



רוצה להרוויח משכורת שנתית בחודש?
הצטרף לשיעור במסחר יומי ללא תשלום ותראה איך מרוויחים כסף גדול באמת
מלא טופס קצר ותתחיל ולהרוויח \$\$

Feedback - Ads by Google

ONLINE EDITION
JERUSALEM POST

Click to Print

Right of Reply: Ideological dead-enders defend HRW

Aug. 2, 2009

GERALD M. STEINBERG, THE JERUSALEM POST

Helsinki Watch (now Human Rights Watch) was established in New York by Robert Bernstein in 1978, primarily to lead the struggle on behalf of prisoners of conscience caught behind the Iron Curtain, including Soviet Jews like Anatoly (now Natan) Sharansky. Bernstein and his colleagues were liberal Democrats, and this was a bold move in this environment. One can easily imagine the attacks in speeches and columns (this was long before the Internet and blogosphere) from unreformed Stalinists on the far left condemning Bernstein's ideological treachery, and labeling Helsinki Watch as a Nixonian anticommunist tool.

But the world has changed, and HRW officials and their die-hard supporters are today's ideological dinosaurs. When the Cold War ended, HRW and its London-based twin - Amnesty International - adjusted their agendas to maintain influence and donations. They redefined themselves by claiming expertise they do not have on international law in armed conflicts, and their obsessive condemnations of Israel endeared them to the UN, while keeping HRW in the headlines. They were embraced by the anti-Zionist post-colonialists who maintain the flame and adrenalin in the Left-Right battles that raged during the Cold War.

These primitive Manichean ideologues have now come to the defense of HRW, after the NGO's leaders have been exposed for using biased and inaccurate "research reports" slamming Israel to solicit funds in Saudi Arabia. Now, as in the Cold War days, the main strategy is to ignore the substance and defame opponents, real or artificial.

DANIEL LEVY launched his attack on HRW's critics in the [widely-read Huffington Post blog](#), and Larry Derfner [joined the fray](#) in The Jerusalem Post (July 23). Levy's opening assault sought to discredit "the former right-wing Israeli government minister, Natan Sharansky (also an ex-Prisoner of Zion, president George W. Bush's favorite author and occupation apologist)."

The pejorative language used by Levy declares that critics of HRW are on the wrong side of the ideological fence; nothing else matters. In this ideological parallel universe, facts are irrelevant. Erasing the reluctant confessions of Ken Roth and other HRW officials caught courting a member of the Shura Council (the Saudi religious police), among others, Levy screams: "It was not a fund-raising event. HRW was certainly not fund-raising from the Saudi government... That HRW does not take government money is something that is already well-known." Apparently HRW's leaders had forgotten this.

Levy and Derfner also endorse HRW's dire efforts to discredit the facts and analysis published by NGO Monitor, which broke the story of the HRW-Saudi dinner, based on an article in the Riyadh-based

Arab News. Levy condemns what he calls the "narrow and misguided right-wing Israel advocacy agenda" led by "Gerald Steinberg's odiously named "NGO Monitor." (To please Levy, we would have been NGO Watch, but the domain name was already taken.)

Similarly, Derfner presents a grotesque caricature of NGO Monitor as "an organization whose sole activity is to tear down human rights organizations that are critical of Israel." No evidence is presented, and none is needed as Derfner's goal is to discredit the systematic analysis of HRW's activities without anyone having to go to the trouble of actually reading NGO Monitor's publications. This is how ideological warfare continues to be waged.

Instead of his using own invective, Levy uses Sarah Leah Whitson's, head of HRW's Middle East division, who slams the "the Gerald Steinbergs of this world, and I guess now the Sharanskys" and continues: "Please, if there is something we got wrong, if one of the incidents or attacks we described is wrong, I would love to hear it... let's get down to the facts and let me know, did we get the fact wrong on any of these cases."

We have - many times. NGO Monitor's numerous analyses (and a 164-page report from the Israeli government) on the Gaza war have systematically exposed HRW's pseudo-technical reports on IDF drone use and the absurd denial that Hamas used human shields in Gaza. But for ideologues, the details are irrelevant.

IN PARALLEL, Derfner's version blindly repeats HRW's claims to have criticized Saudi Arabia as much as Israel, and quotes a few passages from a brief chapter. This is an improvement - HRW only began low-visibility reports on Saudi, Libyan or Syrian violations in 2006, following pressure from board members who read NGO Monitor's reports. But the double standards continue, reflected in the contrasting language and publicity given to reports.

On Saudi Arabia, the language is soft: "Human rights conditions remain poor...," while the latest speculative report on Israel's actions in Gaza, publicized in a full-dress HRW press conference at the American Colony Hotel, uses the term "war crimes" seven times.

Ignoring these key differences, Derfner returns to his ideological straitjacket: "The truth known to everyone outside the right-wing echo chamber is that HRW, like Amnesty International, like the International Committee for the Red Cross... are impartial, credible sources of information."

No Larry and Daniel, the "truth" is far more complex, HRW and other political NGOs have little credibility and if you leave your own echo-chambers, you will discover that you have been manipulated to promote another lost and immoral cause.

The writer is executive director of NGO Monitor and teaches political studies at Bar-Ilan University.

This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249223904115&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>

[[Back to the Article](#)]