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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Institute for NGO Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[04 June 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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United Nations (UN) Agencies, Civil Society, and Emergency COVID-19 Humanitarian Aid

The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health crisis unseen in the world for more than a century. Pandemics travel beyond borders and do not discriminate. Therefore, the global community must pool its resources to tackle this grave problem.

Unfortunately, rather than ensure that humanitarian aid is being used to confront the disease, some UN agencies are exploiting the pandemic and diverting necessary funding to non-humanitarian goals and in violation of the humanitarian principles.

For instance, on March 27, 2020, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), announced the “Occupied Palestinian Territory Inter-Agency Response Plan for COVID-19.”¹ OCHA requested \$34 million on behalf of numerous UN agencies as well as local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for use in the West Bank and Gaza. This number was raised to \$42 million in late-April.²

In its fundraising efforts, OCHA stated that additional resources were needed to “respond to the public health needs and immediate humanitarian consequences of the pandemic in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip” (emphasis added).

According to OCHA, the largest donors to the COVID-19 response in the West Bank and Gaza are Kuwait, the European Union (ECHO), Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (DFID), Sweden, Ireland, Norway, and Spain (AECID).³

However, many of the activities being attributed to the Plan – as detailed in periodic “Situation Report”⁴ updates from OCHA and discussed below – do not appear to involve vital, lifesaving resources and supplies “to implement the most urgent and critical activities” to fight COVID-19.⁵ In some instances, it is clear that existing NGO advocacy ventures, which often involve offensive anti-Israel rhetoric and agendas, have been relabelled “COVID-19,” without a substantive contribution to emergency humanitarian aid. Furthermore, some of the descriptions of NGO activity indicate low- or no-cost efforts, and/or tasks that had already been performed – although there is no information about how much money the NGOs were receiving.

This suggests that key factors for OCHA are the goals of procuring funds for their NGO allies and “padding the stats” – not providing critical humanitarian materials in the most efficient and professional manner possible. Similarly, the listing of independent donations from “outside the Response Plan” and NGO activities that were not part of the original strategic document reflect OCHA’s attempt to take credit for others’ work and inflate its importance and centrality.

Moreover, the call for “emergency” funds comes after OCHA, other UN and development agencies, and their NGO partners have spent millions on anti-Israel propaganda campaigns. For years, detailed analysis shows that these groups have prioritized targeting Israel and promoting a Palestinian nationalist agenda over providing humanitarian aid in accordance

¹ OCHA, “Occupied Palestinian Territory COVID-19 Response Plan,” March 27, 2020: https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/2020_03_26_hct_covid-19_response.pdf.

² OCHA, “Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report No. 7,” April 28 – May 4, 2020: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sitrep-7_4_may_2020.pdf.

³ OCHA, “Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report No.8,” May 5 -11, 2020: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sitrep_8_covid-19.pdf.

⁴ OCHA, “Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report No. 4,” April 7 – 13, 2020: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sitrep_4_13_april_2020.pdf.

⁵ OCHA, “Occupied Palestinian Territory COVID-19 Response Plan,” March 27, 2020: https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/2020_03_26_hct_covid-19_response.pdf.

with humanitarian principles.⁶ The COVID-19 crisis is exposing how wasteful and counterproductive this approach has been.

In addition, OCHA's NGO partners include a number of groups with ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terror group. Such organizations have no business obtaining funding via UN agencies or serving as partners on UN projects.

Given the critical need of emergency COVID-19 related supplies, the UN must increase its oversight to ensure funds are being used for these humanitarian efforts and not being exploited for political campaigning.

⁶ NGO Monitor, "Written Submission of NGO Monitor to the 70th Session of the CEDAW Committee for its review of "State of Palestine," July 16, 2018: <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/submissions/written-submission-of-ngo-monitor-to-the-70th-session-of-the-cedaw-committee-for-its-review-of-state-of-palestine/>