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**B'NAI BRITH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF CANADA**

**National Office/Bureau national**

Sept. 5, 2018

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Lester B. Pearson Building  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0G2

Dear Minister Freeland:

Over many years, B'nai Brith Canada has made clear to successive Canadian governments our serious concerns over the mandate and activities of UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Earlier this year, as part of our dialogue with officials of Global Affairs Canada, we presented a policy paper entitled "Confronting Anti-Israel Bias at the United Nations: What Actions Can Canada Take." In that paper we stated, in part:

*"B'nai Brith Canada believes that UNRWA activities are not contributing to the creation of a climate conducive to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and believes that Canadian assistance, beyond that provided for strict humanitarian requirements, must be conditioned on improved UNRWA performance".*

We have yet to see evidence, either through our dialogue with Canadian officials or through our direct exchanges with UNRWA officials, that the Agency is strictly implementing a principle of 'neutrality' and comprehensively reforming its approach to use of education materials that continue to demonize Israel and inculcate Palestinian children with a hatred towards Jews.

In the absence of meaningful reforms, the United States has now suspended funding UNRWA. This offers opportunities for Canada to join with those who consider UNRWA a bloated, severely politicized agency that has afforded Palestinian 'refugees' attention and terms denied to all other refugee groups. Canada must use this occasion to address UNRWA's deficiencies. B'nai Brith Canada calls for no further UNRWA contributions by Canada in the wake of the United States decision to suspend its funding.

Palestinians alone have had, since 1949, their own dedicated refugee organization at the United Nations, standing apart from the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, which focuses on all the world's other refugees, numbering close to 17 million. UNRWA - one of the longest-lasting entities at the U.N. and likely its single largest bureaucracy in terms of personnel - has also operated under singularly expansive terms, defining as its charges not only actual refugees but all their descendants, indefinitely.

Over the course of years, UNRWA schools teaching a new generation of Palestinians have been found to utilize educational materials negating the existence of Israel and the rights and history of Jews. Repeatedly, UNRWA employees have been found to be associated with Palestinian extremist groups and their doctrines of hate.



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UNRWA spokespeople routinely promulgate anti-Israel propaganda, broadcasting incendiary, one-sided narratives on both traditional and social media. Multiple UNRWA facilities and their surroundings have even been revealed to have been utilized by terrorists to launch attacks, store weaponry or construct underground tunnels for use in cross-border violence against Israelis.

And UNRWA, whose materials tout "Palestine" as if it were already a state even while also excusing Palestinians from any real obligations in peacemaking, has joined in inciting millions to dream of overrunning Israel with a mass Palestinian influx. The perpetuation of this so-called 'right of return' does not serve the cause of peace.

Ultimately, in a sign of impartiality consistent with the U.N.'s own founding principles, UNRWA's work should be absorbed into the overall U.N. refugee agency. More immediately, dramatic reform of UNRWA's mandate and operations is a necessity for restoring U.N. credibility and efficiency, ensuring fair treatment of both Israelis and Palestinians, and meaningfully pursuing peace in the Middle East. Until that long-overdue reform occurs, funds earmarked for UNRWA should be redirected in a manner that promotes, not hinders, regional reconciliation. There should be no additional Canadian funding of UNRWA until these concerns of B'nai Brith Canada, shared by so many others in the Jewish community, are addressed.

For too long, UNRWA has been a primary symbol of discrimination and waste in U.N. agencies, one that many states frequently exploit as political weapons against Israel. Palestinians should certainly not be deprived of basic international humanitarian assistance or social services. You will, I hope, be aware, Minister, that B'nai Brith Canada has expressed understanding for past Canadian contributions to meeting essential Palestinian needs. However, with their utter dependency on the role played by UNRWA - not only in material assistance but also shrill political advocacy - the Palestinians have had little incentive to finally normalize their own circumstances, temper unfeasible demands and reach a mutually just peace with Israel.

Palestinians of successive generations have been denied citizenship rights in Arab and other countries some 70 years after a similar number of Jewish refugees were fully absorbed in Israel and elsewhere. This status quo does not serve Palestinians - and it does not serve the cause of peace.

We ask, Minister, that Canada not be among those who miss this opportunity to reform fundamentally the operations of UNRWA and, ultimately, to see its work absorbed into the broader U.N. refugee framework.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Mostyn  
Chief Executive Officer  
B'nai Brith Canada

