

Hamas is set to win a seat at the United Nations table

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Is Hamas joining the United Nations? Well, not directly — at least not yet — but through the back door, unless the members of the Economic and Social Council wake up.

On Monday, the 54 member states in ECOSOC (including the United States, Germany and United Kingdom) are scheduled to take the vote on the application of Palestinian Return Centre for accreditation as a non-governmental organization in the UN system.

This campaign is led by Sudan — a notorious terror state led by Omar al-Bashir, who's wanted for genocide. If the PRC application is granted, the group's leaders would receive open access to UN facilities in New York, Geneva and elsewhere, as well as the right to participate in committee meetings (including at the Human Rights Council).

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh has had a close affiliation with the PRC, which is based in London and active throughout Europe, for many years, including appearing as the keynote speaker at the organization's annual conference in Milan in 2009. On June 1, after the PRC passed the preliminary vote in the NGO committee of ECOSOC, Haniyeh's office warmly congratulated the PRC leadership.

(This public announcement was later denied, after Hamas belatedly realized that the ECOSOC process hadn't been completed, and that this public display of affection from a terror organization could lead to rejection of PRC's application in the final stage.)

But the links between Hamas terror operations and the PRC go much deeper than that. In December 2010, then-Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak declared the PRC to be an “unlawful association” for its involvement “in initiating and organizing radical and violent activity against Israel in Europe, while de-legitimizing Israel's status as a nation among the European community.” The PRC is headed by a number of Hamas activists, including Zaher al- Birawi , Majed al- Zeer , Sheikh Majdi Akeel , Ghassan Faour and Arafat Madi Shukri .

According to detailed reports published by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, Majed al- Zeer is a “Hamas activist affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain. He is the PRC's General Director and a member of its Board of Trustees . . . He was a Hamas activist in Judea and Samaria after the movement was established. As far as we know, he maintained relations with Hamas after he settled in Britain.”

Similarly, Birawi , chairman of PRC's board of trustees, was active in dispatching convoys to Gaza through former British MP George Galloway's organization, Viva Palestina . In the political realm, Birawi is a leader of an organization calling itself the Global March on Jerusalem, which “demands freedom for Jerusalem and its people and to put an end to the Apartheid, ethnic cleansing and Judaisation policies affecting the people, land and sanctity of Jerusalem.”

Akeel , a member of PRC's board of trustees, is also an activist with Interpal , which sends money to Hamas. Interpal is designated as a terror organization by the United States. Ghassan Faour is also

on Interpal's board of trustees.

The organizational, recruiting and fundraising activities of the PRC and its network in London should, in itself, be a major source of concern.

The recent attacks in Brussels, Paris and Copenhagen have highlighted the growing vulnerability of European cities to terrorism, and steps in legitimizing groups associated with Hamas, the Islamic State and Hezbollah add to the threat.

And as the Hamas network (via the PRC) grows, it does so at the expense of Fatah and the PLO, which maintain tenuous control over the West Bank and which are the West's preferred Palestinian partners.

Thus, an ECOSOC vote for PRC is essentially a vote to let Hamas take a seat in the United Nations.

It's not too late to stop this latest UN theater of the absurd. If David Cameron's government in London, along with Germany and other European members of ECOSOC, join the United States, Australia, South Korea and additional democracies in voting no on Monday, the preliminary outcome will be reversed and Hamas will be prevented from taking a disturbing step toward international legitimacy.