

Proposed Guidelines for Foreign Government NGO Funding

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Objectives

The European Union and its member states, as well as Norway and Switzerland, claim that upholding and promoting universal values such as human rights and democracy are central to their foreign policies. In order to advance these values, Europe provides extensive funding to civil society organizations that are active on these issues, including to groups outside of Europe.

This mechanism has resulted in the transfer of very large sums to Israeli NGOs, on a unique scale, which raises many difficult issues that must be addressed. Much of the European state funding for Israeli NGOs takes place with very limited transparency, accountability, or due diligence. In many instances, support is provided for activities and organizations that are inconsistent with Europe's declared values and objectives, and are closely linked to campaigns of demonization and boycotts. This external funding for Israeli civil society creates reactions that lead to conflict, and also impinges on sovereignty and the democratic process.

These issues are now a major part of the political discussion in Israel, including proposed legislation to oversee foreign government funding to Israeli NGOs.

Israel and Europe should address these issues jointly and reach understandings as to what is appropriate in foreign funding for civil society. This will be strengthen their shared democratic values, advance constructive dialogue, and promote human rights in a manner consistent with the foreign policy of European governments.

NGO Monitor recommendations for European government funding guidelines:

Principles

1. No funding for NGOs involved in antisemitism

NGO Monitor has published many examples of (directly and indirectly) European-funded NGOs and their officials promoting blatant antisemitism. The Palestinian group BADIL, funded by the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat (budget via Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark), publishes blatantly antisemitic caricatures. This NGO has received indirect fund from the EU, Denmark, and Ireland. Sabeel (which receives funds from the Netherlands and Sweden indirectly) regularly publishes antisemitic content.

2. No funding for NGOs involved in terrorism/terrorism supporters/terrorist affiliated staff

European governments and the EU maintain lists of “designated terrorist groups,” such as Hamas, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Despite this, European governments fund NGOs that have alleged ties to these terrorist groups. For instance, the director of Palestinian group Al-Haq is allegedly a member of the PFLP. The Israeli High Court of Justice has described him as “Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde” – a human rights worker by day, a terrorist by night. Addameer (a Palestinian NGO funded by the Secretariat) also has alleged links to the PFLP. Other NGOs, such as the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), legitimize Palestinian terror attacks against civilians by labeling them “resistance.”

3. No funding for organizations that deny Israel’s right to define itself as a Jewish state, that promote one-state frameworks, or support “right of return” claims for millions of refugee descendants

Europe has consistently supported “two states” as the framework for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. In sharp contrast, there are numerous examples of funding to NGOs that deny Israel’s right to exist within any borders and/or call for the implementation of a Palestinian “right of return” into Israel. Israeli group Zochrot (indirectly funded by Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, and others) supports a right of return, and calls for a “de-zionized” Israel in which Jews will become a “minority.” Most Palestinian groups also support these demands, and almost all of them call for the implementation of a right of return.

4. No funding for NGOs involved in BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns

The EU and European states have consistently asserted that they oppose boycotts of Israel. At the same time, they fund many NGOs that promote BDS. Almost all European-funded Palestinian NGOs are signatories to the 2005 call for BDS. For instance, Al-Mezan (funded by the Secretariat, Ireland, Norway, the EU, and others) called for boycotting the G4S security company due to its business ties with Israel. Israeli group “Who Profits” (indirectly funded by the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, and others) is the primary database for BDS campaigns against foreign and Israeli banks, security companies, and various other firms. It also assists BDS activists with identifying new “targets” for their campaigns.

5. No funding for NGOs promoting anti-Israel lawfare

Lawfare is the exploitation of courts and legal language as political warfare. The European-funded Palestinian (and international) NGOs leading this campaign (including Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, Al-Dameer, and PCHR) file cases in various countries demanding the arrest and indictment of Israeli officials. In recent years, following the acceptance of “Palestine” to the International Criminal Court (ICC), there has been an intensification of lawfare efforts. These cases are based on distorted and biased interpretations of international law, aimed at restricting Israel’s military options when combating terrorism. This has direct ramifications on western countries combating terrorism, including the US and its NATO allies in Europe, which are facing similar dilemmas and problems (i.e. the use of human shields, embedding munitions and military positions among civilian populations).

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