



HELPING HAND FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

The Facts About Helping Hand for Relief and Development and the Islamic Circle of North America

Two Islamophobic organizations – the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT) and the Middle East Forum (MEF) – are conducting a politically motivated disinformation campaign against Helping Hand for Relief and Development and the Islamic Circle of North America. Based on misleading information, some members of Congress have called for investigations. This memo provides factual information that exposes the inaccuracies and misrepresentations in the IPT and MEF allegations.

What is Helping Hand for Relief and Development?

Founded in 1998, Helping Hand for Relief and Development (HHRD) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization which provides international humanitarian development aid and disaster relief. HHRD has collection centers in 14 states and, with a programs budget of over \$50 million in 2018, is funded almost exclusively by individual donations. HHRD has permanent offices in South Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East, and has operated development and disaster relief programs in over 50 countries around the world. HHRD's largest program is its Orphan Program through which, to date, nearly 20,000 orphans have been sponsored. HHRD also operates education programs, clean water programs, skills training programs, and many others.

HHRD is known for following the highest standards and best practices of development and relief work. It is a BBB accredited charity, a CFC charity, a member of InterAction, and has been given the highest rating by Charity Navigator due to its finances and transparency.



What is the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and ICNA Relief?

The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and ICNA Relief, while being separate organizations from HHRD with their own unique 501(c)3 statuses, are “sister organizations” of HHRD. ICNA is a religious organization with small chapters across the United States. Its notable activities include hosting an annual convention in the Baltimore-DC area, which is one of the largest annual gatherings of Muslim Americans, as well as several smaller regional conventions.

ICNA Relief is the domestic counterpart to HHRD, providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief within the United States. Its activities include running women's shelters, food pantries, health clinics, and responding to natural disasters. It has worked with a number of large humanitarian and relief organizations in the US and has received grants from FEMA for its important work.

What is Middle East Forum?

The Georgetown University Bridge Initiative describes Middle East Forum as “a right-wing anti-Islam think tank that spreads misinformation, creates “watchlists” targeting academics, and advocates hawkish foreign policy. MEF provides funding to numerous anti-Muslim organizations and has provided legal services to a number of anti-Muslim activists including Geert Wilders and Tommy Robinson.”¹

Its founder, Daniel Pipes, is infamous for asserting that President Barack Obama was a former Muslim who “practiced Islam.”²

It should be noted that Sam Westrop, Director of MEF’s Islamist Watch, has previously falsely accused an individual of terrorism, as determined by a British court, for which he was ordered to pay 140,000 GBP.³

What is Investigative Project on Terrorism?

The Center for American Progress describes IPT as “a research organization founded by Steven Emerson in 1995. In 2012, IPT’s revenue was \$2.5 million. IPT hallows itself for its collection of intelligence on Islamic terrorist groups, but the IPT’s chief function is presenting Islam as an inherently radical, violent, and antagonistic religion.”

Its founder, Steven Emerson has “a history of peddling questionable facts,” according to the Center for American Progress.⁴

Why do these false accusations matter?

The false accusations volleyed against HHRD serve as a distraction from the important work the organization was founded to do and could unfairly harm its reputation. Dollars that could have been spent on sponsoring orphans and staff time that could have been spent raising awareness of humanitarian need around the world are instead spent defending the organization against baseless claims. In the end, these politically motivated attacks hurt the beneficiaries of HHRD’s programs: orphans, refugees, survivors of natural disasters, and so many others. The accusations of these bad actors are phrased in terms of concern, but really they amount to a campaign to scare donors and to create needless obstacles preventing aid from reaching those in need.

¹ https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia_chapter2.pdf

² https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia_chapter2.pdf

³ [https://www.carter-ruck.com/images/uploads/documents/Harrath-v-\(1\)Stand_for_Peace-\(2\)Westrop-Judgment.pdf](https://www.carter-ruck.com/images/uploads/documents/Harrath-v-(1)Stand_for_Peace-(2)Westrop-Judgment.pdf)

⁴ <https://islamophobicnetwork.com/misinformation-expert/steven-emerson/>