Qatar funds Hamas and elite Western universities, courts Islamists, and markets itself as a peace mediator. Through Qatar Charity, millions have flowed into Islamic institutions across Europe—including in Switzerland. And through Al Jazeera, the emirate reaches an audience of millions: in Arabic, with messages different from those in English.

By the editorial team at FokusIsrael.ch

This is how Qatar exerts influence in the Western world and the Middle East:

- Funding Islamists, profiting as intermediaries: Qatar supports the Muslim Brotherhood and has funded the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Its ties to Hamas give Doha political influence that extends all the way to Washington.
- Western universities rely on Qatari funding: $8.8 billion in reported grants and contracts. Qatar thereby secures contractual rights to have a say in American universities.
- Millions for Islamic institutions in Europe: According to research, Qatar Charity funded around 140 projects with 71 million euros, including five in Switzerland totaling over four million francs.
- Al Jazeera: Two Languages, Two Faces: In Arabic, the dead are called “martyrs” and armed groups are referred to as the “resistance.” In English, however, the network refers to them as “the dead” and “militants.” A study documents these differences.

Funding Hamas...

For decades, Qatar has supported the Muslim Brotherhood, offered refuge to its leading representatives, and given its ideology an international reach. One of the Muslim Brotherhood’s most influential thinkers, the Egyptian Islamist Yusuf al-Qaradawi, lived in Doha and reached an audience of millions through Al Jazeera. He

advocated for an Islamic social order that prioritizes religious precepts over individual freedoms, legitimized suicide attacks against Israeli civilians, and described the Holocaust as divine punishment for the Jews. [1]

Hamas, which emerged from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, also found a political home in Doha. In 2012, it opened its political office there. For years, Qatar also financed the provision of supplies and the administration of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Nearly two billion dollars flowed into Gaza over more than a decade, of which about 1.1 billion had already been provided by 2018. Among other things, the money funded salaries, fuel, and humanitarian aid. In doing so, Qatar took some of the financial burden off the Hamas-led administration and freed up its own resources, which Hamas could then use for weapons, tunnels, and other military purposes. [2]

The government led by Benjamin Netanyahu is said to have not only approved the Qatari payments but also actively encouraged them. This was apparently driven by political calculation: According to a 2019 report in the *Jerusalem Post*, Netanyahu wanted to maintain the rift between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank in order to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. The newspaper cited a participant in a Likud faction meeting. Netanyahu disputes this account. [3]

The extent of Israeli support was documented by the U.S. magazine *TIME* in October 2026, based on previously unpublished documents. Israeli security officials repeatedly encouraged Qatar to continue the payments. Israel also played a role in selecting the recipients and processing the transfers. Officially, the funds were intended to prevent a humanitarian crisis and calm the situation at the border.

… benefiting as intermediaries

Following the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023, Qatar used its ties to the terrorist organization to negotiate, together with the U.S. and Egypt, regarding the Israeli hostages whom Hamas had abducted during its terrorist attack on Israel. This made Doha an important diplomatic partner for Washington.

The U.S. already maintains close military ties with Qatar. The Al Udeid Air Base is home to the regional headquarters of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). [4] Thousands of American soldiers are stationed there. Since 2022, Qatar has also been a *Major Non-NATO Ally* of the United States. Its role as a mediator further

strengthens the emirate’s strategic importance: For Washington, Qatar is not only a military base and energy supplier but also an important channel of communication with Hamas.

Just how valuable this role is to Qatar became clear in September 2025: U.S. President Donald Trump pledged far-reaching military protection to the emirate against external attacks. In its statement, the White House explicitly cited Qatar’s role as a mediator. [5] In their 2025 study, political scientists Amira Schiff and Ariel Admoni show that Doha uses its privileged contacts with the terrorist organization as a mediator but goes easy on the Hamas leadership instead of fully leveraging its influence. Qatar even refrained from threatening the Doha-based Hamas leadership with expulsion from the emirate in order to put pressure on them during the hostage negotiations. [6]

Western Universities on Qatar’s Financial Lifeline

Qatar doesn’t just invest in Islamist terrorist groups. The emirate also funds institutions that educate Western elites and shape public discourse.

Reports from U.S. universities, which have been tracked since 1986, totaled approximately $8.8 billion in grants and contracts from Qatar as of February 23, 2026—more than from any other country. China accounted for $4.9 billion. The figures also include contract amounts that have not yet been fully disbursed. The Qatari total represents approximately 1,300 transactions. [7] Among the largest recipients of Qatari funds are renowned American universities such as Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, and Northwestern. All four operate campuses in Qatar’s Education City. [8]

A contract from 2024 is particularly revealing: Qatar’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is paying Georgetown $630,000 over three years for the Bridge Initiative [9], which addresses the issue of “Islamophobia.” In return, the initiative must organize annual international conferences and consult with an institution—also funded by Doha—when planning them. The initiative takes a broad view of the concept of Islamophobia: among other things, it criticizes accusations of anti-Semitism against pro-Palestinian demonstrators as Islamophobic. In a publication of its own from 2026, it describes headscarf bans in French sports as gender-specific Islamophobia.

A significant portion of Qatari funds is used to finance the aforementioned American university campuses in Qatar’s Education City [10]. This brings the emirate

academic prestige and access to renowned institutions. But it doesn’t stop at prestige. A June 2026 report by the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA) analyzes agreements that have been little known until now. [11] According to the agreement, the Qatar Foundation—which is closely linked to the royal family—holds contractual rights to certain research findings at Georgetown University in Doha. When commercializing these findings, Georgetown must also take into account the development of the Qatari economy. Certain decisions regarding the commercialization of government-funded research require the Foundation’s written consent.

Qatar also has a say in the appointment of academic leadership positions: Georgetown and Northwestern must consult with the Qatar Foundation in Doha when selecting their deans and associate deans, although the appointments themselves remain the responsibility of the universities. Joint advisory committees also address budgets and course offerings, but they have no formal decision-making authority. Regarding admissions, 70 percent of the spots at Northwestern and 60 percent at Georgetown are to go to Qatari students.

Millions from Doha—including for Switzerland

French journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot analyzed internal documents from Qatar Charity for their book *Qatar Papers*. [12] They documented the funding of approximately 140 mosque and Islamic center projects totaling 71 million euros. In Italy alone, there were more than 50 projects.

Funds were also allocated in Switzerland. Between 2011 and 2014, more than 3.6 million euros—about four million Swiss francs at the time—are said to have been allocated to five projects. The locations include Biel, Prilly, La Chaux-de-Fonds, and Lugano.

For the Museum of Islamic Civilizations in La Chaux-de-Fonds, the journalists documented at least seven transfers totaling just under 1.4 million Swiss francs. According to the investigation, the Muslim cultural center in Prilly received approximately 1.6 million Swiss francs. The authors described connections between individual officials and the Muslim Brotherhood network.

After the “Qatar Papers” came to light, Qatar ceased funding the Swiss projects in question in 2019. [13]

Al Jazeera: Two Languages, Two Faces

Qatar’s most effective media tool is the state-funded broadcaster Al Jazeera. A study published in 2026 by Lama Khalifah and two co-authors shows how differently its Arabic and English newsrooms report. They compared 94 thematically aligned articles on the Gaza War in 2023 and 2024. [14]

The differences are striking: In 42 of 47 Arabic articles, Palestinian fatalities were referred to as “martyrs.” In the English comparison texts, this term did not appear even once. Armed Palestinian groups were referred to as “resistance” in 38 of 47 Arabic articles. The English editorial team more frequently used terms such as “militants.”

Israeli military actions were also described in varying ways: 45 percent of the Arabic articles referred to “aggression,” while 34 percent mentioned “massacres.” The English editorial team used the term “massacre” in only 6 percent of the articles examined and attributed the term to external sources.

The differences extend to grammar. When describing Palestinian fatalities, the Arabic editorial team used active voice constructions—which explicitly name the agent—in 79 percent of the phrases examined. The English editorial team, on the other hand, preferred passive constructions in 68 percent of cases, which highlight the agent less clearly.

Israeli government officials were quoted in 57 percent of the English-language articles, but in only 19 percent of the Arabic-language ones. While 89 percent of the Arabic-language articles explicitly adopted a pro-Palestinian perspective, 81 percent of the English-language articles took different viewpoints into account.

The study examines a limited time period and finds no evidence of direct instructions from Doha. However, it systematically documents differences in journalistic portrayals of the same conflict—depending on the language and, thus, the audience.

Supporting Islamists, Profiting from the West

Qatar’s policy is not a contradiction, but a business model of power. The emirate exploits the economic and political opportunities offered by Western democracies, enjoys American military protection, and at the same time supports Islamist

networks whose social order contradicts fundamental civil liberties.

The West is aware of these connections. Nevertheless, it courts Qatar as an energy supplier, investor, and mediator. As long as economic and geopolitical interests take precedence over the defense of liberal principles, Doha can continue its dual strategy.

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