



May 28, 2017

## Iranian Support for Palestinian Terrorism: This year funds were again transferred to families of shaheeds in the Gaza Strip by the Iranian Martyrs Foundation through the PIJ-affiliated al-Ansar charity association



The al-Ansar charity association and the Iranian Palestinian Martyrs Foundation announce the distribution of funds to the families of shaheeds killed between the beginning of the second intifada and June 31 [according to the original], 2014 (Facebook page of the al-Ansar charity association, May 21, 2017).

## The Iranian Martyrs Foundation, through the al-Ansar Charity Association, Transfers Funds to Families of Palestinian Shaheeds

1. On May 21, 2017, the al-Ansar charity association, which operates in the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian branch of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation announced they would grant financial support to the families of shaheeds killed between the beginning of the second intifada (the "al-Aqsa intifada") and June 31 [sic], 2014 (Operation Protective Edge). The sum mentioned was \$2 million, and the distribution of the funds has already begun. Apparently money for the families of shaheeds killed in Operation Protective Edge will be distributed separately, as in previous years. In ITIC assessment the total sum of funds transferred from the Iranian Martyrs Foundation to the al-Ansar charity association is \$2.9 million. Thus over the past three years, in ITIC assessment, Iran has transferred about \$8.7 million.

2. **The al-Ansar charity association in the Gaza Strip is affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the second most important terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip. The PIJ has close ties with Iran, from which it receives both military and financial support. Al-Ansar was established during the second intifada (2001) and is in effect the operative arm of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation in the Gaza Strip, used by the Foundation as a pipeline to funnel funds into the Gaza Strip, in indirect support of terrorism.** The money also serves to increase **Iran's influence among the Palestinian people** and sends a message to the **Sunni Arab world** that it is **Iran which is supporting the Palestinians in their struggle against Israel.**

3. **The Iranian Martyrs Foundation, which sends large amounts of money to al-Ansar every year, is an Iranian foundation** established by the Ayatollah Khomeini to support the families of fighters killed in the Iran-Iraq War. The Foundation has a **branch in Lebanon supporting Hezbollah, and a Palestinian branch, also located in Lebanon, which transfers funds to the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria.** In 2007 **the Iranian Martyrs Foundation and its branches in Lebanon were designated by the American Department of the Treasury as sponsoring terrorism because they gave funds to Hezbollah, Hamas and the PIJ** (See the Appendix). In 2003 Israel outlawed al-Ansar, but it renewed its activity after Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

4. Since the days of the second intifada, Islamic charity associations affiliated with terrorist organizations operating the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria have served as **pipelines channeling Iranian financial support to the Palestinians.** The money sent by Iran is earmarked for **the social services that support the terrorist organizations.** Past experience has shown that the **funds intended for social services can trickle into the military-terrorist wings of the various terrorist organizations,** despite their official title of "funds for charity" (the Ayatollah Khomeini gave religious justification for diverting Muslim funds intended for charitable purposes, into supporting the Palestinians instead).

5. In ITIC assessment, **the funds are being transferred on the occasion of the Muslim religious month of Ramadan,** which began on May 27, 2017. (Last year as well, al-Ansar distributed funds to the families of shaheeds during Ramadan). However, Iran's public declaration of transferring the funds may also be regarded as defying the pressure reportedly exerted on the Palestinian Authority (PA) by the United States and Israel not to give payments to the families of shaheeds and prisoners in Israeli jails.

## The Current al-Ansar Money Transfer

6. **Nasser al-Sheikh Ali, spokesman for the al-Ansar charity association in the Gaza Strip**, recently said that al-Ansar and the Iranian Martyrs Foundation would together transfer **the sum of \$2 million to the families of shaheeds in the Gaza Strip**. The money would be given to the families of shaheeds killed between the beginning of the second intifada (the "al-Aqsa intifada") and June 31 [sic], 2014. He claimed **the money would be distributed** through post office branches **to about 5,000 families**. **The family of an unmarried shaheed would receive \$300 and the family of a married shaheed would receive \$600** (Filastin al-Yawm and al-Istaqlal, May 21, 2017).

7. On May 21, 2017, al-Ansar issued a statement as to **how the funds would be distributed**: family members of shaheeds can go to the association's offices between May 23, 2017, when distribution begins, and June 5, 2017, where they will be given checks. They will then be directed to various **post office branches** designated by al-Ansar where the checks can be cashed. A visitor to the al-Ansar Facebook page asked why funds were not being provided for the shaheeds of Operation Protective Edge, and was told, "That will happen soon, if Allah so wishes" (al-Ansar website, Facebook page and Twitter account May 21, 2017).

## Funds Distributed to Families of Shaheeds and Prisoners, 2015-2-16

8. The Iranians distributed funds to the families of shaheeds and prisoners in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria **in 2015 and 2016** as well.

a. On **February 24, 2016**, the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon held a press conference in the Iranian embassy where he announced **Iran's intention to give financial support to the "al-Quds intifada"** (the name Hamas gave to the wave of Palestinian population terrorism). Iran, he said, **would give \$7,000 to the family of every shaheed and \$30,000 to every family whose house was razed by Israel**. The total amount is estimated at **about \$2 million**. In ITIC assessment, the Iranian objective was to encourage the wave of anti-Israel terrorism. The funds would be transferred by the Palestinian branch of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation, circumventing the PA. **The PA was strongly critical of the**

**announcement, which it regarded as attempted Iranian subversion.** It is unclear how much money was actually transferred and by what means.<sup>1</sup>



**Press conference held in the Iranian embassy in Beirut where Mohammad Fateh Ali, Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, announced the proposed Iranian financial support for the al-Quds intifada. Also present was Osama Hamdan, in charge of Hamas' external relations. The sign in the background reads, "Press conference to implement the Tehran announcement regarding support for the Al-Quds intifada." The Arabic at the lower left reads, "Iran's embassy in Beirut" (YouTube, February 24, 2016).**

b. During Ramadan 2016<sup>2</sup> al-Ansar distributed **funds to the families of shaheeds killed during Operation Protective Edge.** According to the association, **\$631,000** was distributed to the first group of families of 1,630 shaheeds (al-Wataniya news agency, June 25, 2016). During the first half of June 2016 funds were distributed to the families of shaheeds killed between **the beginning of the second intifada and June 31 [sic], 2014** (al-Ansar website, May 31, 2016). **Abu Khaled**, (apparently **Nasser al-Sheikh Ali**, deputy head of al-Ansar, and apparently also the association's spokesman), **thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran and its leadership for their support** during an interview with Iran's al-Alam TV channel (July 2, 2016).

<sup>1</sup> See the March 2, 2016 bulletin, "Encouragement for the Palestinian Terrorist Campaign through Financial Support. Iran announces its intention to provide funds for the families of Palestinian shaheeds and families whose houses were demolished by Israel."

<sup>2</sup> In 2016 Ramadan began on June 6 and ended on July 4.



Abu Khaled, deputy chairman of the al-Ansar charity association in the Gaza Strip, was interviewed by Iran's al-Alam TV at the association's offices in Gaza. He thanked the Islamic Republic and the Iranian leadership for financial support. At the left are pictures of Khomeini and Khamenei (al-Alam TV, July 2, 2016).



Left: "Iran is with the Palestinian people until after victory and liberation." In the upper left corner is the al-Ansar charity association logo; the Iranian Martyrs Foundation logo is at the upper right.

Right: Screenshot of a program broadcast on the Iranian al-Alam TV channel in the Gaza Strip regarding distribution points for Iranian aid in the Gaza Strip during Ramadan, 2016. The upper inscription reads, "al-Ansar charity association. The shaheed foundation – Palestine. Iran with the families of the shaheeds. Ramadan in Gaza. Iranian support for the families in the Gaza Strip continues during the blessed month" (al-Alam TV, July 2, 2016).

- c. On **April 12, 2015**, al-Ansar announced **the distribution of \$2 million to the families of 5,000 shaheeds** who had been killed between the beginning of the second intifada and June 31 [sic], 2014. The funds would be transferred by the

Palestinian branch of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation (al-Ansar website, April 12, 2015; al-Ansar Facebook page, April 5, 2015).<sup>3</sup>

d. On **January 18, 2015**, al-Ansar called on residents of the Gaza Strip whose sons had been killed during Operation Protective Edge to bring the relevant documents to arrange for the transfer of funds from the Iranian Martyrs Foundation. **About 2,200 families would each receive \$400**. The **sum total** of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation transfer was estimated at **about \$900,000** (the same amount can be estimated for both 2016 and 2017). The money was distributed through post office branches in the Gaza Strip.

## Estimated Amount Transferred from Iran to al-Ansar, 2015-2017

9. According to the ITIC's partial information, there is a pattern of transferring funds to the Gaza Strip **by the Iranian Martyrs Foundation through the al-Ansar charity association** (as in 2015-2017).

a. **The sum total of \$2 million** is paid annually to the families of shaheeds killed between the second intifada and Operation Protective Edge (September 2000 to June 2014).

b. **The sum total of \$900,000** has been paid annually to the families of 2,200 shaheeds killed in Operation Protective Edge. So far this year the funds have not been transferred.

10. In ITIC assessment, **the Iranian Martyrs Foundation transfers \$2.9 to the al-Ansar charity association every year**, to be distributed to the families of shaheeds. **The total for 2015, 2016 and 2017 is estimated at about \$8.7 million dollars. In addition, Iran may use other channels besides al-Ansar to transfer funds to the Gaza Strip.** The Iranian Martyrs Foundation also transfers money to the families of shaheeds and families whose houses were razed by Israel **in Judea and Samaria**, through so far unknown channels.

<sup>3</sup> See the April 29, 2015 bulletin, "Iranian Support for Palestinian Terrorism: Funds Transferred to Gazan Shaheeds' Families by Palestinian Islamic Jihad-Affiliated Al-Ansar Charity Association."

## Appendix

### American Treasury Statement (July 24, 2007) regarding the Iranian Martyrs Foundation<sup>4</sup>

1. On July 24, 2007, the American Treasury Department designated the Iranian Martyrs Foundation under Executive Order 13224.<sup>5</sup> According to the Department, the Iranian Martyrs Foundation **"channels financial support from Iran to several terrorist organizations in the Levant, including Hizballah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).** To this end, the Martyrs Foundation established **branches in Lebanon staffed by leaders and members of these same terrorist groups.** Martyrs Foundation branches in Lebanon have also provided financial support to the families of killed or imprisoned Hizballah and PIJ members, including suicide bombers in the Palestinian territories" [ITIC emphasis throughout].

2. The statement continued, "In addition to fundraising responsibilities senior Martyrs Foundation officials were directly involved in Hizballah operations against Israel during the July-August 2006 conflict. **In addition, a Lebanon-based leader of the Martyrs Foundation has directed and financed terrorist cells in the Gaza Strip that worked with Hizballah and PIJ"** (Website of the American Treasury Department, July 24, 2007).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp503.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/122570.htm>