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Israeli government funds online propaganda war

Campaign focuses on targeting BDS movement

Trolls use partly government funded App Act.IL to share pro-Israeli propaganda

Act.IL works alongside Israeli Ministries to influence public opinion and smear supporters of Palestinian rights

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) strongly condemns the Israeli government's campaign that seeks to spread pro Israeli-propaganda online through the App Act.IL.

AOHR UK stated that the App Act.IL, was designed to fight what Israel see's as an online "war" against pro-Palestinian opinion and information, particularly attacking activists and groups linked to the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement.

AOHR UK noted that the app was founded in 2015 and went live in 2017, and is a joint project of the private Israeli university IDC Herzliya, which has links with the Intelligence agency, and the US-based Israeli-American Council. Act.IL is headed by Chief Executive, Yarden Ben Yosef, himself a former Israeli Spy, who admitted that the company is largely staffed by former intelligence agency staff.

AOHR UK has found that Act.IL is funded in part by the state and also receives large donations from American right-wing Israeli lobbyists. In particular Sheldon Anderson, who has funded both the Israeli American Council and Act.IL, he was also the largest donor of Trumps campaign for Presidency.

AOHR UK notes that Act.IL closely watches online activity, in particular public opinion surrounding news and social media, using highly sophisticated monitoring



software. The App is designed to appear as a grassroots platform for activists, but in reality it is a state backed, designed and funded platform with the sole intention of spreading pro-Israeli propaganda to sway international public opinion against Palestinian rights, and attempts to distract attention from the vast violations of human rights that the occupation state inflicts on the people of Palestine.

AOHR UK is aware that the App works by assigning missions to its followers across the world, many of which are American students, in exchange for points. The App directs thousands of trolls across various social media and news platforms, with a focus on Twitter. The App seeks to get pro-Palestinian content blocked, banned or removed by spamming and mass-targeting. Furthermore trolls using the App have targeted online petitions, as well as running campaigns directly designed to smear international pro-Palestinian politicians such as leader of the UK labour Party Jeremy Corbyn, and US Law maker Ilhan Omar.

AOHR UK is aware that the Chief Executive of Act.IL admits that the company has worked in conjunction with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Strategic Affairs.

AOHR UK stresses that The Ministry of Strategic Affairs' key focus is to smear individuals and organisations that are supportive to the Palestinian cause, whilst releasing propaganda in attempts to sway public opinion internationally. The Ministry is also largely staffed by ex-intelligence agency staff, demonstrating the significance of the Ministry to the State of Israel, in what it sees as the new frontier in its "war" on spreading misinformation online to increase support for the state of Israel and dehumanise and repress the Palestinian cause.

AOHR UK further states that the Ministry of Strategic Affairs is lead by the Minister Gilad Erdan, and civil servant, Sima Vaknin-Gil, who served in intelligence for over 20 years, runs the daily activities of the ministry. A freedom of information request was previously filed to obtain details from Mr Erdan's diary, which revealed that he had met with Mossad Cheif Yossi Cohen to discuss ways in combating against the BDS movement. Furthermore Erdan has met with leaders of other notable spy agencies on multiple occasions.



AOHR UK stressed that the Ministry has a large budget to fund its semi-covert war on the BDS movement, with a budget of \$13 million in the year 2017, including \$1.3 million for the creation of Act.IL and adds for social media.

AOHR UK calls on the world's decision makers to do more to legislate against state funded and orchestrated online propaganda platforms.

AOHR UK calls on Apple and Android to disable the App Act.IL

AOHR UK calls on Facebook, Twitter and Google to do more to shut down fake troll accounts that are used for the spread of propaganda, and to put a stop to direct attacks on individuals and groups that are fighting for human rights.

AOHR UK calls on the international community to act in support of the Palestinian people by all necessary means. Indeed, silence over the occupation's online propaganda war encourages them to press on with their aggressive policies against the Palestinian people unabated

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)