

Date/Time Recorded:

4/1/1996 at 14:58:28

Participants:

SB = Shukri Ahmad Abou Baker

GA = Gayle (LNU)

Abbreviations:

[]	Background Conversation / Noise/Translator's comments
[UT]	Unintelligible
...	Incomplete sentence
[sic]	Stated as is
[SC]	Simultaneous conversation
LNU	Last name unknown

[Translator's note: This call is entirely in English].

Verbatim Translation

GOVERNMENT
EXHIBIT
013-0168
3:04-CR-240-G
U.S. v. HLF, et al.

[Dial tone. Dialing number.]

[Breathing heavy].

[Phone rings].

GA: Newsroom, this is Gayle.

SB: Yes, Gayle, this is Shukri from the Holy Land Foundation.

GA: Hi, Mr. Baker. Can you hold on a second?

SB: Aha.

GA: I'm on the wrong side of my desk.

SB: Aha.

[Short pause].

SB: [Clears his throat].

GA: Thanks for getting on the phone with me.

SB: Yeah.

GA: As we suspect, we had some follow up questions.

SB: Aha.

GA: There's always holes in the notes and...

SB: Yeah, go ahead.

GA: ... things we forgot to ask and everything. Okay. Ah, first of all, er, you remember I asked a little bit about, uhm, the Imam in New Jersey, ah, Mr. Elmezain?

SB: Aha.

GA: Okay. So, I had tried to call him, er, and basically the folks there said, "Well, this is questions about having to do with the Holy Land Foundation. You should ask the people in Dallas"

SB: Aha.

GA: And they wouldn't let me talk to him. So, I'm back to you with the questions that I was going to ask him. Okay? And, er, the first thing was, I was kind of confused because I've seen his name spelled so many different ways.

SB: Aha.

GA: Um, Was he is, ah... Is he also known as, as Ibrahim Elmezain, or Abou Ibrahim?

[Phone wrings in the background].

GA: Is this him?

SB: Well, you see, if these, these questions are pertaining to... I don't know if I'm, I'm at liberty to er..., discus his..., his personal affairs. I, I, I don't....

GA: No. This is... I'm sorry. This is, uhm, I wanna ask you questions about him relating to the Holy Land Foundation.

SB: Aha.

GA: But I've seen various references to him...

SB: Aha.

GA: ... that I think are to him but I'm not sure and I'm just trying to ask you if this is him. I don't wanna ask you... I'm not trying to ask you a lot of stuff about his personal business.

SB: Yeah. Ah, okay. So, wh... what is the ques...? Yeah.

GA: Are you there?

SB: Hold on. Hold on, please. [Talks to someone in the background] I have another line, er... Can you tell Chris I'll call him back]. Ah, I mean, just to, to answer this,

ah, what are you referring to exactly? What kind of ah, stuff you're referring to?
You said, er..., there are different, ah, um, you know, references to his name?

GA: Okay....

SB: So, what kind of....

GA: Well, I've seen him referred... Okay, well, I've seen references to er..., M, well,
M-E-R-Z-A-I-N.

SB: Aha.

GA: And uhm, M-U-Z-A-Y-Y-I-N

SB: Aha.

GA: And, and to Mahmoud and Ibrahim Mahmoud.

SB: Um.

GA: And I don't know if those are the same person.

SB: Well, er..., his name is... last name is Mezayen. That's right. M-E-Z-A-Y-E-N.
Sometimes, it's spelled different ways.

GA: Aha.

SB: But, ah, what kind, what kind of references are you refer... I mean, I, I, you,
you, somebody written about him or...?

GA: Yeah. Aha.

SB: Yeah. So, if, if, if, they er...

GA: Okay. Well, okay. For instance...

SB: Yeah.

GA: One of the things that, that we want to ask him about was, this..., this..., you
know, testimony before congress, you know, recently, that allegedly in 1990 at the

MAYA convention in Kansas City.....

SB: Aha.

GA: where several Hamas leaders spoke that he spoke also and that he met with some young Hamas recruits. Ah, do you know if, if he did that? If he was there in December, 90, at the MAYA convention?

SB: No. I, I don't know.

GA: Okay. See, this is why I was [SC] trying to talk [SC]....

SB: These....., these are...

GA: ... to him.

SB: These are....., these are public, er....., public meetings, public...., er...., er... You know, I...er, you know, I don't know if....., if I want to say this but, ah... , see, all of these allegations.....er, they, [phone rings in the background] the references to the MAYA conferences....., there is a big misconception there or deception.....

GA: Aha.

SB:that these are secret meetings. But these are very public forums and in many instances, the mayors of the cities were invited to speak in front of the....., of the audience. So, whatever er....., lectures was there or whatever, ah, ah, thinks that Abou Ibrahim was in.....er, er... Mezayen, or anybody spoke of. That was in a public forum. So, ah...

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah. So, ah...

GA: Well, that's fine. I mean....

SB: If he spoke, I mean, er....., I can't go back like you talking about six years ago. So, I don't know. I, I can't really recall, uhm, when and in what capacity he was speaking. He was speaking, he was speaking as an individual. As a, a community leader. I don't know exactly.....er, in what, what the reference point here...

GA: Okay...

SB: But, you know...

GA: Well.....

SB: Him speaking in MAYA convention is not up to me. It's er..., it's a big possibility. He's a Muslim leader....

GA: Right. [SC].

SB: He's a Muslim leader....

GA: I, I would say so.

SB: [Sniffs]. Yeah.

GA: Okay. So, the, the ah, ah, question I was going to ask in reference to that was...

SB: Aha.

GA: Uhm, I, a supposed I quote from him saying that uhm, that he met with young Hamas recruits or trainees there and told them they had been selected to "help escalate the Intifada..."

SB: Hum.

GA: ... on behalf of Hamas." So that was one of the things I wanted to ask the Imam, was whether he... That's a, a, an accurate quote?

SB: Well, ah... I..., I..., I can't speak for him. But, er... I really doubt that a public forums like the MAYA were use to recruit, er... I don't, I don't, eh, we don't believe there is any, you know, Hamas recruitment in this country. Ah, if you want to just er..., .. I think is... You're referring to some, some, some kind of... I think it's a Steve Emerson's allegations again. I believe so.

GA: Then it might have been him that....er.

SB: Yeah, so...

GA: I think you're right.

SB: Yeah. Which ah, which er... if, if this guy could not get the spelling of the name spelling right, ah....

GA: Well, you know we....

SB: I really doubt his sources, you know?

GA: Well, we... I mean, you yourself said it's spelled, it's spelled....

SB: Yeah.

GA: ... several ways.

SB: Yeah, but that, that means that he's, ah, he's getting his sources from [sighs], some, ah, some...

GA: Well, you said it was a, a public meeting, right?

SB: It's not a first... it's not a firsthand. It's not a firsthand, ah, ah, source. What I mean is, ah...

GA: Well, since I wasn't there and I don't know whether he...

SB: Um.

GA: ... was there. That's why I was trying to go to the source....

SB: I don't know if Steven....

GA: ...which would be Mr. al-Mezayen but I'm not allowed to speak to him.

SB: [Sighs].

GA: That's my problem.

SB: Well, you see? Because, because, the, the, your entire context is, ah, you know, ah, ah, I don't know. I mean, I'm looking, I'm looking at it from a different perspective. Talk about 1990. You can go back as many years as you want.

GA: Aha.

SB: But 1990 based on, on, on allegations made by Steven Emerson, whom we know mixes half truths with ah, with, with fabrications....

GA: Which is what we're trying to sort out among other things.

SB: Well, whether he spoke or not, I don't know how relevant it... You know at that time... First of all, Hamas did not have a... Their military wing, according to all experts, started operating 1992.

GA: Aha.

SB: So, I don't know. The Intifada in 1990 was no more than throwing ah, stones, at, at the soldiers of the military occupation of Israel. So ah, ah, 1990 was, ah, just about two years, ah, after the Intifada started and, and a lot of emotional, ah, ah, feelings were, were ah, [sighs] you know ah, surfacing and, and a lot of, ah, rhetoric was said.

GA: Right.

SB: I said, ah, ah, that's, that's why the, the, the historical context is very important. I don't know what ah, what Emerson is really trying to say here. If, if he met with, ah... I, I don't believe....

GA: Oh, let me ask you....

SB: I don't think.....

GA: Let me ask you this.

SB: Um.

GA: Let me ask in this context....

SB: Um, um, um.

GA: Maybe this is a better way of asking.

SB: Yeah.

GA: You know, is it, is it... Would it be correct to say that if the, you know, if some of these conferences, which, at which, you know, I believe ah, ah, if it wasn't this one, it was another just about that time that, ah, you know, was, was, ah, was, one of the speakers thanks, you know, the Occupied Lands Fund and, and IAP for their sponsorship of the conference and of, and of Hamas and goes on, you know, and say things like that. And, you know, these, you know, there are signs saying that they were sponsored by IAP. You know, is it possible that, that, you know, back then the organizations did take a more, you know... Well I know you can't speak for IAP but....

SB: Well, well...

GA: but HLF did take a more political stance and that now you, you've stepped back from that?

SB: No, no act... In fact, ah, I can speak for the Holy Land Foundation very comfortably. We have never raised... We have raised [sighs] money for Hamas. I dare, I dare anybody to say "Shukri you wrote, or you stood up in, in front of a, you know, conference ask money for HAMAS and or trying to recruit members for Hamas." We have never done this. You can go back to our, since we started, ah, the, ah, fund-raising literature. We, we, we have never in any written communication used the word Hamas or in any oral communication in front of an audience try to raise money for Hamas To us, and to Intifada it was a, a historical uh, uh phenomenon and we were trying to... And at that time, of course, Palestinian people were the underdogs. They were the people who were receiving heavy casualties.

GA: Aha.

SB: And the first two years of Intifada over 1,200 Palestinians were killed and we were trying to, ah, ah, help the Palestinian people. Of course, the whole, the entire situation was very emotional and sentimental and people were, ah, very much ah in, in ah, in support of, of the Palestinian struggle against, ah, ah, occupation. Yes, of course, we, we, ah, we, ah, helped raised money during the Intifada to help the Palestinian people. But Hamas was, was not, was never a subject matter because, ah, the Intifada is a massive popular ah, ah, uprising. It's not a, it's not a Hamas making. It's not the making with Hamas. In fact, the PLO had, had ah, a, had a lot to do with the Intifada itself.

GA: Sure.

SB: You know, and, and they have their....

GA: Right.

SB: ... own, yeah their own leadership. So, it was to us, it was a Palestinian phenomenon. It wasn't ah, ah, a partisan phenomenon. It didn't, it didn't relate to Hamas as much as it did to the Palestinian people. That's why, we never raise... We, we... No, when you say about, you know, political... When you talk about the Palestinian situation and you talk about occupation, these are realities. So....

GA: Right....

SB: Yeah.

GA: So, so what I'm asking is...

SB: Um.

GA: You know, that so you're saying that even if, even if, ah, ah, ah, a Holy Land Foundation leaders ah, appeared at conferences, you know, with people who are supporting Hamas and who were very, you know, much in favor of, of armed jihad and things like that. That just because y'all sponsored the conference and the speakers spoke there that doesn't mean that you were sending the money? Is that what you are saying?

SB: Well, we, we didn't sponsor any speakers from Hamas to start with. It was that forum which is a MAYA is not a Palestinian forum. It is a Muslim, ah, group... Muslim Arab Youth Association. Ah, and, ah, ah, it, it is not a Palestinian-dominated organization and they are the one, because of Intifada, it's...

[Phone rings in the background].

SB: ... is a phenomena that interested most, Most Muslims in this country, ah, they invited speakers ah from, from, you know, from that part of the world to speak of the, of the Intifada, the Palestine Uprising.

GA: Uh huh.

SB: Now, as for the Holy Land Foundation, we, we, ah, we tried to capitalize on, on, on conferences, Arabs, Muslims, and non-Arabs, ah, to be there and to, to present

our case and try to raise funds for the, ah, for the Palestinian people. Ah, so this is what, what we did during MAYA conventions and we do it for a lot of other conventions in this country who are, you know, who talk about, whose constituency is interest mainly in, in the Middle East. Kind of marketing. You know, we have a market segmentation here. So, we segment people who, you know... We, we target people who have interest in the Middle East....

GA: Sure.

SB: ... and the Palestinian issue. And we be there. And you find us in the ADC conferences. You find us, ah, in, ah, in conferences that belong to... Up until today, the, the flag day in, ah, Los Angeles that is, ah, mostly ah, ah, Palestinian PLO, ex-PLO. We're everywhere. So, ah being an that moment on, ah, the same platform where maybe sympathizers of Hamas, ah, have been. It doesn't, ah, mean that at that point, we were, ah, ah, you know, ah, working together on any agenda. Again, ah, to us...

[Phone rings in the background].

SB: ... when we raise money, even in the presence of, of Hamas supporters, we, ah the money we raise is very, is explicitly mentioned in, in any fund raising event where it goes to. And we haven't in any single case ah, asked money for, on the behalf of Hamas or, or the, the programs of Hamas in the area. Anyway, however, in 1990, Hamas itself did not have any, ah, ah, ah, military agenda at that point. It, it only evolved in, you know, back 1992. So, 1990, a lot of, ah, Palestinians didn't find it objectionable even to associate with Hamas. You know, a lot of, a lot of people in this country, they sympathize with Hamas very much because it has, ah, it has demonstrated ah, the, the kind of, ah, an aspiration for the Palestinian people during the Intifada days when, ah, you know, everybody noticed that the Palestinian people had the capability of saying "N" to occupation. But, you know, then later on when the military wing started doing different military operations, a lot of people distanced themselves.

GA: What, what I was asking you, was? Is that kind of, the position HLF found itself in?

SB: Well, we never, we never associated with, with, with, ah, with Hamas to start with, to distant ourselves later on. We never associated with Hamas anyway. So, I invite you to look back at the, ah, type of literature we, we published, ah... See the one that ah, for example, that the ADL found, and they were very excited about, is

us helping the, the Palestinian deportees in 19, ah, 93....

GA: Uh huh.

SB: And that was, to, to them, that was the link and they quoted me ah, and my letter asking money for, for those people. But in my letter, I have never, ah, hinted, or never talked to them on behalf of Hamas. I was raising money for a bunch of volu... of, of deportees. They were deported against the international laws and against the United Nation resolution. And I was asking the international community to, to stand by those people. So....

GA: What, what, you know, so were most, were most of the deportees Hamas members?

SB: I don't care.

GA: But were they?

SB: They are still Palestinians. Yeah. And, and that was in, ah, Lebanon.

GA: Okay.

SB: Remember in 1992.

GA: Okay.

SB: They were deported in no man's zone.

GA: Right, okay.

SB: Yeah. At this moment, we are working with, ah, negotiating with, ah, with PLO officials to reach the, ah, the, the Palestinian deportees in Libya. And ah, ah, I didn't take the time, neither am I willing to ask what kind of a, a political, ah, mentality dominates the, the Palestinian deportees at the Libyan Egyptian borders. Ah, it's, it's merely my job as a humanitarian organization to attend to the, to that, to the wounds of the, of the Palestinian people since we decided that the Holy Land Foundation will, will be focusing on the Holy Land and the, the suffering of the Palestinian people, along with other programs. But our main focus will remain on the Palestinian agenda.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah.

GA: All right. Uhm, let me move on to something else here.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: I appre... And I do appreciate it...

SB: Yeah, go ahead...

GA: I mean, I learn something every time....

SB: No problem.

GA: [UI]. Uhm, okay. There was something that... And I mentioned this at the meeting. And I, I really don't know that this is going to play into our story that we're working on now. But since I was going to try to contact Mr. al-Mezayen...

SB: Um.

GA: This is something... This is the other thing that I wanted to ask him. And this relates to the, ah, the telephone records. Okay?

SB: Uh huh.

GA: That showed the calls, ah, the calls between, ah, Ahmad Ajjaj and Mahmoud Abu Kadeer..

SB: Uh huh.

GA: ... talking about calling the New Jersey imam, and then there were calls from Abou Kadeer's phone to, ah, ah, Mr. al-Mezayen's number.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: And I did want to try to find out from him, pretty much for future reference, ah, whether he recalled getting those phone calls. I understand that it may have been just for, ah, a spiritual advice.

SB: Uh hum.

GA: Maybe he wanted to help them in finding a lawyer...

SB: [Sniffs].

GA: ... whatever.

SB: uhm.

GA: But I did want to ask him if he, if he got the calls. If he remembered them. That sort of thing. So, if you could ask if there is anyway you could ask him to give me an answer on that...

SB: Um.

GA: ... that would help me out.

SB: Well, I will.

GA: Okay.

SB: Ah, but, but again, you know, the right context of, of, of this incident is, is to ah, is mention that ah, this, this person, al-Mezayen is ah, is a religious leader and is very well known in, in the, in the East Coast and he receives tremendous calls ah, not only from the state of New Jersey, but from, from East Coast and nationwide asking him for different advices and spiritual guidance and all of that.

GA: I understand.

SB: So, when you mention the story, you know, without going back to al-Mezayen and asking him, you know to me, it's a, it's a, it doesn't, ah, you know, it's a very... It's very possible [smirks] for people to call him from jail....

GA: Right.

SB:from when their....

GA: But it's, it's one thing for this to be the possible, probable reason.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: And for him to say, "Yes, that is." Or, "No, I don't remember the call." Either one, it's, it's to me as journalist if, if I can get more, better information than well, gosh. Most....

SB: See...

GA: ... of the calls he gets are like this.

SB: See, I....

GA: But to find out really....

SB: [Smirks]. See, I don't... as a journalist. I, I, I don't know and I, I'm not a journalist. I, I think you have an hypothesis and you're trying to... You're not, you're not ah, ah working from a vacuum. I think you have a hypothesis. This hypothesis is a theory of, of conspiracy.

GA: But when you start out....

SB: You're trying to prove that Hamas...

GA: When we start out to look at stories....

SB: No, I understand.

GA: You have, you have to look at, at the question that's put before you. Okay? But, but very often it's very possible that we would say, well you know, this question that was raised in our mind. We have decided that the question that was raised, ah, was a false one, or whatever. But there's, there's only... You know, you have to ask, go out and ask the questions.

SB: See Gayle, I, I understand this. But when ah, when, when suppose you know, yeah he said yeah that somebody called me.

GA: Aha.

SB: I, I, I'm sure hundred percent, you're not going to hint. You're not going to put in brackets, "By the way, as a religious leader in the community, it is very normal for

people to call him and ask, ask him..."

GA: I most certainly will put that....

SB: I don't know. Because readers are, very, very... All what they know is... You know, about this Islam and the way the, the dyna... dynamics of Islam. They don't understand it. You know, it's all in the context of, of spooky thing....

GA: Well...

SB: You know what I mean?

GA: To me, if, if....

SB: Yeah.

GA: If it's, ah. To me this is very possible.

SB: Yeah.

GA: I understand totally. It is very possible. He's a well known religious leader. This guy's in jail. He's, you know, he's feeling....

SB: Yeah.

GA: Boy, he needs some help. He need some..., you know, he needs some religious guidance, you know. Some, an attorney, you know, advice on who to...

SB: Yeah.

GA: It's perfectly...

SB: Yeah.

GA: ... understandable to me that, that is exactly why he called him.

SB: Um.

GA: But it's, it's not. I mean, I need to ask him that....

SB: So what is....

GA: ... question myself.

SB: So, what, what is the significance of... Okay, this is your... So what is the significance of, of pursuing this question? I mean, yeah. Okay, he, he called him. So, oh, oh, I mean how does it play. I mean, wh, wh, wh, wh, what kind of importance....-

GA: I don't know his answer.

SB: Um.

GA: And so, I don't know what significance it has.

SB: Um, um.

GA: It may have almost none.

SB: Um.

GA: But until I ask him that question, I don't know.

SB: Um. Yeah.

GA: I mean, we, I mean, you go ut and you ask questions and you find what you find.

SB: Yeah.

GA: So, but I mean. If you, if you could ask him that question for me....

SB: Yeah.

GA:I'd appreciate it.

SB: Yeah, I will...

GA: Okay.

SB: I will call him.

GA: Yeah.

SB: I'll call him. No problem.

GA: Okay. A... also, ah, I talked to ah, Mr. Marzouk's attorney...

SB: Uh huh.

GA: ... the other day, Stanley Cohen.

SB: Yeah.

GA: And we went over a whole lot of different things.

SB: Uhm.

GA: And I was real surprised because when we got to the point where I asked him about, ah, Mr. Marzook making the, I think \$210,000 contribution...

SB: Uh huh.

GA: ... to the Holy Land fund. He said, "Oh no, Mr. Marzook never made that contribution".

SB: Uh.

GA: Whereas, you all remembered very distinctly. It was after a conference. It was a one-time deal.

SB: Yeah.

GA: So, do you? Can you give me any? You know, do you know why he would have said that or?

SB: I don't know. Maybe he doesn't know about it.

GA: Okay.

SB: Maybe ah, you know ah, the, as we said, this man is ah. He's a, he's a philanthropist and he gives money right and left. And maybe this is to the entire

case is insignificant. I don't know if the, if the lawyer took the time to look into this. That's why you, you know, to me when, when, ah, you mentioned, when, ah, what's his name, the other guy?

GA: Steve McGonigle.

SB: Well, Steve mentioned that. I said, well it's, it's a good thing if I...

GA: Sure.

SB: ... if I can call up his attorney and tell him you know, this is, the man has given us some money and this proves that, ah, if he try... was trying to, ah, a launder money or, or, you know, send money back home, he could have done it without, you know, going through a public org...., organization and exposing himself. He could have just wired the money himself....

GA: Right .

SB: Because that's what the media has been saying. He's been sending money all over. So why go through the Holy Land Foundation which is a very public organization and he knows that ah, you know, our public, our records are public and very well in the open. So, I don't know, ah, Gayle, I don't know if... I haven't, I haven't even spoken with a, with this man. And ah...

GA: Okay.

SB: I don't know ah if I should but, ah, ah, ah, he might, ah, need to ask, ah, ah, Abu Marzouk himself .

GA: Well, he

SB: I'm sure he will remember.

GA: He, he said he was speaking for Mr. Marzouk.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Ah, so, I, but I don't know. I was very, I was very....

SB: Yeah.

GA: Surprised by that.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Uhm, now. Uhm, I think we asked you this the other night and, ah, if we did, I apologize. But, but, ah, what was your explanation or, and it could be very simple, why Mr. Marzouk would have like your home phone and the Holy Land L.A. number in his address book when he was, ah, arrested at JFK?

SB: When he was arrested?

GA: Yes.

SB: He has my home num... Home phone?

GA: Yes.

SB: I don't... I don't... As long, you know, along with another thousand names maybe.

GA: Yes, that's right.

SB: [Laughs].

GA: [Laughs].

SB: So this tells you, I mean, I mean, the man is a charismatic, is a philanthropist. Maybe he picks up my....er

GA: The man is what? I didn't understand what you said.

SB: He, he, he's a philanthropist.

GA: Right.

SB: And he's ah, he's ah charismatic person. Otherwise, he would not be in the position he's in right now.

GA: Sure.

SB: Maybe he picked up my, ah, my number from, ah, from the convention. We talked

together about, ah, this, ah, donation. Ah, the, ah, of course, he would have the number for the, for the Holy Land Foundation because he was, ah, either about to give a donation or he has already given. I don't know when he, ah, got these numbers down but I bet you it's, it's before he made the donation.

GA: Right.

SB: So, I, I don't think the man would have sent ah this ah amount of money without taking the basics which is the phone numbers of the, of the office and the officers. I don't know.

GA: Right.

SB: So, to me it's ah, a lot of people have my names. A lot of ah, ah, Mossad agents of this country have my name [UI].

GA: [Laughs].

SB: I don't know cause I'm an affiliate of theirs [laughs]. Uhm. By the way, I'm a very public figure, too. Ah, you'll find me in a lot of people's diaries. Ah...

GA: Okay.

SB: I, I, I, tour the country. I'm all over. I'm very active. I give a lot of lectures and, ah, I, myself, participate in Muslim conferences. So, a lot of people they take interest in me. So, maybe Abu Marzouk was one of them.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah.

[Laughs].

GA: Okay.

[Laughs].

SB: But, but I can assure you, I don't think he tried to [laughs], to recruit me.

SB: Yeah. That point, we haven't reached that point yet.

GA: Okay.

SB: But the, yeah, I... This is no surprise...

GA: Okay.

SB: ... to me.

GA: Okay.

SB: Um.

GA: Now, this is, ah, this is going back to clearing up some questions I was not sure about. About the way, ah, the Holy Land Foundation started. Okay?

SB: Uh huh.

GA: It was founded in 89.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: I think you... Alright. Now, occup... the Occupied Lands Fund was it's predecessor, right?

SB: Oh, yeah.

GA: Okay. Okay. Ah, and when was it founded?

SB: Well, the Occupied Lands Fund is like a name. You know, we did, we... It's just kind of a... It wasn't an, it was an unregistered, you know, operation. Just kind of ah, group of people. So, we can, ah, you know, start raising money. But, ah...

GA: Right.

SB: You know, it was a. In fact, the idea evolved early in 1987. You know, even before the Intifada, as I said, you know. We ah, in 1985, if you remember there was, ah, in the Palestinian camps, ah, there was a lot of tragic situations in the, ah, Palestinian camps in Lebanon. And, ah, in 1985, that was when, when the ah, the

Christian, ah, militias ah, Amal, they surrounded the Palestinian camps and, and a lot of people went hungry and it was a very, ah, tragic situation. So...

GA: Right.

SB: ... so, that, that was a point when we, ah, me, Ghassan, started thinking about doing something. Ah, it wasn't until 1987 that we really thought of the name, the Occupied Lands Fund and, ah, that was before the Intifada. Before the Uprising, actually. But ah, we didn't have anything. We didn't have any institution to, to or any incubators. We just a bunch of guys going around and asking for, for donations.

GA: Right.

SB: We didn't have anything. But, ah, ah, soon after the Intifada, we, ah, we asked Ghassan to incorporate the, the Occupied...

GA: Sorry, you did what?

SB: So,... Incorporated.

GA: Yeah.

SB: It was inc, in 1989.

GA: Aha.

SB: It was incorporated in the State of California under the Occupied Land Fund.

GA: Okay.

SB: See what I mean? We didn't, we didn't start off with the Holy Land Foundation.

GA: Sure.

SB: It was Occupied Land Fund, Incorporated in 1989.

GA: Okay.

SB: That's when we realized that, yeah, we need now to, to have an institution. With

the, with the, you know with a bylaw, with everything. So, we, we went ahead and....

GA: Right.

SB:in January 1989, we applied for the ah, for the, you know, we kind of incorporated and we got the tax ah certificate in late 1989.

GA: Okay.

SB: But the idea was, was, as I said, was... You know, was, ah, in our minds back, way back in 1985.

GA: Uh huh.

SB: We tried to do something for the Palestinian, ah, refugees in Lebanon. It was not tied up with Intifada itself. But we saw the potential. Everybody. We dropped everything. We dropped everything and we, ah, we, we, everybody was kind of taken by the Intifada and the potential of the Palestinian peoples. So...

[Phone rings in the background].

SB: That's when we decided to go ahead full momentum with this, ah, with the Holy Land Foundation.

GA: Okay.

SB: Later on which we, you know, we named it Holy Land Foundation. One year later, 1990, we changed the name.

GA: Okay. I'm sorry you changed the name in 1990?

SB: Yeah. I, I believe so 1990, 91.

GA: Okay.

SB: I'm not quite sure really.

GA: Okay.

SB: But, yeah, it's

GA: Okay.

SB: Uhm.

GA: And, uhm... So, so it's, you had the same incorporation papers and everything?

SB: Yeah.

GA: And you just sent the folks in California or whatever a new deal saying we're changing our name?

SB: Yeah.

GA: Okay. Now, I'm confused, because was, was some branch of the Holy Land Foundation or the Occupied Lands Fund started in Indiana?

SB: Indiana?

GA: Aha.

SB: A branch?

GA: Yeah, I mean. I had some... You know, somewhere I saw something saying y'all started in Indiana.

SB: Well, Indiana... I think that is, ah, ah... No, not Indiana. We didn't start in Indiana. I was in Indiana at that time

GA: You?

SB: I worked as a volunteer, working for the Occupied Land Fund as a volunteer.

GA: Okay.

SB: So, I was receiving mail there when ah, we send.... We, ah, set up a P.O. Box...

GA: Uh huh.

SB: ... and the mail was coming to me.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah, was coming to me.

GA: Okay. Well

SB: To, to Indiana.

GA: And I think you've already answered this question just by me listening to what you've been saying but you obviously helped start the Occupied Lands, so?

SB: Oh yeah.

GA: Okay, you, and, and the Ghassan Elashi?

SB: Yes.

GA: And the third guy that you mentioned, the other night? In, in L.A.?

SB: He... He's Ghassan. Ghassan wasn't in LA at that time.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah.

GA: So, so who all helped set it all up originally?

SB: Me and Ghassan. So, I was working off of Indiana and Ghassan was in New York, ah, not in New York, California.

GA: Aha.

SB: And that's when I asked him to incorporate the ah, the Foundation in Indiana..

GA: Okay. Okay.

SB: In, in California.

GA: Okay.. In California?

SB: But I was in Indiana at that time as a volunteer. Ah, ah, you know, I,... See, that era was all volunteers. We didn't have an office.

GA: Sure.

SB: Nothing, just, you know, just an idea and, and ah we were trying to ah stabilize the operation by....UI.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Sure.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: Okay. Okay. Uhm, let's see... Now this is something I also need to get back to you. Because I still don't... I've gotten a lot of different answers from a lot of different people. Okay, how does the Holy Land Foundation distribute its money in the Middle East?

SB: How?

GA: Yeah, like... You give to schools. You give to... you know, where, you know, like... you, where, you take your money and you actually go out and give it to poor individuals or do you give it to charity organizations over there...

SB: [Sniffs].

GA: ... who give it to poor individuals? How does that work?

SB: Well, we receive ah. We receive different applications. We receive applications from, from, ah... Hold on please?

GA: Sure.

[Talks to UM in the background.]

SB: Who wants to go [UI]?

UM: *Me, me.*

SB: You wanna go there?

UM: [UI].

SB: No, no. We gotta, we gotta stop right now. [To Gayle] Hold on, hold on because I have a group here. [talks to someone in the background.]

UM: *Do you want to talk about the list that you have?*

SB: Ah... Yeah, uh, excuse me?

GA: Sure.

SB: Ah... [Sniffs].

GA: You receive applications...

SB: Yeah, we receive applications....

GA: Okay.

SB: Different charity organizations ah, they send us ah applications and, ah, ah, they request, ah, funding for certain projects. And we meet, and we decide whether these, ah, ah organizations are legitimate and if, if there are any missing....

GA: I'm sorry. Whether these organizations are what?

SB: Legitimate.

GA: Okay.

SB: Uhm, they are lacking, ah, papers or whatever so we eventually decide on the grant and the grant goes ah to the organization, ah, to the, to the, ah, ah, project or program, ah, mentioned in the application.

GA: Okay.

SB: In other words, we don't just give money to X organization, ah, just like that. We... It's not a grant. It's, ah, it goes to specific program or project.

GA: Okay.

SB: So, ah these projects happen to be in different categories. Education, health, ah, a lot of, ah, you see at least 70... 60%, 65% of the budget goes to, ah, social services. Ah, we receive applications for orphans, ah, needy families, ah...

GA: Aha.

SB: ... crippled children and we try to market these, these applications among different sponsors. And the sponsors they pick up their own orphans and we start, ah, we receive the, ah, sponsorship money and we transfer it and we administer the program and make sure that the money is being spent and the social worker is in touch with the orphans and that we receive ah progress reports every six months to a year. Uhm, so that's the way it goes. Er....

GA: Okay.

SB: Ah, it, it goes in different categories.

GA: Okay, so uhm. Sixty-five percent to social services?

SB: I think, something like that. Yeah.

GA: And what, where does the rest of it go?

SB: Well, it goes to, you know, education, health services....

GA: Okay ...

SB: It depends every, ever ...

GA: I'm sorry, to me, social services...

SB:year the ratio changes, you know.

GA:includes health services? That's where I was.

SB: Well, like last year. We put a lot of emphasis, emphasis on health

GA: Right.

SB:so, we spend a lot of money on health in Gaza. We had the hospital in Gaza ...

GA: Okay .

SB:because, you know, yeah.

GA: Okay. Okay. Now, uhm, we were looking at, at some of the, some wire stories recently and from awhile ago. And there's something else I'm not, I'm not clear on. The whole issue came up about the, ah, the, ah, gentleman in Jerusalem named Mr. Hamami? Okay, that runs the faith school....

SB: Aha.

GA: And the, uh, cult, ah, I forget, the Islamic Cultural and Science....

SB: Yeah.

GA: Organization?

SB: Yeah.

GA: Okay. And, and he's apparently been taken into custody at least a couple of times....

SB: Oh yeah.

GA: ... by the Israelis....

SB: Yeah .

GA:for being a connected to a leader of HAMAS?

SB: Uh huh.

GA: Okay. So, this is... Okay, so, so he runs schools and orphanages and clinics?

SB: Uh huh.

GA: And I think this gets down to what y'all were explaining to us....

SB: Aha.

GA: Don't look at the affiliation of people. You're just....

SB: Yeah.

GA:looking as if they are helping orphans?

SB: Yes.

GA: So, you all contribute to the, the organizations that he runs, right?

SB: Oh yeah!

GA: Okay.

SB: Oh Yeah. It's one, it's one of the most reputable organizations in, in the West Bank.

GA: Okay.

SB: [Sniffs]. And the schools he runs, they have received, ah, high marks from the, ah, ah Ministry of Education, the Israeli Ministry of Education. And I was there myself. I visited the territories about three times. And I visited the schools there. They're, they're one of the best private schools in the area.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah.

GA: So, uhm, ah, so if, if there are a schools whose, ah, leaders are ah, associated with Hamas?

SB: Uh huh.

GA: This is neither something that is for or against the school

SB: Yes.

GA: ...in your thinking?

SB: Exactly.

GA: Okay.

SB: To me it's not, it's beyond... it's, it's ah, beyond the point. It's, it's not a... It's not even a point, a point to consider. I, look at the organization. If it's legitimate, if, if it's providing good services, then I should not deny ah that organization my support just because one or two people happen to be non-liked... not liked by the Israelis or being in jail, or even Hamas or whatever. I don't care about that. My, my objective is, is, ah... The humanitarian objective is not colored by the practical reality in that, that region. I don't. I don't care about it. See at this point, we're, we're

GA: I'm sorry, I lost the first part of that sentence.

SB: See, it's not, it's not, ah....

GA: You're what is not colored by political reality?

SB: Ah, ah, our, humanity.

GA: Okay.

SB: The humanitarian work is not colored, ah, by the political....

GA: Right .

SB: Is not affected. You know

GA: Right.

SB:at this point, for example, we are really contemplating, ah, a campaign, you know?

GA: Uh huh.

SB: Ah, ah to raise money to rebuild the houses that the Israelis had just demolished.

GA: Okay.

SB: Because we know the, the demolishing of these houses, is against international law. It's collective punishment. And they did not, um, you know, did not demolish the houses of terrorists like the media has called it. They

GA: They.....

SB: They demolished the houses of the relatives. [Sighs]. The, the parents of those so-called terrorists. So, my obligation as a humanitarian is to go there and rebuild the houses. Because I don't want the, ah, women and the girls to go out as prostitutes trying to make money or make a living just to, to have a shelter. And I don't the rest of the children to go out and blow up themselves just because they see the end of world, oh, that is full of injustice. So, I want to go there and rebuild the houses that the Israelis demolished. And I don't think... I don't consider that as being a political move or pro-Hamas or pro... It's pro-humanity.

GA: Okay.

SB: This is the way, the way we work.

GA: Okay, I, I think I know the answer to this question but....

SB: Um.

GA: I need to ask it anyway.

SB: Uh huh. Yeah.

GA: Mr. Hamami is not a, uhm, an official of the Holy Land Foundation?

SB: No.

GA: Okay.

SB: No, no, no, no. [Sighs].

GA: Okay.

[Keyboard typing].

GA: Who is the head of the Holy Land Foundation over there?

SB: Ah, well the, the office there is, is, is registered as Jerusalem office. It's, it's, works under the Israeli jurisdiction. So...

GA: Uh huh.

SB: A young man in the name, by the name of Anati. Mr. Anati. A-N-A-T-I.

GA: Okay. Mr. Anati.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Okay. Okay. Uhm...

SB: And, and as you know our office is closed right now along with other, you know, 75% of charities, local charities. But we are, ah, pursuing that in courts.

GA: Now, why is it closed?

SB: Well, along with 75% of all Palestinian charities are closed now.

GA: Uh huh. Because they are claiming you have Hamas ties?

SB: Oh, well, yeah. [Sniffs].

GA: Okay.

[Keyboard typing].

GA: When did they do that?

SB: I think, last, last week. Was it not?

GA: Uhm, yeah. We... I only heard about it this week but I thought they said

SB: Yeah. I think last week, something like that.

GA: Okay. Okay.

SB: Not, not long ago.

GA: Okay.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: So, y'all are pursuing legal...?

SB: Oh, yeah.

GA: What can you, what do you? What [UI]?

SB: We will, [SC] I mean, we will, we have already attended the first session in a court. The, the government has nothing. [Sighs]. It's a political move.

GA: Right.

SB: They are just waiting until the end of the elections. And we know it because they, they were inspecting our, our papers more than a year ago. And ah nothing happened until this thing, ah, you know, the suicide attacks. It's a political game and we understand it. And that's why we resent it. We resent this mockery. You see? See un, un, unlike... You know, I want, I want to give this very, very clear, you know.

GA: Sure.

SB: The status quo in this country says that you have to fall in love with Israel. I'm resenting that.

GA: Right.

SB: I'm not falling in love. And every day goes. Every day goes, I have more resentment in my heart and I, more and more evidence that this is nothing but a racist coun... a racist regime that is ruling over the entire region. Ah, what's happening right now is pure racism. When they are cracking down on Palestinian society where

GA: A racist regime in this country or....

SB: No, no there, there. The Israelis.

GA: Okay, okay.

SB: Because they are, they are cracking down on the Palestinians and they are not doing anything against their own terrorists.

GA: Right.

SB: The people who killed Rabin. You know, he's not even being called as a terrorist. In fact, Amir is, is being glamorized and glorified by the Israeli media.

GA: Really?

SB: [Sighs]. With his, with his beautiful smile. You know, with the way he looks. The, the civilized look.

GA: Uhm.

SB: Eienstein.... Goldstein, there is a memorial, ah, there's been a shrine built on his grave.

GA: Well..., I mean obviously, the Israelis aren't exactly all united themselves these days.

SB: Yeah, but I haven't... Despite that, I haven't seen anything equivalent to what's happening to the Palestinians.

GA: Like they haven't taken down his mom's house .

SB: Nothing. [SC]. No, no houses are blown up. Uh, no siege, no deportation, nothing

GA: Well, let me, let me ask you this. I know that ah when Thomas Mohamad was there the other day, he was saying some things that I didn't know whether y'all agree with or really n, not to criticize him but want to really be associated with?

SB: Uh huh.

GA: Do you believe that the Israeli state has a right to exist?

SB: [Sighs]. See, ah, well, you should ask this question to a state. You know, I'm a, I'm a, I'm an individual. I'm not a state. I don't have ambassadors to send to Israel.

GA: Right.

SB: But as, as, as a, as a... See no one. No one is after the destruction of Israel but themselves. No one is after the destruction of Israel but themselves. By the way, they are ruling over the area by the injustice.

GA: Oh, but themselves.

SB: But themselves .

GA: Not by themselves. I thought you said "by themselves" .

SB: But themselves. But themselves.

GA: Okay.

SB: The way, see they have been just unfair from day one. I don't think they want... I think the Palestinian people would have welcomed them. But, but the atrocities in twenty-eight years has caused people to go as crazy as the, ah, the suicide bombers, you know. Who created the suicide bombers but Israel?

GA: Right.

SB: That's, that's my own... The, the region did not know suicide bombers until Israeli came in. So, as, as, as, as, as, ah, you know, people the right to live, nobody can deny... Nobody in, in fact has denied them the right. In fact, the Palestinian people are the, the among the very few people who welcomed, ah, the Jewish ah, ah escaping from, Jews escaping from, from the, Europe. Ah, back in 19, in early, early the century.

GA: Okay.

SB: Ah, and when they....

GA: Recording.

SB: There were people living there for centuries and they, they say, they say, they been

there for thousands of years, nobody has bothered them. So, I, I don't think anybody in, in the position now to say, "oh, no, Israel...."

GA: But what it be fair to say that....

SB:doesn't have the right to exist. But the Palestinians have the right to exist, too. See that's the point.

GA: Sure.

SB: See, people think that this negates this. You know, if, today's Israelis will say, "Well, Israel has the right to exist. That means I should implicitly deny the, the right of return for five million Palestinians." And ah, I don't think so. I think the Palestinians, five million Palestinians, they have the right, the right to return if you want justice in the Middle East. Ah, so that's my, my, ah, my, ah, understanding. I, I cannot deny the Israelis the right to, to live. You know, it's, it's not within my power or my will. But I, I....

GA: There's a difference from them having the right to live and them having the right to have like, a Palestinian Israeli state.

SB: See, that's what I been saying.

GA: Okay .

SB: If they have a right to, to have a state, then the Palestinians have the right to have a state, too. But....

GA: Right. Okay.

SB: ...but my, my ah, my ah my [sighs] dilemma with the Israeli's agenda is that they, they want to be there and nobody else.

GA: Right.

SB: And, and they want to give every Jew in this world the right of return and become an Israeli citizen once he touches the, his feet touch the, the Israeli land. But they don't want to give this right to five million Palestinians. Ah, and to me, that is pure racism. I, I don't understand this by any mean.

GA: Okay.

SB: By any standards.

GA: Okay, uhm. Ah. Thank you for answering that.

SB: Okay.

GA: Because I did... I thought maybe your answer would be a little different than

SB: Uh huh.

GA: ... what he was saying. [Sighs]. Okay, uhm...

[Short pause].

SB: [Sighs].

GA: I think I had, I had, had a second question written down that I think we've already covered. But...

SB: Uh huh.

GA: ... looking at the like, like of the list of institutions that you all have given ah, ah, money to in the Middle East....

SB: Uh huh.

GA:where your social and health and educational services to be provided. You don't, you don't question, you don't ask whether or not their affiliated with Hamas? So, you don't know?

SB: No.

GA: Okay.

SB: I have been in the area for more than one time. I have met with a lot of, ah, Palestinian and civic leaders, ah, in the, in the area.

GA: Uh huh.

SB: Ah, as I said, uhm, this issue is, is, is, uhm, is not a considera...., you know, I, I, came from a very - -

GA: I'm sorry. This is issue is not what?

SB: You see, I came from a very different, ah, culture, you know. I have, 50% of my family Christians. So, my mother side, ah, side are Christians.

GA: Uh huh.

SB: See! Catholics.

GA: Right.

SB: South American, Brazil. And I have lived 50% of my adult life in the West.

GA: Uh huh.

SB: And another, ah, maybe ten years in the Middle East, between Palestine and Kuwait. Okay. [Sighs]. [Smirks]. To me, uhm, I'm the last one to be called, ah, racist or fundamentalist or anti-Semite as some ADL would like to call me.

GA: Right.

SB: Because I understand that it's, it's very, very hard to position all of your attitude in this life on religion or ethnicity because a lot of good people, a lot of, a lot of good Jews are doing wonderful things in this count... in this country and everywhere. They do not deserve my anger or my hate. A lot of bad Muslims are doing bad things. They deserve my frustration. So, I cannot position myself on religion or on, or on ethnicity. What I'm saying is that, when you go to, to....

GA: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I was trying to get that all down and, and I lost you.

SB: You see what I mean?

GA: You said a lot of, you know, a lot of, ah, Jews do ah, wonderful things and they don't deserve your anger or your hate. A lot of bad Muslims are doing bad things and that's where I lost you.

SB: They deserve my frustration. You know what I mean?

GA: Right.

SB: See what I'm trying to... My point is that, if you, if you want to position all of your ah, ah, ah, ah positions and attitudes in this life on, on, on religion, ah, or ethnicity or political, ah, backgrounds, ah, you would be, you're doomed to be a failure. Ah, a lot of Palestinian people, whether they're Hamas, PLO, ah, atheists, communists, they are sincerely trying to help their own people. They are trying to help their own people.

GA: Right.

SB: So, you see when I went to the territories and I saw the misery of the... I went to, to a refugee camp, ah, near Bethlehem and, and, and the man he... We, we visited his one room-home. One room-home which he had a kitchen. He had a bedroom. He had everything in one single room and the, the guy he said, in, in embarrassment he said. "I'm sorry, I cannot even offer you tea because the water we have is contaminated." You know, that, that ...

GA: Right.

SB: ... really affected me so much. Back in 1990, the Palestinian people they don't care. The, the average people on the street, they don't care who provides them with the food, with the bread, whether Hamas or Fatah or, or... They wanna survive. They don't, they wanna survive. So, if somebody is doing a good job. They deserve my support. I don't care. Their... I don't care if the entire world says, you know, no, no, don't this, don't do that. The reality is that the Palestinian people have been abandoned for a long, long time. And I'm not gonna take it anymore. Somebody is doing a good job, I'm going to help them out. Now, within my own humanity... I want to emphasize this, within my own humanitarian agenda, I control my agenda. Nobody else controls mine. I know, I know 100% that every penny goes, it goes to help humanity. That's why... See people are mad. Because they're used to millions of dollars going to the territory and no effect. It goes to bribery. It goes to self-interest and self-enrichment. The money I go... The money I send, I know for sure it's really having a real impact. The money that goes for education educates the Palestinian children. That's why people like Netanyahu. They get mad because they want the Palestinian people to remain er... ignorant. To be kept to, to provide cheap labors for the Israeli masters. They don't like the Palestinian people to get educated. They want... They don't like them to have their own hospitals or clinics. They want them to go and pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars to the Israeli hospitals and doctors to be completely monopolized. Have a

monopoly on, on, on, on every aspect of the Palestinian life. See, my humanitarian work is being tampered by the politicians. But, ah, but, but it's not my choice. I did not choose that. And I ...

GA: Is being tempered?

SB: It's, it's being tampered by, by....

GA: Tampered with?

SB: Tampered with by the Israeli politics, you know?

GA: Okay.

SB: See they want, they, they... All of this happening, all of this happening is not, is not because Israelis have evidence that the Holy Land Foundation has any link with terrorism. Because we don't... Because, if they had evidence, it had been... It would had been unrevealed. It doesn't need Gayle, or Steve or....

GA: Sure.

SB: ... anybody. They, they have their own intelligence. In fact, this country relies on the Israeli intelligence for a lot of things. Because they are far superior than the CIA when it comes to Middle East issues.

GA: Sure.

SB: But, but, you know. The under ah, the, the demonization [sic] of the Palestinian people is their agenda. So, any money that goes to Palestinians, they want to put it under question because to start with, a lot of Israelis, a lot of people in the Likud party, they don't believe Palestinians deserve to live. So, any money that goes to, to, to, to help Palestinians live and, and save Palestinian lives, to them, this is, this is, this is a questionable operation. So, my mission, Gayle, which is a humanitarian mission from day one, has been tampered with by the Israeli politics. And they know it. And it's not a mat... matter of law, because I know. The court has, you know... Our guy in Jerusalem, he said, they went... they attended the first, ah, ah, court meeting.

GA: Uh huh.

SB: The, the, the district attorney, has nothing against the Holy Land Foundation. Has nothing. He just said, you know, we have secret, secret evidence that... Well, guys! I mean, I mean, this is the same language that Emerson is using...

GA: Right.

SB: Secret official of what is the... What is this? I mean, we're in court now. If you have something, just throw it in my face and, and lock me in. But there is nothing, I can assure you. And as I said, you know, they, all of this, you know... Had the PLO been the one that is being annoying the Israelis, we would have been associated with the PLO. I cannot

GA: I'm sorry. Say that again.

SB: If, you see, if, if now the, if the, the, the application of the problem that exists is between the Israelis and the PLO. Now, if, if it's the PLO that is doing this suicide bombing?

GA: Right.

SB: They would have automatically associated the Holy Land Foundation with the PLO. See because, the, the target is not the Holy Land Foundation. The target is the spirit of the Palestinian people. They want to cut off any money or any aid that goes to the Palestinian people. They want to demonize the Palestinian people and make the Palestinian people completely dependent on Israel, on, on Israelis. And they want to, to, to suffocate the Palestinians to a point that there's, there is no one that can come to the rescue except the Israelis and, and at that point, the Palestinians will give up everything they have, for, in exchange for peace, which they did. [Sighs]. Now, Hamas is, is, is, is annoying Israel and, if, they wanna associate everybody with Hamas. Steve Emerson is associating everybody, every Muslim in this country is, is, is, is a fundamentalist. Even Alamoudi, the AMC, even, even CAIR, even the ISNA. All of those groups

GA: Right.

SB: ...to him are Hamas. There are no mainstream. They are everybody's a fundamentalist. I mean, this is very frustrating. At, and it serves no justice, except, as I said, it serves nothing but the Israeli's agenda, which is a very racist agenda. Which, which, which calls for the destruction of the Palestinian people. This is the Jewish... this is the Zionist agenda. It calls for the destruction of the Palestinian

people, for the transfer, that the Palestinian people do not, do not belong to Palestine. They belong to Jordan and they'd better be transferred peacefully rather than by force. And this is what the, what the Netanyahu and his group, what they wanna do. They wanna, they wanna keep the, the separation. They wanna keep the, ah, the collective punishment, if they win, forever. And they wanna separate the Muslim... the, the Arab and the Jewish community forever. They wanna build highways to separate communities. They want to use the hundred thousand, hundred million dollars given by, by, ah, ah, Mr. Generous, Mr. Clinton...

GA: Uh huh.

SB: ... ah, ah, to, to build ah, to build, ah, fences between the Israelis and the Arabs. This is what they want to do, which is... They want to deal with the Arabs like a, like a, like a herd of, of, of, of cows, or something. You know, ah they, they're just contemplating what is the best idea to, to get rid of them. What is the cleanest idea? The way to clean, to get rid of the Palestinian people. How can we do it without too much fuss from the international community? And what's happening right now in, in the Palestinian territories is a mockery to the international law. And I think the media should draw, should be drawing attention to them rather than to 1.5 million dollars that, that we spend on, on, on saving Palestinian lives. Or, maybe draw some attention to the 1.5 billion dollars that goes from Jewish charities in this country and do some kind of investigation. What, what happens to that money once it gets to Israel? I mean, it's a big question. I mean, ah, why are we being the underdog here, I don't know. I, I really wonder, Gayle. I mean, why am I being... I mean, under all of this pressure to answer to your questions, and everybody's questions just because I happen to be a Palestinian and a Muslim?

GA: Well, pa... partly for us as you might suspect, it's because you're based here. And...

SB: Well!

GA: When, when questions come up. They, you know, especially if it's an organization that's in our own backyard, we try to, to...

SB: [Sniffs].

GA: And, and I, I hope you can tell from the questions we've asked, that rather than just putting up an allegation and, and somebody's quote from one side and a quote from the other side, it really doesn't, you know, doesn't examine the question. We're trying to give our best examination of that question.

SB: But you are letting the allegations to set the agenda. I mean, the allegations, they are setting the plat... the platform and I'm answering to the allegations to that point, and you're not getting anything beyond that. You're just, *I mean...* Allegation and answer that allegation but, but that would not clarify the, the overall picture. Because the alle... I can fabricate hundreds of allegations and, and I'm gonna keep my enemy just answering them...

GA: Right.

SB: It won't, it won't really clarify the other,.... the position of the other party. You know?

GA: Perhaps it's not, it's not a very good answer for you. But, but, uhm, it's, it's just that, you know, we are looking... You know, we're not, we're not reporters on the foreign desk.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: You know, we're reporters on the Metro local desk.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: And so, you know. It's, it's we're not looking at the, you know, the overall picture. Maybe, you know, somebody on this paper should be. As you say, of, of money that goes, uhm, you know...

SB: So, how, how, how does it interest the Metro, Metro people in Dallas?

GA: Because you're local .

SB: ...How does it...? Ooh, I mean, what, how does it interest them to know whether... What, what do they know about, about the Palestinians and the suffering of the Palestinians? What do they know about the Israeli-Arab conflict, I mean, to start with?

GA: Well, we're trying to teach them a little bit of that in our story.

[Phone rings in the background.]

SB: I hope it does. I mean, I, I would be disappointed if the story doesn't do that If it

just... If the story puts ah, Mr. Abou Baker in a cage and, and, and portrayed him, portrays him as, as a terrorist in disguise, ah, that would be very... It, it would a really disappointing, ah, story to publish. But if it, if it helps clarify the historical and the, the, the historical conflict and it clarifies the reality, ah, of, of the situation. I'll, I'll be... I'll, I'll kiss your, your hands...

GA: [Laughs].

SB: I mean, I'm going to be like a French kiss, you know. But it's going to be on the hands.

GA: Well, I, I can tell you this.

SB: Huh.

GA: But, personally...

SB: Yeah.

GA: You know, I don't think I know any answers.

SB: Yeah.

GA: I don't think I see anybody that's all right or all wrong.

SB: I know.

GA: I think it's a complicated question.

SB: It is, yeah.

GA: I think that, for instance, the whole question of, if Hamas, you know, has the best schools and the best hospitals and you're trying to help

SB: Yeah.

GA: ... the Palestinian people. You know, why shouldn't you. You know, I, I mean I think that is a, a very good question. I don't think it's... Well, obviously you shouldn't. Or well, obviously you should.

SB: Um.

GA: You know, I think, I think it's a fair question to be explored .

SB: Yeah.

GA: And so

SB: Hm, hum.

GA: ... I hope that's what we'll be doing.

SB: [Sighs]. Yeah, see, what complicates the issue more is, is ah, is you're talking to a Palestinian or maybe half a Palestinian. Because I carry, I carry a lot of baggage, you know, with me when I answer these questions. Because I'm talking... You know, I could have been the coolest man on earth, but, but not, not when I'm a Palestinian. Because when I talk to you about... When I'm talking to you about this situations, you know, I talk while envisioning...

GA: Sure.

SB: ... exactly what's happening to the people and, and how trivial the whole dilemma in this country. The whole, this scenario of, of, of interrogation and answering and questioning. When it come to the, to the reality... You know, when I just think about the 1.5 million dollars we send. That if you distribute among the Palestinian people, each one will get about 60 cents, you know? A, a, and yet, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm being subjected to all of this, ah, ah, scrutinizing [sic]. You know, it, it makes me a little bit more frustrated than a normal guy that you would be calling.

GA: I understand.

SB: Who doesn't have any physical, I would say, or, or spiritual affiliation to the....

GA: Right.

SB: ... to that part of the world, you know.

GA: Well, and that's the other thing about my business is that, It would be fine, you know, if, if you only got asked these questions once.

SB: [Laughs].

GA: Cause for fifteen times, but. I don't know how to make all those other newspapers go away. You know?

SB: Yeah.

GA: I just want you to answer me.

SB: It's okay.

GA: You know, it's like a selfish thing.

SB: [Laughs].

GA: We all want you to answer to us. You know?

SB: That's okay.

GA: And so, but I don't really know how to fix that.

[Laughs].

SB: You know, look, ah, Gayle. I, I, you know, I can give you a very good breakthrough here. You know? I'm going to just tell you exactly, you know, uhm, that ah... What's happening... You know, there are certain elements, yes. You know, like the one, the guy who, Aman... You know, I just said the Israelis are split among themselves. Even, in the government...

GA: Uhuh.

SB: ... itself, some of them...

GA: Right.

SB: ... is, is asking the cabinet to release emergency food supplies and give it to the Palestinians.

GA: Right.

SB: The cabinet has refused. Ah, Wiseman is saying, "if you cannot find the needle in the haystack, then burn the haystack." And, and so-on.

GA: Right.

SB: But one of my employees, he is a Palestinian. And he was back home about, ah, almost a year-and-a-half ago...

GA: Uh huh.

SB: ... to visit his family. And just one or two days before he was coming back to the states ah, the Israelis came in the middle of the night, at 11:00 o'clock. And they got him and they took him. They blinded him and they took him to some kind of a camp. You know, a detention camp.

GA: Right.

SB: For nine days subjecting him... You know, they, they, ah, they put him in different, ah, you know, these interrogation techniques, ah, ah, this, ah, ah, torture techniques that do not leave marks in the body. You know, ah, he cannot sleep for three days. They keep waking him out, waking him up. Ah put him in a one by, you know, one meter by, by half meter room where he cannot stand up or sit down. And, anyway... Last day, they said... they brought him in a room, cleaned up and dressed up and everything nice and they said... they brought a camera. And they said, "look! We want you to confess on camera that the Holy Land Foundation they support... They send money and they support terrorist acts." The guy said, "I'm going to say one thing for the camera. I'm going to say that this is, this is the State of Israel, the democracy that receives three billion dollars a year from the, from, from the American taxpayers and they are prosec..... persecuting me and they are torturing me just be, because I happen to be Palestinian. And they want me to lie." And I have this guy. He's, he's in the office. I don't know if he wants to reveal his identity. I have another brother, a friend, who, who was jailed... Ah, and, and I received a message from jail, that for six months the Israelis were trying to extract a confession from him that the Holy Land Foundation, along with some other organization, they support terrorism, which he refused to give that confession because he could not lie. See, these are real stories and this guy... One of them, of course, he is one of my staff members. He could tell you the story.....

GA: This other, this other friend was also a staffer?

SB: The other friend was, was our, our rep in the north, in Jenin, in the north.

GA: Okay.

SB: Okay, I'm, I'm not going to reveal his name because I don't know, what, what but he's still in jail.

GA: Okay.

SB: But that...

GA: But....

SB: ... other guy is here in my office. Okay. And you can talk to him and, and I want you just, just, just... Because all of this confessions, the, ah, the, the... as you mentioned, the, the whole thing snow, ah, balled when, when, ah, when, ah, this guy Salah...

GA: Uh huh.

SB: He made a confession.

GA: Right.

SB: But, but I can give you live examples where people they... Maybe, be, beside Salah, there are a lot of other people who were put under duress but they did not confess anything because they, they don't know anything about the situ... the situation. And this guy he was, you know, somehow, ah, ah, ah, led to say that the Holy Land Foundation and is, is, is doing this or that. And when he was more comfortable and regained his strength, he retracted his testimony.

GA: You're talking about Salah?

SB: Yeah.

GA: You're right.

SB: So, that's, that's how the whole story... But if you want to go, dig deep and you'll find... I mean, who is the one who is trying to do that. I bet, I bet you it's not the, the Labor party. It's not the elements, the Perez elements. It's somebody whose

more hardliner who wanna convince the American administration that there are no main stream Muslims in America and every Muslim is, is a potential terrorist and all of those people are collaborating to support Hamas and all of that. And they wanna, ah... They look at the Holy Land Foundation. Yes, we are more visible, yes we are more vocal. Well, I could give you some more stories. I mean, how, how the Israelis try to, to tempt me, myself, when I was there last time. And as, you know, just, you know, in, in the airport to, to, to start helping them and work with them and, and, and they, they say... they, how they said, "What a pity! You know, you're working for, for peanuts in, in the country." The Israelis, they are trying to gain... to, to, to a lot of, a lot of nasty things. But this guy, I can set up a meeting between you and him. And I'm, I'm gonna... I don't know if he, he wants to reveal his identity. I think until you..., the horror stories for nine days and eventually what they wanted to break his spirit... By the way, they showed him some pictures...

GA: Okay .

SB: ...which is ADL, ADL taking pictures of us, some of the employees as they, standing outside the, the, they told him... They showed him the pictures. They said, "See, we know everything about you guy". We.....

GA: Standing where out, here in Dallas?

SB: Yeah, in front of the office. They showed him photographs taken by some ADL agent, I don't know, or maybe Mossad agent of us. You know, some of the staff members standing outside the office. They wanted to break his spirit so that he confess or he, you know, under duress. He say, "Yes, yes, okay, the Holy Land Foundation..." He said, "we have nothing, ah, we have nothing to do with terrorism. Because I am here at this moment and I raise \$60,000." He, he did. And ah, in his own town. And it was for the crippled children of his, of his township. He, he said, I know nothing about any link with, with terrorism".

GA: Yeah.

SB: Then what they did ...

GA: Okay.

SB: You know?

GA: I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt you but I'm going to get lost here and I don't want to get lost.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Okay, you mentioned two guys. Okay. The first guy you mentioned that you said works for you.

SB: Um.

GA: And then another guy you said was a friend. The, the second guy is the guy who's, who's the Holy Land Foundation's representative in, in the north part.

SB: He, he was a volunteer. You know, he was, he was, ah, just making sure that, ah, you know, we, we ask him to go and visit, ah, with different projects that we are supporting. And let us know, if, if the, the, the program is going, is working fine.

GA: Okay.

SB: [Sighs]. But that, that is....

GA: He's not living in this country?

SB: No, no, he's

GA: Okay .

SB: He's, he's over there. You know? But this guy is here. He's working with us. Lebanese.

GA: So, the first guy. Okay. All right.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Okay, I just... I was getting those two guys mixed up and....

SB: Yeah, no, no.

GA:I didn't want to get them mixed up.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Okay, I, I think we probably would wanna to talk to him.

SB: Yeah, you know, I want you to talk with him

GA: Okay.

SB: But you know, please. I want you to ah, take care of him. Because his, his, his parents, they're in this country visiting but they want to go back like in ten days.

GA: All right.

SB: And, and, and they... [Laughs]. I don't wanna cause any harm. But this, I can convince him to talk to you in private and explain to you exactly what the Israeli were trying...

GA: Right.

SB: ... to do with him.

GA: Well....

SB: They even, you know, they intimidated him. They say, "what kind of car does Shukri drive? How many children he has?"

GA: Aha.

SB: And, and they, ah, ah, led him to believe that they know everything about me. They even called the office while he was in the interrogation room, they placed a call to the office here....

GA: Uh huh.

SB: You know, and some of the guys answered back and they, they, they hung up. And they said, "You see, you know, you see we can reach you any time, any moment." But, then they brought in the camera and they wanted him to convince, convince that, confess that, you know, the Holy Land Foundation is, is ah, is sending money....

GA: So..., so....

SB: ... to support terrorism.

GA: So, after he said, "No I'm not gonna say that ah...", you know?

SB: He said, "No, I'm gonna....".

GA: Did they....

SB: "... the only thing I'm gonna say is that, you know..."

GA: Okay.

SB: "... this is, this is... the Israelis are, are doing this to me because I have been..., they want me to lie and they want to stop, ah, our, ah, they want to stop the money that goes to the Palestinian orphans...."

GA: Right.

SB: "... and to help the Palestinian people" So....

GA: But then....

SB: Then they, they kick him in, in the tummy. And by the way, once he got to this country, I, I send him to a doctor, and he checked him out. But he went to a massage, ah, this, ah, therapy. And the man, the man was, you know, he was hardly walking straight because of the nine days of, of, of

GA: Right.

SB: ... intensive interrogation and, and, you know, he fled. He just, he just left the country, you know, first chance out.

GA: Right.

SB: You know, he, he will be a really interesting story for you to....

GA: Sure.

SB: ... just, just to get the hint, the idea. What I'm trying to say here is that...

GA: Right.

SB: ... a lot of, a lot of fabricated stories can happen.

GA: Well, can you check with him and see if he would be willing to talk to us?

SB: Oh, yeah, I'll talk with him.

GA: Okay.

SB: Yeah.

GA: And if he... I think what you said was that his parents are here and they're going to go back. I think you are implying that maybe he would want to wait until his parents were safely back.

SB: No, he doesn't... He doesn't... I don't think he wants... he would want his identity to be revealed, revealed. Maybe you can give him...

GA: Okay.

SB: I don't know, anonymous....

GA: Okay.

SB: ... but, but you, you can verify his story.

GA: Right.

SB: You can... But if, if, if... I think if the Israelis... because if they know that he's talking to you and he's exposing....

GA: Uh huh.

SB: Ah, because ah, ah, ah, exposing what they did. They might try to harm his parents back home and the rest of his brothers.

GA: Okay.

SB: Because they already have two of his brothers.

GA: Sometimes, uhm, they will let us, uhm, use people's stories without their names.

SB: Uh huh.

GA: Obviously we do that.

SB: Yeah.

GA: Sometimes. But less and less. Okay ...

SB: Okay .

GA: Newspapers are getting more and more strict about that.

SB: Fine, fine.

GA: So, I, I cannot tell you whether or not they will let use [SC] his story without his name. But we would like... I at least would like to talk to him, uhm...

SB: Well. Fine.

GA: As to, to see about that.

SB: Yeah, sure. Sure, I'll arrange something. I'll call you back...

GA: Okay.

SB: Ah... But actually I had a, a... I took myself away from a meeting. We have a meeting in, in the office...

GA: Right.

SB: ... staff meeting. So, [laughs]...

GA: Right.

SB: So, ah, the guys are kind of...

GA: Okay. Well, I sure do appreciate your spending...

SB: Sure.

GA: ... your time talking to me again.

SB: No problem, Gayle.

GA: And, uhm, if you talk to that gentleman and he's willing to talk us....

SB: Yeah.

GA:either way, if you'll let me know that I'll appreciate it.

SB: And I'll call al-Mezayen for you.

GA: Okay.

SB: But I want you to, ah, you know, in, during my conversation if I showed any expressions of frustrating, frustration, please. It's not a.... it's not at you.

GA: I understand.

SB: You know, you understand that I'm just kind of....

GA: You've been very patient .

SB: The whole thing has been, you know [Laughs] It has a very disturbing impact on, on, on ...

GA: I've often thought

SB: ...on me personally.

GA: ... that I would not want to be the one under media.....

SB: No, no, no, no. You're not, you're not.

GA: Yeah. I mean.....

SB: You've been so kind so far. Thank you very much.

GA: Well, thank you. And we appreciate it.

SB: No problem. Okay, I'll get back to you soon, huh?

GA: Okay.

SB: Thank you.

GA: Bye-bye.

END OF CALL.