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# THE EUROPEAN INSTRUMENT FOR DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS (EIDHR): EU FUNDING TO ISRAEL, WEST BANK, AND GAZA 2014-2017

NGO MONITOR



# The European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR): EU Funding to Israel, West Bank, and Gaza

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NGO Monitor's mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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## BACKGROUND

The European Commission disburses hundreds of millions of euros annually via aid frameworks to provide financial assistance to developing countries and promote EU principles abroad. One of the EU's major aid programs is the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), a thematic funding instrument for EU external action aiming to "support projects in the area of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy in non-EU countries." This instrument is "designed to support civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights."<sup>1</sup>

Through EIDHR, EU is allocating €1.3 billion in 2014-2020 (a 21% increase compared to the 2007-2013 budget) to projects conducted by EU-selected NGOs and institutions. EIDHR's five objectives for 2014-2020 are<sup>2</sup>:

1. Support to human rights and human rights defenders in situations where they are most at risk
2. Support to other priorities of the Union in the field of human rights
3. Support to democracy
4. EU Election Observation Missions (EOMs)
5. Support to targeted key actors and processes, including international and regional human rights instruments and mechanisms

## EIDHR Funding Frameworks 2014-2017

Similar to the framework for 2007-2013, EIDHR funds are distributed through four modalities:

- 1) Global calls for proposals: These grants are published on an annual basis and have an approximate budget of €20-40 million.<sup>3</sup> Calls of this nature target civil society, while typically focusing on a specific set of objectives that change with each annual call. NGOs receive support to implement programs directed at multiple countries and are tailored to the specific circumstances of each.
- 2) Country calls for proposals: Also known as Country-Based Support Schemes (CBSS), which target specific countries, are designed to help civil society organizations promote specific and local objectives, such as human rights and democracy. Grants of this type are handled through EU Delegations in partner countries.
- 3) Small grants for Human Rights Defenders (HRD): Grants of this nature are provided on an ad hoc basis to Human Rights Defenders (HRD) in urgent need and are small in size, ranging up to €10,000. These grants are handled by the EC and are confidential.
- 4) Direct awards of funds: These grants are allocated through direct negotiation with EU delegations in crisis situations and amount to €1,000 per action.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/guide\\_to\\_europeaid\\_funding\\_instruments\\_2014-2020.pdf?5df253&5df253](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/guide_to_europeaid_funding_instruments_2014-2020.pdf?5df253&5df253)

## KEY FINDINGS

The following visuals were generated using data from the EU's main instrument of financial transparency – the Financial Transparency System (FTS).

Table A: Overview of EIDHR projects and funds directed at Israel and "oPt" (the EU's designation for the West Bank and Gaza) in 2014-2017:

	Total Funding	Number of Projects
Israel	€9,349,418	61
"oPt"	€11,026,388	31
Israel/"oPt" total	€20,375,806	92

Table B: Overview of EIDHR projects and funds directed at Israel and "oPt" 2007-2010:

	Total Funding	Number of Projects
Israel	€7,808,718	49
"oPt"	€5,241,933	36
Israel/"oPt" total	€13,050,651	85

Compared to [EIDHR spending in 2007-2010](#), the total funding and number of EIDHR-funded projects to Israel increased by nearly 20% and 24.5%, respectively, in 2014-2017. In regards to "oPt," while the number of projects decreased by roughly 14%, the total funding increased by 110%. These changes for Israel and "oPt" combined represent an overall increase of 56% in funding and 8% in the number of projects.

Of the total EIDHR budget for 2014-2020 (€1.3 billion), combined funding allocated to Israel and the "oPt" stands at approximately €20.3, or roughly 1.5% of EIDHR's total budget. While this would suggest a miniscule amount of resources devoted to Israel and the Palestinian territories, a closer inspection reveals otherwise.

### EIDHR in Israel

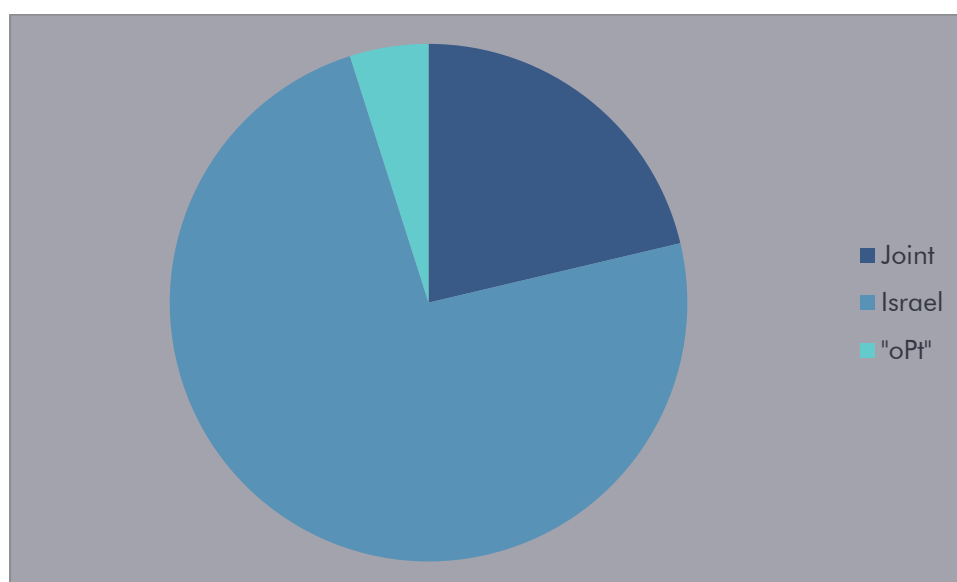
As mentioned, according to the FTS, EIDHR funds a total of 61 projects at a value of €9.3 million in Israel in 2014-2017. The following table provides a summary of the five most common themes<sup>4</sup> in EIDHR projects and their corresponding funding.

Table C: Top 5 EIDHR project themes in Israel

<sup>4</sup> Project themes were organized and applied after examining the titles and scopes of all projects for both Israel and "oPt" from 2014-2017; projects focused on one specific objective (such as combating torture or the socio-economic rights of asylum seekers) became their own theme, while projects with more than one specific objective were catalogued according to all the objectives mentioned.

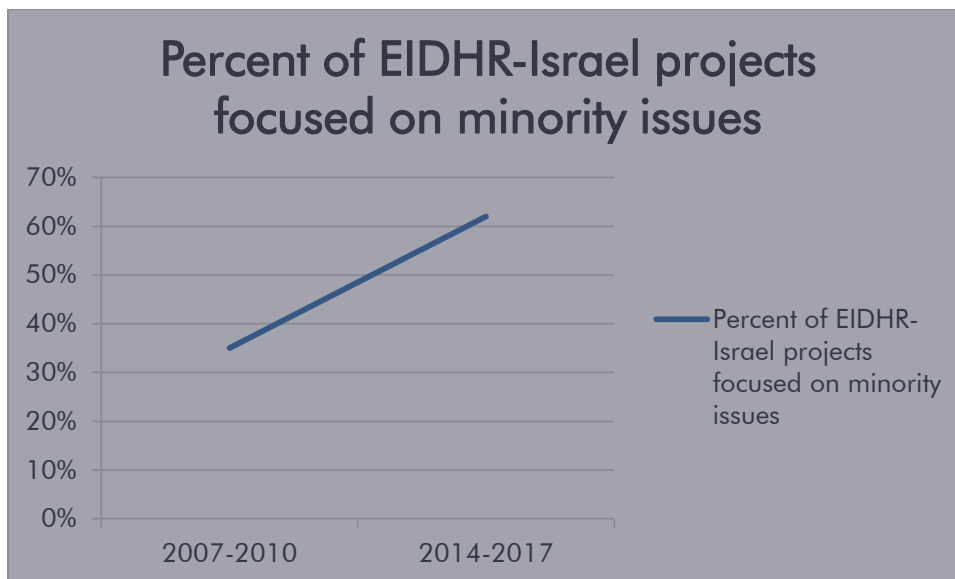
Theme	% of overall funds to Israel 2014-2017	Amount (in €)
Torture	28%	2,614,010
Human Rights	17.5%	1,632,168
Individual Freedoms	7%	655,298
Bedouin Issues	5.9%	550,992
Displacement/Dispossession/Demolitions	5.6%	528,760

Graph A: Geographic distribution of EIDHR-Israel grants



\*"Joint" refers to EIDHR projects conducted in both Israel and "oPt"

While the majority (45 of 61) of EIDHR-Israel grants are focused on activities within Israel, 28 of these 45 grants – or 62% – deal exclusively with minority groups in Israel such as Arab citizens (including Bedouins) and refugees/asylum seekers. This marks a 77% increase [from the period of 2007-2010](#), when the number of grants dealing exclusively with minority groups in Israel stood at 35% (see graph below).



EIDHR distributes grants (also called “commitments”) to NGOs either as “sole recipients” or as “multi-recipients,” the difference being whether or not the beneficiary is the only recipient of the grant or one of several. However, reflecting a lack of transparency, in many instances where there are multi-recipients, the estimated amount received by each NGO on the commitment is listed as “N/A” (not available).

Many of the NGOs chosen by EIDHR to promote the principles of human rights and democracy, particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are highly politicized and consistently present partisan positions. Some of these EU-funded organizations have engaged in activities that stand in direct contravention to [official EU policy](#), such as referring to Israel as an “apartheid state” and supporting lawfare and boycott efforts (BDS)<sup>5</sup>. Such politicized agendas and activities are inconsistent with the ideals and principles of EIDHR, as well as EU foreign policy.

For example:

- In 2014, Adalah was the sole recipient of two grants worth €527,875 and in 2015, was listed as a multi-recipient beneficiary of a €244,371 grant. These grants were for projects titled “Combating Impunity: Torture and CIDT Prevention, Accountability and Rehabilitation in Israel/oPt,” “Promoting and Protecting the Rights of the Arab Bedouin of the Naqab,” and “PROMOTING AND PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION RIGHTS OF ARAB YOUTH IN ISRAEL,” respectively.
- In 2014, Yesh Din was the sole recipient of three grants worth €199,961, while in 2015, it was listed as a multi-recipient beneficiary of a €240,000 grant. These grants were for projects titled “The Road to Dispossession: Promoting the right to property and State adherence to the Rule of Law in the West Bank,” “Standing Idly By: the duty to intervene as an integral part of the IDF’s duty to protect Palestinians and their property in the West Bank,” and “LANDS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE RIGHTS IN AREA C OF THE WEST BANK,” respectively.
- In 2017, multi-recipient beneficiaries include B’Tselem (three commitments worth €509,390), Breaking the Silence (three commitments worth €509,975), and HaMoked (one commitment worth €300,000).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-005122-ASW\\_EN.html?redirect#ref1](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-005122-ASW_EN.html?redirect#ref1)

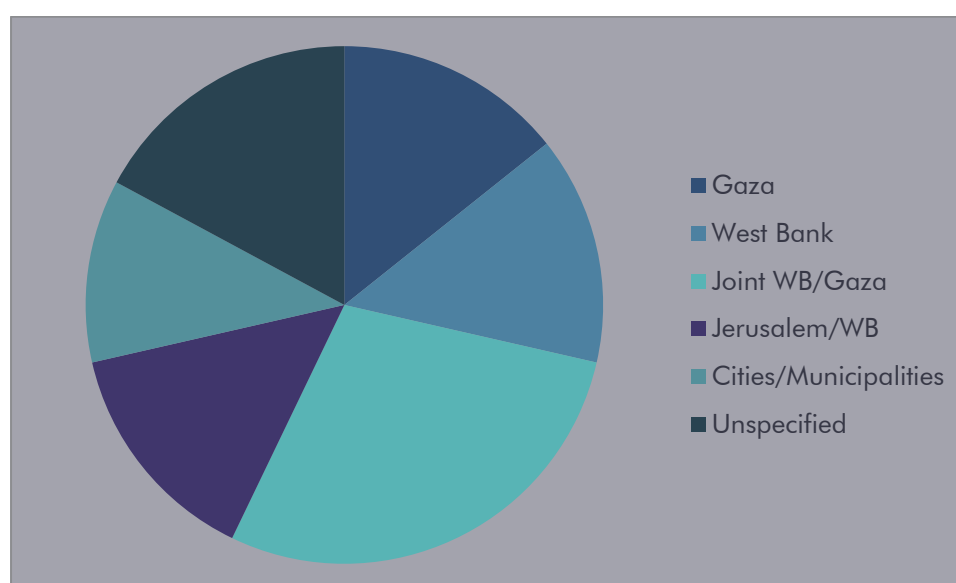
## EIDHR in oPt

According to the FTS, EIDHR funds 31 projects at a value of €11 million in “oPt.” The following table provides a summary of the five most common themes in EIDHR projects and their corresponding funding.

Table D: Top 5 EIDHR project themes in “oPt”

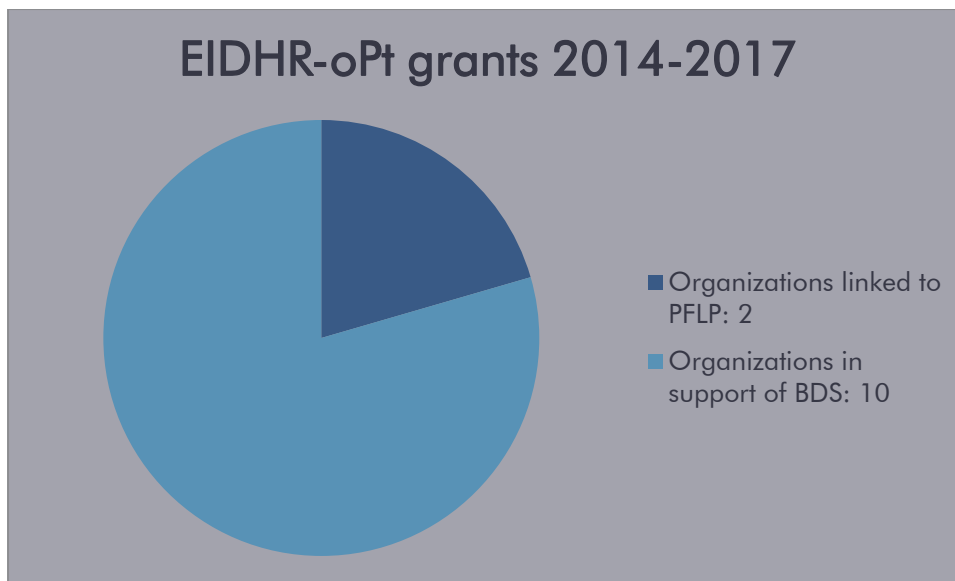
Theme	% of overall funds to “oPt” 2014-2017	Amount (in €)
Torture	20%	2,253,061
Children/Youth	17%	1,910,843
Human Rights	16%	1,769,689
Women/Gender	11.97%	1,316,889
Individual Freedoms	10%	1,112,456

Graph B: Geographic distribution of EIDHR-oPt grants



As opposed to Israel, EIDHR projects focused at “oPt” appear to be more in line with EIDHR’s objectives regarding democracy and human rights. However, a point of interest is that grants meant to support and expand civil society in “oPt” only amounted to 8.72% (€960,313), an allocated amount that is less than both “Environmental Concerns” and “Support to Vulnerable Groups,” such as the disabled.

Graph C: EIDHR-oPt grants to organizations in support of BDS and/or linked to PFLP



Ten recipient organizations of EIDHR funds for 2014-2017, receiving a combined €5.9 million, were found to promote BDS, while two additional organizations with reported ties to the PFLP terror organization receiving grants amounting to €1.5 million. It should be noted that exact amounts to these beneficiary organizations (whose activities stand in direct contravention to EU policy) cannot be established due to a lack of transparency in the FTS.

Examples include:

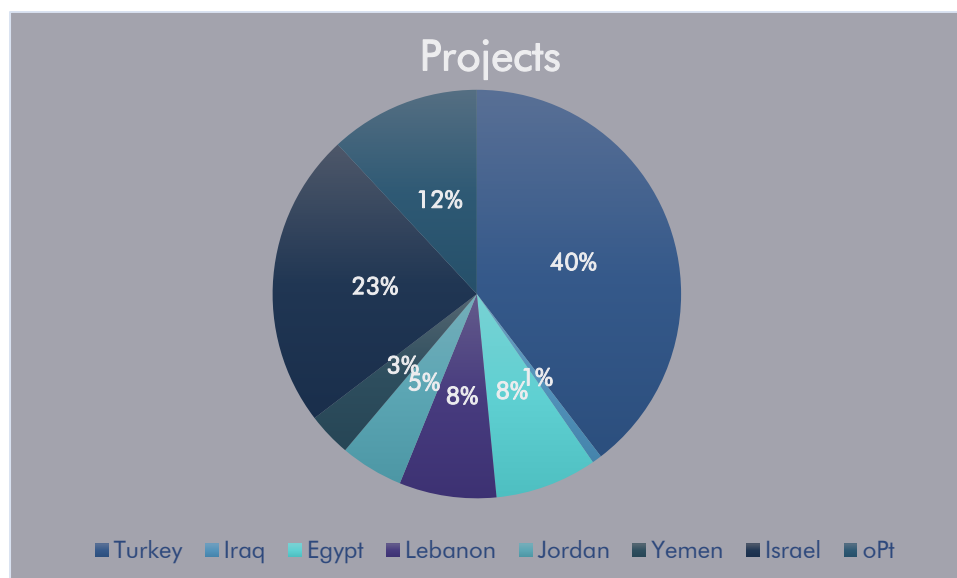
- In 2017, DCI-P was listed as a multi-recipient beneficiary on a grant worth €981,298 titled "PREVENTION, MITIGATION AND REHABILITATION FOR PALESTINIAN CHILDREN EXPOSED TO TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT."
- In 2016, JLAC was listed as a multi-recipient beneficiary on a grant worth €561,100, titled "PROTECTION OF MARGINALIZED PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES IN EAST JERUSALEM AND AREA C OF THE WEST BANK THROUGH LEGAL AID, OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY."
- In 2014 and 2016, Al-Dameer was listed as a sole recipient for two grants worth €100,707 and €446,482, respectively. These grants were for two projects, each titled "Contributing to the respect, protection and promotion of the right to freedom of association in the Gaza Strip."

## EIDHR in the Middle East

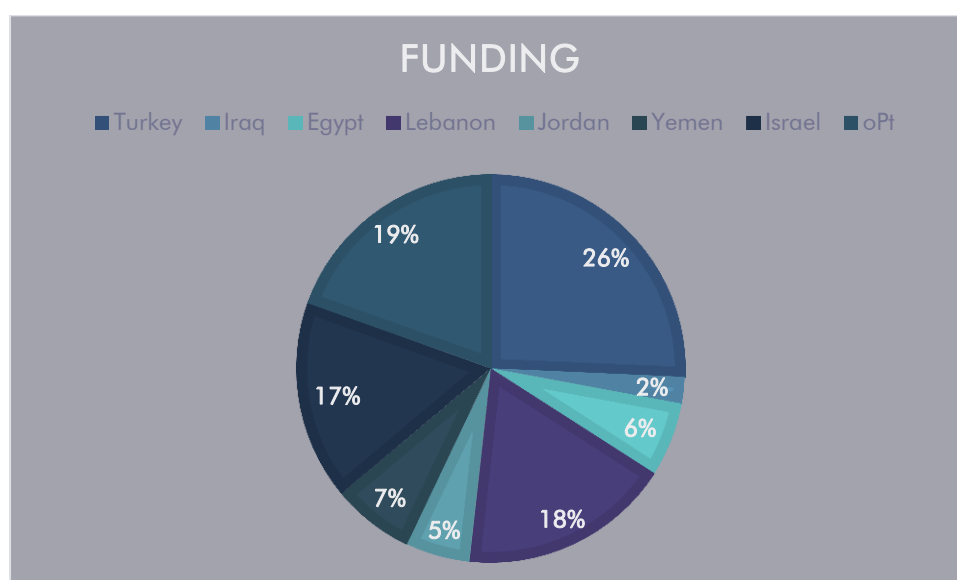
When scrutinizing the activities of the EIDHR in the context of the Middle East, a stark image emerges. The graphs below constitute a visual analysis of EIDHR projects and spending among Middle Eastern countries from 2014-2017, which totaled 260 projects at a value of €56,493,460. Israel accounted for 23% of all EIDHR projects in the Middle East and 17% of all EIDHR funds, while "oPt" accounted for 12% and 19%, respectively.

Graph D: Percentage of EIDHR projects in the Middle East per country 2014-2017:



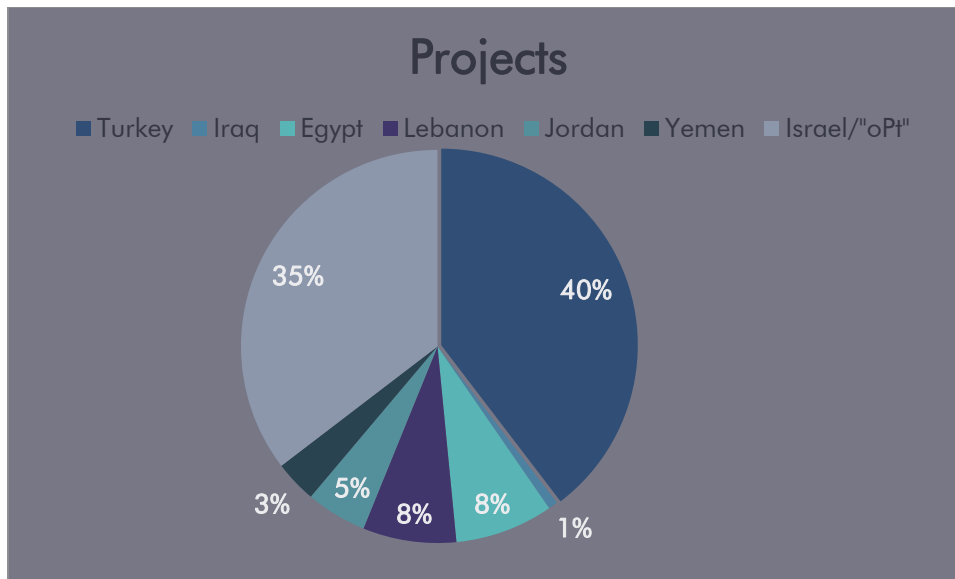


Graph E: Percentage of EIDHR funds in the Middle East per country 2014-2017:

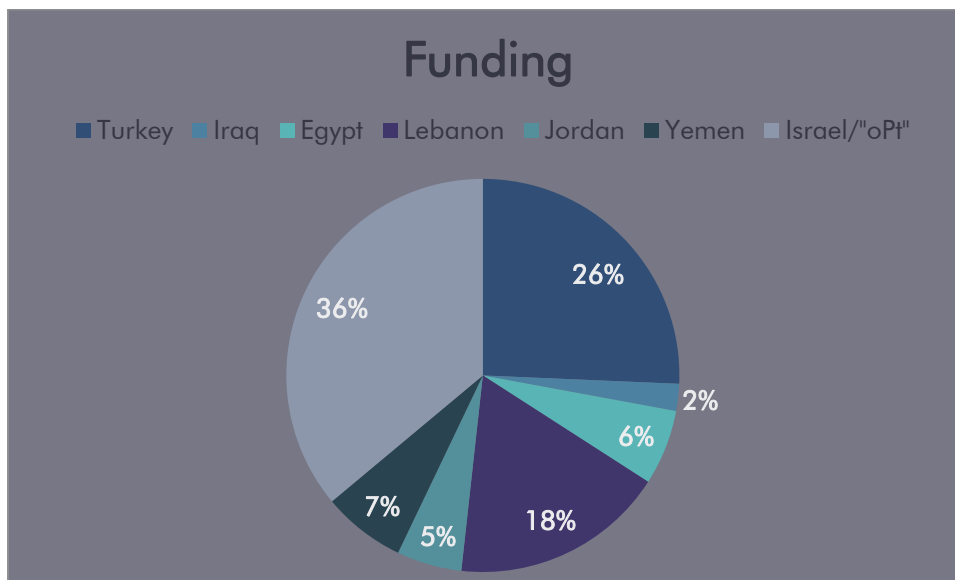


Taken together, the focus of the EIDHR on Israel and the Palestinian Territories becomes apparent with Israel/"oPt" accounting for a total of 35% of all projects and an astonishing 36% of all funding. This places Israel/"oPt" second in projects (behind a staggering 103 for Turkey) and first in funding (with second place Turkey coming in 10% – or €5,649,346 – behind).

Graph F: Percentage of EIDHR projects in the Middle East 2014-2017 (Israel/"oPt" combined):



Graph G: Percentage of EIDHR funds in the Middle East 2014-2017 (Israel/'oPt' combined):



This disproportionate focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the part of EIDHR deprives needy countries of funds and assistance and is detrimental to the rest of the Middle East, which consistently ranks in the lowest levels of individual freedom,<sup>6</sup> freedom of the press,<sup>7</sup> democracy,<sup>8</sup> and human rights<sup>9</sup> (with the exception of Israel). Moreover, this focus is also inconsistent with EIDHR's five objectives for 2014-2020, which place special emphasis on support to human rights, democracy, and elections.

Notwithstanding the violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the disproportionate emphasis on this issue suggests that structural and political factors are more important than substance in the process of grant allocation. As the below graphs demonstrate, of all Middle Eastern countries currently engaged in armed conflict, Israel/'oPt' still receives the highest amount of funding

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index>

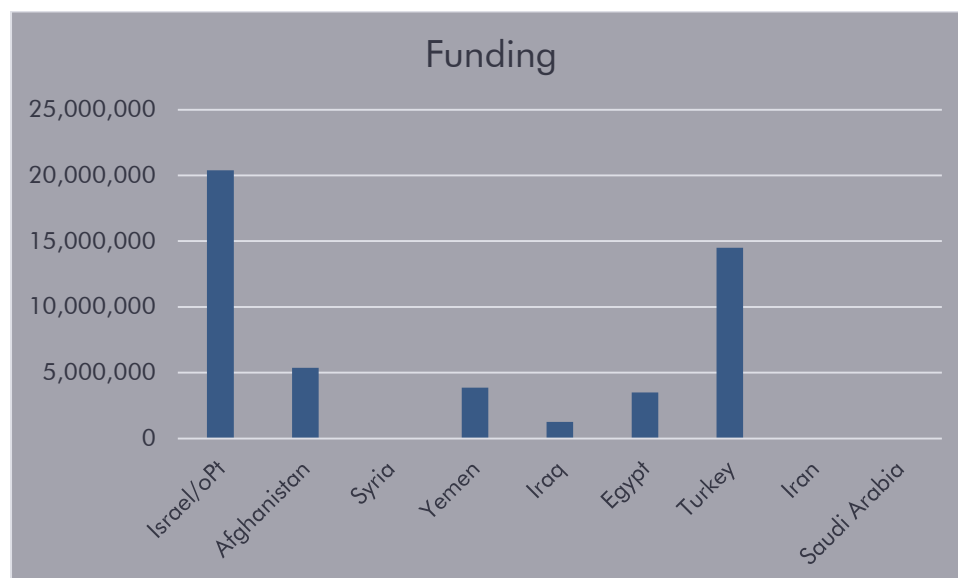
<sup>7</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-index-2018-middle-east-riven-conflicts-political-clashes>

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.actualitix.com/country/moor/middle-east-democracy-index.php>

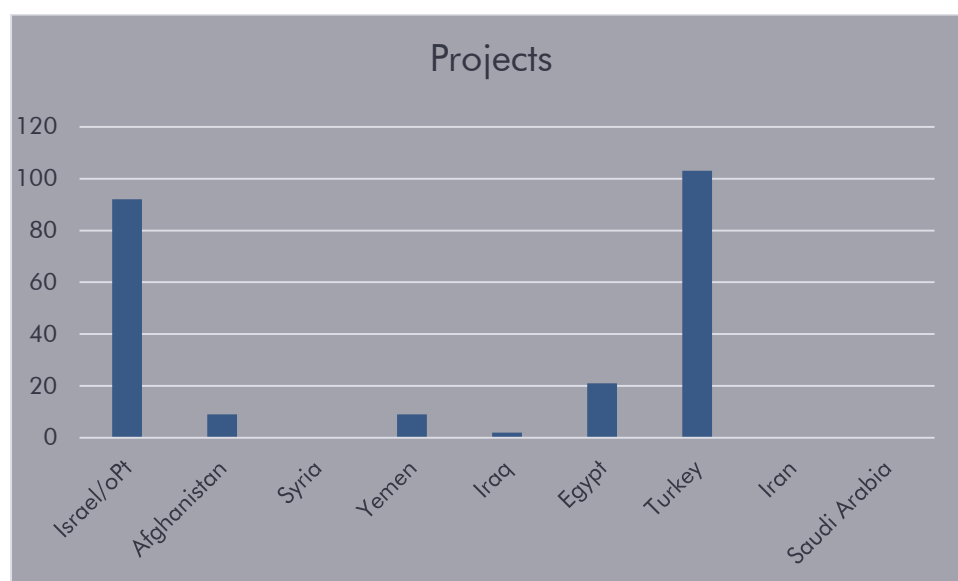
<sup>9</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/human-rights-risk-index-2016-q4>

and the second highest number of projects. This despite the fact that conflict in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria each caused over 10,000 deaths per country in 2017 alone.<sup>10</sup>

Graph H: EIDHR funding to Middle Eastern countries engaged in active armed conflict



Graph I: EIDHR projects in Middle Eastern countries engaged in active armed conflict



## The Veneer of Transparency

While EIDHR maintains a degree of transparency regarding funding activities, there are notable exceptions. Considering that billions of public, taxpayer euro are being invested in projects and organizations in the name of European citizenry, these exceptions become highly problematic.

Given the sheer multiplicity of instruments (in addition to EIDHR) and indirect funding, it is difficult for

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.prio.org/Data/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/>

the European Parliament and any other interested party to track funds. This complexity inevitably results in compromised transparency, overlapping areas of responsibility, and inconsistent objectives.

Focusing exclusively on EIDHR, the key to evaluating transparency rests with “searchability” – the ability of an interested party to trace reported data back to decision making on policy priorities, budgetary distribution, and other micro- and macro-level processes.

The principle method of ascertaining information related to EIDHR grants and beneficiaries is the EU’s Financial Transparency System (FTS). While the FTS does provide a partial record of EU spending (specifically that of the Commission), it is often inconsistent with other sources and does not substitute for coherent and framework-specific reports, to be checked against the calls for proposals. Additionally, the “searchability” of project indicators such as budget reference numbers and lines is not clarified and cannot be easily checked against other sources.

For example, while attempting to locate additional information on the €980,000 grant on torture pictured below, a search for the project’s budget reference indicator returns no matches on FTS nor any other EU data source. However, a search for the project budget line and number returns documents related to a “restricted call for proposals” for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Guyana, and Suriname. Nothing related to Israel or “oPt,” despite the fact the project description explicitly mentions Israel and Palestine.

European Commission > Budget > Financial Transparency System (FTS)

Q FTS About FAQ Contact Help

Year 2017 Israel Search for a beneficiary (name or VAT) Search

Back to results summary Next Print Request more information

Subject of grant or contract	FIGHTING AGAINST TORTURE AND OTHER FORMS OF ILL-TREATMENT IN TURKEY, ISRAEL, AND PALESTINE: REHABILITATION OF TORTURE SURVIVORS, PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PREVENTION ACTIVITIES
Total amount	980,961 €
Source of (estimated) detailed amount	The repartition for each recipient was not available in our central accounting system "ABAC" at the time of publication. Please contact the responsible department as additional information might be available there.
Year	2017
Responsible department of the Commission	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
Reference (Budget)	SCR.CTR.388470.01.1 ( BGUE )
Budget line and number	Enhancing the respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and supporting democratic reforms ( 21.04.01 )
Action Type	EIDHR: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
Funding Type	Grants
Expense Type	Operational

Other sources such as Delegations, EuropeAid, Calls for Proposals (CfP) and Tenders, and the Commission are all sporadic and inconsistent in their reporting. Moreover, there does not appear to be any direct reporting regarding the decision-making process. Questions related to funding amounts and priorities, as well as how specific budgets and beneficiaries are selected seem to be unavailable to researchers, journalists, MPs, and the general public, marking a serious failure of both transparency and accountability.

This failure in searchability and the overall complexity of the instrument not only causes shortcomings in transparency and accountability, but also adversely affects the overall efficiency of EIDHR. These

concerns are also held by member states as well. According to the June 2017 EU External Evaluation of EIDHR, member states either did not “know much about EIDHR, or felt it is not well coordinated.”<sup>11</sup>

## Friction with Israel

While the EU claims to expressly oppose BDS and support a two-state solution, there is [significant evidence of extensive funding](#) for NGOs with agendas and/or values that contradict EU policy. When confronted with such evidence, the EU consistently responds that it “funds projects submitted by NGOs, in line with [the] EU’s fundamental principles and values, but not NGOs themselves.” Such a position has exacerbated friction with Israel and is a contributing factor to the negative view the majority of Israelis hold in regards to the EU. In fact, a recent poll carried out by the Rafi Smith Institute indicated that 55% of respondents said they consider the EU “more of a foe,” while only 18% view it as “more of a friend”<sup>12</sup>.

Indeed, the authors of the EIDHR evaluation note that EU Member States expect the EU to use EIDHR funding in the “oPt” “for the EU to be more critical vis-à-vis the Israeli government on [human rights] violations in oPt.”<sup>13</sup> Instead of focusing on EIDHR as an instrument to advance critical goals of Palestinian human rights, democracy, and fundamental freedoms, it is seen as a tool to criticize Israel. Such blatant partiality and politicization undermines EIDHR’s credibility and the EU’s ability to implement its aforementioned five objectives, and harms EU-Israel relations.

Such bias, along with continued EU funding of organizations whose behavior and platforms (e.g., BDS) are in contravention to EU policy, remain a point of contention between Israel and the European Union.

This tension has led to public friction between Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Israel’s Public Security Minister, Gilad Erdan. The situation culminated in Ms. Mogherini extending an invitation to Minister Erdan to visit Brussels and discuss the issues.

## CONCLUSION

With the proposed creation of a single, streamlined external funding instrument (the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument, or “NDICI”), there is hope that the shortcomings related to search ability, transparency and accountability within EIDHR can be corrected. However, further research and analysis of these issues remains a priority if meaningful EU impact in the Middle East is to be achieved.

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eidhr-evaluation-final-report-volume-2-annexes\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eidhr-evaluation-final-report-volume-2-annexes_en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-finds-most-israelis-see-eu-as-a-foe-rather-than-a-friend/?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-finds-most-israelis-see-eu-as-a-foe-rather-than-a-friend/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

<sup>13</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eidhr-evaluation-final-report-volume-2-annexes\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eidhr-evaluation-final-report-volume-2-annexes_en.pdf)