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4. Eyewitnesses, Evidence and Credibility: The Methodology of anti-Israel NGO Campaigns



## Watching the Watchers:

The Politics and Credibility of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Arab-Israeli Conflict



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## Introduction “Watching the Watchers”

**Officials of powerful NGOs exploit the rhetoric of universal human rights and international law to promote ideological and political campaigns. Instead of careful verified research, “reports” alleging human rights violations, particularly in areas of conflict, have been exposed as based on evidence from “eyewitnesses” and sympathetic journalists. And dozens of radical pro-Palestinian NGOs --supported by European and other governments supposedly to promote peace, democracy and aid -- use this funding to demonize Israel. Together, this network continues to press the agenda of the NGO Forum at the 2001 Durban conference, erasing the context of terror to demonize Israel, while also undermining the moral basis of human rights.**

**Gerald Steinberg**, Executive Director, NGO Monitor

In the 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) claiming a wide range of moral and ethical objectives, from human rights to environmentalism, emerged as major political forces and power brokers. One of the areas where

their influence is most keenly felt is in the Middle East, within the context of the highly-charged Arab-Israeli conflict. Global NGOs, based in Europe and North America with multi-million dollar budgets and access to media and policy makers, increasingly focused their activities on this dispute. These include the so-called NGO “superpowers” - Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Oxfam, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH), and many more. Their campaigns and reports are highlighted in the media, exert a major influence on agendas and resolutions in the United Nations, and influence policies in many national capitals.

This power, as shown in the pages of this publication and in NGO Monitor analyses, has been particularly important in perceptions of the conflict (especially following the failure of the Oslo process). In September 2001, during the height of Palestinian terror attacks and suicide bombings, the NGO community adopted the “Durban Strategy”, proclaiming Israel to be an “apartheid state” and condemning Israeli responses to be systematic violations of human rights. A few months later, the Jenin “massacre” myth gained credibility via the NGO network, and these organizations campaigned actively for sanctions, boycotts, and divestment directed against Israel. NGOs were also among the major political forces behind the campaign of condemnation in response to Israel’s separation barrier. Their reports often repeated and amplified Palestinian claims, combining misinformation (reported as “research”) with political bias couched in the rhetoric of international law. And in 2006, this NGO-led demonization was repeated during the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel.

(left) About 10,000 protesters take to the streets during the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa on August 31, 2001. While the conference was ostensibly called to tackle the issue of racism and xenophobia, it soon devolved into a campaign to delegitimize Israel’s existence. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

(right) A banner from an International Solidarity Movement demonstration at the separation barrier in Qalqilya on July 23, 2003. At the NGO Forum at the Durban Conference, many of the speakers and activists representing at least 1,500 NGOs focused on branding Israel an “apartheid regime.” (Credit: © The Associated Press)



NGO Monitor was formed to provide independent analysis and promote critical debate regarding the activities of the NGO network in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This exploitation of universal ethical principles for narrow ideological objectives showed the need for a mechanism to “watch the watchers”. NGO Monitor was formed to fulfill this objective, providing independent analysis and promoting critical debate regarding the activities of the NGO network in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Readers of NGO Monitor studies are invited to consider the evidence and arguments, and reach their own conclusions. Journalists, diplomats, policy makers, academics, and others are encouraged to examine the facts independently, and decide whether NGO claims are accurate. In this way, we can overcome the “halo effect” that protects NGO officials from detailed independent analysis.

NGO Monitor is also published for the benefit of donors and funding agencies, such as the Ford Foundation and the New Israel Fund, that provide so-called “civil society organizations” with the resources used to influence policy. NGOs are also supported by governments, particularly in Europe. Prior to the establishment of NGO Monitor, the officials and citizens whose money is transferred to NGOs had no independent means to assess the impact of this funding, and the degree to which proclaimed objectives are consistent with supported activities. NGO Monitor research has demonstrated that, in many examples, funding designated to enhance “human rights”, “humanitarian aid”, and other worthy causes has instead been abused for coarse political campaigning. Instead of promoting peace, many NGOs closely associated with the Palestinian cause use this funding to advance a narrative that supports continued conflict and incitement.

In this publication our goal is to provide an overview of the NGO network as it operates in the Arab-Israel context and to examine the credibility of NGOs in a systematic manner. We begin with the NGO Forum of the United Nations “Durban Conference”, which adopted the strategy to demonize and delegitimize Israel, based on the language of human rights and international law. Specific examples in which the NGO network has implemented the Durban Strategy are then cited and analyzed in detail, including patterns of

double standards, in contrast to the claims of universality.

Based on these examples, we take a step back to analyze the nature of the NGO phenomenon, and the process by which these organizations - largely unaccountable to any outside body - gained so much political power. We also analyze the “halo effect”, by which journalists, academics, diplomats and other opinion makers have repeated NGO reports, without question or independent verification, thereby enhancing the political impact of biased NGO officials.

Finally, we examine the “research” methodologies that are prevalent in the NGO community, with numerous examples in which NGO claims were shown to be false, lacked credibility, or could not be independently verified. This process reached new levels during the 2006 fighting in Lebanon, in which NGO publications, largely condemning Israeli responses to Hezbollah attacks, were found to be based on “eyewitness” claims which were unsupported and blatantly false. When the details were revealed weeks or months later, the political damage, in the form of further delegitimization, had already been done.

As noted, this publication and NGO Monitor analyses are limited to the impact of NGO activity on perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict - a particularly disturbing and damaging example of the abuse of NGO power. However, we recognize that the phenomena described in these pages are present in other regions, and that the “halo effect” and its impact is being challenged elsewhere. For example, in 2007, a group of researchers demonstrated systematic bias and false claims by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in their reports on the conflict in Columbia.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we present not a final word, but rather a first step towards critical analysis regarding the claims and activities of non-governmental organizations and their donors.

**Gerald M. Steinberg**  
**Executive Director, NGO Monitor**

The first steps of the Durban strategy took place during a preparatory conference held in 2001 in Tehran under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Commission, headed by Mary Robinson.

# 1 ● The NGO Forum of the Durban Conference and the “Durban Strategy”

The United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (Durban Conference) took place in Durban, South Africa, in late August and early September 2001. With massive funding from the Ford Foundation and a number of governments, this event marked a major turning point in demonstrating the power of the NGO community in the political campaign to delegitimize Israel. In the NGO Forum,<sup>2</sup> speakers and activists representing at least 1500 participating NGOs, including global “superpowers” such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International, as well as Palestinian, European and South African groups, largely ignored the issues for which the conference was ostensibly called. Instead, they focused on branding Israel an “apartheid regime”, thus delegitimizing its existence. The final declaration adopted by NGO participants declared Israel’s anti-terror efforts to be “war crimes” and “violations of international law”, and restored the “Zionism is racism” theme a decade after the original version had been repealed by the UN General Assembly.

The Durban Conference took place against the backdrop of the failed Oslo peace process, the Camp David summit in July 2000, and renewed Palestinian terror attacks and suicide bombings in Israeli cities. The language used by the NGOs rationalized Palestinian violence, while condemning Israeli self-defense as a systematic violation of human rights and international law. The strategy of isolation and boycott adopted in the NGO Forum’s final declaration was seen by many as advancing the goal of eliminating Israel as a nation-state.

In order to understand the political power of the NGO community in the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is necessary to examine its role in the process that began at Durban. This “Durban Strategy” extends from the NGOs’ activities during the conference itself, to their implementation of this strategy to internationally isolate and demonize Israel.

## A. Pre-Conference Planning and Organization

The first steps in the Durban process actually took place during a preparatory conference held in Tehran from February 19-21, 2001 under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC). The participants in this preliminary stage set the agenda for the main conference in South Africa in September. Despite assurances from the UNHRC and its head, Mary Robinson, the Iranian government did not grant visas to Israeli and Jewish representatives. The conference participants affirmed that “human rights are universal, indivisible, inalienable, irrespective of... race, national or ethnic identity,”<sup>3</sup> but Jews and Israelis were excluded.

Officials from radical Palestinian NGOs and their international allies dominated the agenda-setting process for the Durban Conference. The Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), an umbrella group of more than 90 Palestinian NGOs, and the Palestinian Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment, known as LAW, took lead roles. Members of LAW served on the steering committee, led workshops and sessions during the conference itself, and even organized a pre-conference visit to the Palestinian Authority for the South African delegation.<sup>4</sup> Officials from PNGO and its member groups played key role in drafting the resolution referring to Israel as an “apartheid” state and calling for sanctions and international isolation. As a result, instead of providing a platform to redress racism in all its forms, from slavery in Africa to the caste system in South Asia, the preparations for the Durban Conference focused largely on turning Israel into a pariah state - the “new South Africa”<sup>5</sup>

(left) Activists demonstrate at the Durban Conference with a banner reading, “The martyr’s blood irrigates the tree of revolution in Palestine.” (Credit: www.EYEontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=69>>)

(middle) A T-shirt distributed at the Durban Conference accuses Israel of waging genocide against the Palestinians. (Credit: www.EYEontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=69>>)

(right) Members of the audience at the Jewish Caucus’s session on anti-Semitism during the NGO Forum of the Durban Conference wear T-shirts that read “Occupation + Colonialism = Racism: End Israeli Apartheid.” (Credit: www.EYEontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=69>>)





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PNGO and the Durban Strategy: The Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) was crucial in shaping the direction of the NGO Forum of the Durban Conference, and continues to promote the Durban Strategy. According to PNGO, the State of Israel “represents the completion of an apartheid system that by far exceeds the darkest times of South Africa, aiming at the complete demise of our people.”<sup>6</sup> PNGO also rejects joint economic cooperative ventures between Israelis and Palestinians as “the project of enslaving the Palestinian people.”



## B. The Conference on Racism Becomes a Racist Conference

An estimated 7,000 delegates from more than 1,500 NGOs participated in the three-day event at Durban, claiming to represent the “voices of the victims”<sup>7</sup> of racism, discrimination and xenophobia. The large attendance and funding from the Ford Foundation and various governments made the NGO Forum the central focus of the entire Durban Conference. This support also reflected the dominant ideology that viewed NGOs and civil society as “authentic” voices and representatives, in contrast to those of government officials and elected representatives in democratic societies.

When the NGO delegates convened at the Durban Conference on August 28, 2001, the focus had already narrowed primarily to attacks against Israel. The diplomatic and youth frameworks of the Conference were not unaffected by the direction set in Tehran: official US and Israeli delegations walked out of the government sessions in protest at the language of incitement directed against Israel, and while the Canadian and European officials remained, they protested against the diplomatic forum’s final statement.<sup>8</sup> But by then, the much larger and more influential NGO Forum had already completed its activities and issued a closing declaration.

In Durban, NGO participants singled out Israel for attack. Palestinian NGOs distributed copies of the anti-Semitic forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” and leaflets depicting Hitler and the caption, “What if I had won?” The answer: “There would be No Israel and No Palestinian bloodshed.”

(top) A Palestinian youth screams anti-Israel slogans during a protest march on August 31, 2001, the first day of the Durban Conference. (Credit: © The Associated Press).

(bottom) In New York on September 4, 2001, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel commends the decisions of the United States and Israel to withdraw from the Durban. Wiesel said that the conference had shamed its organizers by allowing Arab nations to turn it into a forum for denigrating Israel. (Credit: © The Associated Press).

The NGO Forum built upon the anti-Israel foundation established during the Tehran preparatory conference. In Durban, NGO participants singled out Israel for attack. A large contingent wore T-shirts with the words “Occupation = Colonialism = Racism, End Israeli Apartheid.” Palestinian NGOs distributed copies of the anti-Semitic forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, and leaflets depicting Hitler and the caption, “What if I had won?” The answer: “There would be No Israel and No Palestinian bloodshed.”<sup>9</sup>

Speakers at the NGO Forum focused on the theme of Israel as a singular human rights violator, stripping away the context of the conflict, Arab rejectionism and mass terror. Hanan Ashrawi, a prominent Palestinian official who also heads the NGO known as MIFTAH, (funded by the Ford Foundation, and Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs among others)<sup>10</sup> declared: “The Palestinians today continue to be subject to multiple forms and expressions of racism, exclusion, oppression, colonialism, apartheid, and national denial.”<sup>11</sup> UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson called on participants to focus on “particular victims of racism,” noting the situation of the Palestinians as a central example, and Israeli-Arab Knesset member Azmi Bishara referred to Israel’s “apartheid” policy toward the Palestinians.<sup>12</sup> (The inherent contradiction between the charges of apartheid and the vocal presence of an Israeli Arab MP was apparently lost on the audience.)

A session entitled “Hate Crime and Hate Groups, Ethnic Cleansing, and Genocide” focused on victims from Sudan, India and primarily the Palestinian Authority. South African activists, including local Arabs and Muslims, marched through the conference area chanting, “What we have done to apartheid in South Africa, must be done to Zionism in Palestine.”<sup>13</sup>

“Mob rule” is how Andrew Srulevitch, former Executive Director of UNWatch, one of the groups represented by the Jewish Caucus, described the debating process: “Ten minutes after it was voted that each victim group would be allowed to express its own victimization in their own way, a key paragraph on anti-Semitism was deleted. There was no opportunity for Jewish delegates to respond. It was clearly a kangaroo court.”<sup>14</sup>

**“The new anti-Semitism marches under banner of human rights. When the Middle East has no room for Israel, no matter what its borders are, that is a true apartheid.”**  
*Professor Irwin Cotler, former Minister of Justice, Canada*

Participants at the Durban Conference wore T-shirts with the words “Occupation = Colonialism = Racism, End Israeli Apartheid.”



Many influential NGOs, including Miftah, accuse Israel of “apartheid” and “ethnic cleansing.” Posters repeat these false claims in an attempt to demonize Israel.



Jewish representatives were subjected to verbal assaults and threats of physical violence throughout the conference. "Like all Jewish participants, I felt concern for my safety," said Jewish Caucus delegate Anne Bayefsky. "The Jewish Center in Durban was forced to close because of threats of violence."<sup>15</sup>

Major international NGOs including Amnesty International and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (renamed Human Rights First), were complicit in the exclusion of representatives of Jewish non-governmental organizations. Anne Bayefsky of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (IAJLJ) reported the words of HRW advocacy director, Reed Brody, indicating that representatives of Jewish groups were unwelcome.<sup>16</sup> Shimon Samuels, from the Simon Wiesenthal Center and chair of the Jewish caucus, noted that Amnesty, HRW and Save the Children "had let the Jews down in Durban."<sup>17</sup>

There is also no record that anyone in the NGO Forum challenged the fundamentally false comparisons between Israel, in the context of the ongoing conflict, and South African apartheid.

South African activists, including local Arabs and Muslims, marched through the conference area chanting, "What we have done to apartheid in South Africa, must be done to Zionism in Palestine."

**Anthony Julius & Simon Schama, "John Berger is wrong"**  
*Guardian Unlimited, December 22, 2006*

"Advocates of the boycott of Israel repeatedly invoke the boycott of South Africa. The parallel they draw between Israel and apartheid South Africa is false.

The Palestinian, Druze and other minorities in Israel are guaranteed equal rights under the basic laws. All citizens of Israel vote in elections. There are no legal restrictions on movement, employment or sexual or marital relations. The universities are integrated. Opponents of Zionism have free speech and assembly and may form political organizations. By radical contrast, South African apartheid denied non-whites the right to vote, decreed where they could live and work, made sex and marriage across the racial divide illegal, forbade opponents of the regime to express their views, banned the liberation movements and maintained segregated universities.

In any event, the relations between Israel and the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank are not governed by Israeli law, but by international law. "Apartheid," as a set of discriminatory laws governing the nationals of one state, is simply not the appropriate model here.

Last, and very importantly, since the 1920s, a substantial component of the Palestinian war against the Jewish community has been terrorism, that is, the intentional harming of civilians. The second intifada consisted of nothing more than terrorism. By contrast, the South African ANC expressly repudiated attacks on civilians. As the authors of a recent study of the parallels and differences between Israel and South Africa point out, not one suicide attack was committed in the 30 year armed struggle against apartheid."<sup>18</sup>

(left) Arabs and Jews shop on Jerusalem's popular Jaffa Street. (Credit: NGO Monitor)  
(right) Yasser Arafat gestures during a speech on September 1, 2001 at the Durban Conference. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



## C. The Final Declaration of the NGO Forum - Outlining the Durban Strategy

The NGO Forum's final declaration, adopted by consensus and without dissent, was a concentrated indictment directed at Israel. This document asserted that the "targeted victims of Israel's brand of apartheid and ethnic cleansing methods have been in particular children, women, and refugees"<sup>19</sup> and called for "a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state ... the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation, and training) between all states and Israel."<sup>20</sup>

The NGO declaration also condemned Israel's "perpetration of racist crimes against humanity including ethnic cleansing, acts of genocide."<sup>21</sup> It redefined anti-Semitism to include "anti-Arab racism."<sup>22</sup>

Noticeably absent from the declaration was any reference to Palestinian terror, or to the terrorists' endangerment of civilians through their use of populated Palestinian areas as launch pads for attacks on Israel. The Jewish NGO Caucus attempted to balance the declaration with a paragraph referring to virulent anti-Zionism as a contemporary form of anti-Semitism, and another condemning Holocaust denial. Both proposals were overwhelmingly rejected.

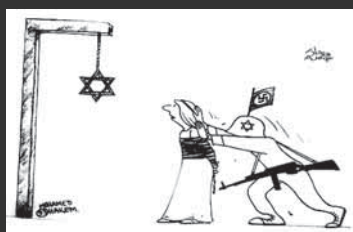
**"We are concerned with the prevalence of anti-Zionism and attempts to delegitimize the State of Israel through wildly inaccurate charges of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and apartheid, as a virulent contemporary form of anti-Semitism leading to firebombing of synagogues, armed assaults against Jews, incitements to killings, and the murder of innocent Jews, for their support for the existence of the State of Israel, the assertion of the right to self determination of the Jewish people and the attempts, through the State of Israel, to preserve their cultural and religious identity."**

*Paragraph proposed by Jewish caucus but excluded from the final NGO Declaration*<sup>23</sup>

International human rights NGOs either kept quiet or actively supported the declaration. However, within a few days following the conference, the NGO declaration was criticized, particularly by some supporters of human rights NGOs in the United States. At this point, leaders of a number of major human rights NGOs such as HRW and Amnesty International attempted to distance themselves from the declaration and Durban's blatant political agenda.<sup>24</sup>

The NGO declaration condemned Israel's "perpetration of racist crimes against humanity including ethnic cleansing, acts of genocide."

Anti-Semitic cartoons played a role in the demonization of Israel at the Durban Conference. These cartoons were displayed at a booth and distributed in a book at the NGO Forum. (Credit: www.EYEontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=69>>)



A JTA reporter noted that “[a]n Amnesty press release handed out during the NGO conference cited several examples of racism and human rights abuses around the world, but mentioned only Israel by name.”

But the record shows their complicity in Durban’s outcome. A JTA reporter noted that “[a]n Amnesty press release handed out during the NGO conference cited several examples of racism and human rights abuses around the world, but mentioned only Israel by name.”<sup>25</sup> HRW Executive Director Kenneth Roth, who did not attend the conference, revealed his group’s intentions two weeks before the proceedings, telling an interviewer, “Israeli racist practices are an appropriate topic.”<sup>26</sup> And, as noted, the HRW delegation led by Reed Brody assisted in the exclusion of members of the Jewish caucus. In the pre-Durban preparatory conference at Geneva, the HRW delegation had also refused to join in objecting to “calls for violence” in the draft declaration, claiming this clause was “justified if against apartheid or on behalf of the Intifada.”<sup>27</sup>



Al-Haq



The Forum’s declaration has become an action plan for the radical pro-Palestinian NGOs that helped draft the document as well as for many of the international NGOs that supported it. As a result, the NGO-led Durban Strategy of demonization and delegitimizing Israel’s existence as a Jewish state continue to gain strength.



(top) A poster displayed at the Durban Conference refers to the State of Israel as “The State of Apartheid.”

While the conference was ostensibly called to tackle the issue of racism and xenophobia, it soon devolved into a campaign to delegitimize Israel’s existence. (Credit: www. EYEontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=69>>)

(bottom) Foreign activists from the International Solidarity Movement and Palestinians release a banner and balloons during a demonstration at the separation barrier in Qalqilya on July 23, 2003. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

# 2. NGO Implementation of the Durban Strategy

The Forum's declaration has become an action plan for the radical pro-Palestinian NGOs that helped draft the document as well as for many of the international NGOs that supported it.



**The final declaration of the NGO Forum at the 2001 Durban Conference provided the foundation for coordinated NGO campaigns to label Israel as the new South Africa, using the rhetoric of human rights.**

During the period between 2001 and 2006, the NGO network applied the Durban Strategy repeatedly in promoting the myth of the Jenin "massacre" (2002); campaigns against Israel's West Bank security barrier (2004); the attempt to impose an academic boycott on Israel (2005); the church-based anti-Israel divestment campaigns (2006); and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon, in which NGOs issued over 100 press releases, statements and reports, almost all of which were directed against Israel.<sup>28</sup> Each of these NGO campaigns emphasized the Palestinian narrative of the conflict, presented the Palestinians and Lebanese as victims of Israeli aggression, made factual claims that were often false or unverifiable, eliminated the context of terror, and exaggerated the scope and impact of Israel's counter-terror activities vis-à-vis a civilian population. These repeated condemnations went far beyond legitimate criticism and disagreement. This politicized approach was reflected in NGO reports and statements, which were repeated by the international media and by diplomatic officials without question or independent verification.



Palestinian children hold toy machine guns during an anti-Israel demonstration in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon on May 8, 2005. NGO campaigns often emphasize the Palestinian narrative of the conflict and eliminate the context of Palestinian terrorism waged against Israeli civilians. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

## 1. The Jenin “Massacre” and Charges of “War Crimes”

The myth of a massacre in the city of Jenin, a major center for Palestinian terrorism, is a model of the Durban Strategy in action. In April 2002, Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield following a period of unprecedented terrorist attacks, including the bombing of a Passover Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya, where 30 civilians were killed.<sup>29</sup> The IDF opted not to rely on air power against the terrorists in Jenin, in order to minimize the Palestinian civilian casualties.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the IDF sent ground troops into the terrorist hub for close-quarter combat that lasted for nine days. In anticipation of the IDF’s arrival, the Palestinians prepared “bombs and booby traps,”<sup>30</sup> significantly increasing the risk to civilians in order to augment Israeli casualties. In the midst of the Jenin battle, Palestinian leaders, such as Saeb Erekat, accused Israel of killing hundreds of Palestinians, calling the event a massacre.<sup>32</sup> Palestinians later acknowledged that no more than 56 Palestinians were killed in the fighting, including 34 armed terrorists. Thirty IDF soldiers were also killed.<sup>33</sup>

In October 2003, the UK-based NGO Christian Aid released a film entitled *Peace Under Siege*. Palestinian suicide bombings were mentioned for only four seconds, dwarfed by the several minutes of coverage dedicated to the damage caused by the IDF response.

However, the Palestinian accusation of a “massacre” gained credibility from the media and diplomats when Amnesty International official Derrick Pounder told the BBC that the signs in Jenin did, indeed, point to a massacre. “I must say that the evidence before us at the moment doesn’t lead us to believe that the allegations are anything other than truthful and that therefore there are large numbers of civilian dead underneath these bulldozed and bombed ruins that we see,” Pounder told the BBC.<sup>34</sup> Palestinian NGOs, like Al Mezan, reinforced this theme of Israeli carnage in their press statements.<sup>35</sup>

When the facts about the fighting in Jenin emerged, Amnesty admitted that there had been no massacre.<sup>36</sup> But in its report, the NGO asserted that Israel had carried out “war crimes” against the Palestinians. In parallel, Human Rights Watch issued its own report on the battles that took place in Jenin and concluded that “grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, or war crimes” took place. The investigation focused entirely on Israel’s actions in the battle, accusing the IDF of “summary executions.”<sup>37</sup> As is the case in other examples in which the Durban Strategy is employed, the context of mass terror, intense close-quarter combat and Palestinian use of human shields was largely ignored. Neither Amnesty nor HRW presented realistic alternatives for Israel.

(left) Israeli police work at the site where a suicide bomber blew himself up on March 27, 2002 at a hotel in the Israeli resort town of Netanya, where guests were gathered for a Passover holiday dinner. Thirty Israeli civilians were killed in the attack. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

(middle) An Amnesty International report from November 4, 2002 criticizes Israeli counter-terrorist measures in Jenin and dismisses the Palestinian suicide bomber responsible for the Passover attack.

(right) On April 18, 2002, BBC news quickly repeated Amnesty International’s claims that Israel had committed a massacre against Palestinian civilians in Jenin. In reality, 34 of the 56 Palestinian casualties were armed terrorists; Israel also lost 30 soldiers in the operation.





A wide range of NGOs continue to promote the myth of a massacre in Jenin. Badil, a Palestinian NGO that campaigns for the “right to return,” spoke of the Jenin “atrocities” in its statement to the 2007 World Social Forum.<sup>38</sup> In October 2003, the UK-based NGO Christian Aid released a film entitled *Peace Under Siege*. Its portrayal of Operation Defensive Shield includes a sarcastic narration in a disbelieving tone when describing Israel’s justification as “eradication of the infrastructure of terror”, while asserting that the real goal was to destroy the Palestinian economy and infrastructure. Palestinian suicide bombings were mentioned for only four seconds, dwarfed by the several minutes of coverage dedicated to the damage caused by the IDF response. No mention was made of the targeted killing of 30 Israeli civilians that preceded the operation.<sup>39</sup>

A wide range of NGOs continue to promote the myth of a massacre in Jenin. Badil, a Palestinian NGO that campaigns for the “right to return,” spoke of the Jenin “atrocities” in its statement to the 2007 World Social Forum.

(left) On June 5, 2002, a suicide attacker exploded a powerful car bomb next to a packed bus during morning rush hour, killing 17 passengers and wounding more than 45 as flames engulfed the bus. Israel has built a security barrier to protect its citizens from this type of terrorist attack. (Caption: © The Associated Press)



## 2. NGOs vs. Israel’s Security Barrier (“Apartheid” Wall)

In the wake of hundreds of Palestinian terror attacks, in which over 1000 Israelis were murdered, and many thousands were badly injured, the Israeli government began constructing a physical barrier in the West Bank to prevent terrorist infiltration. Following completion of the first sections of the barrier, the number of terrorist attacks on Israel dropped significantly. A study conducted by the Israel Ministry of Defense shows that terrorism dropped 84% between August 2003 and August 2004 compared to the period between September 2001 and July 2002.<sup>40</sup>

But rather than welcoming this non-violent effort to promote the human rights of Israelis and to prevent Palestinian terror, the NGO community has played a leading role in the campaign to discredit the barrier, referring to it as “Israel’s apartheid wall.”<sup>41</sup> The main issue was not the route, which has been debated and changed, but, as the language shows, the concept of the protective barrier.

Human Rights Watch played a leading role in the campaign against the barrier, sending a letter to the US President on September 30, 2003 urging financial penalties against Israel for building parts over the “Green line.” The letter claimed the structure impedes “freedom of movement” and endangers “access to food, water, education, and medical services,”<sup>42</sup> ignoring its role in preserving the right to life.

Five months later, in February 2004, HRW issued a report on the security barrier, accusing Israel of violating international standards on freedom of movement and causing “disproportionate harm to the lives of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians.”<sup>43</sup> In HRW’s opinion, the discomfort of Palestinians living close to the barrier outweighed the security needs of the entire population of Israel, who lived under the constant threat of suicide terror before its construction.

(right) British musician Roger Waters spray-paints graffiti onto Israel’s security barrier in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on June 21, 2006. War on Want refers to the structure as “the world’s biggest prison” and encourages readers to “smash the wall,” ignoring the circumstances of Palestinian terrorism in which it is erected. (Credit: © The Associated Press)





The International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, in conjunction with the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists submitted a statement that erased Palestinian terror, and claimed that “the ‘twisting, invasive and dispossessing’ barrier/wall serves no military necessity.”

Christian Aid also played a prominent role in the campaign to delegitimize the barrier and, in the process, to demonize Israel. Although the NGO claimed to understand Israel’s security considerations, it consistently published articles on its website repeating Palestinian claims that Israel’s real goal is a “land grab” in the West Bank.<sup>44</sup>

War on Want, another European NGO, took the campaign one step further, calling on the European Union to end its trade agreements with Israel. According to this group, “The Israeli ‘security wall’ is the world’s biggest prison.”<sup>45</sup> This NGO headlined its sophisticated public relations campaign, “Break the Wall,”<sup>46</sup> and used high profile media stars to completely erase the context of Palestinian terror. Similarly, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) based in Paris,<sup>47</sup> and including 141 human rights organizations from about 58 countries,<sup>48</sup> issued numerous statements denouncing the “annexation wall.”<sup>49</sup>

These messages were based on the campaigns led by local Palestinian NGOs. For example, the EU-funded East Jerusalem YMCA runs the Joint Action Initiative (JAI), which helps coordinate a weekly demonstration against the barrier<sup>50</sup> and distributes t-shirts with the slogan, “Isolate the Israeli Apartheid.”

Ultimately, this NGO campaign was focused on gaining the involvement of the UN General Assembly, and, in accordance with the Durban Strategy and the South African model, on creating a situation in which sanctions would be imposed against Israel. As a result, partly of the NGO efforts, the UNGA adopted a resolution referring the question of the barrier to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for an advisory opinion.<sup>51</sup> The terms of reference in these proceedings were based on the rejectionist pro-Palestinian narrative<sup>52</sup>, and many of the NGOs issued reports and pseudo legal “briefs” to coincide with ICJ proceedings, presenting only the Palestinian side. For example, FIDH, in conjunction with the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists issued a statement that erased Palestinian terror, and claimed that “the ‘twisting, invasive and dispossessing’ barrier/wall serves no *military necessity*.”<sup>53</sup> ICAHD’s statement also minimized the security aspects and human rights of Israelis, arguing that the main purpose of the barrier was to create the “Bantustan-like state that Israel is planning for the Palestinians in the West Bank.”<sup>54</sup> A majority of the judges on the ICJ, many of whom were government officials from non-democratic countries, supported this version. They issued opinions that ignored Palestinian terror and labeled the barrier as a breach of international law. The ICJ’s “advisory opinion” is now frequently referred to by NGOs as a “ruling” which Israel allegedly contravenes by continuing to build the barrier.



www.fidh.org  
Networking Human Rights Defenders

A masked Hamas supporter wears a belt containing what appears to be bombs and sticks of explosives as he holds a grenade in his hand during a Hamas march in the streets of the Jebaliya refugee camp in Gaza City on October 27, 2000. The International Commission of Jurists maintains that the security barrier “serves no military necessity.” (Credit: © The Associated Press)

The Palestinian-based NGO known as Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center plays a central role in promoting Church-based divestment campaigns. It asserts that the “Israeli form of apartheid . . . is much worse than what was practiced in South Africa” and that “the occupation . . . continues to be the root cause of the violence and terror.”

### 3. The Role of NGOs in the Academic Boycott

One of the main goals of the Durban Strategy is to isolate and weaken Israel economically through boycotts and divestment, in a manner similar to the South African case.

The British Association of University Teachers (AUT) effort to impose an academic boycott in 2005, serves as an important example. Beyond the substantive aspects of the AUT’s boycott attempt, which remained limited after the initial vote was repealed, the publicity generated - reinforced by the boycott - promoted the goals of the Durban Strategy.

NGO activity played a central role in perpetuating the AUT campaign (as well as a similar campaign launched by another academic union known as the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NAFHE)). In particular, Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), one of the most active NGOs at the Durban Conference, provided the language and much of the literature distributed by boycott activists.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, AUT members who supported the academic boycott cited PNGO’s petitions and letters - which repeat false and highly distorted claims against Israel - and expressed plans to distribute PNGO’s anti-Israel materials. The PNGO website highlights statements by South African President Thabo Mbeki on the “apartheid wall” and includes many other references to South Africa.<sup>56</sup> PNGO’s reports on this issue attack Israel for “colonization,” “Judaizing the Jordan Valley,” “ghettoization,” and “ethnic cleansing.”<sup>57</sup>



Palestinian children, flanked by their mothers, burn an Israeli flag during a protest at the Ein-el-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp, near Sidon, Lebanon on June 29, 2006. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

#### 4. NGOs and the Church-Based Divestment Campaigns

The Durban Strategy is also manifest in the campaign promoting divestment from Israeli firms and economic activities, involving the Anglican, Lutheran, and other Protestant churches in the UK and US. The Palestinian-based NGO known as Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center plays a central role in this process.<sup>58</sup> Sabeel asserts that the “Israeli form of apartheid ... is much worse than what was practiced in South Africa” and that “the occupation... continues to be the root cause of the violence and terror.”<sup>59</sup>

Sabeel leader, Rev. Naim Ateek goes beyond exploiting the language of human rights, and uses anti-Semitic imagery to condemn Israel. “[I]t seems to many of us that Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians around him,” Ateek said during Sabeel’s Easter Message. “The Israeli government crucifixion system is operating daily.”<sup>60</sup> Sabeel also promotes a one-state solution. According to the group, “Indeed, the ideal and best solution has always been to envisage ultimately a bi-national state in Palestine-Israel.... One state for two nations and three religions.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, the goal of Ateek and his supporters is the replacement of Israel and the end of Jewish sovereign equality.



(left) Hundreds of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese youths, waving Palestinian and Hezbollah flags, protest Israel in Sidon on October 2, 2000. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

(right) The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church meets in Syracuse, NY on June 20, 1997. The Palestinian NGO Sabeel was active in lobbying the Presbyterian Church to accept a resolution calling for divestment from Israel in 2004. The Church repealed the decision in 2006. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

Sabeel’s tactics of professing non-violence, ignoring Palestinian terrorism and promoting a highly distorted history, are reflected in the divestment resolutions from the USA Presbyterian Church General Assembly (later repealed) and the World Council of Churches. Sabeel’s impact was magnified through its links to Christian Aid. In February 2006, the patron of UK Friends of Sabeel (FOSUK), Bishop Gladwin (who is also the Chair of CA) supported a motion for “morally responsible investment” at the Church of England Synod.<sup>62</sup> The motion passed, but the Church’s Ethical Investment Advisory Board (EIAB) rejected the decision. Gladwin was vocal in condemning the EIAB<sup>63</sup>, as was his close ally, Rev. Stephen Sizer, Chair of FOSUK, who has continued the UK divestment campaign by withdrawing his parish contribution to the Church of England.<sup>64</sup>

**“[I]t seems to many of us that Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians around him,” Ateek said during Sabeel’s Easter Message. “The Israeli government crucifixion system is operating daily.”**

*Reverend Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel*

The Durban Strategy is also manifest in the campaign promoting divestment from Israeli firms and economic activities, involving the Anglican, Lutheran, and other Protestant churches in the UK and US.



During the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict, major human rights and humanitarian aid NGOs issued over 110 statements that disproportionately focused on allegations of Israeli “war crimes” and “violations of international law,” while giving much less attention to Hezbollah, including the approximately 4,000 rockets fired at Israeli towns and cities in four weeks and the militia’s use of human shields.

**IDF actions “open the door to deliberately attacking civilians and civilian objects themselves - in short, to terrorism.”**

*Questions and Answers on Hostilities Between Israel and Hezbollah*, Human Rights Watch, August 2, 2006

**“Stop killing civilians”**

*Stop Killing Civilians*, Physicians for Human Rights, July 25, 2006

**Common themes in the NGO statements include:**

- » Accusations of “disproportionate force” by Israel, with no explanation of what would comprise a proportionate response.
- » Judgments and claims regarding “military targets” in the context of asymmetric warfare that most humanitarian and human rights NGOs are not equipped to make.

- » Condemnation of Israel’s targeting of bridges, major roads and the Beirut Airport as “collective punishment,” despite the clear military rationale of sealing off air and sea ports, roads and other such targets to prevent the re-supply of arms from Syria and Iran.
- » Political lobbying such as sending letters to politicians demanding that pressure be brought to bear on Israel; calling for the review of trade agreements and similar campaigns.
- » Little mention that Hezbollah’s concrete reinforced military headquarters are located under buildings in southern Beirut, and that the positioning of military/ guerrilla installations in residential areas is considered a war crime, as defined by Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Convention, article 51(7), relating to human shields. Hezbollah also stores and launches missiles from civilian villages in southern Lebanon, but NGOs dismiss or ignore the human rights implications of Hezbollah’s use of human shields.
- » Reluctance to call for the release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers. There is little attention given to Israeli IDPs (internally displaced persons) numbering approximately 500,000, or to Israeli victims of Hezbollah rocket attacks.

(left) Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah gestures during an election rally in a suburb of Beirut, Lebanon on June 8, 2005. During the Israel-Lebanon War of 2006, Nasrallah encouraged Hezbollah terrorists to launch attacks at Israel from Lebanese civilian areas, cynically using the Lebanese population as a human shield. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



(right) Portraits of captured Israeli soldiers Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev are placed in front of Western Wall before a candle lighting ceremony for Jewish Holiday of Hanukkah in the Old City of Jerusalem on December 17, 2006. Hezbollah terrorists infiltrated Israeli territory on July 12, kidnapping Goldwasser and Regev and instigating 34 days of fighting. A month earlier, Hamas terrorists abducted Gilad Shalit. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



## 5. The NGO Network and the 2006 Lebanon War

The central role of NGOs in delegitimizing Israel was evident again during the Israel-Hezbollah/Lebanon war in July 2006. Despite the fact that Hezbollah - a terror group operating from Lebanese territory - initiated the war with Katyusha rocket barrages across Northern Israel and a cross-border attack that resulted in eight Israeli soldiers killed and two kidnapped, the flood of NGO reports focused on condemning the Israeli response. During this period, over 110 statements were issued by 19 NGOs, many of which were active in Durban. Amnesty and HRW published 27 and 29 statements, respectively.<sup>65</sup> Their reports, op-ed articles and other statements included repeated allegations of Israeli "war crimes" and "violations of international law," while giving much less attention to Hezbollah, including the approximately 4,000 rockets fired at Israeli towns and cities,<sup>66</sup> and the terrorist group's use of human shields.<sup>67</sup> Substantive claims were again based on "eyewitnesses," whose statements supported the NGOs pre-determined conclusions and were simply repeated. To provide "balance," condemnations of Hezbollah were published weeks later, with fewer details and less visibility.<sup>68</sup>

The language and rhetoric in many of these NGO publications repeated the rhetoric and slogans used in the case of "Jenin massacre," the "apartheid wall" and similar campaigns. For example, in an op-ed in *The Guardian* on July 31, 2006, HRW Emergencies Director Peter Bouckaert wrote, "The pattern of Israeli behavior in southern Lebanon suggests a deliberate policy.... Israel blames Hezbollah for the massive civilian toll in Lebanon, claiming that they are... fighting from within the civilian population. This is a convenient excuse."<sup>69</sup> And on the day after Hezbollah's kidnapping attack, an Amnesty press release declared that "Israel must put an immediate end to attacks against civilians."<sup>70</sup> Similarly, PNGO issued an open letter to the U.S. Secretary of State stating: "The force being used by the Israeli troops... is inhuman and savage, aiming at exterminating as many people as possible. This brings to our minds the force used by Serbia in Bosnia as well as the crimes against humanity committed in the Second World War."<sup>71</sup> And the highly-publicized reports published by HRW and Amnesty distorted standards of international law, removed the context of the war and downplayed Hezbollah's tactics from the analysis of human rights claims.

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(top) A Hezbollah supporter marches at an anti-Israel rally in London on July 22, 2006. Hezbollah is a Lebanese terrorist organization, sponsored by Iran and Syria, responsible for the deaths of innocent civilians around the world. (Credit: www.MoonbatMedia.com, See <[http://moonbatmedia.com/against\\_israel\\_220706/](http://moonbatmedia.com/against_israel_220706/)>)

(bottom) In its 2006 report "Fatal Strikes: Israel's Indiscriminate Attacks against Civilians in Lebanon," Human Rights Watch claims that it "found no cases in which Hezbollah deliberately used civilians as shields to protect them from retaliatory IDF attack." Subsequent research performed by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center Report proved this to be false.



The NGO Durban Strategy continues to provide a central framework for demonization and boycotts, based on human rights claims. The repeated rhetoric and massive resources used for public relations campaigns led by NGO superpowers - Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, and others - are central in discrediting Israel's legitimacy in the world of nation-states.



Following NGO Monitor's analyses, HRW received unprecedented public criticism for its coverage of the Lebanon War (even before publication of a Centre for Strategic Studies Report that discredited HRW and Amnesty's research in Lebanon) see page 36. This criticism focused on the credibility of the NGO's research and its determination to distort human rights norms to demonize Israel.

During the conflict, NGO Monitor published numerous analyses of the bias and lack of credibility in these publications, and Executive Director Gerald Steinberg highlighted the process by which false claims of "war crimes" and "indiscriminate attacks" incite hatred against Israel.<sup>72</sup> Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz concluded that "Human Rights Watch no longer deserves the support of real human rights advocates. Nor should its so-called reporting be credited by objective news organizations,"<sup>73</sup> while Abraham Foxman of Anti-Defamation League argued that HRW "is either irrelevant or immoral, or maybe both."<sup>74</sup> Dr. Avi Bell decried HRW's "dubious or fabricated evidence" and "biased, unprofessional behavior."<sup>75</sup> Dr. Bell's analysis of Human Rights Watch's Q&A on the Lebanon War, which was published by NGO Monitor and again in the New York Sun, charged the organization with "whitewashing Hezbollah's crimes of aggression - and ... hiding Lebanon's, Syria's and Iran's legal responsibilities, diminishing other Hezbollah war crimes, and amplifying imagined Israeli wrongdoing."<sup>76</sup>

Five years after the conference at which it was adopted, the NGO Durban Strategy continues to provide a central framework for demonization and boycotts, based on human rights claims. The repeated rhetoric and massive resources used for public relations campaigns led by NGO superpowers - HRW, Amnesty, Christian Aid, FIDH, and others - are central in discrediting Israel's legitimacy in the world of nation-states. Instead of playing a useful and constructive role in promoting mutual acceptance and a just solution to the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, NGO campaigning has had the opposite outcome, by legitimizing and providing the justification for Palestinian extremism.

A Hezbollah supporter marches with her children at an anti-Israel rally in London on July 22, 2006. (Credit: [www.MoonbatMedia.com](http://www.MoonbatMedia.com), See [http://moonbatmedia.com/against\\_israel\\_220706/](http://moonbatmedia.com/against_israel_220706/))



# 3. Human Rights NGOs and the “Halo Effect”

The “soft power” reflected in the impact of NGOs on international politics in general, and the demonization of Israel in particular, is facilitated by the financial support of governments and charitable foundations. In addition, the “halo effect” granted to prominent NGOs means that their reports and statements are routinely accepted at face value and without question by opinion makers - journalists, diplomats, academics and others - who act as force multipliers for the NGO agendas.

Using this status as “self-appointed moral guardians,”<sup>77</sup> NGOs employ their massive resources and access to media, the UN, and academics to influence the human rights agendas and foreign policies of governments. Despite their minimal research capabilities, biased agendas (see Chapter 4), and regular manipulation of human rights claims, NGOs are powerful political actors.

This position has evolved in part because NGOs operate in a relatively unrestricted and opaque environment. Unlike government frameworks in a democratic society, NGOs are not subject to checks and balances or systematic accountability - except among their own supporters. There are no internal “public auditors” and, before the creation of NGO Monitor, no independent individuals or groups were responsible for verifying the accuracy of NGO reports. No agency insured that their agendas reflect the requirements of universality. The “halo effect” ensures that their position of authority has become entrenched and political activists, the media and academics cite NGO reports without critical analysis. NGO “superpowers” such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regularly promote their positions in the media, give testimony at the UN and other international bodies and maintain a presence in most Western capitals. Their work is cited in serious academic studies on human rights.

It is therefore vital to understand the nature of NGO networks, the norms that give rise to the “halo effect”, the links between the different levels and dimensions that constitute “civil society organizations”, structures and alliances, and the basis for and growth of their political power. In parallel, an analysis of the radical ideologies that are dominant among the NGO officials who control this power is central to the discussion.

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A Palestinian medic carries a stretcher at the United Nations headquarters in Gaza City, on October 3, 2004, demonstrating the action for reporters in the wake of Israeli accusations that Gaza terrorists used a United Nations vehicle to transport a homemade rocket. The Israeli army released video that shows terrorists loading a rocket into a vehicle with UN markings.



## A. NGOs, Ideology, and the Politics of the Middle East: A Brief History

### The Basis for NGO Power

In theory, NGOs are autonomous, non-profit and politically unaffiliated organizations that claim to advance a particular cause or set of causes in the public interest and in the framework of civil society. (The term CSO - civil society organization - is often used interchangeably with NGO.) The range of causes on which an NGO can focus is unlimited, but an NGO must operate in a manner consistent with the objectives for which it receives funds.

Often termed “the third sector”, NGOs are neither part of the government nor businesses operating in the private sector. As such, they are seen as independent institutions able to transcend narrow, selfish interests in order to promote universal values. Their operations and activities depend on donations and external funding, which come from governments, the United Nations, private trusts and philanthropies, individual donors, religious institutions, and, in many cases, other NGOs.

NGOs can contribute to civil society and democracy by challenging governments and promoting social interests, but they themselves are not necessarily democratic institutions. They do not select agendas, policies and leaders in an open process based on votes of members. NGOs are generally only accountable to their particular funding sources and activist members.

Powerful organizations such as HRW and Amnesty, progressively adopted the post-1967, pro-Palestinian victimization, while labeling Israel as a neo-colonialist aggressor.

The term NGO came into common usage in 1945 with the creation of the United Nations. Through the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), NGOs can apply for consultative status, giving them special access and the ability to serve as consultants to UN groups on human rights, regional conflicts, and other issues.<sup>78</sup> This certification is designed to “enable international, regional, sub-regional, and national organizations that represent important elements of public opinion to express their views.”<sup>79</sup>

In 1948, 69 NGOs had consultative status at the UN; by 2006, there were over 2,000 NGOs, many of which emphasized “universal human rights” in their mission statements. This growth reflects the special role attributed to NGOs and civil society organizations, particularly in the European political and social frameworks, and the perceived role of NGOs in promoting democracy and pluralism. But, as this publication clearly shows, many NGOs have lost their way.

### Ideologies and Objectives of Human Rights NGOs

The rapid increase in the number and influence of human rights NGOs took place in the context of the Cold War and the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s. The Human Rights Working Group was formed in the United States to lobby for legislation to limit aid to systematic violators of human rights, while generally supporting anti-US Third World regimes.<sup>80</sup> In addition, groups such as Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch (which later merged with the Human Rights Working Group and others to form Human Rights Watch) actively protested the denial of human rights in the Soviet Union and the communist countries of Eastern Europe, including the rejection of the right of Jews and others to emigrate.

An anti-Vietnam War demonstrator offers a flower to a military policeman on October 21, 1967. The rapid increase in the number and influence of human rights NGOs took place in the context of the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s. (Credit: www.Biocrawler.com, See: <<http://www.biocrawler.com/encyclopedia/Image:Vietnamdem.jpg>>)



By the mid-1980s, these organizations were very powerful international actors, and, as the Cold War ended, they found new missions. The agendas of human rights NGOs focused on peoples they considered weak or oppressed,<sup>81</sup> reflecting the ideology of anti-colonialism and anti-Americanism.

In this process, powerful organizations such as HRW and Amnesty progressively adopted the post-1967, pro-Palestinian victimization, while labeling Israel as a neo-colonialist aggressor.<sup>82</sup> They devoted disproportionate time and resources to Israeli-Palestinian issues, working closely with the UN framework for promoting the Palestinian cause, including special committees, conferences, and anniversaries. This biased approach, and the highly disproportionate focus on allegations regarding Israeli behavior, were particularly evident in the 2001 Durban Conference, as well as in the numerous campaigns that reflected the Durban Strategy.

## B. The Structure of the anti-Israel NGO Network

The NGO network that was created as a result of these political processes operates within a three-tier structure that provides resources and access to media. While the large international NGOs at the top of the structure provide visibility and diplomatic access, the local groups operating in the region (often with links to parallel groups based in Europe) provide content and access on the ground. And a third dimension - the funding sources - serves as the glue that holds the structure together.

This structure funds and magnifies the power of numerous small Palestinian groups that use the language of human rights to promote extremist views, allowing them to act as content providers for larger groups with a wider reach. As a result, the fictions and gross inaccuracies reported by politicized pro-Palestinian NGOs become part of the “conventional wisdom.”

**The US State Department’s annual Country Reports on Human Rights, Israel and the Palestinian territories serves as a primary example of the legitimacy achieved by repetition of NGO claims. The report quotes many politicized NGOs, some of which lack independent research capabilities, exhibit clear anti-Israel bias, and rely on questionable sources for their information. The inclusion of such statements in this prestigious report feeds the aura of NGO legitimacy and perpetuates their dominance in defining the human rights narrative of the conflict.<sup>83</sup> This is a prime example of the “halo effect.”**

### The NGO “Superpowers”

The top layer in the three-tier system consists of the superpowers - wealthy international NGOs such as Amnesty, HRW, Oxfam International and Christian Aid. NGOs on this level possess huge budgets - well above the rest of the field in terms of organizational capability, media influence, and access to the diplomatic community.

Amnesty claims a membership of more than 1.8 million and an annual operating budget of nearly \$30 million in 2004/05, with projects in over 150 countries.<sup>84</sup> HRW boasted an income of nearly \$40 million in 2005.<sup>85</sup> Oxfam International, a confederation of national branches that provide humanitarian relief, had a project expenditure of over \$528 million in 2004/05.<sup>86</sup> Others in this category include the UK-based Christian Aid, with an income of £92 million in 2005<sup>87</sup> and the France-based Medecins Sans Frontieres with an income of \$568 million in 2004.<sup>88</sup>



Claims made in reports by wealthy international NGOs are often reiterated by the media without independent investigation or analysis. (Credit: CAIB Photo by Rick Stiles 2003)

NGO superpowers are often headed by individuals with a record of anti-Israel activism. Christian Aid's Chairman, Bishop John Gladwin is also patron of UK friends of Sabeel. He perpetuates his NGO's continued bias in its approach to the Arab Israeli conflict, and in February 2006, used his influence to promote divestment in the Anglican Church.

Such massive budgets allow the global NGO superpowers to set the terms of the debate through a barrage of press releases, media appearances, and glossy reports that promote the groups' political interpretations. These NGOs are largely responsible for promulgating the post-colonial ideology - which includes core support for the Palestinians - through these sophisticated public relations machines. They have contributed to the delegitimization of Israel via the Durban Strategy, amplifying Palestinian rhetoric that labels Israel as an "apartheid regime" and Israelis as "imperialists" and "colonialists", while minimizing terror and condemning Israel's defensive actions.<sup>89</sup>

NGO superpowers are often headed by individuals with a record of anti-Israel activism. For example, at HRW, Joe Stork served as a core member of the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), whose reports demonstrate extreme anti-Israel bias.<sup>90</sup> HRW also employs Lucy Mair, whose previous experience included writing crude Palestinian propaganda for Electronic Intifada, a website devoted to Palestinian advocacy.<sup>91</sup> Christian Aid's Chairman, Bishop John Gladwin, has perpetuated his NGO's continued bias in its approach to the Arab Israeli conflict, and in February 2006, used his influence to promote divestment in the Anglican Church.<sup>92</sup> Gladwin is also patron of UK Friends of Sabeel, a Palestinian NGO that fuels the demonization of Israel through its international campaign for "morally responsible investment" (divestment from Israel).<sup>93</sup>

(left) In 2003, Oxfam Belgium produces and distributes an advertisement encouraging a boycott of Israeli products. The advertisement depicts blood dripping from Israeli fruit.



(right) French, Spanish, and Italian demonstrators march through the northern district of Marseille, France holding a banner that reads "Against colonization and apartheid in Palestine; Boycott of Israeli products," on September 28, 2002. Many NGOs, such as Oxfam Belgium, launch similar political campaigns in support of boycotts on Israeli goods. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



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(top) A poster displayed at an anti-Israel rally in London on July 22, 2006 portrays Israel as an evil blood-thirsty horned monster.

Oxfam’s bloody orange campaign reinforces this demonized depiction of Israel. (Credit: [www.MoonbatMedia.com](http://www.MoonbatMedia.com), See [http://moonbatmedia.com/against\\_israel\\_220706/](http://moonbatmedia.com/against_israel_220706/))

(bottom) The Joint Advocacy Initiative, a project of the East Jerusalem YMCA, advocates a boycott of Israeli goods through an advertisement that violently depicts an Israeli orange as a grenade.



### Case Study: Oxfam’s Bloody Orange

The nature of the political campaigns launched against Israel in the name of human rights and humanitarian relief is illustrated in the case of the Oxfam Belgium poster that promoted anti-Semitism based on the theme of the blood libel.

In 2003, Oxfam Belgium produced and distributed an advertisement encouraging a boycott of Israeli products. The poster reads: “Israeli fruits have a bitter taste... reject the occupation of Palestine, don’t buy Israeli fruits and vegetables.” Well-known Israeli brands and logos are pictured as unfit for consumption.

The message is blatantly political, and in clear contradiction of Oxfam’s declared mission, which states, “We seek to help people organize so that they might gain better access to the opportunities they need to improve their livelihoods and govern their own lives.”<sup>94</sup> Oxfam Belgium’s highly partisan support for the Palestinian cause reflects the role of senior officials, such as Pierre Galand (now a Senator in the Belgium parliament) in exploiting control of this NGO to promote private ideologies and agendas.<sup>95</sup> Galand is extremely active at the UN and other international fora, where he consistently demonizes Israel and promotes boycotts. In a January 29, 2004 letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Galand termed Israel’s security barrier, “a crime without precedent.”<sup>96</sup>

When the poster was highlighted by NGO Monitor, pressure from the Simon Wiesenthal Center and other organizations led Oxfam International, based in London, to withdraw it. However, an accompanying letter stated, “Oxfam’s mission is to respond to the suffering of people, without regard to race, religion or ethnicity... We condemn Palestinian suicide bombings and all other acts of terror and violence. We call for the occupation of the Palestinian territories to end.”<sup>97</sup> And a few days later, a new call appeared as the main item on Oxfam’s website, together with 15 other Belgian NGOs, “not to stock products from the Occupied Territories and on consumers also not to buy these goods...”<sup>98</sup>

In addition to the anti-Semitism and anti-Israel ideology, this example highlights the absence of accountability mechanisms in the major international NGOs. Decision making lacks any transparency, and the power of these superpower organizations, augmented by the vast resources at their disposal, is concentrated in the hands of a few officials, who use the rhetoric of human rights to justify their actions.



Local organizations are closely linked to superpower NGOs, which provide funding, personnel, organizational structure and media access. The relationship is symbiotic: global NGOs often depend on allies to provide the local presence to bolster credibility while providing local partners with access to raise funds from philanthropies and governments.



(left) Representatives from such major NGOs as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch speak at an international news conference after the NGO Forum of the Durban Conference. The viewpoints put forth by these NGOs are largely accepted as fact by many media outlets. (Credit: www.EYeontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=71>>)



## Local and Regional NGOs

The second tier of politically influential NGOs is composed of local and regional groups, most of which are based in the Palestinian Authority, although some operate from Israel. These include Miftah, Ittijah, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), Israel Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I), and others. Many more come under umbrella groups such as PNGO (Palestinian NGO Network), which claims 92 members.<sup>99</sup>

Most of these NGOs operate in a political framework in which departing from the official positions is dangerous, and in which the rule of law is applied sporadically, at best. Many such organizations are headed by individuals loyal to the Palestinian establishment and who follow its overall political agenda. While producing a steady stream of allegations about Israeli behavior, most avoid discussing Palestinian terrorism, corruption, or human rights violations by the Palestinian Authority or other Palestinians. The exceptions are notable, such as PCHR, which campaigns for free and fair elections, calls for reducing the “security chaos and misuse of weapons” and condemns internal Palestinian violence. But PCHR also violates the universality of human rights by demonizing legitimate Israeli responses to terror, which its statements call “resistance.”<sup>100</sup>

Local organizations are closely linked to superpower NGOs, which provide funding, personnel, organizational structure and media access. The relationship is symbiotic: global NGOs often depend on allies to provide the local presence to bolster credibility while providing local partners with access to raise funds from philanthropies and governments. For example, Christian Aid partners include Sabeel, ICAHD, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme (EAPPI), PCHR, B’Tselem and Adalah.<sup>101</sup> Many Christian Aid press releases rely on reports from these politicized NGOs.

(right) Demonstrators bear a sign that reads “No Racism and Apartheid” at a protest in Bern, Switzerland on July 29, 2006. Many NGOs reinforce the fallacy of Israel as an apartheid state, ignoring the fact that Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East. (Credit: www.MoonbatMedia.com, See <[http://www.moonbatmedia.com/switzerland\\_290706/](http://www.moonbatmedia.com/switzerland_290706/)>)





The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) also frequently engages in political advocacy, based on the findings of its local partner organizations. EMHRN's agenda is driven by NGOs such as PCHR, Al Haq and Al Mezan, which repeatedly condemn IDF operations, while ignoring the context of terrorism.<sup>102</sup> As a result, EMHRN uses its power to promote the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and issues one-sided condemnations.<sup>103</sup>

Similarly, the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) is linked to national sections and local groups in over 62 countries.<sup>104</sup> ICJ's size and stature give it tremendous influence in the UN and with the EU and various governments in Western Europe.<sup>105</sup> This influence and credibility is passed down, at least partially, to its affiliates, including PCHR and Al-Haq (ICJ has no Israeli affiliates), as reflected in ICJ's virulently pro-Palestinian political agenda.

Local and regional NGOs also act as content providers directly to media sources and international forums such as the UN. While the superpowers often generate extensive media coverage for their public relations campaigns, local NGOs are presented as reliable sources of raw facts for individual news stories, akin to "eyewitnesses". NGOs offer journalists apparent local expertise, research capability and an objective and universal human rights or humanitarian agenda. At the same time, the "halo effect" blinds the media and UN from looking critically at NGO statements, and in some cases the NGO deliberately courts sympathetic media attention to promote its campaigns. Palestinian NGOs often publish claims of Israeli "atrocities," "aggressive actions," and the resulting Palestinian suffering. Such terms are then repeated in the media, UN and diplomatic circles, with no further investigation of their credibility.

Examples of local Israeli and Palestinian NGO influence in the media include ICAHD Coordinator Jeff Halper's frequent appearances in the European media, including the BBC,<sup>106</sup> and The Washington Post's repetition of unverifiable claims by PHR-I that condemned an IDF operation in Nablus on February 18, 2006.<sup>107</sup> The Post reported PHR-I's claim that "Israeli gunfire [was] indiscriminate" and said that medical workers were "placed between stone throwers and Israeli soldiers in what seems to be the use of the 'human shield' tactic, which Israel's high court recently ruled was illegal." Local NGOs also set the tone for interpretations of the June 9, 2006 Gaza beach incident:<sup>108</sup> Al Mezan<sup>109</sup> and PCHR<sup>110</sup> both declared that the casualties were caused by an Israeli shell, based on their "fieldworkers" reports, "preliminary investigations," and PA video evidence (which was clearly manipulated). Their narrative was repeated by a number of international news outlets<sup>111</sup> and, eventually, by Kofi Annan (although he later retracted his comments, admitting that they were based on "media reports.")<sup>112</sup>

The close ties between NGOs and journalists reinforce this practice, and movement from one sphere to the other is common. Diah Hadid, an Associated Press reporter as of 2006, formerly worked as the Public Relations Officer for Ittijah,<sup>113</sup> a Haifa-based NGO that openly declares its role in shaping the Durban Strategy. Ittijah's website describes how it "gathered, facilitated and directed the vision and position of the Palestinian NGOs inside Israel [at Durban] on racism, particularly Israeli-state racism towards Palestinian citizens, and the apartheid the State practices in the West Bank and Gaza Strip."<sup>114</sup> Hadid now provides AP with news reports on the conflict.<sup>115</sup>

The combined output and intensive campaigning of local and superpower NGOs has reinforced the rejectionist Palestinian narrative in the media and among diplomats. The predominance of post-colonialism has helped their reports find receptive ears, but crucially important is the massive funding and minimal accountability that allows such activity to continue unchecked.



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## UK Parliamentary Committee Investigates Use of Government Aid Money

Department for International Development is the “part of the UK Government that manages Britain’s aid to poor countries and works to get rid of extreme poverty.”<sup>116</sup> In the Middle East, DFID claims to reduce Palestinian poverty by encouraging development, but, in reality, significant funding goes towards politicized NGOs that campaign on external agendas as opposed to internal development, and use their status to demonize Israel.

DFID funds Palestinian NGOs in three ways: directly, via their UK partners, and through contributions to the EU and World Bank. In 2003/04, DFID spent over £40 million on aid to the Palestinians via its “Country Assistance Plan”, over £3 million of which was channeled toward NGOs.<sup>117</sup> DFID also gives Christian Aid £5 million per year,<sup>118</sup> with no detailed checks on how the funds are spent.<sup>119</sup> Christian Aid’s extreme bias in its approach to the Middle East, and its involvement in political activities against Israel are well documented.<sup>120</sup> Despite much public criticism over its December 2004 Christmas campaign, which many criticized as one-sided and even anti-Semitic,<sup>121</sup> Christian Aid continues to use UK government money to sponsor its radical Palestinian partners, such as Sabeel, PCHR and LAW, and to promote demonization of Israel and divestment campaigns in the UK.<sup>122</sup>

In late 2006 the UK Parliamentary Select Committee on International Development held an inquiry into “Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.” The committee chair cited NGO Monitor’s submission to the committee, asking the Christian Aid representative,

“[H]ow rigorous are you in trying to ensure that the people you are working with, who may be frustrated, dissatisfied and attacking the policies [of the Israeli government] . . . , nevertheless, have a positive, civic objective as opposed to being potentially or actually engaged in planning acts of terror?”<sup>123</sup>

Christian Aid Advocacy Officer William Bell, was unable to provide examples of his NGO’s safeguards against such misuse of funds and avoided responding to the substance of the question.<sup>124</sup>

The accountability deficit of NGOs’ use of DFID funds was ignored however, in the Committee’s January 2007 report. The report repeated stock phrases from highly distorted NGO submissions that ignored Palestinian corruption and internal violence, and attributed the poor humanitarian situation entirely to Israel. It also reinforced War on Want’s campaign for the suspension of the EU-Israel trade agreement, because of Israel’s “undermining of human rights and democratic principles.”

A photographer from the Foreign Press Association holds a poster of kidnapped UK journalist Alan Johnston at the Erez crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip on April 25, 2007. Johnston, a BBC correspondent, was abducted by Palestinian gunmen on March 12. Through its Department for International Development, the UK continues to fund radical NGOs such as Sabeel, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



With massive funding from the Ford Foundation and a number of governments, the Durban Conference marked a major turning point in demonstrating the power of the NGO community in the political campaign to delegitimize Israel.

## The Donors

NGO donors include governments, large public and private foundations, and individuals. They supply not only the material means for the NGO network to function, but also contribute to the moral authority behind its message. At the institutional level, such funding is justified as the promotion of civil society and contribution to peace building, and is thus essential to allow local NGOs to operate. However in some cases, a lack of accountability and transparency in monitoring procedures means that recipient NGOs pursue a very different agenda to that of government donors. This can also occur with foundation funding, with the added complication that the foundation itself often has its own political agenda that directs its disbursements.

Governments are the largest sources of NGO funding in the Middle East, and include the European Union, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway and others. The table below illustrates the scale of foreign aid to the Palestinians in general, and, where such data is available, to local NGOs:

Donor Country	Amount
Switzerland	2005 - \$21.8m to West Bank and Gaza <sup>125</sup>
Norway	2005 - \$74m in development aid to the Palestinian Authority, of which \$17.5m channeled via NGOs <sup>126</sup>
USA	2004 - \$84.8m to West Bank and Gaza via USAID <sup>127</sup>
Canada	2003-2004 - \$16.1m to Palestinian Territories <sup>128</sup>
UK	2005/6 - £40m directly to Palestinians, plus more channeled via UK NGOs <sup>129</sup>
EU	2005 - €279m to the Palestinian Authority <sup>130</sup>

Not all of this money is directed via NGOs, and many NGOs receiving support fulfill a genuine humanitarian mandate. However, in some cases government money is used to promote political campaigns that contradict funding guidelines and stated policy aims.

In December 2004, Christian Aid used the theme of "Bethlehem's Child" as the central theme in its annual fundraising and awareness campaign, featuring allegations of Jewish/Israeli violence against suffering Palestinian victims who are compared indirectly to Jesus. Christian Aid leaders later admitted to the insensitivity of this campaign.



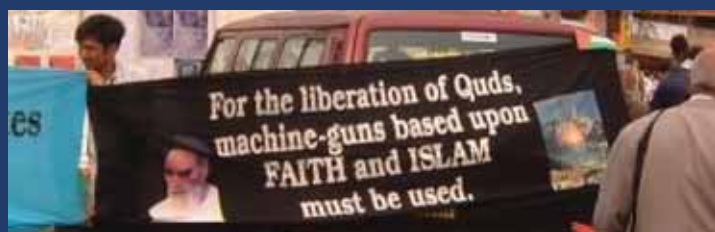
EU funding for a number of local NGOs also magnifies their status and impact beyond their membership base or widespread appeal. This is the case with Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions which received €472,000 from the EU “partnership for peace” program in 2005.<sup>138</sup>

For example, in Switzerland, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) funded “Dev.tv,” to produce two documentaries, *Bedouin Ghetto* and *Everyday Violence in Gaza*. Dev.tv’s stated goal is “to promote the production and distribution of television coverage of issues related to human, economic and environmental crises,” but these short films demonstrate the NGO’s primary goal of attacking Israel. In *Bedouin Ghetto*, Dev.tv claims that the Israeli government has a “policy of destroying the Bedouin way of life” and that Israel is motivated by a need to “Judaize and Zionize” the country by impoverishing the Bedouins and polluting their culture. And *Everyday Violence in Gaza* attempts to hold Israel responsible for fostering a Palestinian culture of terror. It claims that “a symbol of power for a Palestinian child is a martyr” and the need for such a “symbol” emerged from the Palestinians’ attempt to overcome the image of the father as helpless against the “Israeli soldier [who] represent[s] power.”<sup>131</sup> The bias and absence of any Israeli perspectives in the documentaries helps to promote the conflict, rather than assisting in achieving Switzerland’s development goals of poverty relief and democratization.

Al Mezan also received funds from SDC (\$0.2 million in 2006)<sup>132</sup>, as well as from the Ford Foundation,<sup>133</sup> International Commission of Jurists, Norwegian Representative office and others.<sup>134</sup> This NGO claims to “promote, protect and prevent violations of human rights ...and to enhance the quality of life of the community in marginalized sectors of the Gaza Strip.”<sup>135</sup> However, it focuses its resources on emotive attacks against Israel, promoting boycott and divestment campaigns and attacking Israel for “ethnic cleansing,” “war crimes” and continued occupation of Gaza since the disengagement.<sup>136</sup> On October 3, 2006, Al Mezan joined with other NGOs including Al Haq and Badil to attribute the “current crisis” to “the almost 40-year long Israeli occupation,” and the failure of “both Israel and the international community...to meet their obligations under international law.”<sup>137</sup> Al Mezan’s extensive campaigning, continued operation and credibility is assured by its substantial international backing, despite the fact that the group’s activities often contradict its mandate.

(left) Demonstrators at the Durban Conference’s NGO Forum wave a banner that encourages Palestinian violence. (Credit: www.EYEontheUN.org, See <<http://www.eyeontheun.org/view.asp?l=16&p=69>>)

(right) A table offers anti-Israel give-aways at a protest in London on July 22, 2006. Signs urge consumers to “boycott Israeli goods,” and flyers read, “Don’t buy Israeli apartheid.” Many Palestinian NGOs encourage this type of unproductive rhetoric. (Credit: www.MoonbatMedia.com, See <[http://moonbatmedia.com/against\\_israel\\_220706/](http://moonbatmedia.com/against_israel_220706/)>)



## Case Study: ANERA

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has taken consistent measures to avoid the abuse of humanitarian funding for politicized objectives. In addition, USAID's "Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing" lists a range of commitments required from NGOs that operate in the West Bank and Gaza. They include a pledge that NGOs will not engage in activity with groups deemed as terrorist, such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and al-Aksa Martyrs Brigades.<sup>140</sup> These measures and close supervision have been widely effective at ensuring that US aid money is not misused.

However, even USAID's strict funding guidelines are not foolproof. For example, USAID continues to channel significant funds via American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA). ANERA's main focus is on development assistance and emergency relief, and the quality of these programs is considered to be very high. But, this NGO also engages in biased anti-Israel political activities, and its publications erase the context of terrorism and promote the Palestinian narrative while falsely claiming to work with "all people living in impoverished communities". Such activity is inconsistent with ANERA and USAID's proclaimed objectives.<sup>141</sup>



EU funding for a number of local NGOs also magnifies their status and impact beyond their membership base or widespread appeal. This is the case with ICAHD, which received €472,000 from the EU "partnership for peace" program in 2005.<sup>138</sup> ICAHD promotes boycott and divestment campaigns, in cooperation with Sabeel, and in contradiction to EU policy.<sup>139</sup>

In addition to government assistance, local NGOs receive significant support from "facilitator organizations" - usually international NGOs, such as ICJ or EMHRN, that provide not only funding, but also logistical, technical and professional support.

Private groups such as the Ford Foundation and the New Israel Fund (NIF) are also important donors to NGOs. Foundations generally pursue a political agenda in deciding how to distribute their funds, and their large budgets give them significant influence on the political direction of the NGO community. The combination of this political agenda and the recipient NGO's veneer of moral guardianship often allows highly politicized programs to benefit from foundation support. The NIF, a major funding source that has given over \$120 million to more than 700 organizations in Israel, has faced much public criticism over its choice of recipients.<sup>142</sup> NIF beneficiaries include Adalah, the Arab Association for Human Rights and Hamoked.<sup>143</sup>

The combination of hefty government or foundation funding and minimal oversight or even sympathetic officials gives the NGOs immense power and autonomy to pursue their political campaigns. This was demonstrated initially at the 2001 Durban Conference, an endeavor largely funded by the Ford Foundation, the EU, and the Canadian government.



In August 2005, Israel removed approximately 9,000 Israeli citizens from the Gaza Strip in the hopes that the Palestinian community there would turn away from terrorism and instead focus its efforts on developing its social and economic infrastructure. Regardless, Al Mezan continues to accuse Israel of occupying Gaza.



## Case Study: The Ford Foundation's role in the Durban Conference

No donor played a larger role in helping to create the hostile environment that pervaded the Durban Conference than the Ford Foundation. Through multi-million dollar support for politicized Palestinian NGOs, Ford provided the material means for hijacking the anti-racism conference and turning it into an anti-Semitic indictment against Israel.

Ford's funding for anti-Israel and anti-Zionist NGOs did not begin with Durban. The foundation distributed \$35 million in grants to 272 Arab and Palestinian NGOs in the two years before the Durban conference<sup>144</sup> and continues to support many organizations who engage in primarily political activities and who exploit human rights rhetoric to delegitimize Israel.

According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency's (JTA) in-depth investigation into the sources of funding for NGOs active in setting the anti-Israel agenda at Durban, the Ford Foundation financed the activities of Palestinian Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (LAW) and PNGO, two of the Palestinian NGOs most responsible for setting the tone of the conference. Officials from LAW and PNGO said Ford's funding was vital to their organizations. LAW alone received three grants for a total of \$1.1 million for "advocacy" at international conferences. "Ford has made it possible for us to do much of our work," a LAW official told the JTA.<sup>145</sup>

PNGO program coordinator Renad Qubaj said that Ford is their biggest funder. "In Durban, for sure we published posters saying, 'End the occupation,' things like that," Qubaj told the JTA. "And we published a study, had a press conference, organized our partners and protest marches," all key elements that helped set the tone of hate toward Israel.<sup>146</sup> PNGO representatives were directly responsible for the agenda in Durban.

Shortly after the JTA published its investigation and NGO Monitor conducted follow-up research, questions about Ford's funding choices began to surface. Seventeen members of Congress signed a letter sent to Ford Foundation President, Susan Berresford, asking her to cease funding "organizations that have openly and purposefully instigated anti-Semitism, called for the destruction of the State of Israel, and/or engaged in the promotion of violence."<sup>147</sup>

Berresford responded by promising to change the criteria the foundation uses to determine whether to fund a particular NGO. "We will never support groups that promote or condone bigotry or violence, or that challenge the very existence of legitimate, sovereign states like Israel," she wrote in a letter to New York Congressman Jerrold Nadler.<sup>148</sup>

But according to a 2006 NGO Monitor report, the Ford Foundation continues to fund NGOs such as PCHR, Miftah, Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre, and EMHRN. Their activities are primarily political, and they exploit human rights rhetoric to delegitimize Israel, while undermining efforts towards a peaceful end to the conflict.<sup>149</sup>

(left) Seven thousand people march through London to protest Israel on July 22, 2006.

(Credit: www.MoonbatMedia.com, See <[http://www.moonbatmedia.com/against\\_israel\\_220706/>](http://www.moonbatmedia.com/against_israel_220706/>))

(middle, right) In 2003, United States Representative Jerrold Nadler expresses his concern regarding the Ford Foundation's funding of extremist NGOs. He wrote to Susan Berresford, President of the Ford Foundation, "We are extremely concerned with

the Ford Foundation's funding of organizations that have openly and purposefully instigated anti-Semitism, called for the destruction of the State of Israel, and/or engaged in the promotion of violence.... In at least two of the highlighted cases, your grantees were principal players in undermining important international efforts to fight bigotry at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa last year."





Fuelled by financial support from sympathetic foundations or governments and encouraged by the “halo effect” that opens media and diplomatic doors, local and international NGOs exert a great deal of power. While these NGOs claim to promote universal norms of human rights, the primary and often exclusive emphasis of their activities is rooted in Palestinian claims. Adopting the framework of post-colonial ideology, the Palestinians are portrayed as the eternal victims of Israeli aggression while violations of the human rights of Israeli citizens are given little attention. Emphasizing ideology at the expense of universality and accuracy, NGOs use the rhetoric of global justice and humanitarian principles to support a narrow political program. Instead of consistent support for the “inalienable rights of all members of the human family,”<sup>152</sup> these NGOs have made “human rights work” virtually synonymous with advocacy on behalf of the Palestinians.

**FORD FOUNDATION**



### The academic boycott - nearly a second Durban?

In February 2006, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) planned a conference in Italy sponsored by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations on academic boycotts and academic freedom. The list of invited participants included many NGOs and individuals who are active in the boycott campaign and in the wider effort to delegitimize the existence of Israel, in accordance with the Durban agenda. The Ford Foundation was widely criticized for its funding of many of the NGOs that fueled anti-Israel activity at the UN Durban Conference in 2001 and was quick to respond to critics who said that the AAUP conference promised to become an “academic Durban.”<sup>150</sup>

NGO Monitor wrote directly to Ford’s President Susan Berresford to protest the conference, saying that “there is a greater concern that the conference could serve as a platform for renewing the boycott, and otherwise support the effort to disguise anti-Israel bias through anti-racism rhetoric, thereby justifying violence against Israelis. Publication of papers, summaries or consensus statements by some of the participants in this the conference could be used to claim wider legitimacy for such a campaign against Israel. Given these concerns, the question is what the Ford Foundation is doing to insure that the post-Durban guidelines are fully implemented?”<sup>151</sup>

Chastened by the Durban experience, Ford and the other major donors asked the AAUP to reconsider the wisdom of the conference, and it was later cancelled.

About 10,000 protesters take to the streets during the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa on August 31, 2001. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

# 4.

## Eyewitnesses, Evidence and Credibility: The Methodology of anti-Israel NGO Campaigns

In the Middle East Division, Israel consumed over three times more of Human Rights Watch's resources than Iran, Saudi Arabia or the Palestinian Authority, and over six times more than Syria or Libya.

NGOs with highly politicized and strongly ideological agendas use many of the techniques employed by commercial profit-making firms and political lobbyists to promote their products. They issue pamphlets with glossy photographs and press statements that appear very professional.

In this process, the international NGO superpowers focus disproportionately on Israel, in comparison to chronic human rights violators as Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. For example, between 2000 and 2004, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Commission of Jurists published fewer than half the number of reports on the extreme violence in the Darfur region of Sudan (often termed genocide) than they did on Israeli/Palestinian issues.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, the research that these NGOs cite in their reports is often narrow and one-sided. The information chain allows local organizations to feed their information to international NGOs such as Christian Aid and Amnesty, which have very limited independent research capability.<sup>154</sup> And when the major NGOs do send researchers to the area, they select sources to reinforce pre-determined conclusions. Their evidence frequently comes from non-verifiable Palestinian "eyewitnesses" whose credibility is questionable, and from selected journalists who reflect parallel ideologies and political views. Facts and figures that are published in NGO reports, such as casualty numbers, are incomplete and often disputed. But despite this weak foundation, their claims are given credence by repetition within the NGO community, by the UN and by other diplomats.

The following section contains illustrations and analyses of such activities, with examples of how NGOs, including many of the superpowers, distort context throughout their research process as part of the Durban Strategy.



A child in rags rests in an open-air makeshift camp of villagers who escaped an attack that left 40 dead in ethnic violence that has spilled over from Sudan's Darfur province into eastern Chad on November 29, 2006. Between 2000 and 2004, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Commission of Jurists published fewer than half the number of reports on the extreme violence in the Darfur region of Sudan than they did on Israeli/Palestinian issues. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

While the NGOs that are active in the Arab-Israeli conflict zone claim that their numerous reports, press statements, and other publications are based on research and investigation, the evidence reveals that this is largely a façade.

## A. Erasing the Context of Terror

The actions of the Israeli military take place within the context of ongoing terror threats and attacks, primarily from Palestinian groups, as well as from Hezbollah. However, NGOs regularly remove this context, focus disproportionately on Israeli responses and characterize Israel's actions as aggressive, "deliberate[ly] destructi[ve]" and without cause or provocation, even in cases of clear self-defense.<sup>155</sup>

These distortions were illustrated by the NGO response to events initiated on September 28, 2004, when Palestinians in Gaza fired rockets into the Israeli town of Sderot, killing two children.<sup>156</sup> At the time, this was the most lethal of ongoing rocket attacks on the town. In response, the IDF launched a major offensive into Jabaliya in Gaza in an effort to stop the rocket fire and protect its citizens.

On October 5, 2004 Amnesty issued a press release headlined "Israel/Occupied Territories: Excessive Use of Force." The statement condemned Israel's actions as "betray[ing] a lack of respect for fundamental human rights principles, including the right to life." It then provided a detailed account of Israeli actions, including "strict closures" and "unlawful destruction and damage of Palestinian homes," and concluded by condemning Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights. In contrast, Amnesty's account mildly called on "Palestinian armed groups not to initiate [such] attacks" against Israeli civilians. The context was also missing in Amnesty's allegation that "ambulances have on several occasions come under Israeli army fire", omitting numerous documented instances of ambulances abused by Palestinians to transport weapons and terrorists.<sup>157</sup> As in many other cases, claims about casualties were unattributed and unverifiable.

(left) Palestinian children hold toy machine guns during an anti-Israel demonstration in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon on May 8, 2005. NGO campaigns frequently focus the majority of their criticism on Israel while minimizing the importance of ongoing terrorist attacks against the Israeli civilian population. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



In parallel, politicized human rights NGOs systematically condemn Israeli actions, without engaging in the complexities of self-defense in the era of mass terrorism. Numerous NGO condemnations of Israel's restrictions on the movement of Palestinians provide salient examples.

On October 3, 2004, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I) issued a statement entitled, "Palestinian Students and the Violations on Freedom of Movement," which claimed that "[a]s part of the closure policy placed on the occupied territories, Israel tends to block Palestinian students from leaving in order to study, under the *pretense* of security problems [emphasis added]." This statement rebuffs Israel's actions by portraying "security" as merely an excuse to punish the Palestinians and further claims that "[l]imiting the freedom of movement ... is another way of paralyzing the Palestinian society and preventing its development."<sup>158</sup>

Another example is the extensive involvement of NGOs in the campaign to have Israel's security barrier declared as "a violation of international law" and referred to as "the apartheid wall."<sup>159</sup> As noted in Chapter 2, local NGOs, such as Adalah, East Jerusalem YMCA, Miftah and Palestinian NGO Network, in addition to international NGOs, including War on Want and Christian Aid, have been pivotal in this campaign, ignoring the evidence that the barrier has reduced terror attacks.<sup>160</sup>

In these and other NGO activities, the context of Palestinian terror attacks and the legitimacy of the Israeli response are dramatically underrepresented in NGO discourse. The NGO network does not argue against or refute the Israeli perspective of self-defense, but simply erases this central element. The result is a highly political and ideological campaign that removes the circumstances, and thus, the rationale for the Israeli actions.

(right) On June 5, 2002, a suicide attacker exploded a powerful car bomb next to a packed bus during morning rush hour, killing 17 passengers and wounding more than 45 as flames engulfed the bus. Israel has built a security barrier to protect its citizens from this type of terrorist attack. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



## B. The NGO Credibility Gap

While the NGOs that are active in the Arab-Israeli conflict zone claim that their numerous reports, press statements, and other publications are based on research and investigation, the evidence reveals that this is largely a façade.

For example, Palestinian and Israeli NGOs funded by the EU and grants from foreign governments, such as the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), PHR-I and the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) frequently cite figures for casualties and damage with no explanation of methodology or sources to substantiate their claims. In a statistical section headlined “Death and Injuries during the Al Aqsa Intifada,” PCHR claims to provide information on the number of females, children and medical personnel, among others killed by “Israeli Occupation Forces” since September 2000. It also lists the numbers of “wounded,” and distinguishes between “Palestinians” and “Palestinian civilians.”<sup>161</sup> There are no definitions of the different criteria nor explanations about how these figures were compiled, yet the impact of such “research” can be significant. In Christian Aid’s October 2006 submission to the Parliamentary Committee Enquiry on UK government assistance to the Palestinians, Christian Aid (a partner of PCHR) cites PCHR figures for the number of civilians and children killed in the first eight months of 2006.<sup>162</sup>

While many NGOs are outspokenly critical of Israel’s actions, few substantially criticize the human rights violations prevalent in the Palestinian Authority. Here, four-year-old Palestinian boy Hussein Jarboo holds an AK-47 assault rifle during an anti-Israel rally organized by the Palestinian Public Resistance in the Gaza Strip on February 25, 2002. His headband reads, “Friends of Martyrs.” (Credit: © The Associated Press)



Amnesty’s March 2005 report entitled “Israel and the Occupied Territories: Conflict, Occupation and Patriarchy - Women Carry the Burden,” cited PHR-I’s claim that “the rate of survival of breast cancer patients in Gaza is only 30-40%, compared to 70-75% in Israel.”<sup>163</sup> It is impossible to assess the credibility of the research cited in this report. Even if the numbers are correct, the disparity in survival rates may also be the result of societal factors, and differences between the medical facilities of Israel and those of the Palestinian Authority, which are not related to the conflict. Amnesty, however, strips away all other factors, and places the statistic in the context of politics, claiming in the same paragraph that “during the 37 years of Israeli occupation the development of the Palestinian health system has been severely limited.”<sup>164</sup>

This example illustrates how international NGOs rely excessively on their local counterparts as sources, mainly due to a lack of independent research capability, which perpetuates the chain of non-verifiable information. Amnesty has been singled out for particular criticism on this issue, after Michael Ehrlich, former head of Amnesty-Israel, revealed evidence of unchecked repetition of research in annual reports and a politicized approach to the NGO’s human rights analysis.<sup>165</sup> Ehrlich reported that “the core issue for AI is not human rights, but rather the political conflict itself.” Professor Alan Dershowitz revealed further credibility deficits in his analysis of Amnesty’s August 2005 report on violence against Palestinian women.<sup>166</sup> Dershowitz interviewed the AI researcher on Israel and the Occupied Territories to verify Amnesty’s claim that “violence against women had escalated to an ‘unprecedented level’ during the occupation, and especially during its most militarized phase.”

The researcher acknowledged that Amnesty International could provide no comparative data and confirmed that the report was based on anecdotal information, primarily from Palestinian NGOs.

Amnesty International has been singled out for particular criticism after Michael Ehrlich, former head of Amnesty-Israel revealed evidence of unchecked repetition of research in annual reports and a politicized approach to the NGO's human rights analysis.

"[The researcher] acknowledged that AI could provide no ... comparative data and confirmed that the report was based on anecdotal information, primarily from Palestinian NGOs. 'We talk to anyone who would talk to us.' When I asked her for a list of the NGO's that were the sources of the information, she refused to provide them because 'there are things we can simply not provide to outsiders.' ... It is impossible under these circumstances for any outside researcher to replicate AI's study and to confirm or disconfirm its conclusions."<sup>167</sup>

Christian Aid's claims are also based on unverifiable sources. The organization operates mainly through its local partner NGOs and regularly publishes their material on its website. On October 6, 2004, Christian Aid released a press statement regarding an Israeli anti-terror operation, entitled "Israeli assault on Gaza leaves scores dead and many homeless," based entirely on reports from its partners, B'Tselem and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC).<sup>168</sup> PARC is a highly politicized NGO that has made unsubstantiated and ideologically-based statements, including the claim that Israel invented security threats in order to "spread out its control over the whole region."<sup>169</sup> The Christian Aid statement concludes with a quote from a PARC official: "Such aggressive incursions are not only killing the people in Gaza but are also killing the only available chance for democratic change and for building democratic civil society in Palestine."<sup>170</sup>

The use of non-verifiable eyewitness accounts is evident in Human Rights Watch's "onsite investigation" of the Gaza Beach incident. After a June 9, 2006 explosion on Beit Lahiya beach in northern Gaza killed eight Palestinian civilians, HRW's "senior military analyst" Marc Galasco led an aggressive NGO campaign to blame the IDF. He stated that "[t]he likelihood that the Ghalya family was killed by an explosive other than one of the shells fired by the IDF is remote," basing his claim on Palestinian statements and evidence provided by Palestinian security officials.<sup>171</sup> On June 19, Galasco met with Maj-Gen Klifi, who headed the IDF investigation and acknowledged the uncertainties, including the possibility that the explosion could have been created by unexploded ordinance. Yet in a June 20 press release, HRW repeated the charge that "[t]he IDF's partisan approach highlights the need for an independent, international investigation."<sup>172</sup>

Amnesty's admission that "[they] talk to anyone who would talk to [them]" –without examining evidence credibility or bias – reinforces the conclusion that international and local NGOs rely primarily on non-verifiable and highly partisan eyewitnesses for their research.<sup>173</sup>

Government-funded Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, such as the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel and the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem frequently cite figures for casualties and damage with no explanation of methodology or sources to substantiate their claims.

(left) This sign from a protest in London on July 22, 2006 reads accuses Israel of being a "terrorist state." (Credit: www.MoonbatMedia.com, See <[http://www.moonbatmedia.com/against\\_israel\\_220706/](http://www.moonbatmedia.com/against_israel_220706/)>)

(middle, right) Palestinian adults show young boys how to properly hold their assault rifles during a rally organized by the Palestinian Public Resistance in the Gaza Strip on February 25, 2002. The headbands read, "Friends of Martyrs" and "Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade." (Credit: © The Associated Press)





## Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International “research” undermined by Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center Report on Lebanon War

During the Israel-Hezbollah war in July/August 2006, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) published numerous reports primarily condemning Israeli military actions. The claims were based on “evidence” provided by Lebanese eyewitnesses, whose credibility and links to Hezbollah were not investigated. In December 2006, the Intelligence and Terrorism Center at the Israeli Center for Special Studies (ICSS), in conjunction with the American Jewish Congress, issued a detailed report on these events.<sup>174</sup>

The ICSS report provides extensive documentation and photographic evidence of Hezbollah’s consistent pattern of intentionally placing its fighters and weapons among civilians, showing that Hezbollah was well aware of the civilian casualties that would ensue from this activity. This contrasts with claims by Human Rights Watch that it found “no cases” in which Hezbollah deliberately used civilians as human shields.<sup>175</sup> Similarly, Amnesty International alleged that “[i]n the overwhelming majority of destroyed or damaged buildings it examined, Amnesty International found no evidence to indicate that the buildings were being used by Hezbollah fighters as hide-outs or to store weapons.”<sup>176</sup> The ICSS detailed study on the extensive Hezbollah military presence in Qana, Bint Jbeil, Aitaroun, and other sites discredits these and many other NGO allegations.

See [www.ngo-monitor.org](http://www.ngo-monitor.org) for full report

### Bint Jbeil: Killing of 4 Civilians on July 15

#### HRW Report

» HRW eyewitness:  
“[T]here was no fighting taking place in the village -there was no one but civilians. The civil defense was there to help us [recover the bodies].”<sup>177</sup>

#### ICSS Report

- » 20 Bases and 5 Weapons storehouses inside the village are shown in an aerial photograph.<sup>178</sup>
- » 87 rockets fired from within village houses, 109 from within a 200 meter radius of the village, and 136 within a 500 meter radius of the village.<sup>179</sup>
- » 60 regular Hezbollah operatives in the village, including about 15 in charge of storehouses.<sup>180</sup>
- » Arms, ammunition, and equipment were stored in the village before the war. Some equipment was placed in storehouses; some inside civilian residential buildings.<sup>181</sup>

### Tyre: Killing of Civilians on July 16

#### Amnesty Report

» “Residents told Amnesty International that Hezbollah was not active in the area and the organization found no indication that the building had been used for military purposes.”<sup>182</sup>

#### ICSS Report

- » The city of Tyre housed Hezbollah bases and headquarters.<sup>183</sup>
- » “Tyre serves as the center of operations for Hezbollah’s unit in charge of Fajr and 220mm rockets.”<sup>184</sup>
- » Photographic evidence of Hezbollah activity in Tyre.<sup>185</sup>

(left) Hezbollah’s website displays an icon that depicts the word “Israel” in quotation marks, indicating that the country only figuratively exists. (middle) Hezbollah’s website features prominent pictures of leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. (right) Anti-Israel demonstrators protest in Jakarta, Indonesia on April 3, 2002. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



The speed and willingness with which NGOs are willing to convert research with dubious credibility to political campaigns against Israel reveals their core politicization.

Politicized human rights NGOs systematically condemn Israeli actions, without engaging in the complexities of self-defense in the era of mass terrorism.

### C. Political Agenda Dictates NGO Activity

The impact of the narrow political agenda among NGOs that use the language of human rights, without the substance, is decisive. For example, Palestinian groups such as Miftah and Al-Mezan present a highly selective, distorted and politicized picture of the conflict: Miftah consistently refers to Israel's West Bank barrier as the "apartheid wall"<sup>186</sup> and employs terms such as "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity."<sup>187</sup> Al-Mezan refers to the IDF as the "IOF" (Israel Occupation Forces), and promotes the idea that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza turned the territory in "a large prison."<sup>188</sup>

The same phenomenon characterizes the activities of the major international superpowers. NGO Monitor has documented Human Right Watch's political bias by quantifying the disproportionate level of resources it devotes to reporting on Israel. In 2004, the weighted methodology that reflected the different level of NGO resources dedicated to long reports versus short letters and press releases, revealed a stark pattern: In the Middle East Division, Israel consumed over three times more of HRW's resources than Iran, Saudi Arabia or the PA, and over six times more than Syria or Libya.<sup>189</sup>

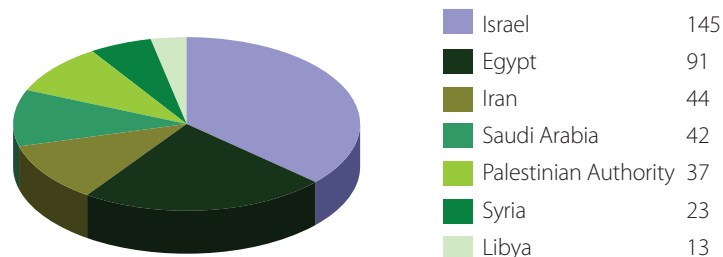


(top) One of the organizers of an anti-Israel demonstration in San Francisco on August 12, 2006 wears a shirt that reads, "Israel Out of the Middle East." (Credit: Zombie, <http://www.zombietime.com>)

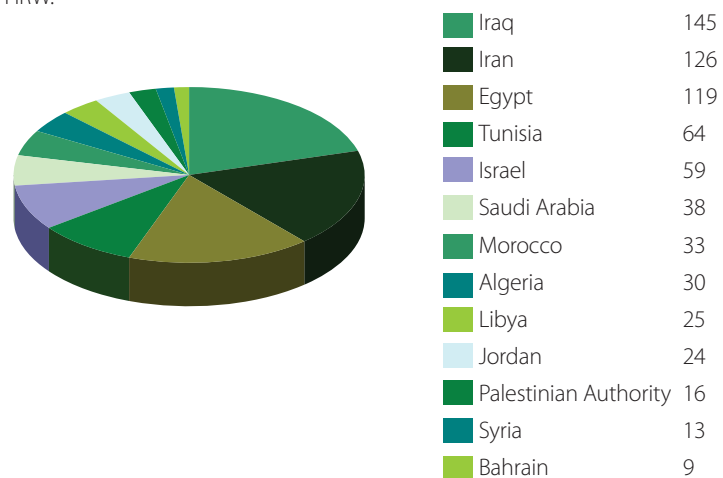
(bottom) A participant in the same demonstration carries a Hezbollah flag. (Credit: Zombie, <http://www.zombietime.com>)

Once these NGOs have concentrated their research capabilities on attacking Israel, stripped away the context of terror and self defense, and selected sources to support their pre-determined conclusions, the calls for boycotts and divestment follow with a Durban-orchestrated logic.

### Comparison of Relevance of HRW's 2004 Middle East Documents



After NGO Monitor's report revealed this core bias in HRW, including the neglect of human rights abuses outside of Israel, significant change was seen in 2005. The same methodology applied the following year showed a much more balanced distribution of resources and a wider Middle East focus by HRW.<sup>190</sup>



But the comparative analysis of the language used in reports shows that HRW publications continue to reflect what can be described as gratuitous political attacks against Israel, often based on unverified media reports and reflecting a hostile political agenda. In 2005, despite the considerably lower level of resources devoted to Israel, language used in HRW reports continued to exhibit clear disproportionality and a lack of universality, despite its claim "that international standards of human rights apply to all people equally."<sup>191</sup>

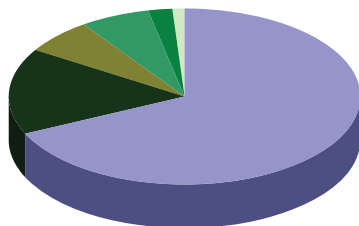


A malnourished boy stands outside the Oop Nursery in Pyongsan, North Korea in April 1997. In 2005, Israel was the subject of the greatest number of Amnesty International publications per million people with 56 times more reports per million than North Korea.

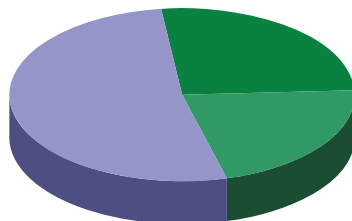
(Credit: © The Associated Press)

In activities related to Israel, NGO Monitor found 38 instances in which HRW made allegations of "Violation of International humanitarian law/human rights law", in comparison to the much lower levels in the case of the PA (2), Egypt (4), Syria (3) and Morocco (1). Israel was charged with "grave" and /or "serious" human rights "violations" and/or "abuses" 32 times.<sup>192</sup> To put this in perspective, Egypt was charged with these abuses 22 times, while all other countries examined received fewer than 10. Israel was the only country charged with "collective punishment" and "war crimes". Eighteen citations of "Arbitrary/unlawful Killing/killing of civilians/extra judicial killings/summary executions" were found describing Israel, compared to Egypt (1), Algeria (3) and Syria (1). As noted above, in terms of the scale of reports of human rights violations, Egypt was cited twice as much as Israel in 2005.<sup>193</sup> HRW's claim to apply human rights norms universally is inconsistent with these results.

Israel	255
Syria	60
Iraq	24
Iran	23
Saudi Arabia	9
Egypt	4



Israel	255
United States	128
28 countries, including Syria, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Iran, Cuba, Congo and North Korea	106



(left) Children receive nutritional drinks at a World Food Program food distribution point in Harare, Zimbabwe in February 2003. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



A study of Amnesty International's output published by the Capital Research Center (CRC) in May 2006 found that Amnesty had adopted "double standards on human rights... and propaganda against America and Israel."<sup>194</sup> The report included statistical analysis of Amnesty's published material from the beginning of 2005 to May 2006. CRC counted the number of news releases, reports, and urgent actions published by Amnesty for selected countries and calculated the "reports per million citizens" for these states. The results show that Amnesty focused on the United States at twice the average global rate, and on par with Saudi Arabia. Israel is the subject of the greatest number of publications per million people with 56 times more reports per million than North Korea and 25 times more than Egypt. CRC's "scrutiny score," which compared Amnesty's level of scrutiny with Freedom House's country rating for political rights and civil liberties, also showed a disproportionate focus on Israel.<sup>195</sup>

### CRC's "Scrutiny Score" for Amnesty International's Reports on the Middle East January 2005 to March 2006

### CRC's "Scrutiny Score" for Amnesty International's Reports across the world January 2005 to March 2006

(right) Young soldiers from a Ugandan supported Congolese rebel movement group sing liberation songs waving their rifles on January 30, 2002 in Bunia, Congo. For decades, boys have been a mainstay of rebel armies around the world, the United Nations estimates that more than 300,000 children under the age of 18 fight worldwide, mostly with rebel groups. (Credit: © The Associated Press)



## D. Exploiting and Distorting the Language of International Law

NGOs often abuse the lexicon of human rights in a manner that is undefined and highly subjective. Allegations of Israeli “violations of humanitarian law”, “collective punishment” or “war crimes” are made selectively and inconsistently. In many cases, such distortions are then exploited to press for political action, ranging from calls for boycotts, divestment and sanctions to cuts in government assistance for Israel. Political claims that are far removed from human rights issues reinforce this process, so that human rights claims simply become the means to accomplish political ends.

Adalah, an NGO based in Israel and supported by the New Israel Fund and the EU, provides legal advocacy for Arab citizens of Israel, but its international advocacy work betrays a consistent focus on highly politicized issues rather than the legal aspects of human rights. In February 2007, Adalah’s submission to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination provided selective and incomplete evidence to support alleged discriminatory practices by Israel, and removed important context and background.<sup>196</sup> In a May 2004 newsletter, Adalah compared Israel to apartheid South Africa and denounced Israeli security policies while failing to mention the Palestinian terror that prompted those security measures.<sup>197</sup> Adalah also actively promoted the myth of Israeli “war-crimes” in Jenin during Operation Defensive Shield.<sup>198</sup>

Similarly, War on Want (WoW) receives Department for International Development and EU support to pursue its virulent boycott and divestment campaigns. Despite being warned by the UK Charity Commission that its political activities are not compatible with its charitable status,<sup>199</sup> WoW labels Israel an “apartheid” state, calls for international sanctions including the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement,<sup>200</sup> and campaigns for the Church of England to divest its investments in Caterpillar.<sup>201</sup> WoW has also directly lobbied the large UK chain of department stores, John Lewis, to stop selling Caterpillar products.<sup>202</sup>

(left) Indonesian students demonstrate against Israel during a protest in front of the United States embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia on July 26, 2006. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

(right) Anti-Israel demonstrators protest in front of the United Nations office in Jakarta, Indonesia on April 3, 2002. (Credit: © The Associated Press)

This phenomenon is widespread among many other NGOs, including PCHR, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and Sabeel, as well as among the international NGO superpowers. HRW’s reports contribute to the demonization that encourages political action against Israel. Sarah Leah Whitson, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch’s Middle East and North Africa Division, has openly campaigned against Israel on numerous occasions. In November 2005, Whitson published a letter to Senator Hillary Clinton protesting Clinton’s support for Israel’s security barrier.<sup>203</sup> On December 27, 2005, Whitson sent another public letter to US President George W. Bush, urging sanctions against Israel, including cuts to American foreign aid, in order to pressure Israel to remove West Bank outposts and stop building within West Bank settlements.<sup>204</sup> And in the wake of the 2006 war in Lebanon, HRW is leading a campaign to stop US sales of cluster bombs to Israel, after its “extensive field research in Lebanon this past summer showed that the Israeli military launched many of its cluster munition attacks ... with no evident military objective.” (See page 33 for evidence of HRW’s widely discredited statements on the Lebanon war).<sup>205</sup>

The speed and willingness with which NGOs are willing to convert research with dubious credibility to political campaigns against Israel reveals their core politicization. Once these NGOs have concentrated their research capabilities on attacking Israel, stripped away the context of terror and self defense, and selected sources to support their pre-determined conclusions, the calls for boycotts and divestment follow with a Durban orchestrated logic.

Allegations of Israeli “violations of humanitarian law”, “collective punishment” or “war crimes” are made selectively and inconsistently.





## Conclusion

While the examples presented and documented in this analysis reflect only a small fraction of the numerous instances of political bias and false claims by very powerful NGOs, they are more than sufficient to demonstrate the damage done to human rights norms. Officials who control these NGOs and their resources are able to use these organizations to promote their personal ideologies and agendas, in close cooperation with United Nations agencies, such as the Human Rights Council. And the gross distortions and fabrications characteristic of the politicized NGO network extend beyond their contribution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with documented examples from Colombia, Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

In this context, it is important to stress that not all NGOs that claim to be involved in moral causes – human rights, humanitarian assistance, environmental issues, etc. – are simply exploiting the “halo effect.” There are less well-known NGOs that actually follow their mission statements, providing assistance and advocating important norms without becoming involved in propaganda campaigns or demonization. But because these groups use most of their resources in a substantive manner, and not to promote themselves or the ideological causes of top officials in the media, they are less visible. This report has focused primarily on those NGOs which use a significant portion of their funds for public relations and political warfare against Israel, as part of the Durban Strategy. Those NGOs that are untainted by this activity should not be held responsible for the actions and failures of others.



At the same time, the damage done by those NGOs that are involved in the Durban Strategy and discussed in this publication – Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, War on Want, and many others – to moral norms is huge. The NGO exploitation of the rhetoric of human rights in order to attack Israel, their use of double standards, and the consistent absence of credibility in their reports, have eroded and essentially destroyed the core universality of this moral framework.

NGO Monitor was founded in order to oppose the erosion of these important principles and to restore the moral basis and universality of human rights and other core principles. By providing the missing transparency and detailed analysis of NGO activities in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and by examining the credibility of their reports, NGO Monitor has made a modest beginning towards these goals. In its first four years of activities, NGO Monitor reports have led donors and funders of the major NGOs, from HRW to B'tselem, to examine the factual basis of their claims, as well as the contrast between the lofty universal goals and the biased political agendas of these organizations. As a result, some journalists, policy makers and academics have begun to strip away the “halo effect,” and join NGO Monitor researchers in examining the claims and allegations of prominent NGOs.

As this process continues and expands, the damage done by the politicization of human rights and humanitarian assistance, particularly by the NGO community, can be reversed. The universal standards that are essential to the moral authority of these principles must be re-established, as well as the credibility of the organizations that claim to champion these causes. NGO Monitor will continue to focus on these goals with the expectation that they can be achieved.

The NGO exploitation of the rhetoric of human rights in order to attack Israel, their use of double standards, and the consistent absence of credibility in their reports, have eroded and essentially destroyed the core universality of this moral framework.

(Credit: © The Associated Press)

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NGO Monitor was founded to promote transparency and critical analysis of the international NGO community for the benefit of government policymakers, journalists, philanthropic organizations and the general public.

The community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has become extremely powerful and influential, particularly with respect to human rights related issues and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Their reports, publicity campaigns, and lobbying activities have a dominant impact, particularly in the United Nations as well as on the policies adopted by many governments.

Until recently, however, these NGOs, which receive significant financial support from generous donors, philanthropic institutions, and governments, have not themselves been subject to independent and critical analysis. NGO Monitor has revealed that, in many cases, NGOs that claim to uphold moral agendas instead produce reports and launch campaigns that stand in sharp contradiction to their own noble mission statements.

NGO Monitor was founded to close this gap — to promote accountability and to advance a vigorous discussion on the reports and activities of humanitarian NGOs. Our objective is to expose the practice used by certain NGOs of exploiting the rhetoric of ‘universal human rights’ to promote politically and ideologically motivated agendas. We research and publicize distortions of human rights issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict and elsewhere, encouraging an informed public debate on the role of humanitarian NGOs.

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