A person wearing a dark balaclava and a military-style jacket stands with arms crossed. The background is a dark blue world map with several bright orange and yellow flames scattered across it, suggesting conflict or terrorism.

# “International Jerusalem Day 2020”

**A Pro-Iranian Coalition Show of Force vs. Israel**

**Dr. Michael Barak and Dr. Eitan Azani**

**May 2020**

## **International Jerusalem Day 2020**

### **A Pro-Iranian Coalition Show of Force vs. Israel**

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On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 the **Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)**, a British pro-Iranian organization, held an online conference, broadcasted on Facebook and YouTube to commemorate the “International Jerusalem Day” (**IJD**). The event was made possible due to the support of over 100 pro-Iranian organizations around the world and was meant to present an intercontinental show of force, put the Palestinian issue on the international agenda and justify the struggle against Israel on the political and military levels. The event was embraced by the leader of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei, dubbed it a proof that there was a global resistance to the Zionist regime.

Since the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the rise to power of Khomeini Iran and its proxies have been commemorating an annual “International Jerusalem Day” on the last Friday of Ramadan. The event is aimed first and foremost to promote Iranian interests and the export of the Islamic revolution beyond Iran via the widest common denominator based on Jerusalem’s holiness in Sunni Islam. Commemorating IJD strives to achieve two major goals: Solidarity with the Palestinian suffering and highlighting the “Zionist occupation” and the need to unite and bring its downfall and termination. This year IJD has an additional meaning because it fell amid an American initiative to implement the “Deal of the Century” which the Iranian and Palestinians summarily rejected. Hence, from the organizers point of view it was important to create visibility for the event in cyberspace because of limitations on free movement due to COVID-19 around the world and inability to hold demonstrations. In light of the above the event was held almost exclusively online, a first in its 41 years.

In light of the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in the UK and Germany one must reexamine the nature of the relationship the above organizations have with Hezbollah. Said reexamination need to be performed in a wider context of the dissemination of the Shiite ideology as a basis for recruitment or via campaigns to fund Hezbollah or other terrorist organizations such as Hamas.

#### **The IHRC in the Service of Iran**

IHRC was founded in London in 1997 and defines itself as an organization who works with Muslims and non-Muslims to get justice for all humans regardless of race or political background. Additionally, it describes itself as an organization seeking to expose war crimes, hate crimes and discrimination and

determined to fight for human rights. On its web site it says that the organization has been cooperating with the U.N. since 2007<sup>1</sup>. Yet, it is evident that the IHRC has been refraining from addressing human rights in Iran, it praises the Iranian activity against Israel and uses its relationship with the U.N. to protect Iranian interests. Its pro-Iranian orientation is not a novelty and the British press has addressed multiple times the organization's support of Iran and Hezbollah. IHRC's main criticism is always addressed at Iran's adversaries first and foremost the U.S., Israel, Egypt and KSA. In March 2019, **Massoud Shadjareh**, IHRC's leader, condemned the British governments intention to designate Hezbollah's political wing as a terrorist organization and accused it of succumbing to pressure from the Zionist regime. He claimed that Hezbollah is a legitimate organization acting within the Lebanese political system and enjoys the support of over 60% of the Lebanese voters<sup>2</sup>. In January 2020 the IHRC sent a strong letter to the U.N. where it strongly condemned the elimination of Qassim Soleimani, the Iranian al-Quds Force commander, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. IHRC demanded that the U.N. to prosecute those responsible for the elimination<sup>3</sup>. Upon the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic it used its U.N. connection to pressure the U.S. to ease its sanctions on Iran, claiming that medical equipment should be allowed into Iran to fight the disease<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted, IHRC has been organizing the IJD parades in London and has the support of James Corbin, the former leader of the Labor party as well as radical left-wing organizations which has been manifested inter alia by allocating resources to the organization's activity<sup>5</sup>.

As aforementioned, the COVID-19 pandemic and perhaps the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in the U.K. and Germany have affected the modus operandi for the 2020 IJD and shifted its focus to cyberspace by launching the "Fly the Flag" campaign on social media.

### **Fly the Flag Campaign and 2020 IJD**

2020 IJD has been promoted this year via a social media campaign that took place throughout Ramadan (starting at the end of April 2020) under two main hashtags: Fly the Flag and IJD 2020<sup>6</sup> within which Iran's supporters in the U.K., Germany, Pakistan, Turkey and other countries, have been requested to photograph themselves with the flag of Palestine or some other national Palestinian symbol, upload the photo to social media under the hashtag Fly the Flag and tag five other users to do the same and increase the viral effect of the campaign<sup>7</sup>. The campaign created a major buzz on social media, especially Twitter. Many Muslims around the world uploaded their selfies with the Palestinian flag as well as uploaded clips supporting the Palestinian struggle against Israel.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/about/about-us/>

<sup>2</sup> 1.3.20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8YOcHA4WPk>

<sup>3</sup> 17.1.20. <https://iranpress.com/en/iran-i142925-ihrc-complains-un-over-ir-gen-soleimani-assassination>

<sup>4</sup> 29.2.20. <https://iranpress.com/en/europe-i144397-ihrc-urges-un-to-remove-anti-iran-medicinal-sanctions>

<sup>5</sup> 10.10.19. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/10/1m-charity-cash-group-linked-iran/>

<sup>6</sup> #FlyTheFlag; #AlQudsDay2020;

<sup>7</sup> The meaning of the campaign's name is not limited to the flag of Palestine and also means flying the flag of the resistance to Israel axis flag

**Ali Khamenei** also partook in the campaign, in English, Arabic and other languages. He praised the global reception of the campaign in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe that per him attests to a global resistance to the Zionist regime. On his Twitter account he posted a collage of Muslims from different parts of the world flying the Palestinian flag<sup>8</sup> (see photo). Per him, it is evident that today there is a growing recognition by the world's nations of the need to promote IJD and view it as a religious duty which is manifested, inter alia, by flying the Palestinian flag for the liberation of Palestine<sup>9</sup>. He promised that the Zionist regime will collapse in the same way the apartheid has been eliminated in South Africa<sup>10</sup>. Further, within the campaign Khamenei accused the U.S. of plotting against the Palestinians to weaken them and prevent them from initiating their struggle against the Zionist entity. At the same breath he praised Soleimani's efforts to assist the Palestinians<sup>11</sup>. He stressed that the armed struggle was a legitimate means to fight the Zionist regime: "the west bank should be armed as Gaza [strip]. The only thing that will reduce the Palestinian plight is the use of force. Otherwise, a compromise will not diminish the cruelty of the evil and rogue entity that acts like a wolf"<sup>12</sup>. That said he promised that Iran will assist to "any nation or group wherever they may be to resist and fight the Zionist regime and not hesitant to say that"<sup>13</sup>.



**Right: A collage of Muslims flying the Palestinian flag as part of the campaign; Left: Khamenei on his Twitter account calls to arm the west bank and promotes an armed struggle against Israel**

<sup>8</sup> 19.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1262848383133331456](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1262848383133331456)

<sup>9</sup> 22.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1263736202479513600](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1263736202479513600)

<sup>10</sup> 21.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1263546687982895104](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1263546687982895104)

<sup>11</sup> 22.5.20. [https://twitter.com/ar\\_khamenei/status/1263588957092114432](https://twitter.com/ar_khamenei/status/1263588957092114432)

<sup>12</sup> 19.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1262513122532896771](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1262513122532896771)

<sup>13</sup> 20.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1263181288338587649](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1263181288338587649). In another tweet he advised the Palestinians to keep fighting, organize better, cooperate and expand jihadi activity inside Israel and promised to assist the Palestinian fighters to carry out their mission ( 22.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1263751560313614336](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1263751560313614336))

The international community condemned Khamenei’s statements, especially the use of the “the final solution”. It is likely that due to this criticism he clarified that his intentions were not to genocide the Jews but put a referendum to Muslims, Christians and Jews to choose the regime they wished to install “and drive bullies like Netanyahu”<sup>14</sup>. A similar softer tone is evident from an animation clip he posted on his Twitter account that shows Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations’ activists celebrate the liberation of Jerusalem under the caption “Palestine will be liberated: the Final Solution until the referendum” (see photo)<sup>15</sup>. It seems that the high sensitivity to the phrase “the final solution” which is reminiscent of the Nazi regime led Khamenei to delete that banner off his Twitter account. Moreover, the Iranian media chose to post that banner however without the caption “the final solution” as was the case with the Iranian Farsi newspaper al-Kayhan<sup>16</sup>.



The banner on Khamenei’s Twitter account with the caption “Palestine will be liberated: the Final Solution until the referendum”<sup>17</sup>



Al-Kayhan’s front page – same animation however sans caption<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 20.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1263165539167371267](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1263165539167371267)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> 21.5.20. <http://kayhan.ir/fa/issue/1860/1>

<sup>17</sup> 20.5.20. [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1263169292931158019](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1263169292931158019)

<sup>18</sup> 21.5.20. <http://kayhan.ir/fa/issue/1860/1>



U.S. and the Muslims and all freedom fighters, especially the young ones, must capitalize those weak points to get rid of the western capitalist hegemony on Islamic lands. He stressed that Jerusalem is to serve as a lynchpin for the young freedom fighters' mobilization and these days the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Jerusalem are closer than ever, within reach, thanks to the beefed-up resistance forces.



Hashem al-Haidari calls upon young Muslims and revolutionaries globally to enlist to liberate Jerusalem while promising the destruction of Israel is close than ever

## Summary

Switching IJD in 2020 to an online gathering due to the COVID-19 pandemic points to a desire to keep it on the world agenda, strengthen the global anti-Israeli front and support the Palestinian struggle against Israel until the liberation of all of Palestine (i.e. the destruction of Israel). **Massoud Shadjareh**, IHRC's chairman who signed off the gathering clarified that the high participant count that included Muslims, Jews and Christians showed that the anti-Israeli resistance axis has been fortified and that trend had to be continued. A cyber audit in that context revealed the existence of a wide net of activists and pro-Iranian entities on UK soil and well as other countries that assists in promoting the Iranian agenda and protecting its interests, inter alia via harassing Iran's adversaries such as the U.S. and the U.K. Based on the multiple components of common denominator among the pro-Iranian organizations in Europe, UK and Germany especially, it is likely that there is a cooperation and even more than that between the above organizations and Hezbollah. Designating Hezbollah as terrorist organization in both Germany and the UK in the past year requires a thorough re-examination of the ties between the above organizations and Hezbollah, sooner rather than later.

The UK today is home to several prominent pro-Iranian organizations that took part in promoting IJD. Among them is **Ahlulbayt Islamic Mission (AIM)**, a Shiite pro-Iranian organization founded in London in 2003. Its goals, as appears on its home page, are to disseminate the twelfth Shia (the central school of

thought in Shia and Iran), hasten the coming of the messiah (the 12<sup>th</sup> imam, per the Twelfth Shia theology), spread the values of tolerance, co-existence and peace and empower Muslim and non-Muslim communities<sup>21</sup>. The organization has a strong linkage to Iran<sup>22</sup>. Its web site content also points to this linkage. For example, the web site posted articles on the importance of preserving the principle of Wilyat al-Fakia, introduced by Khomeini, i.e. pledging and keeping allegiance to a senior cleric that leads Iran; Q&A with Ali Khamenei on various issues; photos of Khomeini and Khamenei in one of its conferences (see photograph)<sup>23</sup>.



## About Us

AIM is an Islamic organisation empowering people through education, activism, and recreational activities. It is a non-profit organisation founded in 2003 in the United Kingdom.

AIM conference featuring Khomeini and Khamenei photos<sup>24</sup>

In summation – the IJD organizers emphasize that their goal is to protect and promote human rights and sound slogans about peace and harmony on earth. Yet at the same time they refrain from any criticism on the dire situation of human rights in Iran. The organizations that partnered up to have IJD promote Iranian interests and some of them disseminate the Iranian Shiite theology around the world (see appendix 1). **All of them clarify that are committed to the destruction of the State of Israel.**

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.aimislam.com/about-us/>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art\\_20353/E2\\_120\\_12\\_1695082257.pdf](https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20353/E2_120_12_1695082257.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.aimislam.com/about-us/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

## **Appendix 1**

### **Organizations that partnered up to enable the IJD conference as posted on IHRC's web site:**

1. Islamic Human Rights Commission, UK
2. Ahlulbayt Islamic Mission, UK
3. Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, UK
4. CASMI, UK
5. Jewish Network for Palestine, UK
6. Campaign Against Criminalising Communities, UK
7. Inminds Human Rights Group, UK
8. Lebanese Community in Scotland
9. Bahraini Community in UK
10. Islamic Student Associations in Britain
11. Neturei Karta, UK
12. Neturei Karta, USA
13. Islamic Movement of Nigeria
14. Hastings & Rye Palestine Solidarity Campaign, United Kingdom
15. Imamians UK, United Kingdom
16. Jaaferiya Youth, United Kingdom
17. Masjid-e-Ali Luton, United Kingdom
18. Muslim Community of Essex (MCE), United Kingdom
19. Al-Ajal (Detroit), United States
20. Light of Guidance (Detroit), United States
21. Muslim Student Association PSG (MSA-PSG), United States
22. Misbah Institute, United States
23. RISE (Houston), United States
24. Canadian Defenders For Human Rights (CD4HR), Canada
25. Canadian Shia Muslims Organization (CASMO), Canada
26. Wilayah Institute of Islamic Research & Education (WIIRE), Canada
27. Den Internationale Quds Dag (Denmark), Europe
28. Fatemiyun (Denmark), Europe
29. Justice Sans Frontières (Belgium), Europe
30. Reslat islamilainen yhdyskunta (Finland), Europe

31. Decoloniality International Network, Europe
32. Albalagh (Pakistan), Asia
33. Tanzeem Ulema E Islam (India), Asia
34. Islamic Pulse (Iran), Asia
35. Kudos TV (Turkey), Asia
36. Palestine Solidarity Forum (India), Asia
37. Pure Stream (Iran), Asia
38. Qom TV (Iran), Asia
39. Muslim Student Organisation (India), Asia
40. Students of Qom (Iran), Asia
41. Tanzeem Ulema E Islam (India), Asia
42. Volunteers of Quds (Turkey), Asia
43. Wisdom Gateway (Pakistan), Asia
44. Wilayat Media (Pakistan), Asia
45. Ahl al Bayt Islamic Council of South Africa (South Africa), Africa
46. Islamic Research (South Africa), Africa
47. Media Review Network (South Africa), Africa
48. Free Zakzaky Campaign (Nigeria), Africa
49. Idara-e-Jaafariya, United Kingdom
50. Party of the Indigenous of the Republic, France
51. Islamic Centre England, United Kingdom
52. Voice of Palestine, Indonesia
53. Indonesia Red Crescent, Indonesia
54. Islamic Defenders Front, Indonesia
55. Fajr Youth, United Kingdom
56. UCL Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
57. Kings Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
58. Queen Mary's Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
59. City Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
60. Brunel Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
61. Surrey Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
62. Aston Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
63. University of Birmingham Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom

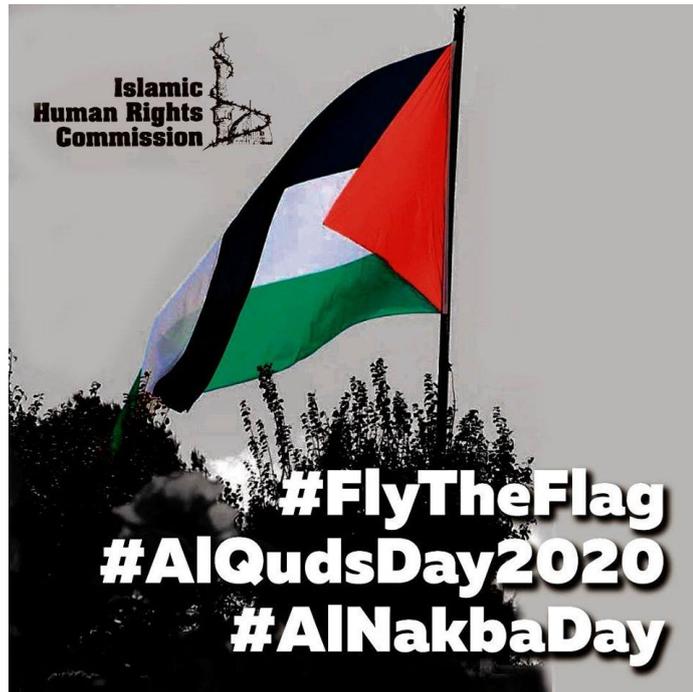
64. Leeds Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
65. Bradford Islamic Ahlulbayt Society, United Kingdom
66. Malaysian Consultative Council of Islamic Organizations, Malaysia
67. Alliance of World Mosque In Defence of Al Aqsa, Malaysia
68. Ulama Assembly of Asia, Malaysia
69. Isra' Foundation, Malaysia
70. Citizens International, Malaysia
71. Al Quds Foundation, Malaysia
72. Pertubuhan IKRAM, Malaysia
73. Palestine Cultural Organization, Malaysia
74. Muslim Youth Movement (ABIM), Malaysia
75. Federation Union of Muslim Student, Malaysia
76. Cakna Palestine, Malaysia
77. Global Peace Mission (GPM), Malaysia
78. Sejagat, Malaysia
79. Salimah, Malaysia
80. Association of Palestine Scholars Abroad in Southeast Asia, Malaysia
81. Ulama Association, Malaysia
82. International Relief and Humanitarian Outreach, Malaysia
83. Waqaf Al Aqsa, Malaysia
84. Baitul Hikmah (Kedah), Malaysia
85. Baitul Latif Social Service (Kedah), Malaysia
86. Mosque Muslimah Movement (Kedah), Malaysia
87. Pusat Dhuaafa Sejahtera, Malaysia
88. Quds Committee Mumbai, India
89. Friends of Al-Aqsa, United Kingdom
90. Quds Freedom Movement, India
91. Federation Of Karnataka Muslim Association, India
92. Bayt Al Qaim Islamic Centre, United Kingdom
93. S.I. Education Society, United Kingdom
94. Religious Advisory Board, United Kingdom
95. Al-Mahkama Ash-Shareiyah, United Kingdom
96. International Union of Unified Ummah, Iran

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97. Aqsana Organisation, Iran
  98. Palestine Foundation, Pakistan
  99. International Union of NGOs Supporting Palestinian Rights, Iran
  100. Majlis Wahdatul Muslimeen, Pakistan
  101. Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan Niazi, Pakistan
  102. Islamic Center Ahlul Bayt (Colombia), Colombia
  103. Fondation Islamique et Culturelle d’Ahl-el-Beit, Switzerland
  104. Azean Brothers’ Club, Ethiopia
  105. Salaam Islamic Center, Ethiopia
  106. Ahlul Bait Mission, Ghana
  107. Manchester Islamic Centre, UK
  108. Heidarioon Manchester, UK
  109. Islam Hub, Sydney, Australia
  110. United Islamic Foundation, Sydney, Australia
  111. Shia Youth Ahlulbayt, Australia
  112. Islamic Student Organisation (ISO), Pakistan
  113. Page Updated 16 May 2020 [created 8 April 2020]

## Propaganda materials posted within “fly the flag” campaign on social media



A call on AIM’s Twitter account to participate in IJD



IHRC social media banner

 **Islamic movement in Nigeria**  
@imnigeria\_org

Followers of Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky #FlyTheFlag for #Palestine to mark international #QudsDay in Abuja, Nigerian Capital City.

Friday 22nd, May, 2020.



2:55 PM · May 22, 2020 · Twitter for Android

Sheikh Ibrahim Zakaki, leader of the Islamic pro-Iranian movement in Nigeria fly Palestinian flags

## ABOUT THE ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counterterrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counterterrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism.

ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counterterrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy.

ICT is a non-profit organization located at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel which relies exclusively on private donations and revenue from events, projects and programs.

## ABOUT THE JIHADI MONITORING GROUP

The Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group (JWMG) is a specialized research and analysis team at the International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT). Composed of researchers fluent in Arabic, the JWMG monitors websites that support and serve the Global Jihad organizations. The

unique characteristic of JWMG publications is the team's integration of diverse materials from a wide variety of Arabic sources. JWMG connects each source to larger trends, providing a complete understanding of events on both a local and a global scale.