

Europe to host NGO attack on Israel

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For years, the United Nations and the European Union have provided major funding and assistance for radical Palestinian NGOs and their supporters, allowing them to exploit the rhetoric of human rights, "civil society," international law and peace to promote the opposite.

An illustration of the damage that results from this combination is provided by the meeting, scheduled for the European Parliament in Brussels on August 30-31, to be run by the UN's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This committee is "the main UN forum where all NGOs interested in the Palestine issue can meet."

The title is certainly high-sounding - International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. But, as noted by UN Watch, "the UN's Palestinian Division runs a tightly-controlled operation that accredits only anti-Israel NGOs and speakers. Without altering the virulently anti-Israel nature of their meetings, the organizers instead seek to mask their activities." Moreover, to add credence to their cover, they invite specially approved Israelis - a select group of radicals who openly espouse hatred of Israel, claiming the license to do so because of their citizenship.

THIS YEAR, for the first time, the exercise is gaining the legitimacy of sponsorship by the European Parliament. Topics include "The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and civil society response"; "Action by civil society organizations working in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem"; workshops on "Fortieth anniversary of occupation: Building on action taken by civil society"; and "Strengthening campaigns to end occupation, including grassroots campaigns against the wall, rallying around Bil'in" (the site of violent attacks organized by NGOs to provoke Israeli responses).

The speakers list is secret, but in previous years it included Jeff Halper from the EU-funded Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (ICAHD), allied with Sabeel, a center for Palestinian liberation theology; Raji Sourani from the Palestinian Center for Human Rights; Michael Warschawski of the Alternative Information Center; and Jamal Juma Ja'afreh from the Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign.

To their credit, the Polish members of the European Parliament from different parties have announced that they will not participate. Bronisław Geremek, a Polish MEP, was quoted by the Polish Web site, Europa21, as declaring: "Although there is no official statement that Israel must be pushed down to the sea... the choice of subjects and the attitude toward the problems show that it will be a biased, conflict-generating conference. Actually we can call it anti-Israeli."

MEP Konrad Szymanski stated: "I am astonished that European Parliament allowed such activity to be placed in its building. If there is any activity against the conference, i.e., a petition signed by MEPs, I will be very glad to support it."

THE ISRAELI government, led by the Foreign Ministry, has urged the EU and the UN to cancel sponsorship of such anti-peace activities. And Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik signed a protest letter to European Parliament President Hans-Gert Poettering, who is from Germany and is expected to be more sensitive to legitimizing propaganda and anti-Israel demonization.

Ambassador the the EU Ran Curiel noted that the committee that uses NGOs "is an anachronistic product of the UN which was created in 1975, in the context of the infamous 'Zionism is racism' resolution revoked in 1991. Since it was founded, this committee has been engaged in one-sided propaganda activities which present only the Palestinian narrative, including the delegitimization of Israel, a UN member state."

But Europe's support for such radical propaganda goes far beyond holding this fringe conference in the Parliament building.

The EU funds numerous NGOs under programs for development assistance to the Palestinians, labeled "Partnership for Peace" or promoting human rights, that are at the forefront of the political war against Israel. The head of the EU-supported ICAHD, for example, speaks in favor of boycotts against Israel and demonizes Israel as an "apartheid state." Halper often appears with Naim Ateek, the head of Sabeel, who frequently invokes anti-Semitic themes, such as referring to "the Israeli government crucifixion system." (Halper and Ateek are on the program for a Sabeel conference scheduled for Boston in October - more EU tax euros at work.)

AS NGO Monitor reports detail, many additional anti-Israel political NGOs and activities are funded by the government aid and development agencies of Ireland, France, the UK, Belgium, Sweden, etc., as well as non-EU countries such as Norway and Switzerland. BADIL, for example, uses its European funds to oppose compromise on the Palestinian claims to a "right of return" - one of the major obstacles to progress in peace negotiations.

The central role of these groups - along with the superpowers such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International - in the political war against Israel was highlighted in the NGO Forum of the 2001 Durban conference on racism. This was so "successful" that the UN is planning another conference in 2009, and is holding a preparatory committee meeting in Geneva a few days before the session planned for the European Parliament.

Both activities highlight the destructive activities of radical NGOs, and both conferences and the committees that promote them should be cancelled before they do more damage.

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