



General Assembly

Distr.: General
XX February 2019

English only

Human Rights Council

Fortieth session

25 February–22 March 2019

Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Institute for NGO Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 February 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

Institute for NGO Research Submission

The European Government-Funded NGO PFLP Network

Introduction

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is a terrorist organization designated as such by the EU¹, Canada², the US³, and Israel⁴. The PFLP is involved in suicide bombings, hijackings, and assassinations, among other terrorist activities targeting civilians.

The EU and many European countries fund a network of organizations, some of which are directly affiliated with the PFLP, and others with a substantial presence of employees and officials linked to the PFLP.

Donors to these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) include the EU, the governments of Sweden, Spain, Norway, Ireland, UK, Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, and the UN.

Continued funding raises serious questions about due diligence and evaluation on the part of the governments and the UN, as well as their compliance with domestic and international laws.

NGOs and “Terror Laundering”

The abuse of human rights organizations in conflict zones is a constant global concern. NGOs face significant challenges in achieving their humanitarian goals in areas controlled by terror organizations. Further, such NGOs themselves face the danger of infiltration by terrorist groups seeking to exploit their resources (as in the case of World Vision in Gaza discussed below). In other instances, the terrorist groups establish new NGOs in order to gain both political legitimacy and access to public resources.

The EU has recognized this problem⁵, at least in theory, stating, “NGOs are considered ‘subjects at risk’ in the ML [money laundering] framework, either as fronts for terrorist organizations that raise and transfer funds, or as legitimate enterprises that indirectly support the aims of terrorist organizations.”

In the Arab-Israeli conflict, as in other conflicts, the lines between terrorist organizations and NGOs operating in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza have been blurred, in part due to funding provided by the EU, European governments, and the UN.

The exploitation of NGOs by terrorist groups was highlighted in the August 2016 announcement by the Shin Bet (the Israel Security Agency) that Mohammad Halabi, manager of World

1 Official Journal of the European Union, “Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/1136”: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016D1136&qid=1474969819578&from=EN>

2 Government of Canada, “Currently listed entities”: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx#2042>

3 U.S. Department of State, “Foreign Terrorist Organizations”: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

4 Israel Ministry of Defense, “Fighting Terror”: https://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mod.gov.il%2FDefence-andSecurity%2FFighting_terrorism%2FDocuments%2Fterror%2520-%2520%25203.8.16.xls&sa=D&sntz=1&usq=AFQjCNFVM1uGZetnuCo2HB_3dEd4PVcNCw

5 European Parliament, “NGOs and money laundering Adapting EU rules to engage NGOs better,” March 2015: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551323/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)551323_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551323/EPRS_BRI(2015)551323_EN.pdf)

Vision operations in Gaza, had funneled 60% of World Vision's Gaza budget⁶ to the Hamas terrorist group. Mr. Halabi is currently on trial.

Several NGOs with links to terrorist groups receive significant funding from the EU, European governments, and the UN. In particular, activists from the PFLP have ties to several prominent NGOs. There is no evidence that these links are considered in the funding processes of the donor governments. Such bureaucratic failure implicates both civil and criminal domestic law as well as international laws.

Founded by George Habash in 1967, the PFLP is a secular Palestinian Marxist-Leninist organization, originally supported by the former Soviet Union and China. PFLP members have carried out numerous terrorist acts since its founding, and the group was the first Palestinian organization to hijack airplanes in the 1960s and 1970s⁷. Most notably, the group was responsible for the assassination of Israeli Minister of Tourism Rechavam Ze'evi⁸ in 2001, and its members joined with the Baader-Meinhof Gang (a West German radical group) to hijack an Air France Tel Aviv-bound flight in 1976, landing it in Entebbe, Uganda. The PFLP is also responsible for suicide bombings in Israel⁹, and members of the organization took credit for the house invasion and murder¹⁰ of the Fogel family in 2011 and the massacre at a synagogue in Jerusalem's Har Nof neighborhood¹¹ in 2014 where five people were murdered.

NGO ties to the PFLP range from establishment and operation by the PFLP itself to NGO officials and staffers being convicted of terrorism charges by Israeli courts. Some individuals have been denied entry and exit visas by Israeli (and Jordanian and US) authorities due to security concerns stemming from PFLP roles. A significant number of these NGO officials hold multiple positions in various organizations, indicating the close connections and relationships between these groups.¹²

Recommendations:

- The clear affiliation between NGOs and the PFLP requires immediate attention and concrete measures on the part of European funders, ensuring that funds do not go to groups affiliated with the PFLP or other terrorist entities.
- Following Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands, the EU, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, and other countries providing funding to PFLP-linked NGOs must launch independent investigations as to how such allocations were authorized. Reviews must be conducted in conjunction with national and international policing and security services as well as with Israeli counterparts.
- All ongoing funding to these NGOs must be frozen immediately until funders undertake independent reviews.

⁶ New York Times, "Israel Charges Aid Group's Gaza Branch Manager With Funneling Funds to Hamas," August 4, 2016:

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/05/world/middleeast/world-vision-hamas.html?emc=edit_tnt_20160804&nlid=2407257&ntemail0=y&_r=1

⁷ PFLP, "The Popular Front and External Operations": [http://pflp.ps/english/wpeng/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/PFLP-](http://pflp.ps/english/wpeng/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/PFLP-ExternalOperations-English.pdf)

[ExternalOperations-English.pdf](http://pflp.ps/english/wpeng/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/PFLP-ExternalOperations-English.pdf)

⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, "PFLP, DFLP, PFLP-GC, Palestinian leftists," October 31, 2015:

<https://www.cfr.org/background/pflp-dflp-pflp-gc-palestinian-leftists>

⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, "PFLP, DFLP, PFLP-GC, Palestinian leftists," October 31, 2015:

<https://www.cfr.org/background/pflp-dflp-pflp-gc-palestinian-leftists>

¹⁰ Jpost, "Who are the terrorists who murdered the Fogel family?" April 17, 2011: <https://www.jpost.com/National-News/Who-are-the-terrorists-who-murdered-the-Fogel-family>

¹¹ Jewish Press, "PFLP Terror Group Claims Responsibility for Har Nof Massacre," November 20, 2014:

<https://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/pflp-terror-group-claims-responsibility-for-har-nof-massacre/2014/11/20/>

¹² For detailed information see, NGO Monitor, "The European-Funded NGO PFLP Network," November 15, 2016, available at <http://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/european-funded-ngo-pflp-network/>

