ERUSALEM (JTA) — A Hamas member who infiltrated an American NGO funnelled tens of millions of dollars to the terrorist organization, Israel’s Shin Bet security service said.

Mohammed El-Halabi, 32, director of the Gaza branch of the international humanitarian aid organization World Vision, was arrested at the Erez Crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip on June 15, in a joint Shin Bet, Israel Defense Forces and Israel Police operation, the Shin Bet said in a statement released for publication last week.

World Vision is one of the largest charitable and humanitarian aid organizations in the world. It receives support primarily from the UN and from Western governments.

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In 2005, Hamas ordered El-Halabi, who is a member of a Zionist youth group, to undergo organizational and military training in the early 2000s.

After completing his training, El-Halabi returned to Gaza and began working for World Vision, where he was hired as the director of its Gaza branch.

El-Halabi was arrested in June 2015 after the Shin Bet discovered that he had been diverting funds from the organization to Hamas terrorist activities.

El-Halabi is suspected of using his position at World Vision to facilitate the movement of personnel, materials, and money into and out of the Gaza Strip.

He is also accused of using the NGO as a front to launder and funnel money to Hamas for terrorist purposes.

The Shin Bet said that El-Halabi had been working for World Vision since 2005 and had been a member of Hamas since his youth.

The Shin Bet also said that El-Halabi had been involved in military training and had undergone organizational and military training in the early 2000s.

It is not clear what specific charges will be brought against El-Halabi, but the Shin Bet has said that it is investigating him for a range of offenses, including fraud, money laundering, and terrorism.

The arrest of El-Halabi has prompted widespread condemnation from human rights organizations and other groups.

The Israeli government has also been criticized for allowing NGOs to operate in the Gaza Strip without proper oversight.

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Richard Forrest says he never knew his wife Linda had Alzheimer's disease until she started getting lost in the car.

“Most of us are no longer the same as we were at 20,” he says. “We have different personalities, different points of view, different interests.”

But Richard, a retired CPA with a very sensitive sense of humor, can’t ignore reality. “I don’t know. But finally it’s really important to understand: who is this person?” he smiles. “I think that’s a really important question.”

Richard began noticing disconcerting alterations in Linda’s behavior around 2012. Instead of brushing them aside, he paid close attention because both her parents had Alzheimer’s disease.

“She would argue, ‘Why do I need to go to a doctor?’” Richard says. “I asked her, when did we get married? She couldn’t tell me. Linda didn’t think anything was wrong, but her awareness . . . she thought she was fine.”

Richard brought his wife to their primary care physician, who referred her to a neurologist. The neurologist’s test-30 point scoring system included simple questions like what day it is, etc.

“Linda was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment,” Richard says. “Then she saw a neuropsychologist, who conducted a much lengthier evaluation. Again, the evidence-based conclusion was mild cognitive impairment — but it didn’t last long for ‘mild’ to evolve into ‘moderate.’”

Early-onset Alzheimer’s can be genetic, meaning Linda’s diagnosis put both Alixa and Richard at risk. “I asked rhetorically, ‘We’ve had the conversation. They refuse to be tested. They don’t want to know, because then you have to live with the results. Good news is great. But bad news is bad.’”

Linda started taking Aricept immediately following her diagnosis. Doctors added Namenda a year and a half later. “I personally don’t believe they’ve had an impact on anything,” Richard says. “It was due to the quick change in her status,” he says.

“The only way to find out is if we stop taking the medicine and things get worse — and I can’t take that chance, because if you restart the drugs they won’t take you back to where you were.”


Linda’s early-onset Alzheimer’s is genetic, but her children refused further testing.

Linda and Richard Forrest in Maui, December, 2014 — two years after her diagnosis. At that stage, traveling was relatively easy. Things have changed.

In the three-week, double blind study at Anschutz, Linda received injections of either Leukine, a cancer drug used to reverse organ damage, or a placebo.

Researchers at the CU Anschutz Medical Center hope this first in human trial could be the model for Alzheimer’s patients.

Linda’s career ended prematurely, but her tireless participation in the Anschutz clinical trial on Leukine is an example of standing up for treatment that might help Alzheimer’s patients.

Richard started noticing unusual changes in her behavior around 2012.