

Charity that exploits its high reputation for ethical work

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Oxfam was founded in 1942 to provide humanitarian aid around the world but it has also become a powerful political force, and the opinions (and prejudices) of its leaders are often more influential than those of many elected officials.

This is particularly true in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where Oxfam's highly biased agenda is continuing to contribute to the conflict. The efforts of the Board of Deputies to expand Oxfam's horizons beyond the standard repetition of the Palestinian victimisation narrative had no visible impact. As the Hamas terror leadership wages its latest destructive war, Oxfam continues to campaign for an "end the blockade in Gaza" - in a tendentious advert in the Sunday Times; at a demonstration in Parliament Square two weeks ago; and in numerous online blog posts. In each case, Oxfam pointedly erases the thousands of missiles and massive terror tunnels that have been Gaza's prime industries, while falsely portraying the limitations imposed by Israel as arbitrary measures that impose "misery on Palestinians in Gaza."

As a charity, Oxfam argues that these politicised tactics and ideological rhetoric are necessary to alleviate poverty, including in Gaza. But this is just a pretext. Behind the ad and the broader campaign is a political narrative and agenda, one that Oxfam has copied from Palestinian extremists and that bolsters Hamas. "Lasting peace," in Oxfam's statements, comes not from disarming Hamas and guaranteeing Israeli security, but from "lifting the blockade".

Oxfam has also "determined" that Israel is conducting "disproportionate attacks" and "collective punishment" in Gaza, and joined Amnesty International and other groups in calling for an embargo on the sale of defence technology to Israel. Similarly, Oxfam repeated the entirely unsupported and later disproven allegations that "three quarters of the dead and wounded are civilians."

Oxfam's brand name facilitates its skewed agenda

Furthermore, the charity has demanded that "the international community should immediately... press the Government of Israel to immediately end its military enforcement of the land and sea buffer zone and find alternative means to protect its border with Gaza, which do not harm civilians." Oxfam has paid lip service to Israel's "legitimate security concerns." But it has not offered reasonable and plausible alternatives that would protect Israelis.

Oxfam's brand name allows it to promote this skewed agenda. Journalists, Ministers, MPs and other political leaders, as well the wider public accept its claims at face value, and this contributes to the fundraising that expands the radius of influence. Almost no one bothers to look beyond the façade or to realise that Oxfam is unqualified to pass political, legal or moral judgments, and that its recommendations for Gaza or in any other terror-related conflict are entirely baseless.

Most importantly, Oxfam avoids all responsibility and accountability when its activities inflame the violence and hatred. For years Oxfam campaigned with other political advocacy non-governmental organizations (NGOs) demanding that the UK and other governments pressure Israel into allowing concrete and other materials into Gaza. They succeeded, but rather than being used to increase commerce and relieve poverty, much of this concrete was diverted into the terror tunnel project and underground rocket launch platforms.

As a result, millions of Israelis are paying the price for Oxfam's entirely misplaced "humanitarian" agenda. Unlike governments and their democratically elected representatives, Oxfam does not face any consequences for this.

Oxfam, including its board members and donors, should initiate a long-overdue evaluation of its own failings and contributions to conflict. As an organisation purporting to deliver aid in conflict zones and promote human rights, it has a clear, moral obligation to go beyond the simplistic slogans, platitudes and slick campaigns, and examine the implications of its activities.

It is easy for NGO armchair generals to insist on "a permanent end to violence by both sides, and lifting the blockade," in the words of Oxfam's Sunday Times ad, and to declare that "Gaza must be rebuilt – for the last time." But the cost of these political campaigns grows daily.

Gerald M. Steinberg is professor of politics at Bar Ilan University and President of NGO Monitor. Naftali Balanson is NGO Monitor's Managing Editor