

US Funding of UNRWA Dependent on Agency Reform

18 June, 2021

The International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) and ‘UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate’, a project of the Jewish NGOs at the UN in New York welcome the intention of the United States government to impose conditions on the renewed funding of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA).

The U.S. State Department has issued guidelines to the Congress requiring that the funding of UNRWA, the UN agency charged with the education of Palestinian refugee children, be made conditional on the removal of hate and incitement from educational materials used in their schools and summer camps. Presenting his 2022 State Department budget to the Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that the renewal of funding was conditional on many necessary reforms at UNRWA.

On June 16, 2021, the ‘UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate’ campaign issued the following statement: “This is a very exciting and positive step toward improving the education and future lives of Palestinian school children. The life of all people in the Middle East will be improved in many ways if young Palestinians are educated to be qualified for careers in modern society, rather than being taught violence and hate with only martyrdom as an ambition.”

Secretary Blinken stated that UNRWA “disseminates in its educational products antisemitic and anti-Israel information”. The content of UNRWA educational materials often constitutes child abuse. Secretary Blinken states that the US is “determined that UNRWA pursue very necessary reforms.” He confirmed that the Biden administration’s renewal of the UN agency’s funding will be conditioned on removal of hate from educational materials, and ensuring that educational content taught in UN schools and summer camps respects human rights. They are also required to commit to preventing the entry of weapons and the improper use of UNRWA facilities, and to maintain neutrality. He added that the State Department would be “looking very, very carefully” at the mechanisms that UNRWA says it has in place in order to address hateful educational materials.

The U.S. ceased its funding of UNRWA in September 2018 following an announcement by President Donald Trump. Secretary Blinken’s statement represents the first time that any Democratic administration has acknowledged that UNRWA’s educational content contains anti-Semitism and messages which perpetuate the conflict. It follows condemnation of UNRWA for teaching hate by the European Parliament, and the announcement that Canada and Australia have also launched investigations into anti-Semitism and incitement in UNRWA school textbooks.

The ‘UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate’ organization has been working toward conditioning of UNRWA funds for three years, lobbying politicians and publicizing the research materials gathered by David Bedein’s [Center for Near East Policy Research](#). ICJW representative Dr. Joan Lurie, a co-chair of the ‘UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate’ campaign, is available for interviews. She can be contacted at: drjoan@gmail.com and you can learn more about this work at ReformUNRWA.org.

The [International Council of Jewish Women](#) is one of several Jewish women’s organizations that has supported the work of the ‘UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate’ campaign. ICJW has consultative status at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The organization has 36 affiliates in 32 countries and represents Jewish women from all walks of life in many important international forums, confronting and responding to the concerns of the Jewish community and women in general.

