

# World Vision and Gaza: Failure of Due Diligence and Worse

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The arrest of Mohammed El Halabi, the head of World Vision's Gaza branch, unsettled not only World Vision International, with its annual budget of \$US2.7 billion (including substantial Canadian donations) but also the many political activists that have made entire careers in mixing aid for Palestinians with harsh anti-Israel advocacy.

The case against El Halabi is based on detailed allegations that \$US 50 million dollars provided over the past decade by governments and well-intentioned individuals were diverted to the Hamas terror organization, instead of providing food or building schools and hospitals.

If substantiated in the upcoming trial, the evidence will also show that in its blindness, World Vision International enabled the construction of deadly terror tunnels and acquisition of thousands of missiles used to murder and traumatize Israelis.

One such anti-Israel activist, Thomas Woodley, President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, has resorted to conspiracy theories in a recent [article](#) in the Huffington Post Canada. In contrast to the use of terms like "justice" and "peace", this organisation actively demonizes Israel, including support for the discriminatory boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns. Turning a blind eye to reality, he has [opposed](#) "labelling" Hamas as a terror organization: "Just because the Canadian government lists Hamas as a terrorist organization doesn't make Hamas any less legitimate to the local population."

In his eagerness to attack Israel in his latest article, Woodley fails to undertake even cursory fact checks. He falsely claims that, “El Halabi will be tried before an Israeli military court” – in fact, the case is being tried in a civil court in Beersheva.

In attacking Israel for protecting its citizens from terror, Woodley exploits the suffering of Palestinians. He claims that in arresting El Halabi, Israel is causing “120 Gaza families [to] lose a breadwinner, and 40,000 children supported by World Vision in Gaza [to] lose their development programs.” In reality, in the process of stealing aid to build Gaza’s terror infrastructure, Hamas has already deprived these families and children of vital assistance.

In addition, the many thousands of Israeli children (and adults) who are targeted and traumatized by Palestinian terrorists do not exist in his strange version of justice. Hamas terror, which El Halabi allegedly assisted for ten years, is not mentioned as it does not serve Woodley’s ideological agenda.

The issue is not where and how humanitarian agencies work, but rather the due diligence that should accompany this work when the aid involves terrorism, warlords, and tyrants. World Vision has rejected the allegations about El Halabi by citing audits allegedly performed on their financial records. But standard financial audits in terror-run areas such as Gaza, are useless, particularly when aid includes cash for projects, equipment and shipments of food. Realistically, no auditing firm can possibly track diversions in a closed area governed by corruption, violence and fear.

Instead of acknowledging this reality, Woodley points to World Vision’s repeated soundbite that “the organization performs international background checks on its employees, and has PricewaterhouseCoopers audit its Gaza operations annually.”

If he and others looked at existing World Vision’s reports, as NGO Monitor has done, instead of repeating the sound bites, they would not find that the amount in question “was more than twice the total budget of World Vision in Gaza during the same period”, as Woodley claimed. They would see for themselves the \$16.3 million annual budget reported (2014) reported by the World Vision’s division registered with the Israeli

Registrar of Non-Profits. (After 2014, this division failed to submit the required financial documentation to the Registrar – another warning sign ignored by the World Vision leadership.)

In parallel, a second legal entity, known as World Vision - Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza (JWG) reported cumulative expenditures of \$134 million from 2004-2015. In this report, which is available on the internet, there is no indication of how or where these funds were spent – another failure in accountability and due diligence. But under the circumstances, the Israeli allegation of \$50 million diverted is far more credible than Woodley's claims.

The absence of due diligence in World Vision's financial accounting for activities in Gaza should also be of serious concern to Canadians, which are among the major supporters of the worldwide operations of this organisation. The government-funded Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is listed as a major donor to World Vision.

Rather than false attacking Israel for ensuring that aid money is not diverted to terror, Woodley and others would be well advised to devote attention to measures that humanitarian groups like World Vision can take to prevent terror groups from infiltrating agents and stealing aid. Regardless of how the El Halabi case ends, it is clear that practical measures are long overdue, including surveillance cameras and other intelligence technologies, and the need for close cooperation with Israeli security agencies in order to vet employees like El Halabi.

Demonization campaigns against Israel are clearly counterproductive and do damage to everyone involved. Woodley claims to be concerned about justice, but in his false accusations, he is promoting a deep and ongoing injustice.