

Ariel Sharon and HRW's anti-Israel obsession

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Gerald M Steinberg

Former Israeli leader Ariel Sharon died on January 11, and within hours, U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) launched yet another obsessive attack on Sharon, highlighting this organization's double standards and irresponsible disregard of both facts and international law.

The inflated accusations and abusive language in HRW's statement following Sharon's death stand in glaring contrast to their immoral silence regarding Arab and Middle Eastern terror leaders and tyrants. When Yassir Arafat died in November 2004, HRW issued no statement referring to impunity for crimes against humanity resulting from the Palestinian leader's central role in mass terror campaigns.

Additionally, HRW's statements following the death of Osama bin Laden are a textbook example of moral confusion and obfuscation, referring vaguely to "the devastating human toll that terrorism has brought to every continent of the world" and to the September 11, 2001 and other attacks for which "bin Laden's al Qaeda organization is blamed." Regarding the American anti-terror operation that killed bin Laden, HRW decided that it did "not have enough information about the killing to draw conclusions about whether it was lawful or not.... The US government should provide all the relevant facts about Osama bin Laden's death to clarify whether it was justified under international law."

HRW's abysmal record in the Middle East is particularly salient in the [endorsement of Libyan's tyrant Moammar Qaddafi and his sons as "human rights reformers"](#). In May 2009, HRW Middle East and North Africa director Sarah Leah Whitson authored an article in the influential US-based publication *Foreign Policy*, titled "Tripoli Spring" and subtitled "How Libya's behind-the-scenes reformer is actually, well, reforming." Whitson's praise was unequivocal: "the real impetus for the transformation rests squarely with a quasi-governmental organization, the Qaddafi Foundation for International Charities and Development." On December 12, 2009, HRW held what was presented as a news conference in Libya – the U.S State Department referred to this event as helping to "solidify Saif al-Islam's reputation as a 'reformer.'" Two op-eds written by HRW officials were published in the *Guardian* and by the Institute for Policy Studies. The first was titled "Is Libya opening up," and the second, written by Whitson, was headlined "Postcard from ... Tripoli" and embraced the Qaddafi human rights reform fraud.

In contrast, Whitson and HRW have a long history of automatically and viscerally condemning Israel, based on little or no credible information. For them, no actions to defend Israeli citizens from ongoing terror campaigns are consistent with international law or human rights principles – Israelis are treated as sub-humans and devoid of rights.

This obsessive policy is consistently reflected in HRW's attacks on Mr. Sharon, which have continued following his death, and in which Whitson is quoted extensively. The HRW statement briefly and selectively quoted from the judicial commission that investigated Sharon's responsibility related to the Christian Phalange killings of Palestinians in the 1982 Lebanon war, distorting the actual process and reports beyond recognition. This again highlights HRW's consistent anti-Israel obsession and exploitation of universal human rights principles to promote personal and ideological agendas.

HRW also plays a central role in the processes by which national and international legal structures and principles are being abused as part of political warfare. While Sharon was serving as Prime Minister and had the grave responsibility for ending the Palestinian terror campaign of brutal bus bombings and other war crimes, HRW officials chose instead to support a cynical effort by Palestinian groups to bring a frivolous lawfare case against Sharon in Belgium. This case triggered a flood of efforts to exploit "universal jurisdiction" statutes and frameworks, including the International Criminal Court, that were created in order to bring genocidal leaders to justice, for the pursuit of partisan political campaigns.

In 2009, the founder of Human Rights Watch, Robert Bernstein, [highlighted the moral failures of his own organization](#), particularly in ignoring the systematic abuses of Middle Eastern regimes. Bernstein also referred to HRW reports on the Israeli-Arab conflict "that are helping those who wish to turn Israel into a pariah state." Indeed, as the latest obsessive attack demonstrates, it is HRW itself that is leading this campaign, based on double standards and misinformation, to delegitimize Israel.