**Israel blasts UN agency for peddling 'false definition' of Palestinian refugees**

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Israel Hayom

September 26, 2018

<http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/09/26/israel-blasts-un-agency-for-peddling-false-definition-of-palestinian-refugees/>

Diplomatic officials are calling a new Foreign Ministry report "revolutionary" for its stance on UNRWA, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees.

Israel Hayom was granted exclusive access to the position paper, compiled only a few days ago, in which officials maintain that U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to end funding to UNRWA late last month "made it clear that the organization is not part of the solution but part of the problem.

"Instead of providing social aid, UNRWA exacerbates the conflict by inflating the number of fake refugees, instilling a narrative of hatred and undermining Israel's right to exist and having ties with Hamas," the report said.

"There are in practice very few Palestinians who meet the legal definition to receive refugee status. Only a few tens of thousands of the 5.4 million registered beneficiaries are refugees."

In the policy paper, ministry officials conclude UNRWA is a political organization that perpetuates the status of Palestinian refugees and feeds the cycle of violence and desperation.

"By inflating the number of registered 'refugees,' UNRWA sustains the demand for '[the right of] return' – a euphemism for Israel's destruction. Actual Palestinian refugees deserve to receive the same international assistance that other refugees around the world receive from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, in order to bring an end to and not perpetuate their status."

The Foreign Ministry then goes on to outline findings that indicate UNRWA has ties with Hamas, the terrorist group that rules the Gaza Strip, saying that the agency, in fact, helps to incite against Israel.

In another section, the policy paper sets out to respond to questions officials believe Israel's interlocutors around the world will likely ask Israeli representatives. So, for example, the policy paper breaks down the claim that the right of return is anchored in U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194 by noting that General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding.

As for the possibility that Western countries will argue that UNRWA's mandate cannot be altered due to the automatic anti-Israel majority at the U.N., Foreign Ministry officials say, "Western countries cannot hide behind the U.N. General Assembly" and should do what they can to implement change on the matter.

Late last month, the U.S. State Department announced it would cut $200 million in funding to UNRWA. The move came one week after Nation Security Adviser John Bolton said the aid agency was "a failed mechanism" that violated international law on the status of refugees.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced his support for the move at the time, saying UNRWA was, in fact, harming the Palestinians by perpetuating their status as refugees.

UNRWA Director Pierre Krähenbühl lashed out at the U.S. for the decision, saying millions of Palestinian refugees "cannot simply be wished away."

He said the children and grandchildren of long-displaced refugees in Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Congo and elsewhere are also recognized as refugees and assisted by the United Nations.

U.S. lawmakers have pressured the State Department to declassify a report, compiled and classified under the Obama administration, on the number of people who became refugees in the 1948 War of Independence.

Sources who have seen the report say that the State Department's assessment was that only 20,000 of the 700,000 Arab refugees who fled their homes in Palestine during the War of Independence are still alive and displaced from their homes.