'We are one', UNWRA officials told Hamas, PIJ in secret Lebanon meeting

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<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-830147>

Former [UNRWA](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-829128) commissioner general Pierre Krahenbuhl met with leaders of designated Palestinian terrorist organizations during his term, assuring them that ‘we are one’ and ‘no one can separate us,’ as published on a UN Watch expose.

According to the expose, the meeting took place in Beirut in February 2017, with participants including, in addition to Krahenbuhl and [UNRWA](https://www.jpost.com/international/article-828450) Chief in Lebanon Hakam Shawan, Ali Baraka from Hamas, Abu Imad Al-Rifai from the Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Salah Al-Youssef from the PFLP, as well as other representatives from different Palestinian factions such as the DFLP, the PFLP – Central Command, and Fatah Al-Intifada.

Hamas leader Ali Baraka, who oversaw the terror organizaiton’s foreign relations with the regimes in Tehran and Syria, was recently designated by the US for his role in Hamas. Likewise, Abu Imad al-Rifai, a Palestinian Islamic [Jihad'](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/unrwa-mistakenly-gave-palestinian-kids-textbooks-calling-for-jihad-655619)s leader from Lebanon, had previously boasted about dispatching suicide bombers to Baghdad to target American and British military personnel.

**Meetings held secretly**

Strikingly, Krahenbuhl appeared to have been completely aware that such meetings were problematic, as according to UN Watch’s expose, he warned those present to maintain their discussions out of the public sphere, so as to avoid a ‘challenge’ to their ‘credibility’, as well as ‘lead to a loss between donor countries and UNRWA, which might result in reduced or even halted funding.’

During these clandestine discussions, Krahenbuhl explicitly emphasized a ‘spirit of partnership’ with those present in the room, and encouraged them to challenge UNRWA's decisions privately, promising potential modifications or complete reversals of decisions. In his own words, Krahenbuhl advocated for a mutual partnership, inviting terrorist representatives to critique UNRWA's decisions freely. He suggested they could meet ‘a thousand times’ to discuss concerns, with the potential to alter or completely rescind existing policies.

‘Your cooperation with us in security matters and your commitment to not closing UNRWA institutions, facilities, schools, or offices also completes this partnership,’ said the UNRWA official to the leaders of Palestinian terrorist organizations, concluding by saying ‘If we can achieve this, it means we are united, and no one can separate us.’

These documents provide a stark insight into the complex and controversial interactions between UNRWA leadership and organizations designated as terrorist groups by multiple international entities.

UN Watch Executive Director, Hillel Neuer, reminded that Hamas official in Lebanon Ali Baraka, who was present at the meeting with Krahnbuhl, regularly met with UNRWA regional directors, some of which saluted him for Hamas’s anniversary.

UNRWA’s connections with Hamas were put under scrutiny since the October 7th Massacre, as multiple UNRWA staff were seen participating in the massacre itself, playing active roles in Hamas’s militia Al-Qassam, and instructing antisemitic and terror lauding material in schools. An UNRWA teacher was also among organizers of anti-Israel protests in the Netherlands while acting as leader of a Hamas affiliated organization in the country.