

The EU Support to Jerusalem and alternatives.
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Yesterday, the Jerusalem NGO's leaders, and all those concerned of the EU Support to Jerusalem gathered in the " African Club" in the Old City. Invited by the EU, they wanted to get the information about the EU funding to Jerusalem, and its priorities.

In the positive side, the EU started thankfully a budget line to support projects in Jerusalem since 2010. This was an initiative that other donors hesitated to do, due to their unwillingness to get in trouble with the Israeli authorities. Unfortunately the Oslo postponement of the Jerusalem issue to the final status negotiations was understood as leaving it in the meantime to Israel by many donors!. This " meantime" already continued over the last 25 years since Oslo.

As a participant in all the EU annual consultation meetings about this budget line since it started, I would like to make several observations:

First: The EU 2010 initiative got the Palestinian Authority Support, a joint steering committee for this budget line was composed between the two sides. In this regard the EU continued to have the say about what projects to be supported or not, while the PA will only be informed. In other hand the EU holds annual consultation meetings with the Jerusalem NGO'S, while the decisions will be made exclusively by the EU staff. Therefore it can be said that the process is not participatory with the Palestinians.

Second: The amount of funding is 10 million Euros per year only, which represent almost nothing in comparison with the huge needs of Jerusalem . This amount is given to big projects that are usually more than half million Euro each, which means that few organizations get the funding, while the majority will be deprived from it.

Third: Most of the funded projects are given to European NGO's who will implement them in Cooperation with Palestinian ones. These EU NGO's take part of the funding for their administrative and staff costs. They also take other part of the so called" capacity building". More importantly these organizations interfere on the content of the projects and their activities on the name of " Quality Control". These practices violates also the principle of having projects that express the local needs. It also violates the local ownership of the projects, and also gives part of the European funding to Europeans!.

Fourth: There are no published guidelines for the applications. And the proposals are too long as if the Palestinians supposed to be in a stable situation, were their time is fully free to write proposals instead of allocating their main time for the emancipatory actions from occupation. All of this is also combined with other requirements such as an online registration called" Pador". Accordingly the proposals will be evaluated on the basis of technical standards rather than according to how much they contribute to the Palestinian emancipation. If an organization got the funding, then it will be subject to further hardships related to the EU focus on formalities when it comes to the types of narrative and financial reports to be submitted, which again will require the receiving NGO's to give more weight to writing and reporting on the expense of their work with people in the field.

Fifth: The process is too long to almost 15 months between submitting a concept note, and then after a full proposal, and getting the approval. This does not help as such for doing something real for sustaining the Palestinian presence and steadfastness in the city as it claimed to be the case.

Here is parts of a short personal story to clarify these shortfalls:

In 2014, my Center submitted a concept note with a partner organization followed by a meeting with the EU staff about it, where we were told that we should ask a certain EU organization to submit the proposal instead of us. We went to talk to that organization who suggested their changes and modifications, and also tried to impose another partner in the project. These conditions by that organization were the end of it, and we decided accordingly not to submit our proposal.

In order to overcome these shortfalls , a more participatory process of decision making with the Palestinians will be required. The amounts need to be increased, the funding need to go mainly to the Palestinian organizations with a focus on the Community based organizations (The CBO,s) rather than to the civil society organizations(The CSO's), the EU organizations tutelage over the implementation of the projects to get to an end, the criteria of selection to focus more on the impact of the proposals on the emancipation agenda rather than on technical issues such as the project design and the style of writing. The process should become shorter, and the procedures of financial and administrative reporting need to become more smooth and less time consuming.

There is a way out for real support to the Palestinian presence, steadfastness, and resilience in East Jerusalem. The question is about the political will to do so.