

# Blood and Money: US Tycoons, Charities and Israel's Settlements

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#)

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*Last month, Bassem al-Tamimi and 35 other Palestinians and Palestinian Americans sought legal services to take a range of charities, firms and tycoons in the US to court in what will be a \$34.5bn law suit. Their argument is personal, charging such figures as Las Vegas casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and philanthropist Irving Moskowitz for complicity in financing a particularly murderous, and dispossessing war machine.*

Five counts of conspiracy, war crimes, aggravated trespass, pillage and racketeering are being made, encased in the legal miracle that is organised crime. Central to this is the overall legal justification (or non-justification) for the Israeli settlements themselves, with a specific focus on development in Judea and Samaria. Some of the plaintiffs have also lost relatives to the predations of the IDF, including Hiba Barghouti, whose Palestinian American brother Abdelrahman Barghouti was slain in the West Bank during an incursion.



File photo of illegal Israeli settlements

Figures like Adelson have well minted form. The casino billionaire tends to reek of his money and political projects. He can count himself a firm figure behind the fortunes of Benjamin Netanyahu and the US Republican Party.

That he has not always been scrupulous is also a lingering claim. Former executive Steven Jacobs should know, having lost his job in 2010 for attempting to end what he suggested were Adelson's endorsement of illegal payments to Chinese officials and ties to Chinese organized crime. Adelson's own response was predictable enough: Jacobs simply did not cut the mustard.[1]

The suit also has Haim Saban, another donor, in its sights. Saban's curriculum vitae involves the donation of millions of dollars to that less than sterling character, Hillary Clinton.

John Hagee, a televangelist who has made a name on the Israel train of blood and glory, has also been named in the suit. In November last year, it was reported that 23 Israeli charities had received something in the order of \$3.2 from John Hagee Ministries.

The website, Breaking Israel News, noted how the organisation had given "over 95 million in donations towards humanitarian efforts in Israel, cementing the strong bond between Christians and Jews." [2] Each "Night to Honour Israel" event is replete with Hagee's feverish dedication to feeding the accounts of the Israeli "humanitarian" machine. Much of this is dressed up in the form of donations to hospitals.

Martin McMahon, a lawyer representing the complainants, told *Al Jazeera* his clients were less in the business for the actual remuneration than hitting companies where it hurt most: their wallets. "We're not in this for the money, but we'll probably pick the pockets of some very wealthy corporations."

McMahon is something of a specialist in this area. On December 21 last year, he busied the federal court in Washington, D.C. with a similar against the US Treasury.

The premise there was similar to that alleged for his Palestinian clients: that non-profit groups were sending wads of tax-exempt cash "to fund the forcible expulsion of non-Jews" and expand the settlement base in the occupied territories. The legal suit, were it to succeed, would involve compelling the Treasury to investigate alleged criminal activities, thereby making grounds for revoking the tax-exempt status of the organisations in question.[3]

US government policy is therefore at odds here, having declared as early as 1980 that the settlements are illegal under international law. The charitable drive, however, has provided a rich pool of assistance that effectively ignores the classification. For pro-Israel donors, reality is relative. "For 30 years at least, the US taxpayer has been funding and/or subsidizing criminal activity overseas, i.e., murder, arson, malicious property destruction, assault and battery and ethnic cleansing."

This is where the murkiness of charity, and supposed good works, becomes profound. Israel has always been marketed as a beleaguered land of crisis, in need of more than spiritual salvation. The entire charitable industrial complex around its existence has meant that guns and butter often get mixed up, both deemed as necessities in the broader cause.

This point is amply illustrated by the US charity Friends of the Israel Defense Forces. "Their job," goes that body's advertising line, "is to look after Israel. Ours is to look after them." In its section of "FIDF Events," sponsorship programs for IDF soldiers are encouraged, enabling visits of a foreign military power to US soil "to participate in special events and programs,

such as IDF Musical Ensemble performances, parlor meetings, lectures at synagogues and schools, regional gala dinners, and meetings with FIDF supporters.”[4]

In one month, this tax-exempt entity receives as much as \$60 million, money which goes to funding various Israeli settler projects, including the creation of “sniper schools”.

All this, despite the conventional idea that charity should involve the amelioration of poverty, the advancement of scientific, religious and education projects, while “eliminating prejudice and discrimination” and “defending human and civil rights secured by law”. The law, however, is truly an ass of some proportion, and any resolution of these suits will have to wait for years. At most, they will be legal nuisances rather than genuine acts of harassment and redress.

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Notes

[1] <http://forward.com/opinion/national/307990/adelson-testifies-in-lawsuit-that-could-topple-his-empire/>

[2] <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/52517/23-israeli-charities-receive-3-2-million-from-john-hagee-ministries-video-biblical-zionism/#hIIYizvZsSOBDKiR.97>

[3] <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/charlotte-silver/us-sued-over-tax-exempt-donations-illegal-israeli-settlements>

[4] <http://www.fidf.org/page.aspx?pid=294>

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