



**United States Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Michigan**

**Barbara L. McQuade
United States Attorney**

PRESS RELEASE

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**Contact: Gina Balaya - (313) 226-9758
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HOLY LAND FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVE SENTENCED

United States Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today that Mohamad Mustapha Ali Masfaka, a 47 year old native of Syria, was sentenced today in federal court in Detroit to 12 months and a day in prison, following his guilty plea on October 14, 2010 to Making False Statements Under Oath in Naturalization Proceedings, a 5 year felony. Masfaka was arrested on January 22, 2010 by U.S. Customs and Border Protection when he attempted to enter the United States from Canada via the Ambassador Bridge. The sentence was handed down by United States District Judge Paul D. Borman. In addition to the sentence of imprisonment, Judge Borman also ordered that Mr. Masfaka be deported from the United States to Syria.

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

The Indictment charged Mohamad Masfaka, also known as Abu Rateb, who is a singer throughout the Middle East, 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. Masfaka admitted during his guilty plea proceeding to lying to U.S. immigration officials about his involvement with the HLF in an attempt to gain U.S. citizenship in 2002 and 2004.

Ms. McQuade commended the excellent work of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their lengthy, complex and thorough investigation leading to the successful prosecution of Mohamad Masfaka. The prosecution was handled by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark J. Jebson and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth R. Chadwell.

