sup>76</sup> “Some of them have been brought to these shores. If people want to adhere to these things, they need to go to other places.”<sup>77</sup>

But Yusuf rejected the very premise that Muslims should denounce an attack carried out in the name of Islam. “The fact that I must have to apologize or say anything about Fort Hood as an American Muslim” shows that Muslim enfranchisement hasn’t arrived yet in the United States, Yusuf said. He asserted that when Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli medical doctor, massacred 29 Muslims in Hebron in February 1994, no one claimed that Goldstein represented Judaism or that Jews needed to explain themselves.<sup>78</sup>

Mainstream American Jewish organizations condemned Goldstein’s crime in clear, unequivocal terms<sup>79</sup> – which contrasts with his own defensive reaction when asked about Fort Hood. In contrast to Yusuf, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) condemned the massacre. ISNA said the killer was mentally unstable or “was motivated by a perverted ideology for which there could be no justification.”<sup>80</sup>

At times Yusuf appears conflicted about what kind of country the United States is. His speeches include frequent references to the innate goodness of the American people and benefits of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. But when it comes to America’s role in the world - and the war against jihadist terror in particular - Yusuf on multiple occasions has portrayed the United States as a malevolent force.

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Muslims & critics challenged,” Louisville *Courier-Journal.com* blog, November 20, 2009, <http://www.courier-journal.com/blogs/faith/2009/11/muslims-critics-challenged.html>, (accessed, April 12, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> Hasan has not been formally charged. Hearings have been held to determine whether he should face a court martial. See “Hasan’s Attorney Wants New Post Commander To Decide On Court-Martial,” KWTX TV, Waco, Tx. [http://www.kwtx.com/home/headlines/Hasans\\_Atorney\\_Wants\\_New\\_Post\\_Commander\\_To\\_Decide\\_On\\_Court-Martial\\_118934759.html](http://www.kwtx.com/home/headlines/Hasans_Atorney_Wants_New_Post_Commander_To_Decide_On_Court-Martial_118934759.html), March 30, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> “Muslims & critics challenged,” Louisville *Courier-Journal.com* blog, November 20, 2009, <http://www.courier-journal.com/blogs/faith/2009/11/muslims-critics-challenged.html>, (accessed, April 4, 2011).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> See Martin Peretz, “Now He Tells Us,” *The New Republic*, March 28, 1994, <http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/now-he-tells-us>. (accessed April 1, 2011.)

<sup>80</sup> See “ISNA Condemns Attacks on Fort Hood Soldiers & Expresses Condolences to the Victims & Their Families,” Nov. 5, 2009, <http://www.isna.net/articles/News/ISNA-Condemns-Attacks-on-Fort-Hood-Soldiers-and-Expresses-Condolences-to-the-Victims-and-T.aspx>, (accessed March 8, 2011); “CAIR Video: Muslims Condemn Fort Hood Shooting, Urge Calm and Unity,” Nov. 6, 2009, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bu\\_UFUFb\\_CM&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bu_UFUFb_CM&NR=1), (accessed March 8, 2011); “MPAC Rejects Radical Imam’s Praise for Fort Hood Shooter,” Nov. 29, 2009, <http://www.mpac.org/press/press-releases/mpac-rejects-radical-imams-praise-for-fort-hood-shooter.php>, (accessed March 8, 2011).

In a speech to the Islamic Circle of North America, Yusuf warned the United States was headed for a war with Islam - a conflict America was likely to lose. U.S. policies were on a collision course with Iran and Pakistan, he said, and this could lead to a larger war with Islam.<sup>81</sup>

“This country cannot win a war with Islam - I swear to God,” Yusuf says. “It must be stopped.” U.S. foreign policy is “the greatest recruiting tool for al-Qaida.”<sup>82</sup>

Pointing to the existence of books with titles like “Militant Islam Has Come to America,” Yusuf suggested that Islam would not be a problem if the United States had not gone to the Muslim world and mistreated people.<sup>83</sup>

“Don’t steal people’s resources,” Yusuf added in suggesting a way for the West to placate Muslims. “But if you go out and plunder people,” it should not be a surprise that they are angry, he said.<sup>84</sup>

In another public appearance, Yusuf questioned the premise that the American people do not want to go to war. He then proceeded to suggest that the opposite is true - that American culture “revels in” war and violence.<sup>85</sup>

Yusuf disparaged television journalist Tom Brokaw’s book *The Greatest Generation*, a tribute to the American soldiers who won World War II (Yusuf mistakenly refers to it as “The Great Generation”). “The Great Generation bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki with nuclear weapons. The Great Generation is guilty of war crimes against huge civilian populations in Germany – Hamburg, Dresden. We don’t like to think about that, because collectively, ‘all of the Germans were guilty.’ We demonized them.”<sup>86</sup>

America is “a society that relishes war,” Yusuf said. The abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison “is a direct result” of the fact that too many American children grow up watching violent television programs and movies. “We are Abu Ghraib, and that is part of us,” Yusuf said.<sup>87</sup>

“All of the despicable qualities we hate about ourselves, we project upon others,” he added. “So, we can project all of that darkness onto the other, to treat them despicably.” This “enables us to carpet bomb and demonize” our Muslim adversaries on the battlefield.<sup>88</sup>

“We can’t go to war without doing that to other people. It’s called ‘Guantanamoizing your enemy,’ ” Yusuf said. It stems from a view that “terrorists are subhuman” and “have no rights. We’re ‘eliminating evil.’ ”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Hamza Yusuf, YouTube Video, “Changing the Tide,” speech delivered to Islamic Circle of North America-New Jersey symposium, March 18, 2006, <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7175238713795693949>, (accessed Jan. 14, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> “Hamza Yusuf and Chris Hedges: “Does God Love War?”, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-yacoQ0gFM&feature=related>, Aug. 12, 2006 (accessed Feb. 15, 2010).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

All of these efforts to dehumanize the enemy enable us “to degrade, cover them with feces, hit them with sticks,” Yusuf said.<sup>90</sup>

He denounced the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay naval base and demanded that it be shut down. “Guantanamo Bay is a sin against the history of this country,” Yusuf said. “There is no room in the American creed of human dignity for torture.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*