Katz: Israel, Switzerland will consider alternatives to UNRWA

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Israel and Switzerland will work together to consider alternatives to the UN Relief and Works Agency, Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Wednesday after meeting with Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis in Bern.

[Switzerland suspended](https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Switzerland-stops-payments-to-UNRWA-follwoing-misconduct-allegations-597152) payments to UNRWA in July until the completion of a [UN investigation](https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UN-investigating-charges-of-ethical-misconduct-at-UNRWA-must-be-investigated-597093) into ethical misconduct among senior officials of the organization. This decision came after Switzerland has already paid its $22.5 million pledge in 2019 toward the organization’s $1.2 billion budget.

Katz, according to a statement put out by his office, told his Swiss counterpart that some UNRWA officials in Gaza had cooperated with terror organizations in attacks against Israel, and quoted Cassis himself as saying in May that the agency is “the problem and not the solution.”

During those comments, Cassis said that the organization fueled “unrealistic” hope among Palestinians of a “right to return” to Israel from refugee camps in the Middle East.

Katz recently directed the Foreign Ministry to come up with a document outlining an alternative to UNRWA, and a team established in the ministry has held a number of meetings on the matter.

The current head of the agency is Pierre Krähenbühl, a Swiss national. An internal investigation alleges serious ethical abuses inside the organization, including “sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination and other abuses of authority: for personal gain, to suppress legitimate dissent, and to otherwise achieve their personal objectives.”

Last year, US President Donald Trump discontinued Washington’s annual $360 million contribution to UNRWA.