

His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General
The United Nations
New York, NY 10017

Via Fax: +1-212-963-2155

February 2, 2017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Today, UN Watch released a report exposing again the rampant use of Facebook by UNRWA personnel to incite and glorify murderous terrorism targeting Israelis and to post classic anti-Semitism, celebrating Nazism and bemoaning that it didn't succeed in eradicating all the Jews. The report details some 40 examples of such Facebook posts by UNRWA employees, including principals and teachers throughout the UNRWA system, from Lebanon and Syria to Jordan and Gaza. UN Watch is extremely troubled by this dangerous conduct by UN staff, which violates UN humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality and UN and UNRWA internal policies for the conduct of employees.

Examples from the report include:

- One UNRWA teacher posted a photo of a Jew with three guns and a knife trained on his head, with the caption reading "Blood = Blood. #KillThem."
- An Assistant Head Teacher at UNRWA praised the "awesome kidnapping" of three Israeli teenagers in June 2014, and posted a photo of himself presenting an award to a student— including a banner that erases Israel from the map.
- An UNRWA school principal published numerous photos and videos on Facebook glorifying Hamas fighters and celebrating terror attacks in Israel.
- An UNRWA teacher has two photos on his Facebook page of Adolph Hitler, whom he calls "our beloved," and "Hitler the great."
- Another UNRWA teacher published a post featuring a picture of Adolf Hitler and his "top ten quotes."

Regrettably, when we exposed 30 similar cases of online incitement last year, the response of UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness was to lash out at UN Watch, and to deny or downplay the problem. Only after months of sustained media attention did the UN spokesman in New York announce quietly that a few employees had been suspended. The identities of the perpetrators, or the duration of their suspensions, were never disclosed. UNRWA itself has never issued any statement on the matter, neither on its website or elsewhere.

That so many UNRWA employees continue to publicly display Facebook posts which celebrate radical Islamic terrorism and incite antisemitism demonstrates that UNRWA—despite its claims to have established disciplinary systems—is failing to take the issue seriously, and that its employees know that.

Likewise, the senior UNRWA echelon’s daily political advocacy targeting Israel—an anomalous practice and breach of neutrality among humanitarian agencies worldwide—creates an overall atmosphere in the organization where teachers clearly feel comfortable erasing the Jewish state from the map.

This stands in stark contrast to the way the United States and United Kingdom have handled similar incidents of anti-Semitic posts by teachers on Facebook. In November 2016, the Oberlin College Board of Trustees [dismissed an assistant professor](#) for anti-Semitic Facebook posts. Similarly, in October 2015, the UK government [banned a teacher](#) from the classroom for life over an antisemitic Facebook post featuring Hitler—identical to that published by two of the UNRWA staffers cited in our report. Palestinian students deserve the same rights that UNRWA’s donors grant their own.

Furthermore, the UNRWA staff Facebook posts exposed by UN Watch today and last year reflect a brazen flouting of UN and UNRWA internal policies concerning staff neutrality and impartiality.

[Article 101\(3\) of the UN Charter](#) states that the “paramount consideration” in employing staff is “securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.” The quality of “integrity” is central to the [UN Staff Rules and Staff Regulations](#), which require staff members to “uphold the highest standards of . . . integrity.” This includes, but is not limited to, “probity, impartiality, fairness, honesty and truthfulness in all matters affecting their work and status.” *See* Regulation 1.2(b). This value is again reflected in Rule 1.2(f) requiring staff to remain neutral and impartial, especially with respect to public pronouncements.

Moreover, UNRWA’s own [International Staff Regulations](#) expressly incorporate this UN “neutrality rule” for its staff, stating in Regulation 1.4 that staff must “avoid any action and in particular any kind of public pronouncement which may adversely reflect on their status or integrity, independence or impartiality which are required by that status.”

In light of the foregoing, we urge you to:

- (a) Immediately condemn UNRWA employees’ incitement to terrorism and antisemitism and direct UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl do the same;
- (b) Demand that UNRWA adopt a zero tolerance policy for employees who incite racism or murder by immediately terminating them, and prominently post on its website these and other actions it is taking to root out this insidious conduct by UN staff.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hillel C. Neuer
Executive Director

cc: Ambassador Nikki Haley, U.S. Permanent
Representative to the United Nations