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For immediate release

Interpal is not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, so why is it in the government's review?

The government's review into the Muslim Brotherhood includes Interpal (paragraphs of 30 and 34 of the summary). The trustees of Interpal wish to put it on record that the charity is neither linked to nor a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, or any other political party or organisation.

The authors of the review appear to be determined to make links that are not there, or to imply by omission that they are. "In 2003 the UK charity Interpal was designated as a terrorist entity by the US Treasury," they wrote, "primarily on the grounds of alleged links to Hamas."

"We find it very strange for the British government to be laying so much emphasis on what a foreign government has done to a British charity given that its own regulatory body has always cleared Interpal of any wrongdoing," commented Ibrahim Hewitt, Interpal's chair of trustees. "The report does not mention that the US government has never, despite numerous opportunities and requests to do so, provided any evidence for the designation. In fact, the US Treasury has hinted to our US lawyer that the designation was a 'political' decision." According to a WikiLeaks document, he added, the Americans branded Interpal "absent a smoking gun"; in short, there is no evidence that the charity has ever directed funds for non-charitable purposes.

Whatever the charity has been directed to do by the Charity Commission, its trustees have done so unhesitatingly. This includes distancing itself from, for example, the Union for Good. For the review to state baldly that, "The Charity Commission took regulatory action against Interpal in 2009" without noting the nature of this action and the fact that the charity fulfilled all of the regulatory body's directives suggests very strongly that the mention of the politically-neutral and non-Brotherhood charity was made with an ulterior motive in mind. "This quite possibly has very little to do with the Muslim Brotherhood and everything to do with the fact that Interpal helps Palestinians with desperately needed humanitarian aid," Hewitt suggested.

Such a conclusion is given further credence by the repetition of the stale allegation that the "chairman of Interpal has written openly in support of the death penalty for homosexuality and stoning to death of married men and women found guilty of adultery." Such accusations arose a couple of years ago on pro-Israel websites; they refer to a booklet written by Hewitt in the early nineties — almost a quarter of a century ago — called "What does Islam say?" The title itself is a bit of a giveaway.

"Despite around 50,000 copies of the book being in circulation," Interpal's chair explained, "neither the publisher nor I have ever received any complaints about the content, until that criticism on those

websites in 2013.” He repeated his insistence that what people get up to behind closed doors is none of his business, or anyone else’s.

Ends

For further information

Contact Interpal on ProjectsAdministration@interpal.org

Notes to Editors

Interpal was founded in 1994 to provide humanitarian and development aid to Palestinians in need. Interpal are a British registered non-political charity working on the ground in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan. The latter includes support given to refugees fleeing from the violence in neighbouring Syria.

Interpal’s aim is to alleviate the suffering and disadvantage faced by the Palestinian people through immediate relief and also to support the Palestinian society through long term development programmes.

Interpal has worked for 20 years, ensuring it is a well-established and trusted development agency working with and for the people of Palestine.

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