

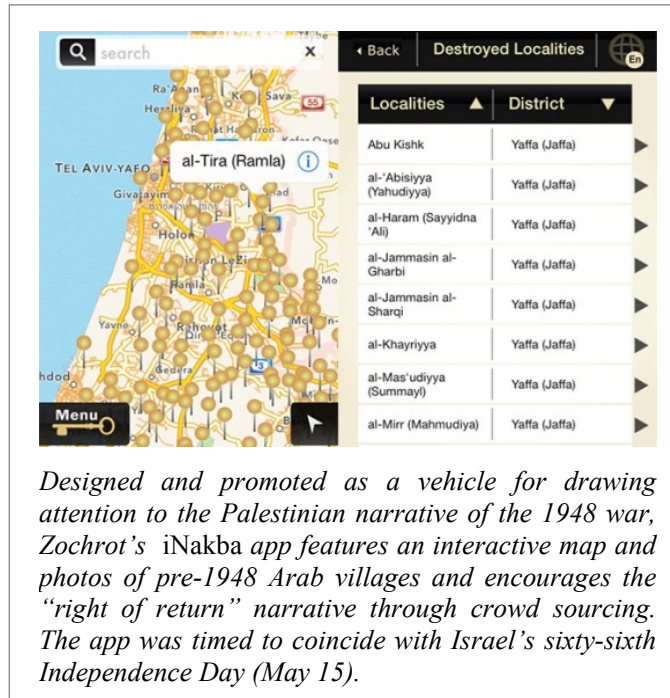
Europeans Fund Anti-Israel Libels

by Gerald M. Steinberg

In May 2014, Zochrot—a radical Israeli nongovernmental organization (NGO)—was the focus of widespread mainstream media coverage featuring its *iNakba* mobile application (app). Articles on the app and Zochrot were published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Haaretz*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Time Magazine*, and several prominent blogs. Most, including *The New York Times*, promoted Zochrot’s agenda while others, such as *The Washington Post*, included some criticism.

Designed and promoted as a vehicle for drawing attention—particularly among journalists—to the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 war, *iNakba* features an interactive map and photos of pre-1948 Arab villages and encourages the “right of return” narrative through crowd sourcing. As stated by *The New York Times*, “Perhaps the app’s greatest promise is its social component—users can upload photos and videos, or ‘follow’ villages to virtually recreate lost communities.”¹ Small wonder that the release of the app was timed to coincide with Israel’s sixty-sixth Independence Day (May 15) and the *Nakba* (catastrophe) as Palestinians and Arabs call this event.

While Zochrot has promoted this inverted narrative of “historic injustice” for many years, its sudden transformation from a fringe political NGO into a major media attraction was made possible by a steep increase in funding from European governments, often channeled through Christian international development and humanitarian aid organizations without any public scrutiny or parliamentary control. This funding grew from some 950,000 NIS (Israeli new shekels) in 2005 to 1,868,485 NIS (more than \$500,000) in 2013.² Such funding is far from unique and can be viewed as a showcase for a wider phenomenon: the central role of European governments and Christian aid organizations in promoting a radical, anti-Israel agenda.



Designed and promoted as a vehicle for drawing attention to the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 war, Zochrot’s iNakba app features an interactive map and photos of pre-1948 Arab villages and encourages the “right of return” narrative through crowd sourcing. The app was timed to coincide with Israel’s sixty-sixth Independence Day (May 15).

¹ *The New York Times*, [May 13, 2014](#).

² “[Reports and Financial Transparency](#),” Zochrot website, Tel Aviv, accessed Sept. 2, 2014.

Background

Zochrot was founded in 2002 with the aims of “rais[ing] public awareness of the Palestinian *Nakba*” and promoting the recognition and realization of the “right of return” of Palestinian “refugees” to places that are now part of the state of Israel.³ Needless to say, this supposed right is irreconcilable with any peace process based on the two-state solution, officially endorsed by many governments, and is “tantamount to destroying Israel through demographic subversion” (to use historian Efraim Karsh’s words), though “in addressing non-Arab audiences, Palestinians have been less than genuine about their objectives, presenting this ‘right’ as humanitarian, as grounded in international law and as a long-overdue redress of historical injustice.”⁴ Initially estimated at 600,000-750,000 individuals, the Palestinian refugee status has been uniquely perpetuated for over six decades and now comprises more than five million people, including second and third generation individuals.⁵

Zochrot’s activities and agenda strongly reflect rhetoric demonizing Israel and originating from the NGO Forum of the 2001 Durban Conference, which included approximately 1,500 NGOs and

was characterized by anti-Semitic displays as starkly illustrated by the Forum’s final declaration that accused Israel of numerous crimes, including apartheid, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and genocide. Article 425 of the declaration advocated a “policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state.”⁶

The Durban strategy outlined in the final declaration became the template for anti-Israel campaigns that followed and initiated the disproportionate and unsubstantiated allegations of human rights violations, war crimes, and racism as forms of political warfare designed to isolate Israel internationally. Many of the NGO participants, including Zochrot, have implemented this coordinated strategy against Israel—isolation and demonization in the international arena.

Zochrot declares support for a “de-Zionized Palestine” and refers to Israel as having an “ethnicized and racialized Zionist” system.⁷ The NGO’s founder Eitan Bronstein has stated, “When the refugees return, Jews will become a minority in the country. Israel as a Jewish state will change radically, and it will no longer be defined as such.”⁸

³ “[Who We Are](#),” Zochrot website, accessed Sept. 2, 2014.

⁴ Efraim Karsh, “[Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return](#),” review, *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2003.

⁵ Yaffa Zilbershats, “International law and the Palestinian right of return to the State of Israel,” in Eyal Benvensti, Chaim Gans, and Sari Hanafi, eds., *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees* (Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer, 2007).

⁶ “[Palestinians and Palestine](#),” NGO Forum, World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, Durban, South Africa, Aug. 27-Sept 1, 2001.

⁷ “[Visions for a New State](#),” *Forced Population Transfer in Palestine: Thinking Practically about Return*, Badil-Zochrot, Bethlehem and Tel Aviv, Spring-Summer 2012.

⁸ Eitan Bronstein and Norma Musih, “[Thinking practically about the return of the Palestinian refugees](#),” *Sedek: A Journal of the Ongoing Nakba*, Pardes-Hanna, 2010, p.17.

Several Zochrot officials were involved in the production of a Hebrew language YouTube video (with English subtitles), posted on April 23, 2014. It features radical activist Natalie Cohen Vaxberg visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and adopting the persona of the “Holocaust,” claiming it to be “the best thing that ever happened” to the Jewish people. The clip has numerous offensive and inflammatory statements, such as the misrepresentation of the Holocaust as the sole reason for Israel’s existence: “Thanks to me you have a country ... Thanks to me and only me you have an army ... There is no one more responsible for your success than whom? ... than me.” Other quotes make the odious comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany: “Who have you learned from to collect people according to their ethnic background and throw them into concentration camps?” And as a final chord, Cohen Vaxberg calls for Israel’s destruction: “From now on there is no Jewish nation, finished, I deny you ... you do not exist, and you never existed.” Eitan Bronstein acted in the video as the “Holocaust Bodyguard,” and Moran Barir, another member of Zochrot, filmed and edited the movie.⁹

As funding has increased, Zochrot has been able to expand its activities and impact, particularly outside Israel. In 2012, Zochrot and Badil (a radical anti-Israel organization, whose Swiss government funding was frozen following the pub-



Zochrot officials were involved in the production of a Hebrew language YouTube video, posted on April 23, 2014. It features radical activist Natalie Cohen Vaxberg (left) visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and adopting the persona of the “Holocaust,” claiming, “There is no one more responsible for your success than whom? ... than me.”

lication of an anti-Semitic cartoon),¹⁰ organized a joint study visit to Cape Town, South Africa, “to learn from cases of expulsion and return.”¹¹ In 2010, Zochrot endorsed the militant “Free Gaza Flotilla,” which used the pretense of humanitarian aid to attempt to breach Israel’s naval blockade of Hamas.¹² In a December 2008 joint submission to the U.N. Human Rights Council for Israel’s periodic review, Zochrot falsely accused Israel of ethnic cleansing and “forcible displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian

⁹ Natalie Cohen Vaxberg, “[The Holocaust’s Visit to Yad Vashem](#),” YouTube, Apr. 23, 2014.

¹⁰ “[BADIL – Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugees Rights](#),” NGO Monitor, Jerusalem, May 23, 2011.

¹¹ “[Study Visit to Cape Town](#),” Badil-Zochrot, Bethlehem and Tel Aviv, 2012.

¹² “[Reports and Financial Transparency](#),” Zochrot, website, accessed Sept. 2, 2014.

people.”¹³ These campaigns, along with unsubstantiated allegations cited by journalists, academics, diplomats, political leaders, and legal officials condemning Israeli policies, reflect the power of NGOs such as Zochrot in reinforcing the distorted Palestinian narrative.

In a further expansion, Zochrot obtained funds for a widely publicized conference in September 2013. This event, held at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv and titled “From Truth to Redress: Realizing the Return of Palestinian Refugees,” emphasized the location of the museum and Tel Aviv University as situated in the area of Sheikh Muwannis, a pre-1948 village.¹⁴ The event’s self-proclaimed objective was an “international, multidisciplinary conference to discuss practical aspects of the Return of Palestinian refugees.”¹⁵ Presentations at the conference included “Imagining the Future: Toward a Bi-national State in Palestine-Israel and a Multicultural Regional

A Zochrot event claimed to be an “international, multidisciplinary conference to discuss practical aspects of the return of Palestinian refugees.”

Confederation” by Jeff Halper, director of the Israel Committee against House Demolition (ICAHD). Halper had previously stated that it was “impossible to have a Jewish state” and that a bi-national

state was the only remaining option resulting from Israel’s “futile attempt to impose an apartheid regime.”¹⁶

William Bell, an official with Christian Aid-UK (a major funder of anti-Israel NGOs)¹⁷ also spoke about “Civil Society: Promoting Refugee Rights and Countering Collective Inertia,” and representatives of Badil, the main Palestinian refugee umbrella NGO. Badil promotes the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel and anti-Israel lawfare (the “exploitation of courts in democratic countries in order to harass Israeli officials with civil lawsuits and criminal investigations”),¹⁸ and which publishes delegitimizing rhetoric¹⁹ and anti-Semitic imagery,²⁰ discussed “Strategies and Recommendations for Israeli NGOs on Realizing Return and Promoting Justice.”

But the event triggered major protests against Zochrot, the conference

¹³ [“Ongoing Forced Displacement of the Palestinian Population on Both Sides of the ‘Green Line’: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory,”](#) BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, the Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, the Arab Human Rights Association, the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced, the Housing and Land Rights Network-Habitat International Coalition and Zochrot in cooperation with Ittijah – Union of Arab Community-based Associations, Human Rights Council Third Universal Periodic Review Session, submitted July 2008.

¹⁴ “Conference Program: [From Truth to Redress: Realizing the Return of the Palestinian Refugees,](#)” Zochrot, Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv, Sept. 29-30, 2013.

¹⁵ *Haaretz*, [Oct. 5, 2014](#).

¹⁶ Rami Almeghari, [“Jeff Halper in Gaza: ‘We are the oppressors.’”](#) The Electronic Intifada, Sept. 2008.

¹⁷ [“Christian Aid,”](#) NGO Monitor, May 13, 2014; Amuta for NGO Responsibility, [“European Human Rights Funding for Arab-Israeli Peace,”](#) Human Rights Council, Twenty-fifth session, Mar. 4, 2014.

¹⁸ Anne Herzberg, [NGO Lawfare: Exploitation of Courts in the Arab-Israeli Conflict](#) (Jerusalem: NGO Monitor, Dec. 2010).

¹⁹ [“Ongoing Forced Displacement of the Palestinian Population on Both Sides of the ‘Green Line.’”](#) Badil, Bethlehem, Dec. 8, 2008.

²⁰ [“Badil’s Antisemitic Cartoon: Questions For Danchurchaid, Trocaire and Funders,”](#) NGO Monitor, Oct. 11, 2010.

funders, and the Eretz Israel Museum. Speakers from the Israeli mainstream, unified in rejection of the Palestinian right of return, were absent from the conference. One Israeli journalist who attended described the event as a “nationalist Palestinian conference ... that dealt with the disappearance of Israel.”²¹ When questioned by NGO Monitor, Zochrot’s funders justified their support on the grounds that they were promoting refugee rights and justice, rejecting concerns regarding the radical character of the NGO and the conference.²²

A central aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the “war of narratives,” in which the media plays a principal role.

Mainstream Media Coverage

A central aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the “war of narratives,”²³ in which the media plays a principal role. The Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project (1997-2000) proposed nine core principles of journalism, beginning with the obligation to be truthful. The fourth and fifth principles focus on the requirement for independence, and the eighth states a journalist’s commitment to “keep the news comprehensive and proportional.”²⁴ These guidelines, also reflected in U.S. and European journalism ethical codes,²⁵ are

21 Yishai Fridman, “[Kenes Zochrot](#),” Yishai Fridman Blog, Oct. 1, 2013.

22 “[Responses to NGO Monitor Inquiries Regarding Funding for Zochrot Conference](#),” NGO Monitor, Sept. 17, 2013.

23 Neil Caplan, “War of Narratives,” *The Middle East Journal*, Spring 2011, pp. 327-31.

24 “[Principles of Journalism](#),” Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project, Washington, D.C., accessed Sept. 2, 2014.

25 “[Resolution 1003 on the ethics of journalism](#),” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, July 1, 1993; “[SPJ Code of Ethics](#),” Society of Professional Journalists, Indianapolis, 1996.

particularly critical regarding reporting on conflict situations where information is systematically manipulated to support partisan narratives and gain

sympathy.

In mainstream coverage of Zochrot’s *iNakba* app, journalistic principles were repeatedly violated as demonstrated in the following analysis of six articles,²⁶ based on four dimensions: the presentation of the *iNakba* app; the discussion of the events of the 1948 war; the degree of criticism (balance), if any; and the evaluation of Zochrot’s presentation as a mainstream organization. Each article is considered in terms of terminology, selection of facts to present, context, and dissenting views. For example, word choices referring to towns as “destroyed” versus “abandoned” or describing Zochrot as an “Israeli NGO” versus a “pro-Palestinian Israeli NGO” or “Zochrot, meaning remembering,” play a significant role in shaping the assumptions of the reader.

Presentation of the *iNakba* App

Haaretz and *The New York Times* presented the app in a highly promotional manner. *Haaretz* described *iNakba* as “a new mobile app to help locate Palestinian villages destroyed since 1948,” launched “to coincide with Israel’s Independence Day.” The use of “destroyed” clearly portrays Israel as the aggressor, and the Palestinian narrative as deserving of “help.” The *Haaretz* article also stated “‘i’ in *iNakba* ... is also ‘I’ as in information”

26 Jodi Rudoren, “[Navigating Lost Villages in Israel](#),” *The New York Times*, May 13, 2014; *The Washington Post*, [May 14, 2014](#); *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), [May 15, 2014](#); *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), [May 5, 2014](#); Agence France-Presse, [May 5, 2014](#); *Time Magazine*, [May 6, 2014](#).

and “maps are a political tool.” *Haaretz* endorsed the app as a practical, information-based aid for refugees to recreate the past, stripping the *Nakba* of any historical context.²⁷

The New York Times provided a personal and highly romanticized report. Author Jodi Rudoren wrote,

Heading up to the Sea of Galilee last weekend, I traveled a lost land. While my husband drove through 2014 Israel, past vast greenhouses and sleek malls, I navigated 1948 Palestine on my iPhone. Using the new *iNakba* app, I saw scores of villages destroyed or abandoned as Israel became a state 66 years ago.²⁸

Amplifying Zochrot’s message, the article reiterated the image of Israel as a conqueror and the Palestinians as victims.

Similarly, *Time Magazine*’s version stated,

In Arabic, “nakba” means “catastrophe,” and the iPhone application maps some 500 Palestinian villages that once stood on the land controlled by Israel since 1948. The app was developed by Zochrot, an Israeli nongovernmental organization that exists to remind Israel’s Jewish majority of that history.²⁹

But, no evidence was provided for the claim, taken from Zochrot, that Israeli Jews need to be reminded of this history. Neither did the article contain any criticism of the Zochrot narrative or details of the Israeli perspective or context. Instead *Time*’s Karl Vick continued,

The app also represents a new frontier—clean, bright, and helpful—in the competition between historical narratives. Israelis and Palestinians have different experiences of the last century, and each wants the world at large to see history from their perspective.³⁰

Christa Case Bryant, in *The Christian Science Monitor*, wrote:

An Israeli NGO hopes to crowd-source location-based data about the villages destroyed in the wake of Israel’s independence, which Palestinians refer to as the *nakba*, or catastrophe ... For fans, the app is a vindication of Palestinian history which has been largely erased from modern-day Israel.³¹

The Monitor’s emphasis on destruction and vindication, and the use of the term “Palestinian history” instead of political narrative, reflected a strong bias.

In contrast, *The Washington Post* article refrained from promotional language and identified the nature of Zochrot’s agenda; it contained minimal emotive language, describing *iNakba*

As a mobile app that pinpoints in Hebrew, Arabic, and English the location of more than 500 Palestinian villages that were emptied, overrun, or abandoned in the 1948 war. The free *iNakba* app for iPhones was made available last week by Zochrot, a pro-Palestinian Israeli group based in Tel Aviv.³²

²⁷ *Haaretz*, [May 5, 2014](#).

²⁸ Rudoren, “[Navigating Lost Villages in Israel](#).”

²⁹ *Time Magazine*, [May 6, 2014](#).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *The Christian Science Monitor*, [May 15, 2014](#).

³² *The Washington Post*, [May 14, 2014](#).

Discussion of the 1948 Events

The 1948 war and the *Nakba* claims have been widely debated in Israeli academic, political, and public frameworks, including in publications of historians such as Benny Morris, Yoav Gelber, and Efraim Karsh.³³ This important dimension is mostly missing in the media reports, which largely repeat Zochrot's version.

Time Magazine chose to present Zochrot's narrative exclusively, eliminating important context and facts, including countless Arab attacks on Jewish communities and the gruesome mutilation of victims. The article quoted Zochrot employee Raneen Jeries:



Omer Bar-Lev, a Labor Party lawmaker, disputed Zochrot's narrative: "Palestine was not inhabited by millions of Palestinians. Most of Palestine was swamps, and my father and mother and the newcomers came to Israel, and some of them died drying those swamps ... It is not that the Jews came and threw them out."

The idea of the app is like changing the landscape, because we in Zochrot believe that maps are a political tool, and from '48 till today, Israel on its maps just erased Palestine and its localities and our heritage. ... So we put Palestine back on the map.³⁴

The Washington Post article began by stating, "On Thursday, the Palestinians commemorate the *Nakba*, or the catastrophe, marking the flight and expulsion of an estimated 700,000 Palestinians from Israel more than six decades ago." Later, the article provided an Israeli viewpoint:

Omer Bar-Lev, a lawmaker from the Labor Party, countered that when the early Zionists arrived in Israel, "Palestine was not inhabited by millions of Palestinians. Most of Palestine was swamps, and my father and mother and the new-comers came to Israel, and some of them died drying those swamps ... It is not that the Jews came and threw them out."

The global wire service Agence France-Presse (AFP) provided an informational introduction, which was reprinted in a number of publications, and included a more balanced narrative:

The launch was timed to coincide with Israel's 66th Independence Day, which begins at sundown, when the Palestinians remember the "Nakba" or "catastrophe" that befell them when Israel came

³³ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Yoav Gelber, *Palestine, 1948: War, Escape and the Emergence of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2001); Efraim Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

³⁴ *Time Magazine*, [May 6, 2014](#).

into existence in 1948, and 760,000 of them fled or were forced into exile.³⁵

The AFP article contained a central point—minimized if not completely omitted in the other articles, namely that the purpose of the app is to bolster the “right of return” argument. The article stated,

The right of return for Palestinian refugees has long been a key sticking point in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks ... Israel fears that any flexibility on the issue would open the floodgates to millions of refugees, which would pose a demographic threat to the “Jewish and democratic character” of the state.³⁶

If Israel were to absorb the millions who claim to be Palestinian refugees, this would pose an existential threat to the nature of the Jewish state. But, none of the articles raised questions of Palestinian resettlement in current host nations or suggested that the status of refugees is a highly sensitive topic for both sides and that the “right of return” implied the threat of destruction of Israel.

Misrepresentation of Zochrot as Mainstream

Zochrot is an anti-Zionist organization on the fringe of Israeli politics and civil society. It regularly campaigns for a “single state,” in which Jews would be reduced to a small minority, and repeatedly accuses Israelis of war crimes. Reporting on Zochrot has omitted this critical context. In reading these articles, one remains

totally unaware of Zochrot’s marginal impact.

Time Magazine provided the most information stating,

“Zochrot has taken very radical positions,” [Dahlia Scheindlin] tells *Time*. By supporting the right of return for Palestinians—allowing descendants of the 1948 exodus to live in Israel—the group has placed itself in line with a segment of the Jewish Israeli population that, Scheindlin says, is too tiny to register in public opinion surveys.³⁷

In contrast, *The New York Times* did not mention any of Zochrot’s history, claiming

Zochrot, Hebrew for “remembering,” has for 13 years been leading tours of destroyed villages, collecting testimony from aging Arabs, and advocating the right of return for millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants.³⁸

Haaretz and *The Christian Science Monitor* gave no information on the organization, other than the brief “Israeli NGO” description. *The Washington Post* provided minimal information, defining Zochrot only as “a pro-Palestinian Israeli group based in Tel Aviv.” The AFP report described Zochrot as an NGO, “based in Tel Aviv, [which] campaigns for Israelis to recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, along with their descendants” but neglected to mention Zochrot’s falsification of international law on refugees and its position on the extreme fringe of the political spectrum.

³⁵ See, for example, *Times of Israel* (Jerusalem), [May 5, 2014](#).

³⁶ [Ibid.](#)

³⁷ [Ibid.](#), [May 6, 2014](#).

³⁸ Rudoren, “[Navigating Lost Villages in Israel](#).”

Finally, none of the news platforms made any mention of Zochrot's funding sources and that the resources for *iNakba* are provided primarily by European governments, via Christian humanitarian aid frameworks. This is a crucial omission that enabled the propagation of Zochrot's agenda.



Zochrot, like other NGOs, is funded by European and church-based groups. Another such group is Breaking the Silence, an organization of former Israel Defense Forces soldiers. Its members tour university campuses and parliaments in Europe and North America, fueling campaigns against Israel based on false war crime allegations.

European Church-based Funding

During its first decade, Zochrot was a fringe NGO with little impact. The rapid rise in the visibility of its activities (such as the 2013 conference and the *iNakba* app) as well as the mainstream media coverage were mainly due to a significant increase in funding, primarily originating from European governments. These governments pour tens of millions of euros into numerous NGOs that are deeply involved

in the Arab-Israeli conflict, under the banner of international humanitarian law and promotion of peace and human rights. As demonstrated in NGO Monitor's detailed research reports,³⁹ European government funding is central to the activities of the NGOs leading the implementation of the Durban strategy of demonizing Israel. As part of this strategy, the funding processes are generally not subject to the norms of accountability and transparency and constitute a significant "democratic deficit."⁴⁰

By funding organizations such as Zochrot and the *iNakba* app, as well as related conferences and publications, European governments have become enablers of the NGOs' radical agenda. These activities and overall agendas do not advance the stated objectives of democracy and human rights and are often incompatible with declared European foreign policy objectives.

Most of this European public (taxpayer-based) funding is channeled through humanitarian aid agencies, which in turn redistribute the money to individual NGOs, including Zochrot. Many of these state-funded agencies are Christian groups, including Misereor (Germany), Christian Aid (U.K.), Le Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement-Terre Solidaire (CCFD, France), Finn Church Aid (Finland), HEKS-EPER (Switzerland), Broederlijk Delen (Belgium), Trócaire (Ireland), St. Het Solidariteitsfonds (Netherlands), BISCHOEFLICHES (Germany), and Interchurch Organization

39 "[Evaluating Funding for Political Advocacy NGOs in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights \(EIDHR\)](#)," NGO Monitor, Feb. 17, 2014.

40 "[State Secrecy: Analyzing the EU's Suppression of NGO Funding Information](#)," NGO Monitor, May 29, 2014.

for Development Cooperation (ICCO, Netherlands). In addition, Zochrot receives money from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in the United States. Non-church related government-funded frameworks that have donated to Zochrot include Oxfam GB and Oxfam Solidarity (Belgium).

This pattern of funding also reflects the central role of both Catholic and Protestant aid frameworks in promoting radical political agendas, in many cases mixed with classic anti-Semitic themes. For example, Rev. Steven Sizer, who was affiliated with Christian Aid for a number of years, espouses the doctrine of supercessionism, also known as replacement theology.⁴¹ Officials in many of these funding organizations are also involved in “teaching of contempt,” a doctrine which claims that the “corrupt Jews” were “punished” for “deicide.”⁴² In this case, they mask their theological contempt for Jews as anti-Zionism. These ancient theological themes at the root of anti-Semitism are based on the belief that Christianity has superseded Judaism and that the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the ensuing exile were divine punishments for the rejection of Jesus.⁴³

Zochrot is hardly the only such NGO: European and church-based funding

Humanitarian relief foundations participate in the delegitimization of Israel, referring to it as an apartheid system or occupier.

is distributed to hundreds of other politicized NGOs. These include The Coalition of Women for Peace (CWP), a leader of BDS campaigns through its

website “Who Profits”;⁴⁴ al-Haq, a Palestinian group that leads lawfare attempts;⁴⁵ and Breaking the Silence, an organization of former Israel Defense Forces soldiers, who tour university campuses and parliaments in Europe and North America, publicizing unsubstantiated testimonies, which fuel campaigns against Israel based on false war crime allegations.⁴⁶

Like Zochrot, these other NGOs are funded directly by governments and indirectly through many of the same humanitarian relief foundations (again, many of them Christian) such as Diakonia (Sweden), Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO, the Netherlands), Christian Aid (U.K.), Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, EED, Germany), Trocaire (Ireland), Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement, CCFD, France), and various churches. All participate in the delegitimization of Israel through tactics such as BDS, supporting the one state solution, lawfare (such as the Goldstone fact-finding report or filing politically motivated reports to the U.N. Human Rights Council), and referring to Israel as an apartheid system or occupier. These NGOs, similarly to Zochrot, have risen to prominence through an abundance of foreign government funding.

41 [“Christian Aid: Continued Bias and Missing Context in Palestinian Agenda: Update January-June 2006,”](#) NGO Monitor, July 13, 2006.

42 Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), pp. x-xii.

43 Robert Everett and Dexter Van Zile, [“Reawakening the Teachings of Contempt,”](#) *The Jerusalem Post*, July 10, 2005.

44 [“Coalition of Women for Peace,”](#) NGO Monitor, Mar. 4, 2014.

45 [“Al-Haq,”](#) NGO Monitor, Jan. 12, 2014.

46 [“Breaking the Silence,”](#) NGO Monitor, June 5, 2014.

Zochrot's Donors

Donor framework	Country
Broederlijk Delen	Belgium
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation	Germany
Finn Church Aid	Finland
Christian Aid	U.K.
Trocaire	Ireland
ICCO	Netherlands
St. Het Solidariteitsfonds	Netherlands
CCFD	France
Misereor	Germany
HEKS-EPER	Switzerland
Mennonite Central Committee	U.S.
Jewish Voice for Peace	U.S.
American Friends Service Committee	U.S.
Oxfam GB	U.K.

In the 2012-13 period, during which the *iNakba* app was developed and the public relations strategy prepared, Christian Aid UK, Broederlijk Delen, Misereor, Trócaire, and ICCO provided the most substantial funding.

The U.K.'s Christian Aid, which was Zochrot's largest reported donor in 2012-13, participated in the publication "Locked Out: Palestinian Refugees and the Key to Peace" (2011).⁴⁷ Broederlijk Delen (355,912 NIS to Zochrot, 2012-13)

organizes tours with Zochrot as well as their own "peace trips," featuring stops at refugee camps and meetings with NGO officials who reinforce the Palestinian narrative.⁴⁸ And the Irish Catholic aid organization, Trócaire (145,380 NIS to Zochrot, 2012-13) refers to the naval blockade of Gaza as "collective punishment" and continues to define Israel as the "occupying power," nine years after its exit from the Strip.⁴⁹

The Dutch organization ICCO (Inter-Church Cooperation Organization—198,360 NIS to Zochrot in 2012) is among the leaders of the BDS and demonization activity in the Netherlands. This includes support for the Kairos Palestine, which calls for BDS against Israel, condones

resorting to violence, and denies the Jewish historical connection to Israel.⁵⁰ In addition to Zochrot, the large-scale government funding provided by ICCO is transferred to Electronic Intifada, Who Profits (founded "as a research project" of the Coalition of Women for Peace and targets Israeli firms for boycotts), and al-Haq (a leader in lawfare campaigns). In 2011, then Dutch foreign minister Uri Rosenthal criticized ICCO's grants as "directly contrary to Dutch government policy," particularly in the case of Electronic Intifada.⁵¹ When Rosenthal scrutinized ICCO's EI funding, ICCO stated that regardless, they would continue their funding.

Anti-Israel, church-affiliated European aid groups often work together. In October 2012, twenty-two NGOs, including Christian Aid, Broederlijk Delen, Trócaire, and ICCO released a report, "Trading Away Peace: How Europe Helps

⁴⁷ William Bell, "[Locked Out: Palestinian Refugees and the Key to Peace](#)," Christian Aid, U.K., June 2011.

⁴⁸ "Program: [Peace Trip](#)," Broederlijk Delen (Brussels) and Pax Christi (Washington, D.C.), Oct. 26- Nov. 4, 2012.

⁴⁹ "[The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion](#)," Amnesty, CARE International UK, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Medecins du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save the Children UK and Trocaire, Mar. 6, 2008.

⁵⁰ "[ICCO \(Inter-Church Cooperation Organization\)](#)," NGO Monitor, Apr. 1, 2014.

⁵¹ "[Rosenthal takes ICCO to task](#)," Government of the Netherlands, Amsterdam, Jan. 1, 2013; "[De Situatie In Het Midden-Oosten](#)," Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Amsterdam, Aug. 13, 2011.

Sustain Illegal Israeli Settlements.”⁵² The report repeats the BDS agenda, calling on the European Union and national governments to wage political warfare through various forms of economic sanctions on Israel. Christian Aid issued a call for legislation to ban the import of goods to the U.K. from Israeli settlements.⁵³ Similarly, ICCO called on the Dutch government “to be playing a more active role in putting pressure on the government of the state of Israel.”⁵⁴ And among other activities, Trócaire published “Sustaining Injustice: EU trade with Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories”⁵⁵ and joined a campaign calling for the suspension of trade agreements and Israel’s accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

In addition, although the funding frameworks receive substantial government budgets, they frequently lack accountability and transparency. While Misereor (247,695 NIS to Zochrot, 2012) provides a clear list of NGOs it funds in other regions, it gives no information on Israeli and Palestinian grantees.⁵⁶ Similarly, ICCO goes to great length to prevent reporting of its funding

Zochrot’s ability to promote its agenda through the media is dependent on funding from foreign governments.

for Zochrot, Electronic Intifada, and other Palestinian NGOs leading the demonization of Israel.⁵⁷

Implications

There is a direct and causal connection between increased funding for political advocacy NGOs, mainstream media visibility, and support for the distorted Palestinian narrative. As a result of an increase in funds, Zochrot was able to go from a fringe group with virtually no impact to a major player, influencing others with its ideological and political perspective.

NGOs are important players in international politics and within the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. In this case, Zochrot’s ability to promote its agenda through the media and other venues is dependent on the funding it receives from foreign governments. This, coupled with unprofessional media reporting, promotes the group’s propaganda and fuels the conflict.

Through the *iNakba* app, Zochrot gained a platform to promote a highly partisan, false perspective via journalists who accepted the narrative at face value and then acted as force multipliers for this agenda. This is the halo effect, in which the NGOs are perceived as reliable sources with moral authority and knowledge untainted by partisan politics⁵⁸ at a time

⁵² [“Trading away Peace: How Europe Helps Sustain Illegal Israeli Settlements,”](#) International Federation for Human Rights (Paris), Oct. 30, 2012.

⁵³ [“Israel-Palestine,”](#) The Methodist Church in Britain, London, 2014.

⁵⁴ [“Guidelines on Lobby and Advocacy,”](#) Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation, Utrecht, June 2010.

⁵⁵ [“Sustaining Injustice: EU trade with Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories,”](#) Trócaire, Maynooth, Ire., Sept. 2012.

⁵⁶ [“Echte Partnerschaft zwischen Nord und Süd,”](#) Misereor website, Aachen, accessed Sept. 2, 2014.

⁵⁷ In 2012, following media articles and NGO Monitor reports, the German EVZ foundation discontinued support for Zochrot. *Haaretz*, [Jan. 25, 2012.](#)

⁵⁸ Thomas Risse, “The Power of Norms versus the Norms of Power: Transnational Civil Society and Human Rights,” in Ann M. Florini, ed., *The Third Force: The Rise Of Transnational Civil Society* (Tokyo and Washington, D.C.: Japan Center for International Exchange and the Carnegie Endowment, 2000), pp. 186-8.

when they are actually partisan purveyors of a false historical narrative and executors of a political warfare that has reinforced Palestinian rejectionism and made peace ever more remote.

Gerald M. Steinberg is professor of political studies, the founder of the Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation at Bar Ilan University, and president of NGO Monitor.

