

EU fed lies about Israel and West Bank

By Gerald Steinberg, May 17, 2012

On May 14, EU foreign ministers officially condemned Israeli policy in “Area C”, that part of the West Bank under Israel’s responsibility according to the Oslo frameworks. Their words adopt the Arab narrative and are far removed from the complex reality.

Such statements reflect the degree to which the EU and its member states have outsourced their policies on Israel and the conflict to a small group of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs. When these ideological NGOs misrepresent reality, it is then reflected in EU rhetoric.

As detailed in a new report by NGO Monitor, *Highly Sensitive EU Documents Repeat False NGO Claims*, between December 2010 and February 2012, six documents from the EU offices were systematically leaked to the media. The documents, dealing with the highly sensitive issues of Jerusalem, the status of Israeli-Arab citizens, violence in the West Bank, and “Area C”, repeat false allegations and distortions by EU-funded NGOs — in some cases, word for word.

This echo chamber contains a narrow fringe of the political spectrum, whose influence is artificially enhanced by massive European government funding. Other views, including those from Israel’s elected leadership and civil society representatives of Israeli public opinion, are simply erased from European policy-making on extremely sensitive issues.

With regard to the six leaked documents, the evidence indicates that the EU made no attempt to verify information or engage in broad discussions. Instead, they relied on such EU-funded political advocacy NGOs as Israel Committee Against House Demolitions, HaMoked, Association for Civil Rights Israel, Ir Amim, Yesh Din and B’Tselem — a wholly inappropriate model for these multifaceted challenges.

As a result, the leaked documents on Jerusalem call for dangerous confrontations with Israel, for example by telling European officials to “avoid having Israeli security and/or protocol accompanying high-ranking officials from member states when visiting the Old City/East Jerusalem”.

Such a policy would be tantamount to granting the Palestinians sovereignty over Jerusalem’s Old City, the Temple Mount, and other sacred sites. Other measures go further in accepting Palestinian positions, dispensing with the need for negotiations and compromise.

The EU document on “Area C” copies false NGO population claims to promote the incendiary libel of Israeli “ethnic cleansing” stating that “[prior] to the Israeli occupation in 1967, Palestinian population of the Jordan Valley was estimated at between 200,000 and 320,000. As of 2009 the population is approximately 56,000...”

According to this version, which originated with the Maan Development Centre, an EU-funded Palestinian NGO, half of the entire population of the West Bank before 1967 was living in or near Jericho — an absurd claim that it seems no EU official bothered to check.

In writing and then leaking each document, the EU violated basic norms of good governance, while dangerously adding to the conflict and fostering Israeli distrust of Europe. Relying on political advocacy NGOs and false information to circumvent diplomatic channels is, to say the least, counter-productive. An environment conducive to peace should first and foremost be based on trust and understanding.

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