



U.S. Department of Justice

Barbara L. McQuade
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan

***Suite 2001
211 West Fort Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277***

**For Immediate Release:
Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758**

Jan 25, 2010

Event: Indictment

Defendant: Mohamad Mustapha Ali Masfaka

HOLY LAND FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVE ARRESTED

United States Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today that Mohamad Mustapha Ali Masfaka, a 47 year old native of Syria, was arrested by U.S. Customs and Border Protection when he attempted to enter the United States from Canada via the Ambassador Bridge. Mr. Masfaka made his initial appearance in federal court in Detroit on an Indictment charging him with Attempted Naturalization Fraud, False Statements, and Perjury.

Joining in the announcement was Brian Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Office of Investigations for Ohio and Michigan and Andrew Arena, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Detroit Division.

The Indictment charges Mohamad Masfaka with lying to federal officials about his involvement with the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), an organization that was designated by the U.S. Department of Treasury on December 4, 2001, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. HLF was created in 1988 as a non-profit tax exempt charitable organization purportedly to assist needy individuals in the West Bank and Gaza. In addition to

its main office in Richardson, Texas, HLF maintained offices in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and in other cities throughout the United States, including Detroit, Michigan. On November 24, 2008, a federal jury in Dallas, Texas convicted the HLF and five of its employees of 21 charges, including providing millions of dollars in material support to the designated terrorist organization, Hamas. Masfaka's Indictment alleges that he was employed by HLF in 1997 and 1998 and ran the HLF operations in the Detroit area to include organizing and participating in fund raising events for the HLF. The Indictment charges Masfaka with lying to both the FBI and U.S. immigration officials about his involvement with the HLF while the FBI was investigating that organization on criminal terrorism charges and in an attempt to gain U.S. citizenship. If convicted, Masfaka faces up to 23 years imprisonment and \$750,000 in fines.

"The arrest puts in motion the criminal prosecution and the process of removing from the United States an alien with known ties to a Treasury Department Designated Terrorist Organization. This individual went to great lengths to avoid apprehension and will now face justice," said ICE Special Agent In Charge Brian Moskowitz.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The prosecution is being handled by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark J. Jebson and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth R. Chadwell.