

Reining in CIDA's radicals

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While Canadian foreign policy has moved away from simplistic slogans and political correctness, some officials have not gotten the word. In particular, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) continues to run its own foreign policy, which is at odds with the goals and objectives proclaimed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

CIDA's annual budget of more than \$3 billion makes this agency a very powerful force. When these resources are used to promote extremism, under the guise of "international development" and "peace building," this is a serious problem.

In one of the more disturbing examples, CIDA supported the publication of a recent book titled *Palestinian Refugee Repatriation: Global Perspectives*. The book's premise repeats the Palestinian claim to a "right of return." Such claims are removed from the context of the numerous wars and terror attacks – particularly the violent rejection of the 1947 United Nations partition plan and the Arab invasion. In that war, one per cent of the Jewish population was killed, and the clock can't be turned back to return them to life.

For almost 60 years, Arab states, abetted by the United Nations, have kept Palestinian refugees and their families in camps in order to use them as part of the continuing war. By seeking to flood Israel with Palestinians, their goal is to use demographics to end Jewish sovereignty. Palestinian refugee claims and former Palestinian Authority president Yasser Arafat's denial of Jewish rights in Jerusalem were the two main reasons for the failure of the Oslo negotiations.

Given this background, the government of Canada's support for a one-sided book promoting the Palestinian position, and excluding experts such as Prof. Ruth Lapidot who argue the opposite position, is counterproductive. (The grant for this book was provided by the Middle East Expert and Advisory Services Fund, which is managed by CIDA and the International Development Research Centre, another Canadian government body, in co-operation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as by its British equivalent, which is well-known for being pro-Palestinian.)

Erasing terrorism and using loaded terms such as "ethnic cleansing," it's not surprising that the book is recommended by the "Palestinian Pundit" blog site. Support for this publication also undermines Canada's claims to be "an honest broker" in dealing with the complex politics of refugee claims.

This is only one example of CIDA's support for radical campaigns. A study by the Canadian Coalition for Democracies (CCD) highlights the lack of accountability in CIDA's programs and the absence of independent impact studies.

According to the CCD, "Not only is CIDA acting irresponsibly with regard to its programs, it is demonstrating a flagrant lack of respect for Canadian taxpayers and an indifference to the plight of the needy...contrary to the spirit and intention of government policy." As the CCD notes, Canadians contributed \$425 million in emergency assistance following the Asian tsunami in 2004. "To date Canadians cannot be provided with a clean audit of where and how these funds were distributed, and what measure of success followed as a result."

Like their counterparts in Britain's aid agency (DFID) and others throughout Europe, CIDA officials tend to patronizingly reinforce Palestinian victimization and subsidize radical anti-Israel politics. NGO Monitor reports show how CIDA "development" funds are channeled to Medical Aid for Palestinians, Médecins du Monde, the Mennonite Central Committee, Oxfam, World Vision, and others that campaign against Israel.

While CIDA claims to fund specific projects and not organizations, money for salaries and infrastructure supports all of the activities of a recipient nongovernmental organization. Alternatives, a Montreal based NGO that is supported by CIDA, promotes Palestinian positions and rhetoric inside Canada, which is clearly a violation of procedures for government-supported groups.

The CCD report also notes that CIDA has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian Authority – with “little to show in terms of gains for freedom and democracy” – including massive support for UNRWA (the UN Relief and Works Agency), whose involvement in “incitement and violence [is] well-documented.”

For these and other reasons, Canada’s elected officials must finally take control of CIDA’s funding, particularly when it comes to radical political groups and causes.