



Widespread Promotion of Terrorism at UNRWA

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Colonna Review Was Not Independent, Verdict Determined in Advance

The “Independent Review Group” led by Catherine Colonna was not impartial. There was manifest bias and conflicts of interests by the examiners, and both the UN and UNRWA declared the outcome in advance, in a mandate explicitly designed not to find wrongdoing, but to “reassure the donors.” This is detailed in UN Watch’s recent report. ¹

UNRWA Systematically Employs Supporters of Terrorism

UN Watch’s submission to the Colonna Review Group showed how, since August 2015, UN Watch has been warning UNRWA about systematic and widespread promotion of terrorism and antisemitism among its staff.² We documented over 180 cases of UNRWA staff incitement to terrorism and antisemitism on Facebook and Telegram in 11 separate reports, all based on public information.³ Astonishingly, the Colonna Report completely ignored all of this evidence.

Terrorism Promotion Is Widespread: 8,000 UNRWA Teachers Rallied for Suhail al-Hindi, School Principal, Head of UNRWA Gaza Union and Hamas Politburo Member

In September 2011, UNRWA suspended Gaza staff union head Suhail al-Hindi for three months without pay due to his “political” (*i.e.*, Hamas) activities, including meeting with Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh. In response, Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu threatened that the UNRWA staff union would act to “embarrass the agency.”⁴ Indeed, During al-Hindi’s suspension, from September to December 2011, the UNRWA Gaza staff union orchestrated a massive protest campaign which shut down 243 schools, with 8,000 teachers and school principals going on strike, affecting 220,000 school children.⁵

Given UNRWA’s oft-touted “zero tolerance” policy for hatred, one would have expected UNRWA teachers to be shocked and outraged that a school principal—and the head of the entire UNRWA Gaza staff union—was an active member of a terrorist group. Instead, the opposite occurred. They rallied around al-Hindi and even rewarded him, re-electing him chairman of the UNRWA Gaza staff union in 2012.⁶ Al-Hindi, now openly organizing Hamas terrorism, is likely still collecting UNRWA benefits, as are other known terrorists who worked for UNRWA.⁷

8,000 UNRWA Teachers Rallying for Terrorism Supporting Union Chief Fathi al-Sharif

In a similar current case, the entire UNRWA staff in Lebanon recently [rallied around Hamas supporter](#) Fathi al-Sharif, head of the UNRWA Lebanon teachers’ union, who was suspended for unstated neutrality violations. In response, the UNRWA Lebanon teachers’ union representing

¹ <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UNRWAs-Rigged-Independent-Review.pdf>

² <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/United-Nations-Watch-Submission-to-UNRWA-Review-Group.pdf>

³ Some of the most egregious examples are listed here: <https://unwatch.org/un-watch-warned-unrwa-about-staff-support-for-terror-since-2015/>

⁴ UNRWA announced the suspension of Dr. Suhail al-Hindi, chairman of the UNRWA staff union in the Gaza Strip, after his election to Hamas’ political bureau. In 2011 he was also suspended by UNRWA for his affiliation with Hamas, but remained in his position, **Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center** (February 27, 2017), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21163/>.

⁵ *Strike closes all UNRWA schools in Gaza Strip*, **The Palestinian Information Center** (September 29, 2011), https://english.palinfo.com/o_post/Strike-closes-all-UNRWA-schools-in-Gaza-Strip/; *Teachers Protest at UNRWA’s Gaza City Headquarters*, **Palestine Chronicle** (October 5, 2011), <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/teachers-protest-at-unrwas-gaza-city-headquarters/>; AFP, *UNRWA’s Gaza schools stage mass walkout*, **AhramOnline** (October 30, 2011), <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/25543/World/Region/UNRWAs-Gaza-schools-stage-mass-walkout.aspx>; @HillelNeuer, **Twitter** (March 24, 2024, 11:36 AM), <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1771833500921987168>.

⁶ *Dr. Suhail al-Hindi, Chairman of the UNRWA Staff Union in the Gaza Strip and Boys’ Elementary School Principal, Is Elected to Hamas’ New Gaza Political Bureau*, **Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center** (February 23, 2017), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/21160/>.

⁷ See UN Watch Submission to UNRWA Colonna Review at pp. 16-18: <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/United-Nations-Watch-Submission-to-UNRWA-Review-Group.pdf>

2,000 teachers [organized mass strikes](#) across all UNRWA camps in Lebanon, shutting schools and services, so that everyone, including teachers and students, could march on the UNRWA office in Beirut and shut it down. The strikes affected 64 schools with nearly 40,000 students.⁸

2,000 UNRWA Lebanon Teachers Backed Terrorism Supporter Riad Nimr

The UNRWA Lebanon teachers' union had orchestrated similar protests one year ago, in March 2023, when UNRWA Lebanon elementary school teacher Riad Nimr was suspended after we exposed his hateful Facebook posts. Instead of condemning him, the UNRWA Lebanon teacher's union, representing 2,000 teachers, [rallied behind Nimr](#), pulling students out of class for a three-day-strike, and effectively paralyzing UNRWA operations in UNRWA's Nahr el-Bared camp for three weeks until UNRWA reinstated Nimr under pressure. According to [one source](#), UNRWA Lebanon Director Dorothy Klaus "was very cooperative" after learning that the situation in the camps had become "unbearable" and "may be a prelude to many things." After this incident, we are not aware that UNRWA investigated any of the UNRWA staff who participated in the strikes for their neutrality violations.

UNRWA Fails To Investigate Encouragement of Terrorism

As part of its public defense, UNRWA has repeatedly insisted, including in its latest *Claims vs. Facts* publication, that it always takes "very seriously any *allegation*" about staff misconduct and that "UNRWA reviews all *allegations* of misconduct" (emphasis added).⁹ This means that UNRWA's approach is reactive rather than proactive. It investigates only when it receives an "allegation" from some third party like UN Watch. Therefore, if UN Watch did not research and inform UNRWA about staff neutrality violations, then UNRWA would take no action. Thus, UNRWA effectively admits that it has never undertaken, and does not see itself as obligated to undertake, a comprehensive review of its staff for neutrality violations.

UNRWA's approach of minimizing the problem and focusing only on the issue of staff social media violations ignores the deeper, systemic problem, which is the fact that UNRWA is hiring these antisemitic and terror-supporting teachers in the first place and placing them in classrooms to serve as role models for impressionable Palestinian children. The UNRWA staff social media violations are merely a symptom of this serious systemic problem which has never been addressed.

CONCLUSION: SYSTEMIC FAILURE TO ADDRESS STAFF SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM

On repeated occasions over the last nine years, UN Watch has reached out to UNRWA and other responsible UN officials to discuss our detailed warnings about their staff support for terrorism. On every occasion, our request to meet was ignored.¹⁰ UNRWA persistently ignored UN Watch's requests to engage on the issue, disparaged our research, and ignored our recommendations.

The Colonna Report failed to state the obvious: UNRWA's record in attacking or ignoring UN Watch's reports leave no doubt that the agency is not serious about addressing the root problem of terrorism and antisemitism among its staff. The agency is far more concerned with ensuring its continued existence than dealing with this serious problem.

⁸ See thread: <https://x.com/HillelNeuer/status/1798525744790065555>

⁹ *UNRWA: Claims Versus Facts*, UNRWA (February 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/unrwa-claims-versus-facts-february-2024>.

¹⁰ <https://unwatch.org/evidence-of-unrwas-2015-2024-refusal-to-engage-serious-allegations-of-terrorism-promotion/>