

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 20, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

It was recently announced that the United States would funnel an additional \$99 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).¹ This comes after the April decision to contribute \$150 million to UNRWA, which faced bipartisan criticism.² Giving money to UNRWA is an egregious use of taxpayer money, harms our interests in the region, and endangers key allies. We write to get much needed clarity on your decision to pursue such a counterproductive action.

UNRWA was established by the United Nations following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and began operations in 1950. Since its founding, the United States has given the agency more than \$6 billion.³ UNRWA has an extreme bias against Israel and helps perpetuate the conflict by constantly demonizing Jerusalem. The organization is poorly managed, facing numerous corruption scandals, including sexual misconduct, improper use of funds, retaliation against whistleblowers, and nepotism.⁴ Most egregiously, the organization promotes the idea of the Palestinian right of return, which if implemented would end Israel's sovereignty.

To make matters worse, there have been numerous reports going back years that textbooks used in UNRWA schools incite violence and glorify terrorism. One egregious example asked students to count the number of dead "martyrs" in the First Intifada.⁵ There are also numerous passages that celebrate known Palestinian terrorists, including Dalal Mughrabi, who participated in the Coastal Road Massacre, which resulted in the death of 38 Israeli civilians, including 13 children.⁶ Furthermore, the

¹ Samuels, Ben. "U.S. Announces \$99 Million Funding to UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees." *Haaretz.com*, Haaretz, 30 Dec. 2021, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-u-s-announces-99-million-funding-to-un-agency-for-palestinian-refugees-1.10504755>.

² Spetalnick, Matt, and Stephen Farrell. "U.S. Restores Assistance for Palestinians, to Provide \$235 Million in Aid." *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 7 Apr. 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-usa-blinken/u-s-restores-assistance-for-palestinians-to-provide-235-million-in-aid-idUSKBN2BU2XT>.

³ Gladstone, Rick. "The U.N.'s Palestinian Refugee Agency: What It Does and Why It Matters." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 31 Aug. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/31/world/middleeast/palestinian-refugee-agency-explainer.html>.

⁴ Joffe, Dr. Alex. "The UN Agency for Palestinians Is Even Worse than You Think It Is." *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*, 8 Aug. 2019, <https://besacenter.org/unrwa-corruption-scandal/>.

⁵ Shalev, Itam. *Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials ... - Impact-Se.org*. IMPACT-Se, <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories%E2%80%9494Jan-2021.pdf>.

⁶ Edmunds, Donna Rachel. "New UNRWA Head to 'Post': No Glorifying Terrorists in Our Schools." *The Jerusalem Post / JPost.com*, 30 July 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/new-unrwa-head-to-post-no-glorifying-terrorists-in-our-schools-636946>.

UNRWA textbooks never acknowledge the State of Israel and Jewish history in the region. When previously pressed by the United States to address these concerns, UNRWA has promised reform but has changed very little. Simply put, the U.S. taxpayers should not be subsidizing books that teach hatred of Israel and Jews.

The United States has been trying to reform and fix the numerous problems with UNRWA since its inception. Despite the United States being the largest donor to UNRWA, funding about one third of its budget, the agency was unwilling to reform. Accordingly, President Trump prudently stopped funding the organization. He also realized that the other countries in the region should be responsible for helping the Palestinians. This move proved to be wise and saved taxpayers millions of dollars and helped advance our interests in the region.

The decision to restore funding was not based on sound analysis or our national interest, and it further endangers our ally, Israel. Based on all evidence available, it seems your decision was made in part due to your resolve to cede American sovereignty to the United Nations. The administration's unreasonable actions to destroy all of President Trump's foreign policy accomplishments – even those widely acknowledged as a resounding success to our national interest - greatly hurts our standing in the region.

We urge you to immediately reverse this decision and cut funding to UNRWA. Additionally, we advise you to take action to use the U.S.'s influence at the United Nations General assembly to push to end UNRWA's mandate, which is set to expire in 2023.

Sincerely,



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Madison Cawthorn
Member of Congress




Chip Roy
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



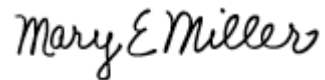
Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
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Doug Lamborn
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Mary E. Miller
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Lance Gooden
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Bill Posey
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