Union of Health Work Committees' Ties to the PFLP Terror Group
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NGO Monitor’s mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1985, the Union of Health Work Committees (UHWC) is a “Palestinian, non-governmental, health, grass-rooted, non-profit organization” that claims to “provide comprehensive health services...to all sectors of the Palestinian people...through its health centers and community programs.” UHWC uses demonizing rhetoric, including accusing Israel of “Urbanicide,” “Genocide,” and “mass killing of civilians.” UHWC signed the 2005 Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS and helped organize the 2007 First Palestinian Conference for the Boycott of Israel (BDS).

UHWC is identified by Fatah as a PFLP “affiliate” and in a 1993 USAID-engaged audit report (by the Democratic Institutions Support Project) as “the PFLP’s health organization.” Citing PFLP connections, on June 9, 2015, Israel’s Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon declared that “the group of people or institutions or association known as the ‘Union of Health Work Committees-Jerusalem [HWC]’...or any other name that this association will be known by, including all of its factions and any branch, center, committee or group of this association is an unauthorized association, as defined by the Defense Regulations” (p.6489).

UHWC’s “sister organization” (as referred to by Viva Salud, one of its Belgian partners) in the West Bank and Jerusalem is Health Work Committees (HWC). HWC states that “among the outcomes of the post-Oslo situation, as a result of the geopolitical situation, the Health Work Committees formed separate administrations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Each department has worked relatively independently to maintain a healthy political and developmental vision and action strategies that take the site's privacy.”

THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PFLP)

Founded by George Habash in 1967, the PFLP is a secular Palestinian Marxist-Leninist organization, originally supported by the former Soviet Union and China. The PFLP is a terrorist organization, designated as such by the EU, the US, Canada, and Israel. The PFLP is involved in suicide bombings, shootings, and assassinations, among other terrorist activities targeting civilians, and was the first Palestinian organization to hijack airplanes in the 1960s and 1970s.

The group was responsible for the assassination of Israeli Minister of Tourism Rechavam Ze’evi in 2001, and its members joined with the Baader-Meinhof Gang (a West German radical group) to hijack an Air France Tel Aviv-bound flight in 1976, landing it in Entebbe, Uganda. PFLP members took credit for the house invasion and murder of the Fogel family in 2011 and was responsible for the massacre at a synagogue in Jerusalem’s Har Nof neighborhood in 2014 where four worshipers and an Israeli Druze police officer were murdered. The terror organization also praised its “comrades” for their role in the murder of Israeli Border Police office Hadas Malka, and wounding of four other Israelis in a June 16, 2017 attack in Jerusalem. In August 2019, a PFLP terror cell carried out a bombing against Israeli civilians, murdering 17-year-old Rina Shnerb, and injuring her father and brother.

The PFLP has never recognized the State of Israel, and opposes all negotiations, instead calling for the “liberation” of all of “historical Palestine,” regularly by means of terror.
In addition to UHWC, NGO Monitor has identified a broad network of Palestinian NGOs claiming to advance human rights or humanitarian interests that have links to the PFLP terror group. These connections include current and former NGO board members, officials, and employees who served in the PFLP or spoken on its behalf at public events and taken part in PFLP forums.

**Funding**

UHWC’s terror affiliation is antithetical to human rights norms and principles. Due to its affiliation with the PFLP, the provision of funds to UHWC is in likely violation of international, EU, and domestic terror financing and material support laws. The organization is therefore an inappropriate partner for governments and individuals seeking to further human rights in the region.

- In 2017, total income was NIS 14.7 million; total expenses were NIS 16.2 million.
- In October 2018 – December 2019, Canada provided $1 million (CAD) to UNICEF for “health programs” project in Gaza. The implementing partner listed on the project is UHWC (on file with NGO Monitor).
- In 2015-2018, the autonomous Basque Country in Spain provided UHWC and its Spanish NGO partners with €1 million.
- In 2015-2018, Belgium (Directorate-General for Development Cooperation; DGD) provided UHWC and Health Work Committees with €605,714 via the Belgian NGO Viva Salud (formerly Third World Health Aid).
- In 2013-2015, DGD provided UHWC and Palestinian Medical Relief Society with €185,306 via the Belgian NGO Oxfam Solidarité.
- In 2017-2018, UHWC received $953,793 from the UNOCHA oPt Humanitarian Fund for “Comprehensive Emergency response to immediate health and protection needs of vulnerable population of Gaza Strip” and for two projects at Al-Awda Hospital in Gaza.
- In 2016, UHWC and Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) received €30,000 “for the population of Gaza in the field of education and psychological support” from the French BDS group Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS).

**UHWC Organizational Ties to PFLP**

- UHWC is identified by Fatah as an official PFLP “affiliate” and by a 1993 USAID-engaged audit as the “the PFLP’s health organization.”
- As academic scholar Glenn E. Robinson, who also identifies UHWC as a “PFLP-affiliated health committee,” explains that “Many-probably most-doctors who joined the UHWC had political leanings similar to the leftist PFLP. As health committees tied to other political factions also existed, it was common for doctors and staff to work with that health group which reflected their politics. Both the providers and, to a lesser degree, the recipients of these medical services were aware of the larger political agenda. The ability to translate medical-and other social-services into a particular political vision was the key to the struggle within the Palestinian community for ideological hegemony” (emphasis added).
UHWC Tied to the PFLP Terror Group

- HWC’s Youth Development Program, “A community, cultural, and social development program that provide services to Jerusalemite youth through ‘Nidal Center,’” was shut down by Israeli authorities from 2009 to 2012 because, in the words of the Jerusalem District Court, it served as “a place of action of the [PFLP] organization.” According to the Jerusalem District Court, “following the closure of the [Center], the PFLP began operating under the guise of the non-profit the Union of Health Work Committees – Jerusalem...on June 9, 2015 at the request of the Minister of Defense the non-profit was an unlawful organization...”

Selected UHWC Staff Members with Ties to PFLP

Numerous UHWC staff members, founders, board members, and senior and subordinate staff members have ties to the PFLP terror group.

Dr. Rabah Muhanna: Referred to as one of UHWC’s “founders” and former “head.”

- According to the PFLP and the Palestinian NGO Al Mezan, Muhanna served as member of the PFLP political bureau.
- In 2012, speaking on behalf of the PFLP at an event “in Gaza City marking the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Front on December 10,” Muhanna declared that the PFLP “will continue to adhere to liberating all of historic Palestine, from the river to the sea, and will never recognize Israel.”
- According an August 2012 PFLP article, Muhanna spoke at a “Jerusalem Day rally in Gaza City” where affirmed that “Jerusalem is not going to be restored by absurd negotiations” and that “the most effective way to restore our rights, the city of Jerusalem and all of Palestine is constant struggle and resistance in all of its forms, popular, armed, cultural and economic.”
- On May 5, 2019, the PFLP issued a statement mourning Muhanna’s death and referring to him as a “warrior and a great national leader” and “one of the most prominent national leaders in the Gaza Strip.” During his funeral, Muhanna’s coffin was escorted by armed PFLP militants.
- Muhanna regularly participated in UHWC activities, such as accompanying foreign delegations and attending charity events.
- In addition to UHWC, Muhanna “contributed to the establishment” of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) and Addameer – two other PFLP “affiliate[s]” NGOs.
Dr. Mohammed Abdel Qader Abu Samr: A “founder”¹ and was a UHWC “member.”²

- Described by the PFLP as a “comrade fighter” in a 2016 statement mourning his death.

¹ According to a May 7, 2016 article on the PFLP’s website.
² According to a March 17, 2018 article published in Amaqps.net.
Magdi Yaghi:

UHWC treasurer,\(^3\) “board member” in 2016-2019; and 2016 “deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors.”

- The PFLP refers to Yaghi as a “member of the regional command” and a “comrade.”
- In February 2019, Yaghi participated in a memorial service organized by the PFLP for Maher Yamani, a PFLP “founder” and a “member of the Central Committee and one of its most prominent military commanders.” Yamani “coordinated special operations…in particular the operation against an aircraft of the Israeli company El Al in July 1968 in Greece.” “Fighters” of the PFLP’s Abu Ali Mustapha Brigades and “civil society representatives” attended the event (see photo below).
- In 2014, Yaghi participated in a PFLP organized field trip to several high schools in Gaza to commemorate the 47th anniversary of its founding.
- In addition to UHWC, Yaghi is involved with the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), another PFLP “affiliate.” In 2013, he served as a UAWC board member. He also participated in a 2019 UAWC event.

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\(^3\) As of an August 8, 2019 post on UHWC’s website.
In February 2019, Yaghi participated in a PFLP memorial service for PFLP founder Maher Yamani (Source: PFLP, “Popular Front in the Gaza Strip holds memorial…” February 4, 2019: https://tinyurl.com/y4cmbsxo)


- In 2015, Al Sultan attended a PFLP organized “graduation ceremony for the ‘Pioneers of Return’ camps in the Gaza Strip,” which featured armed PFLP activists performing military maneuvers.

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4 According to a June 2015 article on UHWC’s website.
Fares Nasser:
Director of Administration and Human Resources.⁵

- In 2017, Nasser hosted an event at his house to commemorate the 50 Anniversary of the establishment of the PFLP.

⁵ According to his Facebook profile, last accessed on October 10, 2019.
Suhail Al Tanani:

Referred to as the “Direction of the Union’s Communication and Advocacy Department” in an October 2019 interview posted on UHWC’s website. He was previously, in 2017, referred to as a Community Centers coordinator.⁶

- According to the PFLP, Al Tanani also serves as a staff officer at the PFLP Al-Qader school.
- The PFLP refers to Al Tanani as a “comrade.”
- In January 2019, Al Tanani spoke at a PFLP-organized graduation ceremony at the Al-Qader school.
- Spoke at an August 2018 event opening the Al-Qader al-Jabhawi school that featured a delegation of PFLP leadership. Al Tanani stated that the school would “work hard as an integrated team in order to preserve the revolutionary intellectual identity and build an advanced generation capable of facing current and future challenges.”

Dr. Fadi Al Ajrami:

In 2016, Al Ajrami was elected to UHWC’s Board of Directors. He is also referred to as a member of the Board of Directors in a May 2015 UHWC article.

- According to the PFLP, Al Ajrami is a “member of the Central Committee of the Popular Front.”

⁶ According to a November 2017 article on UHWC’s website.
Mariam Abu Dakka:

In May 2019, attended the UHWC “extraordinary general assembly.” She also attended the 2018 UHWC general assembly. Abu Dakka’s formal position within the NGO is unclear.

- Abu Dakka has been described as “one of the first female military leaders” and a “Palestinian female figure in armed resistance.”
- According to a January 2019 Jerusalem Post article, Abu Dakka is a “senior PFLP official.”
- In February 2019, Abu Dakka and Madgi Yaghi participated in a memorial service organized by the PFLP for Maher Yamani, a prominent PFLP commander (see Magdi Yaghi above).

Mohammed Abuzaid: Radiographer.

- Numerous posts on Abuzaid’s Facebook page demonstrate his connection to the PFLP, and in particular to its armed branch.


According to his Facebook profile, last accessed on October 10, 2019.
Ahmed M Alhawajra:

UHWC paramedic field worker (on file with NGO Monitor).⁸

- Alhawajra’s Facebook posts (below) indicate his involvement with the PLFP terror group and its armed branch (on file with NGO Monitor).

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⁸ According to Ahmed M Alhawajra’s Facebook, as of February 10, 2019. On file with NGO Monitor.
Fadi al-Khatib:

According to his Facebook account, is a “specialist” at UHWC (on file with NGO Monitor).⁹

- Al-Khatib also states that he is a “member of the Student Office at the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine” (on file with NGO Monitor).
- Al-Khatib’s Facebook posts indicate his involvement with the PLFP terror group and its armed branch (on file with NGO Monitor).

⁹ According to Fadi al-Khatib’s Facebook, as of July 2, 2019. On file with NGO Monitor.
UHWC’S 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On July 27, 2019, UHWC held its 2019 general assembly. Several senior PFLP members attended the event, including Jamil Mizher and Kayed al Ghoul, both members of the PFLP’s Political Bureau of the PFLP, and Abu Nidal Toman, a “member of the Central Committee of the PFLP.”