Molad the center for the renewal of Israeli democracy

The Hasbara Apparatus:
Units, Tasks and Areas of Responsibility

Appendix to "Israel's Hasbara Problem: Myths and Facts"

Hasbara Apparatus:

Department in the Prime Minister's Office. Responsible for Israel's hasbara activities and acts as spokesman for the Prime Minister. The apparatus has two parallel arms: the national hasbara headquarters and the communications and spokesperson's unit.

Tasks: Responsible for working with Israeli and international media, hasbara units, pro-Israel individuals and organizations worldwide, and the operation of all websites and social networks for the Prime Minister's Office. Officially, the apparatus is limited to state and national issues and does not handle political or party issues.

National Hasbara Headquarters

National hasbara headquarters coordinates unified hasbara policy and messaging for the official spokespeople for the State of Israel. The following fall under its auspices: the Arabic communications advisor to the Prime Minister, the Internet and new media department, and all hasbara and policy field coordinators, both military and civilian. Headquarters are in constant contact with pro-Israel individuals and organizations that function locally and worldwide. It coordinates these bodies to advance the objectives and stances of the State of Israel. Headquarters transmits essential hasbara messages and assists in the production of hasbara materials. Headquarters places special emphasis on social networks, a methodology that stems from a belief that direct, unmediated communication with a broad public around the world will engender trust and promote the reliable transfer of the State of Israel's hasbara messaging. Like the National Hasbara Forum, hasbara headquarters holds regular meetings for the "New Media Forum" to promote Internet and social network based hasbara.

Foreign Ministry Department of Media & Hasbara

Department of the Foreign Ministry. Entrusted with the hasbara of the Foreign Ministry. Responsible for both traditional and new media, media relations both foreign and Israeli, as well as general public relations. The department's goal is to relate the Israeli narrative to the world, in its entirely and in all its diversity. This division (Media and Hasbara) is part of the broader public diplomacy apparatus of the Foreign Ministry.

Areas of Responsibility: Management of the press and spokespeople, information production, digital diplomacy, hasbara and branding, and communication with of civil society (battling delegitimization).

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IDF Spokesperson's Division

Division of the IDF. Responsible for representing the Israel Defense Forces to Israeli and international media. Considered a part of the hasbara apparatus.

Tasks: Promotion of hasbara on the Internet through new media by operating the IDF's official of the IDF's official English website and blog, Youtube channel, Twitter profile and Flikr account.

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National Hasbara Forum

Under the auspices of the national hasbara headquarters and determines Israeli hasbara policy on domestic and foreign issues. It includes hasbara agents and official spokespeople for the State of Israel both locally and abroad who adhere to the synchronized positions, messages, reactions, and commentary produced by the Forum.

Tasks:

1. Proactive advocacy (briefings, composition of materials)
2. Increased cooperation and coordination between hasbara agents of the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Minister with hasbara agents in the field of security.
3. Hasbara to Arab populations.
4. Expanding cooperation with relevant hasbara organizations.
5. Internet Hasbara.

Forum Participants: Headquarters' chief of staff, spokespeople for: the IDF, the police, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of the Interior, a representative of the Foreign Ministry, directors of communications for all of the above as well as a representative of the Government Press Office.

The Jewish Agency for Israel

A worldwide Jewish organization that deals with hasbara, primarily through informal representatives.

Tasks: Recruitment, training and deployment of Israeli "messengers" to various countries worldwide for hasbara and education. Transporting hundreds of thousands of Jews from around the world to Israel in different capacities ("Taglit", "MASA", etc.) to help them become goodwill ambassadors for Israel.

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The Ministry of Public Diplomacy & Diaspora Affairs

Government office. (Previously known as "Ministry of Diaspora Society and the Fight Against Anti-Semitism")

Tasks: To significantly increase the national hasbara effort. Mobilizing citizens of Israel and Diaspora Jews in public diplomacy with an emphasis on the battle against delegitimization.

Areas of Responsibility: Management of general hasbara for Israeli and Diaspora societies, the Hasbara Center, the Government Publications Bureau, and the Government Press Office.

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Ministry of Tourism

Government ministry. Responsible for the development and marketing of tourism in the State of Israel.

Tasks: Strategic development and brand management to encourage tourism to Israel. The Ministry acts as an office for engagement and disseminates knowledge and promotional materials wordwide, organizes seminars and educational tours, coordinates journalism and public relations, and helps major tourist companies market Israel as a tourist destination.

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The chart refers exclusively to official hasbara units.

Essential Components of Effective Public Diplomacy

1 Coordination & Management of Hasbara Messaging

1.1 The National Hasbara Forum

A. Formulating principle messages for domestic and foreign hasbara while distinguishing between direct, basic, and periodic messaging.

B. Formulating policy responses to important events.

C. Presenting hasbara policy recommendations to the government based on varying scenarios.

D. A weekly meeting with the participation of the IDF, the Coordinator of Settlement Activity, the Shin Bet, and the police to reassess the situation and formulate a hasbara plan for the Arab population.

E. A meeting once every three months which includes media consultants, market advisors, and experts in the fields of psychology and economics to assess the hasbara situation on the ground, determine hasbara strategies, and solidify the tenets of proactive hasbara programs.

1.2 The National Hasbara Forum, Foreign Ministry, and the Hasbara Ministry: Logistics and Professional Training

Compiling and distributing hasbara materials: editorials, content pages, presentations, films, Internet forums (Hasbara Forum).

2 Informal Hasbara

Main Tasks:

1. Mapping voluntary hasbara organizations in Israel and the world, and identifying the unique hasbara needs of each organization based on its target group (students, Jewish communities, etc.)
2. Holding a roundtable once every other month with hasbara organizations in order to regulate and coordinate partnerships and to develop joint hasbara programs.

2.1 Informal Hasbara through Israelis:

A. Projects "We Are All Ambassadors" and "Explaining Israel".

B. Logistics and Professional Training (National Hasbara Forum, Foreign Ministry, Hasbara Ministry).

C. Training delegations (Hasbara Ministry).

D. Finding and producing content for representatives and target communities abroad (Foreign Ministry).

E. Building companies in different countries to channel hasbara messages from the State of Israel (Foreign Ministry).

F. Students Abroad (Foreign Ministry, Hasbara Ministry, Jewish Agency). This includes: "Hasbara Emissaries" (Jewish Agency and Hasbara Ministry in conjunction with Hillel); Israeli cultural events on campuses (Hasbara Ministry); Bringing American students to Israel in programed, educational frameworks like "Taglit" and "MASA"; Sending Israeli lecturers to campuses in the United States and Canada; Improving Jewish students rhetorical skills in the areas of hasbara and new media (Hasbara Ministry); Amending campus curricula worldwide to reflect "Israel's heritage and the long standing connection of the Jewish people with the land of Israel" (Hasbara Ministry); "Faces of Israel", a project sends delegations of young Israelis to campuses abroad to display the diverse faces of Israeli society (Hasbara Ministry).

G. "Israel's Hopes are in You", a project that trains high school students to do virtual hasbara online aimed at their peers around the world (Foreign Ministry in conjunction with the "Ort" network).

2.2 Informal Hasbara Through Partnerships with Foreign Organizations:

A. Media: Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Americans for a Safe Israel, The American Jewish Committee (AJC), The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, StandWithUs, Christians United for Israel (CUFI), the Israel Project.

B. On Campuses: CAMERA, ICC, ADL, StandWithUs, CUFI, The David Project, Israel at Heart, Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), Hillel, American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), Hillel.

C. Engagement and Branding: Israel at Heart, Birthright, Jewish National Fund, Aish HaTorah.

D. Crisis Management: CAMERA, ADL, ZOA, AJC, The Israel Project, The David Project, StandWithUs, AICE, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA).

E. Strategic Partnerships: The Israel Project, JCPA, AIPAC, ADL, CUFI, Jewish National Fund America (JFNA).

3 Engagement & Branding

Improving Israel's positive image

Examples: In 2010, the Foreign Ministry increased the marketing budget designated for Israel branding from NIS 40 million, of which only 10 million was designated specifically for marketing and hasbara, to NIS 100 million, exclusively designated for marketing and hasbara. Special emphasis was put on social networking with a focus on advancing six areas in which Israel has a comparative advantage: Environment (with an emphasis on desert agriculture); Science and technology (medicine, Internet, high-tech industries); Culture and art; The variety of ethnicities and traditions; Lifestyle and literature; Social justice (support for special needs populations) (Foreign Ministry).

Other branding projects include: Project "These are the Journeys of the Children of Israel" (Traveling Art Exhibition) and Project "Celebrating Israel" (Tribute to Israel Parade down New York's 5th Avenue) sponsored by the Hasbara Ministry and informal partners abroad.

4 Long-Term Partnerships

Partnerships with Diaspora Jewry (hasbara headquarters, Foreign Ministry, and Hasbara Ministry).

Essential activities:

A. "Round table" of organizations (hasbara headquarters).

B. Formulating unique hasbara programming for Jewish communities around the world according to their needs (hasbara headquarters and Foreign Ministry in conjunction with the "Nativ" Liaison Bureau, the Jewish Agency, the JDC, and other Jewish organizations).

C. Hasbara seminars for Jewish communities in the Diaspora (Hasbara Ministry). At present there are 20 hasbara seminars for lay leadership held around the world in Europe (Austria and Britain), North America (USA), South America (Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Costa Rica). Additional seminars are planned for Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Columbia, Chile, and Peru.

5 Multi-Dimensional Communications Strategy

5.1 Determining Hasbara Messages (National Hasbara Forum)

Building a database of speakers, experts, and officials trained to appear before the media in specific, desired fields.

5.2 Media Relations (Hasbara Ministry & Foreign Ministry)

A. Establishing set briefings in Hebrew, various foreign languages, and Arabic for local press (hasbara headquarters).

B. Establishing press briefings for foreign press abroad (Foreign Ministry).

C. Improving the skills of the official spokespeople of the State of Israel for local communication (National Hasbara Forum).

D. Organizing media delegations for foreign journalists in Israel (Foreign Ministry)

E. Managing professional connections with foreign writers posted in Israel (Foreign Ministry).

F. Actively managing new media channels like Facebook and Twitter (hasbara headquarters, Foreign Ministry, Hasbara Ministry, Tourism Ministry by way of its embassies, IDF spokesperson).

5.3 Internet Warfare (Foreign Ministry, Hasbara Ministry)

A. Partnership with relevant Israeli organizations to construct websites that provide hasbara materials and others capable of translating state hasbara materials into a myriad of foreign languages.

B. Recruiting volunteers from abroad to provide an Israeli point of view on European news sites (Germany, Spain, England) and in online surveys. These networks were activated during Operation Cast Lead (2008).

6 Dynamism & Crisis Management

6.1 Internet Warfare (Foreign Ministry, Hasbara Ministry)

A. The "Internet Warfare" network (Foreign Ministry): Official staff of the Foreign Ministry that works around the clock writing pro-Israel responses on websites in Europe and the United States, and participates in conversations that deal with Israel on blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

B. The "Web Listener" network (Foreign Ministry): Official staff of the Foreign Ministry which constantly tracks blogs, the BBC website, and Arab websites.

C. The "Situation Room" (Hasbara Ministry): The hasbara apparatus's virtual network designated for emergencies. The "room" operates in five different languages (English, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew) and has three central staffs: new media, Diaspora relations, and hasbara information monitoring. The staffs of The "Room" activates hundreds of activists and senior bloggers as well as over one hundred thousand Internet social network users (These networks were activated during the Marmara Flotilla in 2010 and the Gaza Flotilla in 2011).

D. Initiatives to deliberately remove anti-Israel messaging from the Internet (Hasbara Ministry's Department of New Media): E.g. The fight to remove the Third Intifada application from the Apple Store and the fight to remove the Facebook page that calls for the Third Intifada.

6.2 Students Abroad (Foreign Ministry, Hasbara Ministry, and Jewish Agency)

A. "Faces of Israel" Project (Hasbara Ministry). Sending a delegation of young people from Israel to campuses abroad to reinforce the existing hasbara networks during "anti-Israel" events such as "Israel Apartheid Week" (Hasbara Ministry).

B. Bringing high school students from the Diaspora to Israel to prepare them "for their departure to campuses where they will fight against the phenomenon of delegitimization" (Hasbara Ministry).

7 Strategic Targeting

7.1 Arabic Communications (National Hasbara Forum and Foreign Ministry)

A. Directing official spokespeople of the State of Israel to Arabic-language media (Foreign Ministry).

B. Upgrading hasbara websites in Arabic and Persian (Foreign Ministry).

7.2 Targeting Opinion Makers (Foreign Ministry and Hasbara Ministry)

A. Formulation of messages aimed at opinion makers.The Foreign Ministry defines "opinion makers" as: state officials such as the President and/or Prime Minister, his/her cabinet, the Foreign Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament and opposition, the ten most prominent members of parliament, up five representatives of top non-governmental organizations; up to ten of the most influential reporters.

B. Bringing influential opinion makers as individuals and delegations to Israel for weeklong visits (Foreign Ministry).

C. Bringing senior radio announcers from the United States to Israel so that up on their return they will stress positive elements of Israel in their broadcasts (Hasbara Ministry).

D. Hosting delegations of elite university professors who teach about Israel (Hasbara Ministry).

E. Sending Israeli speakers from different fields abroad to appear before select, targeted audiences and local media (Foreign Ministry).

F. Organizing annual international seminars for young, non-Jewish opinion makers in Europe (Hasbara Ministry in conjunction with the Interdisciplinary Center in Hezliya).

G. Organizing a Media in Conflicts Seminar (MICS) for journalists and media personnel to encourage a more positive attitude towards Israel specifically when it comes to the Palestinian-Israel conflict (Hasbara Ministry in conjunction with the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya).

H. Setting up an Israeli booth with hasbara materials at book fairs in Russia, Germany, and cities of UN member states and publishing "Bridges to Culture" [in Fankfurt] (Hasbara Ministry in conjunction with "Nativ").