

# The Holy Land Five

## Who Are the Holy Land 5?

The “Holy Land 5” or “HLF 5” refers to the 5 founders of the Holy Land Foundation: Mufid Abdulqader, Ghassan Elashi, Shukri Abu Baker, Abdulrahman Odeh, and Mohammed El-Mezain. These men are all Palestinian-American fathers and they were targeted by the Bush administration as part of the racist and Islamophobic “War on Terror” following 9/11. The organization was shut down in 2001 by the United States government and was falsely accused of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization. The HLF5 were ultimately convicted 15 years ago, in an illegitimate trial that drew on secret evidence and an anonymous expert witness who could not be cross-examined.



The Holy Land Foundation was inspired, in part, by Sanabel Abu Baker, the late daughter of Shukri Abu Baker. Sanabel was born in 1987 and she struggled through various health issues. As Shukri saw his daughter through her health struggles, he could not help but think about how children in Palestine who suffer from the same illnesses as his daughter and how they would not have the same level of care that Sanabel received. The Holy Land Foundation started with this dream of helping sick or otherwise needy Palestinians to have their needs met.

## What was the Holy Land Foundation?

The Holy Land Foundation was the largest Muslim-led charity in the United States. It was headquartered in Richardson, Texas, and was founded and run by Palestinian-Americans based out of Texas. The work of the Holy Land Foundation included relief for Palestinian orphans, widows, and the families of martyred Palestinians in Palestine. During the racist and Islamophobic “War on Terror,” the Holy Land Foundation was targeted by the Bush administration and was forced to cease operations in December of 2001. This attack led to the conviction and imprisonment of the 5 Palestinian leaders of the organization: Mufid Abdulqader, Ghassan Elashi, Shukri Abu Baker, Abdulrahman Odeh, and Mohammed El-Mezain. To this day, 3 of them, Mufid Abdulqader, Ghassan Elashi, and Shukri Abu Baker, are still in prison. Mufid Abudlqader is set to be released in January 2025, but Ghassan Elashi and Shukri Abubaker are still set to serve 65-year sentences.



**samidoun**  
PALESTINIAN PRISONER SOLIDARITY NETWORK

## **Weaponization of Material Support for Terrorism Laws**

The HLF5 was accused and convicted on false charges of “providing material support to a terrorist organization” despite having never been accused of providing funding to the armed resistance forces resisting Zionist occupation and colonization. All of the financial records were legitimate and above-board, and the Holy Land Foundation was donating funds to the same organizations that the Red Cross and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) provide funding to. Despite this, the U.S. government managed to convict the HLF5 based on illegitimate “evidence” brought in by an anonymous Israeli intelligence agent.

## **What can you do?**

QR code incoming - Follow this link to access the Samidoun Network Action tool-kit to plan your own “Free the HLF5” campaign events and print flyers to post in your communities or on social media, as well as access more information on the story of the HLF5, and more ways you can support the campaign. Link: <https://samidoun.net/freethehlf5>



## **Why was the Holy Land Foundation Targeted?**

The Holy Land Foundation was repeatedly targeted because it was very effective in its mission to provide direct aid to people in occupied Palestine. The Holy Land 5 were not only extremely successful in their goal of providing aid to Palestinians, they were also community leaders in the United States, providing a way for Palestinians living in the states to support their brothers and sisters still living in their occupied homeland. Throughout the 1990s, various Zionist organizations including the ADL, as well as many Zionist politicians lobbied for the dismantling of the Holy Land Foundation. After 9/11, the Zionists and the United States government finally had the excuse they needed to shut down operations of the Holy Land Foundation. Notably, former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon came to the United States and visited George Bush shortly before the HLF was shut down. This further illustrates how the U.S. and Zionist governments were working together to stop the efforts of the Holy Land Foundation.

This was a clear attempt at preventing Palestinians in the United States from providing Palestinians in their occupied homeland resources that they needed to resist displacement from their homes and remain steadfast in the face of violent Zionist occupation and without the strings attached to similar aid from the U.S., the European Union, or other “donor states” that will only donate based on political concessions that favor U.S. and Zionist interests.