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The Gaza flotilla and the dirty NGO war

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The images from the “peace” flotilla to Gaza exposed the tactics of powerful non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that lead the strategy of political warfare targeting Israel.

In the May 31 flotilla attack, IHH – a Turkish “charity” with close links to Hamas and jihadist groups – combined forces with European anti-Israel campaigners, including the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). Members of both groups co-operate with terrorists that goad Israel into using force, resulting in injuries and deaths. They know how to unleash massive diplomatic and political campaigns using false charges of “war crimes,” “collective punishment” and similar allegations.

The Israeli government has been remarkably and depressingly inept in dealing with this third-generation warfare (following conventional army attacks from 1948 to 1973, and the ongoing terror campaigns). In the case of the IHH-ISM “free Gaza” flotilla, the IDF and Defence Ministry were surprised by the violence, and the political leadership, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, didn’t anticipate the international pressure to end the Gaza blockade. (When they acted to allow most civilian goods into Gaza, it was another case of too little, too late.)

In order to defeat this third-generation warfare, which has already done considerable damage, we need to assess the threat and find the right strategy. Understanding NGO exploitation of moral principles is the first step. The IHH and ISM were supported by a wide network, including the major NGO superpowers (Amnesty International, Oxfam, Human Rights Watch) and many local partners. This network creates the environment that automatically condemns Israel, while portraying Palestinians as helpless victims.

This illicit political influence has been visible in Canada, where self-promoting radicals initially funded by Liberal governments have waged political war against Israel, the United States and other democracies. When the Harper government ended their taxpayer funding, the NGOs fought back with all their power, mobilizing allies in Radio-Canada, the Toronto Star and Maclean’s.

I recently observed the wrath of the NGO network at the European Parliament’s subcommittee on human rights in Brussels. A hearing, ostensibly on civil society in

Israel, was initiated by NGOs under the façade of promoting peace and human rights. As in Canada, these powerful NGOs have a great deal to lose if Europe's secret funding mechanisms are opened to public scrutiny.

The session opened with speeches from three EU-funded NGO speakers – a fringe Israeli who heads PCATI (the “Public Committee Against Torture in Israel”), Mossawa (led by radical Israeli-Arabs), and the Euro-Med Human Rights Network, which coordinates demonization among these and similar groups. Each spoke for more than 10 minutes, repeating the standard anti-Israel rhetoric, and praising bogus human rights defenders, including the IHH/ISM “Free Gaza” terrorists.

I was invited to present a different perspective by one of the few Euro MPs who knows enough about the reality in Israel to distinguish fact from fiction and recognize the need for a fact-based analysis of NGO agendas and the secret EU funding they enjoy. This was a major departure from the standard ideological monopoly, and the NGO network made a major effort to prevent me from speaking by falsely claiming that I and NGO Monitor are agents of the Israeli government. After losing the battle, they convinced the chair to limit me to five minutes, after they had spoken for 30. (Foreign diplomats get five minutes, and the Israeli diplomat used his time effectively.)

I eventually got my 10 minutes, and surprised many of the EU officials with detailed evidence of NGO manipulation and coarse immorality. This was one small battle in the NGO-led dirty war against democracy, in general, and against Israel, in particular. The Harper government has also made important progress in this area, as has Australia. If Europe's role in aiding third-generation NGO warfare against Israel is also exposed and then halted, this will mark a turning point.

We must win many more battles, focusing on the NGO groups that exploit and destroy moral principles, and on the funding sources that facilitate their dirty warfare. But at least we understand the threat, have a rational strategy and some solid allies, and a few initial successes to give hope.