Lawmakers push to stop flow of US tax dollars to 'anti-Israel' UN office

February 20, 2023

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Fox News

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Lawmakers in both the House and Senate formally introduced legislation that [would halt U.S. funding](https://www.foxnews.com/category/world/united-nations) to a United Nations agency that’s been accused of promoting antisemitism and financing affiliates of terrorist groups.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, on Friday introduced a bill targeting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which supports Palestinian refugees. According to Roy, the agency is an ‘anti-Israel’ vehicle that [spreads hatred for Jews](https://www.foxnews.com/category/topic/anti-semitism).

‘UNRWA's lengthy and detailed history of promoting antisemitism, violence, and terrorism through 'educational' materials, and its continued ties to Hamas, should completely disqualify this corrupt entity from receiving any U.S. taxpayer funding,’ Roy said in a statement. ‘UNRWA has failed to meet previous commitments to stop its hostility toward Israel, and it is an obstacle to peace.’

‘Israel is one of our greatest allies and closest friends,’ he continued. ‘We cannot say we truly stand with them while helping prop up a corrupt organization like this. If our actions do not match our words, then our word means nothing.’

Roy's comments came two days after Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced a companion bill in the Senate.

‘UNRWA has a long history of employing people connected to terrorist movements like Hamas, promoting antisemitic textbooks, and using its schools to store Hamas weapons. It is unthinkable that U.S. taxpayer dollars would be used to help fund such an organization,’ Risch said in a statement. ‘This legislation will cease U.S. contributions to UNRWA unless the administration certifies that the agency is not affiliated with U.S. designated foreign terrorist organizations and does not support antisemitic rhetoric. My colleagues and I will continue working to hold the administration and UNRWA accountable until consequential reforms are made.’

UNRWA has repeatedly come under fire for providing educational materials that incite violence against Jews and Israel. [According to an analysis](https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/Review-of-2022-UNRWA-Produced-School-Materials.pdf) by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, for example, Palestinian textbooks produced by UNRWA include content promoting terrorism, spreading antisemitism, and denying Israel's existence. Newly supplied textbooks from last year described Jews as ‘impure’ and ‘inherently treacherous and hostile to Islam and Muslims.’

The agency also has problems with terror financing. According to experts at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, UNRWA since 2012 [paid more than $4.8 million](https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/04/29/review-un-agency-terror-finance-problem/) for health care services to the Union of Health Work Committees, a Gaza-based entity affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is designated by the U.S. as a terrorist organization. In 2020, UNRWA paid $122,000 to a Lebanese hospital owned and operated by Iran-backed Hezbollah, which is also a U.S.-designated terrorist group, according to the FDD.

Experts applauded lawmakers for seeking to halt U.S. funding to UNRWA but warned legislation may not work.

‘Bravo to Rep. Chip Roy and Sen. Jim Risch for trying to stem U.S. taxpayer monies going to the perversion called UNRWA,’ Daniel Pipes, president of the Middle East Forum, told Fox News Digital. ‘Sadly, however, the failure of all prior congressional efforts suggests that this one too will fail. That's because the foreign policy establishments in both Washington and Jerusalem see these funds as necessary to keep things from erupting in the West Bank, Gaza, and beyond. If UNRWA's evil is ever to be halted, it will have to be through other means than depriving it of American funding.’

In 2017, the U.S. contributed nearly $350 million to UNRWA, whose budget is almost entirely composed of contributions from foreign governments – above all the U.S. The Trump administration ended U.S. funding to UNRWA the following year, cutting $300 million of planned support.

Three years later, however, President Biden restored more than $200 million of American assistance to the U.N. agency. As of July 2022, the Biden administration had given $618 million to UNRWA, according to the agency and the White House.

‘Taxpayers should know whether their money is reaching Hamas and other Iran-backed terror groups,’ wrote Julia Schulman and Richard Goldberg in a 2021 op-ed.

UNRWA has increasingly grown in size, dwarfing other U.N. refugee efforts with a budget of about $1.5 billion and a staff of about 30,000 people.

UNRWA is the only U.N. refugee agency dedicated to a population of just one origin – the Palestinians – while all the world's other refugees are served by the U.N. high commissioner for refugees.

The U.N. defines a refugee as someone outside their country of nationality because they're fearful of being persecuted by that country for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. This definition applies to all peoples around the world – [except for the Palestinians](https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees), who under UNRWA are considered refugees at birth, even if they never fled persecution.

UNRWA didn't respond to a request for comment for this story.