

Written Submission of NGO Monitor to the Human Rights Committee for the Consideration of the Periodic Report of Ireland (135th Session)

Introduction

NGO Monitor presents this submission in advance of the consideration of the periodic report of Ireland and its compliance with the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) at the 135th session of the Human Rights Committee (Committee). We hope that this submission will aid the Committee for its review and in the preparation of its report.

ICCPR Articles 2,5,20,26

According to the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (“ICCPR”), Ireland is required “to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Art. 2); “to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognized herein” (Art. 5); to prohibit by law “any propaganda for war” and “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence” (Art. 20); and to “prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Art. 26).

Antisemitism in Ireland

Ireland is currently failing to fulfill its obligations under the ICCPR, particularly with regards to antisemitism and discrimination aimed at those of Israeli national origin in violation of Articles 2, 5, 20, and 26. A filmmaker who visited the country in 2019 described the level of antisemitism as “frightening.” Likewise, a survey conducted by the EU found that, of any Western European country, Ireland has one of the lowest levels of believing antisemitism to be an important problem.

Irish politicians, for instance, have used their public platforms to promote antisemitic messages. Often these messages reflect an obsession with Israel that is disproportionate, biased, and based on falsehoods and distortions and that crosses the line into antisemitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Association Working Definitions of Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial and Distortion. Much of this invokes Nazi and Holocaust analogies.

In February 2020, tweets made by a Sinn Féin Member surfaced alleging Israel “has taken Nazism to a new level,” Hitler was a “pawn” of the Rothschild family, and that the Israeli Mossad had intervened in the 2019 elections in Britain.

In October 2020, one Sinn Fein TD tweeted the “from the river to the sea” slogan, echoing long-standing Palestinian terminology for the destruction of Israel. In 2018, he liked a comment on his Facebook page that called Israelis “murdering Zionist bastards” and suggested that Hitler may “not have been too far wrong.”

In August 2019, Fianna Fail's spokesperson on foreign affairs and trade, had to apologize for a remark about the influence of the "Jewish lobby" in America.

In another example, during a parliamentary debate that took place while discussing a bill currently pending to criminalize trade in Israeli settlement goods, an Irish MP stated, "It is a tragic irony that we in Europe resolved our consciences after the Holocaust by inflicting what the Palestinian people call the Nakba," and "more than 40 years ago when [Israel] was a left leaning, socially conscious, politically active and decent country, before the inrush of 1 million Soviet citizens who had been scalded by communism and had become extremely right wing."

A Dáil member (representing Kildare North) made a number of antisemitic tweets between 2012 and 2015, including "comparing Israeli embassy staff to monkeys, alleging that Jeremy Corbyn had been targeted by Mossad, and retweeting a post saying that Hitler was a pawn of a Rothschild-owned bank."

As these expressions of hate demonstrate, Ireland needs to take stronger steps to combat antisemitism and anti-Israel national origin discrimination in order to comply with the requirements of the ICCPR. One way it can do so is through the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definitions of Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial and Distortion. The IHRA definitions also include examples of the "new" antisemitism, such as singling out and blaming the Jewish State, denying Jews a nation state and delegitimizing the existence of Israel as the Jewish State, and disguising antisemitism as the fight against the State of Israel. In this respect, the

definitions articulate what is and what is not antisemitism, as well as how to distinguish legitimate criticism of Israel from antisemitism.

The IHRA framework has been adopted by dozens of governments and hundreds of intergovernmental and local institutions. As recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in his 2019 report to the General Assembly, these definitions “can offer valuable guidance for identifying antisemitism in its various forms” and is a “critical non-legal educational tool.”

Irish Funding to NGOs Promoting Antisemitism

Another area where Ireland is failing to live up to its obligations under the ICCPR is via its development funding to NGOs. Irish Aid provides significant annual funding both directly and indirectly to NGOs that unfortunately promote antisemitism, anti-Israel national origin discrimination, violent imagery and rhetoric, and call for the elimination of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people (violation of Articles 2, 5, 20, 26). Several of these groups also have links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a terrorist organization designated by the EU, the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Israel. This destructive funding not only violates the Irish government’s obligations under the ICCPR and international and domestic law, but creates and contributes to an environment of hate and incitement that endangers Jews and Israelis in Ireland and worldwide.

At least three Palestinian NGOs who receive Irish Aid, have documented ties to the PFLP, an EU-designated terrorist organization. Many of the staff members, founders, board members, general assembly members, and senior staff members from these

NGOs have ties to the PFLP terror group. In addition, they regularly participate in PFLP events and/or advocate on behalf of PFLP terrorists. Some of these individuals are employed in financial positions at the NGOs, calling into question funding oversight by Ireland and other donors, and increasing the risk of diversion of public funds to an internationally designated terrorist group.

Other Palestinian NGOs, receiving Irish aid promote blatantly antisemitic and racist material. For instance, the group MIFTAH published an article that repeated the antisemitic blood libel that Jews use Christian blood to bake Passover matzah. It also published an article claiming that Israel kills children to steal their organs, as well as calling for Jews to abandon Israel as a homeland and posing the question “Were not under-populated Birobidzhan, Uganda or Argentina better opportunities to build an Israel?”

In another example, the NGO BADIL has published antisemitic cartoons on its website, that would not have been out of place in Nazi propaganda, as well as imagery promoting the elimination of Israel. A cartoon that won a monetary prize for 2nd prize in BADIL’s 2010 Al-Awda Nakba caricature competition is a blatant representation of classic antisemitic tropes, including a Jewish man, garbed in traditional Hasidic attire, with a hooked nose and side locks. He stands on top of a box adorned with Jewish stars crushing to death a child, holding keys labeled “US” and “UK” and a pitchfork stylized as a menorah dripping with blood, while skulls litter the ground.

While Ireland justifies such funding by claiming that the recipient organizations are engaged in advancing human rights and humanitarian objectives, or that grants are

provided for projects and not for organizations, these excuses are unacceptable. Any group that engages in antisemitism can in no way be said to be promoting human rights or humanitarian goals.

Despite the significant progress in some European countries of acknowledging the evil of antisemitism and the need to allocate meaningful levels of government funding and resources to combat it, Ireland has fallen short has fallen far short of its obligations in the ICCPR.

Recommendations

- **The Irish Government should take measures, including regulatory reforms and legislation, to prevent antisemitism and anti-Israel national origin discrimination in all settings to end the rampant antisemitic and anti-Israel discourse in the political arena, the media, and by organizations receiving Irish funding.**
- **The Irish government should report to the Committee on what steps it has taken to raise public awareness and to combat antisemitic behavior and anti-Israel incitement.**
- **The Irish Government should detail efforts made to provide effective remedies for victims of antisemitism and anti-Israel national origin discrimination.**
- **The Irish Government should describe what steps have been taken to prohibit direct and indirect support to designated terrorist organizations, in all settings, including funding to NGOs linked to designated terror organizations.**
- **The Irish Government should comment on whether Ireland plans to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Definition of Antisemitism and the Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion.**