

Terrorists, hunger strikes and NGO's

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Mohammed Allan, a long-time operative in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (a terrorist group affiliated with Iran) triggered a major international public relations campaign and debate by going on a hunger strike that brought him to the brink of death.

Allaan was first arrested in 2006 after recruiting a suicide bomber, and was tried, convicted and served 35 months in an Israeli jail.

In 2014, he was arrested again and held in administrative detention based on what security officials said was substantial and reliable intelligence regarding renewed contacts with PIJ operatives preparing additional terrorist attacks. (The Israeli High Court reviewed the evidence and approved his detention.) The threats of large-scale violence in Israel and international condemnation if Allaan were to die were used to pressure Israel to release him unconditionally. This strategy was demonstrated in the early 1980s, when 10 IRA hunger-striking terrorists in British jails died, with major ramifications. To avoid a similar situation, Israel had previously freed a number of alleged terrorists in administrative detention.

Indeed, after reports that Allaan had suffered brain damage, the High Court removed the restrictions on him, demonstrating the effectiveness of these campaigns and threats.

In this deadly political chess game, a number of Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), claiming to promote moral agendas, play a central role.

The petition before the High Court of Justice, asking the judges to release Allan, was brought by Adalah , an influential Israeli political advocacy NGO . Adalah is joined by Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I), the Arab Association for Human Rights, Al- Mezan (Gazabased) and other groups. These NGOs are among the leaders of campaigns demonizing Israel, and the Allaan hunger strike is another means to achieve this end.

As in many other situations, the NGO influence is reflected in the media coverage, particularly outside of Israel, which repeats the language and claims of NGO press releases, social media posts and other activities. With annual budgets of millions of shekels provided by European governments and the US-based New Israel Fund, the NGOs generate publicity to promote their political goals.

A survey of NGO websites, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds shows the intense focus of these resources on the Allaan case, which they present as primarily involving the medical ethics of force-feeding and the legality of administrative detention. Dozens of tweets by PHR-I and its officials repeated messages like “conditioning # hungerstriker Allan’s release from admin. detention on deportation is a violation of rights & intl. law,” with no mention of Islamic Jihad terrorism. The demands for his unconditional release refer to his weakened medical condition alone.

Physicians and medical ethics became involved after the Knesset passed legislation authorizing doctors to force-feed hunger strikers to prevent their deaths, based on the American practice at the Guantanamo prison for al-Qaida suspects. The NGOs led the campaign against this legislation, and many Israeli doctors, including at Barzilai and Soroka hospitals where Allaan has been hospitalized, refused to implement the force-feeding option.

Other doctors disagree, seeing the obligation to save lives as paramount, including the use of coercion in order to prevent death by voluntary starvation. The NGO-led claim that there is only one ethically “correct” interpretation on this issue erases this debate. The homepages of Adalah’s and PHR-I’s websites are filled with simplistic propaganda pieces and portraits of Allaan , but again, without mentioning his terrorism connection, which is the reason for his incarceration. Similarly, PHR-I blasted out a statement headlined “Forced Feeding Bill Approved: befits dark regimes,” which removes all

complexity, and refers to the “shameful law, which reveals the real, anti-democratic face of its members.”

In addition, PHR-I, along with Adalah , al Mezan and the other political NGOs are active in campaigning against administrative detention, particularly against terrorists.

Their “aspirational” legal analyses, quoted by journalists, are as one-sided and misleading as in the medical dimensions. Administrative detention in general, and in the Allan case specifically has been found to be legally acceptable under the specific circumstances.

Judges who hear the evidence agree that public trials would expose secret anti-terrorism intelligence methods on which Israel, like other Western democratic governments, rely for security. For the political NGOs that systematically oppose anti-terrorism security measures, exposure of these intelligence methods and their impairment are, in themselves, important goals.

The successes that Allan and his NGO support group can now claim following the media campaign, the threats of violence and his subsequent release guarantees the frequent use of the hunger strike strategy.

In connecting the NGO dots in the Allan case, the picture that emerges is very cynical, with the details and arguments manipulated, particularly by politicized NGOs and their funder/enablers, to achieve objectives far removed from the specifics – particularly by hiding the core terrorism dimension.

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