U.S. freezes grant to UNRWA

January 5, 2018

By Elad Benari

Arutz Sheva

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240315>

The United States administration froze a $125 million grant to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN’s agency for “Palestinian refugees”, which was supposed to be delivered on January 1, Channel 10 News reported on Friday, citing three Western diplomats.

The amount frozen is one-third of the annual funding the United States provides the organization, according to the report.

The three diplomats, who asked to remain anonymous because of the political sensitivity of the issue, told Channel 10 the grant had been frozen until the end of the reexamination of U.S. aid to the Palestinians, which began in recent days. According to the diplomats, officials in the administration have informed UN officials in the past two days that President Donald Trump is considering cutting this amount completely and could even increase the cut to $180 million, which would be half the total U.S. funding for UNRWA.

The cutting in the UN funding to UNRWA is a U.S. sanction against the organization, which has come under strong criticized from both the United States and Israel, as well as against the Palestinian Arabs, in an attempt to pressure them to renew peace talks with Israel.

News of the freezing of the grant came as [a meeting took place in the White House](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240288) discussing the cutting of aid to the Palestinian Authority and to UNRWA.

The meeting followed [**Trump's tweets**](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240170) earlier this week in which he expressed doubt over the usefulness of American aid to the Palestinians, given their refusal to resume peace talks with Israel.

The United States is the largest single donor to UNRWA, providing approximately a fourth of the organization's budget.

Reports in Israel on Thursday indicated that the Israeli Foreign Ministry [is opposed](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240279) to Trump’s planned cut in the aid to UNRWA, but on Friday [Jewish Home chairman Naftali Bennett said](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240297) that cutting aid to UNRWA is the correct move.

For years, UNRWA has been a target for criticism in light of Hamas's activity in its educational institutions and the [**use of its facilities**](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/237364) by Palestinian Arab terrorist organizations in Gaza.

UNRWA was documented storing Hamas rockets and weapons "designed to kill Israeli citizens" in its schools, a fact which the [**UNRWA chief admitted**](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/196871) himself.

In addition, the organization has actively taken part in [**inciting anti-Semitic violence**](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/201777).