

Citation for published version:

Marusek, S & Miller, D 2015, How Israel attempts to mislead the United Nations: Deconstructing Israel's campaign against the Palestinian Return Centre. Public Interest Investigations.

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

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How Israel attempts to mislead the United Nations

Deconstructing Israel's campaign against the Palestinian Return Centre

Sarah Marusek
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July 2015



spinwatch 
Public Interest Investigations



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Published by:



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British Cataloguing-in-Publications Data.

A catalogue record for this report is available from the British Library. ISBN 978-0-9570274-5-9

Design Omar Kachouh, London

Published in the UK, July 2015

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Spinwatch is a founder member of the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation in the EU (ALTER-EU) and the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency UK (ALT-UK).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

This report has been commissioned by the Palestinian Return Centre. It is based on research by a variety of Public Interest Investigations researchers and by the authors. The PRC has had no role in study design, collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, or writing of the report. The PRC was responsible for providing funding, design and editorial layout.

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By Sarah Marusek and David Miller

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Key findings

This report shows that the pro-Israel lobby groups involved in the campaign against the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) at the United Nations (UN) fail to distinguish between matters of fact on the one hand, and claims made by overtly politicised media and think tanks on the other. The campaign accuses the PRC of having ties with Hamas based on unfounded allegations and circumstantial evidence. The tendency to conflate terrorism with non-terroristic forms of political activism and civil disobedience is a recurring theme throughout the pro-Israeli literature on the PRC. Furthermore, the campaign is part of Israel's wider effort to criminalise international civil society organisations actively promoting Palestinian rights and equality.

1. *The PRC is a non-governmental organisation registered in London that is dedicated to finding a solution for Palestinian refugees in accordance with international and humanitarian law through organising conferences, events, delegations and published materials, working with Palestinians alongside UN and government officials.*

The PRC's activities include holding events at the UK parliament, conferences in the UK and across Europe, delegations to meet Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and producing publications, as well as promoting Palestinian identity and culture more generally.

British MPs and European MEPs along with UN, regional and local officials take part in these activities, representing a diversity of views.

2. *The allegations against the PRC are hearsay. The oft cited report by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which reportedly has links with the Israeli military, does not provide any concrete evidence, lacks citations, self-admittedly relies on circumstantial evidence, erases political diversity in PRC activities and focuses on individuals not actively affiliated with the organisation.*

According to *The New York Times*, Meir Amit 'has close ties to the Israeli military establishment and is supported by the American Jewish Congress'. The *Washington Post* also reports that the centre maintains an office within Israel's Defense Ministry.

The Meir Amit report lacks adequate citations, with most of them based on hearsay and many links no longer active. The resulting report is propagandist. The name of 'Ismael Haniyeh,' the former Prime Minister of Gaza, is cited 16 times; some form of 'terror' 66 times (39 uses of 'terrorism', 26 of 'terrorist' and one 'terror'); the Muslim Brotherhood 119 times; and Hamas 229 times. Meanwhile, the participation of a political diversity of Palestinians, as well as British and European officials, in the PRC's activities is ignored.

The authors of the report admit that: 'In the PRC's many publications it is hard to find reliable information about its structure, activists, sources of funding and connections with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.' Nevertheless, they argue that, 'even if it cannot be proved,' their assessment is that the PRC has indeed received funding from foundations connected to the Muslim Brotherhood and/or Hamas.

The authors also say ‘their information,’ never specified, ‘and large amounts of circumstantial evidence’ support the existence of the PRC’s connection to Hamas. The report singles out the participation of Hamas officials in selected PRC conferences to show a direct political relationship between the two, while ignoring the PRC’s wider activities and the participation of other Palestinian officials, as well as European and Arab participants.

Furthermore, the report singles out several individuals who are known British-Palestinian activists legally working in the UK and not presently involved with the PRC in any formal capacity. Majed al-Zeer and Ghassan Faour, who have both been with the PRC since its establishment in 1996, act as directors of the NGO.

3. *Two particular groups are currently active in the public campaign against the PRC at the United Nations: UN Watch and NGO Monitor. Both are funded by right-wing pro-Israel and Islamophobic groups in the US.*

The Geneva-based UN Watch lobbies against the alleged anti-Israeli biases of the UN and the Israeli-based NGO Monitor lobbies against liberal Israeli and international organisations, including the New Israel Fund, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Since 2001, UN Watch has been affiliated with the American Jewish Committee (AJC), which had a budget of \$51,994,897 in 2013 (compared with the PRC’s budget of \$613,392). After 2007, AJC changed the way it reported funding UN Watch and it is not entirely clear exactly how much money it annually allocates to the organisation.

NGO Monitor is not transparent about its financing. Some of its funds have reportedly come from the Israeli quasi-governmental Jewish Agency. The American Friends of NGO Monitor never officially registered while collecting funds, and an organisation named REPORT Inc. was only registered in 2010. Additionally, *Haaretz* newspaper has accused NGO Monitor of using ‘McCarthyite techniques – blacklisting, guilt by association and selective filtering of facts.’

AJC, UN Watch and NGO Monitor are funded by foundations that support a number of right wing pro-Israel and Islamophobic causes, which include:

- **American Friends of IDC Herzliya:** funds a private university in Israel with close connections to the Israeli government and military
- **Birthright Israel:** encourages Jewish only immigration to Israel
- **Clarion Fund:** behind the notorious anti-Islam film *Obsession*
- **Central Fund of Israel:** funder of Israeli settlements in Palestine
- **David Horowitz Freedom Center and Middle East Forum:** labelled by the Center for American Progress as central to the Islamophobia network in the US
- **Friends of the IDF:** largest international donor to the Israeli Defense Forces
- **Middle East Media Research Institute:** the Center for American Progress has called the group ‘the Islamophobia network’s go-to place for selective translations of Islamist rhetoric abroad’

Overall, the report concludes that the campaign against the PRC is politically motivated and the allegations against the NGO are not evidentially supported.

Chapter one

Introduction

In 2010, the Reut Institute, an Israeli think tank based in Tel Aviv, published a report about Israel's eroding international image, blaming the efforts of what it called the 'Delegitimisation Network.'¹ Since then, the Israeli government and numerous affiliated civil society organisations have waged a campaign against international organisations, particularly in the United States and Europe, that are actively promoting Palestinian rights and equality, including established groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Public Interest Investigations has published a series of reports examining the intersection between some of the pro-Israel lobby groups involved in this campaign and right-wing groups peddling Islamophobia.² Israel's current campaign against the Palestinian return Centre (PRC) at the United Nations (UN), which is part of this wider international effort, also fits this mould.

While Israel's campaign against the PRC relies on innuendoes, hearsay and circumstantial evidence, this report presents clear political, financial and institutional linkages between those publicly campaigning against the PRC and right-wing pro-Israel and Islamophobic groups in the US.

The pro-Israel organisations that are involved in this campaign fail to distinguish between matters of fact on the one hand, and claims made by overtly politicised media and think tanks on the other. The tendency to conflate terrorism with non-terroristic forms of political activism and civil disobedience is a recurring theme throughout the pro-Israel literature on the PRC. Furthermore, any one individual's support of the Palestinians' right to self-defence is equated with not only support for terrorism, but also terrorism itself.

The PRC is a London-based non-governmental organisation that was granted special consultative status at the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations on 1 June 2015,³ despite Israel's campaign to deny the PRC this status. Since then, Israeli officials and some affiliated organisations have continued to lobby ECOSOC member nations at the UN to overturn this decision.⁴

In the public domain, Israel's UN Ambassador Ron Prosor denounced the committee's decision and claimed that by granting the PRC special consultative status, the UN had given ' Hamas a grand welcoming at its main gates, allowing it to be a full participant'.⁵ The pro-Israel group UN Watch announced that it would be appealing the decision.⁶ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, a think tank affiliated with the Israeli intelligence services, re-issued its 2011 report on the PRC's alleged connections to Hamas, discussed in detail in chapter three.⁷ And finally, several Israeli media outlets uncritically circulated these allegations and called for its UN status to be withdrawn.⁸

This report deconstructs the Israeli-led campaign against the PRC by both examining the allegations made against it by pro-Israel lobby groups and by investigating the people and organisations involved in circulating these allegations and financing the overall effort.

We find that a network of American and Israeli charities and civil society organisations that support right-wing pro-Israel and Islamophobic causes financially support two of the groups actively involved in the campaign against the PRC: UN Watch and NGO Monitor.

Chapter two

About the PRC and its work to uphold UN resolutions

The Palestinian Return Centre is a non-governmental organisation registered in the UK with offices based in northwest London. It is one of the few British-Palestinian NGOs dedicated to finding a solution for Palestinian refugees in accordance with international and humanitarian law. Its staff consists of Palestinian-British and British citizens.

The PRC describes itself as ‘an independent consultancy focusing on the historical, political and legal aspects of Palestinian refugees’.⁹ As part of this mission, the PRC is also concerned with promoting Palestinian identity and culture throughout Europe.

Its official position on the Palestinian right of return is based on UN resolution 194, which:

Resolves that the [Palestinian] refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.¹⁰

Majed al-Zeer, long-time director of the centre, states that the refugee issue ‘remains central to the question of Palestine’.¹¹ He adds that the PRC is ‘fully committed to the victims of the Nakba’, the Arabic word to describe the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in 1948 to make way for the creation of Israel, ‘and want[s] to see a resolution to their plight based on international law’.¹²

The PRC aims to ‘defend the right to return on all levels, including academia, media and politics’,¹³ through organising conferences and events across Europe. After being accredited by the United Nations in 2003, the PRC has been able to participate in sessions organised by the UN Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

So far, the PRC has received at least 20 letters from UK MPs in support of its application at the UN, and over 100 letters from parliamentarians across Europe¹⁴. This includes the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Greek MEP Dimitrios Papadimoulis.

One of its major activities is hosting the annual Palestinians In Europe Conference, which is held in a different European capital each year. Working with partner organisations in Europe, 13 of these conferences have taken place so far, providing a forum where thousands of Palestinian refugees across Europe can meet and exchange views.¹⁵ Representatives from the different political factions in Palestine regularly take part, as well as officials from Arab states and Europe.¹⁶ For example, at the twelfth meeting in Paris, in 2014, speakers included: former Jordanian Prime Minister Taher al-Masri, Palestinian Ambassador to France Hayel al-Fahom, Vice Chair of the Tunisian Constituent Assembly Aziz Dwaik, President of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe Abdallah Benmansour, and the former Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Riah Abu al-Assal, amongst others.¹⁷



Dries van Agt, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Majed Al-Zeer, PRC director, and Archbishop of Sebastia Atallah Hanna from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. at the 7th annual Palestinians In Europe Conference in the Netherlands.

In addition, the PRC has organised, again with partner organisations, several political delegations to meet with officials and to visit Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. In 2009, it led a delegation to meet Javier Solana, then EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.¹⁸ The same year, over 50 parliamentarians from across Europe visited Gaza. Similar delegations visited Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon in 2011,¹⁹ and those fleeing the violence in Syria in 2013.²⁰ During these visits, delegates met with representatives from the major Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Fatah, along with other members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, as well as independents, for example religious leaders or those aligned with neither Fatah nor Hamas.²¹



Delegation to EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, including Baroness Jenny Tonge; Clare Short, former Secretary of State for International Development; Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament; Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales Caroline Lucas MP; PRC Director Majed Al-Zeer; and former PRC Executive Director Arafat Madi.

In 2009, the PRC launched Palestine Memorial Week, which has subsequently been held in different locations across Britain each year. Activities include: public meetings, workshops, film screenings, photographic exhibitions and demonstrations.²²



From right to left: Britain's International Development Minister Mike Foster, Dr. Ghada Karmi, Professor Rachel Rudolph and Dr. Van Engeland (Expert International Refugee Law) participating in 'UNRWA and the future of Palestinian refugees,' December 2009.

The PRC also holds regular events about the future of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). For example, in 2009, the PRC held an international conference commemorating six decades of UNRWA, recognising the UN organisation's services to the refugees while also stressing that it cannot offer a solution to their problem. The conference, 'UNRWA and the future of Palestinian refugees,' featured UNRWA spokesperson Sami Mshasha, former British MP Clare Short and Palestinian Ambassador to the United Kingdom Manual Hassassian.²³



The 2013 parliamentary delegation meets with the former President of Lebanon, Michel Sleiman.

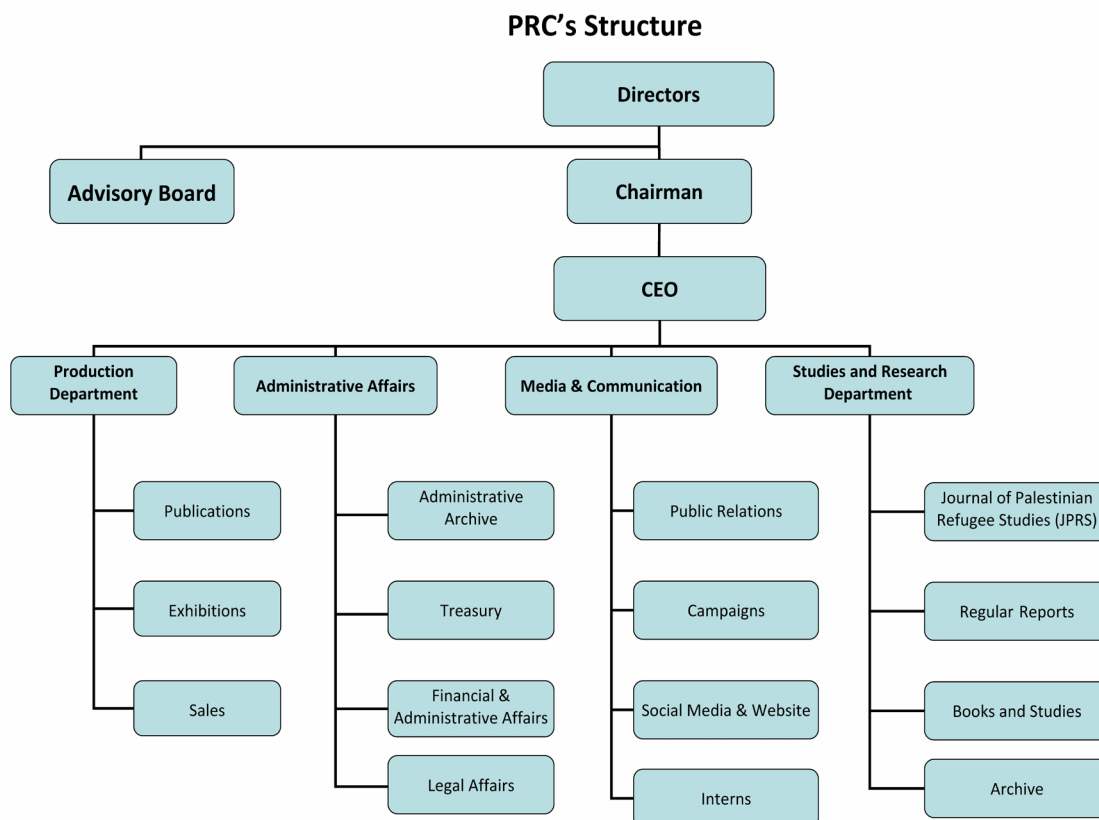
The PRC also publishes materials, including the *Journal of Palestinian Refugee Studies*, aiming to create new spaces to discuss the plight of Palestinian refugees, and released a film documenting the detention and resettlement of Palestinian refugees from Iraq.²⁴

Majed al-Zeer and Ghassan Faour, who have both been with the PRC since its establishment in 1996, act as directors. Al-Zeer, a Palestinian refugee whose family was driven from their Jerusalem home in 1948,²⁵ is also the chairperson of the Palestinians in Europe Conference.

PRC has an advisory board and often gets advice from British MPs, European MEPs, lawyers, journalists and diplomats in regard to its activities. In addition, it has a small staff and employs consultants, including British experts as well as Arab and Palestinian figures. Its budget was £439,443 in 2011, £312,072 in 2012, £393,606 in 2013 and £141,153 in 2014.

The PRC has stated to the authors that it provided the UN with detailed information on its funders; however, the NGO prefers not to publish this information in the public domain because it is concerned that this will make the funders vulnerable to being targeted individually by Israeli groups working to close the PRC down. This lack of transparency is not ideal, but points to the importance of instituting international regulatory protections for organisations operating within the law.

Figure 1. PRC's organisational structure



Chapter three

Intelligence 'experts' on Hamas and the PRC

Israel's campaign against the Palestinian Return Centre is an extension of its wider efforts against Palestinians who oppose its discriminatory policies. Israel's campaign to isolate the Palestinian resistance movement is more than just a military struggle, but also a political effort in civil society against all forms of non-violent resistance.

This campaign is backed by a plethora of American and Israeli reports, articles and books ostensibly about Hamas and its alleged international support network. One of the most commonly cited 'experts' on terrorism by pro-Israel groups is Matthew Levitt,²⁶ whose work has been subject to criticism by both journalists and academics.²⁷

Levitt's 2006 book on Hamas is particularly notable for its failure to distinguish between political, social and military activity, and even its willingness to conflate such activities. For example, under the subtitle, 'Muddying the Waters', Levitt writes: 'Inside the Palestinian territories, the battery of mosques, schools, orphanages, summer camps, and sports leagues sponsored by Hamas are integral part of an overarching apparatus of terror.'²⁸

Reviewing the book for *The New York Times*, Steven Erlanger criticised Levitt's overtly political motive as well as his methodology: 'He appears to have conducted very few interviews with Palestinians or even to have examined Palestinian attitudes through opinion polls,' adding that the book 'depends almost entirely on American and Israeli sources,' and in particular 'on analyses from the [Meir Amit] Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center of the Center for Special Studies — an Israeli nongovernmental organisation created "in memory of the fallen of the Israeli intelligence community" and staffed by its former employees,' which he notes also receives Israeli government financing.²⁹

Erlanger concludes that: 'None of this would matter if Levitt used the centre's analyses critically, but he doesn't appear to. As a result, there will be readers of this book who will see it as fronting for the Israeli intelligence establishment and its views.'³⁰

One of the key resources used by the groups engaged in the campaign against the PRC³¹ is a 2011 report published by the above-mentioned Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, an Israeli think tank affiliated with the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center near Tel Aviv.³² According to *The New York Times*, Meir Amit 'has close ties to the Israeli military establishment and is supported by the American Jewish Congress.'³³ The *Washington Post* reports that it maintains an office at Israel's Defence Ministry,³⁴ while David Bedein, director of Israel Behind the News, has called it the 'public face of Israeli intelligence'.³⁵ The centre is named after Meir Amit who chaired the organisation prior to his death in 2009. He had previously been head of Israel's military intelligence agency Aman before being appointed head of Mossad from 1963 to 1968.³⁶ The current head of the centre, Reuven Erlich, is a retired colonel in Israeli military intelligence.³⁷

On 30 March 2011, Meir Amit published a report about the PRC that has served as the basis of many of the false and misleading accusations currently being circulated against it. The report's key claims lack reliable evidence and primary citations.

For example, the authors admit that: 'In the PRC's many publications it is hard to find reliable information about its structure, activists, sources of funding and connections with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.'³⁸ Nevertheless, they argue that, 'even if it cannot be proved,' their 'assessment' is that 'the PRC has other sources of funds at its disposal, notably the Muslim Brotherhood and/or funds and foundations connected to it and to Hamas'.³⁹

The report's assessment about the PRC's finances is also unsubstantiated. While the PRC occupies a small office space in northwest London and operates a modest budget, the authors of the Meir Amit report still claim, without providing any evidence, that 'the PRC maintains a vast physical and human presence. Establishing it, maintaining it and funding its extensive physical and human network demand... extremely large financial resources.'

The authors also argue that while the PRC has not openly stated its connections to what they call 'Muslim Brotherhood-style extremist Islam,' their 'information and large amounts of circumstantial evidence presented in [their] study support the existence of that connection.'⁴⁰

Relying on circumstantial evidence is only the beginning. In the report, which runs to over 26,000 words, the name of 'Ismael Haniyeh,' the Prime Minister of Gaza from 2006 to 2014, is cited 16 times; some form of 'terror' 66 times (39 uses of 'terrorism', 26 of 'terrorist' and one 'terror'); the Muslim Brotherhood 119 times; and Hamas 229 times.

Haniyeh is also pictured on the cover of the Meir Amit report during a satellite address at the seventh annual Palestinians in Europe conference, held in Milan in 2009. What the report fails to mention is that a broad range of participants also spoke at the event, including former British MP Jenny Tonge, then Italian MP Fernando Rossi and Secretary General of the Palestinian National Initiative Mustafa Barghouti, as illustrated in the photo below.



Mustafa Barghouti addressing the seventh annual Palestinians in Europe conference in Milan, 2009

The PRC says that it believes solving the issue of Palestinian refugees requires dialogue with all regional parties and local players in Palestine, along with help from the international community.⁴¹ However, the Meir Amit report obfuscates this possibility by only highlighting the participation of Hamas officials in PRC activities.

The report also refers to alleged PRC positions that are not attributed to any primary sources, let alone the PRC itself. For example, the authors state that the PRC's view of the right of return 'promotes the final goal of the "restoration" of all of the land of "Palestine," from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state instead of the State of Israel.'⁴² They further allege that: 'The demand for the return to Israel of millions of refugees is regarded by the PRC not only as a method which has been proved to sabotage every peace process, but as an important component in a long-range strategy which will eventually lead to a change in the demographic nature of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and serve the overall goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state on all of "Palestine," (i.e., the territory of the State of Israel).'⁴³

In fact, on its website the PRC states that its mission is: 'To establish the status of Palestinian refugees under international law without any equivocation, and campaign for their basic human and legal rights.'⁴⁴ Furthermore, equating 'all of Palestine' with the 'territory of the State of Israel' would require Israel's annexation of the occupied territories.

The authors also claim, again without any related citations, that: 'the PRC rejects outright the peace process, ties the hands of the Palestinian Authority, which negotiates with Israel for the Palestinians, and advocates Hamas' strategy of the "liberation of Palestine" through jihad and "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence] rather than political negotiations.'⁴⁵

Nowhere in the PRC's published materials are any of these positions supported. On its website, the PRC does criticise the peace process, especially the Oslo Accords, due to what the NGO calls its 'criminal disregard for the rights of Palestinian refugees'; however, such criticism is not an outright rejection. Furthermore, it refers to the Palestinian struggle not only as a national liberation movement, but also in relation to 'the core values and ideals that are at the centre of any human civilisation and international law'.⁴⁶

Indeed, within the ten pages of Meir Amit's report, only one citation is directly related to the PRC's actual literature: footnote nine refers to a promotional video produced by the PRC that expresses support for the second Palestinian intifada.⁴⁷

In the first appendix to the report, there are multiple footnotes referencing the PRC website to explain the organisation's actual positions on Israel and Palestine, for example that 'ending Israel's apartheid in Palestine is the world's responsibility,' about 'why Zionism equals racism,' and discussing the Palestinians' 'ongoing Nakba'.⁴⁸

Other footnotes in the appendix describe the PRC's actual activities, all of which are non violent. These include: organising a conference in 2002 at the Brunei Gallery at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies to discuss the right of return and its influence on the conflict in Palestine; coordinating a solidarity week with the Gaza Strip at London universities; and lodging a protest in 2008 with the Queen of England on the 60th anniversary of the Nakba and Israel's founding.⁴⁹ These positions and activities clearly do not support the report's conclusion that the PRC is affiliated with Hamas, or that it is working towards establishing an 'Islamic Palestinian state' in historical Palestine.⁵⁰

The report also highlights the PRC's strategy for promoting the right of return, which is both practical and progressive: 'stressing the "value of justice"... using short, easy to remember slogans; using publications of new historians; increasing the number of demonstrations; stressing the distinction between Judaism and the "Zionist project," etc.'⁵¹

The report fails, however, to distinguish between political activism and terrorism. For example, it indiscriminately calls Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails 'terrorist operatives',⁵² and conflates non-violent protests, such as the land convoys and sea flotillas to the Gaza Strip, with terrorism.⁵³ Throughout the report, the term 'resistance' is followed by either '[i.e., terrorism]' or '[i.e., terrorism and violence]'.⁵⁴ A diagram at the end even features the PRC alongside other religious or peace organisations seen as pro-Palestinian, such as Stop the War and the Anglican Church.⁵⁵

In essence, the report is part of the effort to gain international support for the Israeli government's decision to outlaw the PRC based on the Israel Security Agency's claim that it is 'part of the Hamas movement'.⁵⁶ Since the PRC is an organisation registered in the UK and operating fully in accordance with UK laws, at best this suggests that Israel doubts the efficacy of the British legal system; and at worst that Israel seeks to undermine it.⁵⁷

Interestingly, despite Israel's decision to outlaw the PRC in late 2010, the UK Foreign Office told *The Jerusalem Post* in early 2011 that Israel had so far not 'raised any concerns or asked Britain to launch an investigation into the work of the PRC'.⁵⁸ The foreign office added at the time that, 'If [Israel] were to raise their concerns or pass any evidence to us of illegal activity, we would of course look into the issue, working with the relevant authorities in the UK'.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the authors of the Meir Amit report focus much attention on the organisational relationships of several British citizens who are active in Palestine solidarity campaigns in the UK, Europe and the Middle East, and whom they claim are central to the PRC, but who PRC staff say have only acted as consultants to the NGO in the past, adding that they are not presently working with the organisation at all.⁶⁰

The report does not accuse Majed al-Zeer of anything specific, merely mentioning his family background as a refugee and activities like organising flotillas to Gaza or calling for a 'Free Palestine' during demonstrations in London.⁶¹ It makes special mention that he once sat on stage with Khaled Meshaal, head of Hamas' political bureau, and Mahathir Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia (though incorrectly calling him the former president).⁶²

The accusations against Ghassan Faour relate to his being a trustee of the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund, commonly known as Interpal, a registered British charity that has also been criticised by the Israel lobby in Britain, after the US took a political decision to designate it a terrorist organisation following 9/11.⁶³

The UK Charity Commission has so far investigated and exonerated Interpal three times. The last investigation closed in 2009, when the Charity Commission found that allegations aired by the BBC against the charity were unsubstantiated.⁶⁴

In July 2010, *Express Newspapers* announced that it was apologising and paying £60,000 to the trustees of Interpal 'over untrue allegations of support for Hamas and terrorism'.⁶⁵

As Alex Delmar-Morgan and Peter Osborne wrote in *The Telegraph* newspaper last year:

Vindication from no less than three Charity Commission investigations tells a story. So does the barrage of newspaper allegations over the years, many of which have led to the publication in question apologising to the charity and retracting its claims. Commentators suggest that if the US and Israel had any evidence that Interpal is actually funding Hamas terrorism, they would have closed down the group long ago and prosecuted its senior staff.⁶⁶

We can also note that the PRC has never been charged with breaking any UK laws.

Chapter four

Israel's campaign against the PRC at the UN

We argue that Israel's campaign at the United Nations against the Palestinian Return Centre should not be seen in isolation, but as an extension of the wider efforts to delegitimise and even criminalise individuals and civil society organisations fighting for equal rights for Israeli Jews and Palestinians, including the Palestinian right of return.

As part of these efforts, the Israeli and American establishment have created a vast network of organisations to reproduce and disseminate their views conflating non-violent resistance with terrorism. These organisations have led the campaign to criminalise Palestinians' struggle for rights, including the PRC, both inside Israel as well as internationally.

The two organisations that have most aggressively targeted the PRC in recent years are UN Watch, a project affiliated with the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and NGO Monitor.

When the meeting of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations took place on 28 May 2015, UN Watch posted a blog with the headline, 'UN status for anti-Semitic Hamas front group to be decided today'.⁶⁷ According to NGO Monitor, the alleged anti-Semitism is due to the PRC's posting of a quotation attributed to Nobel Prize winning writer Jose Saramago likening the condition in occupied Palestine to concentration camps.⁶⁸

The UN Watch post cites information from the Israeli government, the report by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, and the Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch website, edited by former financial trader Steven Merley.⁶⁹ Merley has called Britain 'the command and control centre for the Brotherhood in Europe'⁷⁰ and is also concerned that the brothers have infiltrated the Brookings Institute.⁷¹

Following the committee's approval of the PRC's application, UN Watch announced that it would be appealing the decision in the lead up to the Economic and Social Council's meeting to ratify the status of newly approved NGOs on 20-22 July.⁷² And for its part, NGO Monitor has been updating its entry for the PRC on its website to reflect the recent developments.⁷³ Following is more detailed information on these two organisations.⁷⁴

UN Watch

The Geneva-based UN Watch, an accredited NGO that was granted special consultative status at the UN's Economic and Social Council, was established in 1993 by Morris Abram, former permanent US Representative to the UN in Geneva and honorary president of the American Jewish Committee. On 1 January 2001, AJC (EIN no. 13-5563393) assumed full control of the organisation through an agreement with the World Jewish Congress.⁷⁵

At the time, AJC noted that UN Watch's main focus was 'on monitoring the continuing discriminatory treatment of Israel in the UN system and attitudes toward Jews in the world body, as well as those matters which concern American interests'.⁷⁶ However, it has since obscured

this mission among several others. Indeed, according to its website, 'UN Watch is foremost concerned with the just application of UN Charter principles.'⁷⁷

Since its acquisition by AJC, UN Watch has waged several campaigns against UN officials critical of Israel. It lobbied against UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen for his perceived bias towards Palestinians, accusing him of unprofessionalism for his 2003 statement that Jenin refugee camp 'residents lived through a human catastrophe that has few parallels in recent history'.⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch had issued a report in 2002 charging that: 'during their incursion into the Jenin refugee camp, Israeli forces committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, some amounting *prima facie* to war crimes.'⁷⁹

The NGO also took a hostile stance towards Jean Ziegler, who served as the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2000 to 2008. In October 2005, it published a report on what it called Ziegler's 'Anti-American Bias', including his criticisms of Israel.⁸⁰

UN Watch's own biases are clear: its Executive Director Hillel Neuer tweeted in 2014, during Israel's military campaign in Gaza, that the people of Gaza and Israel were suffering because the 'radical Islamist ruler Hamas is turning Gaza into a giant suicide bomb'.⁸¹

UN Watch's international advisory board includes several members who have expressed hostile attitudes towards Muslims and Islam.⁸² For example, Swiss journalist Jean-Claude Buhrer responded to a controversial Swiss Muslim convert's support of Neo-Nazis by writing: 'This is tantamount to a marriage between the swastika and the (Islamic) crescent'.⁸³ He also once suggested that using the concept of Islamophobia was an affront to freedom of speech.⁸⁴

Former Chess champion Garry Kasparov, also a board member, recently penned an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* arguing that Islamists were waging a 'global war on modernity,' setting 'the time machine to the Dark Ages'.⁸⁵ In a much earlier op-ed, he said that Palestinian refugees do not deserve the right to return because they willingly left in 1948 'as a result of the Arabs' own enmity for Israel'.⁸⁶ He then went on to compare their plight with that of German occupation forces in Eastern Europe after World War II.

Other advisory board members are linked to anti-Muslim groups, like Lord David Trimble, former First Minister of Northern Ireland, who is one of the founding signatories of the Henry Jackson Society,⁸⁷ as well as the Friends of Israel Initiative.⁸⁸

Up until 2007, AJC reported its annual contributions to UN Watch, which it cites on IRS forms as an affiliate, in its itemised list of donations. Between 2003-2007, AJC reported grants to UN Watch totalling \$1,844,083. However, AJC subsequently changed the way it reported its grantmaking (which dropped from \$2,027,761 in 2007 to \$283,739 in 2008), reporting the funds given to UN Watch inconsistently as a transaction with related organisations.

It is not clear whether or not UN Watch employees are included amongst the 300 or so who benefit from AJC's approximately \$25 million annual budget for salaries, other compensation, and employee benefits in the US and overseas. In 2013, AJC's executive director, David Harris, received total compensation of \$886,482.

The IRS form of the US-based fundraising arm of UN Watch makes no mention of Israel in its explanation of the organisation's mission. Established in 2012, UN Watch – USA has so far raised \$862,412. Its president is Alfred H. Moses, who served as president of AJC until 2012.

In a 2008 speech, Moses claimed that calling for the return of Palestinian refugees amounted to the delegitimisation of Israel, and firmly denied any connection between Zionism and racism.⁸⁹

He also opposed equating anti-Semitism with Islamophobia, seemingly justifying the latter by pointing out that, ‘intolerance breeds intolerance’.⁹⁰

NGO Monitor

NGO Monitor is an Israeli organisation founded in 2007 to police civil society in Israel. According to *Haaretz* newspaper, NGO Monitor has engaged in a ‘McCarthyite’ campaign against progressive non-governmental organisations, for example the New Israel Fund and *+972 Magazine*.⁹¹ It has waged a particularly aggressive effort against Zochrot, an Israeli group that recognises the Nakba and supports the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland.⁹² It also focuses on rebutting criticism of Israel by international human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.⁹³

While NGO Monitor’s campaign is to target the funders of civil society groups promoting civil rights in both Israel and Palestine, *Haaretz* reports that it receives thousands of shekels from anonymous sources, including the quasi-government Jewish Agency.⁹⁴

In 2009, Ron Dermer, then advisor to the Israeli prime minister, initiated legislation to ban the foreign funding of Israeli human rights organisations, which ultimately stalled. However, according to Didi Remez of *Haaretz*, Gerald Steinberg, the president of NGO Monitor, subsequently took over the initiative in partnership with the Institute for Zionist Strategies, led by Israel Harel, a founder of the Gush Emunim settler movement.⁹⁵

Further explaining, Remez notes that NGO Monitor ‘is a partisan operation that suppresses its perceived ideological adversaries through the sophisticated use of McCarthyite techniques – blacklisting, guilt by association and selective filtering of facts.’⁹⁶ It reportedly had a budget of more than 2 million shekels, or about \$530,000, in 2010.⁹⁷

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA), headed by Dore Gold, lists NGO Monitor as one of its online publications,⁹⁸ giving it several links to the Israeli government. Gold is a former advisor to Israeli Prime Ministers Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon,⁹⁹ and Lenny Ben-David, JCPA’s director of publications, previously served as former deputy chief of mission in the Israeli Embassy in Washington.¹⁰⁰

JCPA also runs the Institute for Contemporary Affairs (ICA), a five-year, \$1 million programme founded jointly with the Wechsler Family Foundation (EIN no. 04-3533126),¹⁰¹ which funds the Jewish News Service (JNS) agency, a right-wing wire service launched in 2011 as an alternative to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency,¹⁰² in addition to the AJC, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting (CAMERA), a pro-Israel media watch organisation, Central Fund of Israel, David Horowitz Freedom Center and Middle East Forum (MEF).

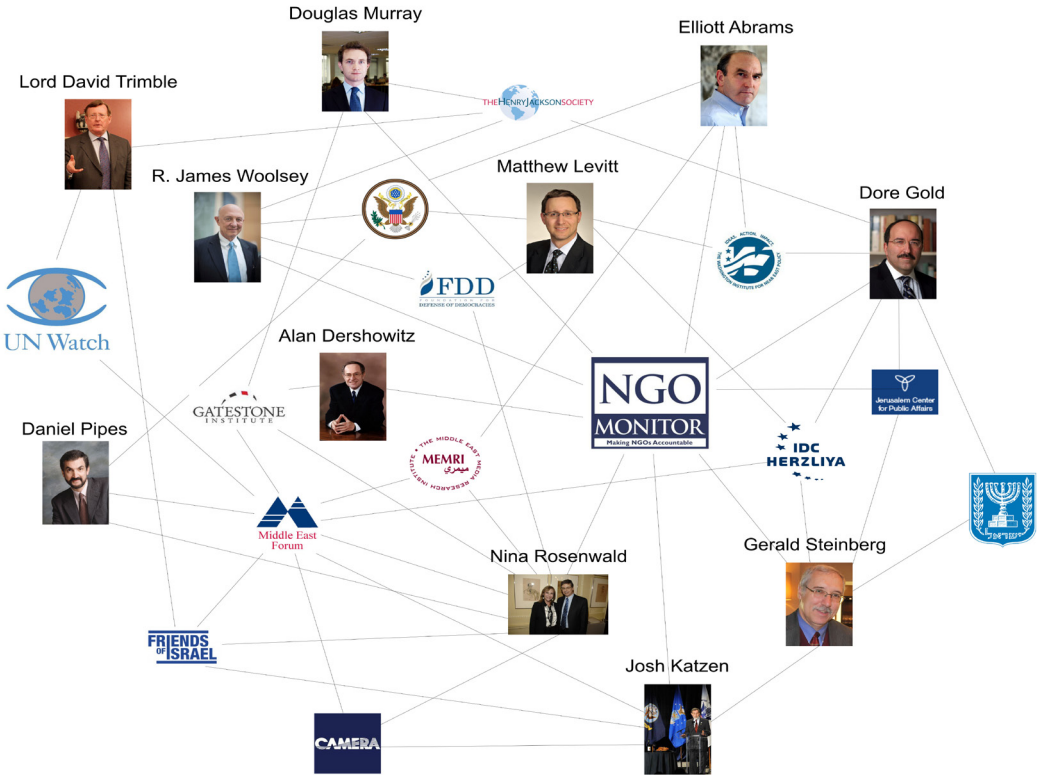
According to the JCPA website, ICA ‘provides a unique venue that enables the foreign press and foreign diplomats in Israel to receive briefings by leading Israeli experts from the military, the political world, academia, and the media on security issues, Israeli strategy, regional players, and the war on terrorism.’¹⁰³ ICA has hosted the following: Minister Natan Sharansky; Major General Giora Eiland, formerly the head of Military Planning and the Prime Minister’s National Security Advisor; Major General Amos Gilad, Defence Minister advisor; Brigadier General Yossi Kuperwasser, Head of Assessment of Military Intelligence, MK Ephraim Sneh, formerly Deputy Minister of Defense and others.

ICA’s Steering Committee includes both Gold and Steinberg, the latter who has his own government connections. Steinberg states on his CV that he sits on the steering committee for the Office of the Prime Minister’s Forum on Anti-Semitism and is a consultant for the Israeli government.¹⁰⁴ An online biography also states that he is ‘a consultant to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Security Council’.¹⁰⁵

Selected NGO Monitor advisory council members include the following:¹⁰⁶

- **Elliott Abrams:** the deputy national security advisor during the George W. Bush administration. He is currently a director of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), and is listed as an author at the Gatestone Institute¹⁰⁷ and an outside expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP).¹⁰⁸
- **Alan Dershowitz:** professor of law at Harvard Law School and also listed as an author at the Gatestone Institute.¹⁰⁹ He has recently made anti-Muslim statements, for example that ‘the only people today who are threatening violence against others for expressing political views are radical Muslims.’¹¹⁰ Earlier this year, he claimed that ‘violent anti-Semitism is all coming from Islamic extremists’.¹¹¹
- **Douglas Murray:** British neoconservative activist known for his anti-Muslim views. In 2006, he stated that ‘conditions for Muslims in Europe should be made harder across the board’.¹¹² He founded the Centre for Social Cohesion and is now associate director of the Henry Jackson Society, as well as an expert at the Gatestone Institute.¹¹³
- **R. James Woolsey:** former director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He is currently chairperson of the conservative think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD),¹¹⁴ sits on the board of advisors for WINEP,¹¹⁵ and is an international patron of the Henry Jackson Society.¹¹⁶

Figure 2. Leading figures involved in the pro-Israel and anti-Islam campaign in the US and UK¹¹⁷



The Centre for Jewish Community Studies (CJCS) is the tax-exempt US fundraising arm of the JCPA. Between 2009-2013, it raised \$8,868,135. Dore Gold is president of CJCS, Austrian-born Israeli Manfred Gerstenfeld, former chairperson of JCPA's steering committee, is chairperson, and Chaya Herskovic is director general of both JCPA and CJCS.¹¹⁸

NGO Monitor also has an American tax-exempt charity to raise funds, previously known as the American Friends of NGO Monitor but which changed its name in 2010 to Research + Evaluation = Promoting Organisational Responsibility and Transparency, or REPORT Inc. (EIN No. 26-2971061).¹¹⁹ Although REPORT Inc. was granted tax-exempt status in 2009, as late as January 2012, it reportedly still had not filed any information to the IRS.¹²⁰ However, since then, it has reported donations totalling \$3,891,443 as of 2013.

Jerusalem-based photographer Dov Yarden is director general of REPORT Inc., as well as chief executive officer of NGO Monitor, and Nina Rosenwald is vice president of the US branch. Max Blumenthal has dubbed Rosenwald, who is a former member of the National Board of AIPAC, 'the sugar mama of anti-Muslim hate' due to the claim she 'uses her millions to cement the alliance between the pro-Israel lobby and the Islamophobic fringe'.¹²¹ She runs the Abstraction Fund, which donated to American Friends of NGO Monitor in 2011.

Boston real estate developer Josh Katzen is president of REPORT Inc. He and his wife Amelia Katzen are both members of the board of CAMERA, and serve respectively as president and treasurer of JNS. Josh Katzen is also vice chairperson of the national board of MEF, Daniel Pipes's conservative, Israel-focused think tank. In turn, Pipes is a director of JNS.

UN Watch and NGO Monitor jointly published a report after Israel's 2014 military campaign in the Gaza Strip, criticising the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Gaza and international NGOs' coverage of the conflict. The report also focuses on the number and type of rockets fired from Gaza, international support for Palestinians in Gaza and the abuse of humanitarian aid to Gaza. The report makes two references to the Israeli 'siege' of Gaza, which is placed in quotations marks (as is 'occupation'), and 453 mentions of 'terror'.¹²²

In its 2014 annual report, NGO Monitor states that, 'In parallel to the rockets and tunnels attacks, particularly in the south, the [international rights] NGO network fought the political and informational dimensions of the war against Israel. As a counter, NGO Monitor published over 20 reports on NGO warfare, including analyses of B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and "NGO medical malpractice".¹²³

UN Watch and NGO Monitor funders

UN Watch is headquartered in Geneva and NGO Monitor in Israel. Neither publishes a list of donors. However, by searching through IRS tax documents on the Foundation Center's website,¹²⁴ we were able to uncover 18 registered charities that have supported UN Watch and/or NGO Monitor. Nevertheless, this information is certainly incomplete.

The AJC changed the way it itemised support for UN Watch in 2007, subsequently incorporating this information as affiliated expenditure only intermittently. Additionally, in 2012, an organisation that calls itself United Nations Watch – USA (EIN no. 45-1683502) also began filing tax reports. It reported income of \$381,113 in 2012 and \$481,299 in 2013.

The funders of NGO Monitor were even more difficult to uncover. Although an organisation known as American Friends of NGO Monitor has been receiving donations for many years, it is not registered as a charity, thus has never reported any income to the IRS. REPORT Inc. began filing tax records in 2010, with a handwritten notice of it being a ‘name change from American Friends of NGO Monitor’.¹²⁵ And yet, several foundations have continued to make donations to the unregistered American friends of group.

Furthermore, the organisation in Israel is remarkably opaque. A Hebrew language exposé in *Haaretz* newspaper revealed that in 2010, three of NGO Monitor’s donations came from undisclosed sources: ‘The first one, for the sum of NIS 570,000 (\$154,000), was passed through the Jewish Federation of North America and the Jewish Agency; the second one, for NIS 100,000, was transferred through the Israeli non-profit Matan – started in 1998 by local tycoon Shari Arison, owner of Israel’s largest Bank – and the third donation came through a British fund registered in the Isle of Man, known for its favourable tax rates.’¹²⁶

But despite the difficulties we encountered in researching their funders, by searching through the database of tax filings, we were still able to uncover 18 registered charities in the US that have financially supported UN Watch and NGO Monitor. *Table 1* lists these 18 charities, in alphabetical order. We have combined the amounts donated to both organisations between 2009-2013 in column three.

*Table 1: Known funders of UN Watch and NGO Monitor (2009-2013)*¹²⁷

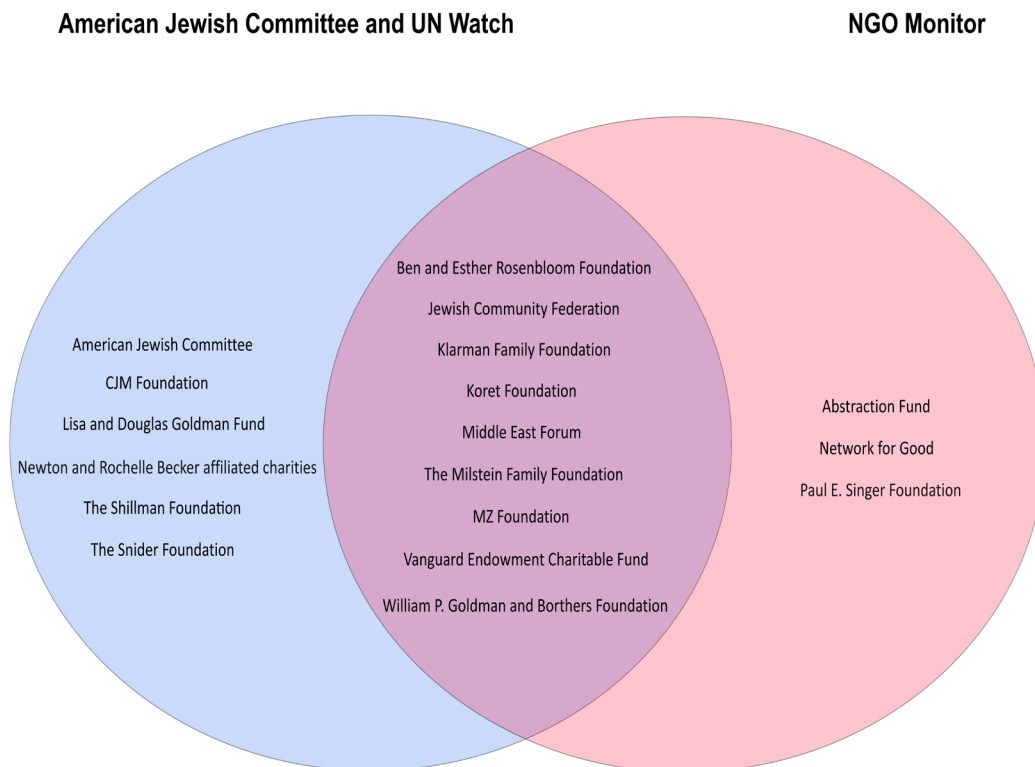
Foundation	Tax No.	Donations to UN Watch and NGO Monitor (2009-2013)	Support for similar right-wing organisations
Abstraction Fund	20-5327719	\$10,000	Aish HaTorah/ Clarion Fund CAMERA David Horowitz Freedom Center Foundation for Defence of Democracies Friends of Israel Initiative Middle East Forum MEMRI
American Jewish Committee	13-5563393	\$1,216,843	American Friends of IDC
Ben and Esther Rosenbloom Foundation	52-1258672	\$56,000	American Jewish Committee Central Fund for Israel Friends of the IDF Middle East Forum WINEP
CJM Foundation	13-7105559	\$50,000	
Jewish Community Federation	94-1156533	\$330,000	American Friends of IDC American Friends of the Reut Institute Birthright Israel Jewish National Fund

Foundation	Tax No.	Donations to UN Watch and NGO Monitor (2009-2013)	Support for similar right-wing organisations
Koret Foundation	94-1624987	\$75,000	American Friends of IDC American Jewish Committee Birthright Israel Foundation for Defence of Democracies Friends of the IDF Middle East Forum MEMRI
Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund	94-3167546	\$50,000	Birthright Israel
Middle East Forum	23-7749796	\$130,000	American Friends of IDC American Jewish Committee CAMERA David Horowitz Freedom Center Friends of Israel Initiative MEMRI
MZ Foundation	94-3316088	\$220,000	American Friends of Reut Institute American Jewish Committee Birthright Israel CAMERA Central Fund of Israel David Horowitz Foundation Middle East Forum WINEP
Network for Good	68-0480736	\$46,011	Central Fund of Israel Friends of the IDF
Paul E. Singer Foundation	27-2009342	\$200,000	Aish HaTorah/ Clarion Fund Birthright Israel Friends of the IDF MEMRI
The Milstein Family Foundation	95-4824595	\$28,000	Aish HaTorah/ Clarion Fund American Friends of IDC American Friends of the Reut Institute Birthright Israel CAMERA David Horowitz Freedom Center Foundation for the Defense of Democracies Friends of the IDF Middle East Forum WINEP
Newton and Rochelle Becker affiliated charities	20-3822168 and 95-4095134	\$70,200	Aish HaTorah/ Clarion Fund American Friends of the IDC CAMERA Central Fund of Israel David Horowitz Freedom Center Friends of the IDF Foundation for the Defense of Democracies Friends of Israel Initiative MEMRI Middle East Forum WINEP
The Shillman Foundation	04-3511089	\$15,000	CAMERA Friends of the IDF

Foundation	Tax No.	Donations to UN Watch and NGO Monitor (2009-2013)	Support for similar right-wing organisations
The Snider Foundation	23-2047668	\$20,000	CAMERA Central Fund of Israel David Horowitz Freedom Center Friends of the IDF Middle East Forum
Vanguard Charitable Endowment Fund	23-2888152	\$100,000	American Jewish Committee Birthright Israel CAMERA Friends of the IDF Middle East Forum
William P. Goldman and Brothers Foundation	13-6163100	\$3,000	American Jewish Committee Birthright Israel CAMERA Friends of the IDF Middle East Forum

Although our research into the funders of UN Watch and NGO Monitor was limited due to their non-transparent nature, we were nevertheless able to create a broader picture of their larger funding network by factoring in the donations to AJC as well. *Figure 3* clearly shows that the three organisations share a significant funding overlap.

Figure 3. Funding overlap between AJC/UN Watch and NGO Monitor (2009-2013)



We were also able to uncover that all of these funders, except one, in turn support a network of right-wing pro-Israel and Islamophobic organisations, amongst other causes, that are all interrelated. These organisations are listed in column four of *Table 1*.

For example, the author of the above-mentioned book on Hamas, Matthew Levitt, is a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank founded by former members of AIPAC, including Martin Indyk,¹²⁸ and was a ‘founding director’ of WINEP’s terrorism programme from 2001 to 2005.¹²⁹ The current president of the institute, Martin J. Gross, sits on the national council of the right-wing American Enterprise Institute.¹³⁰ WINEP’s chairperson, Howard P. Berkowitz, was formerly the national chairperson of the Anti-Defamation League and is scheduled to speak at 2016’s AIPAC policy conference.¹³¹

Levitt also sits on the professional advisory board of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya,¹³² as well as the board of advisors of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington.¹³³

WINEP, IDC and FDD are all recipients of funding from the same network of organisations involved in funding and circulating the campaign against the PRC. Looking through the tax documents of the 18 known charities that fund the AJC, UN Watch and NGO Monitor, we found another 11 right-wing pro-Israel and Islamophobic groups that also frequently receive funding.

These include:

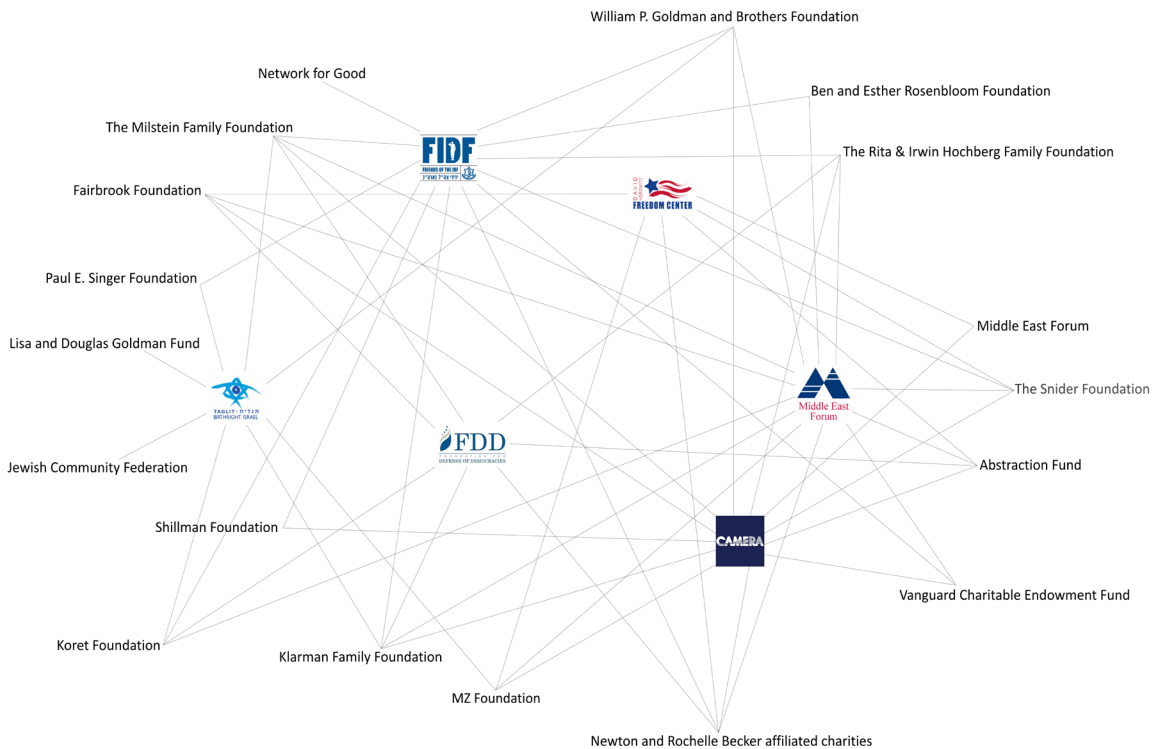
- **Aish HaTorah/Clarion Fund:** Aish HaTorah is a Jewish Orthodox organisation that staunchly defends Israeli policies and features pro-settlement articles on its website.¹³⁴ Ronn Torossian, a spokesperson for Aish HaTorah in New York, once told writer Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic* magazine that, ‘I think we should kill a hundred Arabs or a thousand Arabs for every one Jew they kill,’ adding that: ‘If someone from a town blows himself up and kills Jews, we should wipe out the town he’s from, kill them all.’¹³⁵ According to the *Tampa Bay Times*, Aish HaTorah has ties to the virulently anti-Muslim Clarion Fund, which is behind the notorious anti-Islam film *Obsession*: ‘Clarion’s address, according to Manhattan directory assistance, is the same address as Aish HaTorah International,’ the group’s fundraising arm.¹³⁶
- **American Friends of IDC** (EIN no. 31-1577589): IDC Herzliya was the first private institution of higher education in Israel and houses one of Israel’s most influential security institutes. It has close connections to the Israeli government and military. The board of directors of its International Institute for Counterterrorism includes Shabtai Shavit, former director of the Mossad, Israel’s foreign intelligence service, and Boaz Ganor, former member of the advisory committee of the Israel National Security Council on Counter-Terrorism.¹³⁷ IDC founder Uriel Reichman told *The Jerusalem Post* in 2007 that a central mission of the university is ‘strengthening and development of Israel’s security forces.’¹³⁸ The US fundraising arm reported contributions of \$8,337,149 in 2013.
- **Birthright Israel:** Taglit-Birthright Israel is a Zionist organisation based in West Jerusalem that arranges and finances trips to Israel for Jewish young adults around the world aged 18–26 years old, aiming to strengthen their relations with the State of Israel. Sheldon Adelson, a casino billionaire from California who owns several right-wing Israeli media organisations, annually gives Birthright about \$30 million.¹³⁹ The Birthright Israel Foundation (Ein no. 13-4092050) in New York alone reported an income of \$74,221,738 in 2013.

- **Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America** (Tax no. 52-1332702): CAMERA is based in Boston and its stated mission is to monitor media coverage of Israel. However, according to a 2015 report published by the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, in reality it 'is an Islamophobic watchdog organisation that bullies media outlets into producing pro-Israel coverage'.¹⁴⁰ CAMERA's website has an extensive database of journalists that it has targeted over the years, including many prominent Israelis.¹⁴¹ In 2013, it reported contributions totalling \$3,247,847.
- **Central Fund of Israel** (EIN no. 13-2992985): Based in New York, the Central Fund of Israel supports a Jewish state in historical Palestine.¹⁴² It channels donations to Palestinian Media Watch,¹⁴³ and other right-wing Israeli groups including Im Tirtzu,¹⁴⁴ a far right extra-parliamentary youth movement that has campaigned against universities, non-governmental organisations and peace groups in Israel.¹⁴⁵ Its IRS form does not list any trustees or board members, but VP Arthur Marcus signed the paperwork and the foundation is registered at the same address as Marcus Brothers Textiles Inc. According to *Mondoweiss*, members of the Marcus family run the fund: 'Jay Marcus, a settler in Efrat, is listed as the administrator of the Central Fund. A pro-Israel website lists the Central Fund/Jay Marcus and then directs Jews to "browse" settlement communities to figure out to whom they wish to earmark their Central Fund contribution.'¹⁴⁶ It reported incoming grants of \$19,673,626 in 2013.
- **David Horowitz Freedom Center** (EIN no. 95-4194642): Founded in 1988 by conservative activists David Horowitz and Peter Collier, a 2011 report by the Center for American Progress listed the DHFC as part of the Islamophobia network in the United States.¹⁴⁷ It hosted anti-Muslim activist Geert Wilders in 2009.¹⁴⁸ Robert Spencer currently serves as its 'Jihad Watch Director'. Spencer and Pamela Geller co-founded the anti-Muslim group Stop Islamisation of America, which the Southern Poverty Law Centre classifies as a hate group.¹⁴⁹ They have both been banned from entering the UK.¹⁵⁰ In 2013, the centre reported a budget of \$5,889,609.
- **Foundation for Defense of Democracies** (EIN no. 13-4174402): FDD is a conservative think tank in Washington headed by Clifford May, a former communications director at the Republican National Committee.¹⁵¹ Founded in 2001, Eli Clifton of *Salon* news website recently called it 'Washington's premiere hawkish think tank,' reporting that is heavily funded by Republican donors including Paul E. Singer and Sheldon Adelson.¹⁵² Its stated mission on tax documents is 'to conduct research and provide education on international terrorism and related issues.' The foundation reported a budget of \$7,482,797 in 2013.
- **Friends of the Israel Defense Forces** (EIN no. 13-3156445): Based in New York, Friends of the IDF is the US fundraising arm of the Israeli military, its largest single international donor. In 2013, the charity reported funds of \$72,377,566.
- **Middle East Media Research Institute** (EIN no. 52-2068483): Yigal Carmon, a former Israeli military intelligence officer, and Meyrav Wurmser, an Israeli-born American political scientist, cofounded MEMRI in 1998 to provide free English language translations of Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Pashto and Turkish media reports. The Centre for American Progress has called it 'the Islamophobia network's go-to place for selective translations of Islamist rhetoric abroad'.¹⁵³ One of its directors is Steve Emerson, a media 'terrorism expert' who in January 2015 falsely told *Fox News* that Birmingham is a 'Muslim-only city' where non-Muslims 'don't go' and subsequently apologised.¹⁵⁴ MEMRI reported an income of \$4,847,860 in 2012, the last year it filed taxes.

- Middle East Forum (EIN no. 23-7749796):** MEF is a right-wing think-tank based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that was founded in 1994 by Daniel Pipes, a scholar of the Middle East who since the mid-1980s has worked largely as a right-wing essayist and activist. According to former MEF board member Jerry Sorkin, MEF began to adopt a particularly extreme and pro-Israel position after the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington,¹⁵⁵ becoming increasingly strident about the supposed threat posed by Islam and Muslims in America. The Center for American Progress has argued that both the MEF and Pipes are part of a network of ‘misinformation experts’ that ‘peddle hate and fear of Muslims and Islam’.¹⁵⁶ MEF also acts as a funder to various right-wing causes, including Nina Rosenwald’s Gatestone Institute, currently chaired by former US ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton.¹⁵⁷ In turn, Rosenwald’s foundation the Abstraction Fund generously finances MEF. The latter reported an income of \$5,594,514 in 2013.
- Washington Institute for Near East Policy (EIN no. 52-1376034):** Based in Washington, WINEP is sometimes referred to as AIPAC’s think tank.¹⁵⁸ Its board of advisors includes formerly high-ranking US security officials, such as: R. James Woolsey, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Richard Perle, former Assistant Secretary of Defence; and Robert McFarlane, former National Security Advisor. In 2013, it reported contributions amounting to \$10,392,217.

In order to present a simple visual of how these various groups are part of a larger funding network, we focused on the six organisations that are most commonly funded by the 18 charities that support UN watch and NGO Monitor, as illustrated in *Figure 4*. The six organisations are: Friends of the IDF, DHFC, MEF, CAMERA, FDD and Birthright Israel

Figure 4. Network of groups supported by funders of UN Watch and NGO Monitor



In addition to the Central Fund of Israel, there are several other pro-settlement causes that a few of these foundations support. For example, the Abstraction Fund and Klarman Family Foundation have both financed Friends of Ir David (EIN no. 11-3466176). Ir David in Israel, also known as Elad, seeks to Judaise east Jerusalem. Joyce Anelay, UK Conservative Foreign Office Minister, told *The Independent* newspaper in March 2015 that: ‘We are aware of the link between the Elad group and the Israel Antiquities Authority. We are concerned that this link has led to Israel Antiquities Authority’s support of radical settler activities in and around the Old City under the guise of tourism and protection of Jewish history.’¹⁵⁹

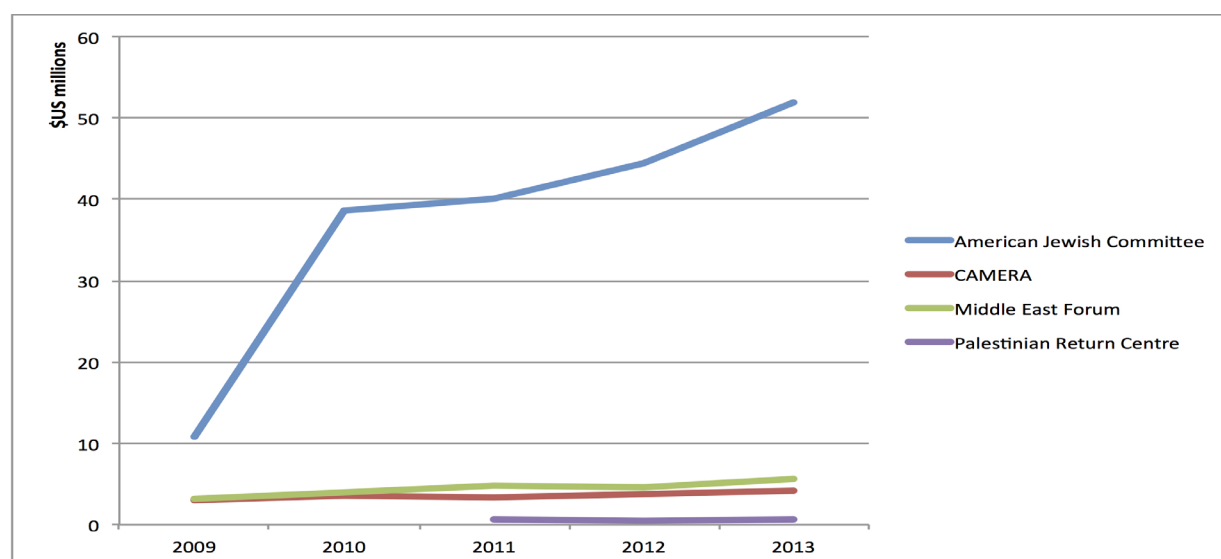
The Paul E. Singer Foundation has supported the Israel Independence Fund (EIN no. 20-8676286). According to *Haaretz*, the fund is headed by New York venture capitalist Kenneth Abramowitz, who is also national chairperson of American Friends of Likud (EIN no. 13-3935945). ‘He also appears on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s “list of millionaires” – i.e., potential donors to Likud’s 2007 primaries.’¹⁶⁰ According to the fund’s tax documents, it transfers most of the money it raises to a Cincinnati-based organisation called Hashomer, which was the name of a Jewish militia set up in 1909.

Finally, MZ Foundation has funded the New York-based One Israel Fund (EIN no. 11-3195338). The fund was initially launched in 1994 as the American Friends of Yesha, referring to the Yesha Council in Israel, which is the umbrella organisation of municipal councils of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. The fund’s Security Projects programme provides ‘preventive security’ equipment to Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank,¹⁶¹ and programme director Marc Provisor asserts that ‘There is no green line’.¹⁶²

In addition to UN Watch and NGO Monitor, there is also a smaller campaign in the United Kingdom against the PRC led by CiF Watch and BBC Watch. CiF Watch, now known as UK Media Watch, was launched in 2009 in response to *The Guardian* newspaper’s coverage of Israel in its Comment is Free section. BBC Watch was initially created in 2000 by British- Israeli lawyer Trevor Asserson to monitor the British Broadcasting Company, and was re-launched in 2012. Both projects are financed by CAMERA.¹⁶³

Although we could not determine the total budgets of UN Watch and NGO Monitor, *Figure 5* illustrates the amount of funds that AJC has to work with in comparison to the PRC, in addition to MEF and CAMERA.

Figure 5. Annual income of three pro-Israel organisations vs the PRC



*Converted from GB sterling to US dollars using 3 July 2015 exchange rate of £1 = \$1.56

Chapter five

Conclusion

This report has examined the main criticisms made of the Palestinian Return Centre by a range of seemingly disparate civil society groups. The report has two main findings.

First, that the allegations made against the PRC are not evidentially supported in the published material of any of these groups.

The second conclusion is that the groups involved are not, in fact, disparate and unrelated to each other. They include NGOs, think tanks and media that share funders and reproduce Israeli government views. Reviewing the Israeli media response to the PRC's application for special consultative status at the UN, Yoni Mendel of *+972 Magazine* argues that the coverage reads as if it is simply the replication of press releases from the lobby groups. He suggests the writers at *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Israel Hayom* simply hit 'Control-C followed by Control-V, thus bringing the press release to the public untarnished'.¹⁶⁴ Critically assessing these reports is vital.

Acknowledgements

This report follows a series of reports that analyse key conservative think tanks and pro-Israel groups currently active in the UK. The latest of these was *The Henry Jackson Society and the degeneration of British Neoconservatism: Liberal interventionism, Islamophobia and the 'War on Terror'* (Public Interest Investigations, 2015), which examined the trajectory of the society from a liberal interventionist Cambridge-based think tank into a right-wing pro-Israel and anti-Muslim lobby group based in the political heart of London.

Thanks to the wide variety of researchers who have contributed to Powerbase.info, our wiki that compiles data and analysis on lobby groups and power networks, particularly on the area of Israel/Palestine, lobby groups and think tanks. This report builds on the excellent research that continues to be done by Hilary Aked, Alex Doherty, Tom Griffin and Tom Mills.

For her indefatigable fact checking and background research we also thank the Managing Editor of Powerbase Melissa Jones.

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ISBN 9780957027459

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