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views



Arnold Roth - Arnold's daughter Malki was murdered when a Palestinian suicide bomber stepped into the crowded Sbarro pizza restaurant in Jerusalem in August 2001. The Malki Foundation, in Malki's memory, helps provide care for severely handicapped children in Israel and their families.

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More from Arnold Roth

- Letter to the Sydney solidarity rally



Dear Commissioner Patten

By Arnold Roth September 29, 2003

Rt Hon Chris Patten, CH
 Commissioner for External Relations
 European Commission
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Dear Commissioner Patten,

I want to share some thoughts about education: mine and yours and that of the children of the Middle East.

I came to Brussels last December as a member of a small contingent of Israelis. Each of us has suffered the loss of a loved one by terrorist murder in the past two years. My fifteen year-old daughter, Malka Chana, was killed by a terrorist cell sent by Hamas. She was a high school student, a talented musician, a volunteer passionately dedicated to the care of disabled children. When her murderer exploded in a Jerusalem restaurant in August 2001, he massacred fifteen innocent civilians, most of them children and teenagers. Hundreds were injured, some of them still hospitalized.

In Brussels last December, we wanted to sit with you and discuss serious concerns. I wanted to ask whether you were aware of the evidence that European Union money, channeled through your office to the Palestinian Authority and so necessary to improving the lives of the Palestinian Arabs, was being secretly diverted into the funding of terrorism. I wanted to ask you how a just peace for all could be achieved when Palestinian children are taught (in EU-funded UNRWA schools and by teachers paid from EU grants) that Israel has no right to exist and that their personal martyrdom is a glorious part of the ethnic cleansing of Jews from the Middle East.

Unlike most of the other senior EU figures we approached, you declined to meet us. We met with your deputy. I referred him to documentary evidence uncovered by Israeli forces in 2002 showing that the PA's top managers skim money off the payroll and that secret bank accounts are a routine part of everyday deception and corruption in the PA. He told me that my concerns were misplaced. He said the payments made via your office to the PA are closely supervised by the International Monetary Fund. Immediately after the meeting, I checked the public record and learned that the IMF had

months earlier published a report (which I was able to find easily on the Internet) that not only denied this but also explicitly said that there had been budgetary abuse by the PA.

Two months after our visit, one-third of the members of your Parliament called for an investigation into those payments made to the Palestinian Authority. This inquiry never got off the ground. You may be better positioned than I am to know why.

Earlier this month, my family and I once again lost friends to terrorist murder. One of the innocent victims of another massacre in a Jerusalem cafe was an emergency room doctor who had dedicated his life to the care of terror victims - Jews and Arabs alike. His daughter, killed with him, was to be married the next evening. This catastrophe led me to reflect again on what is being done to stop the hate-filled education of Palestinian Arab children, the kind that can turn them into walking grenades.

I went looking on the EU's website, and found that a Dutch MEP had asked some very pointed questions to you on this theme only a few days earlier. You answered him in writing on Friday, September 12, 2003:

"The Commission is aware of the... reports on the content of Palestinian media and school curricula... [But] The Commission has no evidence of Community funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) being misused for anything other than its agreed purpose. Should such evidence come to light, immediate action would be taken."

This is strikingly similar in tone and spirit to what you said when faced with earlier charges about the true use of EU money in the hands of the PA. Yes, I know about it. No, there is no evidence. Yes, I will act when I get real evidence.

You said it when confronted with Palestinian source documents captured by the Israeli army eighteen months ago.

You said it when confronted with the findings of the independent Human Rights Watch into Palestinian terrorism, which said: "The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades appear to have benefited from the routine misuse of PA funds."

You said it when George Abed, a high official of the IMF, denied that EU money was being passed to the Palestinians under IMF supervision.

The Palestinian leadership has received vast sums of money from your office and elsewhere. 3.47 billion euros in EU aid were paid between 1994 and 2001 alone according to the EU website. Where has it gone? The empirical evidence is that has not achieved the intended purposes.

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55% of all Palestinian Arabs, according to the IMF, are under the age of twenty. The youth of Palestinian Arab society represent our best opportunity to build bridges of peace between the two peoples. But the hateful messages that permeate their EU-funded textbooks guarantee another generation incapable of reconciling itself to live in neighborly peace with us Israelis. In fact, there is internal Palestinian correspondence verifying that Hamas has taken control of the Palestinian Ministry of Education, ensuring that the children are instructed in the glory of killing, and taught to admire and emulate suicide bombers. Education of a different, more positive kind is a fundamental requirement for a peaceful future - but it is tragically absent today.

You say there will be immediate action when concrete evidence comes to light. I now want to invite you to see the light - from two separate sources.

The first: the San Francisco Chronicle, which published a little-publicized but extremely revealing interview last week with Mahmoud Abbas, the outgoing, never-elected Prime Minister of the PA - an Arafat appointee already replaced by the next Arafat appointee. Abbas's assertions confirm what the Israeli documents claimed a year and a half ago and which you evidently preferred to disregard: that the PA's top managers skim money off the payroll and that secret bank accounts are a routine part of PA daily life.

"The Al Aqsa rampage was the final straw for the proud Abbas, who said he was fighting a war of political attrition from the moment he took office. Arafat blocked financial reforms, he said, because they threatened illegal slush funds Arafat was using to pay for the Intifada. Palestinian Authority officials' salaries are paid by the European Union, but Arafat or his cronies were skimming off up to 15 percent in income taxes and using it for their own causes, Abbas suggested. "Personally, I don't know where those funds go," he said. "When we wanted to cancel them, they said: 'You're harming the Intifada.'" Abbas also said that Arafat opposed efforts to stop paying thousands of police officers in cash - a system that encourages corruption and the siphoning off of funds for undercover groups, such as Al Aqsa, the military wing of Arafat's Fatah organization... Early signs indicate that Qurei is not faring much better as he tries to form a government."

The second source is the IMF, which disclosed last Saturday that its audit had identified \$900M that has been 'skimmed' by Arafat from tax receipts alone over the past several years. Most of it may have ended up in Palestinian public assets, says the report, probably making Arafat the monopoly owner of key pieces of the Palestinian economy. But they say very clearly that no one can account for all the missing money. The report additionally points to specific problems in the PA's internal controls of budget money. These are consistent with published Israeli military intelligence reports last year documenting direct funding by the PA of terrorism from accounts supported by EU grants. The IMF's long and sober

document points to financial mismanagement of the kind that would normally send people to long jail terms. The EU has stubbornly denied for years the existence of financial corruption even while serving as one of its principal feeders.

Innocent people like my daughter die because money continues to be readily available to lubricate the wheels of evil and corruption and for hate-filled education. The EU-sponsored Roadmap already demands that the Palestinians end all incitement immediately. You have unparalleled funding control. If you would choose to exercise it, you could strictly condition the availability of future grants on objective evidence that Palestinian education has become peace-directed and positive. That is what I am asking you to do.

On behalf of the victims of terror in my country, and for the sakes of all the children in the Middle East, I urge you to rise to the challenge.

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