

UK and EU Funding of Non-Governmental Organisations exacerbates Middle East Conflict



Mr Frankfurter

Groundbreaking research released last week by Jerusalem-based watchdog 'NGO [Non-Governmental Organisation] Monitor' reveals that UK and EU funding of political NGOs is often used to exacerbate the Arab-Israeli conflict, rather than encouraging peace. Tens of millions in public money goes to NGOs whose activities directly contradict UK and EU policy. The report also details the severe lack of transparency and accountability in funding of the NGOs.

EUROPE'S HIDDEN HAND

The fifty-page report, 'Europe's Hidden Hand', analyzes the process of distributing tens of millions between 2005 and 2007. One of the case studies singled out for severe criticism is the UK based ChristianAid, which enjoys UK government funding and tax deductible charitable status. While acknowledging good works conducted predominantly in Gaza, the report states that Christian Aid exploits its good name, human rights terminology, and uses rhetoric and down-right propaganda to delegitimise Israel and to absolve Palestinians of responsibility for terrorism and the corruption of its leadership.

Many of the groups funded participated in the infamous Durban Conference in 2001, and repeatedly refer to Israel as a 'racist and apartheid state' and promote boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

In total contradiction to the EU's commitment to the Quartet's road map, which explicitly calls for the peaceful existence of Israel and Palestine, some of these NGOs promote the concept of the elimination of

Israel through a 'one state solution'. Disturbingly, these NGOs openly display EU logos on their materials, providing legitimacy to their extremist politics.

EU OFFICIALS

NGO Monitor states that it contacted a number of EU officials. While some were cooperative, they were often unable or unwilling to provide the information necessary to understand funding policies and decision making in this area. Although the EU preaches transparency and accountability, it displays very little of either in funding for NGOs which pursue partisan and political goals.

Despite the tens of millions of Euros provided by taxpayers, no uniform framework or central database exists for obtaining NGO funding information - data is often hidden beneath numerous layers of bureaucracy. In addition, only vague funding guidelines exist for NGOs, leaving funding decisions at the mercy of the whims and biases of anonymous and unaccountable European Commission officials.

DEMONISING ISRAEL

NGO Monitor's research concludes with recommendations for improvement, which are particularly valuable in the context of preparations for the 2009 Durban Review Conference, in which NGOs are expected to play an important role; Unless the UK and EU change their policies for funding NGOs, Europe will again be responsible for providing NGOs with the ability to demonise and delegitimise Israel. NGO Monitor also recommends practical solutions such as a searchable database of NGO recipients and clear guidelines to preclude the funding of NGOs which promote conflict.

David Frankfurter
Israel

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