

December 5, 2013

Dutch Support for BDS Campaigns:

ICCO - Interchurch Organization for Development and Cooperation

Background

- [ICCO](#) (Interchurch Organization for Development and Cooperation) is a Dutch church-based non-governmental organization that receives large scale funding from the Dutch government. The Dutch government also [views](#) ICCO as an important partner in the Middle East.
- **This relationship is very concerning.** Research shows that ICCO pursues a biased and politicized agenda regarding Israel, as seen in its statements, publications, promotion of BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) that immorally single out Israel, and funding for radical NGOs.
- ICCO's activities in the region and its funding for Israeli, Palestinian and international partner NGOs have been the subject of numerous parliamentary [discussions](#). Following the increased criticism, including NGO Monitor reports, **ICCO has significantly decreased its transparency**. Therefore, its NGO funding is largely hidden from further debate.
- The Dutch government and parliament inquired about ICCO's funding for [Electronic Intifada](#), an anti-Israel website that leads boycott and other public campaigns against Israel. Despite objections from the Dutch government, **ICCO stated that it did not change its policy of funding Electronic Intifada and other BDS organizations.**
- Due to the severe lack of transparency, it is not known whether ICCO continues to fund other radical grantees such as **Badil**. Such secrecy regarding NGO funding and activity is anti-democratic and goes against the principles of good governance.

Funding

- In 2012, the Dutch Government [provided](#) ICCO with €82 million or 84% of its total budget for that year. ICCO also received €5,310,874 from the EU, meaning approximately 90% of ICCO's budget is from government entities.
- ICCO does not provide any information on funding for partner organizations. This is a new development, which occurred following critical reports from NGO Monitor and scrutiny from the Dutch government.
- Independent research by NGO Monitor, including examining reports to the Israeli Registrar of Non-Profits, shows that ICCO partnered with the following Israeli and Palestinian NGOs in 2012:

NGO	Amounts in New Israeli Shekels (NIS)
Addameer	Undisclosed
Al Haq	Undisclosed
Breaking the Silence	153,541
B'Tselem	245,290
Coalition of Women for Peace	Undisclosed
Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS)	Undisclosed
PCATI	Undisclosed
Zochrot	Undisclosed

Examples of ICCO's NGO Partners:

- [Coalition of Women for Peace \(CWP\)](#): CWP is a leader of BDS campaigns, particularly via the “Who Profits” project. The “[Who Profits](#)” website serves as an “online database and information centre,” initiated “in response to the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) on Israel,” which identifies targets for BDS activism. CWP officials have been [photographed](#) holding a flag of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – an EU-recognized terrorist organization responsible for numerous attacks against civilians.
- [Defence for Children International – Palestine Section](#) (DCI-PS): DCI-PS’s [stated mission](#) is “Promoting and protecting the rights of Palestinian children in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as other international, regional and local standards.” However, the NGO is very active in wider anti-Israel political campaigns, including [promoting the return](#) of Palestinian refugees to Israel and “war crimes” accusations at the United Nations Human Rights Council. The organization is also active in BDS campaigns, [lobbying for sanctions](#) targeting Israel.
- [Zochrot](#): This Israeli NGO seeks to “raise public awareness of the Palestinian Nakba...The memory and responsibility that the Jewish public should take on the Palestinian Nakba are basic conditions to peace between people, but it is not enough. Along with it, the rights of the refugees to return must be accepted.” This [agenda](#) is equivalent to calling for the elimination of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Zochrot also [accuses Israel](#) of “ethnic cleansing” and “forcible displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people.”
- Due to ICCO’s severe lack of transparency, it is not possible to know if it still funds radical organizations such as Badil. Badil has been involved with [antisemitic incidents](#), as well as demonizing language, such as “[Israel’s colonial apartheid regime](#),” “state-sponsored racism,” and “[systematic ethnic cleansing](#).”

ICCO and BDS:

- In a Dutch Foreign Ministry press release, then Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal stated that supporting boycotts targeting Israel is in “direct contrast to Dutch policy.” Likewise, “calls for boycott do not contribute” to “Dutch efforts...with regard to the peace-process.” In addition, the Dutch government “is not in favor of a ban on the import of goods from settlements **or measures leading to a boycott of these goods.**” In contrast, ICCO promotes BDS efforts in a number of ways.
- ICCO has attempted to justify BDS initiatives, which immorally single out Israel, as a “peaceful and legal way of trying to end [the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories].”
- ICCO is a supporter of the Kairos Palestine document, which calls for BDS against Israel and denies the Jewish historical connection to Israel. On October 2011, ICCO representatives met with Kairos Palestine officials to discuss “ways of promoting the document.”
- Supports NGOs that are leaders in international boycott campaigns against Israel, including the Coalition of Women for Peace, Badil, Electronic Intifada, and DCI-PS.
- In the last two years, ICCO has jointly written two major publications promoting BDS and identifying companies to be targeted by international activists.
 - In April 2013, ICCO and two other Dutch NGOs published a report, “Dutch Economic Links to the Occupation.” This report alleges “trade and investment relationships between companies located in Israeli settlement or profiting from the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights on the one hand, and the Netherlands on the other hand.”
 - In 2012, together with another 21 European NGOs, ICCO published “Trading Away Peace: How Europe Helps Sustain Illegal Israeli Settlements.” In this report, the NGOs repeat the BDS agenda, calling on the EU and national governments to wage political warfare through various forms of economic sanctions on Israel. Proposals of this report include: “ban imports of settlement products,” “prevent financial transactions to settlements and related activities,” and “exclude settlement products and companies from public procurements tenders and other forms of economic sanctions.” Many of the recommendations are phrased in a vague and expansive manner, belying claims of a “targeted boycott.” For further analyses of this report, click here.

ICCO and Electronic Intifada:

- Electronic Intifada (EI) is an online media outlet active in promoting the Palestinian agenda with news articles and commentary containing highly inflammatory and offensive rhetoric.

- EI has an extensive BDS section, including articles that advocate for academic, consumer, cultural, and church boycotts, commercial divestment, and government sanctions against Israel. EI also issues reports on developments and claimed victories in BDS.
- EI co-founder and executive director, Ali Abunimah, is a leading advocate of the [one-state solution](#). To actualize this, he says “[coercion is necessary](#),” and acknowledges that in a one-state solution “[we couldn’t rule out some disastrous situation](#)” (4:43) for Jews. Abunimah has also claimed that Zionism “is one of the [worst forms of anti-Semitism](#) in existence today.”
- After learning of ICCO’s financial support for the Electronic Intifada (EI), then Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal had a “[frank and open discussion](#)” with ICCO in January 2011, noting that EI’s activities are “directly contrary to Dutch government policy.” The Minister dismissed ICCO claims that its funding of EI comes from private donations as “disingenuous.”
- Following a meeting with Minister Rosenthal, ICCO issued a [press release](#) stating that it would not end its funding for Electronic Intifada. According to an [article](#) on Electronic Intifada, “ICCO did not capitulate to pressure from Rosenthal and continued its grant to the Electronic Intifada the following year.”

ICCO’s regional board:

- ICCO’s Middle East operations are [guided](#) by its Middle East Regional Council. The Council members “**set regional priorities for policy and strategy**,” “are co-responsible for regional policy,” and “monitor regional implementation by the regional office” (emphasis added).
- Reflecting ICCO’s political bias, members of the regional council include Mitri Raheb, Karen AbuZayd, Heikelien Verijn Stuart, and Mieke Zagt.
 - **Mitri Raheb** is [one](#) of the co-writers of the Kairos-Palestine Document. The Kairos document calls for BDS against Israel and denies the Jewish historical connection to Israel.
 - **Karen AbuZayd**, former commission-general of UNRWA, currently serves as the chairperson of the ICCO board.
 - **Mieke Zagt** previously served as program officer and currently holds the position of board Secretary. Zagt has [endorsed](#) BDS campaigns including participating in a 2009 conference titled “[United In Struggle Against Israeli Colonialism, Occupation, and Racism](#).”
 - **Heikelien Verrijn Stuart** is a member of the Palestine Link advisory committee. Palestine Link claims to be an “authentic and independent voice for Palestinians in Holland” that “defends Palestinian national and human rights and promotes Palestinian interests.” The Palestine Link website [advertises](#) the Kairos Palestine Document and the 2005 Palestinian civil society call for BDS.