**NGO Silence on PLO Terror Verdict**

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A federal court in New York this week issued a landmark decision in the case of Sokolow v. PLO, ruling in favor of the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The jury found the PLO guilty of aiding and abetting seven terrorist atrocities that took place in Israel between 2002 and 2004. The attacks killed and wounded nearly 500 individuals, including many Americans.

This decision marks an important milestone in holding Palestinian terrorists and officials accountable for their campaign of atrocities against civilians. It also has unmasked a political and ideological agenda advanced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the Arab-Israeli conflict, belying their claims of promoting universal human rights and ending impunity. The case was aimed at providing redress and compensation for victims of human rights violations.

One would expect human rights and international justice NGOs and activists, who have campaigned on these issues for decades, to support the trial and rejoice at the jury’s decision.

Instead, the international and Israeli human rights network has been virtually absent. Since the verdict was announced on Monday afternoon, the leaders of this movement, including HRW’s Ken Roth, Reed Brody and Sarah Leah Whitson; Amnesty International; the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR); and many Israeli NGOs like B’Tselem (current and former directors Hagai Elad and Jessica Montell), Gisha and Breaking the Silence have said next to nothing.

In fact, when news of the verdict broke, and although many of them were active on social media such as Twitter at the time, they ignored it completely.

Instead, Whitson tweeted the decision of the Israeli Supreme Court in the Corrie case, and several hours earlier retweeted a fake story alleging that Israel had purposely flooded Gaza by opening (nonexistent) dams. Montell was busy promoting her talk at Duke University, “Politics Aside: Promoting Human Rights and Accountability in Israel-Palestine,” yet said nothing about the verdict. New York-based CCR’s founder Michael Ratner complained about the existence of the 1991 US Antiterrorism Act, which facilitated the victim’s lawsuit against the Palestinians.

From their silence, one could reasonably conclude that NGOs and their officials were stunned and upset by the verdict. This is understandable, because for over 14 years, since the infamous 2001 NGO Forum of the UN Durban Conference, NGOs have led a strategy to falsely accuse Israel of war crimes, genocide and other violations, as part of a campaign to impose sanctions and isolate the country. NGOs have spent millions of dollars (much of it taxpayer funds from the EU and European governments) issuing countless press releases, glossy publications, interactive media, and lobbying efforts, advancing a narrative of exclusive Palestinian victimhood and all but erasing the context of Palestinian terrorism.

A cornerstone of this “Durban Strategy” has been the exploitation of UN and international legal frameworks to attack Israel and hamper efforts to combat terrorism, including the Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court. These same actors have never engaged in any such efforts on behalf of Palestinian terror victims.

The New York decision, however, throws a major wrench into the NGO strategy by finding that the PLO and the Palestinian Authority were intimately involved in war crimes against civilians. If anything, this case may force the ICC prosecutor to issue indictments against Palestinian officials.

Another major NGO angle of the case was that the PLO hired Michael Sfard (attorney/activist for many NIF- and European government- funded NGOs) as a paid expert witness. This was the third case where Sfard served as an expert on behalf of the PLO and against terror victims. Sfard’s work for the PLO was based on a 2007 report impugning the Israeli military court system that he wrote for Yesh Din as part of a project funded by the Dutch government, among others.

Sfard’s work on behalf of the PLO is a fitting complement to his promotion of the Durban Strategy. In 2008, he was involved in a lawsuit seeking to hold Canadian companies liable for participating in Israeli “war crimes.”

The Quebec court dismissed it for “inappropriate forum shopping,” and ordered Sfard’s clients to pay partial costs for the frivolous suit. Sfard also appeared at Israel-bashing events like the Russell Tribunal to advance a BDS agenda. Apparently, when Sfard champions “ending the culture of impunity,” this does not apply to Palestinian terrorism.

The Sokolow decision is an important victory for universal human rights that should be celebrated as ending impunity for terrorists and their supporters.

The silence of the politicized NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict speaks volumes.

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