



The Turkish IHH, which led the Mavi Marmara flotilla, operates in the Gaza Strip and is involved in its reconstruction

October 20, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ The Turkish IHH organization announced the launch of a project to clear rubble and open blocked roads in the Gaza Strip as part of reconstruction efforts, following the declaration of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. **The organization was involved in launching flotillas to the Gaza Strip, foremost of which was the Mavi Marmara flotilla which ended in a violent confrontation with IDF forces in May 2010 and the Global Sumud ("resilience") flotilla, which was halted by the IDF in October 2025.**
- ▶ The IHH is an NGO founded in 1992 and with close ties to the Turkish government. It promotes radical Islamist, anti-Israeli and anti-Western activity. Bülent Yıldırım, the head of the organization, has repeatedly made anti-Israeli and antisemitic statements.
- ▶ The IHH also has ties with Hamas and was outlawed in Israel in 2008 due to its involvement in a network of charity associations which raised funds for Hamas institutions abroad.
- ▶ This study is based on dozens of reports issued about the IHH by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC) since 2010. It summarizes the main aspects of the ties between the organization and Hamas and the central role Bülent Yıldırım plays, in cooperation with Hamas, in the campaign to delegitimize Israel.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, the IHH's involvement in reconstruction activity in the Gaza Strip may be another way of strengthening Hamas' influence over affairs in the Strip even after the ceasefire goes into effect. The locating of Hamas headquarters in Turkey, which is one of the sponsors of the ceasefire agreement, and the ties between the movement and the IHH, may also provide Hamas with a direct channel for transferring funds and equipment to restore the military wing, under the cover of humanitarian aid. In addition, the direct connection between the IHH and the Turkish government, one of the signatories to the**

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

ceasefire agreement and an unreserved supporter of Hamas, gives the Turkish regime a foothold in the Gaza Strip and increases its regional influence on Israel's border.

Background

► On October 17, 2025, the IHH announced the launch of a new project in the northern Gaza Strip to clear rubble and open blocked roads, part of reconstruction efforts following the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas on October 10, 2025, with Turkey one of the states signing the agreement alongside the United States, Egypt and Qatar. The IHH published videos of tractors and other heavy equipment carrying out the activities, as they flew IHH and Turkish flags (IHH X account, October 17, 2025).²



IHH teams operating in the northern Gaza Strip (IHH X account, October 17, 2025)

► According to data provided by the IHH, since the start of the war it has provided extensive humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, including more than 214,000 food packages, hot meals for 37 million people, clothing for children, hygiene kits, blankets, drinking-water containers and medical equipment and first-aid kits (IHH website, October 19, 2025). It declared that it will remain in the Gaza Strip "until the pains end." According to its post, it delivers hot meals and medicines to thousands of families every day, which is not only aid but "resistance, patience, brotherhood" (IHH X account, October 19, 2025).

² For the full video, see <https://x.com/TurkishCairoAmb/status/1979479978149347804>



IHH aid trucks in the Gaza Strip (IHH X account, October 19 2025)³

- In addition, on October 19 2025, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with representatives of NGOs which delivered aid to the Gaza Strip as part of the so-called "platform for supporting Palestine." IHH head Bülent Yıldırım, who participated in the meeting, said they examined how to "strengthen solidarity toward the oppressed Palestinian people and increase awareness in international public opinion" (Bülent Yıldırım's X account, October 19 2025).
- Since 2010, the ITIC has published dozens of studies on the IHH's activity and its ties to Hamas and other terrorist organizations, with the following conclusions:
 - **The IHH is a radical Islamist, anti-Israeli and anti-Western NGO which was outlawed in Israel in 2008.** It is tied closely to the Turkish government, is an important member of the international coalition engaged in the campaign to delegitimize Israel and participates in its actions. The organization is headed by Bülent Yıldırım, who for years has been known for anti-Israeli and antisemitic statements.
 - **The IHH led efforts to dispatch flotillas to the Gaza Strip in an attempt to "break the blockade" and purchased the ships that participated in the Mavi Marmara flotilla, which ended in a violent confrontation planned by the IHH in advance, with Israeli Navy commandos on May 31, 2010. The organization was also involved in the Global Sumud flotilla which was halted by the Israeli Navy en route to the Gaza Strip in early October 2025.**
 - The IHH has a close relationship with Hamas due to their mutual following of the Muslim Brotherhood's Sunni-Islamic radical ideology. The organization serves as a conduit for transferring funds directly to finance the Hamas military wing, used, among other things, for constructing a training facility for the naval force and purchasing equipment and weapons.

³ For the full video, see <https://x.com/ihhinsaniyardim/status/1979919125091922295>

► **The present report has three appendices:**

- ◆ Appendix A: Profile of the IHH and its ties with Hamas.
- ◆ Appendix B: Profile of Bülent Yıldırım and notable statements.
- ◆ Appendix C: List of the ITIC's main publications on IHH.

Appendix A: Profile of the IHH

► The IHH, whose full name in Turkish is İnsani Yardım Vakfı, Humanitarian Relief Foundation, was established in Germany in 1992 during the war in Bosnia. Its founder was the Turkish nationalist-religious movement Millî Görüş, established by former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, considered the political mentor of Turkey's current president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erbakan's doctrine is based on close cooperation and unity among Muslim states and a "struggle" against Zionism.

► From its early days the IHH identified with global jihad organizations. Among other things, it assisted the transfer of jihad fighters to Bosnia in the 1990s, and maintained a close relationship with al-Qaeda, recruiting operatives for it to various arenas, including Bosnia, Chechnya and Afghanistan.

► **The IHH has close ties with the Turkish government, led by the Justice and Development Party which has ruled the country since 2002.** It adopted the strategy led by the government under Erdoğan to turn Turkey into an influential regional power, within which NGOs serve as a tool for promoting the state's influence. The IHH is also linked to TİKA, a Turkish governmental aid agency subordinate to the Prime Minister's Office which was formerly headed by Hakan Fidan, now Turkey's foreign minister and previously intelligence chief. The Turkish government places state capabilities at the IHH's disposal, such as the use of ports and satellite communications, and there is political cooperation between the organization and the Justice and Development Party, and the support of IHH activists helped elect Erdoğan as prime minister in 2002 and strengthened his political power.



IHH leader Bülent Yıldırım (right) with Erdoğan (IHH Facebook page, June 3, 2019)

Ties with Hamas

► The IHH and Hamas share the same Sunni-Islamist ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, on which their cooperation is based. Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, relations between them have become close, and the IHH has a presence in the Gaza Strip, providing assistance for Hamas' civilian infrastructure. The IHH claims its activity in the Gaza Strip is humanitarian, yet in practice it has transferred funds to the Hamas administration in the Strip and donated money to families of shaheeds. The IHH head also visited the Gaza Strip in January 2010 and met Isma'il Haniyeh, a senior Hamas figure at the time, and later head of the Hamas political bureau.



Yıldırım (left) with Khaled Mashal, former head of Hamas' political bureau (IHH Magazine, April–June 2009)

► The IHH is also a member of the Union of Good, an umbrella organization of more than 50 Islamic charities worldwide which channels funds to Hamas institutions in the Palestinian territories. As part of its membership, the IHH has ties with other Islamic charities which assist Hamas around the globe. Such assistance includes initiating and carrying out joint projects to support the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, as well as Hamas' civilian infrastructure in Judea and Samaria, and serves as a terrorism-supporting entity. **Due to its involvement in the Union of Good, the organization was outlawed in Israel in 2008.**

► In February 2017 Israeli security forces detained a Gazan named Muhammad Farouq Shaaban Murtaja, who managed the Gaza Strip branch of TIKA. Previously, he has been deputy head of the IHH's Gaza branch. During questioning he revealed that Muhammad Kaya, who headed the IHH's Gaza branch, had for years regularly transferred cash arriving from Turkey to Hamas seniors, and that Murtaja himself had exploited his standing in Hamas and the IHH to transfer \$80,000 from the IHH to Hamas.

IHH involvement in the Mavi Marmara and other flotillas

► One way the IHH helped Hamas was its involvement in flotillas and "aid" convoys to "break the blockade" of the Gaza Strip. In December 2009, the IHH participated in an aid convoy sent by Viva Palestina, an organization led by far-left former British MP George Galloway. The Egyptian authorities allowed part of the convoy to enter the Strip via the Rafah Crossing, but a riot broke out at the Crossing between the convoy and Egyptian security forces, during which dozens of IHH activists were wounded.

► **The IHH was the driving force behind the flotilla project, whose objective was to challenge Israel's policy regarding maritime movement to the Gaza Strip.** It played a central role in the flotilla, which ended in a violent confrontation with Navy commandos aboard the Mavi Marmara on May 31, 2010 and in the deaths of ten "Turkish activists." The IHH led the planning of the flotilla, helped purchase its three vessels (including the Mavi Marmara), provided the coalition that launched the flotilla with Turkish state capabilities and planned the violent confrontation with the IDF without informing its coalition partners.

► **Statements given by IDF soldiers who took part in the raid on the Mavi Marmara revealed that dozens of "activists" participated in the fighting. They were armed with knives, axes, chains, clubs and possibly even firearms. The soldiers reported that the "activists" fought according to a plan and had central direction, and were equipped with weapons and military gear for the express purpose of attacking IDF soldiers and preventing them from boarding the ship at all costs.**

► A search of the ship found a book entitled Palestine – From the Zionist Idea to the Reality of Occupation, published by the IHH in 2009. It gave a one-sided, biased, hostile version of the history of Israeli-Palestinian, presented from an extreme Islamist perspective. Israel is depicted as having massacred Palestinians across generations even before its establishment. Palestinian terrorism is described briefly and sympathetically as "the Palestinian resistance

movement, which wages a "struggle" for independence. Israeli-Arabs are represented as Palestinians living in the "occupied Palestinian lands."

► In years the following the Mavi Marmara, the IHH remained involved in efforts to launch flotillas to the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, whose leaders include known Hamas operatives, such as Zaher Khaled Hassan Birawi (Abu Khaled), a Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood operative in Britain. **Since the start of the Gaza Strip War on October 7, 2023 the IHH has shown off the ships it purchases for flotillas to the Gaza Strip. The it also plays a logistical and organizational role in the Global Sumud flotilla of dozens of vessels which sailed toward the Gaza Strip and were halted by IDF forces in early October 2025** (Daily Sabah, October 3, 2025).

Appendix B: IHH Leader Bülent Yıldırım

► Bülent Fehmi Yıldırım was born in 1966 in Erzurum and studied law at Istanbul University. He is a lawyer and one of the founders of the IHH, today holding the position of president.

► In the mid-1990s Yıldırım helped recruit former soldiers and sent them to combat zones in Muslim countries to gain combat experience. **In 2002–2004 he played a key role in stoking anti-American sentiment among Muslims in Turkey during the war in Iraq.**

► In January 2009 he met Khaled Mashal, then head of the Hamas political bureau, in Damascus, and today head of Hamas abroad. Khaled Mashal thanked him for the assistance the IHH gave Hamas. He later visited the Gaza Strip and met senior Hamas figures, include Isma'il Haniyeh, head of the Hamas political bureau.

► Yıldırım was the driving force behind the Mavi Marmara flotilla, from the first stage of purchasing the ships to obtaining donations and organizing the passenger list. He and other senior IHH figures stayed in a special separate area on board the ship during the voyage, where he gave religious lessons and indoctrinated the activists, and gave interviews to the media. **After he was released from detention in Israel following the violent confrontation on the**

ship, Yıldırım admitted they "used violence" against IDF soldiers, claiming it was "self-defense."



Bülent Yıldırım (IHH website, 10 April 2025)

► Over the years Bülent Yıldırım issued anti-Israeli and anti-Western and antisemitic statements:

- ◆ On March 31, 2010, in a speech delivered at a support rally in Istanbul ahead of the Mavi Marmara flotilla, he said, "Israel's attack in Gaza [Operation Cast Lead] is part of a comprehensive attack to which the Muslim world is subjected. Let us look at the picture of all the wars in the world. The United States kills Muslims. Where? In Afghanistan. NATO forces kill Muslims. Where? In Iraq. Russia kills Muslims. Where? In Chechnya. China kills Muslims. Where? In East Turkestan. Israel kills Muslims. Where? In Palestine" ... "On the day we agree to be the West's slaves we have failed. That is the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan and Chechnya, but with Allah's help we will not allow this in Palestine" ... "If the owners of al-Quds are Muslims, control of the world will be in the hands of Muslims."
- ◆ On April 7, 2011 a memorial ceremony was held for the Mavi Marmara dead in the city of Alanya in southern Turkey. Yıldırım gave a speech in which he said, "we are not afraid to fall as shaheeds" and "we will not retreat until the blockade on Gaza has been lifted" and "until we complete the journey of al-Aqsa Mosque."
- ◆ In April 2025 Yıldırım accused Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu of "murdering" children and women and innocents in the Gaza Strip and claimed that the American president "is leading the world to war." He called normalization with Israel "betrayal," advocated for stopping trade and energy ties with Israel and with the United States, and claimed "Israel will have to leave because whoever commits massacres cannot remain in the Middle East" (IHH website, 10 April 2025).

- ◆ At a rally in support of the Global Sumud flotilla in Istanbul in early October 2025, he condemned Israel for detaining the activists and calls on "the Jews" to rise up, saying, "I am addressing the Jews first. Go to the prime minister's palace or to the parliament building, storm those places, and throw Netanyahu and your government out with all your might" (Yeni Şafak, October 3, 2025).
- ◆ In a speech delivered at the reception for the Global Sumud flotilla activists who arrived in Turkey after being released from detention in Israel, he said that "Netanyahu and Zionism tried to kill humanity [sic]." He added that the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip had been achieved thanks to "the resistance of the Palestinians at home and the movement of the peoples abroad" (IHH website, October 10, 2025).



Yıldırım at the reception for the flotilla activists (IHH website, October 10, 2025)

Appendix C: Selected ITIC Studies on the IHH

► the IHH plays a central role in organizing the flotilla to the Gaza Strip: a Turkish humanitarian aid foundation with an extreme Islamist and anti-Western orientation which, in addition to its legitimate philanthropic activity, tries to assist extremist Islamist elements, including Hamas and at least in the past also global jihad elements (May 27 2010) – Hebrew only.

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/he/21199/>

► Profile of the Turkish Felicity Party an Islamic party of an anti-Western and anti-Israeli character, whose activists took part in the latest flotilla alongside IHH (June 21, 2010).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/18085/>

► Profile of Bülent Yıldırım, leader of the Turkish extremist Islamic organization IHH (June, 26 2010).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/18083/>

► The Iranian media publishes an interview with an Iranian expert on the Palestinian issue, who lives in Turkey and meets IHH activists. The interview describes the circumstances of IHH's establishment as a jihadi Islamic organization whose activists fought in Bosnia and emphasizes

the influence of Khomeini's ideology on the organization's modes of action (September 16, 2010).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/18024/>

► Bülent Yıldırım, the leader of IHH, recently gave an interview focusing on the Mavi Marmara events and the United States intention to designate IHH as a terrorist organization (December 6, 2010).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/17986/>

► A book and pamphlet by IHH found on the Mavi Marmara again illustrate a worldview hostile to Israel and entirely supportive of maximalist Palestinian demands (December 8, 2010).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/17983/>

► The Turkish organization IHH (full name İnsani Yardım Vakfı), Humanitarian Relief Foundation (January 11, 2011) – Hebrew only.

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/he/21199/>

► Detailed statements from IDF officers and soldiers, revealed for the first time and supported by extensive documentation, illustrate the offensive and brutal nature of the fighting by IHH activists and their partners aboard the "Marmara" (January 23, 2011).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/19076/>

► The Turkish IHH, with a background of assisting terrorist elements, maintains close ties with Turkey's AKP government, which grants it state support, logistical assistance and political-propaganda cover in the Mavi Marmara flotilla (January 24, 2011).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/19077/>

► Bülent Yıldırım, leader of the Turkish IHH organization, delivers another inflammatory speech in which he declares that "we are not afraid to fall as shaheeds " and "we will continue until we complete the journey of Al-Aqsa" (April 12, 2011).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/17923/>

► IHH, a Turkish jihadist organization that played a central role in the Mavi Marmara flotilla, heads an international anti-Israeli coalition that announces its intention to dispatch another flotilla to the Gaza Strip during 2014 (August 17, 2014).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/20703/>

► Hamas' military wing uses foreign aid money transferred to the Gaza Strip for its needs: the case of the manager of the Gaza Strip branch of the Turkish aid organization TİKA (March 27, 2017).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21183/>

► Organizing aid flotillas to the Gaza Strip: a challenge to Israel in the local and international arenas (7 April 2024).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/organizing-aid-flotillas-to-the-gaza-strip-and-international-arenas/>

► Turkey as a center for Hamas activity (27 February 2025).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/turkey-as-a-center-for-hamas-activity/>

► The Global Sumud Flotilla: a humanitarian campaign in the service of Hamas (4 September 2025).

<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/the-global-sumud-perseverance-flotilla-in-the-service-of-hamas/>