



# THE INVESTIGATIVE PROJECT ON TERRORISM

## ESAM OMEISH



*Esam Omeish visited the White House 3 times. He met twice with Paul Monteiro, Associate Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement on March 9, 2011 and March 30, 2012. Omeish met with Karen Richardson, Associate Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement in April 15, 2011.*

### ***Biography***

Esam Omeish currently serves as director of the Libyan Emergency Taskforce.<sup>1</sup> He served as president of the Muslim American Society (MAS) from 2004-2008.<sup>2</sup> MAS was founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, an 80-year-old Egyptian religious/political movement that seeks to make Islamic law, or Shariah, the controlling basis for society.<sup>3</sup> As a college student, Omeish was president of the Muslim Students Association at Georgetown University.<sup>4</sup> Like MAS, the student group was founded by Muslim Brotherhood members in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Omeish also formerly served on the board of directors of the radical Dar al-Hijrah mosque in Fairfax, Va.<sup>6</sup> The mosque has had numerous links to terrorists and Islamist

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<sup>1</sup> "Democracy in Libya Threatened by Insurgents and al-Qaeda," September 13, 2012, C-Span <http://www.c-span.org/Events/Democracy-in-Libya-Threatened-by-Insurgents-and-al-Qaeda/10737434080/> (Accessed September 19, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> MAS Form 990, 2004-2008

<sup>3</sup> IPT MAS Profile, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/85.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> "Who Is: Esam Omeish?" Esam Omeish bio from MAS Columbus website, <http://www.mas-columbus.org/masc/> (Accessed January 26, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> IPT MSA Profile, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/84.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Dar al-Hijrah Board of Directors, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060427010647/http://www.hijrah.org/bod.html>

radicals.<sup>7</sup> According to reports from TECS (a computer database operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection) obtained by the Investigative Project of Terrorism through FOIA, the Dar al-Hijrah mosque was associated with numerous individuals linked to terrorism financing<sup>8</sup> and was “operating as a front for Hamas operatives in the U.S.”<sup>9</sup>

In 2007, Omeish was forced to resign from a Virginia immigration panel after a video was posted showing him praising Palestinians who chose “the jihad way” to liberate their land from Israel.<sup>10</sup> Another video showed Omeish congratulating Palestinians for “giving up their lives for the sake of Allah.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Radical Statements:**

#### ***“Moderate” Nature of the Muslim Brotherhood***

- In a letter to the *Washington Post*, Omeish praised what he termed the “moderate” school of thought that is “prevalent in the Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>12</sup>
- Speaking at American University in February 2011, Omeish described his earlier involvement with the Muslim Brotherhood in the United States as a “wonderful experience.”<sup>13</sup>

#### ***Praising for Hamas Founder Ahmed Yassin***

- In an April 2004 speech at a MAS conference in Overland Park, Kan., Omeish referred to Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin, who was killed in an Israeli attack a month earlier, as “our beloved Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.”

“Bullets and bombs are going off upon our brothers in Philistine [Palestine] and we are sitting here and saying (Arabic phrase – there is no power and no strength save in God), instead of feeling that this is our tax money and it is our dollars that killed our beloved brother Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (in Arabic “may God have mercy on him”),” Omeish declared. He warned that if Muslims failed to take such steps it would be impossible to stop “this administration or any administration that will

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<sup>7</sup> “Government Pays Mosque it Considers Radical,” IPT News, May 10, 2010, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/1944/government-pays-mosque-it-considers-radical>.

<sup>8</sup> FOIA Document # 2010FOIA1510, April 7, 2010, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/370.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> FOIA Document # 2010FOIA1510, April 7, 2010, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/369.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> “IPT Footage Takes Down Omeish,” *IPT News*, September 27, 2007, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/494/ipt-footage-takes-down-omeish>

<sup>11</sup> “Esam Omeish In Front of the Israeli Embassy,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sb8jKzrvT6I>

<sup>12</sup> “MAS President Letter to the *Washington Post*” (Letter was submitted to the *Post* but not published.). September 16, 2004., [http://www.unitedstatesaction.com/documents/omeish/www-masnet-org\\_pressroom\\_release-asp\\_nycmexs4.pdf](http://www.unitedstatesaction.com/documents/omeish/www-masnet-org_pressroom_release-asp_nycmexs4.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> “Combating Islamophobia: A Forum Highlighting Effective DC-based Strategies,” Islamic Lecture Series, American University, Washington, DC, February 9, 2011.

come beyond it from doing the same thing to our beloved Muslims all over the world.”<sup>14</sup>

In that same appearance, he urged the audience to integrate rather than assimilate, arguing it was better to have Islam serve as a transformational force in America. Omeish said it was time to take the bull by the horns in “making sure that I will not accept the evils of this society.” He said it was important to “perfect” society “so it can carry the light of Allah so it can establish a presence of what a perfect society under the guidance of Allah is.”<sup>15</sup> Islam will either “become the dominant religion of the next century,” he said, or “we may be forcibly rejected from the West because of forces of intolerance, racism and bigotry are present and grow larger.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Exhorting Palestinians to Choose the “Jihad Way”***

- At a December 2000 “Jerusalem Day” rally in Washington, Omeish praised Palestinians who chose the “jihad way” to liberation:

“We the Muslims of the Washington metropolitan area are here today in sub-freezing temperatures to tell our brothers and sisters in Filastin that you have learned the way, that you have known that the jihad way is the way to liberate your land.”

He added that “we will do everything that we can, Insh’Allah, to help your cause.”<sup>17</sup>

- In another speech in October 2000, Omeish said “we need to congratulate our brothers and sisters in Filastin (Palestine) for their bravery, for their giving up their lives for the sake of Allah and for the sake of Al-Aqsa.”<sup>18</sup> The speeches came during the early stages of the second Palestinian uprising, this one called the Al Aqsa Intifada, which featured a series of deadly terrorist attacks against Israelis.

### ***Support for Hamas Members in the U.S.***

- In March 2007, Omeish spoke at a dinner for Abdelhaleem Ashqar and Mohammed Salah. Prosecutors say the men “were active members in Hamas who engaged in the provision of logistical, financial, strategic and administrative support to further the objective of Hamas.”<sup>19</sup> While they were acquitted of conspiracy charges, Salah was convicted of obstruction for lying about his support for Hamas.<sup>20</sup> Ashqar was sentenced to 11 years in prison after being

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<sup>14</sup> Muslim American Society Midwest Regional Conference, Kansas City, April 10, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Muslim American Society Midwest Regional Conference, Kansas City, April 10, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Muslim American Society Midwest Regional Conference, Kansas City, April 10, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Esam Omeish, Jerusalem Day Rally, 12-22-2000, , December 22, 2000, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/499/esam-omeish-jerusalem-day-rally-12-22-2000-full-speech>

<sup>18</sup> “Omeish Congratulates Those Who Give Up Their Lives,” October 6, 2000, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/523/omeish-congratulates-those-who-give-up-their-lives>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/170.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/410.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/410.pdf)

convicted of contempt for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury investigating Hamas support in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Omeish did not refer to those convictions in his remarks:

“My dear respected brothers and sisters, I would like for us to start by praying for Allah's (UI few words) by congratulating my dear, beloved brother Abdelhaleem Ashqar, and my dear brother Mohammed Salah, who's not with us, but our prayers and thoughts are for him.”<sup>22</sup>

- Ashqar helped organize a secret 1993 gathering of Hamas members and supporters in America to discuss ways to derail the recently signed Oslo Peace Accord. Hamas opposed the peace deal because it moved toward a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and because members feared being marginalized if the secular Fatah movement controlled the first Palestinian Authority. Omeish also wrote a letter of support on Ashqar's behalf, urging the judge to give him a light sentence:

“I have known Dr. Ashqar on a personal and community levels (sic) for a long time. He has been a folk legend for his resistance to testifying against anybody in what he perceives as a witch hunt for any supporters of the Palestinian rights.”<sup>23</sup>

### ***Criticism of U.S. Support for Israel***

- In a January 2009 sermon at Dar al-Hijrah, Omeish lamented U.S. support for Israel during recent fighting against Hamas in Gaza. Washington stood in the way of a United Nations resolution condemning Israel for launching military strikes in an effort to halt rocket attacks from Gaza. Omeish complained that the U.S. “has looked the other way to the human suffering in Gaza, has ignored the legitimate fight of the Palestinians to exist, has even vetoed a ceasefire, for God's sake.”<sup>24</sup>

During the sermon, Omeish also called for “an American Islamic movement that transforms our status, that impacts our society, and that brings forth the change that we want to see.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Original link did not have the info about the prison sentence. Instead, I would suggest using this instead:

) <http://www.investigativeproject.org/554/ashqar-gets-11-years-for-contempt>.

<sup>22</sup> “Free Dr. Ashqar Committee Celebration Dinner,” Alexandria, VA, March 18, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/46.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Esam Omeish , Dar al-Hijrah sermon, January 10, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Esam Omeish , Dar al-Hijrah sermon, January 10, 2009.