



June 3, 2015

UN Committee on NGOs voted to grant the Palestinian Return Centre observer status, pending authorization. The London-based PRC is affiliated with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood and has played an important role in the campaign to delegitimize Israel.



The PRC logo: R for "return," that is, the return of all the Palestinian refugees and their descendants to the State of Israel, and within the R, the map of all "Palestine." It indicates that the final goal is the establishment of a Palestinian state all on the territory of "Palestine," replacing the State of Israel.

Overview

1. On June 1, 2015, the 19-member UN Committee on NGOs voted to give the London-based Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) non-governmental observer status. The vote still needs authorization from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to which the Committee is subordinate. If authorization is given the PRC will have UN observer status which includes certain privileges, including access to UN facilities, the ability to participate in deliberations and UN committee and the use of the UN logo.
2. The PRC said in an announcement that 12 countries had voted in favor (ten of which were China, Iran, South Africa, Turkey, Pakistan, Cuba, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Mauritania and Kenya), three voted against (Israel, the United States and Uruguay), and three abstained (Russia, Nicaragua and Greece). According to the

announcement, **the vote was held after a process that lasted five years.** The PRC rejects Israel's accusations of terrorism, claiming it is an independent, non-political body (Palestine-info.info, June 2, 2015).

3. The PRC is a center for Palestinian anti-Israeli propaganda, established in London in 1996. It is affiliated with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, and **some of its senior figures have been Hamas activists who sought refuge in Britain.** It was founded on the premise of its rejection of the Oslo Accords and its determined, strong denial of the State of Israel's right to exist. Its main concept is the "right" of the Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to the homes they abandoned in 1948, as a tool to destroy Israel and sabotage any possible peace process. The PRC holds intensive anti-Israeli propaganda activities in Britain, Europe and other countries around the globe and plays an important role in networks participating in the international campaign to delegitimize Israel.

4. Its clear affiliation with Hamas led to its being outlawed in Israel five years ago. On December 27, 2010, the Israel Security Agency said in a statement that on December 5, 2010 Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak had signed an order outlawing the PRC as an unlawful association because it was affiliated with the Hamas movement. The statement also noted that the PRC served as a coordinating organizational arm of the Hamas movement in Europe, and that its activists, who were senior Hamas figures, were working to promote the Hamas' objectives in Europe and were in direct contact with Hamas senior figures, including movement heads in Damascus.¹

¹ Israel Security Agency website, December 29, 2010, IDF Spokesman's website, December 27, 2010). In the meantime, the Hamas external leadership left Damascus because of the civil war in Syria and its dispute with Iran.

Selections from the Overview of the ITIC Study of the PRC Issued on March 30, 2011²

1. **The PRC was established in London in 1996, based on rejection of the Oslo Accords and everything they symbolized.** Its founder and head ideologue was apparently **Salman Abu Sitta**, whose family was originally from Beersheba and fled to the Gaza Strip. He was an independent member of the Palestinian National Council between 1974 and 1993. The PRC's activity centers around **disseminating and inculcating the message that all Palestinian refugees have the "right to return" to Israel** (estimated by the PRC at five million).³ Their return to Israel is represented as a "sacred" personal and collective "right," allegedly anchored in international law, which no one can bargain with or cede.

2. The demand for the return to Israel of millions of refugees is regarded by the PRC **not only as a tested method to sabotage every peace process**, but as an **important component in a long-range strategy which will eventually lead to a change in the demography of the State of Israel as the Jewish national state and serve its overall goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in all of "Palestine."** Focusing on the "right of return" is **the common denominator of many organizations and individuals around the globe that reject a Zionist Israel, and it is used extensively in the propaganda serving the campaign to delegitimize Israel.** Those who employ it ignore the fact that after the State of Israel was founded many Jews were either expelled or fled from the Arab countries.

3. **Since its inception the PRC has been affiliated with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain** (the center of the Muslim Brotherhood's political, media and economic activities in Europe). **The PRC is careful not to openly state its strong affiliation with Muslim Brotherhood-style extremist Islam, but ITIC information and large amounts of circumstantial evidence support its affiliation.**

4. For example, the PRC's radical Islamic ideology and political agenda are identical with those of the Muslim Brotherhood; **members of the PRC's board of trustees and senior functionaries have had roles in various Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated institutions in Britain;** the PRC participates in anti-Israeli activities also

² The full version of the study is available on the ITIC website, entitled ["The Palestinian Return Centre: London-based center for anti-Israeli propaganda, affiliated with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, outlawed in Israel. It promotes the demand of the Palestinian refugees to return as a way of destroying Israel. Senior PRC figures send flotillas and convoys to the Gaza Strip and transfer funds to Hamas."](#)

³ UNRWA, which defines the concept of "Palestinian refugee" in the broadest possible terms, reported in 2008 that it had dealt with 4.7 million people.

attended by prominent activists from the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups and organizations; **Zaher al-Birawi**, a senior PRC figure, is program director and chief presenter of London's Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated **Al-Hiwar TV channel**; an Egyptian jurist named **Subhi Saleh**, a Muslim Brotherhood member of the Egyptian parliament till 2010, was at the same time an associate PRC member.

5. **Three members of the PRC's board of trustees are Hamas activists who found refuge in Britain in the 1990s. They do not admit to affiliation with Hamas**, in ITIC assessment to avoid complications with British law. **Prominent among them are Zaher al-Birawi**, chairman of the PRC's board of trustees; **Majed al-Zeer**, PRC general director; and **Sheikh Majdi Akeel**, a member of the PRC's board of trustees.⁴

6. These three Hamas activists are involved in extensive anti-Israeli activities aimed at providing Hamas with ideological, political and practical support. For example, **Zaher al-Birawi** was active in dispatching convoys to the Gaza Strip through George Galloway's organization, Viva Palestina, with the political goal of strengthening the de facto Hamas administration. **Majed al-Zeer** participated in anti-Israeli events in Europe and in Damascus that included support of Hamas, its political agenda and its strategy of terrorism. **Sheikh Majdi Akeel** is an activist of Interpal, which sends money to Hamas, and accompanied one of the Viva Palestina aid convoys to Hamas in the Gaza Strip.⁵ In addition to those three, according to ITIC information **Arafat Madi Shukri**, PRC executive director, is also a Hamas activist who lives in Britain and is the chairman of the ECESG (a European umbrella network which sends flotillas to the Gaza Strip).

7. **Additional conclusions about the PRC's nature and modus operandi revealed in the study (March 2011):**

1) **The PRC's view of the so-called "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees** is the following: The return of the Palestinians to Israel is a "right" and not a demand, according to PRC claims. Adherence to the "right of return" promotes the final goal of **the restoration of all of the land of "Palestine," from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state to replace the State of Israel**. The return of all the Palestinian refugees to Israel and to the places and houses in which they lived in

⁴ All three are listed as Hamas activists in the Israel Security Agency announcement outlawing the PRC in Israel (ISA website, December 29, 2010).

⁵ For further information see the February 21, 2010 ITIC bulletin, ["Britain as a Focus for Hamas' Political, Propaganda and Legal Activities in Europe."](#)

1947-8 is, according to PRC claims, **"a basic personal and collective right" and a "sacred right"** anchored (according to PRC claims) in international treaties⁶ and the holy books of the three monotheistic religions. Thus, according to the PRC, **no one has the right to waive the "right of return"** or to reach a compromise regarding the partial return of the Palestinians. **In consequence, the PRC rejects outright any peace process, ties the hands of the Palestinian Authority, which negotiates with Israel for the Palestinians, and advocates Hamas' strategy focusing on the "liberation of Palestine" through jihad and "resistance"** [i.e., terrorism and violence] rather than political negotiations.

2) **PRC support for terrorism and terrorist organizations:** To avoid complications with the British authorities, the PRC is generally careful, especially when issuing statements in English, not to explicitly support terrorist activities and terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. **In statements in Arabic however**, aimed at Arab-Muslim target audiences, **the PRC is less careful and often expresses solidarity with the Palestinian terrorist campaign** ("the Al-Aqsa intifada"), **Hamas' path of jihad and the Hamas leadership**. For example, at its annual European conferences, which the PRC has been organizing since 2003, **Ismail Haniya**, a senior Hamas figure, has delivered speeches three times. The conferences support the path of "resistance" and jihad (i.e., terrorism), and **praise the shaheeds, the wounded and the imprisoned of the terrorist organizations**. The PRC's publications support jihad and the "resistance," and glorify the terrorist shaheeds who died during Palestinian terrorist campaign, especially Hamas founder and leader Ahmed Yassin. In addition, the PRC organized a campaign to express solidarity with the

⁶ **The UN resolutions regarding the Palestinians do not give the Palestinian refugees the "right of return" to the territory of the State of Israel.** The main resolution, the one on which the Palestinians base their claims, is **UN General Assembly Resolution 194 III, passed in 1948**. It proposes a way of ending the conflict by establishing a reconciliation committee. While the return of the refugees is mentioned, it is part of a comprehensive plan and not a "right" given to the refugees, **especially in view of the fact that the resolution does not use the term "right."** Later General Assembly resolutions recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the right of the Palestinians to return to their houses. However, Security Council resolutions 237 and 242, passed in 1967, and 338, passed in 1973, call for a just solution for the refugee problem, but do not mention their right of return. The Security Council resolutions, and not anti-Israeli resolutions passed by the General Assembly, are the ones binding the relations between Israel and the Palestinians. That is because the Oslo Accords, signed by both sides, give their adoption by both sides a binding force (Yaffa Zilberschatz and Namra Guron-Amitai, "Returning the Palestinian refugees to the State of Israel," (Hebrew), a position paper edited by Prof. Ruth Gavison, Matzila publishing, 2010, p. 10)

Al-Aqsa intifada;⁷ **Majid al-Ziyad**, a senior PRC figure, participated in the conference in Damascus in November 2008, which supported the "culture of resistance" [i.e., the culture of terrorism]. Interviewed by Al-Jazeera TV on May 29, 2010, **he stressed the need for "military resistance"** [i.e., terrorism] inside "Palestine." **Dr. Daud Abdullah**, another senior PRC figure, participated in the conference in Istanbul in 2009 and signed a declaration in support of the path of jihad ("the Istanbul Declaration").⁸

3) Overview of PRC activities:

A. Since its establishment, **the PRC has been prominent among the anti-Israeli organizations engaged in intensive propaganda activities aimed at inculcating the idea of the "right of return" and defaming Israel by representing it as an "apartheid state."** The PRC also seeks to turn Israel into a pariah state by accusing it of the **"ethnic cleansing"** of the "Palestinian" population, both in the past and present (the PRC even issued a book entitled *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*). The PRC's vicious anti-Israeli propaganda campaign is waged in Britain, continental Europe and other countries around the globe.

B. The PRC has **three main target audiences in Britain**: **British politicians**, especially in Parliament, where it is primarily in contact with members of the Labour Party; **university students**, among whom PRC activists participate in events related to the conflict and deliver anti-Israeli speeches; and **the British public in general**, especially the social and cultural elite. PRC activists attend Jerusalem Day and Nakba Day events, react publicly to developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and hold demonstrations and rallies in London and other cities in Britain. In addition, the PRC holds conferences, workshops and seminars. It produces movies, issues various publications and runs a Palestinian cultural center in London.

⁷ From a promotion video produced by the PRC and posted on its website and on YouTube. The narrator stated that the PRC organized a "solidarity campaign with the Al-Aqsa intifada." We have no additional information beyond what was noted in the video.

⁸ Following PRC senior figure Dr. Abdullah's signing of the Istanbul Declaration, the British authorities demanded he resign his position as deputy director general of a Muslim organization called the Muslim Council in Britain (MCB), which was supported by the British government. They claimed that at the conference he represented the MCB. He rejected the demand, claiming that he had signed the declaration representing only himself, and not as representing the MCB. Following the incident the British authorities ended governmental support of the MCB.

C. **Since 2003 [as of the 2011 study] the PRC has held an annual anti-Israeli European conference called "the Annual Palestinians in Europe Conference."** The conferences are attended by PRC activists, representatives of the Arab and Muslim communities in Europe, Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood activists and representatives of the European funds and foundations which finance Hamas. Their agenda and themes focus on inculcating the idea that the so-called "right of return" is "sacred," and that no Palestinian can waive it. The conferences negate the right of the State of Israel to exist, strongly oppose the peace process and support the path of jihad and "resistance" (i.e., terrorism). **Ismail Haniya, [at the time] head of the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, delivered video-conferenced speeches at three of the conferences** because he was banned from entering certain European countries (where Hamas is considered a terrorist organization).

D. **On the international scene** the PRC participates in conferences dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the issue of the refugees, including conferences organized by the United Nations. The PRC exploits the venues as convenient forums for defaming Israel as an "apartheid country" and a "racist country," and for spreading propaganda for the "right of return." **Senior PRC activists and their activities were prominent at the UN's Durban Conference in 2001, which served as a platform for attacks on Israel's legitimacy and a hate campaign directed against it.**

4) **Formulating media strategy to attack Israel's legitimacy:** At the third annual conference, held in Vienna in 2005, **the PRC formulated a media strategy to inculcate the concept of the "right of return" and to undermine the legitimacy of the State of Israel in various broad target audiences in Europe.** The following tactics were agreed upon by the conference workshops: stressing the "value of justice" (a term easily accepted by the European ear) as a tool for creating a sense of European solidarity with the Palestinian demand to return the refugees to Israel; using short, easy-to-remember slogans; using publications of New Historians; increasing the number of demonstrations; stressing the distinction between Judaism and the "Zionist Project," etc. **The decisions made at the conference were important and relevant because they are implemented to this day by the PRC and other anti-Israeli organizations participating in the global campaign to delegitimize Israel.**

5) **Funding the PRC and its extensive activities:** As opposed to other organizations participating in the global campaign to delegitimize Israel, the PRC maintains a vast physical presence. Establishing it, maintaining it and funding its extensive network **demand, in ITIC assessment, extremely large financial resources.** The PRC claims it is funded by donations from people who believe in its goals. However, in ITIC assessment, even if it cannot be proved, **the PRC has other sources of funding at its disposal.**

8. **Senior PRC figures, among them Hamas activists, hold positions in other groups and organizations which spread anti-Israeli propaganda, transfer funds to Hamas and dispatch flotillas and land convoys to the Gaza Strip.** Some of the organizations are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and one with the British far left. **The PRC's senior figures are deeply involved with both the ECESG and Viva Palestina,** two organizations which make significant contributions to the flotilla and land convoy projects to the Gaza Strip. For example, **Dr. Arafat Madi Shukri, the PRC's executive director, is also chairman of the ECESG,** a European umbrella network which sends flotillas to the Gaza Strip. **Majed al-Zeer** is also apparently involved in ECESG activity. **Zaher al-Birawi, a Hamas activist, is chairman of the PRC board of trustees, the spokesman** (and in ITIC assessment also a kind of liaison person with Hamas) of the convoys organized by Viva Palestina, (the organization of far left former British MP George Galloway.⁹) In addition, two senior PRC activists, **Ghusan Faour** and Hamas activist **Sheikh Majdi Akeel, are key figures in Interpal,** a British fund which is an important component in Hamas' international fundraising efforts and was outlawed both in the United States and Israel.

Note: The above information and conclusions were relevant and updated in March 2011. Personnel or organizational changes may have been made in the, **but in ITIC assessment the fundamental goals and character of the PRC have not basically changed.**

⁹ Today (early June 2015) **Zaher al-Birawi** is the Coordinator for the International Committee for Breaking the Siege on the Gaza Strip. He is a member of the so-called Freedom Fleet 3 steering committee, currently planning to send three small ships to the Gaza Strip.