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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

Written statement* submitted by the Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 September 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Submission of the Amuta for NGO Responsibility

Lack of Transparency in European Government Funding to Palestinian NGOs

The central role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Arab-Israeli conflict is facilitated by substantial financial support, primarily from donor governments. NGO Monitor, a project of the Amuta for NGO Responsibility, has prepared a systematic analysis and database documenting the channeling of funding from European governments to Palestinian NGOs.¹

Several of these groups have alleged ties to terrorist organizations. Some recipients are involved in the whitewashing of violence and terrorism, legal warfare (“lawfare”) against Israeli officials, BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns, and even promoting antisemitic propaganda and incitement. Funding to organizations engaged in this activity violates international human rights law, international laws relating to terror financing, EU law and regulations, and domestic European legislation relating to terror financing, hate speech, incitement, and discrimination based on religion and national origin.

This analysis presents the details of funding to 36 Palestinian NGOs, including the identities of the donors (government or private), the grant’s time frame, and the source of the data.

The report utilizes two primary data sources: NGO annual reports and websites and information published by donor governments.

There are two unique challenges in researching funding to Palestinian NGOs, compared to Israeli grantees:

1. NGO Transparency: NGOs registered in the Palestinian Authority are bound by an “NGO Law,” instituted in 2000. According to Article 13 of the law, “No later than four months following the end of the fiscal year, an NGO must present to the relevant ministry... a financial report approved by an accountant and includes detailed income and expenditures of the organization, relative to the property listed in its name.” (NGO Monitor translation). Not included is reference to any requirement that these reports be made available to the general public. In addition, the Palestinian Authority has a poor record combating corruption and implementing and complying with good governance standards, as well as developing a liberal civil society. This lack of commitment by the Palestinian Authority compounds the issues related to Palestinian NGO transparency.

2. Donor Government Transparency: The level of reporting and transparency differs by country. Many states do not publish exact grant amounts or details regarding their grantees. Other countries have tried to suppress this information under a claim of “national security”.

Analysis

NGO Reporting

- Out of the 36 Palestinian NGOs included in this report, only eight publish complete data on donations. The rest of these groups only partially cite or fully omit the names of funders in various documents and on their websites. The lack of transparency for the overwhelming majority of these NGOs makes it difficult to identify funding.

European Government Reporting

European government support generally flows through two main channels: direct funding from state mechanisms (including ministries and embassies) to local NGOs; and indirect funding to NGOs, which occurs in the following ways:

¹ The full report and database can be found at: <http://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/palestinian-ngo-funding-data-base/>

1. **Indirect-marked:** The government designates funds for a local Palestinian NGO and uses a third party to transfer the money.

2. **Indirect-general:** Churches, humanitarian organizations, and foundations that are partially funded by the government fund local Palestinian NGOs. In this case, it is unclear if and how much government money has been passed to the local NGO.

NGO Monitor research found that:

- The amounts reported total **approximately \$120 million** and represent only part of the aid budgets for those organizations. Due to the lack of transparency, however, **the actual amount of funding provided is likely significantly higher.**
- The most transparent countries are Norway and Sweden, as they provide details on the size of grants, the grantees, and projects. Yet, the content of a significant portion these grants and the partners chosen to execute them are highly troubling and warrant investigation.
- The least transparent country, in terms of access to grant details and information on grantees, is Germany. Germany does not maintain a publicly available project database, making it challenging for the general public to understand where its money is transferred.

A large portion of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Norwegian funding is distributed through the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to local Palestinian NGOs. On the UK's Department for International Development's UK Development Tracker website, funds transferred to local organizations through NRC are listed as "supplier name withheld" without the final recipient being listed.

Another governmental funding mechanism is the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat, a joint NGO funding mechanism of the governments of Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland, based out of Birzeit University in Ramallah. According to Secretariat reports, between 2014-2017, more than \$9.6 million dollars were transferred to NGOs, most of which are involved in anti-Israel campaigns. Several of these groups are linked to the PFLP terror organization and promote blatantly antisemitic content.

According to donor reports, many grants to PalestinNGOs are in the form of multi-year grants and many grants are distributed to NGOs for collaborative projects. This phenomenon, combined with the lack of transparency, makes it difficult to determine how much money each individual organization receives.

European governments also fund local NGOs through the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA oPt). It is unclear if these are additional grants or are the same as grants that appear in official government documents (For more information on OCHA oPt, see NGO Monitor's report, "UNOCHA-oPt: Politicized Activities and Funding in the Arab-Israeli Conflict).

There is little record demonstrating whether this funding has been effective in achieving the stated goals. It is unclear what oversight mechanisms are in place and how many evaluations, whether independent or otherwise, of this funding have been conducted. Few documents discussing outcomes are available publicly.

Therefore, the Amuta for NGO Responsibility calls on the EU and all European donors:

To undertake a review of their funding to ensure that grant recipients have the sufficient capacity to carry out the projects, that such funding is effective and produces positive outcomes rather than inflame and prolong conflict, and is in keeping with international and domestic legislation and norms. Such review must concretely and specifically examine and document how such goals were achieved.

To make all funding information and evaluations of such funding publicly available as part of good governance principles and so that independent review and analysis can take place.