

NGOs and the return of antisemitism

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In recent years, antisemitism, particularly in Europe, has returned to levels not seen since the 1930s. What was unimaginable after the Holocaust is now reality — Jews are being deliberately targeted, violently attacked, and murdered at synagogues, schools, kosher markets, and museums.

There is no doubt that the obsessive and disproportionate attacks on Israel, including the exploitation of terms such as “war crimes” and “apartheid”, contribute significantly to the atmosphere of hate. As documented in the UK’s All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism, political attacks that demonize Jews and Israel are directly related to this surge in European antisemitism.

This week in Jerusalem, politicians, journalists, diplomats, educators, and civil society will gather at the Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism (GFCA), a biannual meeting to assess the state of antisemitism globally. For the hundreds of participants, including many non-Jews, it is essential to expose those responsible for fueling antisemitism and those that enable it in order to formulate effective responses.

In this form of racism, powerful non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that claim to promote human rights and humanitarian agendas, as well as the European governments that fund them, play a central role. The NGOs lead the demonization campaigns that target Israel, and despite the extensive evidence of the moral damage caused by these NGOs, European governments irresponsibly continue to fund them with hundreds of millions of pounds, euros, and kroner.

In advance of the Global Forum, NGO Monitor published a [detailed report](#) addressing these issues. The report addresses different types of antisemitism that are manifest in some medical aid organizations, church groups, and major human rights organizations.

For example, last July during the Gaza conflict, Dr. Swee Ang Chai, founder of Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), which is based in the UK and receives government and EU funding, promoted a virulently antisemitic video by the white supremacist, [David Duke](#), a former leader of the Klu Klux Klan. In addition, Swee Ang is one of the signatories of the “[Open Letter for the People of Gaza](#),” published by the British medical journal, *The Lancet*. The letter accuses Israel of “war crimes” while ignoring Hamas’s crimes of rocket fire and terror tunnels from Gaza into Israeli territory, and denies Israel the right of self-defense. MAP, which claims to be “an independent, non political, nonsectarian humanitarian aid organization,” has repeatedly been used as a vehicle to promote antisemitism.

In 2008, MAP received proceeds from an [anti-Israel Christmas campaign](#) that offered an “[alternative carol service](#)” to “[highlight current reality](#) in the Holy Land.” Lord Carey of Clifton, former Archbishop of Canterbury, [spoke out](#) against the event, arguing that it demonstrated that “anti-Semitism and hostility to Jews still lurked beneath the surface in Christian circles in Britain.” Referring to the carol service, he added: “Such actions strengthen an anti-Israeli agenda, trivialize the political issues and nourish an anti-Semitic culture.”

This “culture,” which is prevalent among church groups, reflects theological antisemitism, using regressive language to weaken and disrupt Jewish-Christian relations. Christian pro-Palestinian activists have built on this foundation and introduced resolutions calling on their respective churches to boycott Israel and divest from companies doing business in or with Israel. By recruiting marginal Jewish and Israeli voices for their campaigns, antisemitic campaigners claim the facade of legitimacy.

In parallel, many powerful NGOs claiming to promote human rights and other moral principles generally ignore antisemitism. On April 19, 2015, Amnesty International’s UK branch held its Annual General meeting. Out of 17 proposed motions, the only resolution that was rejected called on Amnesty-

UK to “Campaign against anti-Semitism in the UK,” as well as “Lobby the UK Government to tackle the rise in anti-Semitic attacks in Britain,” and “monitor anti-semitism closely.”

When criticized for this absurd decision, an Amnesty-UK official claimed that “our membership decided not to pass this resolution calling for a campaign with a single focus.” This is false – the NGO has in fact has initiated “single focus” campaigns in the past, for instance, approving “overwhelmingly” a [2010 resolution](#) on Sinti and Roma Communities because “Within the last year widespread discrimination and violence against Sinti and Roma communities has intensified in a number of European countries, which Amnesty International has published within respective country reports.”

The vote also took place in the context of repeated examples of racism within this ostensibly moral organization itself – in particular the activities of staff member Kristyan Benedict, who is listed as Amnesty’s “crisis response manager.” Benedict has a [history of obsessive anti-Israel attacks](#) and antisemitic outbursts, and was investigated for some of his rhetoric; however, serious steps have not been taken.

The ongoing government funding for NGOs that engage in antisemitic activities and use antisemitic rhetoric highlights the persistent double standard: **Hatred of Jews is tolerated in a way that would be unthinkable for other racial, ethnic, or religious groups.** Likewise, Jewish and Israeli targets are often denied the right to define what constitutes discrimination against them. To defeat this virulent form of racism, it is necessary to develop and implement an effective strategy, over a period of many years. This process must begin by ending government funds to these organizations, and by continuing with educating all parts of society on the need to stop antisemitism.