The Palestinian refugee ‘crisis’ is a United Nations-perpetuated myth

November 16, 2023

By Enia Krivine

The New York Post

<https://nypost.com/2023/11/16/opinion/the-palestinian-refugee-crisis-is-a-united-nations-perpetuated-myth/>

The[United Nations Relief and Works Agency](https://nypost.com/2023/10/10/biden-admin-funneled-730-million-to-un-group-despite-its-personnel-calling-for-violence-against-jews/) has a history of hiring staff with connections to terrorist organizations while its schools erase Israel from maps, teach antisemitism and provide cover for Hamas weapons caches and terror tunnels.

In short, UNRWA — the largest humanitarian organization in Gaza — bears direct responsibility for the extremism that fueled the[Oct. 7 massacre of more than 1,200 Israelis.](https://nypost.com/2023/10/29/opinion/hamas-horrors-you-luckily-wont-see-glimpse-of-terror-too-sick-for-israel-to-air/)

UNRWA’s flaws are well-known, but Washington still sent $344 million to the agency last year, making it the agency’s top donor.

([President Trump had stopped funding it,](https://nypost.com/2018/09/03/trump-is-pushing-the-middle-east-to-face-reality-in-palestine/) but President Biden reversed that when he entered office.)

If the United States really has Israel’s back in its war against Hamas, then Washington should not give another penny to UNRWA until it overhauls every aspect of its operations.

UNRWA was established in 1949 to manage the Palestinian refugee crisis that grew out of Israel’s War of Independence.

There were an estimated 750,000 Palestinian refugees after the war, approximately 200,000 of whom fled to Gaza.

The Palestinians were the only refugees to receive their own UN agency, and that is where the trouble began.

The rest of the world’s refugees fall under the care of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (also called the UN Refugee Agency).

UNHCR has a staff of 18,000 and a mandate to assist nearly 59 million refugees in “repatriation and resettlement” and “assimilation with new national communities.”

In other words, UNHCR tries to solve refugee crises, not perpetuate them.

UNRWA is different. It never had a mandate to resettle Palestinians.

Instead, it keeps them in limbo, where their resentments only harden.

UNRWA schools teach Palestinian children Israel will be destroyed, and once the Jews are gone, all the land from the river to the sea will belong to them.

In addition to their own agency, Palestinians have their own definition of who is a refugee.

UNRWA allows parents to pass on their refugee status to their children, generation after generation.

The result? The number of registered Palestinian “refugees” has ballooned to 5.9 million spread across five countries. In Gaza, the number has increased more than sevenfold.

Of course, few of the original refugees from 1948-1949 are still around.

In fact, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo revealed in 2021 that fewer than 200,000 UNRWA beneficiaries are refugees who fled their homes during the 1948 war.

Yet thanks to all the notional refugees in its care, business is booming for UNRWA.

It employs more than 30,000 staff (13,000 in Gaza) and has a yearly budget of $1.6 billion.

Another thing that differentiates UNRWA from other humanitarian organizations and UN agencies is almost all UNRWA’s employees are locally recruited.

Outside of the government, UNRWA is by far the largest employer in Gaza.

In practice, Hamas can shirk the responsibility, costs and accountability associated with running a government, freeing up the terror organization’s time and finances to build a war machine with which to kill Israelis.

Conveniently for Hamas, the UN does not consider it to be a terrorist organization.

So when hiring its staff, UNRWA does not screen for connections to Hamas.

The results are what you might expect.

After Hamas brutalized Israeli communities Oct. 7, more than a dozen UNRWA employees publicly praised the atrocities.

An UNRWA director glorified one of the terrorists as a “hero,” “raider” and a “prince of Khan Younis” (a city in southern Gaza).

In the years leading up to the attacks more than 150 UNRWA employees promoted hatred and violence on social media according to a study by UN Watch, an independent monitor.

It is past time for the Biden administration to acknowledge UNRWA is not just a failure but a cause of the violence we see today.

Until now, UNRWA has remained untouchable because it supposedly reflects global concern for the welfare of Palestinians. In fact, it has contributed to the devastation of Gaza.

Americans should help Gazans rebuild once Hamas is defeated, but not one dollar should go to UNRWA until it shows it’s committed to fixing problems, not perpetuating them.