

Punishing the Victim:

HR 4681 and the Congressional Siege on Palestinians

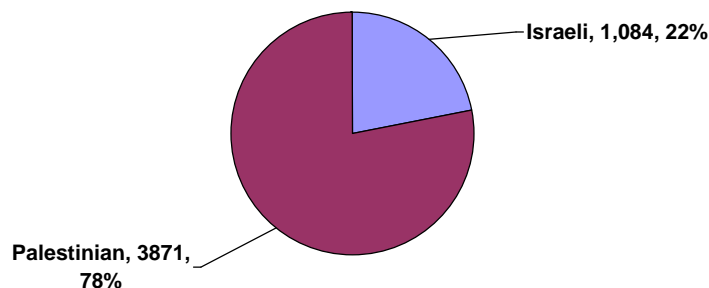
Why Americans Can't Support "Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act"

AIPAC's 290 Congressional co-sponsors and staffers are facing massive opposition in their bid to pass punitive legislation on Palestinians. An array of organized opposition from the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Council for the National Interest, Council on Arab Islamic Relations, and Jewish groups such as the Israel Policy Forum, Americans for Peace Now, and Jewish Alliance for Justice has swamped representative offices with calls to scuttle the legislation.

The bill makes a number of outrageous and purposefully unrealistic demands on the Palestinian Authority while selectively ignoring the history of Israel. Like other legislation, the H.R. 4681 makes no mention of Israeli actions driving the cycle of violence in the region: illegal settlements, annexations of Palestinian territory, theft or retention of Palestinian financial assets, and ongoing targeted killings sanctioned by the Israeli government or colonizers. Essential facts are ignored by H.R. 4681. In the ongoing conflict since the year 2000, Israelis have killed nearly four times as many Palestinians. 29,786 Palestinians have been injured in the violence, vs 7,633 Israelis.

2000-2005 Israeli vs Palestinian Armed Conflict Deaths

(Source: *IfAmericansOnlyKnew.org*)



The *H.R. 4681's* subterfuge and flaws are many. While purportedly crafted to "promote democracy", the bill's true effect would be mounting a unilateral US siege on Palestinian society, undercutting the Palestinians' right to circulate diplomats and representatives in the US, all while cloaking an ongoing Israeli campaign to annex territory and solidify borders most members of the United Nations rightly consider illegal.

Recognizing a State with Expanding Borders

H.R. 4681 demands that Palestinians "recognize the State of Israel as an independent, sovereign, Jewish and democratic state". This is an impossible demand given Israel's refusal to honor its own 1948 armistice border and continued solidification of its hold over territories captured in its 1967 war of choice.ⁱ

Congressional representatives insisting that any state recognize Israel and honor its borders must first negotiate the final geographical borders of a Palestinian state, and obtain international recognition of contiguous borders.

Only after long overdue international recognition should Palestinians be required to approach the subject of recognizing Israel.

The Terrorism Legacy of Israel and Palestine

Sec. 620k Limitation on Assistance to the Palestinian Authority in H.R. 4681 states that assistance from the US can only be provided under certification that "(1) *no ministry, agency, or instrumentality of the Palestinian Authority is controlled by a foreign terrorist organization and no member of a foreign terrorist organization serves in a ministry, agency or instrumentality of the Palestinian Authority.*" **This clause presents a number of difficulties.**

The Lehi Group (short for "Fighters for the Freedom of Israel") was a self-described terrorist group fighting to evict the British from Palestine toward the formation of a Jewish state. It later became known as the Stern Gang after commander Avraham Stern.

Stern believed that Palestine's Jewish population should fight the British rather than support them in World War II and even made independent contact with Nazis proposing alliance with Germany in exchange a Jewish state in Palestine.

Lehi assassinated British police and soldiers and in 1947 and conspired to send mail bombs to British politicians in England. Lehi also sabotaged railroads, bridges and oil refineries, terror operations financed by private donations, bank robbery and extortion.

On Nov. 6, 1944 Lehi assassinated a British government official, Lord Moyne, in Cairo. This murder outraged Winston Churchill and two captured Lehi assassins were executed. In 1948 Lehi and another Jewish terrorist group, Irgun attacked the Arab village of Deir Yassin alongside other "irregular" forces in what became known as the Deir Yassin massacre.

Lehi was later integrated into the Israeli Defense Forces on May 31, 1948 and Lehi leaders received amnesty from prosecution, though Lehi later assassinated UN-envoy Count Folke Bernadotte in Jerusalem.

Yitzhak Shamir, a former Israeli prime minister, was Lehi's "Terror Master" when Lehi assassinated Britain's minister of state for the Middle East, Lord Moyne. Shamir also directed the attempted assassination of Harold Mac Michael, high commissioner of the British Mandate of Palestine, and oversaw the 1948 Bernadotte assassination.

Although Bernadotte had secured the release of 21,000 prisoners headed for Nazi extermination, Shamir still judged him to be an agent of Lehi's "British enemy".ⁱⁱ

It is historically undeniable that many of Israel's founding fathers and institutions are of terrorist origin. If the US is going to apply this set of standards for the recognition of foreign states uniformly, the US, and possibly other nation states, would have to anul official recognition of Israel, effective immediately.

Financial Transparency in Israel and Palestine

Under section (3) (E) *H.R. 4681* demands "financial transparency and accountability of all government ministries and operations". Lack of financial transparency on the part of the Palestinian's neighbor, Israel, is a major cause of retaliatory terrorism on the US and primary mechanism for illegal settlement building.

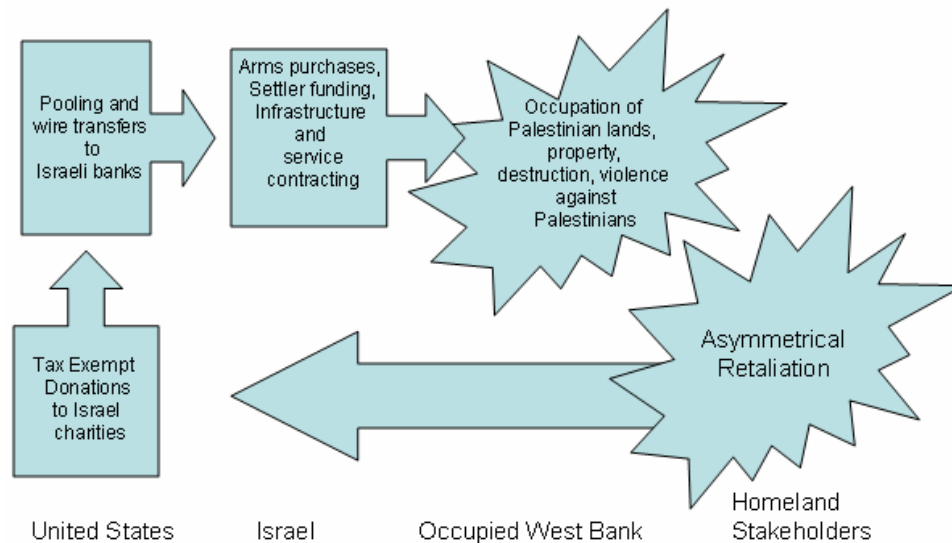
Laundering charitable contributions raised in the US to commit violence and occupation overseas is a direct result of neoconservative ideology at work. An illicit network connects illegal settlements in Israeli-occupied territory, US lobbyists, and charitable entities based in the US and abroad.

Israeli government officials disclosed in August of 2005 that at least US\$ 60 billion has been spent financing illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.ⁱⁱⁱ According to Israeli prosecutor Talia Sasson, the Israeli government has systematically violated its own laws by financing settlements from foreign donations, the official state budget, and secret military accounts.^{iv} One global nonprofit, the World Zionist Organization, played a central role in coordinating illegal settlement activities.

Opaque and fungible assets freed up by massive yearly US foreign aid to Israel were poured into settlement development and infrastructure building designed to partition key Palestinian territories and annex others to the state of Israel. US nonprofits were and are directly and indirectly financing the coordination of illegal settlement building, encroachment, and violence against Palestinians. The recently disclosed charitable contributions from neoconservative bagman Jack Abramoff that were laundered to finance violent armed Israeli activity in the Palestinian territories are only the tip of the iceberg. Combining this with the findings of a groundbreaking new study on the causes of suicide terrorism poses a disturbing question: ***"How exactly do tax-exempt donations from the US cause terrorist retaliation against America?"***

Tax-Exempt Donation Laundering and Terrorism Against the US

(Source: IRmep – October, 2005)



Professor Robert Pape’s quantitative analysis of terrorist attacks from 1980 to 2003 reveals an uncomfortable truth about the root causes of suicide terrorism: It is a strategic effort to compel target governments to withdraw forces from land that the so-called terrorists perceive as their national homeland.^v Donations to tax-exempt entities in the US that are laundered and used to kill and maim Palestinians while ethnically cleansing them from their homelands are not cost-free to Americans. This encroachment generates asymmetrical retaliation against soft targets in the US from ideological stakeholders, as referenced in the 9/11 Commission Report.

Americans made \$136 billion in tax-deductible charitable contributions in 2002.^{vi} A significant number of these contributions were aggregated by the network of tax-exempt charities operating on behalf of Israel in the United States and either transferred to finance illegal settlements or used to fund organizations breaking US, Israeli, and international law. Tracing a single \$25,000 donation within this enormous flow illuminates the important role of money laundering.

Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff laundered money from the Choctaw Chippewa Indian tribe into a nondescript 501 (c) (3) called the Capital Athletic Foundation (CAF). In addition to funding the illegal West Bank Beitar Illit colony, CAF directly procured sniper scopes, camouflage suits, night-vision binoculars, a thermal imager, and shooting mats so that Israeli settlers could intimidate or shoot Palestinian Arabs moving through newly captured land. The shipment of military hardware from the US to Israel was to be expedited via signed letter from a commander in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in order to guarantee “end user” clearance for arms exportation from the U.S. State Department.^{vii}

Tax-Exempt Donation Laundering for Beitar Illit Arms Purchases

(Source: IRmep 2005) ^{viii}



Not all illegal settlement funding from the US is the product of money laundering. A large number of organizations openly raise and disburse funds for the Israeli colonization of Palestinian territories. Although most misrepresent their activities to the IRS as “educational,” others, such as the One Israel Fund, Inc. of Cedarhurst, openly tout their efforts to transfer, arm, and promote Jewish settlements in occupied territories.

US Tax-Exempt Donors to Illegal Settlements

(Source: Internal Revenue Service)

US Tax-Exempt Organization	Tax-Exempt Mandate	Activity
Christian Friends of Israel (Colorado Springs, CO)	“Educating Christians about the Land of Israel and Biblical significance of current events in the Middle East”	Disbursed \$100,061 to an affiliate operating in the West Bank for construction of bus stops, playground equipment in illegal settlements during the year 2003.
American Friends of the College of Judea and Samaria (Brooklyn, NY)	“To provide support for the expansion and furtherance of the needs of educational institutions in Israel.”	Disbursed \$228,200 to an Israeli college established in the illegal West Bank settlement of Ariel.
One Israel Fund, Inc. (Cedarhurst, NY)	“The mission of One Israel Fund is to provide essential humanitarian assistance to the over 225,000 men, women, and children living in the 150-plus communities throughout Judea, Samaria, and Gaza (YESHA).”	Disbursed \$1.9 million in year 2003 to finance illegal settlements, arms, “Friends of the IDF” organization, and “security equipment.”

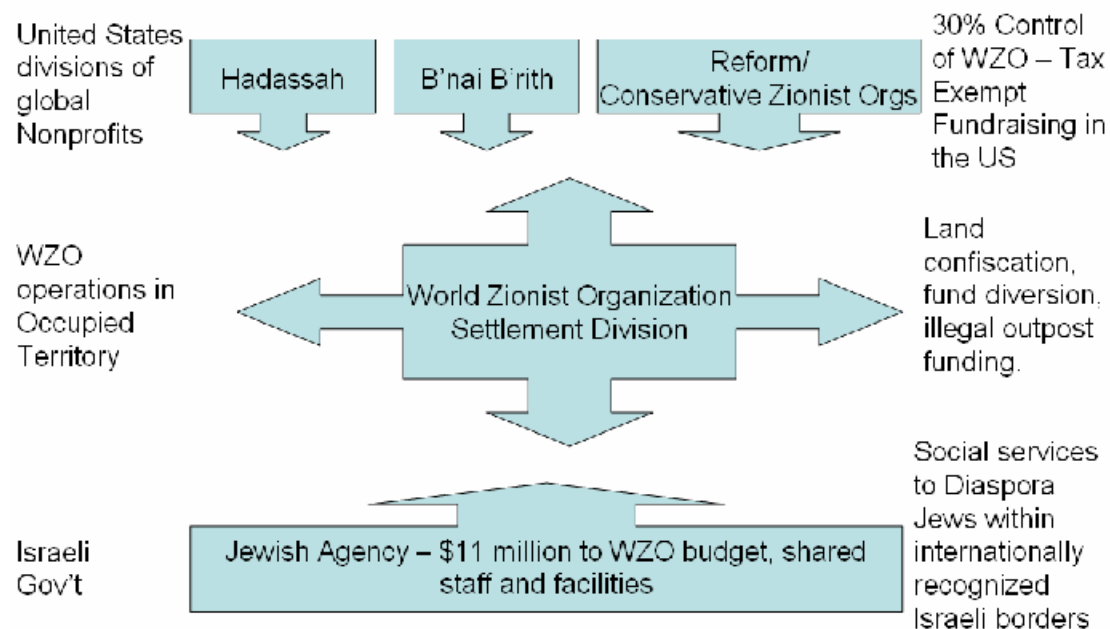
Although not all charitable donations to Israel are spent on financing illegal colonization and violence, funds not earmarked for arms or land-grab campaigns

offset expenses that otherwise would be paid for by the Israeli government, freeing up fungible resources used for encroachment on Palestinian lands. IRS recognized US tax exempt charitable contributions have also been used to ensure that settlements continue to spread in occupied territories irrespective of Israeli and international laws.

American nonprofit organizations control 30% of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) through intermediary governing bodies. On March 9, 2005, Talia Sasson, formerly Israel's chief criminal prosecutor, reported that WZO was deeply involved in coordinating confiscation of privately owned Palestinian land, diverting funds to illegal settlement activity, and acting as the central coordinator for settlement financing and expansion. WZO activities documented in the Sasson report violate international and Israeli laws, as well as American laws prohibiting hostilities against territories or people with which the US is at peace.

US Nonprofit Control of the World Zionist Organization Settlement Division

(Source: Forward)^{ix}



The United States does not escape the consequences of “charity”-financed ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. While Palestinians have not struck back at soft US targets in retaliation, “homeland stakeholders” sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, such as 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, have.

“Yousef’s instant notoriety as the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing inspired KSM to become involved in planning attacks against the United States. By his own account, KSM’s animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experiences there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with US foreign policy favoring Israel.” 9/11 Commission Report^x

The vicious cycle of illegal settlement funding/occupation/retaliation against the US has now become too obvious to deny or explain away. US law enforcement is clearly the best solution for confronting charities operating in the US and laundering tax-exempt donations into illegal settlement activity. To date, however, it is still in an "information gathering" phase and has yet to prosecute any significant neocon overseas criminal activity.

H.R. 4681 is not a credible piece of legislation if it refuses to address the massive illegalities caused by opaque financial transactions and illegal money laundering of US charitable contributions in Israel. By ignoring these ongoing realities in favor of mounting a siege on Palestinian society, Congress is undermining its own credibility. If it truly wishes to confront "terrorism" Congress should act first to stem the major causes.

Terrorist Sanctuaries

Designating Palestinian territories as "terrorist sanctuaries" under Section 5 of the legislation may raise more problems than it resolves. **A sponsor state of H.R. 4681, Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's home state of Florida, is considered by some countries as a terrorist sanctuary for continuing to harbor Orlando Bosch.** Orlando Bosch admitted to taking part in the October 6, 1976 bombing of a Cuban civilian airliner in which all seventy-three people on board were killed, as well as other terrorist attacks. Countries such as Venezuela have requested and been refused Bosch's extradition for trial. However, labeling the entire state of Florida a "terrorist sanctuary" is unproductive. It would unfairly label many law-abiding residents.

H.R. 4681 "broad brush" approach to labeling a territory may appease special interest groups in the US, as the Bosch terrorist sanctuary has Cuban-American groups in Florida. It will do little, however, to address real terrorism issues.

Conclusions

The origins and key special interest support of this legislation, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), immediately raise questions about the bill's utility as American foreign policy. The Executive, the branch primarily responsible for US foreign policy, has been right to ignore the trajectory of the legislation by providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, as have enlightened European and other foreign donor nations.

Two leading AIPAC officials and authors of similar punitive legislation, Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, are now under criminal indictment for passing classified information to a foreign nation and other illegal activity. Members of congress that continue to promote flawed AIPAC legislation that is not in line with the interests of mainstream Americans, do so at peril of their own reputation and the credibility of Congress.

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Sources

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ⁱⁱ Deadly Dogma – pp 96-97.

ⁱⁱⁱ "No one knows full cost of Israel's settlement ambitions," USA Today, 8/14/2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2005-08-14-israelsettlercosts_x.htm

^{iv} "Summary of the Opinion Concerning Unauthorized Outposts," Talia Sasson, 3/10/2005, <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/956aa60f2a7bd6a185256fc0006305f4?OpenDocument>

^v "Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," Robert Pape, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/1400063175/103-1676732-6156641?v=glance>

^{vi} "How many filings, how much revenue?" All Things Considered, National Public Radio, November 12, 2004.

^{vii} "Senatorial Courtesy," Lou Dubose, Texas Observer, 8/26/2005, <http://www.texasobserver.org/showArticle.asp?ArticleID=2016>

^{viii} "Ten Things Every American Can Do to Improve US Middle East Policy," Web Presentation, <http://www.irmep.org/terrorism.htm>

^{ix} "Jewish Officials Profess Shock Over Report on Zionist Body," Forward, 3/18/2005, <http://www.jafi.org.il/papers/2005/march/march18afor.htm>

^x "The 9/11 Commission Report," p. 147, <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/>

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