

Finish off UNRWA now

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.12.2025

We long have known that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a biased, inefficient, and radicalizing actor, and that it cannot be fixed simply by “better oversight.” It is time to finish off UNRWA now.

UNRWA institutions in Gaza – schools, clinics, hospitals, and more – harbored Hamas killers and weapons, with Hamas terror attack tunnels built right underneath them. And dozens of UNRWA personnel were complicit or active participants in the October 7 assault on Israel.

It turns out that more than 2,000 UNRWA employees were also terrorists in either Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). A fifth of UNRWA school administrators were Hamas terrorists, and 10% of the senior positions (school principals and their deputies, directors, and deputy directors of training centers) were also members of Hamas or PIJ. More than 200 UNRWA staff were Hamas killers with unmistakable terrorist records, and hundreds more openly celebrated the October 7 rapes and murders.

Beyond Gaza, UNRWA is rotten to its core. Its schools in Judea and Samaria, Jordan, Lebanon, and elsewhere validate the so-called Palestinian “right of return,” the “right” to demographically overwhelm Israel, thus perpetuating Palestinian war against Israel instead of helping to solve the conflict.

Watchdog organizations tirelessly have documented the hate taught in UNRWA classrooms. Palestinian children learn that Jews are liars and fraudsters, and that Jews spread corruption which will lead to their annihilation. Terrorists are glorified as role models. Lessons that incite violence are taught across all grades and subjects, including in math and science classes. Inevitably, the systematic teaching of hatred and violence within the UNRWA school system results in Palestinian terror against Israel.

And of course, the agency does nothing to resettle Palestinian refugees. In fact, the number of UNRWA-registered “refugees” continues to exponentially grow. UNRWA refuses to remove from its registry millions of people who hold foreign citizenship and residency, and who, by any other “refugee” concept, would no

longer be considered refugees.

In short, while UNRWA professes to be a humanitarian organization, its true goal is to perpetuate the hope that Palestinians will one day flood and destroy Israel. UNRWA is plainly an enormous obstacle to peace.

DESPITE THIS, last Friday the UN renewed UNRWA's mandate for another three years, on the mistaken assertion that the organization is an indispensable humanitarian tool.

Fortunately, real changes on the ground in Gaza and in eastern Jerusalem are proving just how wrong this is and how things can be done so much better without UNRWA.

In Gaza, UNRWA has been blessedly replaced by over a dozen other aid organizations. As Enia Krivine of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies has shown, relief organizations are delivering aid and services just fine without UNRWA's radicalizing agenda.

The UN Development Program (UNDP) is managing waste management. Fuel distribution is managed by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The World Central Kitchen has been effective at delivering food alongside the World Food Program (WFP). The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has taken a larger role in children-related humanitarian responses. The World Health Organization (WHO) is providing medical aid to field clinics and hospitals.

UNRWA's decades-long monopoly on aid and services - which came part and parcel with annihilationist messaging about Israel - has finally been broken. The Trump administration (through its Civil-Military Coordination Center in Kiryat Gat) gets partial credit for this. Now the administration is considering hitting UNRWA with terrorism-related sanctions, something that would appropriately cripple the organization.

For its part, new Israeli laws that came into effect this year outlaw coordination with UNRWA, making it difficult for UNRWA (which had used Israel as its base of operations for decades) to continue delivering its services. Not surprisingly, UNRWA's well-paid lobbyists and advocates warned that Israel's move would have catastrophic consequences. It has not.

For example, UNRWA schools in Jerusalem have been closed down. A thousand or so eastern Jerusalemite Arab students have moved to other institutions, including schools that teach the Israeli curriculum. This is an exceptionally good thing. (Why the heck was UNRWA ever allowed to open schools in Jerusalem?!)

Under the new laws, all UNRWA facilities in Jerusalem are supposed to be shuttered too, especially the agency's vast, main compound in Maalot Dafna (Sheikh Jarrah). Israeli police finally raided the compound this week, seizing equipment and replacing the UN flag with an Israeli one (- an act that was of course condemned by the UN secretary general).

(The compound is scheduled to become a residential neighborhood with 1,400 apartments. Haredi community activists already are bickering over control of the project, which abuts other mostly haredi neighborhoods.)

Next is financial action against UNRWA. The Bank of Israel is supposed to force Israeli banks to close UNRWA's accounts, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare is supposed to stop processing benefit payments to UNRWA employees. The Ministry of Finance already has cancelled the agency's substantial tax exemptions on imported cars, fuel, and equipment. But UNRWA still owes Jerusalem years of unpaid property taxes, worth millions of shekels.

Slowly, slowly (too slowly), the ministries of defense and foreign affairs are stopping the issuance of work/residence permits to UNRWA employees, too.

MOVING from axing UNRWA to a constructive post-Gaza-war framework, the "international community" must focus on rebuilding Palestinian society - free from rank corruption, destructive indoctrination, coddling of terrorism, and the overall moral rot that for too long has contaminated international politics relating to Palestinians.

First and foremost, this means elimination of refugee status for all Palestinians living in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria. "Refugee camps" must be transformed into regular neighborhoods or towns, and their residents redefined as, well, local residents - not refugees.

Second is meaningful curriculum overhauls in Palestinian educational institutions from kindergarten through university, eliminating antisemitic and anti-Israel materials, and the adoption of population-wide deradicalization initiatives.

Third is action towards total demilitarization of Palestinian areas (excepting lightly armed police forces), as envisioned and promised in the Oslo Accords 30 years ago – but never pursued seriously.

Alas, Israel has little confidence in the ability of anybody to swiftly rebuild Palestinian society or “reform” Palestinian government, unless the Palestinians themselves wish to do so.

Throwing more aid money at the Palestinians certainly won’t help, just as it has not done the trick over the past thirty years since the Oslo Accords were signed.

Despite tens of billions of dollars and euros invested in the Palestinian Authority by the “international community,” there is no democracy, no rule of law, no transparency, no sustainability, no investment in economic stability, and no peace education in the PA. Not a single refugee has been resettled. Not one hospital has been built in the West Bank. Only one sewage treatment plant.

But there is plenty of nepotism and corruption, “pay-for-slay” handouts (meaning the incentivizing and rewarding of terrorism against Israel), violent propagandizing against Israel (including support for Hamas’s October 7 invasion and massacres), and diplomatic assault on Israel in every possible international forum.

As for Western “security assistance” to the PA, this has produced mixed results, at best. The PA does not effectively control key terrorist nodes in the West Bank, and PA security personnel repeatedly have participated in or facilitated terror attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers. PA security personnel account for 12% of all Palestinian terrorists held by Israel.

In short, the overall return on Western investment in Palestinian maturity and independence is abysmal. Real reform of Palestinian government and society is going to be a long, arduous process and must involve penalty and penance not just reward and recognition.

Which is why it is asinine of France, Britain, Canada, and others to resurrect illusions of imminent Palestinian statehood. Regrettably, their gambit is a recipe for devastating disappointment and protracted conflict.

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