

Tariq Ramadan, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Shaikh Tamim greets radical cleric Yousuf Al Qaradawi.

Two French journalists, Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot, have come out with [a new study](#) of how Qatar spends hundreds of millions of dollars to pay for projects in Western Europe connected to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Details of the lavish payments made by Qatar to Muslim Brotherhood organisations in Europe, including furnishing funds the academic Tariq Ramadan has used for legal fees to fight rape allegations, have emerged in a new book.

Qatar Papers – How the emirate finances Islam in France and Europe, publishes evidence that cheques and money transfers from Qatar have been used to underwrite more than 140

projects around Europe, where the Muslim Brotherhood has sought to expand its influence.

The book also documents payments of €72 million (Dh296m) to groups in seven European countries. In just one region of France, the payments have totalled €4.6m, including €3m for the Averroes de Lille high school. Several staff at the school were linked to Muslim community bodies that also attracted Qatari support."

Just as Saudi Arabia is the chief financier of Salafists worldwide, Qatar has become the main bankroller of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. It supports everything from Muslim high schools (e.g., Averroes de Lille), to mosques and madrasas, Islamic centers, campaigns of propaganda and outreach connected to the Muslim Brotherhood, including support for imams who are ideologically on the same wavelength. One prominent Muslim academic, Tariq Ramadan, has also received huge financial support that was kept secret. The main surprise is how enormous, and widespread, Qatar's financial support for the Muslim Brotherhood has apparently been.

According to the book, Mr Ramadan was paid €35,000 [\$40,000] a month as a consultant to the Qatar Foundation, a body set up by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the wife of the last emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Just before his arrest early last year that saw Mr Ramadan under criminal investigation, bank documents show that he withdrew €590,000 [\$663,00] from Qatari bank accounts.

The authors point out that Mr Ramadan and his wife bought two apartments in prestigious areas of Paris in the same year.

Before all those unpleasant charges were made against him by various women, in both France (two Muslim women accused him of rape with extreme violence) and Switzerland (four women who accused him of committing sexual assaults when they were his

students in high school), Tariq Ramadan had been the Islamic world's golden boy. He was once hailed as a "towering intellect" and a "leading Islamic scholar." In 2000, TIME called Tariq Ramadan "one of the seven most important religious innovators" of the 21st century; in 2004, TIME named Ramadan as one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World Today." In Internet polls, Foreign Policy magazine listed Ramadan as one of the "100 top global thinkers" in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2012.

Ramadan has always presented himself as a brave would-be reformer of Islam, an independent intellectual beholden to no one. Many knew he held a professorship at Oxford; few were aware that his professorship was paid for by the government of Qatar. And until this book by Chesnot and Malbrunot appeared, no one knew of the additional huge sums that Tariq Ramadan has been receiving from Qatar. It turns out that since Ramadan's legal troubles began, he has been receiving \$40,000 a month directly from Qatar. In addition, though he has been "on leave" from Oxford since November 2017, he has continued to receive his full salary from the university, which salary comes from funds supplied by Qatar. Finally, aside from his Oxford salary, and the \$40,000 he receives each month directly from Qatari sources – sums which pay for many things, including the best legal counsel money can buy – he withdrew from Qatari bank accounts (where did this money come from?) the impressive sum of \$663,000, which was apparently then used to help pay for two apartments, one for Ramadan and one for his wife, in an expensive neighborhood of Paris. With an annual income of more than half a million dollars, Tariq Ramadan is not exactly suffering.

Funds were directed to leading Muslim Brotherhood figures in France and Switzerland, including Mucivi, or Le Musée des civilisations de l'Islam, a museum in Geneva that displays Muslim Brotherhood propaganda. It has received 1.4 million Swiss francs. Swiss police are quoted expressing frustration

that they cannot investigate the affairs of the Muslim League of Switzerland because it is a religious association, except in matters of terrorism. Documents found in the Swiss home of Youssef Nada, a formerly prominent leader of the brotherhood, set out a strategy for co-opting mayors and other local bodies as tools of influence.

The book names a long-standing employee of the Qatari embassy in Paris as the key link in the money chain in Paris. The employee is described as a protege of the ideological leader of the group, Qatar-based Yusuf Al Qaradawi. It also highlights French intelligence warnings about Qatari support for the L'Union des organisations islamiques de France, an umbrella body in France. It adds that Emmanuel Macron sought assurances from Qatari leaders that there would be no unreported financing of activities in France and that Doha would comply with initiatives to control funding of terrorism. "Following our investigation we have some reason to doubt that the Qatari leader respected his promise," the authors state.

Investigations into Mr Ramadan, a 56-year-old who is currently on bail and has surrendered his passport to the French authorities, centre on accusations that he raped two women, in 2009 and 2012. One is the outspoken feminist and activist Henda Ayari and the other, a disabled convert to Islam who has been named only as "Christelle." He denies the charges.

Last month a French court rejected a request to drop the two rape charges levelled against him. He was released on a €300,000 (Dh1.24 million) bail last November after ten months in jail. The Swiss academic was a professor at Oxford University but agreed to take a leave of absence in November 2017 when the allegations surfaced.

He is still being paid by the college, which has benefited from lavish Qatari funding.

A married father of four, Mr Ramadan's Egyptian grandfather was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and his brother Hani heads the movement's Islamic Centre of Geneva.

The next time you are told that Tariq Ramadan is the great hope, the soft-spoken thoughtful reformer of Islam in Europe, that he is an independent scholar ("towering intellect," etc.) who takes ideological orders from no one, but is courageously attempting to craft an Islam fit for the 21st century, look at those huge sums he has been secretly receiving from Qatar (aside from his Qatar-funded Oxford salary), that have helped pay for two luxury apartments in Paris, for his ballooning legal fees, and for so much else; surely he is the best-paid "Islamic scholar" in the world. Ramadan has consistently denied being a member, or even a supporter, of the Muslim Brotherhood. But the journalist Caroline Fourest, who wrote a scathing study of Ramadan, *Frère Tariq – Brother Tariq* – laid out a charge sheet against him that included his visceral loyalty to the Muslim Brotherhood and his use of double discourse to fool non-Muslim audiences.

Thanks to this latest book, which includes detailed evidence of Qatar's massive funding both of Muslim Brotherhood-related people, projects, and institutions in Europe, and of Tariq Ramadan in particular, we can see more clearly that, as Fourest charged several years ago, he has all along been not the nonpareil independent reformer, beholden to no one, that he pretended to be, but has for years been a well-paid agent of influence for Qatar and for the group it so lavishly favors, the Muslim Brotherhood that his grandfather founded in 1928. Let Ramadan now explain just why he has been receiving more than a half-million dollars a year from Qatar. As a past master of taqiyya, he can surely come up with some preposterous explanation. I'm all ears – aren't you?

First published in