

Other Areas of Practice

Canada must end its support for UNRWA | Sergio R. Karas

By **Sergio R. Karas**

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(October 18, 2023, 2:23 PM EDT) -- The scale of the brutality and murder perpetrated by the Hamas terrorists who infiltrated Israel starting on Oct. 7, 2023, and continuing to this date has shaken the entire world. Not only did Hamas commit acts of unspeakable horror against civilians, including women, children, babies and the elderly, but they also displayed their revolting barbarism on social media for the entire world to see.

Their atrocities deserve swift and harsh punishment by Israel and the entire civilized world. Hamas and Islamic Jihad are designated terrorist organizations by the Canadian government. According to the latest news reports, Hamas is holding 199 hostages, including several Canadian citizens, to use them as human shields in violation of the *Geneva Convention*.

For many years, Canadian taxpayers have subsidized organizations intended to help Palestinians with basic needs, but some social welfare agencies have been accused of diverting humanitarian aid to Hamas, with the assistance of sympathizers who work for international relief organizations. For example, Mohammed el-Halabi, the local director for World Vision, a U.S.-based Christian aid group was found guilty by an Israeli court in 2022 of establishing a sophisticated mechanism to divert more than US\$50 million in aid between 2010 and 2016 to Hamas.

On June 26, 2023, Canada announced its continued support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). According to a news release by Global Affairs Canada, "this assistance includes up to \$100 million over 4 years to deliver core programs that support basic education, health, social services and livelihood opportunities and protect the rights of Palestinian refugees. Canada is also providing \$3 million to the Emergency Appeal for the West Bank and Gaza, to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance for basic services, such as emergency food assistance, emergency health services, and improved water and sanitation access." The news release also claimed that "Canada's funding will also reinforce UNRWA's ongoing efforts to uphold UN values and humanitarian principles, including neutrality, within the agency and its operations and ensure corrective actions are taken where needed."

However, UNRWA is not what it claims to be. There are significant concerns regarding its operations, transparency and accountability. UNRWA has been accused of being a partisan organization with significant operational shortcomings and sympathies towards Hamas. It has been alleged that UNRWA schools encourage anti-Semitism in their teaching materials and by employing antisemitic teachers. An in-depth investigation by the German newspaper *BILD* published on April 21, 2023, on anti-Semitism in Palestinian schools titled "Germany continues to pay for hatred of Jews" concerning Germany's funding of UNRWA, details numerous instances of Jew-hatred and indoctrination. It concludes:

In total, the investigation found such content at ten different UNRWA schools, which, according to impact-SE, "violates UN values, UNESCO standards, and UNRWA's purported 'zero tolerance

policy for discrimination or incitement to hatred and violence in its schools, educational materials ...' ”

As recently as three weeks ago, and before the Hamas attacks took place, a report from the United States Congress House Appropriations Committee stated in its report accompanying the foreign appropriations funding bill: “The committee notes the longstanding concerns that educational materials used in UNRWA schools induce incitement or are otherwise inconsistent with the values of human rights, dignity, and tolerance,” the report says. “The committee is further concerned by the United States Government’s lack of visibility on the curricula utilized in UNRWA schools given these allegations and the United States’ status as a significant donor to UNRWA.”

Notwithstanding the significant concerns and allegations of partisanship raised by numerous donor countries, the Canadian government has decided to continue its funding of this organization and send more taxpayer dollars to support it. On Oct. 12, 2023, Canada announced a further \$50-million aid package to UNRWA over the next two years. The timing could not have been worse, at a time when there was a media flood of images detailing the carnage perpetrated by Hamas in Southern Israel. Instead of conducting a full investigation of UNRWA’s activities, the government of Canada seems oblivious to the concerns expressed by other donor countries.

Canada should end its support for UNRWA. Its operations are not in accordance with the principles stated by Global Affairs. Canadian taxpayers should not unwittingly subsidize hatred, anti-Semitism, or terrorist activities.

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