

August 6, 2014

Swiss NGO Statements on Hamas Conflict: Promoting Demonization of Israel

In addition to the military conflict in Gaza, the diplomatic and political dimensions of the war are now receiving significant attention. This is the context for "soft power" attempts to criminalize Israeli military operations and launch "fact-finding investigations."

In this context, NGO Monitor, a Jerusalem-based research institute, has prepared the following information sheet on the major role of Swiss non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the political war. Our detailed analyses of this and previous conflicts are available on our website (www.ngo-monitor.org), and our experts, including Prof. Gerald Steinberg of Bar Ilan University and president of NGO Monitor, are available for interview.

Background

- As part of their larger campaign to demonize and delegitimize Israel, European politicized NGOs are pushing for an international investigation into alleged Israeli "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity" committed during the current Israel-Hamas conflict.
- Under the façade of balance and apolitical, universal human rights, these NGOs have been active in efforts to justify unprofessional UN investigations, as seen in the 2009 Goldstone report.
- In support of this campaign, Swiss NGOs such as Terre Des Hommes Federation Internationale condemn Israel in statements that gravely distort international humanitarian law and repeat unsupported allegations of "deliberate, systematic, and widespread targeting of Palestinian civilians," "collective punishment," and similar claims.
- In addition, the Swiss government provides funding, through direct and indirect funding processes, to Israeli and Palestinian NGOs that make legal and 'factual' claims, without the necessary expertise or access to objective facts on the ground.
- As NGOs continue to make unfounded statements that are often repeated in the media, it is essential that journalists and the public:
 - 1) Recognize the central role of human rights NGOs in the political dimensions of war.
 - 2) Closely scrutinize NGO allegations, in the same way claims by other political actors (i.e. politicians, government and military officials) are held accountable.

Statements by Terre Des Hommes Federation Internationale

- [Statement to the United Nations Human Rights Council \(UNHRC\), July 23, 2014](#)
 - **...So far, more children have been killed by Israeli fire than Palestinian militants. These numbers do not reflect the psychological trauma of Palestinian children in Gaza and their families, who live under constant fear in the midst of heavy bombings and without access to safe places or shelters...**
 - **...Civilian homes, schools, hospitals and places of worship are presumed to be civilian objects. Any attacks on these structures raise serious concerns about whether Israeli strikes and shelling have been in accordance with international humanitarian law.** The violence has left the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, particularly children, traumatized and in need of psychological support. This violence is exacerbated by the blockade on the Gaza Strip imposed by Israel since

2007, which has led to a humanitarian crisis for the 1.7 million Palestinians that live in the Gaza Strip.

- **...Over the course of Israel’s military offensive on the Gaza Strip, Israeli strikes have carried out direct attacks on civilian homes causing a large number of civilian casualties, including children.** The military offensive has seen heavy artillery fire and constant airstrikes batter the Gaza Strip, severely impacting the civilian population of the Gaza Strip. Sunday July 20 became the bloodiest day of the military offensive, with at least 100 civilians killed, including at least 20 children as Israeli troops advanced into Shujai’iya, a crowded residential Neighbourhood of Gaza City.”

These statements are part of a larger strategy used by anti-Israel NGOs, to delegitimize and demonize Israel, which includes boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) and “lawfare” campaigns.

In addition, the Swiss government has provided funding to a number of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs that have issued numerous unfound statements condemning Israel:

B’tselem, PCATI, GISHA, Adalah, ACRI, Hamoked- [Joint statement to the Israeli Attorney General](#) (July 21, 2014): “The reports and data which have accumulated thus far regarding the nature of the strikes and the level of injury to noncombatant civilians as a result of these strikes raise serious concern of severe violations of international humanitarian law, and specifically the laws of war...”

DCI Palestine: [Press statement](#) (July 17, 2014)- “The death and injury to children caused by Israel’s military offensive on Gaza demonstrates serious and extensive disregard of fundamental principles of international law...”

Swiss funding for Israeli Palestinian NGOs:

NGO	Funding Mechanism	Amounts
B’Tselem	NDC ¹	NIS 1,594,770 (2012-2013)
Gisha	NDC	NIS 452,733 (2012-2013)
PCATI	NDC	NIS 1,177,712 (2012-2013)
Adalah	NDC	NIS 110,193 (2012)
ACRI	NDC	NIS 635, 168 (2012-2013)
Hamoked	NDC	NIS 1,301,569 (2012-2013)
DCI Palestine	NDC	Not Disclosed

¹ The NDC (NGO Development Center) is a joint-government funding pool which includes: The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and Denmark. As of 2014, this funding mechanism is known as the [“Human Rights and international Humanitarian Law Secretariat”](#).