

European democracy or hypocrisy?  
Gerald Steinberg

Despite frequent denials, the EU and its member states are centrally involved in funding a number of misnamed “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs) that are leading the dirty, soft-power war being waged against Israel.

For example, a recent EU grant provides €150,000 (about \$200,600) to Yesh Din [Israeli human rights organization] for a project headlined “Israeli Security Forces Criminal Accountability under International Humanitarian Law.” The stated goal is, “To change Israeli policy vis-a-vis the criminal accountability of Israeli Security Forces Personnel in the occupied Palestinian Territories (sic), in such a way that acknowledges and takes into account the severity and the different nature of War Crimes, as distinguished from regular, domestic crimes.”

The loaded language and content of this EU grant embodies a direct continuation of the discredited U.N. report on the 2009 Gaza War, which sought to demonize Israel, following the NGO strategy adopted at the infamous 2001 U.N.-led Durban conference. As acknowledged by Judge Richard Goldstone, the U.N. framework that shaped the Gaza report was blatantly biased, and the “evidence” supplied by Yesh Din and its allies did not support the war crimes accusations.

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In sharp contrast to Goldstone’s honest reversal, EU officials continue to provide massive budgets to Israeli NGOs leading this political warfare. Beyond the moral damage and the obvious economic absurdity, the EU’s singular effort to manipulate civil society in order “to change Israeli policy” makes a mockery of democratic principles.

Yesh Din’s agenda and its exploitation of international law is well established and known to the EU officials, as well as to their counterparts in the governments of Ireland, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands; together, foreign sources provide 94 percent of Yesh Din’s budget. In its reports and activities, often in partnership with other fringe political groups like Breaking the Silence, Yesh Din paves the way for “lawfare” cases against Israeli officials in foreign courts and in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

On December 26, 2010, Israel Hayom published excerpts from Yesh Din’s strategy of “encouraging the entry of the topic of war criminals into the legal discourse relating to the actions of security forces in the occupied territories.” This was also reflected in the NGO’s statement submitted to the Second Stage of Israel’s Turkel Commission on IDF investigatory practices (April 2011), in which the NGO claims that “Israel fails to meet its duty to investigate complaints of violations of justice by soldiers.” Michael Sfard, a central figure in Yesh Din, speaks in frameworks such as the “Russell Tribunal on Palestine” that promote the “apartheid slander” (to quote the language used by Judge Goldstone, who served on the South African constitutional court). Any relationship between this agenda and the universal principles of international law and human rights is entirely fictitious.

To prevent exposure and debate on these illicit activities, EU officials and their NGO partners have marked all information regarding funding structures and decision making as “top secret.” When journalists and members of the European Parliament submit questions regarding procedures and justifications for such NGO funding, officials reply in very general terms that avoid substance. (After the EU summarily rejected the NGO Monitor’s requests for these documents under freedom of

information regulations, we filed suit in the European Court of Justice. For two years, there has been no significant movement on this case.)

Against this background, the anger felt by most Israelis towards European funders of this political warfare, and the extreme secrecy which surrounds it, is understandable and justified. This is the background to the problematic efforts by Knesset members to find a way to limit support for the political warfare being waged by NGOs to delegitimize efforts to defend against terror attacks.

As Israelis debate these issues, the denunciations by European officials and their NGO partners, through claims such as “an attack on democracy,” have the hollow ring of hypocrisy. Yariv Oppenheimer, head of Peace Now, and Hassan Jabareen, the director of Adalah, were invited to repeat these allegations on November 29 during a hearing held at the European Parliament. A parallel event was held in Brussels by the Heinrich Boell Stiftung, a political framework funded by German taxpayers, which also promotes the exploitation of human rights to attack Israel. Of course, no one with alternative views was invited to either event.

If the EU and its member states, many of which are NATO members involved in their own wars, actually believe that Israeli security forces are guilty of “war crimes,” they should state these accusations openly, and not via massive funding to pseudo-civil society groups in order to bombard the Israeli legal system, or via kangaroo courts around the world. We should conduct this debate directly, and not via highly-politicized Israeli NGOs that are selected for massive funding by anonymous European officials.