

February 8, 2024

Mark A. Welsh III
President
Texas A&M University
400 Bizzell St
College Station, TX 77843
By email: president@tamu.edu

Re: Texas A&M and Qatar

Dear General Welsh:

On behalf of the Counter Extremism Project¹ (“CEP”), I am writing to urge Texas A&M University to expand the scope of its current investigation into the status of Qatar’s ties to your institution. We welcome the news that Texas A&M regents are to hold a “discussion and possible action” regarding the university’s relationship with the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development this Thursday at their quarterly meeting. It is imperative, however, that these conversations include a larger examination of your university’s ties with, and presence in, the country that hosts, funds, and sponsors the perpetrators of the October 7 massacre in Israel. Four months after that horrific day, the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (“FTO”) Hamas still holds more than 130 people, of whom Israeli intelligence estimates 32 were already killed prior to the transportation of their bodies into Gaza.

I. Texas A&M and Qatar

Texas A&M is one of several U.S. universities uniquely positioned to play a not insignificant role in the fates of the approximately 100 hostages believed to still be alive and the approximately 30 bodies still in the hands of Hamas. In simple terms, Texas A&M’s extensive financial, physical, and public ties to Qatar puts it in a position to influence the Emirate’s actions, especially by using the court of public opinion. This should be deployed to insist the Qatari government use its own considerable sway over Hamas to secure these hostages’ release. As the primary patron of Hamas², Qatar provides essential support to the group in maintaining its grip over Gaza, thus ensuring Hamas’s ability to plan and perpetrate additional acts of brutality against Israelis, as they have openly promised, while concomitantly prolonging the immiseration of the Palestinians resident in the enclave. To be clear, Qatar’s repeated claims that it does not have influence over Hamas are ludicrous and offensive to reason.

¹ CEP is a bi-partisan, non-profit international policy organization formed in 2014 to confront the growing threat from extremist groups and extremist ideology. <https://www.counterextremism.com/>

² See Section II.

We strongly believe that Texas A&M has an ethical duty to assist in efforts to change Qatar's calculus of interests. Whether Texas A&M conducts such efforts via public or private channels is naturally at your discretion, although we must highlight the fact that Qatar is highly susceptible to public reputational pressure. However Texas A&M wishes to proceed with these efforts, proceed it must. There is frankly little excuse to sit on the sidelines as a disinterested observer when your intervention—especially in concert with other universities with Doha campuses in Doha's Education City— could prove highly significant.

In the wake of October 7 and the surge in antisemitism across American campuses and the reckoning that has followed, universities have justifiably had to answer for their connections to Qatar. Texas A&M currently operates a satellite campus in Education City, Doha and has reportedly received almost \$500 million in donations from one of the world's leading funders of terror and violent antisemitism.³ Furthermore, it appears that discrepancies have emerged between Texas A&M's own reporting of Qatar's gifts to it and the amount reported by your institution to the federal foreign gift reporting system.⁴ Now more than ever, the American people deserve transparency with the relationships between U.S. universities and malign foreign actors.

In the midst of a national reckoning with on-campus hate and antisemitism, your university grants degrees a stone's throw away from the perpetrators of the greatest mass murderer of Jews since the Holocaust, all while espousing the views of tolerance and free inquiry. Qatar has long been funding American universities in an attempt to develop its soft power capacities in the West. Recent studies have likewise found that there are direct links between foreign funding from authoritarian countries like Qatar and increased levels of antisemitism on campuses, as well as greater intolerance for both open inquiry and free expression.⁵

The storied legacy of academic freedom and excellence that rightly characterizes Texas A&M has been directly jeopardized by Qatar's project to whitewash its own legacy of terror.

We urge A&M to use its connections with Doha for good and as a platform to demand that the al-Thanis cease their patronage of Hamas and ensure the safe return of all hostages. Until Qatar fundamentally rejects its support for terrorism, it is not a suitable partner for any American academic institution with a commitment to academic independence, integrity, and freedom of speech. While the release of the hostages is of paramount concern, we also seek to hold the Qatari government accountable for its role in the Oct 7 atrocities and demand the detention of Hamas leadership and their remand into U.S. or Israeli custody. I sincerely hope these items will be first on the agenda at this week's session.

II. Qatar and Hamas

The State of Qatar is the long-time host to the top leaders of Hamas. Supposedly a U.S. ally, Qatar is home to Hamas leader [Ismail Haniyeh, who celebrated](#) the October 7 massacre from

³ Judicial Watch, "[Documents Show Texas A&M Appeared to Receive Almost \\$500 Million in Grants from Qatar Regime](#)," May 3, 2023.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Network Contagion Research Institute at Rutgers University, "[The Corruption of the American Mind](#)," November 6, 2023.

his Doha office along with his predecessor, [Khaled Meshaal](#). Haniyeh,⁶ the chairman of Hamas' Political Bureau and a U.S. Specially Designated Global Terrorist ("SDGT"), his predecessor Khaled Meshaal,⁷ also an SDGT, and other Hamas leadership all lead luxuriantly appointed lifestyles in five-star accommodation in Doha, Qatar. Ali al-Qaradaghi, residing in Qatar, is Hamas's highest religious authority, providing the organization with an alleged pretext (in the form of Fatwa) for their acts of terror. He replaced the late Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a long-time resident of Qatar—and former longtime television personality on Qatar-owned *Al Jazeera*—who encouraged and advocated for all their atrocities and provided religious sanction to suicide attacks. Haniyeh is regularly hailed by Qatari leaders, including the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. In return, Haniyeh offers his constant gratitude to Qatar for its "official and popular support."



Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh (L) with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha, Qatar, July 2017 (Al-Jazeera)

During a single day, more than 1,000 Hamas terrorists perpetrated an atrocity of unfathomable savagery -- butchering, burning and shooting to death approximately 1,200 people in villages and Kibbutzim across southern Israel. Whole families, including elderly grandparents and infants, were locked inside houses and immolated. Hundreds of teenagers and young people in attendance at an open-air music festival were slaughtered en-masse, many at point-blank range, others simply mowed down in hails of machine-gun fire. As dead friends lay strewn around them, Hamas terrorists proceeded to rape teenage girls repeatedly. President Biden has attested to instances of decapitated babies still wearing blood-stained diapers. Witness testimony and video evidence has since revealed a brutal campaign of sexual violence, torture, and mutilation against Israeli women.⁸ Israeli first responders have provided horrifying accounts of the dismemberment

⁶ Counter Extremism Project, "[Ismail Haniyeh](#)"

⁷ Counter Extremism Project, "[Khaled Meshaal](#)"

⁸ New York Times, "[Accounts of Sexual Violence by Hamas are Aired Amid Criticism of U.N.](#)," December 4, 2023.

and eye-gouging of live infants in front of their parents. A full accounting of the slaughter will take months if not years to finalize.

Among the dozens of nationalities caught up in the orgy of violence, 33 Americans are dead. Four months later, Hamas is holding more than 130 hostages and threatening their executions. While Hamas has released a few hostages, it is telling that the group reportedly credited Qatar for their release. Rather than absolve Qatar, this proves that the nation harboring and bankrolling Hamas leaders has the power to force the release of hostages—yet it took almost two months for fewer than half of the hostages taken by Hamas to be released.⁹

Qatar has played a major role in the October 7 brutality by hosting and funding the very same Hamas leaders responsible for its formulation. But even in the months following the horror, Qatar neither accepted any responsibility, provided even the most minor censure of Hamas, nor suspended its platforming of Hamas's propagandizing and incitement from Qatar.

Even as the blood of the 1,200 victims was still flowing, the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that it held Israel "solely responsible for the ongoing escalation due to its ongoing violations." Since the attacks, Qatar has hosted multiple meetings between Hamas leadership and its main terror sponsor, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and continued its full-court propaganda press against Israel.

In addition to Haniyeh and Meshaal, Qatar is harboring multiple other sanction-designated or wanted individuals, including U.N-sanctioned Taliban operatives and several al-Qaeda financiers. Although such individuals are sanctioned by the United States or United Nations, or are the subject of INTERPOL arrest warrants, they are able to live freely – and in most cases, in luxury – within Qatar.

Qatar's patronage for Hamas extends beyond the provision of opulent accommodations and unswerving public support. Even before this heinous event, Qatar had stained its reputation through a long history of vast financial and material support for terrorism and internationally designated terrorists.¹⁰ Qatar's financial support of Hamas dates back to at least 2008, when Doha pledged \$250 million to Hamas one year after the terror group seized control of the Gaza Strip.¹¹ In 2012, Qatar's then-emir Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani pledged more than \$400 million to Hamas for infrastructure projects.¹² In July 2016, the Qatari government announced that it would give \$30 million to Hamas in order to help pay the salaries of Gazan public sector workers.¹³ The following month, Hamas's then-deputy leader Haniyeh said that Qatar's donations would also go

⁹ Washington Post, "[Here are the hostages released by Hamas and those remaining in Gaza](#)," December 6, 2023.

¹⁰ The Qatari government has long provided critical support to a wide array of terrorist and extremist groups including not only Hamas but also al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula ("AQAP"), the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Taliban – including direct money loans, ransom payments, and supplies transfers. Former Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen described Qatar as a "permissive terrorist financing environment" that enables "private fundraising networks" to operate within its borders. According to Cohen, Qatar "has for many years openly financed Hamas, a group that continues to undermine regional stability. Press reports indicate that the Qatari government is also supporting extremist groups operating in Syria."

¹¹ Al Monitor, "[Hamas Ties to Qatar Have Cost](#)," April 22, 2013.

¹² New York Times, "[Qatar's Emir Visits Gaza, Pledging \\$400 million to Hamas](#)," October 23, 2012.

¹³ Reuters, "[Qatar says gives \\$30 million to pay Gaza public sector workers](#)," July 22, 2016; Times of Israel, "[Haniyeh seeks to pay Hamas 'military personnel' with Qatar's money](#)," August 2, 2016.

toward paying Hamas’s “military personnel.” Today, and since at least 2018, Qatar funds Hamas to the tune of between \$360 million to \$480 million each year.¹⁴



Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (R) with Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh (C), in Doha, Qatar, May, 2021 (Middle East Monitor)

III. Conclusion

Along with Hamas, American universities can now count themselves as prominent members on a list of major beneficiaries of Qatari wealth—the Gulf state is now the largest foreign donor to American universities. This largesse, bestowed upon institutions like Texas A&M to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars annually, is part of a lavishly-funded campaign to whitewash Qatar’s crimes, most notably through huge investments in flagship U.S. properties, enterprises and universities. But Qatar’s unabashed attempts to co-opt and/or suborn U.S. interests through such investing in our country’s most cherished academic institutions should neither mask nor exonerate its gross misconduct at home.

At this juncture, we would additionally direct you to CEP’s November 30, 2023 statement regarding American universities and their ties to Qatar:¹⁵

It is unacceptable that flagship American universities—many of whom have exhibited a despicable lack of moral clarity in the wake of October 7—should sit quietly by and allow the Al Thani Royal Family’s whitewashing of its bloody and authoritarian reputation. The storied legacy of academic freedom that has

¹⁴ Associated Press, “[Qatar pledges \\$360 million in aid to Hamas-ruled Gaza](#),” January 31, 2021; Haaretz, “[Qatar is Hamas’ Patron. Its Moderate Rebranding is a Dangerous Delusion](#),” May 9, 2022.

¹⁵ Counter Extremism Project, “[CEP LAUNCHES GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR QATAR ASSET FREEZE](#),” October 16, 2023.

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historically characterized these universities is severely tarnished by their relationship to a state that funds and promotes violent extremism.

If U.S. universities are not willing to do the right thing and stand up to their Al-Thani paymasters, they should end their associations and exit Qatar.”

We would like to reiterate our commendation that Texas A&M is taking the first crucial step this week to examine its relationship with the nation of Qatar. We also note that Qatar can immediately relieve our calls for global isolation by taking the following steps: arrest Hamas leaders, including Haniyeh, resident in Qatar for remand into U.S. or Israeli custody; and use the leverage created by the billions of dollars disbursed by Qatar to ensure the immediate release of every single hostage unharmed. We urge you to join us in this call, and demand that your academic partner immediately cease its duplicitous strategy of handing out funds for American education on the one hand and perpetrating heinous acts of terror on the other.

Please let us hear from you at your earliest opportunity. Thank you for your kind attention.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Wallace". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Ambassador Mark D. Wallace