

*The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to serve Palestinian refugees displaced during Israel's War of Independence. UNRWA continues to operate in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan nearly 75 years later. The United States has [contributed](#) over \$1 billion to UNRWA since 2021 even though the agency provides cover for terrorist activity and perpetuates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

## **1. UNRWA perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem**

The United Nations (UN) treats Palestinian refugees differently than refugees from every other conflict or circumstance. Specifically, UNRWA automatically [registers](#) the descendants of Palestinian refugees in perpetuity, which has led to explosive growth in its official number of clients. From an original number of around 700,000 refugees, there are now [5.9 million Palestinians](#) registered with UNRWA, even though the vast majority did not flee the conflict. In 2021, then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [stated](#) that fewer than 5 percent of UNRWA-registered “refugees” meet the criteria for the designation that the UN applies to refugees from other conflicts. By growing the refugee population and promoting Palestinian claims to Israeli land, UNRWA perpetuates and exacerbates the conflict.

## **2. UNRWA is a bloated agency with no authority to meaningfully solve the refugee issue**

With the exception of Palestinian refugees, all other refugees in the world fall under the responsibility of the United Nations Refugee Agency (also known as UNHCR), which has a [mandate](#) to assist refugees in “repatriation and resettlement” and “assimilation with new national communities.” The UN Refugee Agency has a staff of [18,000](#) to serve [over 100 million people](#). By contrast, UNRWA employs [30,000](#) staff to service 5.9 million Palestinians. UNRWA [admits](#) that it “does not have a mandate to resettle Palestine refugees and has no authority to seek lasting durable solutions for refugees.”

## **3. Neighboring governments refused to resettle Arab refugees after Israel's War of Independence**

Both Jews and Arabs fled their homes during and after Israel's 1948 War of Independence. Following the war, Israel absorbed hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Arab states who faced persecution and expulsion. However, due to the challenges of resettlement and the benefits of wielding the refugees as a future weapon against Israel, these same Arab states did not resettle a similar number of displaced Arabs. In 1949, the United Nations established UNRWA to serve Palestinian refugees. Although most of UNRWA's original beneficiaries are no longer alive, the agency continues to [operate](#) in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

## **4. UNRWA does not recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization**

In 1997, the United States designated Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, freezing its U.S.-based assets, barring members from entering the country, and banning the provision of “material support or resources.” Other countries and international entities that have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization include Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Israel, the Organization of American States, Paraguay, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. However, UNRWA follows the [guidelines](#) of the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List of terrorist groups and individuals, which does not include Hamas. As such, the agency has a history of [hiring](#) Hamas affiliates. U.S. law [forbids](#) American funding for UNRWA to be used for “furnishing assistance” to terrorists, but there is no way to enforce this provision.

## **5. By delivering basic services, UNRWA frees up money for Hamas to spend on terrorism**

Despite the poverty experienced by Gaza residents, Hamas [spends](#) over half of its budget on military needs and [diverts](#) humanitarian resources to its terrorist purposes and the pockets of its senior leadership. By picking up the civilian tab, UNRWA frees up Hamas resources for terror operations. A Hamas official admitted as such on October 30, [explaining](#) that Hamas built hundreds of kilometers of tunnels to protect its fighters, while “it is the responsibility of the United Nations to protect [civilians].” Following the 2014 Gaza war, former Israeli National Security Advisor Maj. Gen. Yaakov Amidror [explained](#) that “when you look at what Hamas did with all the cement and the materials that went into Gaza for ‘building,’ and you see that most went on the tunnels, you understand that from their point of view the civilian side is not important.”

## **6. UNRWA schools radicalize Palestinian children**

The [curriculum](#) taught in UNRWA schools denies Israel's legitimacy, [incites](#) antisemitism, and encourages violence and jihad. In a study [published](#) after the massacre of October 7, IMPACT-se — a research and policy organization that monitors education around the world — documented statements from more than a dozen UNRWA employees who publicly praised the atrocities. For example, as posted on the school's official Facebook page on October 26, a teacher led elementary students in prayer to support the jihad warriors against the enemies of religion, i.e., Israel. IMPACT-se also identified more than 100 UNRWA employees who promoted hatred and violence on social media prior to the attack.

## **7. Hamas manipulates UNRWA's Gaza operations**

Hamas has [built](#) tunnels [underneath](#) UNRWA schools in Gaza for years, using students as human shields. On November 8, Israeli forces [destroyed](#) a Hamas terror tunnel adjacent to an UNRWA-administered school in the Gaza Strip. Further, the group [stores](#) rockets inside UNRWA schools and uses school grounds as [launchpads](#) for attacks. UNRWA leadership also clamps down on employees whose statements reflect well on Israel or poorly on Hamas. For example, UNRWA recalled its Gaza chief in 2021 after he publicly [acknowledged](#) that Israel carried out "precise" and "sophisticated" strikes in order to avoid civilian casualties. Similarly, just weeks after the October 7 massacre, UNRWA [reported](#) Hamas officials were removing fuel and medical equipment from an UNRWA facility in Gaza City. Yet the agency quickly deleted the information, [likely under pressure](#) from Hamas authorities.

## **8. UNRWA facilities provide a haven for violence outside the Gaza Strip**

Violence [erupted](#) in an UNRWA refugee camp in southeast Lebanon in July 2023 when tit-for-tat [shootings killed](#) an Islamist militant and five members of Hamas's main rival, Fatah. Fatah is a major Palestinian political party led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Bloody street battles continued into August, [killing](#) 13 Palestinians and [displacing](#) an additional 2,000. UNRWA's Jenin Camp in the West Bank is also a locus of terrorism, frequented by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other local armed groups.

## **9. UNRWA management has a history of scandal**

[Reports](#) surfaced in 2019 of "credible and corroborated" corruption allegations against senior UNRWA personnel. In an internal review that leaked to the press, UNRWA [detailed](#) "sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination, and other abuses of authority" among its top brass. UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl [resigned](#) in the aftermath of an internal investigation. The scandal prompted [Switzerland](#), [Belgium](#), and the [Netherlands](#) to suspend their funding. UNRWA has no [board of directors](#) to ensure accountability and prevent corruption within the agency. Krahenbuhl won [appointment](#) last month as global head of the Red Cross, another indicator of impunity.

## **10. The United States has contributed over \$7 billion to UNRWA**

Between 1950 and 2018, U.S. taxpayers [contributed](#) about \$6 billion to UNRWA. The United States cut funding to UNRWA in 2018 at the direction of President Donald Trump, [labeling](#) the agency "irredeemably flawed." President Joe Biden unconditionally resumed funding UNRWA in 2021, delivering [\\$1 billion](#) over three years, making the United States [once again](#) UNRWA's single largest donor.