

**Submission by United Nations Watch to the  
Independent Review Group on UNRWA Neutrality**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This submission to the Independent Review Group initiated by UNRWA, which is made without prejudice to UN Watch's fundamental objections to the tainted mandate, conflicts of interest and biased composition of the Group, summarizes UN Watch's research and reports about widespread promotion, encouragement of and support for terrorism among UNRWA staff, repeated letters and warnings to both the UN and UNRWA, and UNRWA's responses which consisted of a repeated refusals to engage on the warnings of terror support and instead of attacking the messenger. UNRWA's failure to take meaningful action over nine years demonstrates that UNRWA is systemically unwilling to confront pervasive and entrenched terror-support within its agency.

This submission also details UNRWA's deep ties to Hamas going back many years, including UNRWA teachers becoming senior Hamas terrorists, Hamas embedding its terrorist infrastructure within UNRWA facilities, and Hamas controlling and influencing UNRWA decisions concerning its employees and other matters. Hamas's extensive infiltration of UNRWA's institutional infrastructure makes it impossible for UNRWA to tackle terrorism within the agency.

Finally, this submission details how the main purpose of UNRWA, in contrast to the resettlement objective of UNHCR, is to promote the "right of return" narrative for Palestinians, perpetuating grievance, hatred and war. UNRWA's humanitarian mandate is only secondary to this political advocacy role. Indeed, UNRWA-designated refugees (most of whom are not refugees under international law) consider the existence of UNRWA to be their "right" until they can "return" to sovereign Israel. UNRWA's top management reinforces this position, justifying UNRWA's continued existence on the basis of its political function as the "witness" to the "Palestinian plight." There is a direct line from the UNRWA narrative to the terrorist massacre of October 7<sup>th</sup>, which was perpetrated and supported by thousands of UNRWA school graduates.

There is no reason that the UN and its donor states should be supporting a partisan agency that exists primarily to promote violent terrorism. Humanitarian aid to Palestinians in need can, and should, be provided via other aid agencies that have not been politicized or infiltrated by terrorists. Accordingly, UN Watch's position is that UNRWA, as an institution, is—by definition—not neutral. Therefore, it cannot be reformed.

## **II. PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF TERRORISM IS WIDESPREAD AMONG UNRWA STAFF**

### **A. UN Watch Has Been Warning UNRWA About Terror Support Among Its Staff Since 2015**

Since August 2015, UN Watch has been warning UNRWA about systematic and widespread promotion of terrorism and antisemitism among its staff on social media. We have documented over 180 cases of UNRWA staff incitement to terrorism and

antisemitism on Facebook and Telegram in 11 separate reports, all based on public information.<sup>1</sup> Some of the most egregious examples are listed below:

UN Watch Warnings	Examples of UNRWA Staff Promoting Terrorism and Antisemitism
<a href="#">September 2015 Report</a> (warned about 12 perpetrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Ramy Alshorbasy: Posts antisemitic blood libel depicting cabal of cackling ultra-Orthodox Jews, crudely stereotyped with claws and ear locks, laughing at the fate of Palestinian babies being burned.</li> <li>• Employee Wael Sallouh: Celebrates the June 2014 kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">October 2015 Report</a> (warned about 10 perpetrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Hiba Miari: Celebrates wave of Palestinian stabbing attacks against Israeli Jews with a cartoon of a masked Palestinian playing music on a giant knife.</li> <li>• Employee Hani Al Ramahi: Posts a violent image of a Keffiyeh-clad Palestinian against the backdrop of the Dome of the Rock, holding a bloody knife with the Palestinian flag with the caption “Stab Zionist dogs.”</li> </ul>
<a href="#">November 2015 Report</a> (warned about 10 perpetrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Mazen Abo Hady: Celebrates terror attacks and lauds as “martyrs” the Palestinian terrorists who killed three people in a stabbing and shooting attack on a Jerusalem bus.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">February 2017 Report</a> (warned about 41 perpetrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Ghanem Naim Ghoneim: Venerates “wonderful” Hitler.</li> <li>• Employee Omar Asaad: Admires Hitler by posting his picture with a quote “I could have killed all the world’s Jews, but I left some so that the world would know why I killed them.”</li> <li>• Assistant Head Teacher Mohammad Alsayyed: Praises “awesome kidnapping” of three Israeli teens.</li> <li>• Principal Hussein Amrah: Glorifies violence and celebrates murder of Israelis.</li> <li>• Employee Tarek Abu Ghazaleh: Endorses the gruesome mass murder of Jewish rabbis at a Jerusalem synagogue.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">April 2017 Report</a> (warned about 61 perpetrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Mohamed Soliman: Admires Hitler and endorses Palestinian knife attacks against Israelis.</li> <li>• Teacher Mohamad Fahed: Glorifies Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin and incites against Jews by calling on them to “go back to Europe where they came from.”</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> All of the individuals listed herein and in our reports were identified through searches of publicly available information on the internet. The individuals self-identified as UNRWA employees on their public Facebook profiles or participated in a publicly accessible UNRWA-employee Telegram chat. Therefore, this information does not constitute “individual cases and information that may violate individuals’ human rights and privacy.”

<p><a href="#">September 2019 Report</a> (warned about 10 perpetrators)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal Mudalalah Louz: Teaches children to destroy Israel.</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">August 2021 Report</a> (warned about 22 perpetrators)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Math teacher Nahed Sharawi: Posts Hitler video depicting him as an inspirational philosopher.</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">June 2022 Report</a> (warned about 10 perpetrators)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Nihaya Awad: Endorses Hamas rocket attacks on Israel and encourages Hamas exploitation of Palestinian child soldiers.</li> <li>Teacher Elham Mansour: Advocates killing Jews and Israelis, “By Allah, anyone who can kill and slaughter any Zionist and Israeli criminal, and doesn’t do so, doesn’t deserve to live. Kill them and pursue them everywhere...”</li> <li>Teacher Hana’a Daoud: Endorses Hamas terrorism and incites killing of Jews, “O Muslim, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">March 2023 Report</a> (warned about 10 perpetrators)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Adnan Shteivi: Glorifies perpetrator of March 2022 Bnei Brak shooting attack as a “martyr” whose name should “forever remain in letters of fire, might, and magnificence.”</li> <li>Teacher Riad Nimr: Glorifies terrorist commander as “martyr” and “noblest of souls” and celebrates mass murder in Jerusalem synagogue.</li> <li>Employee Labibeh Iskandarani: Celebrates Adolf Hitler by sharing a photograph of Hitler, calling on him to wake up because “there are still some people you need to burn.”</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">November 2023 Report</a> (warned about 20 perpetrators)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Osama Ahmed: Celebrates October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre as it unfolds by posting “Allah is Great, Allah is Great, reality surpasses our wildest dreams.”</li> <li>Principal Iman Hassan: Justifies October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre as “restoring rights” and “redressing” Palestinian “grievances.”</li> <li>Training Center Director Rawia Helles: Glorifies October 7<sup>th</sup> terrorist as “hero,” “raider,” and “prince of Khan Younis.”</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">January 2024 Report</a> (warned about 30 perpetrators)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Israa Abdul Kareem Mezher: Celebrates October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas massacre “God is the greatest God is the greatest” and declares “Israel’s time is over.”</li> <li>Teacher Waseem Medhat Abu El Ula: Calls to kill Israelis—“execute the first settler”—and prays for the success of the October 7<sup>th</sup> terrorists.</li> <li>Teacher Moreed Abdulazizz Issa: Celebrates October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas massacre “What we did exceeded expectations... What they do after doesn’t matter.”</li> </ul>

## B. Terrorism Promotion Is Widespread, Not Just “A Few Bad Apples”

UN Watch’s research captures only a tiny fraction of neutrality violations among UNRWA staff. This is because we do not have access to the full list of UNRWA employees or to the full list of UNRWA employee social media profiles and social media activity. Moreover, as part of its “social media and neutrality training, UNRWA has advised its employees to make their social media profiles private,<sup>2</sup> essentially telling them to conceal their encouragement of terrorism or antisemitism, which UNRWA euphemistically calls “neutrality violations.” In addition, UN Watch has no access to UNRWA staff activity inside UNRWA classrooms. Our reports are based solely on the *public* social media posts of individuals who self-identify as UNRWA employees.

Yet, despite all these limitations, UN Watch was able to identify over 180 cases of UNRWA staff incitement to terrorism and antisemitism. If UN Watch had access to all UNRWA staff lists, social media profiles, and classroom activity, thousands of UNRWA employees would certainly be implicated in promotion of terrorism and antisemitism.

This is clear based on the fact that, out of 30,000 employees, there is not a single known case of any of the UNRWA staff who on social media has responded to condemn their colleagues’ posts promoting the murder of Jews. On the contrary, the only known responses are of UNRWA staff endorsing the offending posts, as reflected in the examples below.

<b>Date Identified</b>	<b>UNRWA Employee</b>	<b>Promotion of Terrorism, Antisemitism</b>
<a href="#">February 3, 2017</a>	Mohammad Yaser Arab	Liked Post Endorsing Holocaust Denial
<a href="#">February 3, 2017</a>	Hamad Al-Shehabi	Liked Post Endorsing Holocaust Denial
<a href="#">February 3, 2017</a>	Anas Al-Hamidi	Liked Post Promoting Terrorism and Child Soldiers
<a href="#">February 3, 2017</a>	Fadi Mousa	Liked Post Celebrating Hitler
<a href="#">February 3, 2017</a>	Ahmad Nasser	Endorsed Post Celebrating Hitler
<a href="#">April 10, 2017</a>	Samah Al Saleh	Liked Post Celebrating Kidnapping and Murder of Three Israeli Teens
<a href="#">April 10, 2017</a>	Wafaa Sharaf Adlouni	Endorsed Post For Hamas Terrorism
<a href="#">March 14, 2023</a>	Jasmine Al-Shami	Liked Post Praising Hitler
<a href="#">March 14, 2023</a>	Muna Awad	Endorsed Post Praising Hitler

Indeed, over the years, several UNRWA educators have been suspended over support for and/or direct involvement in terrorism. Instead of condemning them, their fellow UNRWA employees rallied around these terror-supporters, organizing mass solidarity protests and rallies, shutting down UNRWA services, as they demanded their colleagues’ reinstatement.

1. [8,000 UNRWA Teachers Rallied for Suhail al-Hindi, School Principal, Head of UNRWA Gaza Union and Hamas Politburo Member](#)

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<sup>2</sup> *Social media & neutrality training for managers & supervisors*, UNRWA (2017), <https://www.unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/UNRWA-social-media-training.pdf>.

In September 2011, UNRWA notified teacher and Gaza staff union head Suhail al-Hindi that he would be suspended for three months without pay due to his political (*i.e.*, Hamas) activities, specifically meeting with Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh. Then-Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu condemned the decision and threatened that the UNRWA staff union, representing 8,000 teachers, would act to “embarrass the agency.”<sup>3</sup>

During al-Hindi’s entire three-month suspension, from September to December 2011, the UNRWA Gaza staff union orchestrated a broad protest campaign, closing UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip several times. The campaign shut down 243 schools, with 8,000 teachers and school principals going on strike, affecting 220,000 school children.<sup>4</sup> Given UNRWA’s oft-touted “zero tolerance” policy for hatred, one would have expected UNRWA teachers to be shocked and outraged that a school principal—and the head of the entire UNRWA Gaza staff union—was an active member of a terrorist group. Instead, the opposite occurred. They rallied around al-Hindi and even rewarded him, re-electing him chairman of the UNRWA Gaza staff union in 2012.<sup>5</sup>

At the time, UNRWA should have investigated all staff who participated in the Suhail al-Hindi protests for neutrality violations for having supported a Hamas member. Yet, as far as we are aware, none were investigated or disciplined. Notably, UNRWA’s Legal Officer in Jerusalem at the time was none other than current-UN Palestine Rapporteur Francesca Albanese<sup>6</sup> who just published a report accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza and denies that the Hamas October 7<sup>th</sup> atrocities—the worst massacre of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust—was antisemitic.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Strike by 2,000 UNRWA Teachers for Fathi al-Sharif, School Principal Tied to Hamas

In a similar case just last month, the entire UNRWA system in Lebanon rallied around two UNRWA teachers disciplined for neutrality violations—Fathi al-Sharif, head of the

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<sup>3</sup> UNRWA announced the suspension of Dr. Suhail al-Hindi, chairman of the UNRWA staff union in the Gaza Strip, after his election to Hamas’ political bureau. In 2011 he was also suspended by UNRWA for his affiliation with Hamas, but remained in his position, **Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center** (February 27, 2017), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21163/>.

<sup>4</sup> Strike closes all UNRWA schools in Gaza Strip, **The Palestinian Information Center** (September 29, 2011), [https://english.palinfo.com/o\\_post/Strike-closes-all-UNRWA-schools-in-Gaza-Strip/](https://english.palinfo.com/o_post/Strike-closes-all-UNRWA-schools-in-Gaza-Strip/); Teachers Protest at UNRWA’s Gaza City Headquarters, **Palestine Chronicle** (October 5, 2011), <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/teachers-protest-at-unrwas-gaza-city-headquarters/>; AFP, UNRWA’s Gaza schools stage mass walkout, **AhramOnline** (October 30, 2011), <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/25543/World/Region/UNRWAs-Gaza-schools-stage-mass-walkout.aspx>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 24, 2024, 11:36 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771833500921987168>.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Suhail al-Hindi, Chairman of the UNRWA Staff Union in the Gaza Strip and Boys’ Elementary School Principal, Is Elected to Hamas’ New Gaza Political Bureau, **Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center** (February 23, 2017), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21160/>.

<sup>6</sup> Francesca Albanese completed application form for position of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, **OHCHR** (Last visited April 2, 2024), [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/ALBANESE\\_Francesca\\_form.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/ALBANESE_Francesca_form.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Why Germany & France Condemned UN’s Francesca Albanese for ‘Disgraceful’ Antisemitism, **UN Watch** (March 26, 2024), <https://unwatch.org/germany-france-condemn-uns-francesca-albanese-for-disgraceful-antisemitism/>.

UNRWA Lebanon teachers' union and Raif al-Ahmad, deputy head of the union.<sup>8</sup> Al-Sharif was suspended for three months without pay due to his position as a senior Hamas leader.<sup>9</sup> In response, the UNRWA Lebanon teachers' union, representing 2,000 teachers, organized mass strikes across all UNRWA camps in Lebanon, shutting schools and services, so that everyone, including teachers and students, could march on the UNRWA office in Beirut and shut it down.<sup>10</sup> The strikes affected 64 schools with nearly 40,000 students.<sup>11</sup>

At a March 27th protest in front of UNRWA's Beirut headquarters, al-Sharif rallied the crowd of hundreds by threatening "bad consequences" if UNRWA does not resolve the issue quickly.<sup>12</sup> One of al-Sharif's students, Ilana Abdel-Ghani, decried the injustice against her Hamas-teacher and expressed her admiration for al-Sharif who had "raised the generations to love Palestine...to love the homeland and redemption." She added that the students would "not return to school until [UNRWA Lebanon Director] Dorothy Klaus withdraws the punitive measures."<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Strike by 2,000 UNRWA Lebanon Teachers Supporting Colleague Riad Nimr Who Was Suspended for Encouraging Terrorism

The UNRWA-Lebanon teachers' union had orchestrated similar protests one year ago, in March 2023, when UNRWA Lebanon elementary school teacher Riad Nimr was suspended after we exposed his hateful Facebook posts. Instead of condemning him, the UNRWA Lebanon teacher's union, representing 2,000 teachers, rallied behind Nimr, pulling students out of class for a three-day-strike, and effectively paralyzing UNRWA operations in UNRWA's Nahr el-Bared camp for three weeks until UNRWA reinstated Nimr under pressure.<sup>14</sup> According to one source, UNRWA Lebanon Director Dorothy Klaus "was very cooperative" after learning that the situation in the camps had become "unbearable" and "may be a prelude to many things."<sup>15</sup> After this incident, we are not

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<sup>8</sup> *UNRWA Teachers Union Rally for Accused Hamas Teachers*, **UN Watch** (March 26, 2024) (Article translated from the **Palestinian Refugees Portal**), <https://unwatch.org/unrwa-teachers-union-rally-for-accused-hamas-teachers/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Lazzarini suspends UNRWA union chief for Hamas ties, staff rally in his defense*, **UN Watch** (March 28, 2024) (Article translated from the **Palestinian Refugees Portal**), <https://unwatch.org/lazzarini-suspends-unrwa-union-chief-for-hamas-ties-staff-rally-in-his-defense/>.

<sup>10</sup> *UNRWA Teachers Union Rally for Accused Hamas Teachers*, **UN Watch** (March 26, 2024) (Article translated from the **Palestinian Refugees Portal**), <https://unwatch.org/unrwa-teachers-union-rally-for-accused-hamas-teachers/>.

<sup>11</sup> *Where We Work: Lebanon*, **UNRWA** (Last visited April 2, 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

<sup>12</sup> *Lazzarini suspends UNRWA union chief for Hamas ties, staff rally in his defense*, **UN Watch** (March 28, 2024) (Article translated from the **Palestinian Refugees Portal**), <https://unwatch.org/lazzarini-suspends-unrwa-union-chief-for-hamas-ties-staff-rally-in-his-defense/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Striking UNRWA Staff Protest Suspension of Teacher Who Incited Terrorism*, **UN Watch** (March 22, 2023), <https://unwatch.org/hamas-unrwa-staff-slam-suspension-of-teacher-who-promotes-terrorism/>.

<sup>15</sup> *Special Report: Solidarity and mobilization around the 'Mustafa' case contributed to pressuring UNRWA to retract its decision*, **Al Quds News** (April 13, 2023), <https://alqudsnews.net/post/192264/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%AD%D9%88>.



aware that UNRWA investigated any of the UNRWA staff who participated in the strikes for their neutrality violations.

#### 4. UNRWA Students Endorse Teachers' Violent Messaging

These examples show that UNRWA staff who condone murderous terrorism are role models for their impressionable students, as was demonstrated by al-Sharif's student, Ilana Abdel-Ghani, quoted above praising her Hamas teacher. Indeed, UNRWA students have endorsed the violent messaging of their teachers on Facebook. For example, our March 2023 report contained a violent post by an UNRWA student who tagged his UNRWA teacher Ayman Dlash, apparently knowing the teacher would endorse it.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, our February 2017 report showed how UNRWA students praised their teacher Ghanem Naim Ghoneim's post venerating Hitler.<sup>17</sup>

#### 5. UNRWA Fails To Investigate Encouragement of Terrorism

As part of its public defense, UNRWA has repeatedly insisted, including in its latest *Claims vs. Facts* publication, that it always takes "very seriously any *allegation*" about staff misconduct and that "UNRWA reviews all *allegations* of misconduct" (emphasis added).<sup>18</sup> This means that UNRWA's approach is reactive rather than proactive. It investigates only when it receives an "allegation" from some third party like UN Watch. Therefore, if UN Watch did not research and inform UNRWA about staff neutrality violations, then UNRWA would take no action. Thus, UNRWA effectively admits that it has never undertaken, and does not see itself as obligated to undertake, a comprehensive review of its staff for neutrality violations.

Considering these facts—that UNRWA's investigations were only in response to "allegations" supplied by outsiders and that UNRWA itself has never conducted its own comprehensive investigation—it is highly misleading for UNRWA to claim that this is just about "a few bad apples" simply based on the small number of investigations UNRWA has opened.

Moreover, UNRWA's approach of minimizing the problem and focusing only on the issue of staff social media violations ignores the deeper, systemic problem, which is the fact that UNRWA is hiring these antisemitic and terror-supporting teachers in the first place and placing them in classrooms to serve as role models for impressionable Palestinian children. The UNRWA staff social media violations are merely a symptom of this serious systemic problem which has never been addressed.

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<sup>16</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 15, 2023, 7:55 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1635882496075223040>.

<sup>17</sup> Ghanem Naim Ghoneim, *Teacher at UNRWA, Venerates 'Wonderful' Hitler*, **UN Watch** (February 6, 2017), <https://unwatch.org/ghanem-naim-ghoneim-teacher-unrwa-venerates-wonderful-hitler/>.

<sup>18</sup> *UNRWA: Claims Versus Facts*, **UNRWA** (February 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/unrwa-claims-versus-facts-february-2024>.

### III. UNRWA'S REACTION TO UN WATCH WARNINGS PROVES SYSTEMIC FAILURE TO ADDRESS SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS OF WIDESPREAD STAFF SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM

UNRWA's responses to UN Watch's reports leave no doubt that the agency is not serious about addressing the root problem of terrorism and antisemitism among its staff. The agency is far more concerned with placating donors and ensuring its continued existence than dealing with this serious problem. UNRWA has persistently ignored our requests to engage on the issue, disparaged our research, and ignored our recommendations.

#### A. UNRWA Refuses To Meet Or Engage With UN Watch

Over the years, UN Watch has sent our reports to both the UN Secretary-General and the UNRWA Commissioner-General and requested meetings to discuss our research. As detailed in the chart below, our requests were met with silence 99% of the time. We received one response from UNRWA's DC Representative William Deere in May 2023, in which he persisted in defending UNRWA's approach, refused to engage constructively, and did not respond to our request for a meeting. Moreover, UNRWA recently rejected the opportunity to directly engage with UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer by refusing to send a representative to a March 19, 2024 hearing in the European Parliament about UNRWA's terror-ties.<sup>19</sup>

Date	UN Watch Communication to UN / UNRWA	Response
August 23, 2015	<a href="#">Letter</a> to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon	None
September 3, 2015	<a href="#">Report</a> sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl	None
November 30, 2015	<a href="#">Report</a> sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl	None
February 2, 2017	<a href="#">Report</a> sent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres	None
April 19, 2017	<a href="#">Email</a> to UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl requesting meeting	None
February 18, 2018	Written Statement to 37 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council Titled <i>UNRWA Must Stop Devastating Palestinians and Inciting Racism</i> ( <a href="#">A/HRC/37/NGO/111</a> )	None

<sup>19</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 20, 2024), <https://twitter.com/UNWatch/status/1770431558391918619>.

<b>March 3, 2020</b>	Written Statement to 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council Titled <i>UNRWA Must Stop Devastating Palestinians and Inciting Racism</i> ( <a href="#">A/HRC/43/NGO/109</a> )	None
<b>March 17, 2021</b>	Written Statement to 46 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council Titled <i>United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Staff Incitement of Antisemitism and Terrorism Violates United Nations Principles</i> ( <a href="#">A/HRC/46/NGO/136</a> )	None
<b>June 15, 2021</b>	Written Statement to 47 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council Titled <i>Antisemitism and Incitement in Palestinian Education</i> ( <a href="#">A/HRC/47/NGO/145</a> )	None
<b>October 3, 2021</b>	Hillel Neuer testifies at UNHRC about antisemitic UNRWA teachers ( <a href="#">video</a> )	UNHRC Chair cut the speech off saying it contained “derogatory, insulting, and inflammatory remarks”
<b>October 26, 2021</b>	<a href="#">Letter</a> to UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini requesting direct dialogue	None
<b>March 14, 2023</b>	<a href="#">Report</a> sent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini	None
<b>April 24, 2023</b>	<a href="#">Letter</a> sent to UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini requesting a meeting	<a href="#">Letter response</a> from UNRA DC Director William R. Deere received May 21, but meeting request ignored
<b>April 27, 2023</b>	Hillel Neuer <a href="#">tags</a> UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini in tweet requesting a meeting	None
<b>May 12, 2023</b>	UN Watch <a href="#">tags</a> UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General Leni Stenseth in tweet requesting a meeting	None
<b>May 15, 2023</b>	UN Watch <a href="#">tags</a> UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini in tweet requesting a meeting	None

<b>July 17, 2023</b>	<a href="#">Reply Letter</a> sent to UNRWA DC Director William R. Deere requesting a meeting with Philippe Lazzarini	None
<b>February 23, 2024</b>	Hillel Neuer <a href="#">tags</a> UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini in tweet requesting a debate at a time and place of Lazzarini's choosing	None

### B. UNRWA Attacks UN Watch For Warning Of Terror Support

In their public reactions to our reports, some of which are detailed in the chart below, the UN and UNRWA have consistently resorted to attacking and disparaging UN Watch instead of tackling the issue of terror-support among staff head-on.

<b>Date</b>	<b>UN / UNRWA Official</b>	<b>Attack on UN Watch</b>
<a href="#">August 25, 2015</a>	UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness	"UN Watch makes a fool of itself ... Credibility dead in water. Will anyone believe them again"
<a href="#">August 26, 2015</a>	UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness	"Appeal 2 journalists: please don't turn @UNWatch baseless allegation about anti-semitism into a "he said she said" story. It is a non story"
<a href="#">February 4, 2017</a>	UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness	"UNRWA is dismayed by the article published on 3 February 2017 in Bild [based on UN Watch's report], and the apparent attempt to undermine – on false premises – efforts to preserve the dignity of 5.3 million people in deep distress in a highly unstable region."
<a href="#">June 30, 2021</a>	UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini	Reports documenting UNRWA staff incitement to violence or antisemitism constitute "irrational allegations" and "political attacks that seek to undermine [UNRWA's] legitimacy as a way to erode the rights of Palestine refugees"—from which UNRWA should be "shielded" by donor states.
<a href="#">August 5, 2021</a>	Official UNRWA Statement	"This week, UN Watch -- an organization with a deep history of unfounded and politically-driven assertions against the Agency -- released a report accusing 22 UNRWA personnel of promoting violence and hate through social media channels."
<a href="#">September 17, 2021</a>	UNRWA Commissioner-	"Since 2018, UNRWA has faced growing attacks from politically motivated pressure groups on its education

	General Philippe Lazzarini	programme aiming at delegitimizing the Agency and erode the rights of Palestine refugees.”
<u>June 24, 2022</u>	Official UNRWA Statement	“Yesterday, as the world gathered at UN Headquarters in support of the humanitarian and human development mission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) on behalf of Palestine refugees, a well-known politically motivated organization once again deliberately attempted to delegitimize the work of the Agency.”
<u>June 28, 2022</u>	UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General Leni Stenseth	“The actions of this organization [UN Watch] and the coordinated comments by satellite organizations, demonstrate yet again the real intent. They seek to destroy, not build, to invite conflict, not build a lasting peace.”
<u>March 18, 2023</u>	UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General Leni Stenseth	“This latest report parallels these organisations’ previous attempts to sensationalize, overstate and sometimes give misguided conclusions derived from what a credible academic organisation described as methodologies ‘ <i>marked by generalising and exaggerated conclusions based on methodological shortcomings.</i> ”
<u>November 11, 2023</u>	UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini	“False & insidious claims that our schools teach hatred + that we have let the people of #Gaza down come from those who want @UNRWA to fail. They only fuel a toxic & deeply polarized environment.”
<u>November 16, 2023</u>	UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini	“UNRWA rejects claims linking its personnel and schools to the abhorrent October 7 attacks in Israel – attacks that UNRWA has condemned in the strongest terms, and which I will always continue to condemn. I question the motivation of those who make such claims, through large advocacy campaigns – especially under these current circumstances.”
<u>January 15, 2024</u>	UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric	“I mean, UN Watch has a track record, and I think from our end, it speaks for itself... But, obviously, any allegations are looked into.”
<u>February 2024</u>	UNRWA Fact Sheet	“Previous claims by UN Watch and other organizations about the behavior of individuals have often misidentified as

		UNRWA staff the people allegedly involved.”
<u><a href="#">March 4, 2024</a></u>	UNRWA Commissioner- General Philippe Lazzarini	“UNRWA is facing a deliberate and concerted campaign to undermine its operations, and ultimately end them. Part of this campaign involves inundating donors with misinformation designed to foster distrust and tarnish the reputation of the Agency.”

### C. UNRWA And Donor States Ignored UN Watch Recommendations On How To Stop Terror Support

The UN and UNRWA have completely ignored the detailed recommendations in our reports for how they should address its staff neutrality violations. These recommendations are primarily addressed to UNRWA donor states, all of whom are members of UNRWA’s Advisory Commission which meets twice a year “to discuss issues of importance to UNRWA” and “provide advice and assistance to the Commissioner-General.”<sup>20</sup>

*UN Watch Recommendation 1:* UNRWA should implement its stated “Zero Tolerance” policy for employees who incite racism or murder, by immediately terminating such employees, and prominently publicizing on its website and social media these and other actions it is taking to root out such insidious conduct by UN staff. *Action Taken: None.*

- [February 2017](#)
- [April 2017](#)
- [September 2019](#)
- [August 2021](#)
- [June 2022](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch Recommendation 2:* Donors should establish, in concert with other like-minded donor states, an independent and impartial investigation with the mandate to examine the nature and extent of incitement to antisemitism and terrorism among UNRWA teachers and other staff, and in UNRWA educational materials, and to recommend remedial action. *Action Taken: None.*<sup>21</sup>

- [April 2017](#)
- [September 2019](#)

<sup>20</sup> *Members of the Advisory Commission, UNRWA* (Last visited April 2, 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/advisory-commission/members-advisory-commission>; *Advisory Commission, UNRWA* (Last visited April 2, 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/advisory-commission>.

<sup>21</sup> This so-called Independent Review Group was created by the UN, not by donor states, is not truly independent and impartial, and is focusing on “UNRWA’s efforts on neutrality,” rather than the extent of antisemitism and terrorism among staff.

- [August 2021](#)
- [June 2022](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch Recommendation 3:* UNRWA should provide an explanation as to why some employees identified in UN Watch’s reports were placed on paid leave rather than unpaid leave, as well as an explanation of what criteria determines whether an UNRWA employee who incites antisemitic hatred or terrorism receives a warning, dismissal or other disciplinary measure. *Action Taken: None.*

- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch recommendation 4:* UNRWA should publicly disclose the names and records of completion of what it states is mandatory teacher training on neutrality, non-violence, tolerance, and conflict resolution, as well as on its teacher-centered approach. *Action Taken: None.*

- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch recommendation 5:* UNRWA should determine and disclose which of the people identified by UN Watch in the attached [Annex](#) as having posted antisemitism and terrorist incitement on social media, is still employed by UNRWA, and thereby potentially being funded by them. *Action Taken: None.*

- [April 2017](#)
- [September 2019](#)
- [August 2021](#)
- [June 2022,](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch recommendation 6:* UNRWA should conduct a thorough investigation of its facilities and put an immediate stop to all antisemitic or terrorist-inciting activities and images found there. *Action Taken: None.*

- [April 2017](#)
- [September 2019](#)
- [August 2021](#)
- [June 2022](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch recommendation 7:* UNRWA should work with donors to implement effective monitoring and controls to ensure the neutrality of UNRWA facilities, UNRWA educational materials, and staff and make public its activities in this regard. Action Taken: None.

- [April 2017](#)
- [September 2019](#)
- [August 2021](#)
- [June 2022](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch Recommendation 8:* Donors should demand that UNRWA be in full compliance with its neutrality obligations prior to releasing any further funds to UNRWA. Action Taken: None.

- [February 2017](#)
- [April 2017](#)
- [September 2019](#)
- [August 2021](#)
- [June 2022](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

*UN Watch Recommendation 9:* Donors should instruct UNRWA to stop defaming UN Watch for exposing UNRWA's neutrality violations. Action Taken: None.

- [March 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)
- [January 2024](#)

#### **IV. UNRWA IS COMPLICIT WITH JIHADI TERRORISM**

Putting aside the issue of UNRWA staff antisemitism and support for terrorism, which should be a major concern for anyone who wants to see a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians, UNRWA has been so infiltrated by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists that it is incapable of being reformed. Since January 2024, there have been several disturbing revelations about UNRWA's deep ties to Hamas. As detailed below, these are just the tip of the iceberg. UNRWA's terrorism-ties have been deeply entrenched for decades.

##### **A. UNRWA Has Long History Of Breeding Terrorists**

1. [At Least 14 UNRWA Employees Participated In The October 7<sup>th</sup> Atrocities](#)

On January 29, 2024, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article, citing Israeli intelligence, revealing that at least 12 UNRWA employees directly participated in the



October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas atrocities, 1,200 UNRWA Gaza employees are Hamas and PIJ operatives, and another 6,000 have close relatives who are affiliated with those terrorist groups.<sup>22</sup>

In February, the IDF identified one of the 12 UNRWA employees as Faisal Ali Mussalem Al-Naami who is seen on video kidnapping the lifeless body of murdered Israeli Yonatan Samerano.<sup>23</sup> In March, the IDF published recordings of two additional UNRWA employees who participated in October 7<sup>th</sup>, bringing the number of UNRWA staff who participated in October 7<sup>th</sup> to at least 14.<sup>24</sup> One of these is UNRWA teacher Yusef Al-Hawajara, who boasted about abducting Israeli women as “Sabaya,” using the ISIS word for sex slave.<sup>25</sup> The other is UNRWA teacher Mamduh Hassin Ahmed al-Kak who excitedly bragged to his friends on October 7<sup>th</sup> that he is “inside, with the Jews inside,” and proclaimed that he will return home “when I die.”<sup>26</sup>

UNRWA’s official response to these revelations was as follows: “UNRWA has not received any information, let alone any evidence, from the Israeli Authorities or any other Member State about the above claim. UNRWA became aware of this claim first from international media and later from a press briefing by an Israeli government official.”<sup>27</sup> This is not a serious response from a UN organization obliged to uphold UN neutrality with an annual budget exceeding 1 billion USD funded by the taxpayers in donor countries.

## 2. UNRWA’s Gaza Workforce Has Been Infiltrated By Hamas Since At Least 2004

It is widely known that Hamas has infiltrated UNRWA’s Gaza workforce. As far back as 2004, then-Commissioner-General Peter Hansen remarked “Oh I am sure that there are Hamas members on the UNRWA payroll and I don't see that as a crime.”<sup>28</sup> Hamas has controlled the UNRWA Gaza staff union since at least 2009.<sup>29</sup> When, in February 2017, UNRWA suspended school principal and chairman of the UNRWA Gaza staff union

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<sup>22</sup> *Intelligence Reveals Details of U.N. Agency Staff’s Links to Oct. 7 Attack*, **Wall Street Journal** (January 29, 2024), <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/at-least-12-u-n-agency-employees-involved-in-oct-7-attacks-intelligence-reports-say-a7de8f36>.

<sup>23</sup> *Mother whose son’s body was seized by UNRWA staffer urges UN head to meet in Geneva*, **Times of Israel** (February 26, 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/mother-whose-sons-body-was-seized-by-unrwa-staff-calls-on-un-head-to-meet-in-geneva/>.

<sup>24</sup> *‘I captured one!’ – IDF recordings show more UNRWA staffers bragging of Oct. 7 crimes*, **Times of Israel** (March 4, 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/i-captured-one-idf-recordings-show-more-unrwa-staffers-bragging-of-oct-7-crimes>.

<sup>25</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 5, 2024, 7:18 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1764883085886206455>.

<sup>26</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 5, 2024, 7:30 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1764886205114540037>.

<sup>27</sup> *UNRWA: Claims Versus Facts*, **UNRWA** (February 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/unrwa-claims-versus-facts-february-2024>.

<sup>28</sup> David Patrikarakos, *How can the war between Israel and Hamas ever end when so many schools in Gaza – run by a UN agency backed by our millions – teach children to hate Jews?* **Daily Mail** (January 22, 2024), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12993841/How-war-Israel-Hamas-end-schools-Gaza-run-agency-backed-millions-teach-children-hate-Jews.html>.

<sup>29</sup> *Resignation of Suhail al-Hindi, chairman of the UNRWA staff union in the Gaza strip, after exposure of his election to Hamas’ new Gazan political bureau*, **Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center** (April 24, 2017), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21194/>.

Suhail al-Hindi, it was not because of his Hamas affiliation, but because he had been elected to the Hamas Politburo (along with Yahya Sinwar).<sup>30</sup> Al-Hindi ultimately resigned from UNRWA to avoid being fired and apparently continues to receive UNRWA benefits.<sup>31</sup> He went on to chair—on behalf of Hamas—the violent “Great March of Return” border riots that preceded the October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre.<sup>32</sup>

More recently, UNRWA officials have confirmed the agency’s position that employee affiliation with Hamas is not itself considered problematic. In a 2021 interview with *Foreign Policy*, UNRWA spokeswoman Tamara Alrifai explained that UNRWA acts only when its employees are found to hold a political position with Hamas, meaning that Hamas affiliation itself is not an issue for UNRWA.<sup>33</sup> In February 2024, UN Relief Chief Martin Griffiths told *Sky News* that “Hamas is not a terrorist group for us, of course, it’s a political movement.”<sup>34</sup>

Suhail al-Hindi is not the first UNRWA employee to move on to a senior position with a terrorist group. He joins a list of elite terrorists who started out as UNRWA teachers. On March 14, 2024, the former head of UNRWA’s curriculum development, Ahmad Oueidat, boasted about how “UNRWA schools were giving rise to leaders” such as Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh and PFLP-GC Secretary-General Dr. Tal Naji.<sup>35</sup> The PFLP-GC, an offshoot of the PFLP terrorist organization, opposes peace with Israel, has close ties to Syria, is supported by Iran, and cooperates with Hezbollah. It was involved in several attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers in the 1970s and 80s and took responsibility for a 2015 rocket attack on Israel from Lebanon.<sup>36</sup>

Other famous Palestinian terrorists that started out as UNRWA employees, and may still be receiving UNRWA benefits, include:

- **Saeed Siyam.** Hamas terrorist leader who taught at UNRWA schools from 1980 to 2003. He was a member of UNRWA’s Arab Employees Union and headed the Teachers Sector Committee. Later, as Hamas Minister of Interior,

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<sup>30</sup> *UN suspends Gaza staffer amid allegations of Hamas ties*, **AP** (February 26, 2017),

<https://apnews.com/general-news-a555d90827ee4282bb6384810acc516a>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 22, 2024, 6:57 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771219686287430099>;

<sup>31</sup> *Resignation of Suhail al-Hindi, chairman of the UNRWA staff union in the Gaza strip, after exposure of his election to Hamas’ new Gazan political bureau*, **Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center** (April 24, 2017), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21194/>.

<sup>32</sup> *Mapping Palestinian Politics: Suhail Al-Hindi*, **ECFR** (Last visited April 2, 2024), [https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping\\_palestinian\\_politics/suheil-al-hindi/](https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/suheil-al-hindi/).

<sup>33</sup> Yardena Schwartz, *Palestinian Schools Have a Problem – and Are Running Out of Time*, **Foreign Policy** (November 5, 2021), [https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/05/unrwa-palestine-israel-refugees-united-states-funding-corruption-education/#cookie\\_message\\_anchor](https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/05/unrwa-palestine-israel-refugees-united-states-funding-corruption-education/#cookie_message_anchor).

<sup>34</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (February 15, 2024, 10:43 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1758049397965717709>.

<sup>35</sup> *Former UNRWA Official Ahmad Oueidat: Hamas Leader Ismail Haniyeh Was A Teacher In One Of Our Schools, As Was PFLP-GC Leader Talal Naji; The West Tried To Corrupt Our Curricula*, **MEMRI** (March 14, 2024), <https://www.memri.org/tv/fmr-unrwa-official-ahmad-oueidat-schools-rise-palestinian-leadership-hamas-ismail-haniyeh-pflp-talal-naji>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 22, 2024, 6:34 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771213795622375574>.

<sup>36</sup> *Mapping Palestinian Politics, Popular Front For The Liberation-General Command (PFLP-GC)*, **ECFR** (Last visited April 2, 2024), [https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping\\_palestinian\\_politics/popular\\_front\\_for\\_the\\_liberation\\_of\\_palestine\\_general\\_command/](https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/popular_front_for_the_liberation_of_palestine_general_command/).

he also “controlled thousands of Hamas security troops in Gaza and was widely feared.”<sup>37</sup> Hamas mourned him on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his assassination.<sup>38</sup>

- **Zuheir al-Qaisi.** Popular Resistance Committees General/UNRWA math teacher who was responsible for the summer 2006 kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.<sup>39</sup>
- **Awad al-Qiq.** Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist who was “a respected science teacher and headmaster at a United Nations school” by day and “built rockets for Islamic Jihad” by night.<sup>40</sup> According to Islamic Jihad, which produced a 168-page book in tribute to al-Qiq,<sup>41</sup> he was the youngest school principal in UNRWA history.<sup>42</sup> Following al-Qiq’s death, UNRWA’s Rafah Boys Prep School where he had worked placed a handwritten notice at the entrance declaring that al-Qiq, “chief leader of the engineering unit,” would now find “paradise.” The notice was removed after a visit from the *Reuters* news agency. The staff told *Reuters* that UNRWA officials had instructed them “not to discuss Qiq’s activities.”<sup>43</sup>
- **Issa Abd al-Hadi al-Batran.** Hamas commander who worked as an UNRWA teacher by day and a Qassam Brigades explosives expert by night. He was

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<sup>37</sup> *Key Hamas leader killed in Gaza*, **BBC** (January 15, 2009), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7831870.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7831870.stm); @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 23, 2024, 9:12 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771615978956193836>.

<sup>38</sup> *Martyr Minister Siam...an ‘exceptional leader’ who established national security services*, **Al-Rai Agency** (January 2019), <https://alray.ps/ar/post/188629>.

<sup>39</sup> Avi Issacharoff, *Shalit’s Captors: He Wasn’t Tortured, He Received Medical Care and Watched TV*, **Haaretz** (October 20, 2011), <https://www.haaretz.com/2011-10-20/ty-article/shalits-captors-he-wasnt-tortured-he-received-medical-care-and-watched-tv/0000017f-db4d-df62-a9ff-dfd6c520000>; *Zuheir al-Qaisi Martyrs Page*, **Alweya.ps** (March 9, 2019),

<https://alweya.ps/post/5807/%D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A5%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B2%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%A5%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86->

<sup>40</sup> Adam Entous, *Gaza headmaster was Islamic Jihad & “rocket-maker,”* **Reuters** (May 5, 2008), <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL05686115/>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 23, 2024, 10:47 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771639897708691722>.

<sup>41</sup> *The Story of A Man From Another Time Awad Al Qiq*, **Noor-Book** (Last visited April 2, 2024), <https://www.noor-book.com/en/ebook-%D8%AD%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%87-%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B2%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A-pdf>

<sup>42</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 23, 2024, 11:16 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771647160922128794>.

<sup>43</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 23, 2024, 11:09 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771645576532131875>.

fired from UNRWA in 2009 after being seriously injured in a Hamas “work” accident involving explosives.<sup>44</sup>

- **Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi.** Al Qaeda operative, formerly an UNRWA pediatrician in Jordan, who blew himself up killing eight people on a CIA base in Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup>

### 3. Not Just Teachers: UNRWA Also Produces Student-Terrorists

The UNRWA education has also proved successful in turning out graduates who go on to perpetrate murderous terrorist attacks. UNRWA schools have been producing Palestinian terrorists from the agency’s early days. In their book about UNRWA, *The War of Return*, Einat Wilf and Adi Schwartz describe the indoctrination in UNRWA schools in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and how UNRWA schools drilled in students the idea of a violent return into the territory of Israel:

All the maps of Palestine used in the schools showed the whole of Israel painted in black... UNRWA’s education system effectively became an instrument for the mobilization of the population of the camps for the Palestinian armed struggle. “We hope to mobilize forces that will be much stronger than the armies put in the field in 1948 by the Arab League,” recounted one teacher from a refugee camp...<sup>46</sup>

The perpetrators of the 1972 Munich Olympic Massacre, in which 11 Israeli athletes were murdered, who almost all were raised and educated in UNRWA schools, emerged from this environment.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Mohamed Deif, the commander of Hamas’s Al Qassem Brigades who masterminded the October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre, was also educated in an UNRWA school.<sup>48</sup> Tragically, as we have seen, UNRWA continues to educate and graduate future Palestinian terrorists, including the perpetrator of the April 2023 drive-by shooting in which Lucy Dee and her two daughters were killed.<sup>49</sup>

### **B. Hamas Use Of UNRWA Facilities For Terrorism Is Widespread**

On February 11, 2024, the IDF revealed that it had discovered a sophisticated Hamas data and intelligence center right beneath the UNRWA Gaza Headquarters, connected to UNRWA electricity cables. The tunnel system and data center included a kitchenette and living quarters. There was also a perimeter wall with a gate and security cameras documenting who entered and exited the complex. Inside the UNRWA headquarters

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<sup>44</sup> *House Report 112-323, U.S. House of Representatives* (December 8, 2011),

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-112hrpt323/html/CRPT-112hrpt323.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> *Source: CIA bomber’s intel led to successes, NBC* (January 5, 2010),

<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna34705029>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 23, 2024, 11:42 PM),

<https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771653886094233827>.

<sup>46</sup> Adi Schwartz and Einat Wilf, *The War of Return, All Points Books* (2020), pp. 122-126.

<sup>47</sup> @EinatWilf, **Twitter** (October 10, 2023, 1:37 PM),

<https://twitter.com/EinatWilf/status/1711692436190249232>.

<sup>48</sup> @EinatWilf, **Twitter** (October 10, 2023, 1:37 PM),

<https://twitter.com/EinatWilf/status/1711692436190249232>.

<sup>49</sup> *100 Hamas terrorists, including Dee family murderers, revealed to be Hamas terrorists, Voz Media* (October 29, 2023), <https://voz.us/100-hamas-terrorists-including-dee-family-killers-revealed-to-be-unrwa-graduates/?lang=en>.

itself, IDF troops found several caches of weapons, equipment, and documents that indicated that the same offices were also used by Hamas.<sup>50</sup>

UNRWA Chief Philippe Lazzarini reacted immediately on Twitter, incredibly claiming that “UNRWA did not know what is under its headquarters.”<sup>51</sup> Just one week earlier, the *Wall Street Journal* had reported that “in 2014, part of the parking lot at the Unrwa headquarters in Gaza began sinking, likely from a Hamas tunnel dug beneath. ‘No one talked about what was causing the collapse,’ a former Unrwa official said, “but *everyone knew.*” (emphasis added).<sup>52</sup> Moreover, in November 2021, former-UNRWA Gaza Director Matthias Schmale told *NPR* that “Many people told me through my four years, there's tunnels everywhere and it's a safe assumption.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Lazzarini’s claim that UNRWA did not know is very hard to believe.

Hamas’s use of UNRWA facilities for military purposes in violation of international law is nothing new. During Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014, UNRWA admitted three times that Hamas rockets were stored in its schools.<sup>54</sup> A subsequent UN investigation found that terrorist rockets had been stored in UNRWA schools that were actively being used by children and that rockets had also been launched from UNRWA schools.<sup>55</sup>

In more recent years, UNRWA has admitted finding Hamas terror tunnels underneath its schools.<sup>56</sup> During the May 2021 conflict with Hamas, the IDF published evidence that

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<sup>50</sup> Emanuel Fabian, *Directly beneath UNRWA's Gaza headquarters, IDF uncovers top secret Hamas data center*, *Times of Israel* (February 10, 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/directly-beneath-unrwas-gaza-headquarters-idf-uncovers-top-secret-hamas-data-center/>.

<sup>51</sup> @UNLazzarini, *Twitter* (February 10, 2024, 8:01 PM), <https://twitter.com/UNLazzarini/status/1756377920254218556>.

<sup>52</sup> David Luhnow, *A U.N. Agency Is Accused of Links to Hamas. The Clues Were There All Along*, *Wall Street Journal* (February 2, 2024), <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hamas-israel-attack-untied-nations-unrwa-0ec8d325>.

<sup>53</sup> *He was the top U.N. official in Gaza. An Israeli TV interview cost him his post*, *NPR* (November 18, 2021), <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/18/1056254276/gaza-untied-nations-schmale-palestinians-israel>.

<sup>54</sup> *UNRWA Strongly Condemns Placement of Rockets in School*, *UNRWA* (July 17, 2014), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-strongly-condemns-placement-rockets-school>; *UNRWA Condemns Placement of Rockets, For A Second Time, In One of Its Schools*, *UNRWA* (July 22, 2014), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-condemns-placement-rockets-second-time-one-its-schools>; *Cache of Rockets Found In UN School In Gaza*, *UNRWA* (July 29, 2014), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/cache-rockets-found-un-school-gaza>.

<sup>55</sup> *Explosive: UN admits Palestinians fired rockets from UNRWA schools*, *UN Watch* (April 27, 2015), <https://unwatch.org/confirmed-un-admits-palestinians-stored-rockets-in-unrwa-schools-and-highly-likely-used-school-premises-to-launch-attacks/>.

<sup>56</sup> *UNRWA Condemns Neutrality Violation in Gaza In The Strongest Possible Terms*, *UNRWA* (June 9, 2017), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-condemns-neutrality-violation-gaza-strongest-possible-terms>; *UNRWA Reiterates The Inviolability Of Its Installations Must Be Respected At All Times*, *UNRWA* (August 11, 2021), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-reiterates-inviolability-its-installations-must-be-respected-all>; *UNRWA Strongly Condemns Neutrality Breach Against The Agency in Gaza*, *UNRWA* (November 29, 2022), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-strongly-condemns-neutrality-breach-against-agency-gaza>.

Hamas had launched rockets from a site near civilian structures, including a UN building, schools, a mosque, and apartment buildings.<sup>57</sup>

Since fighting began on October 7th, there have been numerous documented instances of UNRWA operating in or near UNRWA schools. These include IDF troops being targeted by terrorists attacking from UNRWA schools<sup>58</sup> and Hamas terror tunnels in the vicinity of UNRWA schools.<sup>59</sup> On January 18, 2024, Col. Elad Shushan, commander of the 646th Reserve Paratroopers Brigade, said: “There is not a UNRWA site, school, mosque, or kindergarten in which we didn’t find weapons. None. One hundred percent.”<sup>60</sup>

### C. UNRWA Not Independent, Submits To Hamas Pressure

On numerous occasions, UNRWA has demonstrated that it is not a fully independent actor but is beholden to Hamas. In May 2021, when UNRWA’s then Gaza Director Matthias Schmale commented in a news interview that Israel’s strikes on Gaza were “very precise,” confirming that Israel wasn’t targeting civilians, Hamas declared him “persona non-grata in Gaza,” forcing UNRWA to swiftly spirit Schmale out of the territory and remove him from his position.<sup>61</sup> Instead of standing behind Schmale, UNRWA Deputy Chief Leni Stenseth apologized and paid tribute to Hamas. She met with Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, “affirmed her solidarity” and declared Schmale’s honest remarks on Israeli TV to be “indefensible.”<sup>62</sup>

That wasn’t the only time UNRWA caved into pressure from Hamas. Two years later, in April 2023, UNRWA-Lebanon Director Dorothy Klaus reinstated teacher Riad Nimr who had been suspended for posting support for terrorism on Facebook, after his fellow teachers pulled students out of class for a three-day strike protesting the suspension, and after Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist factions pressured UNRWA.<sup>63</sup> In addition, shortly after October 7th, UNRWA tweeted on its official account that Hamas had stolen fuel from UNRWA, as much as 36,000 liters according to one news report. Yet, apparently under pressure from Hamas, UNRWA quickly deleted the tweet and

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<sup>57</sup> @IDF, **Twitter** (May 20, 2021, 12:25 AM),

<https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1395128582742192131?s=20>.

<sup>58</sup> *Hamas shot at IDF troops from an UNRWA school*, **IDF** (December 9, 2023), <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/hamas-israel-war-24/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/hamas-shot-at-idf-troops-from-an-unrwa-school/>; @ChayaRaichik10, **Twitter** (January 30, 2024, 1:39 AM),

<https://twitter.com/ChayaRaichik10/status/1752114182391058811>; @cogatonline, **Twitter** (December 7, 2023), <https://twitter.com/cogatonline/status/1732691140493615547>; @IDF, **Twitter** (October 22, 2023, 9:15 PM), <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1716156227585974585>; @cogatonline, **Twitter** (October 19, 2023, 12:45 PM), <https://twitter.com/cogatonline/status/1714940859030933813>.

<sup>59</sup> @IDF, **Twitter** (December 3, 2023, 12:02 AM),

<https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1731071286753771620>.

<sup>60</sup> Lazar Berman, *In central Gaza, where gunmen lurk underground, a commander sees a long slog ahead*, **Times of Israel** (January 18, 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-central-gaza-where-gunmen-lurk-underground-a-commander-sees-a-long-slog-ahead/>.

<sup>61</sup> *UN agency withdraws director from Gaza after threats*, **AP** (June 4, 2021),

<https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-middle-east-b03eb29c5b9286fff1d6b80cf6539294>.

<sup>62</sup> *UNRWA official expresses understanding to Sinwar*, **Al Mayadeen** (June 3, 2021),

<https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/1485841/unrwa-official-expresses-understanding-to-sinwar>.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

published an urgent clarification that it wasn't true. Independent sources had already confirmed that indeed Hamas did steal the fuel.<sup>64</sup>

## V. UNRWA'S VERY PURPOSES PROMOTE TERRORISM

UNRWA's deep ties to Hamas make sense when one understands that UNRWA's main purpose is political, not humanitarian, and that it aligns with Hamas's goal of eliminating Israel as stated in the Hamas Charter—"there is no solution to the Palestinian question except through Jihad."<sup>65</sup> UNRWA exists to perpetuate Palestinian grievances from 1948 by supporting the "right of return" narrative, which ultimately seeks to end Israel as a Jewish state by having millions of Palestinians violently "return" to sovereign Israeli territory. For Palestinians, this means October 7th-style terrorism. According to a recent poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, over 70% of Palestinians support the October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas attack.<sup>66</sup>

UNRWA's existence to perpetuate the Palestinian fantasy of "return" is why UNRWA created its own refugee definition which automatically grants refugee status to the descendants of the original 750,000 refugees—most of whom are no longer alive—for generations ad infinitum even if they don't qualify for such status under international law.<sup>67</sup> This leads to the anomaly where 2.2 million UNRWA "refugees" with Jordanian citizenship and 2.3 million UNRWA "refugees" in the West Bank and Gaza residing under Palestinian rule in Palestine are treated as refugees by UNRWA.

UNRWA claims on its website that this unique treatment is justified because UNRWA is only mandated to provide services to the Palestinian refugees until there is a "just and lasting solution to their plight" and it has no mandate to resettle them.<sup>68</sup> By "just and lasting solution," UNRWA means implementing the "right of return." The website later explains that "UNRWA was established to provide assistance pending the implementation of ... resolution [194]"<sup>69</sup>—the UN General Assembly resolution which Palestinians interpret as giving them a "right of return" to the sovereign territory of Israel.

Both senior UNRWA officials and lower-level employees regularly affirm UNRWA's political mandate, which is often described as bearing "witness" to the "Palestinian plight." In a March 4, 2024 speech to the General Assembly, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini himself acknowledged UNRWA's dual role of "protecting the rights of Palestine Refugees" and "acting as a witness to their plight." Lazzarini

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<sup>64</sup> @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (October 16, 2023, 8:03 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1713963804445331648>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (October 16, 2023, 8:11 PM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1713965999836262864>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (October 17, 2023, 2:01 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1714053942408073394>.

<sup>65</sup> Article 13 of the Hamas Charter, **The Avalon Project** (Last visited April 1, 2024), [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp).

<sup>66</sup> Zach Kessel, *Over 70 Percent of Palestinians Support Hamas's October 7 Terror Attack: Poll*, **National Review** (March 21, 2024), <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/over-70-percent-of-palestinians-support-hamass-october-7-terror-attack-poll/>.

<sup>67</sup> *Who We Are*, **UNRWA** (Last visited April 2, 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>.

<sup>68</sup> *Frequently Asked Questions*, **UNRWA** (Last visited January 23, 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

explained that he was referring to the Palestinians' ongoing status as refugees, noting that there is still no "fair and lasting political solution ... 75 years after the Nakba."<sup>70</sup>

Likewise, in a September 2015 interview, former UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl said almost the same thing—"Palestine refugees can remain assured that UNRWA is not only a service provider, we remain the witness of the injustice that has been done."<sup>71</sup> Krahenbuhl went even further when he declared that this political aspect of UNRWA's mandate was not negotiable. "We will stand our ground on that and defend this," he added, "there is nothing to be negotiated on that part."<sup>72</sup>

Last year, when the UNRWA Teachers' union in Lebanon vehemently protested UNRWA's suspension of terror-supporter teacher Riad Nimr, it similarly described UNRWA as "the main political witness to our cause."<sup>73</sup> And, during last week's strikes in support of Hamas leader / UNRWA principal Fathi al-Sharif, protesters also stressed that UNRWA is "an international witness to their asylum."<sup>74</sup> Fellow-UNRWA principal Ibrahim Mari said straight out that "UNRWA is a right for the Palestinians until they return to Palestine."<sup>75</sup>

Since UNRWA's primary mission fully aligns with Hamas' goal of violently liberating Palestine through jihad, it is no surprise that so many UNRWA teachers and students support and affiliate with Hamas. This also explains why UNRWA teachers unabashedly back Palestinian terrorism on social media and rally around their colleagues when they are disciplined for endorsing terrorism. For UNRWA refugees, educated in UNRWA schools, supporting Hamas is not supporting terrorism, rather it is "patriotism" and "exercising their rights to express their belonging to their homeland."<sup>76</sup>

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

UNRWA's humanitarian mandate masks its true purpose, which is to promote the "right of return" narrative, effectively encouraging violent October 7<sup>th</sup>-style terrorism. Palestinians fervently believe that they have the right to this "bearing witness" political function. Therefore, by definition, UNRWA is not neutral and cannot be reformed. Humanitarian relief should be provided to Palestinians—based solely on need rather than a contrived refugee status—by other international aid agencies that have not been politicized or infiltrated by terrorists.

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<sup>70</sup> *Statement of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to the General Assembly*, **UNRWA** (March 4, 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-commissioner-general-unrwa-general-assembly>.

<sup>71</sup> *Talks with UNRWA Commissioner-General*, **UNRWATV YouTube** (September 15, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGGjhsyNzk>.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> *Striking UNRWA Staff Protest Suspension of Teacher Who Incited Terrorism*, **UN Watch** (March 22, 2023), <https://unwatch.org/hamas-unrwa-staff-slam-suspension-of-teacher-who-promotes-terrorism/>.

<sup>74</sup> *UNRWA Teachers Union Rally for Accused Hamas Teachers*, **UN Watch** (March 26, 2024) (Article translated from the **Palestinian Refugees Portal**), <https://unwatch.org/unrwa-teachers-union-rally-for-accused-hamas-teachers/>.

<sup>75</sup> *Lazzarini suspends UNRWA union chief for Hamas ties, staff rally in his defense*, **UN Watch** (March 28, 2024) (Article translated from the **Palestinian Refugees Portal**), <https://unwatch.org/lazzarini-suspends-unrwa-union-chief-for-hamas-ties-staff-rally-in-his-defense/>.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*