

# Louisiana





# QUICK FACTS ON GÜLEN CHARTER SCHOOLS LOUISIANA



NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

1

KNOWN AS

**Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School**

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

**561**

CHARTER VENDOR

**Harmony Public Schools (TX)  
Educational service provider (ESP)**

TOTAL REVENUES

**\$6,653,133**

RELATED INSTITUTIONS

TN

Read Foundation /  
Memphis School of Excellence



Harmony Public Schools  
Riverwalk Education Foundation



Sky Foundation Dove /  
Public Charter School Foundation



Harmony D.C.  
Public School



Focus Foundation /  
Albuquerque School of Excellence



Little Scholars of Arkansas /  
LISA Academy



Millennium Education Foundation /  
Frontier Schools

## KEY PEOPLE



Tevfik  
Kosar



Serkan  
Ozel



Osman  
Kazan



Sadik  
Oner



Adem  
Ozel



Elif  
Ulupinar



Soner  
Tarim



Ohan  
Kizilkaya

## CHARTER NETWORK



Harmony Public Schools is the charter management organization responsible for the Greater Texas region of the Gülen Organization charter network.

Pelican contracts with Harmony to provide additional educational management services for a fee paid from total school revenues.



The Pelican network serves a large percentage of vulnerable student populations, such as students eligible for free and reduced lunch and minority students.

## SUSPECTED FRAUD



As of the 2016-2017 school year, Louisiana has one charter school currently in operation within the Gülen Organization.



The Louisiana network, overseen by the nonprofit Pelican Educational Foundation ("Pelican"), had fallen under major scrutiny for suspected fraud and extremely poor academic performance.

All figures based on available data for 2015-2016 academic year.

## Quick Facts

- ▶ Region: Greater Texas
- ▶ School Names (known as):
  - ▷ Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School
- ▶ Total number of schools in state: 1
- ▶ Total student enrollment 2015-16: 561 <sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Charter Holder/Governing Board(s):
  - ▷ Pelican Educational Foundation ("Pelican")
    - Organized as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization
    - Oversees 1 charter school
- ▶ Charter Management Services Vendor: Harmony Public Schools (TX) - Educational service provider (ESP)
  - ▷ Until 2011, the Cosmos Foundation was the operating organization "doing business as" Harmony Public Schools. In 2011, Harmony became the primary operating organization.
- ▶ Regional Gülen Organization Oversight Entity: Harmony Public Schools (TX)
- ▶ Regional Sister Networks:
  - ▷ Harmony Public Schools (TX)
  - ▷ Riverwalk Education Foundation (TX)
  - ▷ Harmony D.C. Public School (Washington, D.C.)
  - ▷ Little Scholars of Arkansas/LISA Academy (AR)
  - ▷ Sky Foundation/Dove Public Charter School Foundation (OK)
- ▶ Read Foundation/Memphis School of Excellence (TN)
- ▶ Millennium Education Foundation/Frontier Schools (MO)
- ▶ Focus Foundation/Albuquerque School of Excellence (NM) <sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Total Revenues for FY 2016: \$6,653,133 <sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Network Founders - Founders of Abramson or Kenilworth Science & Technology schools ("Abrahamson" and "Kenilworth"):
  - ▷ Tevfik Kosar: Founding Board member, Abramson and Kenilworth (LA); President, Pelican Educational Foundation from 2005 to 2013 (LA); currently Treasurer of the Board, Buffalo Academy of Science (NY), a Gülen-affiliated charter in Buffalo, NY; currently Associate Professor Computer Science/Engineering at State University of New York at Buffalo; former Professor of Computer Science, Louisiana State University; B.S., Bogazici University (Istanbul, Turkey). <sup>4</sup>
  - ▷ Serkan Ozel: Board Member, Pelican (LA); at the time of Pelican's founding, an undergraduate student at University of Massachusetts Boston (MA); currently Sr. Manager of Software Engineering, PayPal (CA); Board Member, Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School for one month (February 2015) (LA). <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Louisiana Dept. of Ed. Data Files 2016-17, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycd9dxmq> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>2</sup> The Focus Foundation is no longer active.

<sup>3</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation, Financial Statement 2015, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8tj8kkn> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>4</sup> Information taken from: Charter applications for Abramson and Kenilworth, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017); Pelican IRS Form 990 for 2006 and 2013, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8hjxtuo> (last checked 6/9/2017); Buffalo Academy of Science; available at <http://tinyurl.com/y9mj72dn> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>5</sup> Serkan Ozel - Louisiana Secretary of State, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwphcbf> (last checked 5/21/17). LinkedIn profile, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7apz92o> (last checked 5/21/17).

- Osman Kazan: Founding Board Member, Pelican (LA); Assistant Professor, Energy Institute, Tulane University (LA); B.A., Middle East Technical University (Ankara, Turkey).<sup>6</sup>
- Sadik Oner: Founding Board Member, Abramson (LA); Vice President, Pelican Educational Foundation (LA); Postdoctoral Researcher at the Health Science Center, Louisiana State University (LA); M.D. Inonu University (Malataya, Turkey).<sup>7</sup>
- Ohan Kizilkaya: Founding Board Member, Abramson and Kenilworth (LA); Secretary, President, Pelican Educational Foundation (LA); Research Associate, Louisiana State University (LA); Ph. D. in Physics, Louisiana State University (LA); Judge for Gülenist Science Fairs; B.S., Ege University (Izmir, Turkey).<sup>8</sup>
- Adem Ozel: Founding Board Member, Abramson and Kenilworth (LA); Treasurer, Pelican Educational Foundation (LA); B.A., Ege University (Izmir, Turkey).<sup>9</sup>
- Elif Ulupinar: Founding Board Member, Kenilworth (LA); Lawyer, Yuksel Law Office (Istanbul, Turkey) until 2008; Legal Counsel, Pelican Educational Foundation in 2009 (LA); Wife of Mehmet Ulupinar who was involved with Atlas Foundation, Gülenist cultural organization in Baton Rouge, and Raindrop Turkish House in Little Rock, AR.<sup>10</sup>
- Soner Tarim; Key Contact in charter application for Abramson and Kenilworth (LA); CEO, Harmony Public Schools (TX).<sup>11</sup>

## Overview

As of the 2016-2017 school year, Louisiana has one charter school currently in operation within the Gülen Organization. The Louisiana network, overseen by the nonprofit Pelican Educational Foundation ("Pelican"), had fallen under major scrutiny for suspected fraud and extremely poor academic performance. While Pelican used to operate a second charter school, its charter contract was revoked, and Pelican has failed to gain approval for any of its subsequent charter applications.

Harmony Public Schools is the charter management organization responsible for the Greater Texas region of the Gülen Organization charter network. Pelican contracts with Harmony to provide additional educational management services for a fee paid from total school revenues. The Pelican network serves a large percentage of vulnerable student populations, such as students eligible for free and reduced lunch and minority students.

<sup>6</sup> Osman Kazan - Louisiana Secretary of State, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwphcbf> (last checked 5/21/17) Osman Kazan - Biography from Tulane University, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y83pswzd> (last checked 5/21/17).

<sup>7</sup> Charter applications for Abramson and Kenilworth, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>8</sup> Information taken from: Charter applications for Abramson and Kenilworth, available at <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017); Pelican IRS Form 990 for 2014, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>9</sup> Id.

<sup>10</sup> Information taken from: Charter application for Kenilworth, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017); E. Ulupinar - Pelican IRS Form 990 - 2009, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017); M. Ulupinar presentation on Gülen, University of Central Arkansas Philosophy and Religion Facebook, available at <http://tinyurl.com/y7uo83cb> (last checked 5/25/17);.

<sup>11</sup> Information taken from: Charter applications for Abramson and Kenilworth, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017) Harmony Public Schools, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7ypegdj> (last checked 6/9/2017).

School	Operation	Student Demographic Information <sup>12 *</sup>	Authorizer	Governing Board
Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School 7600 Boone Dr, Baton Rouge, LA 70808	Grades 6 – 8  2009 – present	Enrollment: 561 94% FRL 09% SWD 07% ELL 03% Anglo 85% African American <01% Asian 11% Hispanic 01% 2 or more races	Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) (Type 5 charter)  Baton Rouge Recovery District <sup>13</sup>	Pelican Educational Foundation
Closed/Abandoned Schools				
Abramson Science and Technology Charter School	Charter revoked 2011 Closed by BESE <sup>14</sup>			
Charter Petition Denials				
Banks Elementary (conversion)	Pelican not awarded charter <sup>15</sup>			Pelican Educational Foundation <sup>16</sup> Lead Petitioner: Tevfik Kosar
Crestworth Middle School (conversion)	2009 Pelican not awarded charter <sup>17</sup>			Pelican Educational Foundation <sup>18</sup> Lead Petitioner: Tevfik Kosar
Charter Petition Denials				
Kenilworth Science and Technology High School	2010 HS expansion denied <sup>19</sup>			Pelican Educational Foundation Lead Petitioner: Tevfik Kosar
Kenilworth Science and Technology High School	2017 HS expansion denied <sup>20</sup>			Pelican Educational Foundation
Pelican Excellence Academy (New Orleans)	2010 <sup>21</sup> Denied			Pelican Educational Foundation
Pelican Math and Science School <sup>22</sup>	2007 original name for Abramson <sup>23</sup>			

\* ELL indicates English language learner; FRL indicates students eligible for free/reduced price lunch; SWD indicates students with disabilities.

<sup>12</sup> Louisiana Department of Education Data Files 2016-2017, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycd9dxmq> (last checked 6/9/2017)

<sup>13</sup> Louisiana Department of Education, 2015-16 Charter School Annual Report, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ybwm5898> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>14</sup> Vanacore, Andrew. BESE votes to rescind charter for Abramson Science and Technology Charter. New Orleans Times-Picayune. (4 August 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8h4y8qv> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>15</sup> Banks Elementary closed and became JK Haynes Elementary and Middle Charter School operated by JK Haynes Foundation; Charter application available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yckxy68g> (last checked 5/19/17).

<sup>16</sup> See organizations that applied to take over Baton Rouge schools, WFAB TV Baton Rouge, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9gpsf5t> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>17</sup> Crestworth charter awarded to Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church and later Celerity Educational Group. Lussier, Charles. New middle school to open in Scotlandville in the fall. The Advocate (Baton Rouge) 13 June 2014, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycg554xl> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>18</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation role in school take over, WFAB TV, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8owz2xb> (last checked 5/31/17).

## A History of Strategic Ambiguity and Conflicting Interests

Since opening its first school in Louisiana in 2007, Pelican has had a turbulent history with school closings, attempted bribes of state officials, and an FBI raid.

Like the origins of other Gülenist charter networks around the country, many of Pelican's founders were involved in STEM fields as professors, graduate students, or research assistants at Louisiana State University (LSU) or other universities before banding together to form Pelican in 2005.<sup>24</sup> Most of these individuals received their undergraduate degrees at the same handful of Turkish universities, all affiliated with Gülen. One founder was an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts in Boston when he was listed on Pelican's certificate of incorporation in 2005.<sup>25</sup> The original Pelican staff included veterans of other Gülen Organization charter schools. For example, Mustafa Guvercin served as Pelican's first CEO and later became the first Superintendent of the Abramson Science and Technology Charter School. Guvercin joined Pelican as a veteran of Harmony Public Schools and Dove Science Academy in Oklahoma City, both Gülen Organization charter networks.<sup>26</sup>

Pelican was incorporated in Louisiana in 2005-06 and opened its first school in Louisiana

in New Orleans when the city began its move to replace traditional public schools with charter schools after Hurricane Katrina. Abramson Science and Technology Charter School ("Abramson") officially opened in 2007, with Pelican working in partnership with Harmony Public Schools, the Gülen Organization charter network in Texas and regional oversight entity for the Greater Texas region. Abramson was a Type 5 charter school approved by Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education ("BESE") as a Recovery District School in New Orleans.

Pelican opened its second school, the Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School, in 2009 as a Type 5 charter school serving grades 6 – 8, also authorized by BESE as a Recovery District school. Kenilworth is a "conversion charter school," as it originally opened in 1973 as a traditional public school and later converted to charter status under Pelican's oversight. For the past three years, Kenilworth has received a "D" rating from the Louisiana Department of Education, scoring 18 points below the state average on state tests in 2015-2016 (15% vs. 33%).<sup>27</sup>

BESE abruptly closed Abramson by revoking

<sup>19</sup> LISA Academy Chenal operation found; their website available at <https://tinyurl.com/l8hkfwe> (last checked 5/22/2017).

<sup>20</sup> LISA Academy Chenal Enrollment only available for 2016-2017, their first year of operation; the Arkansas Department of Education Data Center, Enrollment by Race by School; available at <https://tinyurl.com/nyb5c47> (last checked 5/22/2017).

<sup>21</sup> Students who receive special education and those with limited English; LISA District Totals; Arkansas Department of Education Data Center; Student Status by District; 2015; available at <https://adedata.arkansas.gov/statewide/Districts/StudentStatus.aspx?year=26&search=lisa&pagesize=10> (last checked 6.13.2017).

<sup>22</sup> LISA Academy North Opening date; Arkansas Department of Education Charter Authorizing Panel Agenda; Sept. 17, 2014; pg. 21 available at <https://tinyurl.com/lhhwod3> (last checked 5/22/2017).

<sup>23</sup> Students who receive special education and those with limited English; LISA District Totals; Arkansas Department of Education Data Center; Student Status by District; 2015; available at <https://adedata.arkansas.gov/statewide/Districts/StudentStatus.aspx?year=26&search=lisa&pagesize=10> (last checked 6.13.2017).

<sup>24</sup> Biographies for Kosar, Kizilkaya, Oner, and Guvercin from Abramson charter application, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017); Osman Kazan biography on website for Tulane University, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y83pswzd> (last checked 6/9/2017); Serkan Ozel LinkedIn profile, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7apz92o> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>25</sup> Louisiana Secretary of State, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwphcbf> (last checked 5/21/17)

<sup>26</sup> See Mustafa Guvercin's biography below.

<sup>27</sup> Louisiana Department of Education, School Profiles 2015-16, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycd9dxmq> (last checked 6/9/2017) (Select: Recovery School District – Baton Rouge).



its charter in August 2011 after Board members learned about the serious incidents that had been documented at the school.<sup>28</sup> Two years later, the FBI raided Kenilworth in 2013, seizing boxes of financial and personnel records and focusing on nine vendors.<sup>29</sup> The investigation ended in 2016, and no charges were filed.<sup>30</sup>

Currently, Kenilworth is the only school Pelican operates. Pelican and Kenilworth recently submitted a Type 1 charter application to the East Baton Rouge Parish Schools (EBR) in spring 2017, however, to create a new high school that would enroll students from the geographic boundaries of the district starting in Fall 2018. A previous request to open a high school was denied in 2010.<sup>31</sup> The external reviewer was concerned that Kenilworth's academic performance had declined significantly since 2012-2013 and that no systematic strategy for achieving improvement was included in the application. The EBR Board hearing was held on May 18, 2017, and the Board denied Kenilworth's expansion application by a unanimous vote.<sup>32</sup> However, Kenilworth can now apply to BESE for a Type 2 charter, which if approved, would allow them to accept students from anywhere in the state.<sup>33</sup>

Harmony served as the educational service provider for both schools when they opened,

and it still provides services to Kenilworth. Notably, Pelican selected Harmony as its educational services provider in 2007 without a competitive bid.<sup>34</sup> Both schools used Harmony's commitment of technical support and involvement to win charter approval. Kenilworth's charter application described the important role that the Cosmos Foundation (d/b/a Harmony Public Schools) played at Abramson, stating that Cosmos "has been helping us to operate our Abramson Science and Technology campus in New Orleans. Cosmos Foundation has proven to deliver its services for our [sic] when we establish Abramson campus and will continue to deliver services according to timetable."<sup>35</sup> In another section of the application, it goes on to say: "The Cosmos Foundation and its staff have done a superb job by establishing Abramson Science and Technology Charter School with Pelican Educational Foundation. The Cosmos Foundation is committed to opening quality charter schools and will support Pelican by all means . . . . They are willing to use their resources to set up the school correctly."<sup>36</sup>

Pelican pays Harmony to provide a range of administrative and academic services through a long-term, on-going support services agreement that has been annually renewed. Starting in 2007, Pelican paid Harmony five percent of all the state or federal funds received annually.<sup>37</sup>

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- <sup>28</sup> See recommendation to revoke charter from Acting State Superintendent made to BESE on August 3, 2011 (document received from LA Department of Education through 2017 FOIA request); see also Vanacore, Andrew. Abramson Charter in eastern New Orleans shut down amid TP investigation into startling misconduct. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (15 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y99fzhj8> (last checked 5/1/17).
- <sup>29</sup> Samuels, Diana. Kenilworth charter school, subject of apparent FBI inquiry, has ties to Turkish education movement. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (12 December 2013), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ydz3efez> (last checked 5/24/17).
- <sup>30</sup> Mustian, Jim and Lussier, Charles. Feds drop criminal probe of Kenilworth charter school in Baton Rouge, no charges filed. *Baton Rouge Advocate* (6 January 2016), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y92m6zsa> (last checked 5/24/17).
- <sup>31</sup> Kenilworth Charter Review 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7x8n84d> (last checked 6/9/2017).
- <sup>32</sup> Lussier, Charles. Innovation, service to poor among concerns as School Board sorts through charter applications: 2 charters accepted, 5 rejected. *The Advocate (Baton Rouge)* (17 May 2017), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9ygzsov> (last checked 5/30/17).
- <sup>33</sup> BESE Policies and Bulletins; Bulletin 126 – Charter Schools, Section 512 (A-3) (C-1), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7whq3xa> (last checked 6/9/2017).
- <sup>34</sup> See Kenilworth charter application at p. 82, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 5/19/17).
- <sup>35</sup> Kenilworth charter application, p. 82, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017).
- <sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 100.
- <sup>37</sup> See Pelican IRS Forms 990 for 2007 and 2008, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 5/18/17); see also Official Statement p. B-2 and 3, Cosmos Foundation bond issue May 1, 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ydcvya5n> (last checked 5/19/17).

Harmony changed its billing structure in 2012-13 and currently bills for its services at the rate of \$80 - \$120 per hour, which makes it easier for Harmony to absorb Pelican's funds as needed by falsifying work hours. In addition, Harmony now charges a licensing fee for its intellectual property software, which ranges from \$15,000 - \$147,000 per school per year.<sup>38</sup>

Harmony has similar agreements in place with seven other Gülen Organization charter school networks in the Greater Texas region.<sup>39</sup> The original agreements were also based on a percent of all state funds received and changed to an hourly basis in 2013, as well:

- ▶ Riverwalk Education Foundation (TX) (five percent of state funding)
- ▶ Millennium Education Foundation (MO) (three percent of state funding)
- ▶ Sky Foundation/Dove Public Charter School Foundation (OK) (three percent of state funding)
- ▶ Focus Foundation (NM) (\$45,000 per year flat fee)
- ▶ Read Foundation (TN) (three percent of

state funding)

- ▶ Little Scholars of Arkansas (LISA) (AR) (three percent of state funding)
- ▶ Harmony DC Public Schools (Washington, D.C.) (five percent local funding)

In our view, the fees paid to Harmony through these agreements yield significant benefits to the Gülen Organization. Harmony has created steady revenue from public funds that can be expended without any fiscal restrictions since they are not public funds entrusted to Harmony by the state of Texas. This provides Harmony with funds to expand its model within a state or in other states, which in turn increases overall student enrollment and its annual fees. It is difficult to identify the actual payments made by these charter schools and networks to Harmony through public documents, including the payments made by Pelican. These transactions are not transparent, and, as a result, there is little accountability regarding how the funds are used, whether Harmony fulfilled the stated purposes in the support services agreement, and how well the services are delivered. In addition, individuals in leadership at Pelican are all veterans of Harmony Public School, so there is a legitimate question about whether decisions regarding the continued contracts with Harmony are made at arm's length.<sup>40</sup>

## Financial Issues

Pelican's Financial Statements for 2014 and 2015 do not show weaknesses or deficiencies, but the school is rated "not a low-risk

auditee" regarding its use of federal funds. The statements are not a performance audit.

<sup>38</sup> See Harmony bond issue July 2, 2014, Official Statement p. B-3, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ybboyse6> (last checked 5/19/17).

<sup>39</sup> See Official Statements – Appendix B: Cosmos Foundation bond issues for 2011 and 2012; Harmony bond issues for 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k3mnqv2> (last checked 5/19/17).

<sup>40</sup> Pelican's current Superintendent worked for Harmony, as did past CEOs and principals.



## Bond Financing

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At the time of publication, no records of Pelican or Kenilworth borrowing funds through a bond issue could be found. This is likely due to the Louisiana networks inability to expand as

of yet. Harmony, however, is frequently involved in bond issues, so this situation should be monitored.

## Real Estate

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Because Kenilworth took over an existing public school building, it leased the building

from the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board without any lease payments.<sup>41</sup>

## Excessive Use of H-1B Visa Program

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Like all Gülen Organization charter networks, the Pelican Education Foundation and Kenilworth utilize the H-1B visa program to immigrate large numbers of individuals from Turkey who are affiliated with Gülen into the United States for employment in the schools. From 2001 to 2016, Pelican, Abramson, and Kenilworth filed a total of 125 H-1B visa applications,<sup>42</sup> an exceptionally high number for a charter network with only two schools during this period. The cost of these applications is estimated to be \$3,000 per application, for a total of \$321,000 public funds expended to expand the Gülen Organization's Turkish employee base.

Gülen-affiliated schools typically state that the visas are necessary to fill shortages for math and science teachers, but applications are filed for a wide range of positions, including: librarians, computer teachers, budget analysts, IT managers, instructional coordinators, Turkish literature teachers, social studies teachers, English teachers, geography teachers, superintendents, and assistant principals.<sup>43</sup>

Pelican and Kenilworth use the same limited number of attorneys to file and process their H-1B visa applications as other known Gülen Organizations charter networks, vendors, and cultural associations, indicating once again the existence of an overall network.

- ▶ Tina Nguyen: the Louisiana network used Nguyen, a Texas-based attorney to file numerous H-1B applications.<sup>44</sup> Nguyen also filed applications for other Gülenist entities, including:
  - ▷ Cosmos Foundation, Inc. (TX)
  - ▷ Dove Science Academy (OK)
  - ▷ Little Scholars of Arkansas (AR)
  - ▷ Millennium Education Foundation (MO)
  - ▷ Sky Foundation, Inc. (OK)
- ▶ Yalcin Karadag: the Louisiana network used Karadag, a Texas-based attorney to file numerous H-1B applications.<sup>45</sup> Karadag also filed applications for other Gülenist entities, including:
  - ▷ Cosmos Foundation, Inc. (TX)

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<sup>41</sup> Financial Statement for Pelican Educational Foundation 2014 and 2013, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9hffaq3> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>42</sup> The Louisiana charter schools filed 125 H-1B applications from 2001-2016, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8wgvc5n> (Pelican Educational Foundation) (117); <http://tinyurl.com/y8py8lo8> (Pelican Education Foundation, Inc.) (2); <http://tinyurl.com/yaxazul6> (Kenilworth Science and Technology) (6).

<sup>43</sup> Jobs In Tech, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yd6nvq8k> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>44</sup> Nguyen profile listing H-1B clients, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mh29kbe> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>45</sup> Karadag profile listing H-1B clients, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yckgzf2c> (last checked 5/20/17).

- ▷ Dove Science Academy (OK)
- ▷ LISA Academy (AR)
- ▷ Riverwalk Foundation (TX)
- ▷ Sky Foundation (OK)
- ▷ Millennium Education Foundation (MO)
- ▶ Chia Ching Cheng: the Louisiana network used Cheng, a Texas-based attorney to file numerous H-1B applications.<sup>46</sup> Cheng also filed applications for other Gülenist entities, including:
  - ▷ Cosmos Foundation, Inc. (TX)

## Scandals, Investigations, & Notable Activities

### Investigation and Closure of Abramson:

The Louisiana Department of Education conducted an in-depth investigation beginning in July 2011 to determine “if there were legitimate concerns about the safety, health, and welfare of students attending Abramson and to determine if Abramson or Pelican or any of their employees violated any provision of state or federal law.”<sup>47</sup> The initial investigation found evidence that Abramson had failed to comply with state law, BESE policy, and the Type 5 Charter Contract. Because there was documentation that indicated a threat to the safety, health, and welfare of students, the Acting State Superintendent recommended that BESE immediately terminate and revoke the charter school contract with the Board of Directors of the Pelican Educational Foundation that governed Abramson.<sup>48</sup> As a result, BESE abruptly closed the school on August 3, 2011.

In addition to the allegations of improper actions at Abramson, an employee of the state education department conducting the

investigation of Abramson informed law enforcement authorities that Inci Akpınar, Vice President of the Atlas Texas Construction and Trading Company in Houston, Texas, offered him a \$25,000 bribe to “help fix the problem” at Abramson.<sup>49</sup> When he responded that it would be a conflict of interest for a state official to accept money from the school, Akpınar told him that he would “only need to advise them.”<sup>50</sup> Akpınar participated in a meeting with the state official and representatives of the Cosmos Foundation at Abramson just before she made the bribery offer.

Atlas Construction has many other ties to Gülen-affiliated charter school networks. Between 2007 – 2009, Atlas received almost \$12 million in contracts from Harmony Public Schools,<sup>51</sup> the Gülen-affiliated charter network in Texas employed as the Abramson school’s education service provider during this time-period. Atlas has also received construction contracts from the Dove Science Academy (Sky Foundation) in Oklahoma and the LISA Academy in Arkansas,<sup>52</sup> both Gülen-affiliated charter networks within the Greater Texas region. The LISA Academy leases a school building from a company owned by the President of Atlas

<sup>46</sup> Cheng profile listing H-1B clients, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9bh9ds8> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Acting State Superintendent to President of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (July 28, 2011), received through 2017 FOIA request.

<sup>48</sup> See recommendation to revoke charter Acting State Superintendent made to BESE on August 3, 2011, received from Louisiana Department of Education through 2017 FOIA request; see also Vanacore, Andrew. Abram Charter in eastern New Orleans shut down amid TP investigation into startling misconduct. New Orleans Times-Picayune (15 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y99fzhj8> (last checked 5/1/17).

<sup>49</sup> Vanacore, Andrew. Abramson charter group’s ties to Gülen movement come to surface. New Orleans Time-Picayune (22 July 2017), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/3l2cnxs> (last checked 5/25/17).

<sup>50</sup> Id.

<sup>51</sup> Harmony Public Schools/Cosmos Foundation IRS Form 990 for 2009 – 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/hu9wqcl> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>52</sup> LISA had a \$213,690 construction contract with Atlas Texas Construction and Trading in 2012-2013.

Texas Construction<sup>53</sup> and received a \$419,283 loan from Atlas in 2012.<sup>54</sup> The Memphis School of Excellence, another Gülen charter school network affiliated with Harmony, received a \$945,820 loan from Atlas Texas Construction in 2012, repaying \$14,800 per month until it matures in December 2017.<sup>55</sup>

The 72-page investigative report submitted to BESE in 2011 by the Acting State Superintendent was partially instigated by written records provided by four young teachers who witnessed improper and unethical behavior at Abramson. The teachers grew disturbed that their concerns were not addressed by the school administration.<sup>56</sup> The investigation included site visits and interviews with teachers, students, and parents. Examples of the problems outlined in the report include unsupervised classrooms, testing irregularities, tampering with graduation requirements, bribery, incidents of a sexual nature, and failure to provide services to students with special needs. The school's failure to deliver services to students with special needs is of particular concern and is consistent with similar deficiencies reported at other Gülen-affiliated schools around the country.<sup>57</sup>

Specific incidents that were included in statements submitted by teachers, parents, and students during the investigation include<sup>58</sup>:

- ▶ Failure to provide a teacher in a classroom and leaving students unattended for days after the Turkish language teacher

abruptly disappeared from the school;

- ▶ Failure to provide individualized education plans ("IEPs") that federal law requires for students with special needs;
- ▶ IEPs that provided the same services for all students, demonstrating that they were not serving individual needs;
- ▶ Failure to provide extra help for students with special needs;
- ▶ Inadequate staffing to provide services for students with special needs—a single special education teacher for a 600-student population;
- ▶ Science lab equipment unopened after two years despite the school being billed as a science and technology focused curriculum;
- ▶ A parent who said her child's science fair project was completed by teachers, and she would not let her daughter participate because the work was not hers;
- ▶ Students reporting they received questions on tests that were very close to the actual test questions;
- ▶ Concerns that the principal's wife was also a test-prep teacher;<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> LISA rents a school facility at 21 Corporate Hill Drive (Little Rock) from Atlas Barin Properties. The President of Atlas Barin (Yunus Dogan) is also the President of Atlas Texas Construction and Trading. Property records at Pulaski County Clerk, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y96et5lb> (last checked 5/31/17); Corporate records for Atlas, Texas Secretary of State, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/r7iiv>.

<sup>54</sup> LISA Academy Financial Statement, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yd3c6phj> (last checked 5/31/17).

<sup>55</sup> Memphis School of Excellence Financial Statements (FY 2011) p. 24, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y9x5v6jp> (last checked 5/30/2017).

<sup>56</sup> See letter with attachments from Acting State Superintendent to BESE dated July 28, 2011, received in 2017 from Louisiana Dept. of Education as part of a FOIA request.

<sup>57</sup> Similar issues have arisen in Oklahoma and New Jersey.

<sup>58</sup> See letter with attachments from Acting State Superintendent to BESE dated July 28, 2011, received in 2017 from Louisiana Dept. of Education as part of a FOIA request; see also Vanacore, Andrew. Records show glaring faults at school with ties to Turkish charter network. New Orleans Times-Picayune. (15 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6949dbl> (last checked 5/26/17).

<sup>59</sup> Tidmore, Christopher; State orders closure of Abramson Charter School. Louisiana Weekly. (8 August 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9twuac5> (last checked 5/21/17).



- ▶ Request that teachers adjust grades to make them higher, in order to increase college admissions;<sup>60</sup>
- ▶ Difficulty communicating with Turkish teachers who were recent immigrants and had limited English skills;
- ▶ Unsafe conditions for students when the administration failed to address issues of student violence;<sup>61</sup>
- ▶ Poor teaching skills of Turkish teachers;
- ▶ Failure to address a report of student sexual abuse reported and written up by a teacher who had observed two separate acts by the same student—the administration told her to log it as a ‘minor classroom disturbance’;
- ▶ Student acceptance to North American University, a Gülen-affiliated university in Houston, despite failing grades in math and English, to improve the schools’ college acceptance rate. Principal Cuneyt Dokman accepted a job with North American University within this time period.<sup>62</sup> Dokman currently works for Harmony Public Schools, the education service provider for Abramson; and
- ▶ Retaliation against parents and teachers who spoke up about the school’s practices. One of the teachers who filed the original complaint was fired by Abramson.

The state education official conducting the investigation had warned state officials about the problems at the school a year before in June 2010. However, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), the Abramson charter authorizer, said it did not receive complete information about the seriousness of the allegations or of the attempted bribe at that time. At the recommendation of the Louisiana Department of Education in 2010, the Board voted to give the school a year to improve under a “correction action plan” that would address problems with special education services.<sup>63</sup> The Times Picayune newspaper began in-depth reporting about the serious problems at Abramson in July 2011, which finally triggered the school closure and revocation of the charter on August 3, 2011.

The Times-Picayune also reported that two members of BESE, Linda Johnson and Louella Givens, took trips to Turkey at the invitation of the Pelican Educational Foundation in May and June 2010 just before the BESE voted to take only corrective action in response to the problems reported at Abramson.<sup>64</sup>

Further, Tevfik Eski, Pelican’s CEO, denied inviting BESE members on the trip according to the Times Picayune, but a copy of the invitation signed by Eski was obtained by the newspaper.<sup>65</sup> Johnson stated that her trip was partially paid for by the Texas Turkish American Chamber of Commerce, while Givens stated that she paid her own way. Johnson said that the BESE ethics office had cleared the trip because payment for expenses did not come from Pelican or any other organization that BESE regulates.<sup>66</sup> In a

<sup>60</sup> Id.

<sup>61</sup> Id.

<sup>62</sup> Well, Tomas. DOE report reveals numerous problems at Abramson but indicates no prior knowledge despite year-old state audit and bribery attempt report by DOE official subsequently fired. Louisiana Voice. (5 August 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8jkds43> (last checked 5/15/17).

<sup>63</sup> Vanacore, Andrew. Records show glaring faults at school with ties to Turkish charter network. New Orleans Times-Picayune. (15 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y99fzhj8> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>64</sup> Vanacore, Andrew. Abramson Charter in eastern New Orleans shut down amid TP investigation into startling misconduct. New Orleans Time-Picayune. (15 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y99fzhj8> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>65</sup> Id.

<sup>66</sup> Id.

subsequent action, the Louisiana Board of Ethics ruled that Johnson violated state law that precludes a public servant from receiving anything of economic value. Johnson signed a consent agreement in 2013 and paid a fine of \$1,000. She did not run for re-election to the Board.<sup>67</sup>

Following these disclosures and the closure of Abramson, the state investigator who reported the bribery attempt and his supervisor were fired from the state department of education.<sup>68</sup>

It is important to note that despite the seriousness of the problems at Abramson that resulted in the immediate school closure, the entire leadership structure of the Pelican Education Foundation at the time of the Abramson closure is still in place:

- ▶ Harmony Public Schools is still the paid education service provider for Kenilworth;
- ▶ The Superintendent/CEO of Pelican Educational Services, Tevik Eski, is still in the same position; and
- ▶ The members of the Pelican Board of Directors are still largely the same.

In addition, leaders at Abramson from this time period now work at Harmony Public Schools:

- ▶ The former Superintendent/CEO of Pelican, Nihat Bayhan, is the Chief Internal Auditor at Harmony Public Schools in Texas; and

- ▶ Cuneyt Dokman, the Abramson Principal at the time of school closure, is now a college transition counselor for Harmony Public Schools.

## **FBI Investigation of Kenilworth**

The FBI raided Kenilworth on December 13, 2013, and the investigation lasted over two years.<sup>69</sup> The U.S. Attorney announced that the investigation ended on January 6, 2016, without filing criminal charges.<sup>70</sup> News accounts detail nine specific vendor contracts that the FBI investigated, including contracts for busing and cleaning.<sup>71</sup>

**Lawsuits and concerns about special education and uncertified teachers:** Two employment lawsuits were filed in 2010 – 2011 against Kenilworth Science and Technology. The first lawsuit alleged wrongful termination of three teachers and administrators on the basis of race, gender, national origin, and religion. The second alleged mistreatment of a middle school student who was mistreated and humiliated by Kenilworth teachers.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, concerns were raised in 2011 about the significant number of uncertified teachers employed at Kenilworth.<sup>73</sup> In 2010-11, 36% of teachers were uncertified, and 59% were uncertified in the previous year. These percentages compare to 4-5% respectively for the state. The state department of education also expressed concerns about the treatment of students with special needs.<sup>74</sup> The state told the Kenilworth principal that Kenilworth's two teachers, one

<sup>67</sup> Capitol Bureau. Former BESE member fined. Baton Rouge Advocate. (19 January 2013), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycxk3v3q> (last checked 5/21/17).

<sup>68</sup> Vanacore, Andrew. Abramson charter school whistle-blower has been fired from state job. New Orleans Times-Picayune. (7 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/3glx7ht> (last checked 5/17/17).

<sup>69</sup> Samuels, Diana. Kenilworth charter school, subject of apparent FBI inquiry, has ties to Turkish education movement; New Orleans Times-Picayune. (12 December 2013), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ydz3efez> (last checked 5/24/17).

<sup>70</sup> Mustian, Jim and Lussier, Charles. Feds drop criminal probe of Kenilworth charter school in Baton Rouge, no charges filed. Baton Rouge Advocate. (6 January 2016), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y92m6zsa> (last checked 5/24/17).

<sup>71</sup> Id.

<sup>72</sup> Gyan Jr., Joe. Kenilworth disputes lawsuit claims. The Advocate (Baton Rouge). (29 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y9tkrsyd> (last checked 5/25/17).

<sup>73</sup> Sentell, Will. Uncertified teachers cited in state probe of charter school. The Advocate (Baton Rouge). (6 August 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yd5acuj6> (last checked 5/2/17).

<sup>74</sup> Id.

a para-educator and one a substitute teacher, were not sufficient to meet the needs of students with special needs. The state official stated,

“this is not appropriate and hinders the process of meeting individual needs as mandated in the students’ individualized education program.”<sup>75</sup>

## Notable Turkish Vendors

Of the independent contractors listed on Pelican’s IRS Form 990s between 2008 and 2015,<sup>76</sup> 28 percent of the contracts went to companies that are owned and operated by individuals of Turkish national origin (three companies had a total of eight contracts out of 29) and 34% of total contract dollars went to these companies, a total of \$2,866,347 (exclusive of contracts with Harmony Public Schools). The contractors listed on the 990 forms only represent the five largest contractors for each year with contracts of \$100,000 or more.

A review of these three companies raises concerns about insider connections between the companies, the inexperience of the corporate leaders at one company, and multiple contracts awarded to the same individual at different companies in the same year. In 2010 two companies owned by Ufuk Tuncer, Skyline Travel and Transportation and Prestige Commercial Cleaning, both received contracts from Pelican. In addition, a \$600,000 contract for transportation was awarded to two individuals who were sophomores at Louisiana State University (LSU) at the time.

The contracts include:

- ▶ Gulf Coast Cleaning & Maintenance LLC<sup>77</sup>
  - ▷ Ramazan Ozelik, registered agent

and corporate officer

- ▷ Contracts:
  - 2010: \$158,418<sup>78</sup>
  - 2011: \$260,881<sup>79</sup>
  - Total: \$419,299
- ▷ The business address listed on Secretary of State records is the residential address (1020 Rue Crozat) for a 4-bedroom home.
- ▷ Ozelik identified himself as an Administrator for Harmony Public Schools in 2014 when he made a \$1,500 campaign contribution to a Texas candidate for the U.S. Congress.<sup>80</sup>
- ▷ There is no company website online.

- ▶ Skyline Travel and Transportation LLC<sup>81</sup> (two companies under the same name)
  - ▷ First incorporation: Ufuk Tuncer, corporate officer; created November 11, 2010; inactive December 3, 2010. This company remained active less than one month.
  - ▷ Second incorporation: Enes Tuncer, Registered Agent and Corporate Officer; Efe Tuncer, Corporate Officer; created March 28, 2011; inactive March 5, 2015.
  - ▷ Contracts:
    - 2010: \$563,909<sup>82</sup>
    - 2011: \$629,906<sup>83</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Id.

<sup>76</sup> Pelican IRS Forms 990, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>77</sup> Louisiana Secretary of State, searchable at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwphcbf>.

<sup>78</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>79</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>80</sup> Campaign donations to Filemon Vela, candidate for Congress-Texas, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycowke9g> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>81</sup> Louisiana Secretary of State, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwphcbf>.

<sup>82</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>83</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017).



- *Total: \$1,193,815*
- ▷ The business address for Skyline Travel and Transportation is 11959 Nicholson Drive, Apt 19203, Baton Rouge. This is the address of an apartment complex called Indigo Parks Apartments. This is also the domicile address for the company manager and registered agent, Enes Tuncer.<sup>84</sup>
- ▷ Enes Tuncer, the Manager/Corporate Officer and Registered Agent for the company, was a 2014 graduate of LSU in the College of Engineering, making him a sophomore at LSU when Pelican awarded the Skyline contract.<sup>85</sup>
- ▷ Efe Tuncer, the other Corporate Officer/Registered Agent for the company, is also a 2014 graduate of LSU in civil engineering<sup>86</sup> and currently works for EFETAS Group, an import, export, and construction company based in Turkey.<sup>87</sup>
- ▷ It appears that Skyline was not incorporated between December 23, 2010 and March 28, 2011, after the first company became inactive and before the incorporation of the second company. Yet there was a contract in place for \$563,909 during the 2010 - 2011 school year according to Pelican's 2010 IRS Form 990.
- ▷ There is no company website online.
- ▷ Ufuk Tuncer contributed \$31,500 to the Milkyway Education Center in 2006 and 2007. Milkyway is a Gülen-affiliated nonprofit organization in New Jersey that is the parent organization for Pioneer Academy, a private Gülen school.<sup>88</sup>
- ▶ Prestige Commercial Cleaning & Construction LLC<sup>89</sup>
  - ▷ Ufuk Tuncer, Registered Agent
  - ▷ In 2010, Ufuk Tuncer had two contracts with Pelican: Skyline Travel and Prestige Commercial Cleaning.
  - ▷ Contracts:
    - 2008: \$116,766<sup>90</sup>
    - 2009: \$532,717<sup>91</sup>
    - 2010: \$385,387<sup>92</sup>
    - 2011: \$218,363<sup>93</sup>
    - Total: \$1,253,233
  - ▷ Total for all three contractors: \$2,866,347
- ▶ Harmony Public Schools – Educational Service Provider
  - ▷ From 2007 to 2011 or 2012, Pelican paid Harmony five percent of all revenue, including both state and federal funds received annually. Pelican paid Harmony \$238,595 in 2007-2008 (5.4%) and \$289,796 (6.5%) in 2008-2009,<sup>94</sup> a total of \$528,391 for those two years.
  - ▷ The actual payment totals that Pelican paid to Harmony from 2009 to 2017 are not listed in any public document such as financial statements, IRS Form 990s, or annual reports. However, Harmony bond documents show that Pelican

<sup>84</sup> Indigo Parks Apartments, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7gv36n9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>85</sup> LSU 2014 Graduation, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8j52q5u> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>86</sup> LinkedIn profile, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yczkq2tk> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>87</sup> Id.

<sup>88</sup> IRS 990 Form for Milkyway 2006 and 2007, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mdknvzx> (last checked 5/29/17).

<sup>89</sup> Louisiana Secretary of State, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwphcbf>.

<sup>90</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2008, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjix9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>91</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2009, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjix9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>92</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjix9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>93</sup> Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjix9> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>94</sup> Harmony IRS Forms 990 from 2007 and 2008, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjix9> (last checked 5/19/17).

continued paying Harmony 5% of the public funds it received through 2011 or 2012 through the support services agreement, an estimated \$1,217,437 during this time-period.<sup>95</sup> In total, Pelican paid Harmony an estimated \$1,745,828 between 2007 and 2012, representing 5% of its total revenue. Full disclosure from Harmony would ensure that the public funds going to Harmony are fully accountable to taxpayers.

- ▷ By June 30, 2013, Harmony changed its billing structure and began billing

at an hourly rate of \$80 - \$120. In addition, Harmony began charging a licensing fee for its software at a cost of \$15,000 - \$147,000 per school per year.<sup>96</sup> There is no documentation about the payments from Pelican to Pelican from 2013 - 2017, either for the support services agreement or for licensing fees. This lack of transparency means that there is no accountability about how these public funds are used and what Pelican receives for the payments.

## Gülenist Cultural and Business Organizations Active in State

Turkish cultural organizations play a central role in the Gülen landscape, serving as the external face to the community that obscures the true activities of the organization. They are generally nonprofit organizations with governing boards composed mostly of individuals of Turkish national origin. The organizations provide a platform for community involvement, hosting events where local leaders who can benefit the organization are honored, convening forums and conferences, and sponsoring expense-paid trips to Turkey that promote the Gülen movement. In addition, the evidence we have interpreted suggests that funds collected through the various Gülen charter school schemes, such vendor contracts, excessive rents, and teacher kickbacks, can be channeled through the organizations to pay for programs that will enhance the façade of legitimacy.

### Atlas Foundation (Atlas Interfaith Foundation)

The Atlas Foundation is a nonprofit organization formed in 2002 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The foundation promotes the teachings of Fethullah Gülen on its website.<sup>97</sup> It holds an annual cultural awareness dinner (most recently on May 18, 2017) as well as weekly and monthly events, sponsors trips to Turkey for elected officials and civic leaders,<sup>98</sup> and promotes the work and the mission of the Foundation in the community. Board members include Emrah Ceyhan, Fevri Sarac, Afsin Oktay.<sup>99</sup> Emrah Aktepe served as the Executive Director in 2015 and stated in a 2015 interview that he was familiar with the Hizmet Movement and the ideas of Fethullah Gülen.<sup>100</sup>

One of the community leaders who participated in the 2011 trip to Turkey sponsored by

<sup>95</sup> Federal and state revenue for Pelican is IRS Forms 990, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjix9> (last checked 5/17/17).

<sup>96</sup> See Harmony bond issue July 2, 2014, Official Statement p. B-3, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ybboyse6> (last checked 5/19/17).

<sup>97</sup> Atlas Foundation website, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y85z87c5> (last checked 5/26/17).

<sup>98</sup> Richard, Mary. Atlas Foundation of Metairie sponsors cultural tour of Turkey. Times-Picayune (4 October 2010), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ybuggetb> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>99</sup> See Atlas Foundation IRS 990 Form 2014, available at <http://tinyurl.com/y8xqa379> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>100</sup> Braud, Gabrielle. Executive Spotlight Q & A: Emrah Aktepe. Greater Baton Rouge Business Report (16 February 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yb97flwx> (last checked 5/20/17).

the Foundation described the Foundation as “a member of the Fethullah Gülen movement” in his blog about the trip and noted that he had met numerous followers of Gülen movement while in Turkey. He said that the Foundation paid for ground transportation, all hotels and meals, guides, interpreters, as well as admission to historic sites and other fees, while the participants paid for their own airfare. He also reported that the host of an evening event was a “three-decades-long acolyte” of Gülen who had “repeatedly met with Gülen.”<sup>101</sup> The following costs associated with trips to Turkey were reported on the Atlas Foundation IRS Form 990:

- ▷ 2013: expenses totaling \$12,800 for trips;<sup>102</sup>

- ▷ 2012: expenses totaling \$21,214 for trips;<sup>103</sup>
- ▷ 2011: expenses totaling \$32,405 for trips; and<sup>104</sup>
- ▷ 2010: expenses totaling \$37,962 for trips.<sup>105</sup>

## Turkish Cultural Centers: <sup>106</sup>

Turkish Cultural Centers are located in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, operated by the Atlas Foundation. They are nonprofit organization established in 2002 by the Turkish-American community and other volunteers. The location in Baton Rouge is co-located with the Atlas Foundation.

## Friends of Gülen Spotlight

Various organizations affiliated with the Gülen movement have sponsored trips to Turkey for elected officials and community leaders.

- ▶ The Atlas Foundation organized subsidized trips to Turkey for numerous Louisiana elected officials and community leaders. For example:
  - ▷ At Atlas’s 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner on November 17, 2011, several community leaders reported on their trips to Turkey including representatives of Southern University, the Farm Bureau, and a prominent journalist/attorney.<sup>107</sup>
  - ▷ Former Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden participated in a trip to Turkey

in 2009 sponsored by the Atlas Foundation and signed a sister-city agreement with Malatya while he was in the country.<sup>108</sup>

- ▷ Two members of the BESE, Linda Johnson and Louella Givens, accepted trips to Turkey at the invitation of the Pelican Educational Foundation. The Texas Turkish American Chamber of Commerce sponsored the trip, although Givens paid her own way, in 2010 before the BESE voted to give Abramson a year to correct its deficiencies, despite early reports of serious wrongdoing at the school.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Hizmet Movement news site (Sep. 12, 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ydd2z5cx> (last checked 5/21/17).

<sup>102</sup> Atlas Foundation IRS 990 Form 2013, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8xqa379> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>103</sup> Atlas Foundation IRS 990 Form 2012, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8xqa379> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>104</sup> Atlas Foundation IRS 990 Form 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8xqa379> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>105</sup> Atlas Foundation IRS 990 Form 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8xqa379> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>106</sup> Turkish Cultural Center in Metairie promotes dialogue, communication, The Times-Picayune (11 May 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yb4qqzhp> (last checked 5/30/17).

<sup>107</sup> Atlas Foundation (blog Nov. 17, 2011), available at <http://tinyurl.com/yco6nrel> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>108</sup> Garland, Greg. Kip’s Trips – Mayor Holden has traveled extensively since taking office. The Advocate (Baton Rouge) (4 April 2017), available at <http://tinyurl.com/y9neetsa> (archived behind paywall) (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>109</sup> Vanacore, Andrew. Abramson Charter in eastern New Orleans shut down amid TP investigation into startling



# Individuals Caught in the Gülen Organization Web

It is common for the charter networks within a region to shuffle their Turkish H-1B visa employees, both teachers and administrators, among schools, states, and education management vendors in different types of jobs. The individuals listed below are examples of the overlap of employees among these organizations, further demonstrating the interconnections and affiliation between the networks.

**Mustafa Guvercin:** Superintendent, Abramson Science and Technology Charter School (LA); Principal, COO, Assistant Principal, and Teacher, Dove Science Academy (OK) until 2005; Math Teacher and Assistant Superintendent, Harmony Public Schools (TX); Teacher, FUK Educational Foundation and UB International School (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia).<sup>110</sup>

**Cuneyt Dokman:** Principal, Abramson Science and Technology when it closed after scandal in 2011 (LA); Director of Housing, Texas Gulf Institute, parent organization for North American University, a Gülenist institution and Harmony Vendor (TX); College Transition Counselor, Harmony Public Schools (TX).<sup>111</sup>

**Soner Tarim:** CEO, Harmony Public Schools (TX); Key Contact for both Abramson and Kenilworth schools in their charter applications (LA).<sup>112</sup>

**Tevfik Eski:** CEO, Pelican Educational Foundation (LA); Principal, Harmony Public Schools (TX).<sup>113</sup>

**Nihat Bayhan:** Former Director and CEO, Abramson Science and Technology (LA); Teacher, Principal, and Guidance Coordinator, Harmony Public Schools (TX); Area Superintendent, Harmony Public Schools (TX); Chief Internal Auditor, Harmony Public Schools (TX); Teacher and Department Chair, Sisli Ufuk Middle School (private school in Istanbul, Turkey); FEM Education Center (Gülen-run school in Turkey to help students prepare for university exams); B.S., Bogazici University (Istanbul, Turkey).<sup>114</sup>

**Mehmet Ulupinar:** Atlas Foundation, Gülenist cultural association (LA); Husband of Elif Ulupinar, former Legal Counsel for Pelican and Founder of Kenilworth Science and Technology; currently Coordinator of International Engagement, University of Central Arkansas (AR); Speaker at University of Central Arkansas on the Gülen Movement (AR); Public Policy and Relations Manager, Raindrop Turkish House (AR).<sup>115</sup>

**Niyazi Evren Culha:** Assistant Principal, Harmony D.C. Public School (Washington, D.C.); Assistant Principal, Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School (LA).<sup>116</sup>

misconduct. New Orleans Time-Picayune. (15 July 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y99fzhj8> (last checked 5/20/17).

<sup>110</sup> Information taken from: Pelican 2007 IRS Form 990 – 2007; available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017); Donna Garner, FBI Raids Turkish Charter School in LA, voicesempower.com (Dec. 12, 2013), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yc4gkj4k> (last checked 6/9/2017); IRS 990 Form Harmony Public Schools 2005, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/hu9wqcl> (last checked 6/9/2017); Abramson Charter Application, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycybxeeb> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>111</sup> Information taken from: Pelican IRS 990 Form 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017); Cuneyt Dokman, LinkedIn profile, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y6usueyz> (last checked 6/9/2017); Texas TEA Non-Teacher Master File 2014-2015, available from Texas Education Agency through 2016 FOIA request.

<sup>112</sup> Information taken from: Harmony IRS Form 990 – 2014, available at <http://tinyurl.com/hu9wqcl> (last checked 6/9/2017); Charter applications for Abramson and Kenilworth, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>113</sup> Information taken from: Pelican Educational Foundation IRS 990 Form 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rdjx9> (last checked 6/9/2017); Texas Public Schools and Charters, Directory (Oct. 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycdsyols> (last checked 5/25/17).

<sup>114</sup> Information taken from: LinkedIn profile, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yd3nuk6w> (last checked 6/9/2017); Charter applications for Abramson and Kenilworth, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/24t7emn> (last checked 6/9/2017).

<sup>115</sup> Information taken from: University of Central Arkansas website, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8csyy2b> (last checked 5/25/17); M. Ulupinar presentation on Gülen, University of Central Arkansas Philosophy and Religion Facebook, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7uo83cb> (last checked 5/25/17).

<sup>116</sup> Information taken from: DC STEM network, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/y7ef354f> (last checked 5/30/17); Staff list for Kenilworth – 2011, received from LA Department of Education through 2017 FOIA request.

## Notable Press Coverage and Research Regarding the Louisiana Gülenist Network

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