

# UN agency fuels Palestinian attacks against Israel

Palestinians in Gaza said they planned to try to cross the border into Israel Tuesday for a new round of protests to mark the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Six-Day War, when Israel was attacked by Arab armies and took control of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Israel completed its withdrawal from Sinai in 1982 and returned the area to Egypt, and withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

The promised Palestinian action Tuesday follows seven weeks of protests backed by Hamas, the terrorist group that seized control of Gaza in 2007 from the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas and the terrorist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad have launched dozens of rockets, mortar shells and kites carrying firebombs over the Gaza security fence in recent weeks. Israeli troops have killed over 100 Palestinians and injured thousands who tried to breach the fence.

Two Hamas terrorists attempted to breach the border fence with an axe Monday and Israeli forces shot one dead. One Hamas mortar shell landed in the yard of an Israeli kindergarten last week, shortly before the preschoolers were set to arrive. The attacks on Israel from Gaza are part of Hamas' relentless campaign to destroy the Jewish state.

But while Hamas poses the most immediate threat to Israeli security, promoting stability and peace also depends on dealing with organizations such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which professes good intentions yet creates the conditions in which Hamas can thrive.

The Trump administration has been sharply critical of UNRWA, the U.N.'s special refugee agency devoted to Palestinians, and chose to withhold \$300 million of the annual U.S. contribution to the agency.

UNRWA must stop hiring terrorists, stop letting its facilities be used by terrorists, stop glorifying martyrdom, stop erasing Israel from maps, and stop encouraging

Palestinians to hold onto a right of return that actually undermines a potential two-state solution.

After the extensive violence in Gaza in the past few weeks, some influential Europeans are also speaking out, including Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis of Switzerland, UNRWA's eighth-largest donor.

"By supporting UNRWA, we are keeping the conflict alive," Cassis said. "It provides ammunition to continue the conflict," he explained, by fueling "unrealistic" hopes that all Palestinian refugees will someday live in what is now Israel.

The foreign minister has a point. In April and May, tens of thousands of Palestinians gathered in Gaza for the Great Return March, an intermittently violent attempt to overrun the border with Israel. While Hamas deserves most of the blame, we should not ignore the role played by UNRWA.

The marchers were not interested in a two-state solution or in preventing the U.S.'s embassy move to Jerusalem. What they want is to reclaim physically every square inch of Israel – not just lands Israel took in 1967 – that UNRWA has taught them is theirs.

On the final day of the march, organizers falsely claimed that Israeli soldiers were fleeing, even as they were reinforcing their positions, while Hamas officials lied about the border fence being breached.

Hamas led Palestinians to charge into a military zone, risking death and injury. UNRWA never literally encouraged Gazans to storm the border – as Hamas and march organizers did – yet its indoctrination motivated them to march to their deaths.

The Palestinian dream of a mass return to Israel is just that: a dream. Israel will never consent to an influx of millions of aggrieved Palestinians.

Nonetheless, UNRWA's mandate directs it to worsen this tension by preserving the Palestinians' refugee status, rather than resettling them in neighboring countries – the preferred approach of the U.N.'s primary refugee agency, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Furthermore, UNRWA treats Palestinians as refugees even if they are living in

Palestinian-controlled lands. It also incentivizes them to live in UNRWA camps rather than becoming self-sufficient. Thus, refugee camps pepper the landscape in Gaza and the West Bank, the territories that would constitute a Palestinian state under any likely peace agreement.

Maintaining these refugee camps undermines the prospect of a two-state solution by offering Palestinians false hope that they will return to Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem, and encourages Palestinians to hold out for their maximalist demands. It also justifies Israeli fears that the Palestinians would not be content with a return to the 1967 borders that existed before the Six- Day War.

Further impairing prospects for peace, UNRWA extends refugee status to those who claim to be descendants of the original Palestinian refugees from 1948. From an initial refugee population of around 700,000, according to UNRWA, the current number of Palestinians receiving UNRWA aid has ballooned to 5.4 million.

In fact, Foreign Minister Cassis noted: “The word refugee in this case no longer corresponds to the meaning we attach to it.” Palestinian refugees in Jordan, which he visited, are “third-generation families” with Jordanian passports, living in cities called refugee camps.

Bringing all these Palestinians to Israel would make Jews a minority in the world’s only Jewish state. It would dramatically increase the prospect of future conflict reminiscent of the wars of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Rwanda.

Education, a major component of UNRWA’s aid program for Gaza, has become a means of encouraging Palestinian obduracy. UNRWA textbooks, schools, and teachers entrench maximalist Palestinian demands, including the right of return to land that has been part of Israel since the Jewish state gained independence from Britain in 1948.

IMPACT-Se, an organization that monitors and evaluates school textbooks across the Middle East, produced a damning report on the Palestinian Authority textbooks used by UNRWA in Gaza. Last year’s report found that the Palestinian Authority curriculum promotes a Palestinian right of return, martyrdom, violence, demonization of Israel and religious bigotry.

Anti-Israel and anti-Jewish indoctrination of Palestinian children begins very early in both UNRWA and non-UNRWA schools. As Fox News reported this week: “A

shocking video recently surfaced that allegedly shows a play at a preschool in the Gaza Strip where children dressed up as commandoes and performed a mock hostage-taking and execution of an Israeli soldier.”

The Fox News story links to the chilling video, which is clearly designed to produce a new generation of Palestinian terrorists.

UNRWA has a lot of work to do in order to justify the restoration of U.S. funding, which amounted to approximately a quarter of the agency’s budget.

UNRWA must stop hiring terrorists, stop letting its facilities be used by terrorists, stop glorifying martyrdom, stop erasing Israel from maps, and stop encouraging Palestinians to hold onto a right of return that actually undermines a potential two-state solution.

Until then, UNRWA will be aiding and abetting the Palestinians’ march towards national disaster.

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