An IPT Investigative Report:

Ahmed Rehab
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAIR-CHICAGO

www.investigativeproject.org
Introduction

Ahmed Rehab currently serves as both CAIR-Chicago's executive director and CAIR's national strategic communications director. 1 Rehab joined CAIR-Chicago in 2004 and became the chapter's executive director mid-2006. 2 Rehab has staunchly defended a charity found guilty of funneling money to Hamas, a Hamas operative, a fundraiser for a Hamas-linked group, and his own organization from its founding officials' ties to a U.S. Hamas support network. He has also failed to wholly condemn Hamas when questioned by the media.

Though CAIR has pledged to combat extremist voices that reinterpret Islamic principles to promote violence, 3 Rehab has written off the threat of some extremist groups that do just this, focusing instead on their limited reach and disapproval by the Muslim community. He has also implied that the U.S. government is responsible for radicalizing individuals through the use of informants.

Before his time with CAIR, Rehab listed an Islamist thinker who inspired Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida's ideology as one of his “favorites.”

The Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS)

Notably, Rehab has called Hamas “part of the problem, not the solution.” 4

the blowing up of Tel Aviv pizzerias or cafes.”

The U.S. government rejects the argument that Hamas’ social wing should be considered separate from its violent actions. A material support statute, recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 6-3 opinion, made it illegal to send support to any part of a terrorist organization, including its social wing. In arguments before the court, Justice Antonin Scalia explained the theory behind the legislation, saying that aid given to any part of a terrorist group legitimizes the entire organization. “Hamas, for example, gained support among Palestinians by activities that are perfectly lawful, perhaps running hospitals,” said Scalia.

Rehab’s reluctance to criticize Hamas was just as apparent in July 2007, when he appeared on a panel on PBS with Zuhdi Jasser, president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy. Jasser asked Rehab to condemn Hamas, and Rehab responded, “Are you asking me if I condemn terrorism or if I condemn Hamas?” Jasser clarified by asking if Rehab condemned groups that “use terrorism as an action.” In the ensuing cross-talk, Rehab said, “Then you would condemn the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) and the Israeli army as well…”

In 2008, the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, a U.S. charity, and five of its officials were convicted of funneling money to Hamas through zakat (charity) committees. Before the convictions, Rehab delegitimized the government’s case against HLF, calling it “particularly worrisome because of its dubious legal arguments.” Rehab called the government’s argument that by providing support to Hamas’ social wing, HLF was supporting Hamas’ military wing “ludicrous.” The government’s evidence, said Rehab, “ranged from the mention of the word ‘Hamas’ by the defendants to textbook guilt by association.”

Rehab attended a town hall meeting held by supporters

---

Rehab criticized the ISP’s reasons for revoking Mustapha’s position, calling the ISP’s decision following an IPT report unveiling Mustapha’s connections, the “result of some notorious, dubious individual on the Internet.”22 In defense of Mustapha, Rehab talked about the imam’s “integrity” and his will to “serve his country and his community.”23 Rehab did not mention the imam’s employment and service with two Hamas-supporting organizations in the United States as laid out in HLF exhibits and Mustapha’s own words.24

One HLF exhibit even showed Mustapha singing militaristic lyrics. Mustapha sang, “O mother, Hamas for jihad. Over mosques’ loudspeakers with freedom. Every day it resists with stones and the dagger. Tomorrow, with God’s help, it will be with a machine gun and a rifle.”25

---

Muhammad Salah and Abdelhaleem al-Ashqar

Rehab has also accused the government of “political persecution” of Muhammad Salah, a known Hamas operative. 26

Muhammad Salah, Rehab said during a July 2007 town hall, is “not a specially designated terrorist,” but “a decent individual” and a “man we hold dear.” 27

Salah had been previously designated by the U.S. as a Specially Designated Terrorist (SDT) in 1995. 28 Rehab also remarked that Salah came to the United States “searching for justice and yearning for dignity.” 29

In January 1993, Salah was arrested in Gaza by Israeli authorities for his activities with Hamas. 30 Salah pleaded guilty in an Israeli military court in 1995 to participating in Hamas affairs. Salah admitted that he was a member of Hamas from 1988 until his arrest, that he had acted as an envoy for Hamas members outside of Gaza and that he was the head of military operations in the West Bank at the request of Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook. 31 Salah was sentenced to five years in prison; Israel released him in 1997 and allowed him to return to the United States. 32

On July 11th, several days before Rehab’s comments at the town hall, Salah was found guilty by an Illinois court on one count of obstruction of justice for submitting false and misleading statements through his lawyers to the U.S. District Court, including saying that he had “never provided or delivered funds for the purpose of supporting Hamas.” 33

Rehab protested the government’s use of statements Salah made to Israeli authorities after his 1993 arrest, because the Israelis “systematically tortured” Salah to get him to admit to supporting Hamas. 34

“The same policies that drove him out of his home followed him to his adopted homeland,” Rehab said in July 2007. 35 Rehab also called Salah “only guilty of being a bold Palestinian activist.” 36 “Mr. Muhammad Salah is neither a terrorist nor a criminal for having supplied charitable aid to the most vulnerable factions of his occupied and war-ravaged country of origin, Palestine.”

-Ahmed Rehab

neither a terrorist nor a criminal for having supplied charitable aid to the most vulnerable factions of his occupied and war-ravaged country of origin, Palestine,” wrote Rehab in February 2007 opinion piece.  

Rehab told the Chicago Tribune “the feeling is this [Salah’s prosecution] could happen to anyone.” He said the community saw Salah as someone “caught in a political drama at a time when it’s difficult to be a Palestinian or a Muslim.”

In a statement issued by CAIR-Chicago responding to Salah’s sentencing, Rehab echoed many of his previous statements. The release also cited CAIR-Chicago’s Civil Rights Coordinator Christina Abraham saying that Salah’s case “is of concern to every person who cares for the stated principles of this nation.”

Similarly, Rehab stood behind Abdelhaleem Al-Ashqar, who was found guilty of obstruction of justice and criminal contempt for refusing to provide immunized testimony before a federal grand jury investigating a Hamas-related case. Specifically, Ashqar refused to answer questions including whether he personally was a member of Hamas. He was sentenced to 11 years in prison. Ashqar had been previously indicted, along with Salah, on racketeering charges related to Hamas. Both were acquitted of the racketeering charges against them.

Rehab was quoted in a CAIR press release expressing dismay that Ashqar’s sentence “apparently ignores Dr. Ashqar’s acquittal on the most serious charges and instead reflects a prison term that could only have been imposed if he had actually been convicted of those charges.”

In October 2009, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Ashqar’s sentence, finding the district judge appropriately applied an enhancement due to the terrorist nature of the investigation.

Defense of CAIR-National

CAIR-National was named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation case, though an appeals court later ruled that the government should not have released the list publically.

Prosecution exhibits in the HLF trial identified CAIR as a part of the Palestine Committee, the umbrella organization created by the Muslim Brotherhood meant to serve as the Hamas support network in America.


FBI transcripts placed two of CAIR’s founders – Omar Ahmad and Nihad Awad – at a 1993 meeting of the Palestine Committee in Philadelphia. During the meeting, Ahmad and Awad discussed how to make the Hamas viewpoint more popular in the United States. 48 The Philadelphia meeting “has no bearing on CAIR,” Rehab has said, because CAIR wasn’t founded until 1994, almost a year after the meeting. 49

However, FBI case agent Lara Burns testified during the 2008 HLF trial that CAIR’s creation was a result of planning that occurred during the Philadelphia meeting. 50

Additionally, Rehab said “Nihad Awad and Omar Ahmad have never been members of or tied to Hamas.” 51

Evidence submitted in the HLF trial indicates otherwise. Both Nihad Awad and Omar Ahmad (aka Omar Yehya) appeared on a Palestine Committee phone list. 52

Omar Ahmad was listed on two different pages in the phonebook of Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook. 53

In addition, it was Ahmed who called the Philadelphia meeting to order, saying it was convened by the Palestine Committee. 54

In 2007 Rehab claimed that, “Neither CAIR chapters nor the national office solicits or accepts money from any foreign government.” 55

Contrary to Rehab’s comment, CAIR had solicited funds from foreign governments just the year before. In 2006, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister of Finance and Industry and Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, endorsed a proposal to build a CAIR property in the United States. 56

Paul Findley, who reportedly headed CAIR’s delegation to a meeting between Hamdan and CAIR, said he briefed Sheikh Hamdan on CAIR’s strategic plan to correct the image of Islam and Muslims among the American public. Nihad Awad said CAIR values highly the stances of Sheikh Hamdan and Al Maktoum Charity Foundation for supporting its plans to promote dialogue. 57

A set of State Department cables received through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request confirm this trip and CAIR’s solicitation to the UAE deputy ruler. 58
FOIA documents show CAIR officials also visited Saudi Arabia to raise funds in June 2006. The State Department cables noted that one “reason for the group’s current visit to the KSA [Saudi Arabia] was to solicit $50 million in both governmental and non-governmental contributions.”

### The Muslim Brotherhood

Before his time with CAIR, Rehab listed some of his favorite personalities and thinkers online as a DePaul University graduate student in the 1990s. Among them were Muslim Brotherhood Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb. Qutb’s writings inspired today’s al-Qaeda. Qutb believed that humans have the choice of either submission to Islam or jahiliyya, a condition of unbelief. For the Egyptian thinker, this also translated into the belief that Muslims have the obligation to take up arms against non-believers.

Qutb was also well-known for his disenchantment with the West, which developed during the late 1940s. “Milestones,” one of Qutb’s well known writings, portrayed the United States as an oppressor engaged in an ongoing struggle against Muslims. It emphasized that Muslims should fight the enemy, the United States.

Rehab also listed Sayyid Qutb’s brother, Muhammad Qutb, as one of his favorite thinkers. Osama bin Laden studied under Muhammad Qutb while in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden is said to have become more militaristic in his Islamist views during this period of his studies.

### Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT)

Ahmed Rehab has claimed that CAIR is working towards “weeding out any extremist voices” on a “daily basis.” To his credit, Rehab has condemned certain extremist voices such as the radical Yemeni cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and al-Qaeda No.2 Ayman al-Zawahiri. However, in other cases, Rehab has minimized the attention focused on radical pockets in Islamist circles.

In the summer of 2009, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), a group dedicated to the establishment of an international Islamic state, gathered for a Chicago conference. Rehab responded to news of the event on Fox Chicago, emphasizing that, “they remain on the margins of the community.”

“As a matter of fact,” he said, “I don’t believe they could pass out their literature in any of these

---

mosques. They have to pass them outside.”

When the Fox anchor mentioned that HuT was once tied to both the mastermind behind 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and top al-Qaida official, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Rehab responded that “in fairness to them [HuT], both of these terrorists that you mentioned were not involved with this organization when they committed their acts of terror. They had left the organization.”

Rehab added that “there is no evidence to suggest that they [HuT] are in any way related to terrorism or extremism of that sort.” Similarly, Rehab was quoted in the Chicago Tribune saying that CAIR doesn’t need to condemn the group, it just shouldn’t support them. “I can not claim that there is any danger to the group. As far as I’m concerned, they’re a non-violent group. That’s the litmus test of whether we should issue something.”

Yet, HuT has advocated for violence in the past. Take, for example, HuT religious leaders’ 2007 call for Australian Muslims to kill all those who stand in the way of their goal of establishing a Khilafah (Islamic super-state).

Rehab was also quoted in the South Town Star, saying, “They’re [HuT] not secretive; they’re not underground. To me that should be a cause for comfort rather than fear.”

Revolution Muslim

In April 2010, Rehab’s reaction to a threat made by the radical group Revolution Muslim to the creators of South Park for depicting the Prophet Muhammad implied that the group might be a set-up.

“Whether true Muslims or agent provocateurs,” wrote Rehab in a piece published in The Chicago Tribune, “They are five community outcasts.” According to the CAIR-Chicago official, Revolution Muslim’s “mysterious leader, born Joseph Cohen, is an American Jew who converted to Islam in 2000 after living in Israel and attending an orthodox rabbinical school there.” Most suspect the group [Revolution Muslim] is fraudulent,” Rehab added.

CAIR’s Ibrahim Hooper framed the CAIR viewpoint more directly. “In fact, most Muslims suspect they [Revolution Muslim] were set up only to make Muslims look bad,” Hooper said.

Later that year, in October 2010, another Revolution Muslim leader named Zachary Chesser (aka Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee) pleaded guilty to threatening the South Park creators, in addition to providing material

---

support to the Somali Islamist terror group al-Shabaab and soliciting violent jihadists to desensitize law enforcement. In November 2010, the group called on Muslims to kill British parliamentarians who voted for the Iraq War.

### The “Bronx Four” Plot

Although Rehab condemned the “The Bronx Four” plot to destroy targets in New York, he implied that the U.S. government radicalized the individuals. “[I]t turns out that the radicalization ‘tipping factor,’ if you will, was none other than a paid government agent-provocateur,” said Rehab.

The “Bronx Four,” James Cromitie, David Williams, Onta Williams and LaGuerre Payen, were arrested in May 2009 and indicted in June on charges they plotted to attack two targets in New York: a synagogue and the New York Air National Guard Base in Newburgh. In October 2010, all of the defendants were convicted on seven counts related to the plot, including attempting to use weapons of mass destruction, attempt to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles and conspiracy to kill officers of the United States.

---


### September 2010 FBI Raids

In late September 2010, the FBI raided the homes of several individuals in Illinois and Minnesota. Minneapolis FBI spokesman Steve Warfield explained that the warrants sought “evidence relating to activities concerning the material support of terrorism.”

Search warrants sought links to the Colombian terrorist group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Lebanese Hizballah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)—groups that have proved themselves violent.

FARC, which is committed to the violent overthrow of the democratically elected government of Colombia, has committed numerous terrorist acts in 2009 and 2010. In September 2010, FARC set off a bomb outside of the Colombian intelligence agency’s offices, wounding 12 people. Also in September, five Colombian police officers were killed by a suspected FARC roadside bomb. FARC set off a car bomb...
outside of a Colombian radio station in August 2010 which wounded nine people. In November 2009, six died when FARC guerillas opened fire on a civilian bus after the driver refused to stop. FARC, in addition to kidnapping U.S. nationals, has directed violent actions towards Americans, such as the bombing of popular restaurants in Bogota frequented by U.S. nationals.

The PFLP is also known for its attacks which have killed innocent civilians. As a testament to Hizballah’s continued commitment to the use of violence, in November 2010, the group promised that blood would be spilled if a United Nations tribunal found Hizballah members guilty in the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Rehab participated in a Sept. 27 rally at the FBI’s Chicago headquarters. A CAIR-Chicago press release promoting the rally said the raids were a “blatant attempt to intimidate those who organize in opposition to U.S. wars.” The release read, “Join CAIR-Chicago at the FBI Headquarters to protest recent FBI raids of the homes of peaceful, anti-war activists.”

In Chicago, the FBI raided the home of Hatem Abudayyeh, director of the Arab American Action Network (AAAN). Rehab called the investigation into the AAAN “a waste of taxpayer dollars” and called Abudayyeh “a longtime, respected leader in the community.”

“It is unthinkable that he would have any connections to terrorism.” Rehab added, “This is a new low... This is an example of FBI overreach when it comes to activism or commentary on the (Middle East) conflict.”

On Sept. 28, CAIR-Chicago sent out a press release responding to the raids. It noted that Ahmed Rehab and CAIR-Chicago staff attorney were present at the raids.

---

90. “Hezbollah warns Hariri indictment would be ’explosive,’” Agence France Presse, November 2, 2010, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g1_EcgsG_9zmXiDxSf6_PBORtY4w/docId=CNG.f3dab386228eefc5765738b9b4c1d64.3a1 (Accessed November 10, 2010).
protest in front of the FBI headquarters. It also issued a statement which read in part:

“The FBI has overstepped its bounds in targeting individuals based on their commitment to peacefully challenge U.S. policies in Palestine and Colombia.”

Anti-Semitism

R ehab has been an outspoken critic of anti-Semitism,95 but his reaction to signs with the Star of David twisted into a swastika used during a 2009 rally calls his commitment to battling it into question. Clearly, the signs in question equated the religion of Judaism with Nazism. Another banner at the same rally alleged that Jews were responsible for 9/11.96

Rehab responded to concerns about the sings dismissively. “As hundreds of innocent human lives are crushed in full view of the world by a belligerent Israeli government,” said Rehab, “I find it appalling that some on the pro-Israeli side are better concerned with cardboard paper.”97

Additionally, a webpage from his time as a graduate student at DePaul University stains his record. In the piece posted online, Rehab defended David Irving, who authored a book minimizing the death toll of the Holocaust. Rehab called Holocaust history “the established opinions of the able Jewish historians.”

“If Jewish historians have the right to research the history of the Holocaust and dictate it for schools and Universities, why can’t other historians do the same even if their findings are different?” Rehab asked.98

Irving used “educated methods, a researched content and objective arguments,” to write his book, Rehab said. Curiously, at the end of his article Rehab noted, “The point of this article is not to justify the validity of Irving’s book, for I, myself, have never read it before...” Rather, Rehab said, he hoped to show that the American media reacts different to anti-Semitism than anti-Islamic pieces, comparing the U.S. media’s reaction to Irving’s work to Salman Rushdie’s “The Satanic Verses.”99

Talking about American journalist Charlie Rose’s condemnation of Irving’s work, Rehab said that “Rose confirmed the Jewish control over the media.” Rehab made the comment in response to guest Christopher Hitchens saying he wasn’t convinced by Irving’s conclusions when asked by Rose.100