

ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM IN EUROPE: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS AFTER THE SECOND INTIFADA

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Abstract:

The current political context surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict is often seen as significantly contributing to the resurgent antisemitism in many European countries. This Antisemitism has two dimensions: on the one hand, one of renewal – if we are to talk about the far-right antisemitism and on the other hand, one of metamorphosing, in relation to far-left antisemitism. Often hidden behind the mask of political critique of the Israeli politics, the far-left antisemitism mixes aspects related to the Jewish life in Europe with certain peculiarities of Netanyahu's government policies towards Palestine. Therefore, this paper will aim at identifying whether the EU's support for these NGO's can be viewed as tolerating the anti-Semitic attitudes of the NGO's whose programs it finances, or whether these attitudes are to be regarded as independent from the initiatives of the NGOs that are financed by the EU.

Keywords

Antisemitism; anti-Zionism; BDS; human rights; European Union new antisemitism; NGO.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the Oslo Accords were signed in the early 1990's, the relations between the EU and Israel seemed to develop towards a more positive direction. Official initiatives like granting Israel a *special status* at the Essen European Council in 1994, and the Association Agreement in 1995 represent clear proofs of willingness to improve the relations on both sides. However, the political internal developments in Israel – especially the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu – as well as the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2001 eliminated any hope for the continuation of the Peace Process. This, in the end, led to the old patterns of the relations between the EU and Israel. The main character of these patterns was determined by the tense political relations between the two actors in respect to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The return to these patterns affected not only the EU's relations with Israel, but also the perception of Israel in the EU. One of the main consequences of this change is represented by the rampant anti-Semitism after 2000, which was mainly fueled by Israel's continued policy on building settlements and was amplified by a big number of so-called pro-Palestine NGOs. Thus, this article will focus on exploring the role played by some of these NGOs in propagating anti-Semitic narratives as anti-Zionist argumentations, starting from identifying different approaches towards the definition of anti-Zionism. Besides the literature available in the field, the research is based also on official reports by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs of Israel, and by organisations in the field of civil society.

The article will include five subsections covering theoretical and analytical discussions. The first subsection is mainly a description of the current context in regard to the influence of antisemitism on the relations between the EU and Israel as well as of the evolution of antisemitism in Europe. Further, the second subsection describes the methodological approach behind the analysis of the NGOs included in research. Also, the second subsection indicates the main objective of the research. The third subsection of the research describes the framework in which the New Antisemitism in particular is approached by the European Union as part of a larger spectrum of anti-Semitic nuances in Europe in a post-World War II context. The fourth subsection is a description of the

context in which the pro-Palestine NGOs developed in the civil society culture in Europe as well as of the directions in which these organisations decide to act. Also, this part brings into discussion the European political culture as a scene on which these NGOs developed, and their ideological directions as instruments towards their objectives. Finally, the fifth subsection focuses on the analysis of different elements related to the actions of the NGOs: history, modus operandi, funding, records of anti-Semitic discourse. The entire analysis is built upon the review of the activity of a set of NGOs that are active within the EU, and which have a record in relation to different anti-Israel activities, mainly BDS. The analysis is also based on these NGOs connections to the European Union through the financial funding that they received for various projects that they developed. Therefore, the last subsection covers this analysis starting from the records of these NGOs in relation to the funding they received, and to their overall activities. A major role in this analysis is also played by the ideological background upon which these NGOs built their narratives, and acted. Therefore, it can be said that the research gravitates around an ideological conundrum created through the interaction between the narratives of these NGOs and the EU's involvement in combating antisemitism.

a. European Union, Israel and European antisemitism

The relations between the European Union (EU) and the State of Israel manifest a set of particularities determined by the triangle EU, Israel and the Jewish community in the EU. The element connecting the three actors is the common history of Europe and the Jewish people in the twentieth century, intertwined with the way in which the relations between different European countries and Israel developed. The symbolical eight-day visit of the first afterwar German chancellor Konrad Adenauer to Israel on 2 May 1966 (Feron, 1966) indicated a clear direction in respect to the future relations of Europe and Israel, as well as to its anti-Semitic past. Overall, the European history created an environment that gave space for good relations between certain European countries and Israel. This means that there is a certain awareness at the level of European

population regarding responsibility for the post-WW2 generations in relation to the Holocaust.

However, as the time passed, the European political configuration was subject to massive changes, as also was the way in which the European antisemitism manifested itself despite of the sensitivity for the topic as an outcome of WWII. Events like the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War led to a vicious circle in which elements like the occupation of the East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights played and continue to play a major role. Not only these events had a major impact on the American and European politics in respect to the Middle East and Israel, specifically, but also on the transformation of antisemitism. One such example is represented by the French Left which during the Six Day war radically changed its view towards the Jews. In the words of Colin Schindler:

'On the eve of the Six Day war in 1967, amidst talk of another massacre of the Jews – the imagery in France was that of the emaciated Jew in the striped pyjamas and his post-war liberated successor, the socialist kibbutznik who made the desert bloom. During the war, the image of the jackbooted Jewish conqueror emerged, seemingly aided and abetted by a coordinated Jewish lobby which was centrally pulling the political strings in a multitude of countries.' (Schindler 2014)

After the two major wars, the first official significant position taken by the European Union in regard to the political situation in Israel in relation to Palestine is the 1980 Venice Declaration that frontally approaches the topic of settlements. The nine states involved in the Declaration were considering the Israeli settlements “a serious obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East” (European Council 1980). However, the Venice Declaration’s reference to settlements was an almost incidental one, as its main focus was represented by the general improvement of the situation of Palestinian people. The main tool proposed by the Declaration for reaching its objectives was the implementation of ‘two principles accepted by the international community: the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and

justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people' (European Council 1980).

After a long history of religious antisemitism, and after the events that occurred during the World War II, the more and more present pro-Palestine organisations (many of them very active in Europe) began promoting a new form of antisemitism. This new type of antisemitism is mainly focused on denying the right to existence of the State of Israel. (Schindler 2014; Steinberg 2009) Although not universally considered as antisemitism, the anti-Zionism covers certain behaviors that are considered anti-Semitic in the European countries that adopted the 2016 IHRA definition of antisemitism. Some of these are: accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor, and drawing comparisons of contemporary Israel policy to that of the Nazis

Moreover, many of the policies of the Israeli government under prime-minister Benjamin Netanyahu often and considerably fueled the anti-Semitic feelings promoted by the afore mentioned organisations. Laws like those of Settlements or the National Law in 2018 represent elements that only justified, in the minds of those militating against Israel, actions related to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. According to an official answer given by the former Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini "the EU rejects the BDS campaigns attempts to isolate Israel and is opposed to any boycott of Israel" (European Parliament 2016). In this context, it is easily understood that the EU rejects any anti-Semitic narrative, and that it is part of a symphony with other institutions like the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, according to whom "the objectives, activities and effects of the BDS movement are fully anti-Semitic" (OHCHR 2019).

From an institutional point of view, while the EU Fundamental Rights Agency was tasked to monitor the evolution of antisemitism in Europe, as well as identifying its causes and consequences a major role is played by the EU's foreign policy as part of the European External Action Service's duties. This situation changed in December 2015 when the Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, together with the Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Jourova, appointed two coordinators

tasked with combatting antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred. The main objectives of the two's activities are "to bring the concerns of the respective communities to the attention of the political level of the Commission, and help coordinate efforts across services in the context of the Commission's overarching policy on racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance" (European Commission 2015).

2. METHODOLOGY

Given the main objective of the paper, the research will be based on exploring the European network of pro-Palestine NGOs involved in different actions targeting the Israeli government. Thus, the selected cases are NGOs that are active in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, and which received funding for different projects from the European Union after 2016 when the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism was adopted. Another criterion according to which the NGOs were selected for analysis is represented by their involvement in activities related to BDS. This approach is supported by the fact that the IHRA definition, although not legally binding and not adopted by all the EU countries, provides a set of criteria regarding what is considered to be antisemitism in the European framework. This approach is relevant as it is strongly related to the ideological background behind the financing of these NGOs. Also, the fact that these NGOs receive funding from the EU represents the criterion of selecting the case studies in this article. The paper will also explore some practices and ideological characteristics of these NGOs in regard to Israel, and in relation to topics like Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, BDS, and Israeli domestic and regional politics. The purpose of this is to identify certain common traits of the actions of these NGOs and the objectives they want to reach. However, this does not imply that one might be able to foresee certain actions, but rather to identify a certain trend in the relation between the EU and certain NGOs.

b. The IHRA Definition and the New Antisemitism

A major game changer came in May 2016, when the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) plenary in Bucharest adopted the non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism. While controversial, the definition is instrumental for the activity of the European institutions when approaching the topic of antisemitism. Among other aspects related to antisemitism, the definition includes “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, (...) by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.” (IHRA 2016). While controversial, the definition was adopted or endorsed by 21 EU and non-EU countries so far. As the EU Working Definition of Antisemitism indicates, the EU was using an almost similar definition quite long before the IHRA adopted its own definition of antisemitism (European Union 2007). The innovation brought by the definition is that it addresses a more recent type of antisemitism – the one coming from the left spectrum of politics. The New Antisemitism is mainly connected to the denial of the State of Israel and it often uses the anti-Zionism as a cover. However, the „anti-Israel bias does not include legitimate criticism of the Israeli government, its policies, or its politicians” (Anti-Defamation League). The European Commission follows the same line of thinking, and shares the idea that anti-Zionism and antisemitism are at least adjacent.

The origins of the New Antisemitism lie in the very existence of the State of Israel. This is due to the fact that it rejects the right of the Jewish people to have a state. In the words of the former leader of the Swedish Liberal Party and Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Per Ahlmark, the New Antisemitism is “often less directed against individual Jews. It attacks primarily the collective Jews, the State of Israel. And then such attacks start a chain reaction of assault on individual Jews and Jewish institutions (...). Today, the most dangerous antisemites might be those who want to make the world *Judenstaat*, free of a Jewish state” (Yad Vashem 2002). Additionally, “the new antisemitism projects traditional conceptions of ‘the Jew’ onto Israel as the collective Jew. For this reason, traditional definitions of the ideology of antisemitism apply fully to its new manifestation” (Marcus 2015). However, the way in which it is called was

not considered to be proper, as Pierre-Andre Taguieff insists on calling it Judeophobia for the reason that:

“Post-Nazi Judeophobia is grounded not upon the vulgar racist theories of the late nineteenth century, with their myth of a ‘race war’ between two imaginary constructs, ‘Semites’ and ‘Aryans,’ but upon a set of cultural and political elements quite different from those characterizing the antisemitism of the Dreyfus Affair or the state racism of the National Socialists” (Taguieff 2004)

Although it is not connected in any way to the traditional Muslim antisemitism, the New Antisemitism comes also from different members of the Arab community and from Arab organisations, together with non-Arab supporters. The main reason for this is that the New Antisemitism is not much related to the old Muslim anti-Semitic myths, but rather to the political events involving the political relations between Israel and the Arab World, with very few exceptions. According to those supporting the existence of a ‘new antisemitism’, this concept manifests itself in two ways, as identified by Klug. The first one is originated in the fact that “a new wave or outbreak of hostility towards Jews began with the start of the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000 and is continuing at the present time” (Klug 2003). The second one, according to the same author, “is said to involve a new form or type of hostility towards Jews: hostility towards Israel [...] However, those who hold this view tend to think that the new form of antisemitism has intensified with the recent intifada”. Both ways of manifestation of the new antisemitism share a common trait which is its popularity among the liberal-left circles of intellectuals and activists.

Even though it can be said that it has been around for a while, the New Antisemitism became more visible due to the Second Intifada – which is considered to have „discredited the Oslo Accords and delivered a blow to the Israel peace camp, from which it has yet to recover” (Ben-Atar 2015). A consequence of this development was that anti-Semitic feelings were becoming more inflated among the European population while they were clearly perceived by the Jewish population:

„While 59 percent of EU citizens considered Israel the greatest danger for world peace at the time of the Second Intifada, in Austria that statistic was 69 percent. In 2011, 42 percent of Austrians thought that Israelis acted just as inhumanely to the Palestinians as the Nazis once did to the Jews. This Israel-related antisemitism correlates with the classical hostility toward Jews: 43 percent of Austrians hold the Jews accountable for the current financial crisis” (Grigat 2015).

Although controversial, the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism succeeds in drawing a clear distinction between what is a legitimate criticism, and criticism that spills over into anti-Semitic hate speech. The way in which it does this is by specifically addressing the elements that fuel manifestations of New Antisemitism. A clear example of this distinction can be seen in all the official communiques of the European External Action Service addressing different actions of the current Israeli government, and which may affect the Two-State Solution. However, while Anthony Lerman considers that „no definition ever saved a Jew from experiencing antisemitism” (Lerman 2018), the IHRA definition definitely represents at least the beginning of another significant effort to deal with the anti-Israel antisemitism hidden under the mask of legitimate criticism and freedom of speech.

c. Non-Government Organisations (NGO) and the European politics in respect to Israel

In spite of a not very old tradition of lobbying in Europe it can be said that the Non-State Actors (NSA), especially different NGOs involved with promoting human rights, play a significant role in influencing European policies, either domestic or foreign. Regarding the role played by the NSAs, in our case the human rights organisations, it has to be mentioned that the EU engagement with NSAs has become part and parcel of EU policy-making as it contributes to increasing both EU’s legitimacy and efficiency (Voltolini 2013).

In the words of Alexander Grasse “Interregional and cross-border cooperation on the part of subnational authorities is now an established feature of everyday politics, as in the case of the presence of regional lobby groups in Brussels...The establishment of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the fixing of the

subsidiarity principle in the Maastricht Treaty and thus the supposed anchoring of the regions as a definite third level of European politics, as well as Commission policy addressing the regions directly as objects of policy....-all these factors can be taken to indicate an apparently irreversible and uniform trend towards regionalization in Europe” (Grasse 2001). Regarding the regionalization, it has to be mentioned that ‘there are numerous cases of persisting multidimensional regionalization processes by non-state actors, and innovative new types of actors, namely coalitions of state-market-civil society-external actors’ (Bojinović 2012). Although one may argue that this can apply only to the domestic policies of the EU, Grasse supports the idea that „the third level will continue to paint an exceedingly heterogeneous picture. With the Eastern enlargement of the EU imminent, and the very different traditions and minority issues this will bring with it, the picture will become yet more complex”. (Grasse 2001)

Despite the fact that the 2005 EU Action Plan for Israel includes specific references to the Israel-Palestine conflict and it addresses elements like „improving economic and social conditions for all populations” (European Commission 2005), and combating „hate crimes, which can be fueled by anti-Semitic propaganda in the media and on the internet”(European Commission 2005), one very interesting aspect is that elements that might threaten the capacity of Israel to engage in free trade or its state sovereignty are not regarded as anti-Semitic. In this specific case it is very difficult to conclude whether this omission was because the IHRA definition was not yet adopted at the moment or, as in the case of the EU Guidelines prohibiting the allocation of the Union’s funds to Israel in the Occupied Territories, the European Commission „has set a double standard: it has one rule for the Jewish State, and a different one for the rest of the world” (Bell et al. 2013). Nevertheless, through this document the EU promises to „jointly review the implementation of the recommendations on combating antisemitism of the EUMC and other European bodies, with a view to working together on monitoring and education” (European Commission, 2005).

The overall activity of the NGOs involved in supporting the Palestinian cause and opposing the Israeli government manifests a complex and nuanced approach. The relationship of some of them (many of which expressing strong anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic opinions) with the European Commission (EC) often left space for a supposed antisemitism rhetoric on EC's side. Even under the scrutiny of Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs on EU's funding of some of these organisations, a clear proved anti-Semitic label was impossible to be attached to the EU since „the EU funding has been granted for projects not directly related to promoting boycotts, due to insufficient oversight and information-gathering regarding the actual use of all funds” (Israel Ministry of Strategic Affairs 2019). Nevertheless, based on the IHRA definition and the topics to which anti-Zionism aims, many human rights NGOs in Palestine, Israel and Europe are often involved in propagating anti-Semitic biased information and hate speech that might put in danger lives of Jewish individuals. By conducting their activities under the flag of human rights, the NGOs engaged in these endeavors become protected by a sort of „halo effect” that helps them avoid analysis and accountability for their actions (Steinberg 2009).

Rin relation to the way in which some of the human rights NGOs cross the thin line between the legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism, the description of (Steinberg 2009) provides us with the ideological context in which they act:

„By the mid-1980s these organisations were very powerful international actors. Yet a few years later, with the coming of glasnost, perestroika, and the end of the Cold War, their agendas necessarily shifted and expanded. [...] The link between post-colonial ideology and NGOs, particularly in their activities related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, is illustrated by powerful organisations such as War on Want and Christian Aid - both based in Britain. While claiming humanitarian objectives, these NGOs also lead political campaigns under banners such as opposition to the "root causes of global poverty, inequality and injustice”

While the ideological context and the objectives according to which these NGOs act are known to different EU's institutional actors involved in supporting them due to their presence in the EU lobby register or their visibility in media, many of these organisations are still funded from European public funds, despite the

EU's efforts to combat antisemitism. The antisemitism is still very present in Europe, in spite of different scholars who consider that while there are still some autochthonous anti-Semites in Europe „their numbers are small and their extreme views are rejected by the vast majority of Europeans” (Mearsheimer et al. 2006). According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

“Jewish people in Europe continue to be confronted with antisemitic hatred, including violence. Extremist groups, especially Neo-Nazis and Islamists, pose particular threats to the safety of Jewish communities and their members across the continent. Jewish institutions, such as synagogues, community centres and cemeteries, are often vandalised, also in reaction to events in the Middle East. The view that attacks on Jewish persons and property could be considered as justifiable reactions to policies or actions of the Israeli government is, regrettably, widespread and not only held by members of extremist groups” (ECRI, 2018)

In relation to BDS, the Anti-Defamation League (2019) claims that the European support for it was relatively low while having the highest rates “in Belgium, where 18 percent said they supported BDS; and in Denmark, Sweden and the U.K., where support for the boycott hovered around 15 percent”

d. „Boycott Divestment and Sanctions” (BDS) and Pro-Palestine NGOs

The issue of an anti-Semitic narrative behind the European Union's efforts to manage its relationship with Israel, especially in respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict, becomes more complicated when connected to EU funds going to certain human rights NGOs manifesting a strong anti-Zionist character. Although they receive the funds, these NGOs have projects that are consistently focused on promoting the boycott against Israeli goods. In the aftermath of the 2000 Second Intifada, the UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism in Durban took place. At this conference Israel was “once again singled out with charges of ethnic cleansing, racism, war crimes and crimes against humanity” (Judaken 2008). One of the outcomes of the Durban Conference was the establishing of the Palestinian BDS National Committee, whose role, among

other things, is to „strengthen and spread the culture of boycott as a central form of civil resistance to Israeli occupation, colonialism and apartheid” (BDS 2020). In the same spirit of the Conference from Durban the supporters of BDS movement use also the apartheid rhetoric.

One aspect that is very important and it must be mentioned is that the NGOs involved in supporting the BDS movement do not make a clear distinction between their targets – as often the goods originating from the Occupied Territories are not the only ones boycotted – in spite of the claim of Coulibaly that „for proponents of the strategy, the term *occupation* does not refer to an Israeli presence in territories acquired in the 1967, but rather refers to the establishment of Israel in 1948” (Coulibaly 2013). This aspect is relevant for our research since the very idea of human rights cannot be attached to those NGOs targeting the goods coming from the *de jure* Israeli territories. The very reason for this is that they do not act against goods coming from the Occupied Territories, which indeed are illegal from an international law perspective. For instance, regardless the 2005 EU-Israel Action Plan and the Free Trade Agreement (as part of the 2000 EU-Israel Association Agreement) „the BDS movement has been calling for the boycott of Israeli goods and the complete ban of Israeli products from EU markets (together with a policy of divestment from settlements and the imposition of sanctions). Others have often confused the issue of preferential treatment and labelling, while some NSAs deal with the broader implications of settlements for the Middle East Peace Process (Voltolini 2013).

In this context, since many of the NGOs involved with supporting the BDS movement are EU funded (though, not necessarily for the purpose of supporting the BDS), the relations between the EU and Israel as well as the approach of the EU towards antisemitism become intertwined in an ideological conundrum. The complexity of this situation is maintained through the red thread that is the financial aid that these organisations receive from the EU. Although the EU 2013 Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities clearly focuses on the distinction between the entities in the pre-1967 Israel, and in the Occupied Territories, the problematic aspect related to these NGOs is that some of them call for boycott on goods coming from the pre-1967 borders. The main reason for this

problematic situation is represented by how the border between the two areas is defined since it “whilst being socially constructed and a practice in and of itself – is an anchor not for a coherent set of practices, but rather for “incoherent implementation” (Bicchi et al. 2017)

The second edition of the „The Money Trail” report, released by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs of the State of Israel brings into discussion the situation of „ten NGOs active in promoting boycotts in Israel” (Israel Ministry of Strategic Affairs 2019) that either received or still receive direct funding from the EU. NGO Monitor is another organisation tracing the European funding of NGOs promoting the boycott of goods from Israel. In one of its reports, NGO Monitor identifies 23 NGOs that were recipients of a grant equal to €25 million. Among these NGOs are included the Union of Agricultural Committees (UAWC), Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC), Al-Dameer, Defence for Children International - Palestine (DCI-P), Health Work Committees (HWC), Bisan Center, Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), Al-Haq and the Palestinian NGO (PNGO) (NGO Monitor, 2020a). One of the consequences of the involvement of these EU funded NGOs in BDS related activities is reflected in the perception of Israeli citizens regarding the EU. While for a long period there was a strong positive view of the EU among the Israeli citizens as EU was seen as hospitable to potential Israeli accession, and therefore that Israel could and should join the EU in the foreseeable future (ECFR, 2016). Additionally, when asked what comes in their minds when they think about the EU, the leading answer among the Israel respondents was antisemitism (ECFR, 2016). The first NGO to approach in this research is Al-Haq. Established in in 1979, the NGO states as part of its mission to „promote Palestinian people’s human rights, defend them and enhance the rule of law and the culture and values of human rights according to the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, and fight through holding perpetrators of these law accountable irrespective of their nationality” (Al-Haq 2019). According to the aforementioned report by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, the organisation received in 2018 a total support of 296,600 euro. According to the same report, the NGO has been very active in pressuring the United Nations Human Rights Council to publish a „Black List” of companies with some

connection to Judea, Samaria and East Jerusalem. Additionally, according to NGO Monitor, the total support of 296,600 euro was granted by the EU for a project named “Empowering Palestinian Civil Society to Promote the Effective Reporting and Implementation on International Rights Instruments Palestine acceded 2014” (NGO Monitor 2020). This grant was the second after another one in 2011, when Al-Haq received also from the European Union 288,290 euro for a project “Mobilising Media to Empower Citizens and Civil Society for Human Rights, Democratic Reform, and Intra-Palestinian Reconciliation” Also, in 2017, together with a network of French organisations Al-Haq published a report titled „The Dangerous Liaisons of French Banks with the Israeli Occupation” which accused the French banks that they „indirectly contribute to the maintenance and development” of the settlements (RFI, 2017). Although Al-Haq, based on its mission statement, brings into discussion terms like human rights, humanitarian law, or international legal jurisprudence, it did not manage to make public its financial details since 2009. Nevertheless, its main donors, according to NGO Monitor (2018) are the EU and the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat (which is a joint funding to which contribute countries like Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland contribute), together with countries like Norway, Ireland, Italy, France and Spain.

Al-Mezan is another Palestinian NGO established in 1999 in the Gaza Strip aiming “to promote and protect human rights with a focus on economic, social, and cultural rights in Occupied Palestine, with a focus on Gaza Strip” (Al Mezan, 2020). The only year when Al-Mezan made public the list of its donor partners was 2016, when the EU was not yet a partner. According to “The Money Trail” report, the NGO signed the “Palestinian Civil Society Call on BDS” in 2005. Also, in 2017, it supported the aforementioned “Black List” project. Similarly, in 2014, the organisation signed, together with other Palestinian organisations, a “public call urging for an intensification of the BDS campaign directed at the State of Israel” (Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs 2019). The NGO was financed by the EU in 2018 with 449,997 euro, besides consistent donations from the Netherlands, Save the Children Norway, Medico International, Diakonia and American Friends Service Committee (NGO

Monitor 2018). The organisation expressed its support for Omar Barghouti, a co-founder of the BDS movement, when in August 2016, submitted a joint complaint to the UN Special Rapporteur concerning the review of the residency status of Mr. Barghouti (Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights, 2016). Al-Haq and Al-Mezan both received funds from the EU starting with 2018. In 2019 was part of '7,2 million "Human Rights Fund Programme" funded by Sweden via the NGO Development Center (NGO Monitor, 2020c), Al-Mezan is a signatory to the 2005 "Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS".

Another beneficiary of European funding is the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisation Network (PNGO), which together with 3 other organisations received 1,200,000 euro. The organisation never made its annual reports public, although it "boasts of 135 NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that work across sectors in different developmental fields" (PNGO, 2020). The NGO is a member of the BDS National Committee (BNC), the leading Palestinian coalition of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions groups against the State of Israel (Ministry of Strategic Affairs, 2019) – although this information is not mentioned in the Membership section on the website of the NGO. Additional to an workshop on boycotting Israel organized in 2012, PNGO signed in 2014 a public petition to the foreign ministers of EU member states in which it was claimed that "the failure to suspend the Association Agreement is a form of political support for Israel's continued violations of international law that seems completely out of step with the EU's determination to act to hold other states to account, including, for example, Russia and Sri Lanka" (European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine ECCPALESTINE – 2014). According to NGO Monitor (2020b), the head of the EU Representative Office to the West Bank and Gaza sent in March 2020 a "clarification letter regarding the EU funded contracts" to PNGO, stressing that "it is understood that a natural person affiliated to, sympathizing with, or supporting any of the groups or entities mentioned in the EU restrictive lists is not excluded from benefiting from the EU-funded activities, unless his/her exact name and surname corresponds to any of the natural persons on the EU restrictive lists". In the context of this letter, and other allegations surrounding PNGO and other pro Palestine NGOs, the Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Olivér

Várhelyi stated that he had instructed the heads of EU delegations to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza to “look deep” into the allegations that some EU funds got o terror-linked or supporting NGOs, declaring that such funding “will not be tolerated” (NGO Monitor 2020b)

Established in Geneva in 1979, but very active in Palestine, Defence for Children International (DCI) - with its local branch Defence for Children Palestine - is another NGO in the list of the EU funded organisations supporting BDS. While collaborating with American BDS organisations like US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, American Muslims for Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, and the American Friends Service Committee, it also signed the 2005 “Palestinian Petition Calling for BDS against the State of Israel. While the organisation claims that its “highest value is the pursuit of each child’s interests” (DCI Palestine 2020), it also stays committed to supporting the BDS activities. Together with other organisations, DCI Palestine was the incumbent of two EU grants totaling 1,680,534 euro (Ministry of Strategic Affairs 2019). Between 2017-2020, DCI-P received a European grant of 981,298 euro for a project named „Prevention, mitigation, and rehabilitation for Palestinian children” (NGO Monitor 2020b).

Slightly more transparent than the NGOs mentioned so far is the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ). Established in 1990, one of the NGO’s objectives is “to catalyze coordination and cooperation between the various groups and institutions working in economic development, and to facilitate the creation of a multi-sector planning unit” (ARIJ 2020). It received, together with another organisation 494,361 euro in 2017 (Ministry of Strategic Affairs, 2019). Nevertheless, in spite of its declared involvement with agricultural activities, the NGO is also part of the BNC and it signed the 2005 „Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS” (BDS 2005), as well as a public call against the Aprtheid Wall in 2014 (Ministry of Strategic Affairs 2019).

Among the organisations from Europe worth mentioning for the purpose of this research, the Norwegian People’s Aid received 2,300,000 euro in 2017, Un Ponte Per (Italy) received 2,000,000 euro, Comite Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Developpement (France) was part of a joint grant (798,843 euro) with another organisation, and the Irish organisation TROCAIRE, which was part of 6 EU

grants with other organisations (Ministry of Strategic Affairs 2019).

3.CONCLUSIONS

As the research points out, the involvement of these organisations in actions that have a strong anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic character raises potentially negative evaluations of the EU's efforts in combating antisemitism. However, these dynamics need to be assessed in a much larger context in which political aspects related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are related. More specifically, the EU-Israel relations, as well as the Israel's actions in the region play an important role in understanding the whole context.

These organisations, their modus operandi, as well as the funds they use for their activities help us partially grasp their approach towards the concept of human rights, social justice, and equality. The reports used for this research pointed out to significant structural issues regarding the EU's monitoring and control mechanisms, especially as they are related to the activities of beneficiary organisations receiving funds. Moreover, the fact that the NGOs receive EU funding while supporting BDS actions, and use elements like the unclear definition of the Israel borders in order to push their agenda contribute to this complex context. While these funds have as main objective supporting the activities of the NGOs, there is another benefit consequent to receiving the funds, which is "the fact that an organisation which supports a boycott of Israel is a recipient of EU financial aid, even if for purposes other than boycotting Israel, grants the organisation a unique status and an enhanced legitimacy which can assist it in raising funds from other entities for boycott activities.

As we have seen, the European Union is strongly involved in fighting the scourge of antisemitism. Moreover, given the ability of the antisemitism to metamorphose, the EU funding regulation might find it difficult to keep pace with the dynamic character of antisemitism, as well as with the dynamics of BDS movement. By developing tools to closely monitor the activities of the human rights NGOs it funds, the EU, and more specifically, the European Commission, might contribute to diminishing the number of Israeli citizens and Jewish

Europeans viewing the European Union as anti-Semitic. As these human rights NGOs pretend not to be anti-Semitic, but only criticizing the Israeli government, supposedly some of them (or all of them) do not want to be perceived as anti-Semitic. While there are reports that identified certain associations / involvements of the NGOs explored in this research with alleged terrorist or anti-Semitic discourses or actions, this does not necessarily put the European Union in a similar position given the EU funding for these organisations. In respect to this specific aspect, the words of the Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi mentioned earlier in the research in relation to the EU's efforts in identifying any potential terrorist threat are clear enough. If such situations may occur - and it is possible that this will happen - the worst accusation that can be brought to the EU is that of negligence. On every level possible, the European Union stays committed to the effort of building a solution that benefits both Israel and Palestine, together with the aforementioned efforts of combatting antisemitism.

Besides identifying a set of NGOs involved in promoting different anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic actions, and which are financed by the EU, the main contribution of this research is to identify the common discourse upon which these NGO's develop their actions. The relevance of this effort is that it points out to certain actions among actors that are part of the European civil society in relation to the State of Israel, and the way in which the European Union manages its relationship with them.

One important aspect is that this research does not have an exhaustive character, since many of the activities that these NGOs do not have a large public coverage in media. Moreover, the fact that the EU's Register for lobbyists does not have yet a mandatory character significantly reduces the access to the real number of the NGOs involved in BDS activities. Moreover, this aspect thwarts also the access to their real level of funding, and origins of the funds. In a context influenced by the mandatory character of the EU Register, future researches on the topic might be able to provide a more complete review of these civil society organisations.

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