

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

24 April 2023

Dear Commissioner-General Lazzarini,

I am writing to express United Nations Watch's deep concern about UNRWA's response to our recent report, jointly produced with IMPACT-se, documenting incitement to hatred and violence by your teachers. I would like to request a meeting with you to discuss this, as well as to share new evidence of alarming violations by UNRWA teachers that breach their solemn duty to be a role model to students, to show regard for UN values, and to act in line with the standards of conduct expected of UN civil servants.

In response to our report, [UNRWA Education: Reform or Regression](#), released on March 14, UNRWA immediately replied with a [statement](#) disparaging our work as "sensationalized" and "exaggerated," and accusing us of following an alleged pattern of presenting "misguided conclusions" and using "methodologies 'marked by . . . methodological shortcomings.'"

Surely you will agree that it is highly unlikely that your team managed in only four days to properly assess our 100-page joint report, which cited 212 separate source citations containing detailed documentary and photographic evidence, before it issued this false and defamatory statement.

We regret that, once again, UNRWA has adopted the approach of attacking the messenger even while claiming it has "zero-tolerance" for "hatred and the promotion of violence." This contradictory stance appears to be an attempt, on the one hand, to prevent public debate in Western donor countries about their governments' funding of an agency that hires teachers who promote the murder of Jews, while, on the other hand, appeasing the Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, that pressure UNRWA to keep hiring teachers of hate.

Moreover, even when UNRWA does take disciplinary action, its approach is inconsistent, equivocal, and non-transparent, sending the counterproductive message that employee violations of UNRWA's neutrality are, in practice, tolerated.

At the same time, we note that UNRWA apparently agreed that at least some of its staff perpetrators whom we identified in our report had violated neutrality. Though this was never publicly announced by UNRWA, Palestinian news sites [widely reported](#) that your agency, in wake of our report, took disciplinary action against some of the employees — including Riyadh Mustafa Nimr (a.k.a. Abu Hadi), a teacher at UNRWA's al-Manara school at the Nahr El Bared camp in northern Lebanon, who had publicly endorsed a gruesome mass murder by Palestinian terrorists at a Jerusalem synagogue.

Regrettably, however, it seems that this terrorism supporter was quickly reinstated and returned to the classroom, after his fellow teachers pulled students out of class for [a three-day strike](#) protesting his suspension, and after Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist factions [pressured UNRWA](#).

As a UN humanitarian agency required to be neutral, we would expect UNRWA to respond strongly to evidence of shocking neutrality violations, and in a consistent, principled, and transparent manner. If the agency agrees that publicly endorsing terrorism and antisemitism on social media violates neutrality, it should simply take appropriate disciplinary action without repeatedly maligning our human rights organization.

Moreover, given that we have shown how deeply rooted and systemic the problem is, we once again urge UNRWA to itself undertake independent investigations into how and why the agency, when hiring teachers, fails to vet candidates to keep away from UNRWA classrooms those who publicly glorify Hitler, terrorist attacks, racial hatred, antisemitism and violence. As we have consistently pointed out in [our reports](#), these social media posts are merely a symptom of a much deeper and more pervasive problem: that UNRWA systematically hires teachers who incite hatred and violence, and places them in schools to mentor impressionable young students.

Commissioner-General, we remind you that UNRWA's own [dispute tribunal](#) has ruled that neutrality violations of the kind detailed in our reports are even "more serious" because of a teacher's "duty to be a role model to his students."

Our latest report provided evidence of how students in fact view these teachers as role models and are influenced by them. For example, when a student of UNRWA West Bank teacher Ayman Dlash posted a photo of armed militants which implied the weapons enabled them to "feel proud," he made sure to tag his UNRWA teacher. Our report also showed evidence of UNRWA students presenting assignments to their class glorifying Dalal Mughrabi — a well-known terrorist whom UNRWA officials, including yourself, have repeatedly [asserted](#) is not mentioned by your agency's teachers or educational materials.

The fact that students are influenced by the violent messages promoted by their teachers was also on clear display during the mass teacher-organized rallies in Lebanon protesting UNRWA's suspension of Riyadh Mustafa Nimr for his incitement of terrorism. Videos of the rallies showed children [brandishing real-looking weapons](#) (see screen shots in attached Annex), showing how UNRWA students are tragically imbibing their teachers' glorification of violence.

We are disappointed that UNRWA has apparently caved in to the terrorist factions' [pressure campaign](#). Instead, we once again urge UNRWA to protect Palestinian children by *permanently removing from the classroom* all teachers who preach hatred and violence (see partial [list of perpetrators](#) at Annex A); and we urge your agency to now investigate the leadership of its own teachers' union in Lebanon for (a) publicly supporting their suspended colleague's incitement to terrorism, and (b) for allowing

weapons at these protests, and to take all necessary disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

I look forward to hearing from you, and I hope that we can arrange to meet, in Amman, Geneva or elsewhere, to discuss the serious issues above, which have significant impact on the lives and the future of both Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hillel C. Neuer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hillel C. Neuer  
Executive Director

CC: Diane Corner, UK Consul General in Jerusalem, Vice-Chair, UNRWA Advisory Commission

Catherine Palmier, Representative Office of Canada in Ramallah, Chair of Sub-Committee, UNRWA Advisory Commission

## Annex A

At strike rallies organized by the UNRWA Teachers Union in the UNRWA Nahr al-Bared camp, in protest against UNRWA's initial decision to suspend teacher Riyadh Mustafa Nimr, children brandished weapons, or real-looking weapons, and held up a giant poster of a militant with a weapon. (Source: [video of March 18, 2023](#); see more [here](#).)

### Screenshot 1



### Screenshot 2



### Screenshot 3

