

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 29, 2024

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Lee:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) Appropriations bill, I write to ask for your support in defunding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the Gaza Strip.

Following Hamas's October 7 terrorist attack against Israel, appalling revelations showed that UNRWA employees in Gaza not only supported, but also actively participated as part of Hamas in the attacks. It is reported that of the publicly identified twelve UNRWA employees involved in the attacks, seven were teachers.¹ According to reports, an UNRWA school social worker brought the body of a dead Israeli soldier back into the Gaza Strip, and helped coordinate ammunition and vehicle distribution before and during the attack.² Another UNRWA employee was connected to the massacre at Kibbutz Be'eri, where ninety-seven people were burned and butchered, and dozens kidnapped.³ Additionally, new reports presented to the United Nations reveal that UNRWA has employed more than 450 individuals in Gaza that are military operatives for Hamas and other terrorist factions.⁴

¹ Carrie Keller- Lynn & David Luhnow, Intelligence reveals details of U.N. Agency staff's links to Oct. 7 ... Wall Street Journal (2024), <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/at-least-12-u-n-agency-employees-involved-in-oct-7-attacks-intelligence-reports-say-a7de8f36> (last visited Jan 30, 2024).

² Ronen Bergman & Patrick Kingsley, Details emerge on U.N. workers accused of aiding Hamas raid The New York Times (2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/28/world/middleeast/gaza-unrwa-hamas-israel.html> (last visited Jan 29, 2024).

³ Id.

While the purported goal of UNRWA is to provide humanitarian aid, education, and healthcare to the Palestinian people, it continues to be evident that the funds used by UNRWA officials are supporting extremism and terrorism. Before October 7, it was evident that UNRWA had allocated funds towards textbooks filled with language and imagery that encourages violence and hatred towards other nations and ethnic groups, particularly the State of Israel. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has documented such content in detail in a report⁵ that was released to Congress on April 26, 2018, and declassified in February 2019. Despite strong efforts by the U.S. State Department and the United States Mission to the United Nations, UNRWA has failed to remediate the problem.

Additionally, the IDF has uncovered Hamas tunnels, weapons, and even data centers in and under UNRWA buildings throughout the Gaza Strip.⁶ The United States cannot continue using taxpayer dollars to fund hate or incite terror against the State of Israel, one of our closest allies.

For peace between Israelis and Palestinians to come to fruition and endure, children cannot be corrupted into hating the “other.” I request for the inclusion of the following language into the FY 2025 SFOPS Appropriations report:

“None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act and prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be made available for a contribution, grant, or other payment to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) with respect to activities carried out in Gaza unless the Secretary of State certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that the UNRWA has submitted to the Department of State all available identifying information of its employees, contractors and beneficiaries and does not obligate funds to any employee, contractor or beneficiary until the Department provides confirmation that such persons have cleared anti-terror vetting.”

“No funds made available under this Act may be provided to or used to support U.S. participation in an international organization that has, within the past year, engaged in conduct that constitutes antisemitism pursuant to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism, including holding the State of Israel to a double standard, declaring Zionism or the State of Israel to be racist, or accusing Zionism or Israel of apartheid.”

We have a shared responsibility to ensure that our taxpayer dollars are used to foster an open and safe society and not propagate terrorism and further division. Our taxpayer dollars must not be allowed to fund employees moonlighting as Hamas operatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

⁴ Reuters, “Israel says over 450 UN aid agency workers in Gaza are ‘military operatives’, Marhc 4, 2024, <https://reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-over-450-un-aid-agency-employees-gaza-are-military-operatives-2024-03-04/>.

⁵ (GAO-18-227C)

⁶ Joseph Krauss, What is UNRWA, the main aid provider in Gaza that Israel accuses of militant links? AP News (2024), <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-un-aid-refugees-29932f8d12c4fa748daa03e3689dc536> (last visited Jan 29, 2024).