

Palestinian NGO Blood Libel, Funded by E.U. and U.S.
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On March 27, 2013, Miftah – a Palestinian non-governmental organization (NGO) led by long-time PLO spokesperson Hanan Ashrawi — published an article in Arabic by Nawaf al-Zaru that repeated the infamous blood libel against Jews. Referring to President Obama’s recent trip to Israel, al Zaru wrote, “Does Obama in fact know the relationship, for example, between ‘Passover’ and ‘Christian blood’?!... the Jews used the blood of Christians in the Jewish Passover ...”

This core antisemitic myth incited many pogroms against Jews in medieval Europe, resulting in the murder of thousands and the brutal elimination of entire communities. In the 19th century, accusations increased, expanding as far as Damascus, and also fueled Nazi propaganda, including in *Der Sturmer*. Now, this debased forgery, like the Protocols, has become widespread in Arab and Muslim media, including in the publications of “mainstream” NGOs, such as Miftah, and is included in a deadly mix of anti-Israel propaganda and incitement.

Miftah, however, did not act alone – its visibility and impact is the result of massive funding received from donors who, while publicly condemning antisemitism and incitement, turn a blind eye to its practice. In 2011 (the latest available report), Miftah’s funder/enablers include the European Union (via the Anna Lindh Foundation), the governments of Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Italy, and Austria, as well as two official German political foundations (the Heinrich Boell and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung), and the UK branch of Oxfam (itself a recipient of state funding). Similarly, the US-based National Endowment for Democracy and International Republican Institute, both taxpayer supported, provided money between 2007 and 2012. (The NED reported having stopped the flow at the end of 2012, in contrast to many of the European funders.)

After this repetition of the blood libel became public, largely through the efforts of a blogger (Elder of Zion), some funders sought to distance themselves and rejected any responsibility for their central roles. An Oxfam GB official condemned the “reprehensible anti-Semitic statements” on Miftah’s website, while noting that the NGO “has removed the offensive blog post and issued a public apology [after outside pressure, in English only - not on the original Arabic site]. MIFTAH has assured us that the individual behind the post has been reprimanded.” And in any case, the Oxfam GB partnership is about helping “marginalized women and men to support women’s rights and gender justice.” Case closed.

Similarly, an NED official from the US explained that the funding was provided for Miftah’s “young leaders program,” while Miftah’s web site “has never been supported by NED”.

Such attempts to compartmentalize and deny moral responsibility are entirely artificial and evasive. Miftah is a blatantly political organization, as Ashrawi’s role demonstrates. According to its mission statement, the main goal is “to engage local and international public opinion” in support of “the Palestinian cause by disseminating “the Palestinian narrative and discourse ...” In other words, Miftah is clearly a propaganda organization, and played a key role in the infamous 2001 Durban NGO Forum, whose participants adopted a strategy of political warfare against Israel, using the facade of human rights and civil society.

When these funders decided to support Miftah, did they fail to check the organization's website? Or did they work hard to overlook numerous accusations of Israeli "cultural genocide," "war crimes," and "apartheid," posts in English and Arabic promoting anti-Israeli BDS (boycotts, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns, and articles glorifying terrorism. A piece by Johorah Baker, "Palestinian Women and the Intifada" (July 5, 2006), focuses on Palestinian women who "decided to join the ranks of the resistance movement," including Wafa Idrees, described as "the beginning of a string of Palestinian women dedicated to sacrificing their lives for the cause." Another heroine, Hanadi Jaradat, murdered 21 people, including four children on October 4, 2003 in Haifa.

This background stands in sharp contrast to Miftah's belated "apology", which claimed that Nawaf al-Zaru's article was "accidentally and incorrectly published by a junior staff member". In an earlier response, also in English, Miftah officials attacked Elder of Ziyon for "smearing" them and described Al Zaru's article as having "briefly addressed" the blood libel. (In fact, up to half the article focused on this myth.)

In this culture of hatred, the publication of the blood libel was far from exceptional. Surely, European and American government officials who approved funding this and other such NGOs should have considered this evidence. Similarly, the members of parliaments who approved the budgets (in most cases, without access to any of the details, which EU and other officials have labeled top secret), and the journalists who showed not interest in this policy and its consequences, share in this moral failure.

Funders, particularly those who use the money provided by taxpayers, are also enablers, and accountable for all of the activities, including antisemitism, of the organizations in which they invest. The damage that has already been done by European governments and the US as a result irresponsible support for Miftah and its counterparts is immeasurable, and every additional grant does greater harm.