US Congressmen to Investigate UNRWA Schools for Inciting Terrorism

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Members of the US House of Representatives are investigating incitement to terrorism in the UN Relief and Works Agency schools, Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO) told *The Jerusalem Post* on Monday.

“Congress has been asking questions about UNRWA for years, and it is important that we continue to do so until we are sure that the curriculum used and the teaching the children receive does not poison their minds,” Lamborn said.

“Textbooks and other materials that delegitimize Israel, denigrate the Jewish people, promote the ‘right of return’ through violent struggle, and glorify martyrdom must be banned.”

David Bedein, director of the Jerusalem- based Center for Near East Policy Research – which has provided material to Congress about UNRWA incitement – said, “Congress is going to begin an official investigation of UNRWA using some of our material to look at creating new standards for the organization.

While they cannot defund or get rid of UNRWA, which is ensconced in the UN,” they can advocate changes be made said Bedein, who also heads the center’s affiliated Israel Resource News Agency established in 1987.

Bedein sees getting rid of the agency as unrealistic and so is pushing for reform, particularly with its education system which promotes “war with Israel.”

The Center for Near East Policy is continually investigating UNRWA to promote accountability and transparency for the organization that serves the purpose of “keeping the Palestinian refugees as such by keeping alive the promise of return.”

Bedein’s organization released a new video, “The UNRWA Road to Terror: Palestinian Classroom Incitement,” showing youth that purportedly attend UNRWA schools voicing support for terrorism against Jews.

One UNRWA student named Arafat, from the Jerusalem neighborhood of Shuafat, says in the video, “They teach us in school that Jews are fickle, bad people. I am ready to stab a Jew, and drive [a car] over them.”

Another UNRWA student from Kalandia says, “Stabbing and running over Jews brings dignity to the Palestinians. I’m going to run them over and stab them with knives.”

Nur Taha, an UNRWA student in Kalandia, commented, “With Allah’s help, I will fight for ISIS, the Islamic State.”

UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness responded to the charges, telling the *Post,* “As with many of Bedein’s previous films, in this latest he takes non-UNRWA facilities and falsely claims they belong to UNRWA. He shows teachers claiming they are from UNRWA when in fact they are not, and he plays the same tricks with students, often misrepresenting what they say in slanted translations.”

In addition, argued Gunness, the film “fails to translate for the viewer the leading questions in Arabic that the interviewer puts to the children, such as ‘how much do you hate Jews?’ The generalized allegation made in the film that many Palestinian children who murdered Jews came from UNRWA schools is completely unsubstantiated in the film, which produces no evidence to prove this.”

On the question of textbooks, he said “UNRWA uses the same curriculum as the PA and the Israeli Education Ministry in the schools it administers” in Jerusalem.

These textbooks “have been subjected to close examination, including in studies commissioned by the US State Department, and found to be largely free of incitement. Moreover, UNRWA has in place a system of checks and balances to ensure that no incitement is taught in our classrooms.

“As a neutral UN humanitarian agency, UNRWA is committed to promoting nonviolence and the highest standards of neutrality. Our condemnation of all forms of racism including anti-Semitism is a matter of public record,” said Gunness.

Responding to the criticism by Gunness, Bedein said that he hires experts, “some with PhDs and politically unaffiliated,” to carry out the research.

A report published by his center this summer calls on a number of UNRWA reforms, including advancing the resettlement of Arab refugees, canceling the new curriculum which “incorporate principles of Jihad,” and to stop paramilitary training at all UN schools.

In addition, it drew attention to the hiring of “youth ambassador” Mohammad Assaf, a Palestinian singer, who travels the world and encourages “insurrection and violence.”