



QATAR CHARITY PAPERS

52'

An in depth and thought-provoking investigation on Qatar's religious activism in Europe and a close look at Qatar's secret diplomacy.

This investigation is the fruit of in-depth research by two seasoned journalists and renowned Middle East experts Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot.

George Malbrunot is a well-established journalist working for French national Television and regular contributor for the French daily *Le Figaro*.

Christian Chesnot works as a foreign correspondent for *France Inter*, French public radio station.

Together, they have written more than 10 books on the region, including *Our Friends the Emirs* and *Al Qaeda Confidential*. They have both been kidnapped and taken hostage by an Al Qaeda linked group in Iraq in 2004. The two have continued to work together ever since.

This film is our second collaboration with Georges Malbrunot, after producing in 2012, the acclaimed *Inside Al Qaeda*, a portrait of Osama bin Laden's bodyguard.



1• The whistle-blower and the two journalists: how the investigation started

In 2017, a secret but reliable source entrusted the two journalists with a USB flash drive full of compromising material. Following cross-examinations, on-site interviews with various Qatari sources and new leads, the journalists were able to confirm the findings of the leaked documents: **Qatar is putting a religious stamp on Europe's Muslim communities and on European circles of influence.**

The documents concern the financial transactions of Ghaith, an initiative launched by the **Qatar Charity** to provide large-scale funding for Islamic projects in Europe. They offer proof that the Qatari government, despite their repeated denials is engaged in **religious activism via the organisation known as the Muslim Brotherhood**. This film will tell the story of how Qatar attempts to influence European societies through religious activity and what the long-term goals are.

Main countries and Qatar Charity funded initiatives featured in the film

Through its humanitarian foundations investing heavily and secretly in various projects, Qatar is backing the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe.

In Italy, the foundation has launched a huge, 25-million-euro investment program spanning a number of projects. The film will take a look at two of them, one in Sesto San Giovanni in the suburbs of **Milan**, the other in **Sicily**. All projects are monitored by l'Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia (UCOI), the **Italian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood**.

In Germany, we will focus on **Forum für Islam**, a program led by the imam Benjamin Idriz and financed by the Qatar Charity. Although Idriz presents himself as a liberal religious leader, we have discovered that he is tied to the **Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland (IGD), the German branch of the Muslim Brotherhood**.

In Switzerland, we will shine the spotlight on the **Islamic museum** founded by Nadia Karmous. We know from the leaked documents that the Qatar Charity finances this establishment. In 2007, the French police arrested her husband, Mohamed Karmous, who was caught carrying more than 50,000 euros in undeclared cash in his suitcase. The money, which had been provided by Qatar, was to be given to the Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines (IESH), a French school for imams. We know that this institution, promoted by former President Nicolas Sarkozy with the aim of building a French brand of Islam, is run by the Union des Institutions Islamiques de France (UOIF), the French branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In Kosovo, where 90 % of the population is Muslim, we will interview officials about the government's decision to ban the Qatar Charity, whose activities are considered to be a source of conflict and division.



2• The broader historical context: Qatar's connections to Muslim Brotherhood' and its soft power



As the investigation unfolds, the film will examine the broader historical context of the Muslim Brotherhood's development in Europe and its strategies for extending its influence among local Muslim communities. It begins in the sixties with the organisation's ambition to convert Europe to Islam. The leader of the movement Saïd Ramadan is the father of the Swiss-born Muslim academic Tariq Ramadan, . Saïd was also the son-in-law of Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood's founder. As a first step, he helped built a mosque in Munich. When the organisation realized that there wouldn't be any massive conversions in Europe, they invented a new concept – **Da'wa or proselytization** – an initiative embraced and bankrolled by Qatar. **The goal is to gain influence with the European population and its leaders.** Leading Muslim Brotherhood specialists like **Haoues Seniguer, who teaches at Sciences Po Lyon**, will address this issue.

It's clear from our investigation that Qatar is trying to make its mark on European Islam, but what is the larger goal?



Lorenzo Vidino, a foremost expert on the **Muslim Brotherhood** who teaches and works at George Washington University, will help us determine what's at stake for Qatar behind these shadow networks and activities.

Once a desolated desert state, Qatar began to emerge as a major gas exporter in 1995. **The country lacked diplomatic leverage.** The Muslim Brotherhood, with whom the Qatari king shared an ideological affinity, already had a European network in place, which the Qataris used to plug into it. **Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood have a long, close history.**



It is Qatar who opened its doors to the **Al Jazeera TV star Yusuf al-Qaradawi**, a preacher known for his inflammatory statements about women, Christians and Jews. During the Arab Spring and Qatar's embrace of the uprisings, the relationship between Qatar and the Brotherhood gained momentum. **They supported terrorist groups like the Al Nusra Front in Syria, Mohamed Morsi in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia.**

Qatar was at the time the focal point of Middle East diplomacy, but things changed in 2014 when President Mohamed Morsi was removed by the army. **Regional tensions grew and Qatar was ostracized by its neighbours. The latter imposed a blockade on the country in 2017 that still remains in force.**

It was during this period that Qatar **started expanding its influence in Europe, notably through large investments in sports, luxury and real estate** and the discreet financing of religious activities.

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