

Mr. Philippe Lazzarini  
Commissioner-General, UNRWA  
PO Box 140157, Amman 11814  
Jordan

26 October 2021

Dear Mr. Lazzarini,

In advance of the international conference of UNRWA donors to be held next month in Brussels, we write to request information on what if any UNRWA actions have been taken in wake of the United Nations Watch [report](#), *Beyond The Textbooks: A Report Exposing UNRWA Teachers' Incitement to Antisemitism and Terrorism*, released in August. The report calls for UNRWA to fulfill its promise of "zero tolerance" by dismissing any UNRWA teacher who glorifies antisemitic hatred or terrorism. To date, however, we have not received any direct response from UNRWA.

### **A. Reported UNRWA Suspension of 6 Employees for Inciting Antisemitism**

According to recent reports in [Al Jazeera](#) and [The New Arab](#), UNRWA has suspended several employees, placing them on paid leave, pending an investigation into the findings of United Nations Watch's report that documented incitement of antisemitism and terrorism. UNRWA media advisor Adnan Abu Hasna said that employees against whom allegations were proven would be subject to "graduated penalties according to the case, such as warning, dismissal or other administrative procedures," reported [Al Jazeera](#).

We welcome the suspensions. We are confused, however, as to why no statement was published on the UNRWA website. To allow UNRWA donor states and their taxpayers to properly follow-up on our report, we respectfully request clarifications of the following:

1. Of the 113 UNRWA teachers and other staff identified in [Annex A](#) of our report for glorifying antisemitism or terrorism, which, if any, have been suspended?
2. If indeed only six of the 113 perpetrators have been suspended, can you identify which of the 107 UNRWA teachers and staff listed in Annex A are still employed by UNRWA? For example, we wish to know about:
  - [Ghanem Naim Ghoneim](#), UNRWA teacher who venerates Hitler
  - [Ahmad Fareed Sultan](#), UNRWA teacher who glorifies terrorists
  - [Ibrahim Sabbagh](#), UNRWA teacher who incites terrorist violence
  - [Mudalalah Louz](#), UNRWA school principal who calls to destroy Israel
  - [Mohammad Alsayyed](#), UNRWA head teacher who celebrates abduction and murder of Israelis
  - [Omar Asaad](#), UNRWA employee who glorifies Hitler

- [Hatem Asaad](#), UNRWA employee who praises terrorists
  - [Mohamad Fahed](#), UNRWA employee who endorses murder of Jewish boys
  - [Mohamed Alhallaq](#), UNRWA teacher who glorifies terrorist groups
  - [Tarek Abu Ghazaleh](#), UNRWA employee who celebrates murder of rabbis
  - [Hussam Khattib](#), UNRWA teacher who endorses murder of Israeli civilians
  - [Mohamed Soliman](#), UNRWA teacher who glorifies Hitler and stabbings
3. Why were the six suspended employees placed on paid leave?
  4. What criteria determine whether an UNRWA employee who incites antisemitic hatred or terrorism receives a warning, dismissal or other disciplinary measure?
  5. Given that UNRWA [proclaims](#) “zero tolerance” for “hatred, incitement to violence or discrimination” and a “zero-tolerance policy” for “any deviation from UN principles,” why are teachers found to have publicly incited antisemitic hatred and terrorism not being permanently removed from the classroom?
  6. Does UNRWA have a vetting procedure in place to prevent the hiring of teachers who promote antisemitic hatred, violence or discrimination, and if so what is it?
  7. When earlier this month the UN Human Rights Council president made the unprecedented move of [cutting off](#) my testimony on UNRWA incitement, was this censorship preceded by a request or other communication from UNRWA?

## **B. Defaming Those Who Uncover UNRWA Misconduct**

We are concerned by UNRWA’s contradictory approach toward oversight and accountability, including reports that document racist teachers employed by the agency. On the one hand, in wake of our latest report, UNRWA stated that it “takes each allegation seriously”; “has immediately launched a thorough investigation”; is “concerned” that “some of the posts violate our rules and policies”; and pledged “immediate administrative or disciplinary action” should misconduct be found. Moreover, UNRWA stated that “oversight and accountability of any organization is vital” and that the agency “welcomes future opportunities of assessment.” ([UNRWA statement on United Nations Watch allegations](#), 8/5/2021).

On the other hand, on several occasions—in your own capacity as Commissioner-General—you have resorted to ad hominem attacks on the human rights work of United Nations Watch. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, for example, you told UNRWA’s donor states that reports documenting UNRWA staff incitement to violence or antisemitism constitute “irrational allegations,” and you characterized this form of oversight and accountability as “political attacks that seek to undermine [UNRWA’s] legitimacy as a way to erode the rights of Palestine refugees”—from which UNRWA needed to be “shielded” by donor states. ([Commissioner-General’s opening statement to UNRWA Advisory Commission](#), 6/30/2021)

Likewise, following our latest report documenting incitement to antisemitism and terrorism by 113 UNRWA teachers and other staff, UNRWA's initial response was to lash out and falsely defame our human rights group as "an organization with a deep history of unfounded and politically-driven assertions against the Agency." ([UNRWA statement on United Nations Watch allegations](#), 8/5/2021) Not one example of such "unfounded" or "politically-driven" assertions has ever been provided.

Less than two weeks later, you reported to the UN General Assembly that UNRWA faced "intense politically motivated attacks" which you said "sought to question its mandate, its relevance and the integrity of its staff" primarily through "attacks on the quality of the education that Palestine refugee children receive." ([Commissioner-General's report to the General Assembly](#), 8/18/2021)

In practice, it would seem that your agency is refusing to engage with the extensive research and documentation of United Nations Watch which demonstrates UNRWA's failure to apply its purported "zero tolerance" policy toward teachers who incite racism and violence, while at the same time seeking to kill the messenger by maliciously defaming United Nations Watch for providing a minimal form of oversight that UNRWA itself has failed to exercise.

United Nations Watch welcomes the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with you concerning the serious questions above, and the findings in our report, which have a significant impact on the lives and futures of both Israelis and Palestinians.

As I am sure you will agree, these constitute material issues for the states that will convene for the UNRWA international donors conference next month, and we hope that you can respond to the above in advance of this event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hillel C. Neuer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hillel C. Neuer  
Executive Director

CC: Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Ambassador of the U.S. to the UN  
Antje Leendertse, Ambassador of Germany to the UN  
Olof Skoog, Ambassador of the EU to the UN  
Dame Barbara Woodward, Ambassador of the UK to the UN  
Anna Karin Enestrom, Ambassador of Sweden to the UN  
Pascale Baeriswyl, Ambassador of Switzerland to the UN