Trib Editorial: U.N. Watch — UNRWA's comeuppance

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Those who follow the controversies surrounding the United Nations' relief agency for Palestinian refugees shouldn't be surprised by a Trump administration decision to withhold $65 million from the organization. Maybe that could have been avoided if Turtle Bay bothered to investigate years of accusations against the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The State Department says the money in question — part of America's nearly $364 million annual contribution to UNRWA — is “frozen and being held for future consideration.” The U.S. reportedly wants to see “revisions” in UNRWA operations. There are ample reasons to do so:

• Agency employees have been accused of inciting violence against Israelis.

• A UNRWA campaign used a picture of an 11-year-old girl “from Gaza” in a bombed-out building to portray Israel as an oppressor of Palestinian children. But the monitoring group U.N. Watch exposed the photo as disingenuous; it was shot in Syria.

• Hamas rockets reportedly turned up in a UNRWA Gaza school amid attacks against Israel in 2014.

“Just over the last year alone, UNRWA officials were elected to the leadership of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, UNRWA schools denied the existence of Israel and terror tunnels were dug under UNRWA facilities,” according to Danny Danon, Israel's ambassador to the U.N.

By withholding funds, the Trump administration has made it clear to UNRWA and the rest of the world body that the days of blind U.S. financial support are over.