

March 15, 2022

Secretary of State Antony Blinken
Department of State
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write regarding the **State Department’s February 2022 notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) “for projects that strengthen accountability and human rights in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza.”**¹ The language and requirements of the DRL proposal, as well as the specific context of eligible recipients, suggest that these funds will be used to advance anti-Israel initiatives that are inconsistent with US foreign policy.

The NOFO seeks applicants to “collect, archive, and maintain human rights documentation to support justice and accountability and civil society-led advocacy efforts.” These terms mirror numerous NGO projects, funded by the United Nations and European governments, which are exploited for campaigns targeting Israel. These grantees lobby the International Criminal Court and UN frameworks - such as biased Commissions of Inquiry- to sanction Israel, promote BDS, and use the “apartheid” label. As NGO Monitor’s systematic research demonstrates, Israeli, Palestinian, and international NGOs acting under the façade of “human rights documentation” are central participants in these discriminatory campaigns.²

Therefore, we believe that it is imperative that this NOFO be reconsidered, and if continued, that clear, unequivocal language be added, informing applicants that funds cannot be used for those purposes and will not be provided to organizations advancing those efforts. Before providing grants, the State Department must conduct a thorough review of the websites, publications, public statements, and social media accounts of potential partners, including sub-grantees, as well as those of key officials. This is necessary to ensure that potential grantees accord with US policy and values.

In this context, we recall that the Biden Administration has clearly and repeatedly opposed the campaigns seeking to demonize and isolate Israel. On March 3, 2021, following the ICC’s decision to launch a formal investigation into “the situation in Palestine,” you affirmed that “the United States firmly opposes and is deeply disappointed by this decision,” declaring, “We will continue to uphold our strong commitment to Israel and its security, including by opposing actions that seek to target Israel unfairly.”

¹ The NOFO February 11, 2022, titled, “Strengthening Human Rights and Accountability in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza,” will provide between \$493,827 and \$987,654. <https://www.state.gov/drl-strengthening-human-rights-and-accountability-in-israel-and-the-west-bank-and-gaza/>

² “International Criminal Court (ICC) and NGOs,” <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/key-issues/international-criminal-court-icc-and-ngos/about/>

ADVISORY BOARD:

Elliott Abrams
Amb. Vivian Bercovici
Hon. Michael Danby
Prof. Alan Dershowitz
Sen. Linda Frum
Tom Gross

Bonnie Glick
Colonel Richard Kemp
Douglas Murray
Hon. Fiamma Nirenstein
Prof. Judea Pearl
Justice Elyakim Rubinstein
Judge Abraham Sofaer
Dr. Einat Wilf

Prof. Ruth Wisse
R. James Woolsey
Michal Cotler-Wunsh

PRESIDENT:

Prof. Gerald Steinberg

Likewise, on December 24, 2021, Ambassador Patrick Kennedy, in referring to another UN attack under the façade of human rights documentation, declared “the U.S. stands with Israel in rejecting the unprecedented open-ended mandate of this Commission of Inquiry, which perpetuates a practice of unfairly singling out Israel in the UN.”

Similarly, in January 2022, Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, petitioned you to defund the Commission, labeling it “outrageous and unjust.” And State Department officials correctly denounced Amnesty International’s February 1, 2022, publication that applied the “apartheid” label to Israel. State Department spokesperson Ned Price stated “I think that it is important, as the world's only Jewish state, that the Jewish people must not be denied their right to self-determination, and we must ensure there isn't a double standard being applied,” adding “I reject the view that Israel's actions constitute apartheid.”

In light of the Biden Administration’s repeated rejection of such campaigns, we call on the State Department to reconsider this program. If however the NOFO proceeds, the application of clear and rigorous safeguards will be necessary to ensure that taxpayer funds are not provided to organizations advancing a discriminatory, anti-Israel agenda under the façade of accountability and human rights.

I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Professor Gerald Steinberg
President, NGO Monitor

Cc :

- 1) Ambassador Thomas Nides, US Embassy, Jerusalem
- 2) Lisa Peterson, Acting Assistant Secretary, US State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)
- 3) Senator Bob Menendez, Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- 4) Senator James Risch, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- 5) Representative Gregory Meeks, Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee
- 6) Representative Michael McCaul, Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee