



European countries freeze donations to anti-Israel women's organization after learning it supported the establishment of a women's center named after Palestinian terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi

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Overview

On August 21, 2017, **the governments of Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands announced they would immediately stop their joint funding of the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC).** In addition, according to the announcement, they would initiate an investigation to discover **how the funds they had contributed were used.** They made the decision because **WATC participated in funding the establishment of a women's center in the Samarian village of Burqa (northwest of Nablus), which had been named for Dalal al-Mughrabi,** the Palestinian terrorist who participated in the Coastal Road Massacre in 1978 (35 Israelis killed). Naming the women's center after her was widely condemned in European countries.¹



Right: Sign announcing the establishment of the Dalal al-Mughrabi women's center in the village of Burqa (Watan TV, January 1, 2017). Left: Center operatives and children participate in the inauguration of the center (Madar News, May 31, 2017).

Inaugurating a youth and women's center named for Palestinian terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi in the village of Burqa: the sequence of events

- ▶ On May 15, 2017, a youth and women's center was inaugurated in the Samarian village of Burqa, funded by a number of organizations, among them Women's Affairs

¹ For further information about Palestinian Authority's cult of glorifying Dalal al-Mughrabi, see the March 23, 2017 bulletin, "Glorifying shaheeds who carried out deadly terrorist attacks and turning them into role models: Dalal al-Mughrabi, a Fatah terrorist who participated in the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre, as a case study."

Technical Committee (WATC), an anti-Israeli women's organization, the government of Norway and UN agencies. The center was named for Palestinian terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi, who participated in the Coastal Road Massacre and became a venerated Palestinian role model.

► At the inauguration ceremony, Rim Haja, a member of the village council, said the center would focus on **the history of the struggle of the shaheed Dalal al-Mughrabi and on presenting her "heritage" to youth groups.** She added that naming the center for Dalal al-Mughrabi **led the way for other "enrichment activities" dealing with the history of the Palestinian struggle (Ma'an, May 15, 2017).**

► WATC, one of the organizations whose funding held establish the Dalal al-Mughrabi youth and women's center, is **an openly anti-Israel Palestinian women's organization.** In March 2016 **it joined a call to women to participate in the BDS campaign** and in July 2014 **it called for imposing a boycott on Israeli-made products** (see the Appendix). One of the groups supporting WATC is the **Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat, founded in March 2014 by Sweden and later joined by Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands, and providing joint funding for the organization.**²

Reactions from European countries

► After the center was named for a terrorist, **the Norwegian foreign ministry asked for its donation to be returned.** It also denounced the Palestinian Authority (PA) for its decision to name the center for Dalal al-Mughrabi (website of the Norwegian foreign ministry, May 26, 2017). In response, **the chairman of the village council asked Norway to focus on the nature of the center, stressing that the name was chosen to honor Dalal al-Mughrabi, who was killed in the struggle against the occupation.** He claimed that designating the symbols of the Palestinian people and its leaders as terrorists was surrender to Israeli

² The **Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat is a joint program established by Sweden in March 2014. Its other participants are the governments of Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands.** It supports and funds about 40 Israeli and Palestinian social organizations. It has a four-year budget of \$17.6 million. Usually, the contributing countries decide on an overall framework and the Secretariat's policies, and authorize the programs presented to them. **The money is managed by the Institute of Law at Bir Zeit University and a European engineering consulting company called NIRAS.** The Institute is openly anti-Israeli. It finances many organizations, including those involved in lawfare against senior Israeli officials and against companies doing business with Israel, thus promoting the BDS campaign. The Secretariat's manager is **Mustafa Mari'**, head researcher of human rights at Bir Zeit University, who in the past was active in al-Haq, an anti-Israeli human rights organization (currently headed by a former senior activity of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) that deals with lawfare against Israel.

pressure and dictates. He also appealed to Norway to respect the feelings of the Palestinian people (Madar News, May 28, 2017).

► Following an appeal from Israel, **the office of UN Secretary General António Guterres reported the UN had decided to end its support for the women's center.** “The glorification of terrorism, or the perpetrators of heinous terrorist acts, is unacceptable under any circumstances...The United Nations support...has asked for the logo of UN Women to be removed immediately,” the UN statement said (Times of Israel, May 28, 2017).

► Moreover, naming the women's center after Dalal al-Mughrabi **led Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands** (the other members of the Secretariat) **to suspend their support for Palestinian NGOs and to take measures to ensure that donations would be used fairly:**

◆ On June 2, 2017, **Anders Samuelsen, the Danish foreign minister, ordered freezing \$8 million in donations to 24 pro-Palestinian organizations until the end of an investigation that would ensure the funds were being used fairly.** He also ordered to put a stop to collaboration with WATC, and demanded the return of the \$500,000 Denmark had transferred to the organization. While Denmark had not directly contributed to the women's center named for Dalal al-Mughrabi, it had supported a different WATC project. Samuelsen said he was amazed that WATC, which operates to promote human rights, would glorify terrorism and exploit the trust and generosity of the Danish people. He said **it is forbidden to use money from Denmark and Danish taxpayers to glorify or promote terrorism or terrorists.** Therefore, he said, the Danes as well demanded the organization return the funds it had received. **He also said Denmark would not transfer funds to Secretariat until a comprehensive investigation had been carried out** (um.dk, June 2, 2017).

◆ On June 13, 2017, **the Council of States, or "upper chamber"** of the Swiss parliament adopted legislation instructing the government to supervise the funding of NGOs to prevent funds from being transferred to NGOs involved in racism, anti-Semitism, hatred and incitement. **On August 21, 2017, the Swiss government confirmed that the Secretariat has ended its support for WATC.** On August 23, 2017, **the Swiss foreign ministry confirmed that the four contributing countries had decided to suspend, for the time being, their funding for Palestinian social organizations because of the role WATC had played in the women's center named after Dalal al-Mughrabi.** The Swiss newspaper SonntagsZeitung, the Swiss weekly

which broke the story, has noted that the four countries are launching an investigation into funding to the organization (ejpress, August 23, 2017).

- ◆ On June 30, 2017, in an exchange of communiqués with the Israeli NGO Monitor, **the Dutch foreign minister confirmed** that in collaboration with the Secretariat's donor countries, **the Netherlands had decided to suspend cooperation with WATC until further notice** (NGO Monitor website).

Appendix



WATC logo

WATC (Women's Affairs Technical Committee)

► According to the WATC website, it was founded in 1992 after the Madrid Conference and the beginning of the peace talks in Washington. The initiative for the organization came from several women leaders and its establishment was meant to ensure the inclusion of women in the negotiations. With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the organization hoped for active participation in building the Palestinian state. Thus, for the sake of equality, the organization therefore took upon itself the task of adopting a program to support the participation of women in politics and lawmaking. WATC is an umbrella organization for a large number of women's organizations. **Its main office is in Ramallah, and it has a branch in the Gaza Strip.**

► According to NGO Monitor, since 2013 the organization has not issued a financial report. According to information received from donors, in 2013 the organization received funds from the EU. Among the donors in 2013 were the UN and organizations in France, Norway and the United States. **Between 2014 and 2016 the organization received \$530,000 from the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat, which is funded by the governments of Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands.**



► **WATC is openly anti-Israel.** In 2014, along with other organizations, WATC participated in meetings held during the 27th conference of the UN's Human Rights Council to discuss "war crimes in the Gaza Strip" and "human rights violations in the occupied territories." WATC activists also participated in events to boycott Israel on March 8, 2016. In addition, they signed a petition calling for women to join the BDS campaign because the Israel authorities ("the [so-called] regime of colonialism and apartheid") had decided to delay the rights of the Palestinian to self-determination. On July 19, 2014, the organization issued a call to boycott Israeli products.