UNRWA Must be Defunded & Exposed as the World’s Leading Anti-Israel Propaganda Machine

January 4, 2024

The Jewish Voice

<https://thejewishvoice.com/2024/01/unrwa-must-be-defunded-exposed-as-the-worlds-leading-anti-israel-propaganda-machine/>

In the complex and protracted saga of the Palestinian refugee issue, the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been more than controversial, to say the least. A critical examination of UNRWA’s unique status reveals inherent challenges that hinder the resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem, perpetuating a cycle of dependency. It is time for a pragmatic reassessment of UNRWA’s role and international support for the sake of genuine progress in the region.

The most glaring peculiarity in the Palestinian refugee narrative is the unprecedented duality of their legal status. Unlike any other refugee group worldwide, Palestinians are recognized both as citizens of a sovereign state and as refugees. This exceptional status, coupled with the hereditary transmission of refugee status to subsequent generations, sets the Palestinian refugee issue apart from other global humanitarian crises.

The United Nations, in its commitment to addressing refugee concerns, predominantly operates through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which oversees a multitude of refugee groups. The singularity of UNRWA’s exclusive focus on Palestinians, 75 years after the initial conflict, raises questions about the continued necessity of a dedicated agency. Is it justified to maintain a distinct entity solely for Palestinians, given the similarities they share with other displaced populations around the world?

The assertion that Palestinians bear a unique injustice and an inherent right to return to their ancestral lands is a narrative deeply ingrained in the Palestinian psyche. However, a closer examination reveals a more nuanced truth. The displacement of Palestinians occurred during a war initiated by Arab countries seeking to undermine the establishment of a Jewish state. Those who remained in the newly formed Israel were granted full citizenship and have since become integral members of Israeli society.

The perpetuation of the myth that all Palestinians are eternal refugees, nurtured by UNRWA’s policies, impedes their potential for resettlement in Arab countries or the development of a viable Palestinian state. The reality is that UNRWA has faced credible allegations of corruption, ties to terrorist organizations, and the promotion of anti-Semitic ideologies in its educational materials.

The withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005 presented a historic opportunity for the Palestinians to establish the foundations of an independent state. Regrettably, the prospect was derailed by the singular focus of Hamas on the destruction of Israel, diverting resources and attention away from nation-building endeavors. Instead of capitalizing on the scenic beaches for tourism, the majority of Gazans, many of whom are considered refugees by UNRWA, invested their energies in constructing tunnels and infrastructure geared towards attacking Israel.

Hamas’s provocative “Great March of Return” in 2018 exemplifies their unyielding commitment to a narrative that undermines peace efforts. Encouraging masses to swarm the Gaza security fence, the movement advocates for the return of Palestinians to all of historic Palestine. The dynamic is exacerbated by UNRWA’s extensive involvement in Gaza, providing essential services such as education, healthcare, and food aid, which enables Hamas to channel its resources into terrorist activities instead of governance.

The influence of UNRWA on Palestinian education is a contentious aspect, with credible accusations of promoting hatred towards Israel and Jews as well as directing their hostility towards them. Well founded concerns have arisen over UNRWA’s role in indoctrinating the children of Gaza with extreme nationalistic rhetoric as well as the incessant promotion of virulent anti-Semitism. Historic examples, such as Palestinian children reciting an anthem emphasizing a violent return, highlight a problematic trend that persists to this day.

UNRWA school textbooks contain many examples of indoctrination against Israel and also contain veneration of terrorists.

Textbooks omit recognition of Israel school maps omit the existence of Israel. School books exclude any connection between the Jews and the land of Israel. It also appears that refugees are being primed for combat. UNRWA summer camps actually give young “campers “paramilitary training, preparing for future war with the Jews. The goal is the “right of return”, is to bring Arab populations to cities and towns like Lod, Ashdod, Jaffa, and Ashkelon, which were populated by Arabs who left or fled in 1948 when Arab armies attacked the newborn Jewish state and whose leaders assured them that they would return to their homes when the Jews were defeated.

The advocacy group UN Watch, enumerated on how teachers in UNRWA schools express support for terrorism and Palestinian terrorist groups, and indoctrinate students to violence. On July 15, 2022, Hillel Neuer, director of UN Watch tweeted that UN Watch has “easily identified 120 UNRWA teachers, school principles and other employees who praise Hitler, glorify terrorist attacks and spread snit-Semitism.”  Watch decried the, “exploitation of children as child soldiers” as a “form of child abuse and a violation of international law.”

Recent reports from Israeli sources, including the Telegram news channel Abu Ali Express, reveal disturbing instances of UNRWA schools incorporating art projects that glorify terrorists. The juxtaposition of landmarks like the Dome of the Rock with images of infamous figures like Osama Bin Laden raises serious questions about the agency’s educational content and its clear impact on fostering a culture of violence.

UNRWA’s journey has been marked by decades of continuous funding, transforming it into a permanent fixture in the region. The reluctance of the United States to antagonize the Arab world during the Cold War, coupled with fears of Soviet expansion, led to the sustained financial backing of UNRWA, perpetuating its presence year after year.

One glaring issue is UNRWA’s refugee registration system, which has seen the number of refugees skyrocket from the original 750,000 to a staggering 5.9 million. This exponential increase, primarily attributed to its expansive definition of refugee status, raises serious questions about the agency’s objectives and sustainability. The irony is exemplified by Jordan, the country with the highest concentration of registered refugees at two million. Despite the majority being Jordanian citizens, they are still categorized as refugees, highlighting the absurdity of UNRWA’s approach.

To maintain its relevance, UNRWA employs a dubious refugee definition, explicitly stating that it “does not afford refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention.” Instead, the agency operates based on a self-crafted definition that determines eligibility for services and assistance. This strategic maneuvering allows UNRWA to continue its operations without adhering to internationally recognized refugee conventions.

The perpetuation of such a system not only raises ethical concerns but also impedes the path to a sustainable resolution for the Palestinian refugee crisis. By maintaining an inflated refugee count and perpetuating a narrative that contradicts the international standards set by the Geneva Convention, UNRWA risks becoming an obstacle rather than a catalyst for a lasting solution.

The time is long overdue for the cessation of all funding to the UNWRA. This odious organization clearly has a dangerous agenda and must be exposed as the anti-Israel propaganda machine that it is.