Amendment cutting US aid to UNRWA & UNHRC advances

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An [amendment](http://amendments-rules.house.gov/amendments/ROSLEH_035_xml825171016111611.pdf) from Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) that would sever U.S. aid to the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) — an agency that exclusively assists Palestinian refugees worldwide — has been advanced by the House Rules Committee. The measure for Fiscal Year 2018 will now head to a floor wide vote.

While numerous amendments are proposed to the annual State and Foreign Operations bill in the House Appropriations Committee, a select few are “made into order” by the Rules Committee and subsequently receive a floor wide vote. An informed Republican staffer told Jewish Insider that this will be the first time in many years that a floor wide vote — possibly as early as on Thursday — will proceed on defunding UNRWA.

In addition to cutting payments to UNRWA, the amendment would also end funding to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recommended to U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley in June that UNRWA should be [dismantled](http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/UNRWA-should-be-dismantled-Netanyahu-says-he-told-Nikki-Haley-496503). However, *Foreign Policy* [reported](http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/24/u-s-vows-to-fund-a-u-n-agency-for-palestinian-refugees-israeli-leader-wants-shuttered/) last month that Haley promised UN officials the Trump administration would fully fund UNRWA to the tune of $300 million. A veteran lawmaker who recently announced her retirement from Congress after nearly four decades of service, Ros-Lehtinen currently serves as the Chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa.

Testifying before Congress in June, Haley defended UNRWA. “I will say there’s also good that comes out of UNRWA: what they do with the schools and healthcare. You do see [value](http://jewishinsider.com/12189/haley-defends-unrwas-schools-healthcare-congressional-attacks/) in it.” However, Ros-Lehtinen’s slammed the agency for its “anti-semitic bias” against Israel. “UNRWA employees and facilities are consistently tied to foreign terrorist organizations and a full accounting of the agency’s affiliations should be [required](https://ros-lehtinen.house.gov/press-release/ros-lehtinen-reintroduces-measure-holds-unrwa-accountable-ties-terror-group-hamas) before another dime is spent on this divisive organization,’ she said.