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Analysis of the EU's Report: "Implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy in Israel Progress in 2014 and Recommendations for Actions"

On March 25, 2015, the European External Action Service (the EU's diplomatic service) released a [progress report](#) on the European Neighborhood Policy vis-à-vis Israel in 2014 (covering the 2014 calendar year). In December 2014, as a member of Israeli civil society, NGO Monitor provided a "[Submission to the European External Action Service Country Report on Israel](#)," discussing fundamental problems with previous reports and highlighting several issues that should be addressed in the forthcoming publication.

In NGO Monitor's assessment, the 2014 ENP Report shows improvement with regards to overly simplistic, homogenous perception of minorities in Israel contained in previous ENP updates. In 2014, the EU also provided a more proportionate discussion of the complexities of the Israeli environment in dealing with EU-related issues.

NGO Monitor also notes the ENP's inclusion of language praising "the vitality of Israeli democracy," (page 5) referring to Israel's internal democratic processes that prevented restrictive parliamentary proposals from impinging on Israeli democracy.

However, these changes are overshadowed by the EU's continuing dependence on material provided by a narrow group of political advocacy NGOs, often funded by the EU and European governments, resulting in a distorted approach and affecting the report's content and credibility. The following brief analysis examines the impact of the reliance on these NGOs, including omissions in the ENP report.

Reliance on highly political Israeli, Palestinian, and international NGOs

In our [submission to the EU](#) in advance of the 2014 ENP Report on Israel, NGO Monitor emphasized the negative impact of uncritical reliance on claims and allegations proffered by marginal political Israeli, Palestinian, and international NGOs. Many of the NGOs that influence EU policymaking falsely portray Israel's self-defense measures, and make unverifiable claims, distorting international law, and fueling international delegitimization campaigns against Israel. The narratives of these NGOs and their unverified allegations should not be repeated without independent confirmation nor substituted in place of data provided by official sources.

In addition, the 2014 ENP Progress report continues past years' repetition of NGOs rhetoric and assertions, for example, citing to the Israeli NGO [Gisha](#). Despite the problematic nature of this organization's agenda and claims, the allegations were repeated without independent corroboration. Specifically, the ENP document repeats Gisha's unverified allegations of "reports" and "unofficial announcements" regarding the reduction of the buffer zone around Gaza, and statistics on "the transfer of agricultural and fishery products from Gaza to the West Bank" (page 10).

Beyond relying on NGO claims, the EU also cites the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), and its “Protection Cluster” of marginal NGOs. OCHA and its NGO partners do not constitute an independent nor reliable source of information or analysis.

Omissions in the 2014 ENP Report

On the Gaza conflict” July-August 2014

- The ENP report notes that there was “indiscriminate rocket fire from the Gaza Strip,” (page 2) but, like the NGO network, notably omits the wider context of the 2014 Gaza conflict, such as years of incessant rocket fire at civilians in Southern Israel and the infiltration tunnels leading from Gaza into Israel. There is also no mention Hamas’s [repeated](#) grave violations of international law, including the use of UNRWA schools and facilities as weapons depots and other military activities, which are essential factors for understanding the reported “shelling of several schools of [UNRWA]” (page 14).
- Reflecting a lack of independent research and verification mechanisms, the EU repeats claims of “over 2100 [deaths] on the Palestinian side, of which 70% were civilian according to the United Nations (UN),” (page 2) and acknowledging that “the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) claimed that no more than 55% of the dead were civilians” (page 14). It fails to mention that the figure of “70% civilians” originated with Hamas officials in Gaza, repeated by NGOs and UN-OCHA, and refuted in detail in research by the [Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center](#).
- The ENP report notes Israel’s refusal “to cooperate with the UNHRC Commission of Inquiry, heavily criticizing committee chairman William Schabas” (page 5). However, the text omits the EU’s own accurate criticism: the common EU statement to the UNHRC [described](#) the inquiry as having “prejudged the findings even before it was formed” and the UN resolution establishing it as “unbalanced.” Many political advocacy NGOs, some of which are directly and indirectly funded by European governments, were active in lobbying in support of the resolution – against the common EU position.

Religious Freedoms in Israel

- The ENP Report criticized limited access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem during Ramadan, noting a “90% decrease in Palestinian worshippers at the site” (page 16). The EU, reflecting the reliance on selective NGO reports, did not mention that Ramadan overlapped with the Gaza conflict and significant violence in Jerusalem, necessitating stronger security measures.
- The ENP Report failed to mention the October 30 attempted assassination and severe wounding of Yehuda Glick, an Israeli who advocates for Jewish prayer rights on the Temple Mount. This example is one of numerous instances where violence against Jews was ignored or minimized as “violence against settlers,” again reflecting dominant NGO biases.

Violence against Israeli civilians

- In discussing “increased tension between Jewish and Arab communities in Israel” and noting that “Even excluding Operation Protective Edge, 2014 saw the highest number of civilian deaths related to violent incidents and terror attacks for many years,” (page 3) the EU provided specific examples of “Price Tag” attacks such as an “anti-Arab graffiti on a mosque in Fureidis” (page 5). In contrast, there are no specifics on the numerous terror attacks against Jewish targets in 2014 or the perpetrators. Other salient factors, such as [widespread incitement](#) to violence in Palestinian society and the PA, are erased.
 - Notably absent was discussion of the November 18 terrorist attack, when two Palestinian men from East Jerusalem entered a [synagogue in the Har Nof neighborhood](#) of Jerusalem during morning prayers and attacked the worshippers with axes and firearms. Four worshippers were murdered and eight others wounded; a Druze police officer was also killed.
 - Other [attacks against Israeli civilians](#), such as several attacks near the Jerusalem light rail and other details which were included in NGO Monitor’s submission, were equally overlooked.
- The ENP report refers several times to the June 2014 abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers. However, the report does not identify the perpetrators or their affiliation with Hamas. In contrast, the report notes that “extremist Israelis” were responsible for the horrific revenge murder of an Arab teenager in Jerusalem (page 14).
- The EU’s discussion of “Violence against settlers” in 2014 is problematic in a number of ways:
 - The section titled “Israel’s Responsibilities in the Occupied Territories” (see below), is framed by the statement that “Settlements are illegal under international law [and] constitute an obstacle to peace” (page 13). This context has the effect, if not the intention, of minimizing the significance of violent attacks against these Israeli civilians.
 - OCHA is cited as the primary source for this data. As noted above, OCHA has no credible methodology and its statistical analyses are unreliable. These basic flaws also highlight the EU’s failure to consult official Israeli sources.
 - Not all victims of attacks against Israeli civilians in the West Bank were “settlers,” meaning Israelis who live over the 1949 Armistice line. For instance, one of the victims, a father of five from Modiin who was traveling to a Passover Seder, was murdered *en route*.)

Issues relating to the section on “Israel’s Responsibilities in the Occupied Territories”

- Israel is singled out as the only ENP country that has a particular chapter devoted to responsibilities under international law, including other ENP countries involved in territorial disputes and/or armed conflicts. This section, which deviates from the template of ENP Reports for other countries, was added to the 2011 Report on Israel following [significant lobbying efforts](#) from highly politicized NGOs, further demonstrating the close dependency relationship between EU policy and these groups.
- In analyzing the situation in Gaza, the EU refers to smuggling tunnels connecting Gaza to Egypt, as well as to Israeli control of movement in and out of the territory.

- NGO Monitor notes that discussion of smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt is irrelevant to the Israeli ENP report. This information would be more relevant to the ENP reports on the Palestinian Authority or Egypt, though it was not included in either.
- The report wrongfully identifies the “continuing Israeli restrictions” and Egypt’s closure of the smuggling tunnels, which led to the “economic and physical isolation of the Strip” as the “primary obstacle for long-term economic development” of Gaza (page 16). This unsupported opinion does not acknowledge the Hamas violent takeover of Gaza in 2007, the continuous terror coming from Gaza, and the uncontrolled flow of arms into the Strip which compelled the Israeli response in order to protect civilians from attack.
- The report fails to address Israeli humanitarian commitment during the military operations (the so-called “humanitarian windows,” i.e. cease-fires repeatedly violated by Hamas, and the transport of civilians to in Israeli hospitals) and after.
- Moreover, the EU ignores Hamas’ exploitation of humanitarian aid and structures for military/terror purposes. Hamas built a network of tunnels beneath the Gaza border with Israel, using humanitarian material meant to assist civilians in Gaza, with the sole objective of carrying out attacks within Israel.