UNRWA, the EU and the map

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The visit of the European Union Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency’s (UNRWA) schools in the Beddawi camp in Lebanon on 27 March was an important and welcomed visit by UNRWA. The EU is now the biggest donor to the UN contributing EUR 82 million to the 2018 UNRWA budget.

But events surrounding the visit also reveal UNRWA’s and the EU’s incapability to deal with extremism in the camp.

Ahead of the commissioners visit to the Beddawi camp, UNRWA decided to polish the facade of its camp. The Palestinian news site Al-Quds News reports that UNRWA had told  the inhabitants of the camp:

1. That they had to remove from schools UNRWA flags carrying ”slogans” against the official UNRWA policies.

2. Visible maps of the Palestinian one state solution in which Israel is erased and  replaced by an Arab Palestine had to be removed also.

The removal of one such in the Kawkab-Battouf School for Girls caused a lot of angry feelings among the Palestinian Arabs.  Terror organizations like Hamas complained and spoke in Palestinian media of the humiliation among those who had to remove the maps, claiming that the decision violates the so called right of refugees to their identity.

The EU commissioner came, gave some speeches and left.

As soon as the commissioner had left the UNRWA camp, the mighty EU felt it had to comment on the removal of the map in the Kawkab-Battouf School claiming the removal of the map was not a request by the EU.

One day after the visit of the commissioner, the maps that erase Israel and replace it with an Arab fictional Palestine were up again.On a wall in the Kawkab-Battouf School, Palestinian activists filmed an artist painting a map in the shape of Israel including Judea and Samaria, all in the colors of the Palestinian flag. Next to it someone had written ”I am Palestine, not neutral” referring to UNRWA’s official neutrality policy of which the map is a violation.

According to the terror organization PFLP, UNRWA staff participated in the video filmed event which was posted on Facebook. The video clip shows the map being drawn on a wall in the schoolyard inside the UNRWA school in the presence of small girls chanting ”with our blood, with our soul we will liberate you oh Palestine”. They also chanted the very famous terror slogan ”millions of martyrs are marching to Jerusalem”.

The map incident and how UNRWA and the EU dealt with it reveal how hard it is to promote democratic values in the UNRWA camps where Palestinian terror organizations and their anti-Israel and anti-reality ideology have the total control of the minds of the inhabitants.

According to UNRWA 3% of 2301 examined pages of UNRWA schoolbooks violate the values of the UN. That means 69 pages. Reports have showed that textbooks used in UNRWA’s education call for Jihad and that its teachers support the Nazi ideology. UNRWA even admits that its schools and other UN installations in Lebanon have been used by armed groups, i e terrorists. All this tells us UNRWA is weak, and lacks control or identifies with the Jihad activities. It is counterproductive to peace and democracy and it can not give the inhabitants in the camps a real and meaningful future,  despite all millions of Euros that the EU is investing in these camps.

The EU, which is the most important donor to UNRWA, and my home country Sweden - which spent more than EUR 51 million last year on UNRWA - should not allow this to continue. The donations from European democratic countries must cease as long as UNRWA is not capable of teaching the children in the camps democratic values and that Israel is here to stay.

European countries must change UNRWA radically, making sure democratic values and nothing else is being taught, removing from its schools all maps that do not recognise Israel and ensuring greater transparency into UNRWA in order for all  journalists, NGOs  and governments to access the work of UNRWA without conditions.

If all this is not possible the European donors must follow in the footsteps of the US and cease funding UNRWA.