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ISLAMISM

Hannoun's arrest reveals a Hamas cell in Italy

POLITICS

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Hamas has a cell in Italy. This is the conclusion reached by Italian investigators after more than two years of meticulous investigations, financial flows sifted through and cross-border investigative cooperation: the invisible web linking Europe to Gaza seems to have emerged suddenly, but it unfolds on the table of history like a secret map finally deciphered.

Operation “*Domino*”, coordinated by the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor’s Office, with the cooperation of Italian and European investigative agencies, led to the arrest of nine people, including the well-known imam Mohammad Mahmoud Ahmad Hannoun. This outcome, while respecting the presumption of innocence of those involved, lifts the veil on a stable channel of support for Islamic terrorism, rooted in Italy and passed off as solidarity.

More than seven million euros are said to have been intercepted and confiscated, collected

through three alleged charities and, according to the charges, ending up in the coffers of the organisation responsible for the massacre on 7 October. This figure, investigators warn, represents only a fraction of much larger and partly untraceable flows. A total of 17 searches were carried out in various Italian cities, involving 25 suspects. During the operations, over €1 million in cash was seized from association headquarters and private homes; approximately €560,000 was hidden in a garage in Sassuolo among Palestinian flags and keffiyehs. €6,000 and a Hamas flag were found in a house.

Operation "Domino" has its roots well before 7 October, starting with reports of suspicious transactions. From there, the trail led to leading figures in the organisation, such as Osama Alisawi, former minister of the de facto government in the Gaza Strip, who was identified as the direct solicitor of support. A mosaic that now, piece by piece, reveals a dark design behind the ambiguous rhetoric of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people to fuel one of the most closely watched and feared terrorist organisations in the world.

Imam Hannoun, the omnipresent and charismatic face of pro-Palestinian street protests in Italy in recent years, with his keffiyeh and megaphone as symbols of identity, is identified by investigators as a leading figure in Hamas: the architect of a powerful fundraising machine, linked by a financial thread that connects Italy, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and finally Gaza. According to the investigation, he is the linchpin of the organisation's Italian cell and sits on the board of the European Palestinians Conference. He is accused of directing an endless collection of money, presented as humanitarian aid but instead — according to the prosecution — destined for the coffers of Hamas, the families of suicide bombers, prisoners held for terrorism, and the strengthening of the propaganda apparatus. An uninterrupted flow, which began in October 2001, capable of crossing years, borders and control systems.

Hannoun allegedly acted by exploiting a variety of roles, both formal and informal: legal representative of the Associazione Benefica di Solidarietà col Popolo Palestinese (A.b.s.p.p.), founded in Genoa in 1994, as well as promoter and manager of two other organisations — the Cupola d'Oro, opened in Milan in December 2023, and La Palma — created, according to investigators, to circumvent financial circuit blockages and ensure continuity of cash flows: a strategic project by Hamas, capable of establishing a complex structure, ramified abroad, and functional to the movement's objectives for its battles in the Middle East. The three associations have been seized for assets worth a total of around eight million euros. To understand the economic power of the network, it is enough to consider that an employee of A.b.s.p.p., Abu Rawwa,

representative for north-east Italy and now one of the men in handcuffs, is said to have purchased around forty properties at auction in just a few months.

It is in this context that A.B.S.P.P. is described in the documents as an external branch of the Hamas terrorist organisation, operating in Italy and embedded in a wider European network. Because it is not just about fundraising, there is also the construction of the entire propaganda narrative for the Palestinian cause.

Hence the financial support for the Infopal news site, which, according to reconstructions, was funded by one of the associations under investigation between 2010 and 2024 with over €300,000. The money, moreover, also travelled in full view, through formally unexceptionable bank transfers, shielded by apparent charitable causes.

Investigators identified, for example, between 2017 and 2023, 168 transfers abroad for over €1.5 million in the form of “long-distance adoptions of orphans”; “packages for the poor”; “hot meals”; “support for families”; “payment of school fees”, but intended for the Islamic terrorist organisation. Transfers to Turkish bank accounts totalling approximately €762,000 were also identified.

Last July, at the request of the Israeli Defence Minister, the Italian authorities were urged to freeze approximately \$500,000 allegedly destined for accounts linked to Hannoun. The request had no effect. Instead, the European anti-money laundering system intervened and, since 2021, has closed dozens of accounts due to the arrival of funds from sanctioned individuals. Hannoun reacted by inviting donors, via [Instagram](#), to a new financial “migration”.

The investigation reconstructs an organic structure around him. Among those arrested is Dawoud Ra'Ed Hussny Mousa, identified as a member of the foreign division and operational contact: an A.B.S.P.P. employee since 2016, co-head of the Milan office with Yaser. Al Salahat Raed, also considered part of the foreign department, joined the board of the European Palestinians Conference in 2023 and is identified as a key figure in the Italian cell, the contact person for Florence and Tuscany since July 2024.

With them are Elasal Yaser, an employee since 2016 and co-manager in Milan, and Albustanji Riyad Abdelrahim Jaber, active since 2015 in promoting fundraising: a Jordanian, arrested in Modena but resident in Norway, constantly moving between Italy, Europe and the West Bank. Rounding out the picture are Rade Al Salahat, the Tuscan representative for donations in mosques, who during wiretaps expressed appreciation

for terrorist attacks, and Abu Deiah Khalil, custodian of the Dome. It was Elasalay who suggested last August to the imam of Turin, Mohamed Shanin, now released by the Court of Appeal and not under investigation in this inquiry, not to reveal how funds were sent to Gaza. According to the order, Shahin speaks constantly with those arrested, is called into question and moves money with the man accused of raising funds in Turin to send them to Gaza.

In short, associationism, ideological militancy and financial flows welded

together in a planned operational architecture. Today's arrests do not close the story: they make it public. It is the moment when what has remained submerged for years comes to the surface, with all its gravity. And to think that those who, in recent months, dared to question the network now under investigation because of the many anomalies that were already emerging from daily news reports, ended up being branded as *accomplices to genocide*. Now that it has been discovered that Hamas was financed from Italy, one question remains open: did those rivers of money also support the immense media coverage beyond the collateral mobilisations? Was the financing of the Flotilla also involved?