



The Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium

April 14, 2008
Corrected May 14, 2008¹

**Steve Merley, Senior Analyst
The NEFA Foundation**



[Belgium has become an important center for the global Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. Since its origins in early student organizations, the Belgian Brotherhood network has grown to include Hamas support infrastructure and local Islamic groups that in turn are part of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), the global Muslim Brotherhood umbrella group in Europe. Belgium also serves as the FIOE national office. One individual, Bassem Hatahet, appears to be the most important figure in the Belgian Muslim Brotherhood.]

Background

The Global Muslim Brotherhood has been present in Europe since 1960 when Said Ramadan, the grandson of Hassan Al-Banna, founded a mosque in Munich.² Since that time, Brotherhood organizations have been established in almost all of the EU countries, as well as non-EU countries such as Russia and Turkey. Despite operating under other names, some of the organizations in the larger countries are recognized as part of the global Muslim Brotherhood. For example, the Union des Organizations Islamiques de France (UOIF) is generally regarded as part of the Muslim Brotherhood in France. The network is also becoming known in some of the smaller countries such as the Netherlands, where a recent NEFA Foundation report detailed the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in that country.³ Neighboring Belgium has also become an important center for the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. A 2002 report by the Intelligence Committee of the Belgian Parliament explained how the Brotherhood operates in Belgium:

“The State Security Service has been following the activities of the International Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium since 1982. The International Muslim Brotherhood has had a clandestine structure for nearly 20 years. The identity of the members is secret; they operate in the greatest discretion. They seek to spread their ideology within the Islamic community of Belgium and they aim in particular at the young people of the second and third generation of immigrants. In Belgium as in other European countries, they try to take control of the religious, social, and sports associations and establish themselves as privileged interlocutors of the national authorities in order to manage Islamic affairs. The Muslim Brotherhood assumes that the national authorities will be pressed more and more to select Muslim leaders for such management and,

¹ The NEFA Foundation is releasing a new version of this report to reflect a correction on p. 11. Hassan Swaid was replaced as President of CECIV by M. Mohammed Arabate, not Michael Privot. Privot was elected Treasurer.

² Ian Johnson, “How a Mosque for Ex-Nazis Became Center of Radical Islam,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2005.

³ Ron Sandee, “The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands,” *The NEFA Foundation*, December 2007.

in this context, they try to insert within the representative bodies, individuals influenced by their ideology. With this purpose, they were very actively involved in the electoral process to carry out the election of the members of the chief body for the management of Islam in Belgium. Another aspect of this strategy is to cause or maintain tensions by positing that a Muslim or Islamic association is a victim of Western values, hence the affair over the Muslim headscarf in public schools.^{4 5}

Three factors have contributed to this development in Belgium. First, high concentrations of Arabic-speaking, immigrant populations are a natural support base for the Muslim Brotherhood and Belgium has such a large and concentrated Islamic population, estimated at about 400,000, which is about 4% of the total population.⁶ The majority of these are Arabs, mainly Moroccans who have settled mostly in Brussels and the French-speaking areas of the South, with about half living in the Brussels conurbation. This has brought the percentage of Muslims in Brussels to approximately 17%.⁷ Second, the presence of important EU institutions in Brussels is a logical attractor for any Muslim organization with aspirations for achieving legitimacy at the Europe-wide level. Finally, the Belgian government is the only European government not to have acted against the local branch of a Hamas fund-raising organization, discussed later in this report, with strong ties to the Brotherhood, allowing it to operate freely while branches in other countries were shut down or restricted.

In addition to these factors, the Belgian government appears to have created a power vacuum in the Muslim community by ending its relationship with the Saudi-sponsored Islamic Cultural Center of Brussels (ICCB). Founded in 1969, the ICCB is chaired by the Saudi Ambassador and receives most of its funding from the Saudi Muslim World League. Until 1990, the ICCB had been treated by the Belgian government as the official representative of the Muslim Community in Belgium and allowed it to recommend imams and teachers who were then appointed by the government. However, opposition to the ICCB from the local Muslim community forced an end to its role, and in 1994, the government appointed a committee of 17 Muslims called "*De Belgische Moslim Executieve*" in Dutch or "*L'Exécutif des musulmans de Belgique*" in French.⁸ The newly created organization took over the role of the ICCB in appointing teachers and imams and served as the basis for an election at the end of 1998 that created the Representative Council of the Belgian Muslim Communities, the officially recognized organization of Muslims in Belgium.⁹ Although participants in these organizations were vetted by the Belgian government to weed out extremists, the jockeying for power that took place attracted the interest of the Muslim Brotherhood which may have created organizations in order to further its legitimacy.

The environment resulting from these factors fostered the creation of a set of interrelated institutions that constitute the Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium today. The remainder of this report will examine these institutions, paying special attention to their

⁴ Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Session De 2001-2002, Rapport d'activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité, 19 Juillet 2002,

<http://www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr>.

⁵ http://www.comiteri.be/rapports/rapport2001def_nl.pdf.

⁶ "Islam & Muslims in Europe," <http://euro-islam.info/pages/belgium.html>.

⁷ http://www.briobrussel.be/assets/andere%20publicaties/en_35_bs4en.pdf

⁸ "Islam in the Benelux Countries" in Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape*.

⁹ Lionel Panafit, "First for Islam in Belgium," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2000.

structure, leadership, and public activities. It is important to note that almost none of the organizations or individuals that are part of the global Muslim Brotherhood identify themselves as such and no doubt, if asked, would deny any such connection. It is therefore necessary to establish such a connection to the Muslim Brotherhood through analysis of factors that include the history, affiliations, ideology, and backgrounds of the organizations under question and their leaders. It should further be noted that this kind of structural analysis is, by nature, limited and can only reveal the public structure of a Muslim Brotherhood network. As the Belgian parliamentary report explained, the global Muslim Brotherhood operates clandestinely and these clandestine structures are not normally accessible through examination of the public record. In the U.S., for example, previously secret documents have recently come to light that revealed an extensive and covert Muslim Brotherhood infrastructure in that country.¹⁰ Nevertheless, public information can provide a great deal of useful information about Brotherhood structures, leadership, and activities and can point the way for investigators with access to non-public information.

Early Student Organizations

Muslim Brotherhood networks often began as student and/or youth organizations and Belgium was no exception. The earliest known Muslim Brotherhood organization was the Association Humanitaire pour la Promotion de la Jeunesse (AHPJ).¹¹ Founded in May 1988, the AHPJ was identified as one of a number of Muslim Brotherhood organizations operating under other names by a July 2002 report of the Belgian parliamentary Intelligence Committee.¹² Bassem Hatahet, later to become one of the most important individuals in the Belgian Muslim Brotherhood network, was elected as the Secretary of the AHPJ in January 1991, serving in that position until November 1996.^{13 14} This report also says that the AHPJ was also operating under the name Union Islamique des Etudiants et de la Jeunesse en Belgique (UIEJB), which Belgian records show was founded in April 1995 and dissolved in February 2000.^{15 16} In February 1999, Bassem Hatahet attended a conference in Kuwait where he was described as affiliated with the Islamic Students Union in Belgium, likely the UIEJB.¹⁷

The Belgian parliamentary report describes the student organizations as:

“...also close to the Turkish movement ‘Milli Gorüs’. These associations publish a newspaper which propagates anti-Western ideas and anti-Zionist ideas. They actively supported the Muslim cause in Afghanistan by the collection of funds and the exchanges were made with the ‘Office of Afghan Mujahideen

¹⁰ Douglas Farah, Ron Sandee, and Josh Lefkowitz, “The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States: A Brief History,” *The NEFA Foundation*, October 26, 2007.

¹¹ Résultat recherche Banque-Carrefour des Entreprises (BCE) et Registre du Commerce http://kbo-bce-ps.mineco.fgov.be/ps/kbo_ps/kbo_search.jsp?VO=19F1B415.

¹² Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Session De 2001-2002, Rapport d'activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité, 19 Juillet 2002, <http://www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr>.

¹³ Association humanitaire pour la Promotion de la Jeunesse “Transfert du Siege Social Modifications Aus Statuts Conseil D’Administration”, published December 12, 1991.

¹⁴ Association humanitaire pour la Promotion de la Jeunesse “Nominations-Exclusions Transfert Du Siege Social”, published November 28, 1996.

¹⁵ Résultat recherche Banque-Carrefour des Entreprises (BCE) et Registre du Commerce http://kbo-bce-ps.mineco.fgov.be/ps/kbo_ps/kbo_search.jsp?VO=1B4AB0F5.

¹⁶ Résultat recherche Banque-Carrefour des Entreprises (BCE) et Registre du Commerce http://kbo-bce-ps.mineco.fgov.be/ps/kbo_ps/kbo_search.jsp?VO=1B4AB0F1.

¹⁷ “Students Discuss Ways to Secure Detainees’ Freedom,” *Kuwait Times*, February 24, 1999.

in Brussels'. They organize camps where immigrants of second and third generations are indoctrinated."

Both the student organizations were registered at Brussels addresses belonging to the charity Islamic Relief. A 1989 statement in a leaflet attributed to the L'Association des étudiants musulmans", likely the above organization, is an early hint of the modus operandi of the Muslim Brotherhood described in the Belgian parliamentary report:

"This document concerns you, young immigrant. Today it's the headscarf, tomorrow forbidden to speak Arabic in schools? It's time to act so that the authorities know we are not toys."¹⁸



Islamic Relief

A Hamas Support Network in Verviers

Founding of Al-Aqsa Belgium

The next Belgian Muslim Brotherhood organization to be created was the Belgian branch of the Al-Aqsa Foundation, founded in September 1993, and called Al-Aqsa Humanitaire.¹⁹ Al-Aqsa Belgium was, in turn, the Belgian branch of the parent organization which had been established in Germany as the Al-Aqsa e.V in July 1991. Another Al-Aqsa branch had been established in the Netherlands one month before the Belgian branch; all three organizations shared the same director and had other board members in common.²⁰ The declared purposes of Al-Aqsa Belgium included a series of humanitarian activities on behalf of Palestinians inside and outside Belgium, including support of orphans, formation of institutions in Palestine, and aiding other NGOs – "who come to the assistance of the Palestinian people."

Al-Aqsa Belgium was first registered in Verviers, an economically distressed municipality of approximately 52,000 residents located in the Belgian province of Liège and close to the cities of Aachen, Germany and Heerlen, the Netherlands, where the Al-Aqsa branches in those countries were first registered.²¹ The registration address is a small commercial/residential building in the Hodimont area of Verviers, a former working-class neighborhood that has become largely Islamic in character. The original signatories to the Al-Aqsa Belgium registration and their self-provided occupations were Mahmoud Amr (political scientist, journalist), Mohamed M. El Hajjaj, (independent entrepreneur), Nimeh Amro (cleaning lady), Bassem Hatahet (businessman), Abdallah Larhouasli (elementary schoolteacher), Mostafa M. Busif (technician), and Ali Sonlu (technician).

¹⁸ Translated version of <http://web.archive.org/web/20070612023207/users.skynet.be/suffrage-universel/be/bemimu001.htm> at <http://translate.google.com/translate?u=http://web.archive.org/web/20070612023207/users.skynet.be/suffrage-universel/be/bemimu001.htm>.

¹⁹ Belgian registration document, September 23, 1993.

²⁰ Ron Sandee, "The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands," *The NEFA Foundation*, December 2007.

²¹ Belgian registration document, September 23, 1993.

Mahmoud Amr Mahmoud Amr is a Jordanian who was the former Chairman of the Al-Aqsa Foundation head office in Aachen, Germany, as well as the former Chairman of the Netherlands Al-Aqsa branch, now headed by Ali Sonlu. At the time Al-Aqsa Belgium was created, Mr. Amr listed his profession as “student” and a telephone number of his belonged jointly to an Arab student association in Aachen as well as to a Belgian students organization.^{22 23}



Mahmoud Amr

A 1993 interrogation of Hamas operatives in Israel revealed that Mr. Amr was considered by them to be a “senior Hamas figure in Germany” who could be contacted through the Muslim Brotherhood center.²⁴ The Thüringen State intelligence agency also reported that Mahmoud Amr maintained “close relations” with the German Muslim Brotherhood organization.²⁵ The interrogation additionally revealed that Mr. Amr was in touch with both the Hamas leadership in Germany, as well as Hamas elements in Jordan. Nimeh Amro, who listed her address as the same as Mr. Amr’s, is probably a relative and was also one of the founders of Al-Aqsa Netherlands.

Mohamed El Hajjaji is a Moroccan-born Belgian citizen who has been living in Verviers since at least 1993 where business records list inactive water/sewer construction and restaurant businesses in his name.²⁶ A Danish research institute, as well as the Belgian security services, link Mostafa Busif to the Algerian GIA.²⁷

Early Activities on Behalf of Hamas

There is no public record of the early activities of Al-Aqsa Belgium, but, although the declared purposes of the organization were humanitarian, by the mid 1990s, evidence was appearing that the Al-Aqsa Foundation as a whole was actually functioning as part of the Hamas support infrastructure in Europe. In 1998, the German domestic security agency reported that Al-Aqsa Germany “by means of donations for humanitarian aid in Palestine, indirectly but effectively supports the aims of Hamas.”^{28 29 30}

In 2001, all three branches of the Al-Aqsa Foundation, including Al-Aqsa Belgium, were listed as founding organizations of the Union of Good, a worldwide collection of

²² Belgian registration document, September 23, 1993.

²³ RWTH Aachen - Humboldt-Haus-INCAS.

<http://www.rwth->

[aachen.de/aw/main/deutsch/Themen/Einrichtungen/Verwaltung/dezernat/humboldt-haus/~hmv/incas/?Vereine.html](http://www.rwth-aachen.de/aw/main/deutsch/Themen/Einrichtungen/Verwaltung/dezernat/humboldt-haus/~hmv/incas/?Vereine.html) (accessed June 2005, no longer available)

²⁴ “A German Court Upholds a Government Decision to Outlaw the German office of the Al-Aqsa Charitable Foundation,” *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies*, December 2004.

²⁵ <http://www.thueringen.de/de/publikationen/pic/pubdownload415.pdf>.

²⁶ Worldbase, August 14, 2005, EL HAJJAJI MOHAMED and Worldbase, April 11, 2007, EL HAJJAJI MOHAMMED.

²⁷ <http://www.flwi.ugent.be/cie/documenten/jihad-dk.pdf>.

²⁸ “Palestinian Charity in UK under Attack,” *Financial Times*, March 13, 1996

²⁹ The Haifa District Court P 000272/03, Before his honour Court President Lindestraum, Date: 12/01/2005 and Judges Y. Dar and A. Schiff.

³⁰ Udo Ulfkotte, “Are Charitable Organizations in Germany Funding Terrorism?”, from www.faz.com, October 1, 2001.

charities under the direction of global Muslim Brotherhood leader Sheikh Youssef Qaradawi.³¹ The list of Union of Good Trustees includes many prominent members of both Hamas and the global Muslim Brotherhood.³² In many European countries, the Union of Good affiliate has connections to the local Muslim Brotherhood.³³ Although the Union of Good, formerly known as the 101 Days Campaign, describes itself as a humanitarian charitable organization, it has been described differently by an Israeli intelligence website:

“The Union of Good is composed of a combination of Hamas-affiliated, designated extremist Islamic funds and foundations around the world. Most of the money it transfers to the PA-administered territories eventually reaches Hamas-affiliated institutions, helping Hamas establish itself as a potential alternative to the Palestinian Authority and maintain a large-scale infrastructure supporting terrorism, including suicide bombing attacks, as clearly illustrated by original documents found by Israeli security forces.”³⁴

In addition to its membership in the Union of Good, Al-Aqsa Foundation Chairman Mahmoud Amr was listed as the registered contact for the 101 Days website, using Mohamed El Hajjaji’s home as the registered address.³⁵

Pressure Builds

Following the events of September 11 2001, the Al-Aqsa Foundation’s head office was coming under pressure in Germany over its connections to Hamas. In October 2001, the Interior Minister for the German state of North-Rhine Westphalia said that Al-Aqsa was known to be collecting funds on behalf of Hamas and warned the public against making donations.³⁶ Around the same time, Mahmoud Amr was called a “Hamas functionary” by a State intelligence agency. In August 2002, the German government shut down Al-Aqsa in Germany, seizing money and documents during searches of the group’s offices.³⁷ The German Interior Minister said at that time that Al-Aqsa raised money for suicide bombers and their families in Israel, and that it transferred funds to social and humanitarian organizations in the Palestinian territories that were connected to Hamas. German authorities reported telephone calls in which a Hamas “cadre” was requesting assistance from Mahmoud Amr following suicide bombings in Israel, as well as “numerous contacts” between Mr. Amr and presumed Hamas functionaries.³⁸

Pressure on Al-Aqsa was also building in the Netherlands where the general intelligence and security intelligence service had reported in 2001 that Al-Aqsa Netherlands,

³¹ “Implementing Organizations,”

<http://web.archive.org/web/20010811052333/http://www.interpal.org/web/organisations.htm>

³² عروضوم يا - ريخلا فالتى

<http://www.101days.org/arabic/modules.php?name=somnaa>.

³³ Ron Sandee, “The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands,” *The NEFA Foundation*, December 2007.

³⁴ “The Union of Good,” *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies*, February 2005.

³⁵ “Whois Record for 101days.org,” <http://whois.domaintools.com/101days.org>.

³⁶ wdr.de - “Al-Aqsa”: Unterstützt Aachener Verein die Hamas?:

http://online.wdr.de/online/news2/spenden_al_aqsa/index.phtml.

³⁷ “German Interior Minister Outlaws Arabic Charity Believed to Support to Hamas” [sic], *Associated Press*, August 5, 2002.

³⁸ “Bundesinnenministerium legt neues Material gegen Al-Aqsa vor” Agence France Presse – German Dienstag, 27. Juli 2004.

now chaired by Al-Aqsa Belgium founder Ali Sonlu, had been collecting money for Hamas since 1993.³⁹ On April 9, 2003, the Ministry of Interior announced a freeze on all financial activities and assets of Al-Aqsa Netherlands stating that the organization was collecting money for Hamas and/or organizations related to Hamas that support or develop terrorist activities.⁴⁰ In May 2003, the U.S and British governments designated the Al-Aqsa Foundation, including both the Dutch and Belgian branches, as a terrorist organization and initiated action to freeze the organization's funds.⁴¹ In its official statement, the U.S Treasury Department cited action in Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands as a basis for its decision.⁴² Also cited was the arrest of the head of the Yemeni office of Al-Aqsa, accused of providing support for both Hamas and Al-Qaida and of having close relations with the German office. The U.S. described Mr. Amr at the time as "an active figure in Hamas."

During the same time in which various governments were acting against the Al-Aqsa Foundation, the Israeli government released a series of documents detailing connections between the Foundation and Hamas, many of which implicated Al-Aqsa Belgium in the support of Hamas. Several of these documents also implicate the U.K. charity known as Interpal, whose chairman Abdul Rahaman Daya was one of the founders of Al-Aqsa Netherlands.^{43 44} This information indicates that the Al-Aqsa Foundation was part of a global network of charities that provided Hamas with between \$ 10-15 million yearly. These documents, along with other evidence implicating Al-Aqsa Belgium, include:

- Documents from 2003 reveal correspondence between INTERPAL and Hamas in the Palestinian town of Jenin. In the correspondence, Hamas thanked Interpal for 12,000 pounds sterling, 4,000 of which came from an Al Aqsa fund in Belgium.
- In 2003, an Israeli court document reported that members of the Hamas movement in Israel had been in regular and continuous contact with activists in Interpal, Al Aqsa, the Union of the Good, and the World Assembly of Moslem Youth in order to help these organizations transfer funds to its accounts in Israel and the Territories. This contact included telephone conversations, and correspondence via facsimile, mail and e-mail. The "activists" identified included Mahmoud Amru and Mahmoud Hejazi (likely Mohamed M. El Hajjaji.)⁴⁵
- At the end of December 2003, a Belgian national identified as Said Maduhi was arrested as he attempted to enter the Gaza Strip in the

³⁹ "MIDDEN-OOSTEN Duitsland verbiedt islamitische al-Aqsa beweging (Samenvatting)" Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP August 5, 2002

⁴⁰ MinBZK.nl (uk) - Al-Aqsa balances frozen following AIVD investigation:
http://www.minbzk.nl/uk/public_safety/press_releases/al_aqsa_balances.

⁴¹ "US, UK Designate Islamic Charity As Terrorist Organization," *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2003.

⁴² "Treasury Designates Al-Aqsa International Foundation as Financier of Terror," *U.S. Treasury Department Press Release*, May 29, 2003.

⁴³ Ron Sandee, "The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Netherlands," *The NEFA Foundation*, December 2007.

⁴⁴ British Muslims Monthly Survey, March 1996, Vol. IV, No. 3.
<http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/1996/03March96.html>.

⁴⁵ The Haifa District Court P 000272/03, Before his honour Court President Lindestraum, Date: 12/01/2005 and Judges Y. Dar and A. Schiff.

company of a twelve-member delegation that included Belgians, as well as other nationalities. Mr. Maduhi acknowledged meeting with members of Hamas-affiliated charitable institutions in the Occupied Territories. Maduhi, who headed the delegation, said that his arrival had been coordinated by Muhammad Hejazi, director of the Al Aqsa Fund in Belgium.⁴⁶

- In October 2004, the U.S. Treasury Department declared that Al-Aqsa Belgium was “reportedly linked” to the Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA). In addition to financing Al-Qaida, IARA allegedly moved funds to the Palestinian territories for use in terrorist activities, serving as a conduit to Hamas in one Western European country. In part, funds were raised through IARA collection boxes marked “Allah” and “Israel” indicating that the funds would be used for attacks against Israelis.⁴⁷
- In December 2004, a document was released describing the allocation of funds received from various foundations (including the Al-Aqsa Charitable Foundation) in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark to Hamas’ Al-Islah Charitable Society in Bethlehem. The report stated that the funds were allocated through the British Hamas-affiliated INTERPAL fund, and that some of the funds were bound for Hamas “terrorist-supportive infrastructure.”⁴⁸
- In December 2004, a letter was released from Mahmoud Amr to the Orphan Care Society in Bethlehem, a Hamas organization. The letter requests that the Society send Mohammed Hejjaji “a list of the orphans who receive support funds from the institution” in order to assist Al-Aqsa Germany with its legal problems in Germany.⁴⁹ The report adds, “Owing to the ban on the foundation’s activity in Germany, it maintained its correspondence through the Belgium branch.”

In July 2002, the Belgian parliamentary Intelligence Committee report stated “Hamas was present in Belgium via the organization Al-Aqsa in Verviers.”⁵⁰ However, despite the action of other governments and the evidence against the organization cited above, the Belgian government has taken no action to date against Al-Aqsa Belgium. A Belgian

⁴⁶ “Belgian National Arrested on Suspicion of Connection to Outlawed Al Aqsa Fund,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release*, January 6, 2004.

⁴⁷ “Treasury Designates Global Network, Senior Officials of IARA for Supporting bin Laden, Others,” Treasury Department Press Release, October 13, 2004.

⁴⁸ “A German Court Upholds a Government Decision to Outlaw the German office of the Al-Aqsa Charitable Foundation,” *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies*, December 2004.

⁴⁹ “A German Court Upholds a Government Decision to Outlaw the German office of the Al-Aqsa Charitable Foundation,” *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies*, December 2004.

⁵⁰ Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Session De 2001-2002, Rapport d'activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité, 19 Juillet 2002, <http://www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr>.

parliamentary investigation concluded in January 2004 that there was insufficient evidence to ban the activities of Al-Aqsa Belgium as had been done in Germany and the Netherlands.⁵¹

Changes in the Organization

Beginning in 2001, Al-Aqsa Belgium underwent a series of organizational changes, most likely due to the pressure facing the organization at that time. As of September 2002, Bassem Hatahet, Nimeh Amro, and Mostafa Busif left the board, and Mohamed El Hajjaji took over as President with Mr. Amr appointed as “Director of Projects.”⁵² In 2005/2006, more changes in Al-Aqsa Belgium took place.^{53 54 55}

- Mr. Amr and Ali Sonlu were removed from the board effectively, severing any official connection between Al-Aqsa Belgium and the branches in Germany and the Netherlands.
- A series of relatively unknown individuals were appointed as other officers.
- The name of the organization was changed to AKSAHUM. According to Belgian legal documents, this change was made to avoid confusion with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, but it is more likely that Al-Aqsa Belgium had problems transferring funds, possibly as a result of the U.S. designation.⁵⁶
- The registered office was changed to a new facility, located in a higher income neighborhood just outside the Hodimont area of Verviers.



Al-Aqsa Verviers

As of February 2006, German police were reported to have been searching for Mahmoud Amr, who was to have been deported as a result of his activities; investigators assumed that he had fled to Brussels based on information provided by his wife.⁵⁷

Al-Aqsa Belgium today is the only remaining office of the Al-Aqsa Foundation that continues in operation, testifying to the efficacy of creating redundant organizations, a well-known strategy of the global Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Aqsa Belgium maintains a highly visible office in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, an economically distressed municipality located in Brussels that is home to a largely Muslim immigrant population. The organization has

⁵¹ SÉANCE PLÉNIÈRE, <http://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRA/html/51/ac140.html>.

⁵² A-Aqsa 4800 Verviers ANDERUNGEN AN DER BENENNUNG *** ANDERUNG DER SATZUNGEN *** ERNENNUNG(EN) *** VERWALTUNGSRAT *** VOLLMACHT
Veröffentlichung: 2002-11-14 N. 022510 Identification : 1619393 MWST oder Unternehmensnummer: : 450818683

⁵³ “Germany Departs Head of Al-Aqsa Charitable Society,” http://www.jihadunspun.com/index-side_external.php?article=102871&list=/home.php&; accessed May 24, 2005 (no longer available)

⁵⁴ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2005/04/28/05062700.pdf.

⁵⁵ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/11/09/06169923.pdf.

⁵⁶ http://www.cass.be/tribunal_commerce/verviers/images/1306.0009.pdf.

⁵⁷ “Hamis-Helfer gesucht,” *Focus*, February 6, 2006.

another, less-visible office in Verviers, which is marked only with a small piece of tape on the entrance door, and Mohamed El Hajjaji, likely the founder of Al-Aqsa Belgium, as well as other El Hajjaji family members are listed in Belgian phone records at that address. In November 2007, the front door of the Al-Aqsa Belgium office displayed large poster advertising the yearly meeting of the German Muslim Brotherhood organization, the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland. As the remainder of this report will illustrate, Al-Aqsa Belgium has organizational ties with other parts of the Belgian Muslim Brotherhood.

Islamic Complex in Verviers

Located one block down the street from a prior Al-Aqsa Belgium address in Verviers is a complex of Islamic facilities tied to Al-Aqsa Belgium and the Belgian Muslim Brotherhood. A newspaper article on the Hodimont complex traces its origin to an unidentified Islamic association that had been in operation since at least 1993.⁵⁸ According to that article, the building housing the complex is an abandoned tannery built in 1936 and bought in 2001 at a cost of 200,000 Euros, financed from the proceeds of an inheritance that specified the establishment of a mosque. As of January 2005, the 6,000m² space was reported to include Internet facilities, a cafeteria, Arabic language classes, youth and women's committees, and a mosque that occupies the largest amount of space.⁵⁹ The mosque may have been known earlier as Mosquée As Salem but is now called Mosquée Assahaba.^{60 61} Attendance for Friday prayers has been put at over 1,300, of which 25% were reported to be women. As of October 2007, Belgian documents refer to Yahya Lamaalaoui as the Imam for the mosque, with an address down the street from addresses associated with probable El Hajjaji family members.⁶²



Hodimont Complex

In addition to the mosque, there are at least two other organizations operating from the complex. The first is known as the *Complex éducatif et Culturel Islamique de Verviers* (CECIV). CECIV was established in May 2004 as a successor to the unidentified association mentioned above, and its constitution specifies Islamic youth and social purposes including cultural, sport, educational, and festival activities.⁶³ The original officers of CECIV were Hassan Swaid (President), Abdeljallil El Hajjaji, Driss El Hajjaji, Mohamed Darfoufi, and Mohamed Arabate. Hassan Swaid is German with an address in Aachen, the former location for the

⁵⁸ ...: Minorités :::, <http://www.minorites.org/article.php?IDA=7588>.

⁵⁹ Quand les musulmans voient grand - Lalibre.be,
http://www.lalibre.be/article.phtml?id=10&subid=90&art_id=203947.

⁶⁰ www.verviers.be/VIE_PRACTIQUE/Divers
http://web.archive.org/web/20050309124628/http://www.verviers.be/site_ville/vie_pratique/vp_divers.html.

⁶¹ 0865.470.622 Date de début: 26 mai 2004 Dénomination (sociale): Complexe Educatif Culturel Islamique de Verviers "Mosquée ASSAHABA" Dénomination en français, depuis 26 mai 2004
Abréviation: C.E.C.I.V. Dénomination en français, depuis 26 mai 2004***

⁶² http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste.

⁶³ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste.

head office of the Al-Aqsa Foundation. In 2003, Swaid was listed as a member of the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland, the Muslim Brotherhood organization in Germany.⁶⁴ Mohamed Darfoufi, the Treasurer, was listed in 2006 as the Treasurer of Al-Aqsa Belgium.⁶⁵ Abdeljallil and Driss El Hajjaji are probably members of Mohamed El Hajjaji's family.

In September of 2004, Hassan Swaid was replaced as President by M. Mohammed Arabate, the current Imam of the Assahaba mosque. Elected as Treasurer was Michael Privot, a convert to Islam whose brother was reported to be the architect for the complex of buildings housing the CECIV.^{66 67} Another CECIV leader in 2005 was Hajib El Hajjaji, probably also a member of the El Hajjaji family and a Verviers City Councilman elected in 2006.^{68 69} Hajib El Hajjaji was also listed in 2006 as a member of the leadership of Comite Verviers Palestine (CVP,) and in May 2006, the CECIV complex hosted a pro-Palestinian conference organized by the CVP featuring far-left Belgian journalist Michel Collon.⁷⁰ As of October 2007, other than Hassan Swaid, all of the above individuals were still listed as members of the board of the CECIV.⁷¹

An archived web page from April 2006 promotes a conference hosted by CECIV that featured Muslim Brotherhood figure Tariq Ramadan as the featured speaker.⁷² Connections to the Muslim Brotherhood in Brussels are discussed later in this report.

The second organization operating from the complex is known as Essalem and was founded on August 2, 1996 by Abdeljallil El Hajjaji, Khalid El Abbadi, and Hassan El Azzouzi.⁷³ As of December 2005, Abdeljallil El Hajjaji and Hajib El Hajjaji were President and Vice-President respectively.⁷⁴ The declared purposes of the organization are similar to those of CECIV with the addition of civil rights goals such as fighting xenophobia and racism as well as "Islamaphobia."

The Muslim Brotherhood in Brussels

Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe

There are a series of organizations in Belgium linked to the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), a European umbrella group with "close connections" to the

⁶⁴ [islam.de / Newsnational / "Deutscher islamwissenschaftlicher Ausschuss der Neumonde" \(DIWAN\) meldet: Dienstag, der 25. November 2003, ist Id al-Fitr, http://www.islam.de/1106.php.](http://islam.de/)

⁶⁵ [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste.](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste)

⁶⁶ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste

⁶⁷ Quand les musulmans voient grand - Lalibre.be,
[http://www.lalibre.be/article.phtml?id=10&subid=90&art_id=203947.](http://www.lalibre.be/article.phtml?id=10&subid=90&art_id=203947)

⁶⁸ ...: Minorités ..., [http://www.minorites.org/article.php?IDA=7588.](http://www.minorites.org/article.php?IDA=7588)

⁶⁹ Hajib EL HAJJAJI - page d'accueil, [http://www.hajib.be/Quisuisje.html.](http://www.hajib.be/Quisuisje.html)

⁷⁰ [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/08/02/06126446.pdf.](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/08/02/06126446.pdf)

⁷¹ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste

⁷² Feuille blanche,

[http://web.archive.org/web/20060619154227/http://www.ceciv.be/solidarite.htm.](http://web.archive.org/web/20060619154227/http://www.ceciv.be/solidarite.htm)

⁷³ Essalem STATUTS, published September 26, 1996.

⁷⁴ [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/01/13/06013979.pdf.](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/01/13/06013979.pdf)

Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁵ The FIOE was founded in 1989 and is comprised of some 29 member organizations, the majority in the EU but also including non-EU countries such as Russian and Turkey.^{76 77} Most of these member organizations have visible ties to the global Muslim Brotherhood, particularly those members in the larger European countries such as Germany, France, and the U.K., where the FIOE members are generally acknowledged to represent the Muslim Brotherhood. The FIOE website explains the organization as follows:

“The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe is a non-profitable European organization, which provides a framework for its member organizations and institutions. This framework aims to achieve the overall common goals of serving Muslims in European societies. The FIOE also aims to maintain the Muslim presence in Europe and to enhance and develop that presence so that Islam is properly and accurately introduced.”⁷⁸

The FIOE is organized administratively into departments such as Public Relations, Dawa, and Eastern Europe.⁷⁹ The departments are run by FIOE officers who include some of the most important leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, such as Ibrahim El-Zayat, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood organization in Germany known as the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland, the FIOE German member organization.^{80 81}

In addition to its member organizations, FIOE is also comprised of what it calls its “central organizations”, the most prominent of which include:⁸²

1. European Council for Fatwa Research

Headquartered in Dublin, the ECFR is a theological body headed by global Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi and composed of scholars, most of who reside outside of Europe. The ECFR meets annually and issues fatwas consistent with the Muslim Brotherhood tradition represented by Qaradawi.

2. The Europe Trust

A U.K. charity founded in 1996 that purports to be independent but actually functions as a funding mechanism for FIOE. Most of the activity of the Europe

⁷⁵ Ian Johnson, “Islamic Group's Ties Reveal Europe's Challenge,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005.

⁷⁶ “New Body of European Imams: What's Next?”, *IslamOnline.net*, February 28, 2008.

⁷⁶ “Pan-European Muslim Org. Forms Special body for Preachers and Prayer Leaders,” *KUNA*, February 24, 2008.

⁷⁸ The Official Web Site of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, http://www.eu-islam.com/en/templates/Index_en.asp. (Date Saved: January 20, 2007, no longer available)

⁷⁹ MainFrame, http://www.eu-islam.com/en/templates/about_en.asp. (Date saved: January 20, 2007, no longer available)

⁸⁰ Official Website of The Amman Message, “Grand List of Endorsements of the Amman Message and its Three Points,” http://www.ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=31

⁸¹ http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/download/SHOW/vsbericht_2005_engl.pdf.

⁸² MainFrame, http://www.eu-islam.com/en/templates/about_en.asp. (Date saved: January 20, 2007, no longer available)

Trust has been devoted to amassing a real-estate portfolio and has been funded by sources in Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The majority of Trustees are FIOE officers including Ibrahim El-Zayat.⁸³

3. European Institute for Human Sciences

Founded by the French FIOE member organization in 1990, the stated purpose of EIHS was to train Imams in the European context, but the institution rather appears to be promoting Arabization and re-Islamization of its students. EIHS has failed to graduate significant number of students trained as Imams and has suffered financial problems of late.

4. The Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO)

Founded in 1996 and headquartered in Brussels, FEMYSO is the youth and student division of FIOE and will be discussed later in this report.

Each of these organizations has strong ties to the global Muslim Brotherhood and/or Saudi institutions such as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), as did the long-serving FIOE President Ahmed Al-Rawi, recently retired, who made statements supporting terrorism in Israel and Iraq.^{84 85} Dr. Al-Rawi is also a Trustee of the Union of Good, the worldwide coalition of charities supporting Hamas that was discussed previously in the section on Al-Aqsa Belgium.⁸⁶

Ligue Islamique Interculturelle De Belgique

A 2001-2002 report by the Belgium parliamentary Intelligence Committee identifies the Ligue Islamique Interculturelle De Belgique (LIIB), the Belgian FIOE member organization, as one of several Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Belgium operating under other names.⁸⁷ The LIIB was founded in February 1997 by Monsif Chatar and Karim Azzouzi, the current LIIB President and Vice President respectively, as well as two other relatively unknown individuals.⁸⁸ The purposes of the new organization included: integration of immigrants, promoting tolerance, youth development, and projects to “ensure the auto-financial sufficiency of association.” In June 1998, several important changes were made:

⁸³ Extract from the Central Register of Charities maintained by the Charity Commission for England and Wales,
<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/registeredcharities/showtrustees.asp?Chy=4007138&Reg=1103290&Type=Main+Charity&Name=EUROPE+TRUST&SubID=>.

⁸⁴ Nicholas Rufford and Abul Taher, “British Muslim Says Troops are Fair Target,” *Times Online*, October 31, 2004.

⁸⁵ Ian Johnson, “Islamic Group's Ties Reveal Europe's Challenge,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005.

⁸⁶ عووضوم ي ا - ري خ ل ا ف ا ل ت ي ا <http://www.101days.org/arabic/modules.php?name=somnaa>.

⁸⁷ Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Session De 2001-2002, Rapport d'activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité, 19 Juillet 2002,

<http://www.senate.be/www/?Mlval=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr>.

⁸⁸ Registration document.

- The LIIB changed its registered address to its present location.
- The Europe Trust was assigned any assets remaining upon dissolution of the organization.
- An Islamic youth organization called "Spaces Cultural Moslem Youth" was created within the LIIB.



LIIB Location

The June 1998 document was signed by LIIB President M. Chatar as General-Secretary and by Bassem Hatahet.⁸⁹

In February 2006, the LIIB added Franck Hensch as Vice-President/Secretary and Beji Denguir as Treasurer.⁹⁰ Born in Verviers, Mr. Hensch, likely an Islamic convert, is 29-years old and lists his profession as "organizer." In June 2001, he was listed as the Secretary of an Islamic culture association in Verviers, and in March 2005, he was appointed the Secretary for Al-Aqsa Belgium.^{91 92} In September 2006, Mr. Hensch was removed as Vice President/Secretary and replaced by Karim Azzouzi.⁹³ Current LIIB officers are Monsif Chatar (President), Karim Azzouzi (Vice-President/Secretary), and Beji Denguir (Treasurer).

The LIIB maintains a facility at its registered address, located in a middle-class residential/commercial neighborhood in southern Brussels close to the Midi/Zuid train station. Islamic websites also list a mosque known as the Centre Abidine at the same address.⁹⁴ In November 2007, the LIIB headquarters had a poster on its window advertising a conference with Muslim Brotherhood figure Hani Ramadan.

In recent years, the LIIB has demonstrated strong ties to the global Muslim Brotherhood and the organization maintains associations to Brotherhood figures Tariq and Hani Ramadan, the grandsons of the founder of the Brotherhood. The 2001 report of the Belgian parliamentary Intelligence Committee states:

"The Ligue islamique interculturelle organizes conferences regularly where it invites Tariq Ramadan and his brother Hani Ramadan. They note that the moderate speeches which Tariq Ramadan gives in public always do not correspond with the remarks which he makes in restricted Islamic mediums, where they are definitely more critical towards Western Society."⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Ligue islamique interculturelle de Belgique 1080 Bruxelles ANDERUNG DER SATZUNGEN *** VERLEGUNG DER SITZES Veröffentlichung: 2001-11-15 N. 021937 Identification : 410097 MWST oder Unternehmensnummer: : 460342697.

⁹⁰ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/02/27/06041047.pdf.

⁹¹ "Dar Salam " 4840 Welkenraedt SATZUNGEN *** Veröffentlichung: 2001-06-07 N. 009696 Identification : 96962001 MWST oder Unternehmensnummer: : 474870626

⁹² http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2005/04/28/05062700.pdf

⁹³ http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2006/09/28/06149652.pdf.

⁹⁴ L'Annuaire Musulman | Mosquées | Mosquées et Centres islamiques | Centre Al Abidine | L'Annuaire Musulman

<http://www.annuaire-musulman.com/view.php?id=1114&page=0&cat=78>.

⁹⁵ Sénat et Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Session De 2001-2002, Rapport d'activité 2001 du Comité permanent de contrôle des services de renseignements et de sécurité, 19 Juillet

The LIIB is known to have sponsored a November 2006 conference with Hani Ramadan, and in November 2007, as noted above, the LIIB headquarters had a poster for yet another conferences with Hani Ramadan in its window.⁹⁶ The LIIB has also been involved with a number of FIOE activities including a 2003 joint event with FEMYSO, signing a joint petition with 24 other FIOE affiliates, organizing conferences with and sponsoring several speakers from the FIOE French affiliate.^{97 98 99 100 101}

The LIIB also has relationships with important Saudi Islamist institutions. The Parliamentary reports states that the organization maintains contacts with the Islamic Cultural Center of Brussels (ICCB), identified earlier as a Saudi-sponsored institution. Also, an archived website of the Saudi World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) lists the LIIB as one of eight Islamic organizations in Europe, all of which are FIOE affiliates.¹⁰²

Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations

The website of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) traces its origins to a series of meetings held in 1996 with various youth and student organizations under the sponsorship of FIOE and the Islamic Foundation.¹⁰³ Another source says that FEMYSO was created by a joint initiative of the FIOE and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, together with several national Muslim youth organizations.¹⁰⁴ In 2004, the FIOE website included FEMYSO as one of its “central organizations” and described it as “...a forum that consists of dozens of youth and student organizations and associations spanning most of Europe. The Forum works towards increasing the awareness of Muslim youth and preserving their identity through organizing seminars, conferences, camps, and advanced courses, as well as through publishing leaflets, magazines, and books and creating a communication network of members and contacts via the Internet.”¹⁰⁵

FEMYSO says that it has since has developed into a network of 37 member organizations, bringing together youth from over 40 countries.¹⁰⁶ The organization is headquartered in central Brussels, occupying one of two offices in a second floor office suite. The adjacent office is occupied by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). In 2003, Belgian phone records listed a Bassen Hatahet at the same address and a telephone number

2002,

<http://www.senate.be/www/?Mlval=/publications/viewPubDoc&TID=33618007&LANG=fr>.

⁹⁶ CONFERENCE FEVRIER 2006: Mouedden Mohsin

<http://moueddenmohsin.blogspot.com/archive/2006/01/31/conference-fevrier-2006.html>

⁹⁷ “Femyso.org: 2003,” <http://p9445.typo3server.info/56.0.html>.

⁹⁸ “An urgent appeal from Muslims and Islamic Bodies in Europe,”

http://web.archive.org/web/20040914102712/http://www.rabita.ch/francais/communiqués/urgent_appel_journalists.htm.

⁹⁹ “Dounia News,” <http://www.dounia-news.com/mois-2004/fevrier/16-02.html>.

¹⁰⁰ AU NOM DE DIEU LE TOUT MISERICORDIEUX LA LIGUE ISLAMIQUE INTERCULTURELLE DE BELG, <http://www.islam-belgique.com/annonce.cfm?StartRow=516&PageNum=36>. (Date saved: June 17, 2005, no longer available)

¹⁰¹ AuteurMessage, <http://femmesmusulmanes.forumactif.com/viewtopic.forum?t=1134>.

(Date saved: June 17, 2005, no longer available)

¹⁰² http://web.archive.org/web/20030102102350/http://wamy.co.uk/islam/islam_frame31.html.

¹⁰³ “Femyso.org: History,” <http://p9445.typo3server.info/20.0.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Sara Silvestri, “Interacting with Muslim Communities in the EU,” Centre of International Studies, University of Cambridge, 2003.

¹⁰⁵ MainFrame, http://web.archive.org/web/20040715151512/http://www.eu-islam.com/en/templates/about_en.asp.

¹⁰⁶ “Femyso.org: About us,” <http://p9445.typo3server.info/profil.0.html>.

that belonged to the FEMYSO operation.^{107 108}

Although FEMYSO has recently elected new and relatively unknown leadership, five of the eleven trustees are important leaders in the German Muslim Brotherhood and/or officers of FIOE.^{109 110}

- Ibrahim El-Zayat is one of the founders of FEMYSO.¹¹¹ He is the head of the Muslim Brotherhood organization in Germany, a FIOE officer, and the former head of WAMY in Western Europe.¹¹² A May 2007 German news report stated that Mr. Ibrahim El-Zayat is currently the representative of the Brussels office of FEMYSO, and, in that capacity, he functions as a lobbyist to European institutions on issues such as the headscarf.¹¹³
- Ayman Aly is also one of the founders of FEMYSO.¹¹⁴ He is the current Secretary-General of FIOE and the Assistant Secretary-General of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO), which has close relations with the Saudi Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY).^{115 116 117}
- Ogüz Ucuncu is the business partner of Ibrahim El-Zayat and the Secretary General of Milli Gorus in Germany, a Turkish Islamist organization that runs 300 mosques in Germany.¹¹⁸
- Khallad Swaid is the former President of FEMYSO who, as late as 2005, was identified as the Chairman of the Muslimische Jugend (MJD), a FEMYSO member organization with which Mr. El-Zayat and his brother Bilal are closely associated.^{119 120}
- Hadia Himmat is the former FEMYSO Vice-President and likely the daughter of Ali Ghaleb Himmat, long-time head of the IGD and Mr. El-

¹⁰⁷ Europe "White & Yellow Pages," Infobel DVD

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.ljp.lv/docs/musulmani.doc> (no longer available).

¹⁰⁹ "Femyso.org: President & ExCo," <http://p9445.typo3server.info/15.0.html>.

¹¹⁰ "Femyso.org: Board of Trustees," <http://p9445.typo3server.info/16.0.html>.

¹¹¹ I-G-D e.V.

http://www.i-g-d.de/cmsde1/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=66&Itemid=33

¹¹² Ian Johnson, "Islamic Group's Ties Reveal Europe's Challenge," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005.

¹¹³ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, "Die Macht des Ibrahim El Zayat," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 11, 2007.

¹¹⁴ "Guest CV: Dr. Aiman Ali," Islamonline.net

<http://www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=rbOxt5>.

¹¹⁵ "European Muslims Charter Born," *KUNA*, January 10, 2008.

¹¹⁶ "Guest CV: Dr. Aiman Ali," Islamonline.net

<http://www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=rbOxt5>.

¹¹⁷ "The Muslim World After 9/11," *RAND*, 2004.

¹¹⁸ Ofri Ilani, "German Turk Takes on 'Anti-Semitic Islamic Propaganda,'" *Haaretz*, October 12, 2006.

¹¹⁹ "Femyso.org: President & ExCo," <http://p9445.typo3server.info/15.0.html>.

¹²⁰ "Muslimische Jugend Deutschland"

<http://www.jugendserver.de/wai1/showcontent.asp?ThemaID=3886>, February 14, 2004.

Zayat's predecessor and close associate of Youssef Nada, the "foreign minister" for the International Muslim Brotherhood and also a former member of the IGD.

Current and former FEMYSO leaders are also active in the Verviers Islamic complex housing the CECIV and Essalem. Perhaps the most prominent of these is Michael Privot, who has been a Vice-President of FEMYSO and is currently listed as the Vice-Secretary of the CECIV.^{121 122} Mr. Privot is the Campaigns & Networking Officer at the European Network Against Racism, which is described as a network of over 600 European NGOs working to combat racism in all the EU member states.^{123 124} In November 2005, Mr. Privot participated in a U.S. State Department conference in Brussels that brought together Belgian and American Muslims. The participating American organizations included all of the major U.S. Muslim Brotherhood organizations, including the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and the Muslim Students Association of the US and Canada (MSA). Joint initiatives between FEMYSO and MSA were announced at a follow-up to the conference.¹²⁵ Other FEMYSO leaders with ties to CECIV/Essalem include CECIV founder Hassan Swaid, who listed the same address as FEMYSO leader Khallad Swaid, and Hajib El Hajjaji, an officer of both CECIEV and Essalem, who has helped to organize at least one FEMYSO event.^{126 127 128}

The FEMYSO website states that:

"Over the last 4 years it has become the de facto voice of Muslim Youth in Europe and is regularly consulted on issues pertaining to Muslims in Europe and has developed useful links with the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, -and a host of other relevant organizations at the European level."

These claims are substantiated by evidence that includes:

- FEMYSO is one of the groups designated by the UN as "Specially accredited to the World Conference against Racism."¹²⁹

¹²¹ "Michael Privot: A Muslim Declaration of Independence," *The Providence Journal*, November 25, 2005.

¹²² HV – SC,

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste.

¹²³ "ENAR - ENAR Staff," <http://www.enar-eu.org/en/info/staff.shtml>.

¹²⁴ "ENAR - About ENAR," <http://www.enar-eu.org/en/about/>.

¹²⁵ MDC21, <http://www.muslimdialogue.be/gallery/pages/MDC21.htm>.

¹²⁶ HV – SC,

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0865470622%20&liste=Liste.

¹²⁷

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0477992838%20&liste=Liste.

¹²⁸ http://p9445.typo3server.info/uploads/media/21Jan2006_en.pdf.

¹²⁹ BILAN 2003 - E/CN.4/2003/19/Add.1

<http://www.hri.ca/forthecord2003/bilan2003/documentation/commission/e-cn4-2003-19-add1.htm>.

- The Council of Europe has designated FEMYSO as one of thirty members of its Advisory Council on Youth for 2006-2008.¹³⁰
- Since 2003, FEMYSO has been meeting with the Group of Policy Advisors (GOPA), a think-tank attached to the President of the European Commission, as well as attending briefing conferences organized by the Commission's Counsellor For Religious Affairs.¹³¹
- FEMYSO took part in a conference jointly sponsored with the European Youth Forum that was held at the European Parliament in September 2003.¹³²

More Infrastructure

Since 2001, there is evidence that the Muslim Brotherhood in Belgium has been attempting to develop a more comprehensive infrastructure as it has done in other European countries. This effort is reflected in the creation of the following organizations, all of which involve Bassem Hatahet or his business partner Karim Chemlal as a signatory:

1. Charity

Bassem Hatahet is listed as the President of an organization founded in January 2001 known as the Association Assalem pour les actions humanitaires, culturelles et de charité en Belgique.¹³³ The Secretary/General is listed as Yaslam Chibah, with an address associated with various CECIV/Essalem officers, and the Treasurer is listed as Moncef Chatar, likely the current LIIB President. One of the two additional founding members is Ahmed Al Raoui, likely Ahmed Al-Rawi, the past President of FIOE. The declared purposes of Assalem included “assistance with humane, charitable, and cultural activities”, promotion of “constructive dialogue between institutions and the minorities, and encouraging “projects of development and investments intended for minorities.” Like the LIIB, the founding statutes specify that in case of dissolution, remaining assets will go to the Europe Trust, the “charitable” arm of FIOE. Again... fonts.

2. Student

¹³⁰ “Composition of the Advisory Council on Youth for the Period 2006-2008,” Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=951125&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864>.

¹³¹ “Islam in the European Commission’s System of Regulation of Religion” in Aziz Al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas (Editors), “Islam in Europe: Diversity, Identity and Influence.”

¹³² “Youth Event Enhances Dialogue between MEPS and Young Muslims,” Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations and Youth Forum Press Release, September 16, 2003, http://web.archive.org/web/20051104010911/http://www.youthforum.org/en/press/press_releases/0576-03EN.pdf.

¹³³ Association Assalem pour les actions humanitaires, culturelles et de charité en Belgique SATZUNGEN Veröffentlichung: 2001-02-15 N. 002841 Identification : 28412001 MWST oder Unternehmensnummer: : 473999507.

In August 2005, Bassem Hatahet was listed as one of three founding members of the Union des Organisations Estudiantines Musulmans.¹³⁴ The other founders and officers are three relatively unknown individuals who appear to be genuine students, listing home addresses in Kuwait, Malaysia, and Benin. The registered address for the organization is in Brussels, just around the corner from the address listed by Beji Denguir, the Treasurer of the LIIB.

3. Umbrella

The Ligue des Musulmans de Belgique (LMB) was created in February 2006.¹³⁵ The name suggests that the organization was created as a successor to the LIIB and the statutes state that the LMB is a member of FIOE whose assets on dissolution go the Europe Trust.¹³⁶ Of the eleven signatories to the founding document, two are known to be officers of other Belgian Muslim Brotherhood organizations: Karim Azzouzi, LIIB Vice-President/Secretary and Abdel El Hajjaji, an officer of CECIV/Essalem in Verviers. A third, Karim Chemlal, is the business partner of Bassem Hatahet and is identified in recent news reports as the head of the LMB.¹³⁷ Two more founders are possible relatives of Brotherhood organization officers including Redouae Chatar and Ben Razzouk who listed an address adjacent to the registered address of the Union des Organisations Estudiantines Musulmans, discussed above. Since its creation, the LMB has been a signatory to several online petitions concerning Islamic issues, such as the Danish cartoon crisis and supporting the ex-head of the Central Muslim body after he was arrested on charges of fraud.^{138 139} In September 2007, the LMB hosted a meeting in Brussels which brought together over 400 Islamic organizations to sign a code of conduct developed by the FIOE for Muslims who live in Europe.¹⁴⁰ The LMB is likely the same organization referred to on the FIOE website as the Muslim Association Of Belgian, the FIOE Belgian member organization.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0875698974%20&liste=Liste.

¹³⁵ Résultat recherche Banque-Carrefour des Entreprises (BCE) et Registre du Commerce, http://kbo-bce-ps.mineco.fgov.be/ps/kbo_ps/kbo_search.jsp?VO=3468BA54.

¹³⁶

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_tsv/tsv_rech.pl?language=fr&btw=0879261151%20&liste=Liste.

¹³⁷ Nawab Khan, "Belgian Activist Lauds Kuwait's Role in Establishing European Muslims," *KUNA*, January 24, 2008.

¹³⁸ BRIEF N.A.V. DE KARIKATUREN VAN DE PROFEET :: Voem vzw :: <http://www.voem-vzw.be>
<http://www.voem-vzw.be/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=202>.

¹³⁹ Fraudes à l'Exécutif des musulmans,

<http://www.bladi.net/forum/88727-fraudes-lexecutif-musulmans/index2.html>.

¹⁴⁰ De Morgen: Buitenland - Europese moslims ondertekenen historische 'gedragscode' (124941)
<http://demorgen.be/dm/nl/990/Buitenland/article/detail/124941/2008/01/07/Europese-moslims-ondertekenen-historische-gedragscode.dhtml>.

¹⁴¹ Contact Us : Euro-Muslim

<http://www.euro-muslim.net/English/yo-yo-yo/contact-us>.

FIOE HQ

Until very recently, the FIOE national office was located in Markfield, U.K., where the ex-President Ahmed Al-Rawi was working. In May 2007, the FIOE national office was moved to an address in Brussels located in a largely immigrant neighborhood but within several blocks of the important EU buildings.¹⁴² In addition to the FIOE, it appears that the European Federation of Muslim Women, an organization associated with FIOE though not listed as an official FIOE organization, is also located at that address. According to Belgian phone records, Bassem Hatahet is listed at this address and shares the same telephone number as the FIOE national office.¹⁴³



FIOE Headquarters

1. Bassem Hatahet

A January 2007 article posted on the Internet describes a Bassem Hatahet as a member of the FIOE.¹⁴⁴ He is 43 years old and was born in Damascus, Syria where he likely still has relatives. Various sources list a residential address for Mr. Hatahet in northwest central Brussels.¹⁴⁵ Security sources in Belgium describe Mr. Hatahet as the most important Muslim Brotherhood figure in Belgium, and a Bassem Hatahet was listed in a 1999 phonebook belonging to Youssef Nada, a self-described leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who was designated by the U.S. in 2002 as a terrorist financier.^{146 147} Mr. Hatahet is an executive in at least two real-estate related businesses in Brussels, and a March 2007 announcement published by the city of Brussels indicates that he was constructing an apartment building with eleven apartments at that time.¹⁴⁸ One of the businesses, Eurocim European Capital Investment Management, lists Monsieur Mohamed Rachad Hatahet with an address in Damascus as the other officer.¹⁴⁹ The other business, Nitro EU Consulting, lists Karim Chemlal as Manager.¹⁵⁰

2. Karim Chemlal

Karim Chemlal is a 40 year old resident of Brussels, born in Morocco and now also a naturalized citizen of Belgium.¹⁵¹ He has a PhD in microbiology and has been employed in that field. As noted above, he is listed as the Manager of Nitro EU Consulting, where Bassem

¹⁴² Headquarters of FIOE : Euro-Muslim

<http://www.euro-muslim.net/English/fioe/headquarters-of-fioe>.

¹⁴³ White Pages look up for "Hatahet,"

<http://www.whitepages.be/search/hatahet.html;jsessionid=12A6A7BE1D50898AB3DB22155B3CA7B>.

¹⁴⁴ Ab wann ist ein Embryo ein menschliches Lebewesen?

<http://www.aerztezeitung.de/panorama/?sid=436219>.

¹⁴⁵ White Pages look up for "Hatahet,"

<http://www.whitepages.be/search/hatahet.html;jsessionid=12A6A7BE1D50898AB3DB22155B3CA7B>.

¹⁴⁶ Youssef Nada phonebook.

¹⁴⁷ "Designation of 10 Terrorist Financiers Fact Sheet," *U.S. Treasury Department Press Release*, April 19, 2002.

¹⁴⁸

<http://www.brucity.be/pdf/commission%20de%20concertation%20de%20dossier/2007/OJ070904.pdf>.

¹⁴⁹ Eurocim 2006 Annual Report.

¹⁵⁰ Dun & Bradstreet, Inc., Worldbase, August 14, 2005, NITRO EU CONSULTING SPRL.

¹⁵¹ Nitro EU 2007, Corporate document.

Hatahet is an executive, and his current address in Brussels is located close to the apartment building that Mr. Hatahet is constructing. He was also listed in July 1999 as a responsible party on the founding documents for a Moroccan immigrant organization known as Nibras.¹⁵² Dr. Chemlal has been active in Belgian Islamic affairs including:

- Dr. Chemlal was one of the nine individuals from Belgium who endorsed the “Amman Message”, a statement that was issued on 9 November 2004 by King Abdullah II of Jordan, calling for tolerance and unity in the Muslim world.¹⁵³ Among the other signers in Belgium were Khallad Swaid, the former President of FEMYSO, and Mohamed Boulif, a former President of the Islamic Executive Council. Many of the signatories to the Amman message are known to be part of the global Muslim Brotherhood, and the effort was based partially on the fatwas of Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi.¹⁵⁴
- In February 2006, Dr. Chemlal was listed as a contact person on an online petition protesting the Danish cartoons.¹⁵⁵
- Dr. Chemlal, along with the other Belgian signers of the Amman Message, attended a July 2006 conference in Istanbul titled “Muslims In Europe.” The conference also featured many prominent members of the global Muslim Brotherhood including Bosnian Grand Mufti, Mustafa Ceric, Tunisian Islamist Rachid Ghannouchi, and Ahmed Al-Rawi, the President of the FIOE.¹⁵⁶

Recent news reports describe Dr. Chemlal as representing FIOE in Belgium.¹⁵⁷ The FIOE website lists him as both the contact person for the FIOE Belgian member organization and as the head of the FIOE Youth and Student department.^{158 159}

Conclusions

This report has identified a more elaborate Muslim Brotherhood infrastructure in Belgium than was previously known publicly. The 2002 Belgian parliamentary report identified only the Ligue Islamique Interculturelle De Belgique (LIIB) and the early student organizations as part of that infrastructure. Conspicuously absent was the entire Hamas

¹⁵² Nibras 2660 Hoboken SATZUNGEN *** Veröffentlichung: 2000-01-13 N. 001029

Identification : 10292000 MWST oder Unternehmensnummer: : 469124266.

¹⁵³ Official Website of The Amman Message, “Grand List of Endorsements of the Amman Message and its Three Points,”

http://www.ammannmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=31

¹⁵⁴ Official Website of The Amman Message, “The Amman Message,”

<http://www.ammannmessage.com/>.

¹⁵⁵ BRIEF N.A.V. DE KARIKATUREN VAN DE PROFEET :: Voem vzw :: www.voem-vzw.be

<http://www.voem-vzw.be/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=202>.

¹⁵⁶ Muslims of Europe Conference,

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070329013229/www.muslimsofeurope.com/invitees.php>.

¹⁵⁷ Nawab Khan, “Belgian Activist Lauds Kuwait’s Role in Establishing European Muslims,” *KUNA*, January 24, 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Members : Euro-Muslim

<http://www.euro-muslim.net/English/members>.

¹⁵⁹ Contact Us : Euro-Muslim

<http://www.euro-muslim.net/English/yo-yo-yo/contact-us>.

support operation in Verviers, mentioned only briefly in the report as part of the Hamas “presence” in Belgium. It is not clear why Al-Aqsa Belgium and CECIV/Essalem were not included as part of the Belgian Muslim Brotherhood. It is also not clear why the Belgian government never acted to shutdown Al-Aqsa Belgium as both Germany and the Netherlands did. While sources in the Belgian security service say this was due to the lack of a Belgian anti-terror law, it should also be noted that in 2006, Belgium, along with France and Ireland, argued against declaring the political wing of Hamas a terrorist group, a position that might shed light on the thinking behind the decision.¹⁶⁰ As noted in the report, Al-Aqsa Belgium has been successful at preserving the Al-Aqsa Foundation in Europe following the cessation of operations in Germany and the Netherlands.

The record of the Brotherhood operations in Brussels is more mixed. Beyond sponsoring a youth conference under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the Ligue Islamique Interculturelle De Belgique does not appear to have succeeded in gaining recognition from any governmental organizations, and the Belgian government does appear to have succeeded in keeping the Brotherhood out of the government-sponsored Muslim council by screening the members for extremist backgrounds.¹⁶¹ This is in sharp contrast to France, for example, where the government sponsored elections resulted in a dominant role for the Muslim Brotherhood organization there. Although, as this report has documented, the Belgian Brotherhood has recently created a series of new national organizations, it is not clear that any of them has yet been particularly active or successful.

Far more successful have been the Belgian-based components of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), particularly the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO) which have managed to achieve official status at the UN, as well as with the Council of Europe and the European Commission. In addition, the location of the FIOE national office in Brussels has resulted in elevating the status of the Belgian branch that recently reported becoming “very active.” Leading the FIOE office in Brussels is Bassem Hatahet, whose name appears on virtually all of the paperwork associated with the Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Belgian. This would appear to confirm Mr. Hatahet’s role as the most important figure in the Belgian Brotherhood as reported by the Belgian security services.

¹⁶⁰ “Magistrates Allege Italian Sources of Funding for Hamas,” *BBC Monitoring Europe – Political*, August 21, 2006.

¹⁶¹

http://eycb.coe.int/eycbwwwroot/hre/eng/LTTCDC/LTTCDC_participants_projects/haoua.htm.

Appendix 1

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN BELGIUM

