## It’s Time to Push Back at the United Nations

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The United Nations’ obsession with Israel is well known, and well documented.

The UN’s Human Rights Commission has passed more resolutions condemning Israel than all other nations combined. That’s an interesting fact, given that many of the Commission’s members — China, Russia, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Venezuela and Qatar — rank among the worst human rights abusers on the planet.

Another UN agency, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has also been renowned for its anti-Israel bias. In October 2016, Israel suspended ties with UNESCO after the cultural agency passed a resolution criticizing Israel as an “occupying power,” and denying Jewish ties to the region’s holy sites. In May of last year — on Israel’s Independence Day, no less — UNSECO again passed a resolution on “Occupied Palestine,” which said that Israel has no legal or historical rights anywhere in Jerusalem.

Israel’s enemies use the UN as a tool — not, as they would have us believe, to advance Palestinian rights, but to undermine Israel’s legitimacy as a Jewish state. The attempt to erase the eternal connection of Jews and Israel to the very birthplace of Judaism is not about Palestinian rights, but is unmistakable evidence of an agenda that is clearly anti-Israel and antisemitic.

These efforts at the UN have done significant harm to the peace process, by appearing to justify the Palestinian Authority’s refusal to come to the negotiating table — and by providing little incentive for PA leaders to negotiate in good faith. And why should they, especially if their “friends” at the UN will impose a “favorable” solution that requires little or no compromise on their part?

Earlier this month, the United States decided to condition roughly half of its contribution to UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees) on the agency’s ability to reform itself. The administration will transfer roughly $60 million to UNRWA immediately, but the remaining pledge of $65 million has been withheld “for future consideration.” This represents a welcome departure from past American foreign policy.

The United States is right to condition these massive payments on reform. For too long UNRWA has not been held to account — for inciting hatred, protecting terrorists and enabling widespread corruption.

UNRWA was created in 1949 to support Palestinian refugees. Unlike every other category of refugee in world history, Palestinian refugee status became hereditary under UNRWA’s authority. Today there are more than five million Palestinian “refugees” living in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. Yet only a tiny percentage of them were even alive during Israel’s War of Independence in 1948 and 1949.

But this inherited status — reserved solely for Palestinian refugees–  has allowed UNRWA to ever expand. Today, UNRWA is one of the largest UN agencies. Its staff of 30,000 exceeds the staff of the UN High Commissioner on Refugees — 10,000 — and that agency works with every other refugee from around the world. The United States is the largest funder of UNRWA, contributing more than $350 million per year.

UNRWA has long been accused of ignoring its directive — to alleviate the plight of Palestinian refugees. Instead, UNRWA has been using its resources to promote incitement against Israelis and to shelter terrorists. In 2017, UNRWA filled several high-level positions with senior Palestinian terrorists, including Hamas operative Suhail al-Hindi.

Beyond employing staff with ties to terrorist organizations, UNRWA facilities are routinely used as launching pads for terrorism itself. In December 2017, a terror tunnel was discovered under two UNRWA schools. During the 2014 Gaza war, at least three Hamas weapons caches were found in other UNRWA facilities, and a Hamas terror tunnel was found under a UNRWA clinic.

There is also questionable accounting by UNRWA. A recent census by the Lebanese government found that the number of Palestinian refugees in the country is only 150,000. UNRWA, however claims that the number is 500,000. This discrepancy has renewed scrutiny regarding UNRWA’s commonly-cited total of five million Palestinian refugees across the region.

An internal UN audit found that UNRWA was particularly vulnerable to “misappropriation, graft and corruption” in its “procurement, partner selection, food and cash distribution, hiring and promotions, and other areas.” The UN audit also found that UNRWA’s oversight arrangements were deficient. All these facts, which are not new, have led to several bipartisan recommendations that American contributions to UNRWA be scrutinized and re-examined.

It is high time that the United States take a long and hard look at UNRWA and other UN and Palestinian institutions. The recent decision to withhold some of the UNRWA funding and the pending Taylor Force Act, which would demand an end to the “pay-for-slay” program of the Palestinian Authority, are both welcome developments.