This morning, President Obama got what he’s been working toward all year. With Senator Barbara Mikulski’s announcement that she will vote to support the Iran nuclear deal, the administration got its 34th vote in the Senate, thus assuring that the president will have enough support to sustain a veto of a resolution of disapproval of the pact. Mikulski was just the latest of a number of Senate Democrats to throw in with the president on Iran. The only suspense now is whether Obama will get to 41 and thus have enough for a filibuster and prevent a vote on the deal from even taking place. Leaving aside the terrible damage the deal does to U.S. security and the stability of the Middle East, the most far-reaching effect of the deal is that from now on Democrats own Iran. From this moment forward, every act of Iran-sponsored terrorism, every instance of Iranian aggression and adventurism as well as the Islamist regime’s inevitable march to a nuclear weapon can be laid at the feet of a Democratic Party. With a few exceptions, the Democrats fell meekly behind a president determined to prioritize détente with Iran over the alliance with Israel and the need to defend U.S. interests. By smashing the bipartisan consensus that had existed on Iran up until this year, the Democrats have, in effect, become the hostages of the ayatollahs. This is a decision that will haunt them in the years to come.

In analyzing the struggle that was ultimately won by Obama, it must first be acknowledged that the outcome was determined primarily by a mismatch in terms of the relative power of the two sides. Though the Iran deal is a threat to U.S. security as well as to the interests of moderate Arab regimes who are as afraid of Tehran as Israel, the pro-Israeli community, and AIPAC led the fight against the agreement. Though AIPAC can generally count on bipartisan support on any issue it cares about, it never had a prayer of beating an administration that was prepared to do and say anything to get its way. Once the president made clear that he considered the nuclear deal to be the centerpiece of his foreign policy legacy, the chances that even the pull of the pro-Israel community could persuade enough Democrats to sustain a veto override were slim and none. In order to achieve that victory, Obama had to sink to the level of gutter politics by smearing his critics as warmongers and slam AIPAC with the same sort of language that earned President George H.W. Bush opprobrium. But the president’s ability to twist the arms of most of the members of his own party to back him was never really in doubt. It was a defeat for AIPAC but not one that should impact its ability to continue to be effective on Capitol Hill.

It must also be noted that this outcome was only made possible by the utter stupidity and cowardice of key Republican leaders — especially Senator Bob Corker — that led to their agreement to a bill that reversed the treaty ratification process. The Corker-Cardin bill that gave Congress the right to vote on the deal was represented at the time as a bipartisan triumph but the Democrats were laughing up their sleeves the whole time. Instead of demanding that the president present the deal to Congress as a treaty, which would have required a two-thirds vote of approval, Obama was able to ram this awful deal down the throats of a reluctant country and Congress by only being able to have enough votes to sustain a veto. It would have been better for the country had the GOP stood on its ground on the treaty issue since that would have left Obama to pursue his original plan, which was to treat the deal as a simple agreement that required no Congressional action at all. At least then the deal would have been seen as another end run around the Constitution by a lawless president.

But the most important point to be gleaned from Obama’s seeming triumph is that he and his party now bear complete responsibility for Iran’s good conduct as well as its nuclear program.

Let’s remember that, up until this past winter, it could be argued that Congressional Democrats were as ardent about stopping Iran’s nuclear ambitions as the Republicans. Sanctions on Iran — that were opposed by the Obama administration — got overwhelming Democratic support with members of the party like Senator Robert Menendez leading the fight for them. Even tougher sanctions that were also opposed by the president last year also had the support of the vast majority of the Democratic caucuses in both the House and the Senate. Nor was there much enthusiasm among Democrats for the string of concessions that Obama made to Iran in the negotiations led up to the deal.

But once the president got close to achieving his goal of an entente with Iran, he set about the business of peeling away Democrats from that consensus position. To date only two in the Senate — Menendez and New York’s Chuck Schumer — resisted the pressure and even Schumer promised not to try and persuade other Democrats to join him. The power of the presidency and the threat of unleashing a wave of slander and perhaps primary opposition from the president’s left-wing admirers was enough to force Democrats into his camp.

The statements of support from each Democrat betrayed their lack of enthusiasm for a deal that all admitted wasn’t the triumph that Obama was crowing about. They know it doesn’t achieve the administration’s stated goal when the negotiations began of stopping Iran’s program. At best it postpones it for a decade or 15 years. Meanwhile Iran is allowed to continue research and keep its advanced infrastructure as well as the right to go on enriching uranium.

Just as important, the deal did nothing to rein in Iran’s support for terrorism, halt its ballistic missile building program (which shows that the U.S. and Europe are as much Tehran’s target as Israel) or halt its push for regional hegemony.

Obama and the Democrats now say they will get behind Israel and strengthen its defenses even though the deal makes Iran a threshold nuclear power almost immediately. That renders talk of preserving Israel’s qualitative military edge over potential enemies like Hamas and Hezbollah using Iranian funds and material to wage war against Israel or moves against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states must now be seen as having been enabled not just by Obama but also by his party.

If Iran cheats its way to a bomb before the deal expires or uses the wealth that Obama is lavishing on it to get them to agree to this deal to undermine regional stability it won’t be possible in the future for Democrats to say that this was simply Obama’s folly. No, by dickishly following his lead for a deal that few of them were eager to embrace, the entire Democratic Party must now pray that the president is right and that Iran will seek to “get right with the world” rather than pursuing a religious and ideological agenda of conflict with the West and Israel.

Obama got his deal despite the opposition of the majority of Congress and the American people. But the Democratic Party now gets to pay the bill. By making Iran a partisan issue in this manner, Obama saddled his party with the blame for everything that will happen in the coming years. Munich analogies are often inappropriate but when Rep. Patrick Murphy (the likely Democratic nominee for the Senate seat Marco Rubio is vacating next year) said the deal gives us “peace in our time,” his channelling of Neville Chamberlain was no ordinary gaffe. In the years to come when Obama is retired and Iran uses the deal to make new mischief and atrocities, Democrats may regret giving in to the president’s pressure. But, like the appeasers of the 1930s, the legacy of the pro-Iran deal Democrats is now set in stone. (CommentaryMagazine.com Sep 2)

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Kerry’s Speech Tops Chamberlain’s Remarks
By Rick Richman
In his speech yesterday on the Iran deal, Secretary of State Kerry mentioned “Israel” or “Israeli” 26 times –– protesting a bit too much about his concern for the ally put at existential risk by the Obama administration’s cascade of concessions. Even eerier was the similarity of Kerry’s words to those of Neville Chamberlain in the British parliamentary debate on the Munich agreement in 1938. Here is Kerry’s assertion about Israel, together with his concluding words:

“The people of Israel will be safer with this deal, and the same is true for the people throughout the region. … [H]istory may judge [the Iran agreement] a turning point, a moment when the builders of stability seized the initiative from the destroyers of hope, and when we were able to show, as have generations before us, that when we demand the best from ourselves and insist that others adhere to a similar high standard –– when we do that, we have immense power to shape a safer and a more humane world. That’s what this is about and that’s what I hope we will do in the days ahead.”

In the debate on the Munich agreement, Chamberlain’s claims were actually more modest than Kerry’s. He acknowledged the criticism he had received for saying that the agreement signaled “peace for our time,” and he said he hoped Members of Parliament would not “read into words used in a moment of some emotion, after a long and exhausting day, after I had driven through miles of excited, enthusiastic, cheering people –– I hope they will not read into those words more than they were intended to convey.” He said he knew “weakness in armed strength means weakness in diplomacy” and he had a program to accelerate Britain’s re-armament. Then he described the effect of the agreement on Czechoslovakia and his hopes for the future:

“It is my hope and my belief, that under the new system of guarantees, the new Czechoslovakia will find a greater security than she has ever enjoyed in her life. Even if she is assailed. Even if she is put to the test.”

As his secretary of state employs rhetorical, in prepared remarks, that would have embarrassed Neville Chamberlain. (CommentaryMagazine.com Sep 3)

Losing the War of Ideas
By Caroline B. Glick
We have arrived at the point where the consequences of the West’s intellectual disarmament at the hands of political correctness begins to have disastrous consequences in the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Speaking last month at the memorial service for the five US marines massacred in a recruiting office in Chattanooga, Tennessee, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said, “The meaning of their killing is yet unclear, and what combination of disturbed mind, violent extremism, and hateful ideology was at work, we don’t know.”

US Vice President Joe Biden claimed, the “perverse ideologues…may be able to inspire a single lone wolf, but they can never, never threaten who we are.”

Both were wrong, and dangerously so.

The meaning of the killings was no mystery. Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez shot his victims down in cold blood because he was a jihadist. He wrote of his devotion to the Islamic war for global domination on his blog. He downloaded messages from Anwar Awlaki, the American al-Qaida commander killed in a drone attack in Yemen in 2011.

Awlaki’s most prolific follower to date was US Army Major Nidal Malik Hassan who massacred 13 soldiers and wounded 32 in his November 2009 assault at Ft. Hood, Texas. Yet, just as the Obama administration denies to this day that Hassan operated out of devotion to the cause of Islamic global supremacy through genocidal war, so Carter pretended away Abdulazeez’s obvious motive. And Biden stood before those whose lives were shattered by jihad last month and told them that jihad was not a threat to their way of life.

Ideas are the most powerful human force. And the idea of jihad that the Obama administration will not discuss is perhaps the most powerful idea in the world’s marketplace of ideas today.

The notion of jihad is fairly simple. It asserts that Islam is the only true religion. All other faiths are wrong and evil. It is the destiny of the one true faith to reign supreme. The duty of all Muslims is to facilitate Islam’s global rise and dominance.

How this duty is borne varies. Some take up arms. Some engage in indoctrination. Some engage in subversion. And some cheer from the sidelines, providing a fan base to encourage those more directly engaged. What is most important is the shared idea, the creed of jihad.

The jihadist creed is a creed of war. Consequently, its adherents cannot live peacefully with non-jihadists.

By definition, those who subscribe to a jihadist world view constitute a threat to those who do not share their belief system.

Rather than contend with the idea of jihad, the West, led by the US, insists on limiting its focus to the outward manifestations of jihadist beliefs.

Physical bases of jihadists in places like Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen are targeted to kill specific people –– like Awlaki. But the ideas that inspire them to action are ignored or dismissed as irrelevant and interchangeable with other ideologies, like Zionism and fiscal conservatism.

Imagine the Americans, the jihadists understand the power of their idea. And they invest hundreds of millions of dollars to propagate it. MEMRI recently reported that Islamic State (IS) runs at least three production companies. They disseminate professional- quality videos daily. The videographers, composers and singers who produce these films are IS members, no different from its beheaders, sex traders and chemical weapons purveyors.

Like IS’s battle successes and its sex slave industry, these videos have already had a profound impact on the shape of the Islamic world and the threat jihadist Islam constitutes for its opponents worldwide.

From Nigeria to Egypt to the Palestinian Authority to Pakistan, in Europe, the US and South America, jihadist armies and individual Muslims are embracing the idea of the caliphate –– the ultimate aim of jihad –– and pledging or weighing the option of pledging loyalty to IS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

As a result, the never reasonable notion that you can limit war against jihad to the physical bases of IS and other terrorist groups while ignoring the idea that motivates their actions has become downright deadly.

Consider Egypt. As Yoni Ben-Menachem reported last month for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, on August 20, Baghdaddi officially asked the Muslim Brotherhood to join IS and pledge loyalty to his caliphate. His request was completely reasonable.

Both IS and the Brotherhood share the same ideology, including the goal of Islamic domination through the renewed caliphate. Like the Brotherhood, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Ansar el-Maliks in the Sinai and other jihadist groups in Asia and Africa have already accepted Baghdaddi’s invitation, pledged allegiance to the caliphate and changed their names to incorporate into the Islamic State.

Ben-Menachem noted that in January 2015, Muslim Brotherhood leader Youssef Qaradawi said that Baghdaddi is a member of the Brotherhood. Organizational cooperation, including military cooperation between IS and the Brotherhood, which is at least the largest organization on the ground in Egypt has grown steadily over the past two years since then defense minister Abdel Fattah Sisi overthrew the Brotherhood regime in July 2013.

IS’s goal is apparently to convince the young Brotherhood members to join forces. If the bid is successful, Egypt will become a tinderbox whose destructive force will be cataclysmic.

Then there is nuclear-armed Pakistan.

Last week the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Stimson Center published a joint report warning that given Pakistan’s rate of nuclear activity, within five to 10 years Pakistan may have the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world, behind only the US and Russia. According to the report, Pakistan is producing nuclear bombs four times faster than India.

The epicenter of Pakistan’s nuclear work is its Baluchistan province. IS’s popularity is high and growing in the area, as it is throughout much of Pakistan.
Indian intelligence reports claim that Pakistan’s security forces are making the same cynical use of IS that they have made of al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

ISI, Pakistan’s spy service, facilitates the operations of these groups in order to coerce the US to provide Pakistan with more aid, which it is expected to use to contain the threat it has itself cultivated.

This game has been going on for decades. But there is no reason to assume that as IS gains power and adherents, the same Pakistani security forces that believe they can control IS will not end up joining it. And as a consequence, the danger that bombs they now build will fall under Baghdadi’s control is real and growing.

Last week the Pentagon’s Inspector General announced it is investigating reports that the Obama administration has required US intelligence agencies to minimize their reporting on the threat IS poses. Intelligence officials have allegedly been ordered to exaggerate the success of the US’s anemic campaign against its bases in Iraq and Syria while understating the threat IS constitutes.

Over the past year, jihadists published the home addresses of American soldiers and officers. On numerous occasions, what an FBI alert referred to as “Middle Eastern men” accosted the wives of US soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan outside of their homes.

Speaking to concerned soldiers last week, Carter again pretended away the problem. While insisting that protecting soldiers is “job one for all of us,” Carter insisted that the threat was limited to “a few troubled losers who are on the Internet too much.”

While Carter’s statement is true, what is not is that IS’sacellular unitary will continue to be relevant.

Australian Foreign Minister Julia Bishop warned in June that IS may already have sufficient nuclear material to produce a dirty bomb. As we have seen with IS’s wide-scale use of chemical weapons in Iraq, we must assume that its fighters will use all weapons at their disposal.

The West – led by the US – has been willing to abandon the intellectual straightjacket of political correctness with which it has willingly shackled itself. IS may very well have been a marginal movement able to attract no more than “a few troubled losers who are on the Internet too much.”

Biden’s pledge that while “pervasive ideologies...may be able to inspire a single lone wolf they can never, never threaten who we are” might have been credible.

But because of our voluntary intellectual enslavement, we now face a real danger that IS and its demonic notions will take over Egypt. Because we see a need to ignore the creed of jihad, Pakistan’s fast growing nuclear arsenal could very well become the property of the caliphate.

Ideas are the force that drives history. If we aren’t willing to fight for what we believe, then we will lose to those who are. And make no mistake, we are not winning this war.

(Jerusalem Post Sep 1)

Hillacy-Sidney Emails Herald a Demise of a Pro-Israel Democractic Party

By Jonathan S. Tobin

The latest batch of Hillary Clinton emails to be released is being scoured for classified information today. While the Clinton camp is taking solace in the fact that there was no “Top Secret” data in these communications, the large number of emails with classified information is just drawing more attention to the former secretary of state’s allergy to transparency and doing her presidential candidacy no end of harm. But there is more to be learned here than a reaffirmation of what we already knew about the Clintons’ passion for secrecy. The treasure trove of information about her work at the state department also gives us an inside view of her close relationship with Sidney Blumenthal. We already knew that Blumenthal’s role in Hillary’s life illustrated the conflicts of interest created by the Clinton Family Foundation since he was, at one and the same time, a paid consultant by the so-called charity, seeking business opportunities in Libya while also operating as an adviser to the secretary about topics in which he had a vested interest. But what wasn’t clear until today was the extent to which the person whom she has publicly described as a close personal friend was counseling her to distance herself from pro-Israel groups and filling up her email account with anti-Zionist and other left-wing screeds by her son Max that she had printed out for further reading. The Blumenthal-Clinton correspondence is notable for many reasons but principally because it gives us a window into the sorts of conversations that would go on inside a Hillary Clinton White House.

As Politico reports, the Blumenthal correspondence is numerous and widespread in terms of the topics covered. Blumenthal’s pose as a Libya expert was visible as he knew nothing about the country other than the tidbits he gleaned as he attempt to profit from his connections there in the wake of the fall of the Qaddafi regime. But the Clinton White House political hit man had plenty to say about just about every foreign policy issue and the former first lady was eager to hear all of it.

Yet the topic about which Blumenthal seemed to have the most passion was his attempt to steer Clinton away from the sort of pro-Israel stands that she had established while in the Senate. Blumenthal urged her to give “tough love” to Israel. That’s a nice way of saying that he wanted her to lecture and threaten it to bow to Obama administration dictates even if they undermined the alliance between the two countries and Israel’s security.

As he said in one email about a speech she was scheduled to give to an AIPAC conference, he wanted her to: “remind in as subtle but also direct a way as you can that it does not have a monopoly over American Jewish opinion.”

Just as telling is the way he pried her with his son Max’s articles. Max Blumenthal is a radical left wing writer and the author of Goliath, a vicious anti-Zionist polemic that attacks Israel’s right to exist and urges its isolation and ultimate dissolution. As the Daily Caller notes, Sidney sent Clinton some of Max’s pieces supporting the so-called Gaza flotilla and attacking Israel’s attempt to enforce the blockade of the Hamas state in the strip. Other Max Blumenthal pieces passed along by his dad spread libels about Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. Still more sought to highlight “Islamophobia” on the right.

The point here is that Sidney Blumenthal is not just one among many voices whispering in Hillary Clinton’s ears. He is a close friend and, as the emails attest, a valued adviser. Indeed, Clinton kept him close to her despite the fact that the Obama White House wouldn’t let her hire him and sought to keep him away from all policy discussions and decisions.

Despite what Clinton may tell her many pro-Israel donors, keeping a man like Blumenthal in her inner circle is a telling indication of her true feelings about a lot of issues, but especially that of the state of Israel. If she were to become president, Sidney’s voice would continue to have great weight in her counsels. Just as dangerous, it would help legitimize Max Blumenthal’s views.

During the course of the debate about the Iran nuclear deal, we have already witnessed the collapse of the pro-Israel wing of the Democratic Party. Faced with pressure by President Obama, most liberal Democrats, even many with strong pro-Israel records, caved into administration pressure and backed the agreement despite the fact that it fell far short of Obama’s own criteria for success when the negotiations started.

Despite the rearguard efforts of some figures in the party to keep it at a distance from Obama’s antagonism to the Jewish state, Democrats are largely abandoning Israel on Iran. The Blumenthal emails make it clear this won’t be a problem if Hillary becomes president.

The assumption has been that if Clinton were elected, the damage done to the U.S.-Israel alliance by Obama would begin to be undone. Clinton was, we were told, the adult in the room. Her backers assure us that she has a tougher-minded foreign policy approach than that of a president who is clearly committed to prioritizing détente with the Islamist regime in Tehran over strengthening the alliance with Israel. But so long as Sidney Blumenthal, and by extension his son Max, are going to be treating Israel as “a few troubled losers who are on the Internet too much,” the threat that Blumenthal’s pose as a defender of Israel is no longer credible. She may not go as far as they like in distancing herself from the pro-Israel community. But the notion that she will restore the closeness Obama wrecked is obviously untrue. With Sidney whispering in her ear, there will be plenty more of the dangerous “daylight” that Obama has done so much to create between the two nations.

While Clinton has more to fear from the email issue than fallout about Blumenthal, the Hillary-Sidney emails show just that the pro-Israel community will be on thin ice if she recovers and wins in November 2016. (CommentaryMagazine.com Sep 1)

How Israel Prevented ISIS from Going Nuclear

By Michael Freund

The entire free world owes Israel an enormous debt of gratitude. No country is in a better position to understand the implications of a nuclear loose cannon than the one that prevented ISIS from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

This revelation came to light thanks to a recent article on the NK News website by former US diplomat Dennis P. Halpin, who highlighted an intriguing tidbit of information that was otherwise almost completely ignored by the mainstream press.

The article, posted on June 30, claims that a Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, which aims to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, posted a satellite imagery brief which revealed that, “The destroyed reactor site in Syria is now under the control of ISIL/Daesh [Islamic State, or IS], which is apparently dismantling and possibly conducting excavation activities at the site.”

Halpin, who is currently a visiting scholar at the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University, was the first to point out the significance of the satellite data and he did not mince words in describing it: “If it were not
for ‘Operation Orchard’ – the Israeli air strike conducted on the Al Kibar reactor on September 6, 2007 – ISIL fighters could well be armed today with atomic weaponry rather than just captured U.S. tanks and Kalashnikov rifles.”

According to foreign media reports, Israeli special forces along with aircraft hit the atomic facility, which the Syrian government was building with help from North Korea, in the Deir ez-Zor region of the country.

On April 24, 2008, more than seven months later, the White House press secretary issued an unusual statement saying that Syria had indeed been “building a covert nuclear reactor in its eastern desert capable of producing plutonium.”

Based on intelligence, the US said there was “good reason to believe that reactor, which was damaged beyond repair on September 6 of last year, was not intended for peaceful purposes,” and it noted that “after it was destroyed, the regime moved quickly to bury evidence of its existence. This cover-up only served to reinforce our confidence that this reactor was not intended for peaceful activities.”

Now jump back to the present, and consider what the current situation might be had that Syrian reactor been left in place: it would now be in the hands of IS.

Just the thought of a nuclear-armed Islamic State, which enthusiastically revels in the shedding of blood, should be enough to send chills down the spine.

The group, which now controls swathes of Iraq and Syria equivalent in size to Great Britain, has made headlines over the past year thanks to its expansionist and genocidal ideology, and aims to establish an Islamic caliphate in order to rule the world.

It has shown a penchant for the macabre, releasing videos in which its fighters have proudly beheaded, crucified or burned captives alive.

And as the BBC’s Andrew Hosken notes in his new book, Empire of Fear: Inside the Islamic State, the terrorist group’s objective is to take over the entire Middle East, all of North Africa and even parts of Europe by 2020.

Hosken is also convinced, as he told the UK Daily Express on August 11, that IS would not hesitate to employ chemical, biological or nuclear weapons to achieve its goals.

“If they had weapons of mass destruction, they would use them,” he said, adding, “There is no question about that.”

Nor did the Israeli attack, which Hosken claims was conducted by IS, fit the description of a “surgical strike,” as commonly defined by the US military. Instead of the usual shock and awe bombing, the Israeli special forces entered the reactor and destroyed it.

El Baradei’s remarks were quickly seized upon by the pro-Israel lobby in the US, which was looking for a pretext to strike against Syria.

In fact, El Baradei had been reporting on the legal and political implications of the Syrian nuclear reactor since 2001, and had made public his concerns about the reactor to the US government.

But the US government chose to ignore his warnings, instead opting to strike the Syrian reactor without consulting El Baradei or providing him with any evidence of its existence.

El Baradei was so concerned about the legality of the strike that he threatened to quit the International Atomic Energy Agency in protest.

In the end, El Baradei was vindicated, as the US-led strike was later found to have violated international law.

Still, El Baradei’s warning was ignored by the US government, which continued to pursue its own interests in the region.

The lesson of El Baradei’s remarks is clear: the US government is not a reliable ally in the fight against terrorism.

It is up to the international community to stand up to the US and work towards a more just and peaceful world.

Who’s Funding Pro-Palestinian Israeli ‘Human Rights’ Groups? By Evelyn Gordon

Granted, everyone is (justly) preoccupied with the Iran deal right now, and, granted, the original scoop was in Hebrew. But I still can’t believe this news has gotten so little attention: During last summer’s war with Hamas in Gaza, two Israeli “human rights” organizations – B’Tselem and Breaking the Silence – requested and received special grants from Palestinian middlemen in order to finance reports accusing Israel of war crimes.

Under most circumstances, taking money from the enemy in wartime to produce propaganda against your own side would be considered treason. In this case, legally speaking, it definitely isn’t. But morally speaking, it’s not merely skirting close to the edge; it’s well over the line.

The news was first reported by Gidon dokow on the Hebrew-language news site NRG. But you needn’t take Dokow’s word for it; he helpfully included a link to the funding organization’s English-language annual report.

The organization goes by the unwieldy name of the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat. According to its annual report, it is “a project implemented by NIRAS NATURA AB – Sweden, and the Institute of Legal and Birzeit University, Birzeit, Palestine, with generous support from the governments of Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland.”

In other words, the money itself is European. But the ones who decide what to do with it are Niras Natura – which describes itself as an international consultancy firm in the field of sustainable development – and the faculty of Birzeit. And since the Birzeit people are the ones actually on the ground, they presumably have considerable influence over how the money is spent.

The Secretariat’s main job appears to be funneling money to other organizations. According to the annual report, it had 24 “core grantees” and 19 “project grantees” last year. Nine of the former and two of the latter are Israeli; the rest are Palestinian.

When the war broke out in July 2014, the Secretariat put out a call to its core grantees soliciting emergency funding requests. “The emergency funding call focused on activities related to monitoring and documentation of IHL [international humanitarian law] and human rights violations in the Gaza Strip, arising from the then ongoing war,” the report said.

Requests were received from 11 organizations, including three Israeli ones, and the Secretariat decided to fund nine of them, including two Israeli groups – B’Tselem and BTS.

But the money was intended for “monitoring and documentation” of alleged violations by one side only – Israel. That’s crystal clear from the report’s summary of its emergency grantees’ “achievements”: Not one of the nine says anything about the massive Palestinian violations of international humanitarian law.

The section on Breaking the Silence is particularly blatant. The Secretariat would have considered its money well spent, the report declared, had BTS managed to scrounge up even a single anti-Israel testimony from Israeli soldiers:

Breaking the Silence (BTS) presented a unique proposal for emergency funding whereby BTS attempted to interview (collect testimony from) residents of Syria. However, when the Syrian reactor was destroyed eight years ago, BTS were very cautious about how effective their work would be at the peak of the conflict. At first, they were not even sure they would be able to interview soldiers or even feel safe to issue testimonies. The Secretariat was ready to accept even one testimony.

Of course, had the alleged violations been real, one could argue that B’Tselem and BTS were doing holy work. But most of what they produced was a calculated smear campaign.

Indeed, a particularly blatant example from the BTS report, courtesy of the Elder of Ziyon blog: A soldier testified about an apparently mentally disturbed girl who kept getting close to his company.

The soldiers feared Hamas had wired her with explosives, having encountered an old man earlier that day – “70 or 80 years old” – who “turned out to be booby-trapped from head to toe.” Consequently, they fired at the ground near her in an attempt to drive her away.

B’Tselem testified that at one point, when she kept refusing to leave, he really wanted to shoot her. But none of the soldiers actually did.

The headline of the testimony, however, was, “I really, really wanted to shoot her in the knees” – which would leave any casual reader thinking the immoral Israeli had in fact done so. And thus BTS warped a story of the immorality of Israel's soldiers.

As noted earlier, B’Tselem and BTS probably weren’t breaking any laws. But the money was intended for “monitoring and documentation” of alleged violations of IHL and human rights violations in the Gaza Strip, arising from the then ongoing war.

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