

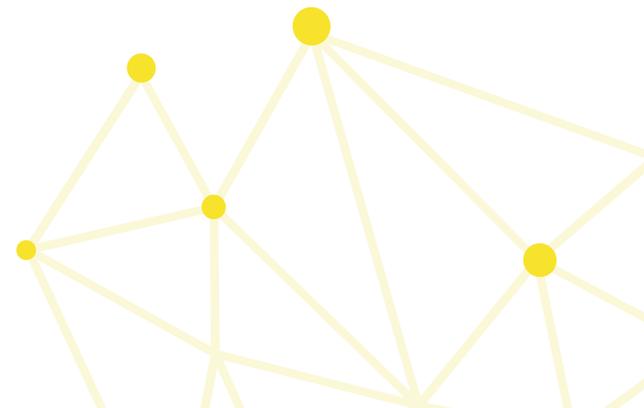
UNRWA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: CHANGING CONTEXTS FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES

Re-considering UNRWA's current relationship with the EU in changing circumstances, advocating for coherent and coordinated European policies that support Palestine refugees and consider a mandatory transition.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State of play

The United Nations Relief Works Agency in the Near East's (UNRWA) mandate as per UN Resolution 302 (IV) gives it a dual responsibility.

- The implementation of relief works 'in collaboration with local governments [...] as recommended'.
- The consultation of regional Near Eastern Governments 'in preparation for the cessation of international assistance'.

Over its 70-year mandate, UNRWA has expanded its humanitarian services massively due to the evolving needs of Palestine refugees, consequently making the Agency a 'quasi-state institution'. However, such expansion has been counterbalanced by concrete restrictions on the Agency's political bargaining power as its mandate clearly defines UNRWA's role on the ground as a purely humanitarian one, except for dealings related to a transition of power. Nonetheless, the fact that UNRWA has become a 'quasi-state institution' has given the Agency a 70-year hegemony on certain aspects of humanitarian aid, which has made it reluctant to relinquish control. UNRWA has shown inflexibility, and in particular a certain refusal, to transfer some of its responsibility to the PA, in defiance of its mandate.

The historical-political developments within the conflict have resulted in the Agency morphing from a short-term solution focused on immediate humanitarian relief, to a bureaucratic and heavily politicized quasi-state institution which provides essential education, healthcare services to over five million individuals. This has been exacerbated by extreme financial difficulties since 2018, when the US (long-term donor for the Agency) decided to withdraw USD \$305 million funding in January 2018. **In reaction, the European Union and European Member States increased their funding to USD \$465 million becoming the largest donors of the Agency.**

These financial difficulties inflated and subsequently revealed severe ethical allegations towards high-level UNRWA staff, detailing nepotism, retaliation, discrimination and other abuses of authority. These allegations have led many external actors to advocate for an institutional change. More importantly, these charges are having a serious impact on the activities of the Agency, with the Netherlands, Belgium, New Zealand and Switzerland suspending their funding to UNRWA over this ethics report. That being said, **the expansion of UNRWA's internal structure gives insight as to how its primary donors, i.e. the EU and its members, should react, considering the pivotal role they have towards the Agency's survival.**

EU and EUMS policy

The role of donors is essentially one of a board of directors and investors, in particular as they provide all sources of funding for the Agency. **This role could be utilized to implement large scale reform within UNRWA to tackle the abovementioned crisis factors.**

Erroneously, the EU has placed certain political responsibility on UNRWA, a responsibility which is not UNRWA's to hold due to the nature of its mandate, which is incredibly limited in scope when considering anything outside humanitarian advocacy. Particularly poignant examples of this imposed responsibility come from the official EU statements by former EU High Representative, regularly stating that "UNRWA is essential for the very perspective of a two-state solution". Furthermore, **as a result of poor communication, several EUMS and their agencies have put UNRWA in a position where there was a surplus of funds for a specific area but a lack in many others, due to**

the presence of multiple stream of budget all supposedly funding the same sector of activities. As a matter of fact, the paper analyses EUMS supports using official UNRWA records of donation. Germany, France, Belgium and Sweden are selected as case studies, as they are the Agency's most consistent and largest donors.

This belief that UNRWA can act as an independent political agent highlights not only a misunderstanding of the mandatory restraints the Agency has, but also of a fundamental misunderstanding of their own EU-UNRWA Joint Declaration for 2017-2020. In essence, although the EU appears to have a clear understanding of the Agency's humanitarian importance on the ground, it does not seem to take into account the actual constraints experienced by the Agency which impede it from having any political role, or even from providing the space for one.

Policy recommendations

- **The EU and EUMS, when it comes to any foreign policy related to UNRWA, should abandon any language that is not limited to humanitarian aid** and exclude discussion on the political role that the Agency plays within Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In accordance, **The UNRWA-EU Joint Declaration should be re-considered** in the current tumultuous context. As the document is not legally binding, the EU and EUMS should leverage on their funding support for the Agency having in mind the limits of UNRWA's mandate and posing certain constraints. These constraints should:

- a. **Require UNRWA to reorganize its administration** to avoid further ethical problems and
- b. **Foster accountability within the Agency's organization** with regards to its own mandate.

- **The EU, as UNRWA's primary donor, should be more present, by observing the minutiae of the Agency's administrative organization and general handling of funding with greater detail.** The Department of Planning and the External Relations and Communication Department at UNRWA Headquarter could be asked to take on more responsibility in donor communication, with the Monitoring and Evaluation indicators being pivotal leverage to foster transparency. Coherently, the EU and EUMS **should take a more coordinated approach** to the two funding tracks that the EU has in relation to UNRWA, i.e. coordinating the funding that the EU gives as a singular entity and the funding given by individual EUMS.

- Dealing with UNRWA's probable transition, the EU and EUMS should focus on **establishing a transition plan, working closely with the UNRWA policy makers.** This plan should include transition some of UNRWA's responsibilities to both host countries and to the Palestine refugees themselves. **The most feasible option for this transition of services would be to begin with Jordan Field Office coordinating directives with UNRWA Headquarter in Amman.**

- Finally, **the EU should push for a permanent budget**, overseen by the UN for the Agency as an attempt to rectify the ethical issues within the Agency along with increased and unified Monitoring & Evaluation regulations.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ComGen	Commissioner General
DSRM	Department of Security and Risk Management
ED	Education Department
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
ERCD	External Relations and Communications Department
EU	European Union
EUMS	European Union Member States
FO	UNRWA Field Office
HQ(A)	UNRWA Headquarters (Amman)
IFPO	Institut Français du Proche Orient (French Institute of the Near East)
IMPACT-SE	Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education
PA	Palestinian Authority
PB	Core Programme Budget
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
UN GA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMS	United Nations Member States
UNRWA (the Agency)	United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the political, financial and administrative crisis faced by the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as well as the nature of the EU-UNRWA relationship, with particular focus on European Union Member States' contributions to UNRWA and the EU-UNRWA Joint Declaration 2017-2020.

It will demonstrate how the financial, administrative and political problems UNRWA is facing today are a result of the fundamental paradox of it being an agency designed to deliver short term, rapid relief who has had its existence perpetuated due to the absence of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The main implication of this dynamic is that while UNRWA has factually become a key political player in the topic of Palestinian refugees today, its mandate impedes it from having any real political bargaining power. The paper will furthermore argue that the EU's policy towards UNRWA has exacerbated the latter's problems due to the faulty assumption that it indeed has such bargaining power. Yet, the paper will explain how the EU could possibly remedy (at least part of) UNRWA's current issues by virtue of it recently becoming its primary donor.

The first part of the paper depicts the nature of UNRWA's mandate, its financial deficit, administrative organization as well as the precarious political context it currently faces. The second part will examine the EU/EUMS' position towards the Agency and highlights several misunderstandings these positions arguably express. In the third and final part, the paper projects the likely prospects for UNRWA as its current mandate comes to an end and provides recommendations as per the EU's role and responsibilities within said prospects.

Keywords: Palestine refugees, financial deficit, current mandate, European Union

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article rend compte de la crise politique, financière et administrative à laquelle est aujourd'hui confronté l'Office de secours et de travaux des Nations unies pour les réfugiés de Palestine dans le Proche-Orient (UNRWA). Il analyse également la relation qui unit l'UE à l'UNRWA, en accordant une attention particulière aux contributions des États-Membres de l'UE (EMUE), et à la Déclaration Conjointe UE-UNRWA 2017-2020.

L'article vise à montrer que les problèmes administratifs, financiers et politiques de l'UNRWA résultent d'un paradoxe. Destinée à fournir de l'assistance à court-terme au moment de sa création, l'agence existe aujourd'hui depuis 70 ans, en raison de la perpétuation du conflit israélo-palestinien. Ainsi, alors que le mandat de l'UNRWA ne lui confère aucun véritable rôle politique, et donc aucune force de négociation, l'agence a progressivement acquis un rôle d'acteur-clé quant à la place et à l'avenir des réfugiés palestiniens. Les difficultés rencontrées par l'UNRWA sont d'ailleurs exacerbées lorsque l'UE lui attribue à tort un pouvoir de négociation. Cet article propose justement des pistes pour que l'UE, premier financeur de l'UNRWA, contribue (au moins partiellement) à la résolution des crises traversées par l'agence onusienne.

La première partie de cet article s'intéresse à la nature du mandat de l'UNRWA, à son déficit financier, à son organisation administrative ainsi qu'au contexte politique instable dans lequel elle évolue actuellement. La seconde partie interroge la position de l'UE et de ses États-Membres vis-à-vis de l'agence, et met en lumière certaines des incompréhensions qu'illustre ce positionnement. Enfin, la troisième et dernière partie de cet article formule des hypothèses relatives à l'avenir de l'UNRWA, alors que son mandat arrive bientôt à son terme, et, à partir de ces présentes hypothèses, propose des recommandations quant au rôle et aux responsabilités qui incombent à l'UE.

PART I - STATE OF PLAY: UNRWA'S CONCEPTION, STATUS AND CONSTRAINTS IN 2019

Part I outlines UNRWA's current mandatory, financial, political and administrative situation and **why it is unsustainable**, as well as **the main structural barriers** the Agency has with regards to its activities. Furthermore, it evaluates **the key criticisms UNRWA faces**, and how these issues impact the overall relationship the Agency has with the European Union as its main financial contributor.

The UNRWA Mandate

The United Nations Relief Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA) remains at the heart of any discussion concerning the plight of Palestine refugees. Established under UNGA Resolution 302(IV) on December 8, 1949¹, it has been providing essential services to said refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank, Gaza, and Syria ever since.²

Due to the exceptional nature of this mandate, which has not only given Palestine refugees the inherited right to receive UNRWA (or 'the Agency') benefits for the past three generations, but has also endowed the Agency with a key position at the center of a socio-political balancing act between UN member states, regional actors, host countries, and the Palestine refugees themselves, **UNRWA is the most contested UN agency to date.**³ Nevertheless, it remains a **key player in any discussion on the fate of Palestine refugees** as it is as of now the **sole institutional caretaker of Palestine refugees** (that do not have acquired nationalities of third-party states) on this scale.

Although the mandate's interpretation has been expanded to encompass the changing needs of refugees throughout its 70-year lifespan, its scope has remained two-fold as per Resolution 302 (IV): **the implementation of relief works**⁴ 'in collaboration with local governments...as recommended' and **the consultation of regional Near Eastern Governments**⁵ 'in preparation for the cessation of international assistance'.⁶ Suffice to say, the Agency's focus has been centered on the former and has largely ignored the latter, i.e. it has defied its mandate.⁷ The following sections explain the consequences of this unbalanced and near-exclusive focus on the first part of the mandate, on the organization as a whole, and thus on the quality of humanitarian aid provided to Palestine refugees.

1 "Resolution 302 (IV)". 2019. unrwa.org. <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/302%20%28IV%29.pdf>.

2 Ibid.

3 Al-Husseini, Jalal "UNRWA and the Palestinian Nation-Building Process." *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol 29, Numero 2 01/2000

4 Originally the central focus of the Agency i.e. ration provisions, temporary camp materials, bedding, etc. Today, relief works consist of preserving refugee records, providing social safety net assistance for most vulnerable refugees, and providing aid to community organizations through the RSS Departments. Read more here: <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/social-safety-net-programme?program=40>

5 Generally meaning, the host countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Israel, as well as the Palestinian Authority.

6 "Resolution 302 (IV)". 2019. unrwa.org. <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/302%20%28IV%29.pdf>

7 Bocco, Riccardo "UNRWA and the Palestine Refugees, A History Within A History". Unrwa.Org (2010): 231 <https://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201006109359.pdf>

Consequences of the Mandate: ‘Implementation of Necessary Relief Works’

The expansion of humanitarian action from emergency ‘direct relief and works programmes’⁸ (now the Relief and Social Services Department, RSS), to the multi-departmental structure of services UNRWA currently provides occurred due to the changing and increasingly important needs of Palestine refugees as the conflict persisted.

This massive task of service provision (focused exclusively on humanitarian provision) has led to several consequences for UNRWA. Firstly, **its service has essentially made the Agency a ‘quasi-state institution’**, defined by Jalal Al-Husseini as an organization ‘taking on responsibilities traditionally assigned to national governments in the fields of education, health, and social services’,⁹ that however remains inherently **devoid of any political bargaining power**. Secondly, **the ad hoc nature of UNRWA’s expansion over the**

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years has created a stagnant bureaucracy, which was only exacerbated by the financial crisis experienced in 2018 by the Agency. Finally, **its expansion had created a burden of responsibility towards both its Palestine refugee beneficiaries and external actors who fund them**, which at times is in direct contrast with the nonpolitical and humanitarian mandate that focused purely on the aforementioned “implementation of necessary relief works”.¹⁰

The expanded nature of the relief works provided by UNRWA, making the Agency a ‘quasi-state institution’, is counterbalanced by profound restrictions on the Agency’s bargaining power by its mandate. While UNRWA has essentially taken on the burden of the modern welfare state, (i.e. they are the sole provider of education, healthcare, camp improvement, microfinance, legal protection and emergency relief structures for Palestine refugees) its mandate is prohibitive of any political agency,¹¹ and clearly stipulates UNRWA’s role on the ground as purely humanitarian, with the exception of dealings related to a transition of power.

This expansion of services provided by UNRWA has created an extremely hierarchical organizational structure, which works through a top-down approach. The Commissioner General’s (ComGen) Office in Jerusalem focuses of humanitarian advocacy, and coordinates with the External Relations and Communications Department (ERCD), which handles all donor relations. Day-to-day organization of the Agency is thus handled by the Deputy ComGen Office in Amman. Below this structure are the Headquarter in Amman (hereinafter HQ A) Department heads, the most important of these departments being the Education Department, led by long-time Director of Education Dr. Caroline Pontefract, and the Department of Human Resources, which was until recently led by Chief of Staff Hakam Shahwan.^{12,13} Each Department Head leads policy within their own department, a responsibility which extends to the Chief Field Department Office (five Field Offices for each UNRWA region of operation). The Chief Field Office is also subject to the Director of each Field, and every sector of the Agency is subject to donor concerns when working with them on projects or crucial aspects of the program budget. Host country laws and materials (in the case of

8 “Resolution 302 (IV)”. 2019. Unrwa.Org. <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/302%20%28IV%29.pdf>

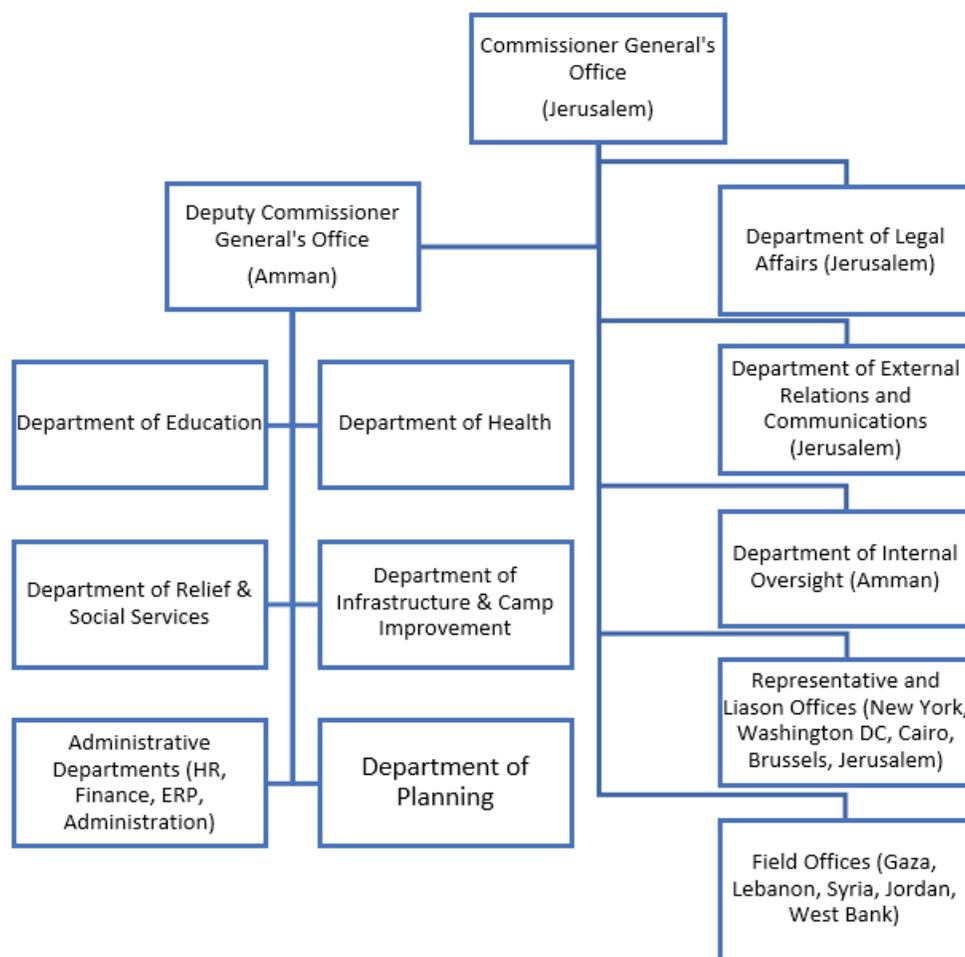
9 Al-Husseini, Jalal “UNRWA and the Palestinian Nation-Building Process.” *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol 29, Numero 2 01/2000

10 “Resolution 302 (IV)”. 2019. Unrwa.Org. <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/302%20%28IV%29.pdf>

11 Bartholomeusz, L. 2009. “The Mandate of UNRWA at Sixty”. *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28 (2-3): 452-474. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdp033.

12 Williams, Ian. 2019. “UNRWA Chief Of Staff Leaves Over ‘Unacceptable Email’”. *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/unrwa-chief-staff-leaves-unacceptable-email-190726121657614.html>.

13 “Organizational Structure | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/organizational-structure>.



schools), must also be respected.¹⁴

Overall, the administrative problems within the Agency are a result of this top-down, highly bureaucratic internal structure created through *ad hoc* expansion of humanitarian works. This top-down approach has difficulty relating to the problems on-the-ground to higher administration, and there is a constant tension between the Field Offices and Department Heads. An article in the Journal of Humanitarian Assistance explained that **the as-needed expansion of its services, and so its bureaucratic structure has created a ‘lack of proper accountability and management procedures’, which translates to a ‘recipe for mismanagement’** due the original short-term nature of the UNRWA mandate.¹⁵

While beneficiaries feel UNRWA has the ‘moral and financial responsibilities for the provision of relief services’ until which time an agreement with Israel is reached,¹⁶ external actors hold the Agency accountable for certain parts of its service provision which UNRWA actually has no control over as dictated in its mandate. Indeed, this absence of political bargaining power is in direct contradiction to the political role that has been continually thrust upon UNRWA throughout its existence. For example, when the Agency expanded its scope to include an Education Department in 1950, it was not allowed to produce its own curricula, only supplementary and optional materials.

14 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: “Organizational Structure | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/organizational-structure>.

15 Marx, Emmanuel, and Nitza Nachimas. 2019. “Dilemmas of Prolonged Humanitarian Aid Operations: The Case of UNRWA (UN Relief and Work Agency for the Palestinian Refugees) | The Journal Of Humanitarian Assistance”. Sites. Tufts.Edu. <https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/834>.

16 Al-Husseini, Jalal “UNRWA and the Palestinian Nation-Building Process.” Journal of Palestinian Studies, Vol 29, Numero 2 01/2000

While education has become the largest portion of UNRWA's budget, and the core of everyday activities (providing education for 526,646 students in 2018¹⁷ and amounting to 58% of the Agency budget in 2015¹⁸), 'schoolchildren in UNRWA schools follow the host authorities' curricula and textbooks'¹⁹ to this day.

The importance of Education as the central service provided to Palestine refugees by the Agency has led to intense criticism on the review and management of host country classroom materials. Specifically, the most reputable critiques come from Israel-affiliated or Israeli-funded organizations which review the textbooks used in UNRWA schools²⁰ - and sustainably damage the Agency's reputation. Commissioner General Pierre Krahenbuhl in his May 2019 communiqué noted this issue severely impact on the Agency, citing in particular the (somewhat biased) accusations by IMPACT-SE²¹ that the textbooks used in UNRWA schools in the oPt (given by the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education and used in both Gaza and the West Bank²²) were allegedly supporting 'terrorism'. The EU itself has followed up on these accusations, freezing aid both in 2018²³ and in May 2019 to both the PA and UNRWA, and the launching of their own investigation on said textbooks after the study done by IMPACT-SE²⁴ (which also reviews Syrian and Jordanian educational materials to comparable results²⁵). In similar fashion, the director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, an Israel based collective advocating for education as a means to resolve conflict, is cited as saying that 'UNRWA schools use the educational platform as a springboard for terrorist ideologies and incitement'.²⁶ While the content of some textbooks may be considered controversial, **UNRWA is not permitted to alter any host country classroom materials.**

The problem of textbook review illustrates the overall issue: from its conception, the Agency has adapted to both refugees' expanding needs putting pressure on it from below, and both donor country expectations and political stress placing pressure on UNRWA from above. Overall, UNRWA's assistance through the years has essentially been politicized to a degree where it has forcibly been declared by outside actors as a vector for the nation-building process.²⁷ As UNRWA's mandate is extremely narrow in scope and void of any political agency, this situation places the Agency essentially between a rock and hard place. The fact of the matter is that UNRWA neither owns the land²⁸ of its 58 'recognized' refugee camps, nor do they police said camps,²⁹ nor does it have any authoritative role in negotiations for Palestine refugees other than advocating for assistance in a humanitarian function. **It can thus**

17 "Education | UNRWA". 2019. *UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>.

18 "How We Spend Funds | UNRWA". 2019. *UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/how-you-can-help/how-we-spend-funds>.

19 "What We Do - Education | UNRWA". 2019. *UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/education>.

20 Examples include: IMPACT-SE, 2006 Israeli Defense Ministry Study, Palestinian Media Watch 2007, Center for Near East Policy Research, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Middle East Forum.

21 IMPACT-SE is an Israeli-government affiliated, non-profit organization that reviews school textbooks under several criteria for anti-Semitism, religious education and inflammatory remarks

22 Ziri, Danielle. 2019. "New UNRWA Textbooks For Palestinians Demonize Israel And Jews". The Jerusalem Post | Jpost.Com. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/New-UNRWA-textbooks-display-extreme-anti-Jewish-and-anti-Israel-sentiments-study-shows-506174>.

23 Bandler, Aaron. 2018. "EU Budget to Withhold Palestinian Aid Over Anti-Semitism In Textbooks". Jewish Journal. <https://jewishjournal.com/news/nation/239616/eu-budget-withhold-palestinian-aid-anti-semitism-textbooks/>.

24 Bachner, Michael. 2019. "EU to Probe Palestinian Textbooks for Incitement to Hatred, Violence". Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-to-probe-palestinian-textbooks-for-incitement-to-hatred-violence/>.

25 "Reports - IMPACT-Se". 2019. Impact-Se.Org. <https://www.impact-se.org/reports/>.

26 Rudec, Eliana. 2019. " Hamas' Support of UNRWA Highlights Agency's Inherent Flaws". *IsraelHayom.Com*. <https://www.israelhayom.com/2019/06/16/hamas-support-of-unrwa-highlights-agencys-inherent-flaws/>.

27 Ibid.

28 "Frequently Asked Questions | UNRWA". 2019. *UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions>.

29 "Palestine Refugees | UNRWA". 2019. *UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>.

be said that UNRWA's current mandate restricts the possibility of a state-building process, as it operates by necessity essential state functions, but it lacks of the political agency to bring them to fruit.³⁰

Consequences of the Mandate: 'Prepare for cessation of activities'

As previously noted, part of UNRWA's mandate specifies the eventuality of 'cessation' of UNRWA activities, i.e. a transition.³¹ Indeed, UNRWA de facto becoming a 'quasi-state institution' has given the Agency a 70-year hegemony on certain aspects of humanitarian aid, which has made them reluctant to relinquish control. According to an article written in the Journal of Humanitarian Assistance 'Dilemmas of Prolonged Humanitarian Aid: The

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Case of UNRWA', UNRWA has shown inflexibility, and in particular a certain refusal, to transfer some of its responsibility to the PA,³² in defiance of its mandate. For example, in 1995, in response to the burgeoning peace

process between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, UNRWA published 'The Horizon Plan', where it declared its intention to dissolve in 2000, the Agency never took any further steps to transition.

The article explains that UNRWA 'continued to hold the power to veto the activities of other organizations that engaged in assistance programs, including the Palestinian Authority'³³ and further states that this was essential in the perpetuation of refugee crisis. This has effectively annulled the only political bargaining power the Agency has. The EU should take this dilemma into account when considering UNRWA's position, in particular as this refusal to delegate has meant that 'neither the European Commission nor other [...] donors can execute any project in areas under the control of UNRWA [...] (this situation) hinders cooperation with the donors community and create unnecessary, destructive bureaucratic behavior'.³⁴ Said behavior has only been aggravated by the current crisis.

The Current Crisis

The historical-political developments within the conflict have resulted in the Agency morphing from a short-term solution focused on immediate humanitarian relief (with an initial year-long mandate), to a bureaucratic and heavily politicized quasi-state institution which provides essential education, healthcare services to over five million individuals,³⁵ despite the fact it has no political bargaining. This has been **exacerbated by extreme financial difficulties since 2018, difficulties which revealed severe ethical allegations towards UNRWA and have led to many advocating for an institutional change**, exemplified by the US envoy to the region Jason Greenblatt calling for the 'dismantlement of the Agency' at a UN Security Council meeting in May 2019.³⁶

30 Al Hussein, Jalal, and Riccardo. Bocco. 2009. "The Status of the Palestinian Refugees in the Near East: The Right of Return and UNRWA in Perspective". *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28(2-3):260-285. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdp036. Supported by: Al Hussein, Jalal. Interview by author. Tape recording, Amman, May 3 2019

31 ⁸ "Resolution 302 (IV)". 2019. Unrwa.Org. <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/302%20%28IV%29.pdf>.

32 Marx, Emmanuel, and Nitza Nachimas. 2019. "Dilemmas of Prolonged Humanitarian Aid Operations: The Case of UNRWA (UN Relief and Work Agency for the Palestinian Refugees) | The Journal Of Humanitarian Assistance". Sites. Tufts.Edu. <https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/834>

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Al-Husseini, Jalal "UNRWA and the Palestinian Nation-Building Process." *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol 29, Numero 2 01/2000

36 Patel, Yumna. 2019. "UNRWA Rejects US Calls to End Agency's Mandate – Mondoweiss". Mondoweiss. <https://mondoweiss.net/2019/05/rejects-agencys-mandate/>.

Financial Structure and Deficit since 2018

To understand what the 2018 financial deficit meant and, in a sense, continues to mean for the Agency, it is essential to have a clear understanding of how the Agency is funded. Unlike most other UN Agencies, which have an established minimum budget that is funded through the mandatory contribution given to the UN, UNRWA has what is known as a ‘voluntary budget’ that is established through contributions provided by UN member states.³⁷ These voluntary contributions from member states make up 93.28% of UNRWA funding, which is complimented by private donations and sister UN organizations such as UNICEF.³⁸ These contributions make up what is called the central or, ‘Core Programme Budget’ (hereinafter also called PB) for the Agency. This PB funds the essential services in its five fields of operation and for all of its major departments, as well as paying the salaries of its 28,000 national ‘local’ staff members. In layman terms, the PB is the funding for the bare minimum of services that the Agency provides.³⁹

In addition to this bare minimum budget, the Agency also received funding from two different monetary tracks.

- **Through the funding of its projects**, which focus on the improvement and inspection of its services in order to increase their quality. The External Relations (ERCD) Jerusalem department of the Agency works in conjunction with UNRWA departments in its Amman Headquarters to appeal to existing donors for financing of these projects, most of which apply to multiple Fields.⁴⁰ Individual Field Offices also handle projects within their Fields on a smaller scale.
- **Through the Emergency Appeals**, which generally launch in response to crisis situations within one or more of their Field Offices. Currently, the Agency has launched two politically sensitive Emergency Appeals: the 2017 Appeal for the oPt, and the Syria Regional Crisis Appeal, currently in its seventh year.
 - o The oPt Appeal focuses on the ‘socio-economic conditions rooting in occupation-related policies’ in the West Bank, and on ‘political and security situation’ in Gaza, where UNRWA states ‘1 million Palestine refugees are dependent on emergency food assistance’.
 - o The Syrian Appeal, established during the beginning of the Syrian civil war, and greatly assisted by the Education in Emergencies project (funded by Belgium), concentrates on sustained ‘humanitarian and protection needs’, in particular for Palestine refugees from Syria that are now displaced outside of the Syrian Republic (notably in Jordan and Lebanon⁴¹).

In 2018, UNRWA faced what the UNGA called the ‘greatest financial predicament in its history’. The Trump Administration announced this withdrawal due to the ‘irredeemably flawed’⁴² nature of the Agency, and as the US

37 Hillard, Laura, and Amanda Shendruk. 2019. “Funding the United Nations: What Impact Do U.S. Contributions Have on UN Agencies and Programs?” <https://www.cfr.org/article/funding-united-nations-what-impact-do-us-contributions-have-un-agencies-and-programs>.

38 “How We Are Funded | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/how-you-can-help/how-we-are-funded>.

39 „Core Programme Budget | UNRWA“. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/how-you-can-help/how-we-spend-funds/core-programme-budget>.

40 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, March 2019. Supported by: “Vacancy Announcement Director, External Relations And Communications Job Description”. 2019. UN Jobs. <https://jobs.unrwa.org/vpads/VA%20%20Director%20External%20Relations%20and%20Communications.pdf>

41 “Emergency Appeals | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <http://www.unrwa.org/how-you-can-help/how-we-spend-funds/emergency-appeals>.

42 “US Ends Aid To Palestinian Refugee Agency”. 2019. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45377336>.

has been UNRWA's primary donor for the better part of the millennia,⁴³ this directly resulted in financial crisis. However, it is important to note that the US has always been a point of international stress for the Agency. The US government has had a historically tumultuous relationship with the Agency, having used its position as UNRWA's greatest funder to apply pressure on policy.⁴⁴ As explained by the Foundation for Middle East Peace in 2018, the US Congress has directly placed legislature attacking UNRWA forty times since 2001,⁴⁵ and has been critiquing the Agency's status for decades prior.⁴⁶ Thus, the American withdrawal is in fact a culmination of these congressional attacks. Congress itself stated two primary reasons for the cuts: they accused UNRWA of promoting terrorism in education, they sustained that UNRWA's definition of a refugee was incorrect, constraining the definition exclusively to those having left Palestine in 1948.⁴⁷

The American withdrawal of funds in January 2018, to the amount of US\$305 million,⁴⁸ resulted in large staff cuts throughout (from 33,000 to 28,000 local staff members) and has had a profound impact on the lives of Palestine refugees and in every major department at the Agency.⁴⁹ These effects have been especially felt due to several extenuating factors, which UNRWA describes as 'a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty'.⁵⁰

In the Education Department, this crisis translated to a delay in the beginning of the school year for 2018-19, and in the conversion of schools into a double or triple shift schedule (i.e. two schools sharing a building and having a half-day schedule of each day). In Zarqa Refugee Camp in Jordan for example, the budget cuts translated to a slower provision of healthcare services.⁵¹ Throughout the Agency, the Camp Infrastructure apparatus (ICIP⁵²) had difficulty providing its essential waste management and camp rehabilitation services, which in some Field Offices (notably West Bank and Gaza), UNRWA is the only structure responsible. This has greatly decreased the quality of life in camps overall. The crisis became so severe that in the summer of 2018 a statement was released that 'unless it receives US\$217 million [...] it will be forced to stop all services in October'.⁵³

43 Example: in 2017 364,265,585 USD from the United States of America

44 Zanotti, Jim. 2018. "US Foreign Aid To The Palestinians - CRS Report". Fas.Org. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/middle-east/RS22967.pdf>.

45 History, Congressional, and Foundation peace. 2019. "Congressional Attacks on UNRWA: A History - Foundation for Middle East Peace". Foundation for Middle East Peace. <https://fmep.org/resource/congressional-attacks-unrwa-history/>.

46 Lynch, Colum, and Robbie Gramer. 2019. "Trump And Allies Seek End To Refugee Status For Millions Of Palestinians". *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/03/trump-palestinians-israel-refugees-unrwaand-allies-seek-end-to-refugee-status-for-millions-of-palestinians-united-nations-relief-and-works-agency-unrwa-israel-palestine-peace-plan-jared-kushner-greenb/>.

47 Albanese, Francesca. 2019. "UNRWA and Palestine Refugees, New Assaults, New Challenges". Institute For Palestine Studies - USA Current Issues in Depth Series. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/resources/current-issues-in-depth>.

48 "UNRWA in Financial Crisis; Jordan Warns Of "Catastrophe"". 2019. The Jerusalem Post. <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UNRWA-in-financial-crisis-Jordan-warns-of-catastrophe-564427>.

49 Heaney, Christopher. 2019. "UNRWA Faces Greatest Financial Crisis In Its History Following 2018 Funding Cuts, Commissioner-General Tells Fourth Committee - Press Release - Question of Palestine". Question of Palestine. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-faces-greatest-financial-crisis-in-its-history-following-2018-funding-cuts-commissioner%E2%80%9191general-tells-fourth-committee-press-release/>.

50 "Advisory Commission Meets To Discuss Global Support For UNRWA Amid Unprecedented Financial Crisis | UNRWA". 2019. *UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/advisory-commission-meets-discuss-global-support-unrwa-amid-unprecedented>.

51 Luck, Taylor. 2019. "US Defunding of Palestinian Refugee Agency Creates Crisis For Jordan". Csmonitor. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2018/0912/US-defunding-of-Palestinian-refugee-agency-creates-crisis-for-Jordan>.

52 Meaning: Infrastructure and Camp Improvement

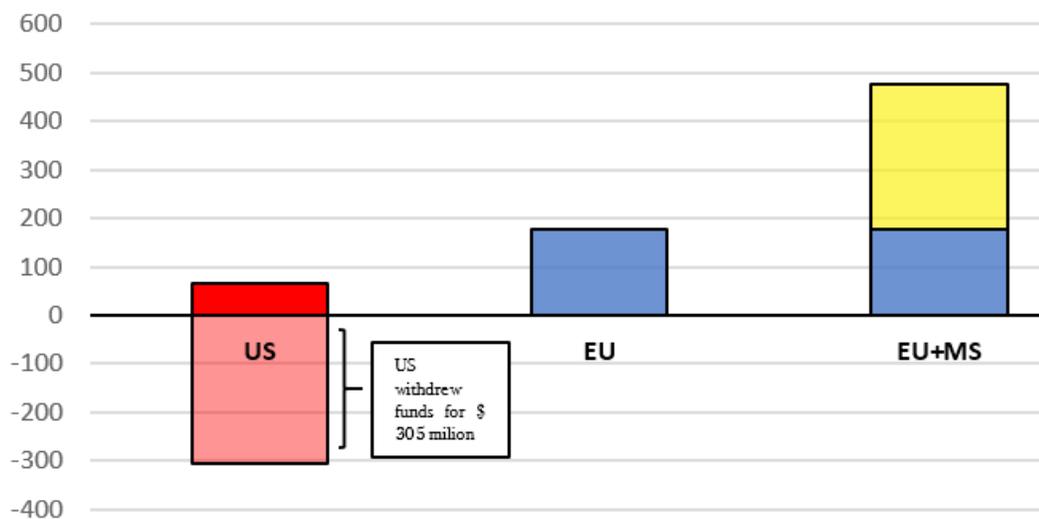
53 Luck, Taylor. 2019. "US Defunding Of Palestinian Refugee Agency Creates Crisis For Jordan". Csmonitor. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2018/0912/US-defunding-of-Palestinian-refugee-agency-creates-crisis-for-Jordan>.

The European Union increased their funding from US\$82 million to US\$178 million

to current donors and a funding campaign under the hashtag #DignityisPriceless on January 22, 2018 in order to ‘mobilize donations worldwide’.⁵⁵ In support of this, the European Union increased their funding from US\$82 million to US\$178 million and spoke in length about how it was important to ‘help the Agency find its financial footing’⁵⁶. Its member states,⁵⁷ most notably Germany and Spain, greatly increased their funding for the general Programme Budget, with the EU and EUMS making up four of the five top donors to UNRWA in 2018.⁵⁸ This support through donations makes up a combined total for the EU/EUMS of US\$465 million (the largest EU/EUMS contributions being from Germany, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain and Italy⁵⁹). It is important to note that this campaign was spearheaded by the UNRWA Executive Office.

In response to this, the Agency launched a two-pronged funding strategy to recover its US\$446 million deficit,⁵⁴ consisting of an emergency appeal

Funds to UNRWA as per confirmed donors’ pledges in 2018 (in million \$)



sis-for-Jordan.

54 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: “Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East: 1 January–31 December 2018”. 2019. Reliefweb. Int. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_74_13_E.pdf.

55 Fiddiyan-Qasmiyeh, Elena. 2018. “UNRWA Financial Crisis: The Impact on Palestinian Employees”. Middle East Monitor Vol. 48, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327260138_UNRWA_Financial_Crisis_The_Impact_on_Palestinian_Employees.

56 Heaney, Christopher. 2019. “UNRWA Faces Greatest Financial Crisis In Its History Following 2018 Funding Cuts, Commissioner-General Tells Fourth Committee - Press Release - Question Of Palestine”. Question of Palestine. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-faces-greatest-financial-crisis-in-its-history-following-2018-funding-cuts-commissioner%E2%80%9191-general-tells-fourth-committee-press-release/>.

57 This includes regional governments, i.e. Spain and its Regional Governates or Belgium and the Government of Flanders. Does not include EEA states. Until official withdrawal, the UK is being counted as an EUMS.

58 “How We Are Funded | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/how-you-can-help/how-we-are-funded>.

59 “2018 Confirmed Pledges to UNRWA’s Programmes”. 2019. *Unrwa.Org*. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/list_of_2018_pledges_by_all_donors.pdf.

Overall, the effects of the withdrawal are being continually felt into the current funding period, with a US\$360 million deficit looming over UNRWA announced in 2019.⁶⁰ This deficit severely debilitated the Agency, and placed doubt in the minds of many donors as to the Agency's capacity to continue providing services to its 5 million beneficiaries. Thus, these donations by the European Union and its members states help and are continuing to fund the basic UNRWA services that keep schools and hospitals open and provide essential services such as food distribution and waste management.⁶¹ This trend has continued, with France providing funding to its most vulnerable refugees in Lebanon in March 2019,⁶² and the Government of Austria contributing an additional €1.95 million to support the Health Department in West Bank in late July 2019.⁶³

Administrative Misconduct

The financial crisis has exacerbated and subsequently revealed gross incompetence and ethics violations within the Agency's administrative structure (which was created through the ad hoc expansion of services, as aforementioned). On July 29, 2019, Al Jazeera received a confidential ethics report detailing allegations of severe 'abuses of authority' by a high-level 'inner circle'⁶⁴. Furthermore, Al Jazeera reported that the UN was conducting a formal investigation on UNRWA concerning an ethics report that describes 'credible and corroborated' allegations of 'misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination and other abuses of authority, for personal gain, to suppress legitimate dissent, and to otherwise achieve their personal objectives' toward senior officials.⁶⁵ These senior officials included Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl, Deputy Commissioner-General Sandra Mitchell, and Chief of Staff Hakam Shahwan.⁶⁶ Both internal sources and the ethics report cite that Pierre Krahenbuhl, in violation of administrative rules which delegate donor relations to ERCDC, has acted as the direct link between the major donor states, i.e. the EU and EUMS, and the situation on the ground in Palestine, advocating for their rights and explaining to donors why the services that UNRWA provides are essential.⁶⁷

These allegations of misconduct have coupled with other administrative and bureaucratic issues within the structural framework of the Agency (in large part due to its mandatory constraints), resulting in difficulty executing the provision of services to over five million Palestine refugees.⁶⁸ The ComGen Pierre Krahenbuhl has his office in

60 Editor, VOP. 2019. "UNRWA Will Start the Year with a Deficit Due To Lack of US Assistance". VOP Today News. Reuters. <https://voiceofpeopletoday.com/unrwa-will-start-year-deficit-due-lack-us-assistance/>.

61 Fiddiyan-Qasmiyeh, Elena. 2018. "UNRWA Financial Crisis: The Impact on Palestinian Employees". Middle East Monitor Vol. 48, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327260138_UNRWA_Financial_Crisis_The_Impact_on_Palestinian_Employees.

62 "France Contributes To The UNRWA Social Safety Net Programme Supporting The Most Vulnerable Palestine Refugees In Lebanon | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/france-contributes-unrwa-social-safety-net-programme-supporting-most>.

63 "Government of Austria Contributes EUR 1.95 Million to Support UNRWA Health Services in the oPt | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/government-austria-contributes-eur-195-million-support-unrwa-health-services>.

64 Williams, Ian. 2019. "Ethics Report Accuses UNRWA Leadership Of Abuse Of Power". *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/ethics-report-accuses-unrwa-leadership-abuse-power-190726114701787.html>.

65 Williams, Ian. 2019. "Ethics Report Accuses UNRWA Leadership Of Abuse Of Power". *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/ethics-report-accuses-unrwa-leadership-abuse-power-190726114701787.html>.

66 Ibid.

67 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: Williams, Ian. 2019. "Ethics Report Accuses UNRWA Leadership Of Abuse Of Power". *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/ethics-report-accuses-unrwa-leadership-abuse-power-190726114701787.html>.

68 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: Nachmias, Nitza.

Jerusalem, although he spends most of his time travelling to donors and conferences. Thus, the head of UNRWA's Amman Headquarters until the ethics scandal was Deputy ComGen Sandra Mitchell, who oversaw all the Agency's Departments at HQ (A), and, even though it was not her official job, all the Field Directors as well.⁶⁹

This ethics report is supported by the anonymous interviews from UN staff that were conducted during March 2019 for this paper. Staff within the UNRWA Headquarters in Amman, ERCD in Jerusalem and both Jordan, West Bank, and Lebanon Field Office expressed concerns about the internal structure of the Agency, which maintains a bureaucratic structure due to the ad hoc expansion of its mandate since 1949, as previously noted. Furthermore, the hiring policies of the Agency were of concern to staff, with important post at both HQ and Field level remaining unfilled for large periods of time, and these being several instances of the Department of Human Resources largely ignoring Agency protocol with regard to Critical Posts within the UNRWA Framework.

The so-called 'exodus of senior and other staff' within the Agency, which led to 'a significant breakdown of the regular accountability structure'⁷⁰ within the report was also maintained by statements made by UNRWA staff. This led to a hiring crisis where important departments, such as the Department of Security and Risk Management, was reduced to two staff members throughout 2018, soon to be only the Chief of the department Mohamed Haider in August 2019, who was allegedly hired without proper research into his references and is allegedly grossly underqualified for his position.⁷¹

In understanding its repercussion, the importance of this confidential ethics report detailing alleged abuses of power within the Agency's higher-level management is clear. UNRWA's top-heavy approach delegates massive amounts of responsibility and a 'concentration of power' to higher level staff, leaving to what the report calls a 'management decline' since 2015. **The 2018 financial crisis only served to radicalize this concentration and created a reportedly hostile work environment,**⁷² which Foreign Policy denoted a 'bloated UNRWA bureaucracy'⁷³. **More importantly, these allegations are having a serious impact on the viability of the Agency, with the Netherlands, Belgium, New Zealand and Switzerland suspending their funding to UNRWA over this ethics report,** and the Netherlands reportedly being 'in consultation with other donors' about similar action.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Jason Greenblatt, US envoy to UN has called for a 'full and transparent investigation' towards the Agency's 'broken/unustainable' model.⁷⁵

Although explanations of the ad hoc nature of UNRWA's internal structure expansion do not excuse the Agency from taking responsibility for its alleged actions, they do give insight as to how its primary donors, i.e. the EU and its members, should react, especially considering the pivotal role they have towards the Agency's survival as the largest donors.

2019. "UNRWA at 60: Are There Better Alternatives?" Middle East Forum. https://www.meforum.org/2481/unrwa-at-60-better-alternatives#_ftn7.

69 "High Level Evaluation Of The Organizational Structure In Lebanon Field Office May 2014". 2019. UNRWA. ORG. https://evaluation.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa2014-high_level_evaluation_of_the_organizational_structure_in_lfo.pdf.

70 "Report Alleges Ethical Abuses At UN Agency For Palestinians". 2019. France 24. <https://www.france24.com/en/20190729-report-alleges-ethical-abuses-un-agency-palestinians-0>.

71 Anonymous ex-UNRWA DSRM staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019.

72 Williams, Ian. 2019. "Ethics Report Accuses UNRWA Leadership Of Abuse Of Power". *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/ethics-report-accuses-unrwa-leadership-abuse-power-190726114701787.html>.

73 Sekulow, Jay. 2018. "UNRWA Has Changed The Definition Of Refugee". Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/17/unrwa-has-changed-the-definition-of-refugee/>.

74 "Netherlands, Switzerland Suspend UNRWA Funding Over Ethics Report". 2019. Aljazeera.Com. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/netherlands-switzerland-suspend-unrwa-funding-ethics-report-190731074050968.html>.

75 Benari, Elad. 2019. "Greenblatt Calls For Probe Into UNRWA Ethical Abuses". Arutz Sheva - Israel National News. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/266666>.

PART II – EU AND EUMS POLICY: PARTNERSHIPS AND DECLARATIONS

The EU has been the Agency's strategic partner since 1979, with member state partnerships have existing since UNRWA's conception. The EU and 12 of its member states are permanent members of the Agency's Advisory Commission,⁷⁶ taking a primordial role in the advocacy and providing certain advice to the UNRWA Commissioner General Office. Part II outlines the EU and EU member states' policies towards UNRWA, focusing first on the financial aspects and political misunderstandings. Secondly, the paper analyses to what extent the EU-UNRWA Joint Declaration 2017-2020 (the official document outlining EU support to UNRWA) is being adhered to. Thirdly, using official UNRWA records of donation, Germany, France, Belgium and Sweden are selected as case studies as they are the Agency's most consistent and largest donors.

A Financial Partnership

The privileged relationship held by the EU/EUMS with UNRWA has only been strengthened since 2018, as the European Union and its member states responded with zealously to the financial crisis through widespread donations throughout the year, becoming the Agency's individual largest donor. As aforementioned, this additional support began in September 2018, when the EU reinforced their collaboration by proposing an additional US\$40 million in donations. Increasing to 446 million by the end of the budgetary year.⁷⁷

On July 25-26, 2019, the Bahrain Workshop was held by the Trump Administration to discuss the economic terms of its peace plan for the region, the first step in its two-part 'deal of the century'. During the Conference, it was reported that as part of their proposal, the US recommended that Israel withdraw UNRWA's mandate in West Bank and Gaza Fields to 'be replaced by development programmes implemented by international NGOs but run by the Palestinian Authority'.⁷⁸ Although the American conference did not live up to the conceptual expectations they had promised, it did reinforce the idea that UNRWA's future mandate decision in 2020 was up for question by a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). On the same dates, in an effort to contrast the Bahrain Workshop, UNRWA held its own annual pledging conference in the UN New York Headquarters. Following this conference, in order to reinforce their support for the Agency, the European Union announced their donation of €21 million to UNRWA for its 2019 PB, making their annual contribution a total of €107 million for the new budgetary year. The role of donors is essentially one of a board of directors and investors, in particular as they provide all sources of funding for the Agency. This role could be utilized to implement large scale reform within UNRWA. Considering that the Agency's mandate is to be discussed in the UNGA at the end of 2019, now seems to be the best time to reevaluate EU policy towards UNRWA and consider the current crisis as an opportunity for reform.

A Political Responsibility

The EU has placed certain political responsibility on UNRWA, a responsibility which is not UNRWA's to hold due to the nature of its mandate, which is incredibly limited in scope when considering anything outside humanitarian advocacy.

A particularly poignant example of this imposed responsibility occurred when the former EU High Representative

76 "Members of the Advisory Commission | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/advisory-commission/members-advisory-commission>.

77 "Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East: 1 January–31 December 2018". 2019. Reliefweb. Int. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_74_13_E.pdf.

78 "Report: US to Propose to Dismantle UNRWA During Bahrain Conference". 2019. Middle East Monitor. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190528-report-us-to-propose-to-dismantle-unrwa-during-bahrain-conference/>.

Federica Mogherini spoke at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the Situation of UNRWA in 2018, stating that ‘it is a key political contribution that UNRWA is bringing to the prospect of relaunching a credible peace process’,⁷⁹ or even more alarmingly when she states at a Ministerial Conference that ‘UNRWA is essential for the very perspective of a two-state solution’.⁸⁰ **These statements are largely misguided as researchers have shown throughout UNRWA’s mandate that the Agency’s very existence discourages the Palestinian Authority (PA) from establishing its own proper infrastructure projects, and it encourages a delegated responsibility for host countries (e.g. the refugee situation in Lebanon)**⁸¹. This belief that UNRWA can act as an independent political agent highlights not only a misunderstanding of the mandatory restraints the Agency has, but also of a fundamental misunderstanding of their own EU-UNRWA Joint Declaration for 2017-2020.

From EU statements, it is clear that they retain a clear understanding that ‘ending UNRWA’s humanitarian activities could generate instability across the region’.⁸² However, the EU and its member states have not fully understood the constraints the Agency has, nor have they grasped that the Agency’s de facto role as a quasi-state entity. Furthermore, the EU has not grasped that UNRWA is not a vector for a viable political solution to the perpetuity of the refugee status, especially since they seem reluctant to delegate any responsibility to external actors. **In essence, although the EU appears to have a clear understanding of the Agency’s humanitarian importance on the ground, it does not seem to take into account the actual constraints experienced by the Agency which impede it from having any political role, or even from providing the space for one.**

As aforementioned, increasingly throughout the recent period, there has been sentiment that UNRWA’s mandate is likely be terminated, or at least redrawn, on a serious scale at the upcoming UNGA sessions beginning September 17, 2019.⁸³ This sentiment, felt by both the refugees benefiting from the services, and from the international community funding them, has been growing since the increase in harsh criticism of UNRWA’s Education Department, the financial crisis beginning in mid-2018, its administrative crisis and more importantly, the vote for the renewal of UNRWA’s future mandate scheduled in 2020. Although the Communiqué Ministerial Strategic Dialogue⁸⁴ reiterated the EU and EUMS’ commitment to the

The Agency’s very existence discourages the Palestinian Authority from establishing its own proper infrastructure projects

79 Mogherini, Federica. 2018. “Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the Situation of UNRWA”. *EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission*. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquartershomepage_en/39514/Speech%20by%20High%20Representative/VicePresident%20Federica%20Mogherini%20at%20the%20European%20Parliament%20Plenary%20Session%20on%20the%20Situation%20of%20UNRWA.

80 “Speech by High Representative/Vice-president Federica Mogherini at the Ministerial Conference on UNRWA”. 2019. Un.Org. https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EUSPEECH_150318.pdf.

81 Al Husseini, Jalal. “UNRWA: An Agency for the Palestinians?” *Land of Blue Helmets: The United Nations and the Arab World*; eds. Karim Makdisi Vijay Prashad (2017): n.p. Print.

82 Heaney, Christopher. 2019. “UNRWA Faces Greatest Financial Crisis In Its History Following 2018 Funding Cuts, Commissioner-General Tells Fourth Committee - Press Release - Question of Palestine”. *Question of Palestine*. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-faces-greatest-financial-crisis-in-its-history-following-2018-funding-cuts-commissioner%E2%80%91general-tells-fourth-committee-press-release/>.

83 Toameh, Khaled. 2019. “Palestinians Fear UNRWA Mandate May Not Be Renewed”. *The Jerusalem Post | Jpost.Com*. <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Palestinians-fear-UNRWA-mandate-may-not-be-renewed-598895>.

84 12/04/2019, including France, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom, the European External Action Service and the European Commission. See footnote 81.

Agency,⁸⁵ a sentiment which was further reinforced at the latest Advisory Commission on July 18, 2019 in Jordan,⁸⁶ the problems previously outlined within and around the Agency have begun to drive a rift between UNRWA and the EU. **As the Agency's largest donor, the EU will have the unexpected responsibility on helping manage these future mandatory terms and perhaps deliberate and later carry out a transition of some kind for the Agency. For the EU/EUMS to consider a transition of UNRWA responsibilities in the best possible manner, it is essential that they have a clear understanding of UNRWA's current state,** especially due to the fast-approaching American 'deal of the century' and its implications.

EU Policy: The Joint Declaration

The influx of injections into UNRWA's budget during the financial crisis is indicative of the EU's strategy towards UNRWA, which aims to propose the Agency as 'one of the pillars of Middle East peace policy'.⁸⁷ **The clearest documentation of the EU strategy is the Joint Declaration between the EU and UNRWA for 2017-2020,** where the EU reiterates its commitment to a two-state solution and considers the Agency an important cadre in this regard.

The legally non-binding document states that UNRWA is essential for the 'stability in the Near East' through several means: **UNRWA's provision of 'well-being, protection and human development'** for Palestine refugees; **UNRWA's improvement of 'the plight of Palestine refugees'** by providing them with services that give them a better quality and opportunity of life; and finally, that **the Agency's 'work provides political space' for a solution to the refugee question.**⁸⁸

UNRWA's efforts on the first two provisions explained in the Joint Declaration are being achieved to a certain degree, albeit largely through ad hoc action at HQ level. This is especially true of its efforts to maintain services that are no longer funded due to the financial crisis. Certain UNRWA staff have noted that there has been a deterioration in the quality of services provided throughout. Furthermore, in certain departments, reforms that were implemented years ago have not been fully embedded within practices, such as the Education Reform 2011-2015 orchestrated by Dr. Caroline Pontefract. Nonetheless, the resistance to policies focused on UN values, and more internationally accepted educative practices within certain Fields, Jordan in particular, have stagnated the quality of services, and the lack of financial aid had impeded follow-up on improving classroom practices.⁸⁹ On the other hand, the Joint Declaration's statement that UNRWA provides 'political space'⁹⁰, appears to be increasingly remote considering the aforementioned mandatory constraints, and, when considered with the statements made by Federica Mogherini, is symptomatic of the EU's misunderstanding of the Agency.⁹¹

On the operational side, the EU proclaims its intentions through several statements: firstly, they state their

85 "Communiqué Ministerial Strategic Dialogue on UNRWA | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/communiqu%C3%A9-ministerial-strategic-dialogue-unrwa>.

86 "Statement of UNRWA Commissioner-General, to the Advisory Commission - 2019 | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-unrwa-commissioner-general-advisory-commission-2019>.

87 UNRWA. 2017. "EU and UNRWA Factsheet". EU and UNRWA https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/eu_and_unrwa_factsheet_2017.pdf.

88 Joint Declaration Between the EU and UNRWA on European Union Support to UNRWA (2017-2020)". 2019. European Union External Action Service. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_declaration_between_the_eu_and_unrwa_on_european_union_support_to_unrwa_2017-2020.pdf.

89 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: "Education Reform | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/reforming-unrwa/education-reform>.

90 Joint Declaration Between the EU and UNRWA on European Union Support to UNRWA (2017-2020)". 2019. European Union External Action Service. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_declaration_between_the_eu_and_unrwa_on_european_union_support_to_unrwa_2017-2020.pdf.

91 Ibid. pages 1-3.

intention to contribute to the Core PB and specify the nature and scope of complementary contributions (including ENI).⁹² These intentions have been followed through on to the fullest, and the EU's framework for complementary contributions has been utilized within the Agency through ERCD.⁹³

Finally, and perhaps most importantly within the document, the EU commits itself to a 'strengthened political partnership' composed of three expectations: use their relations with host countries to 'support UNRWA's internal reform process'; utilize their diplomatic relations with regional partners, particularly 'Gulf countries' to promote 'political and financial support' to the Agency; and finally to 'contribute to the improvement of the respect for the rights of Palestine refugees by host countries and Israel'.⁹⁴

The first commitment of the EU, to use their diplomatic influence with host countries '(Lebanon, Jordan, Palestinian Authority) to support UNRWA's internal reform process'⁹⁵ is only true to the extent that the statement places the relations of the EU with these three respective host countries in an essential position for the survival of the Agency. This commitment is particularly affected due to the strained relationship between the EU/EUMS and the Syrian government, largely due to the government's human rights violations during the Syrian Civil War in 2011.⁹⁶ This strained relationship affects the work that the Agency is able to do for Palestine refugees in Syria.

The last commitment is perhaps the most important commitment that the EU states within the Declaration, and it is one that is also the most challenging. The EU does provide diplomatic and financial support to Palestine refugees and the Palestinian Authority, however its commitment to the 'rights' of Palestine refugees is not necessarily translated when speaking to representatives of certain host countries i.e. Lebanon, and Israel, especially when considering the accusations that the current Israeli government places on UNRWA with regards to terrorism and the dismantlement of the Agency as a whole.^{97,98}

Overall, the EU-UNRWA Joint Declaration 2017-2020 gives clear evidence of a concrete European policy towards UNRWA that is in line with their advocacy for a two-state solution. Additionally, there is evidence of a certain concrete EU strategy towards UNRWA donations (US\$664 million total EU/EUMS contribution in 2018⁹⁹), although at times bilateral contributions can be both limited and limiting. **However, this is not to mean that the implications and duties of UNRWA's mandate are well and precisely understood by the EU establishment. As noted throughout, the political aspects of EU strategy and their attempt to utilize the Agency to that regard are indicative of a misunderstanding of the UNRWA mandate and its real ability to provide the stability needed to create a political discourse, especially with the current crises faced.**

92 Ibid.

93 Anonymous UNRWA ERCD staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: "Vacancy Announcement Director, External Relations And Communications Job Description". 2019. UN Jobs. <https://jobs.unrwa.org/vpads/VA%20%20Director%20External%20Relations%20and%20Communications.pdf>

94 "Joint Declaration Between the EU and UNRWA on European Union Support to UNRWA (2017-2020)". 2019. European Union External Action Service. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_declaration_between_the_eu_and_unrwa_on_european_union_support_to_unrwa_2017-2020.pdf.

95 Ibid.

96 Rettman, Andrew. 2019. "EU Takes Step Toward Recognition Of Dissident Syria Council". Euobserver. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/113877>.

97 JPOST STAFF, REUTERS. 2019. "UNRWA Should Be Dismantled, Netanyahu Told Nikki Haley". The Jerusalem Post | Jpost.Com. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/UNRWA-should-be-dismantled-Netanyahu-says-he-told-Nikki-Haley-496503>.

98 Baker, Alan, Amb. 2019. "UNRWA Condemns The Palestinians To Refugee Status In Perpetuity". Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. <http://jcpa.org/article/unrwa-condemns-palestinians-refugee-status-perpetuity/>.

99 UNRWA. 2017. "EU and UNRWA Factsheet". EU and UNRWA. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/eu_and_unrwa_factsheet_2017.pdf.

The EU Member States and UNRWA

The following analysis of individual member states relationship with the Agency will be used to demonstrate the vastly different bilateral contributions to UNRWA. These contributions also show that the EU common fund contributions to Agency are not necessarily in tandem with the individual states' goals, and that certain member state's goals actually impede development. Although every member state has the autonomy to make their own donations as they see fit, a more targeted approach could perhaps help the structural, political, and administrative issues within the Agency.¹⁰⁰

The political aspects of EU strategy and their attempt to utilize the Agency are indicative of a misunderstanding of the UNRWA mandate

Using official UNRWA records of donation, Germany, France, Belgium and Sweden were selected as case studies as they are the Agency's most consistent and largest donors.

Germany was the second largest donor to the Agency in 2018 after the EU, contributing a total of US\$177 million, most of which was contributed towards individual projects.¹⁰¹ According to inside sources, the projects provided by Germany were given both through the Government of Germany itself and through GIZ, a major government development agency. GIZ provides large sums of money to UNRWA through its Education Department and they have been particularly focused on providing psycho-social support (PSS) to Palestine refugee from Syria who have suffered directly from the Syrian conflict.¹⁰² This support of mental health is also translated to several other projects that Germany funds through other UNRWA departments. Furthermore, Germany is very active in its efforts to rebuild Nahr al Bared Camp in north Lebanon, which was gravely damaged in the 2007 conflict with the Islamist group Fatah al-Islam.¹⁰³ **It is important to note that the delicate nature of Germany's relations with Israel have led to its focus being the Palestine refugees outside the Palestinian Territory.**¹⁰⁴ Its relations with Jordan are particularly friendly, with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas recently stating 'Jordan and Germany are partners in supporting UNRWA, which has to continue its role'.¹⁰⁵

The French model of donation is largely concentrated on micro-finance and cash assistance programmes and education. Some of their current projects include: a Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) for vulnerable Palestine refugees from Lebanon,¹⁰⁶ a school building project exclusively for schools that also provide French as a language of instruction (known as the Tri-lingual Schools), and a capacity development project that concentrates on the 4 francophone schools in Lebanon (out of 66¹⁰⁷ schools in the country). **France's contributions to the UNRWA budget are some of the most complicated, due to the fact that according to interviews with relevant staff,**

100 Please note that pending the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union on October 31, 2019 they were not included in this analysis, despite them being an important donor to the Agency.

101 "Top 20 Donors Overall Ranking". 2019. Unrwa.Org. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/top_20_donors_overall_ranking.pdf.

102 "End Of Project: "Strengthening Psychological Support For Palestine Refugees In Lebanon" Funded By GIZ | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/end-project-%E2%80%9Cstrengthening-psychological-support-palestine-refugees-lebanon%E2%80%9D>.

103 "Rebuilding the Community Together. UNRWA and Germany Announce A New Contribution of EUR 21 Million for Further Reconstruction of NBC | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/res-building-community-together-unrwa-and-germany-announce-new-contribution>.

104 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019

105 "Germany Says To Continue Support For UNRWA". 2019. Middle East Monitor. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190609-germany-says-to-continue-support-for-unrwa/>.

106 "France Contributes To The UNRWA Social Safety Net Programme Supporting The Most Vulnerable Palestine Refugees In Lebanon | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/france-contributes-unrwa-social-safety-net-programme-supporting-most>.

107 "Lebanon | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

their donations are extremely targeted to the country's foreign interests. This is to say that France generally donates a large portion toward the PB, and then attempts to limit their projects to benefitting exclusively Lebanon and improving the level of francophones in Lebanon. To place this into context, out of UNRWA's 169 schools, only 4 can be considered 'francophone' and they were installed out of 'French insistence' rather than out of a real need for Palestine refugee students to speak French.

In April 2019, the Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Jordan hosted a conference to discuss the support that Sweden could provide to UNRWA which included major EUMS representatives as well as the European External Action Service and the European Commission.¹⁰⁸ Meetings such as these are indicative of the commitment Sweden has to the Agency, although it is important to note Sweden take a rather *hands-off* approach, contributing almost exclusively to the Core Programme Budget. Although the Netherlands takes a similar approach, also preferring to generally remain a PB donor, their contributions have increased in recent years. However, **the recent ethics report scandal has prompted the Dutch Foreign Minister Sigrid Kaag to freeze the current 2019 contribution of US\$14.5 million until the UN completes their investigation.**¹⁰⁹

Belgium most important project within the Agency has been the Education in Emergencies programme¹¹⁰ and through it, the oPt Emergency Appeal. This project has been essential in providing education to students in conflict areas,¹¹¹ in most cases Syria and Gaza.¹¹² However, due to internal politics within Belgium, the EiE project no longer has funding from Belgium in 2019 and thus students in conflict areas will no longer have access to materials or teachers in the same way. **This change is a reminder of how UNRWA's voluntary budget makes essential services such as education ephemeral.** Recent media coverage has also revealed that Belgium has halted its funding to the Agency due to the allegations of misconduct as well.

Overall, what we can see is that while the German donations have taken into account UNRWA's priorities and needs following the 2018 financial crisis, the French model of donations appears to use the Agency as a means to reach their own foreign policy priorities in Lebanon, in particular relating to the 'Francophonie' of the country.¹¹³ Whilst it is understandable that donations are made with a certain vested interest, it is imperative that these interests should not be the foundation for important monetary injections, especially as UNRWA is funded exclusively from the 'voluntary contributions'¹¹⁴. When considering the other EUMS donor countries that have recently frozen funding due to the ethical allegations surrounding the Agency at this time, it is clear that the EU has not only been negligent in surveying the organization for which they act as investors, but also it highlight the power that their contributions can have over UNRWA.¹¹⁵

108 "Communiqué Ministerial Strategic Dialogue On UNRWA - Occupied Palestinian Territory". 2019. Reliefweb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/communiqu-ministerial-strategic-dialogue-unrwa>.

109 "Netherlands, Switzerland Suspend UNRWA Funding Over Ethics Report". 2019. Aljazeera.Com. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/netherlands-switzerland-suspend-unrwa-funding-ethics-report-190731074050968.html>.

110 "The Government of Belgium's Generous Support to Education in Emergencies Gives Gaza Children a Voice - Occupied Palestinian Territory". 2019. Reliefweb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/governement-belgium-s-generous-support-education-emergencies>.

111 "Education in Emergencies: Ensuring Quality Education in Times of Crisis". 2017. unrwa.org. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/2017_education_in_emergencies_fact_sheet_-_august_update.pdf.

112 "Education in Emergencies | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/education-emergencies>.

113 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: "Francophonie". 2019. France ONU. <https://onu.delegfrance.org/Francophonie-8628>.

114 "Government Partners | UNRWA". 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/our-partners/government-partners>.

115 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: "Netherlands, Switzerland Suspend UNRWA Funding Over Ethics Report". 2019. aljazeera.com. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/netherlands-switzerland-suspend-unrwa-funding-ethics-report-190731074050968.html>.

The consequences of the general lack of coordination apparent in the way that the EU/EUMS donate to the Agency can at times result in serious consequences. Indeed, when Belgium notified to Agency that they were having difficulty securing Education in Emergency funding for the following period in 2018, the Education Department launched a funding appeal to many different agents (including Norwegian Council,¹¹⁶ GIZ) to be able to retain School Counsellors for their psychosocial support.¹¹⁷ **As a result of poor communication, several EUMS and their agencies have put UNRWA in a position where there was a surplus of funds for a specific area but a lack in many others, due to the presence of multiple stream of budget all supposedly funding the same thing.**¹¹⁸

Overview of EU-UNRWA relationship

Researcher for the Institut Français du Proche Orient (IFPO) in Amman and expert on UNRWA, Jalal Al Hussein noted that ‘UNRWA is more accountable to donors and hosts than it is to the Palestine refugees’.¹¹⁹ This rather poignant statement has proved to be correct in recent times due to UNRWA’s financial and administrative structure, which is exacerbated by the political context and pressures placed upon the Agency. Although this accountability to donors has at times constricted the Agency, it also permits major donors, notably the EU and EU member states, to take a more active role in ensuring that their donations reach their purpose, especially as the current scandal will likely be used as pretext by the American administration to terminate the Agency’s mandate. **As UNRWA’s ‘largest and most reliable donor to the Agency’,¹²⁰ the EU will need to take a strong position should this occur.** The EU also have a responsibility as UNRWA’s largest donor to consider the current crisis and the various stakeholders involved (EUMS, host countries, UNRWA staff, and the Palestine refugee beneficiaries) and take an active role in the decision-making processes related to the end of the current mandate in 2021 and whether continuing the Agency’s current modus operandi is a viable option.

The evidence provided in this paper would argue **the essential nature of the services provided by the Agency, and yet would agree that UNRWA’s current issues in situ are unsustainable**, especially as the spaces available for the Agency to function in certain Field Offices (West Bank notably) become more and more restrictive, and others are increasingly being considered more and more redundant (Jordan). **As the current mandate comes to a close in 2021, it is essential that the EU reconsider their policy concerning both the Agency.** This reassessment should be made not only with its own strategic interests and that of its member states, but also the realities on the ground, their responsibility as UNRWA’s primary investor and as to how their investment impacts the Palestine refugees that are directly affected.

116 “UNRWA Partners with the Norwegian Refugee Council and Right To Play to Support the Psychosocial Needs of Palestine Refugee Children | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-partners-norwegian-refugee-council-and-right-play-support-psychosocial>.

117 “End of Project: “Strengthening Psychological Support for Palestine Refugees in Lebanon” Funded By GIZ | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/end-project-%E2%80%9Cstrengthening-psychological-support-palestine-refugees-lebanon%E2%80%9D>.

118 Anonymous UNRWA staff member. Interview by author. Notes. Amman, 2019. Supported by: “Building Resilience: How UNRWA Psychosocial Support Counsellors Help Children Recover From Conflict | UNRWA”. 2019. UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/features/building-resilience-how-unrwa-psychosocial-support-counsellors-help-children>.

119 Al Hussein, Jalal. “UNRWA: An Agency for the Palestinians?” *Land of Blue Helmets: The United Nations and the Arab World*; eds. Karim Makdisi Vijay Prashad (2017): n. pag. Print.

120 “2018 Confirmed Pledges To UNRWA’s Programmes”. 2019. *Unrwa.Org*. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/list_of_2018_pledges_by_all_donors.pdf.

PART III – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: RECONSIDERING UNRWA’S MANDATE

As demonstrated, current EU policy concerning UNRWA is based largely on misconceptions on the scope of its mandate and it does not take into account any concrete and unified strategy between EUMS’ to properly coordinate their monetary contributions. Therefore, Part III examines the possibility for the EU to re-consider its policy based on its strategic and financial interests and guided by policy effectiveness. In short, it will be argued that the EU should use its political and financial leverage to work towards a more modernized UNRWA better suited to handle the current situation for Palestinians on the ground, as well as building concrete policy for transition.

The Utilization of Funding as a Policy Vector

The EU and EUMS, when it comes to any foreign policy related to UNRWA, should abandon any language that is not limited to humanitarian aid and exclude discussion on the political role that the Agency plays within Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Should the fundamental structure of the mandate remain as stands currently, the EU’s understanding of this mandate should come to terms with the fact that UNRWA’s position is limited due to its lacking bargaining power.

That being said, the EU, as UNRWA’s primary donor, should be more present, by observing the minutiae of the Agency’s administrative organization and general handling of funding with greater detail. The Department of Planning and the External Relations and Communication Department at UNRWA HQ in particular could be asked to take on a more primary role in donor communication, with the Monitoring and Evaluation indicators being pivotal leverage to foster transparency. **As the recent scandals have shown, there needs to be a reduced role of the Executive Office in donor relations, with a more direct contact between the EU and the Departments which they are funding.**

The EU and EUMS could also take a more direct, participatory role within UNRWA decision making with targeted funding. In this perspective, funding could be used as a pressure point to create a more efficient process within the Agency’s bureaucratic hierarchy, thereby eliminating the so-called ‘toxic and dysfunctional work environment’¹²¹ that the Executive Office is accused of creating. **This would also mean taking a more coordinated approach to the two funding tracks that the EU has in relation to UNRWA, i.e. coordinating the funding that the EU gives as a singular entity and the funding given by individual EUMS.** This should also be followed by a closer observation of where this money actually ends up through M&E, imposed and well scrutinized by the EU and EUMS as well as coordination of individual project budgets, to prevent overlap.

Rethinking the Joint Declaration in 2020

The UNRWA-EU Joint Declaration should be re-considered in the current tumultuous context in coherence with the Agency’s mandate. As the document is not legally binding **in 2020, the EU and EUMS should leverage on their funding support for the Agency having in mind the limits of UNRWA’s mandate (as shown above) and posing certain constraints.** These constraints should:

- a) **Require UNRWA to reorganize its administration** to avoid further ethical problems and
- b) **Foster accountability within the Agency’s organization** with regards to his mandate.

121 “UNRWA Corruption Scandal Fact Sheet - UN Watch”. 2019. UN Watch. <https://unwatch.org/unrwa-ethics-scandal-fact-sheet/>.

A Possible Roadmap for Transition

It is important to remember the crucial role that UNRWA plays in providing essential services to Palestine refugees throughout their five regions of operation (Jordan, West Bank, Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon). A complete suppression of the Agency would prove disastrous to any attempt at a peace process. All interested parties would face economic and political turmoil should the 5 million Palestinians that UNRWA provides for find themselves without the proper and necessary humanitarian support.

It is nevertheless crucial to speak about how to tackle the probable transition process that could begin as early as this year where the EU and EUMS will have a pivotal role as primary donors of the Agency.

- The EU and EUMS should concentrate on their discussions within the UNGA meeting that began in September and **attempt to glean a meaningful policy of transition hand-in-hand with UNRWA policy makers**. The most important of these meetings will be the UNGA Fourth Committee which in the 48th Plenary Session of the General Assembly on 7 December 2019 will discuss the future of UNRWA.¹²²
- The EU should focus these discussions on the UNRWA mandate and the creation of **a plan to transition some of UNRWA's responsibilities to both host countries and to the Palestine refugees themselves** all while safeguarding the 33,000 workers that UNRWA employs. Furthermore, should the decision to transition the Agency's responsibilities be made, the EU should consider UNRWA's aforementioned reluctance to hand over its services to third parties. The unique position held by the EU in its financial and strategic relationship with UNRWA should be wielded to permit this transition of services to take place. **The most feasible option for this transition of services, and thereby of status for Palestine refugees, would be to begin with Jordan Field Office coordinating directives with UNRWA HQ Amman.**
- Moreover, **the EU should advocate at the UNGA for a permanent budget**, overseen by the UN for the Agency as an attempt to rectify the ethical issues within the Agency along with increased and unified Monitoring & Evaluation regulations.

Throughout this paper, it has been noted the profound and unsustainable issues relating to UNRWA's current state of affairs. Such situations are inherent to UNRWA condition and are sufficient reasons for advocating for a deep structural and administrative reform within the Agency. This is even more pertinent due to the current and vocal US strategy. **The EU's responsibility as UNRWA's primary financier and in coherence with fundamental EU values, will allow it to act as an active mediator in the next UNGA session to ensure a stable political situation in the region.** This structural reform should include a strong leadership willing to engage in Field Office resistance and the Palestinian Area Staff Union, and the recruitment of more specialized staff. It is important to note that any concrete attempt at transition will require care and consideration for either the safeguarding or the transition of the Palestine refugee status that remains an essential component of the Palestinian identity. Any propositions the EU has will need to maintain this scope clear.

122 "Schedule of General Assembly Plenary and Related Meetings 73rd Session". 2019. UN.ORG. <https://un.org/en/ga/info/meetings/73schedule.shtml>.

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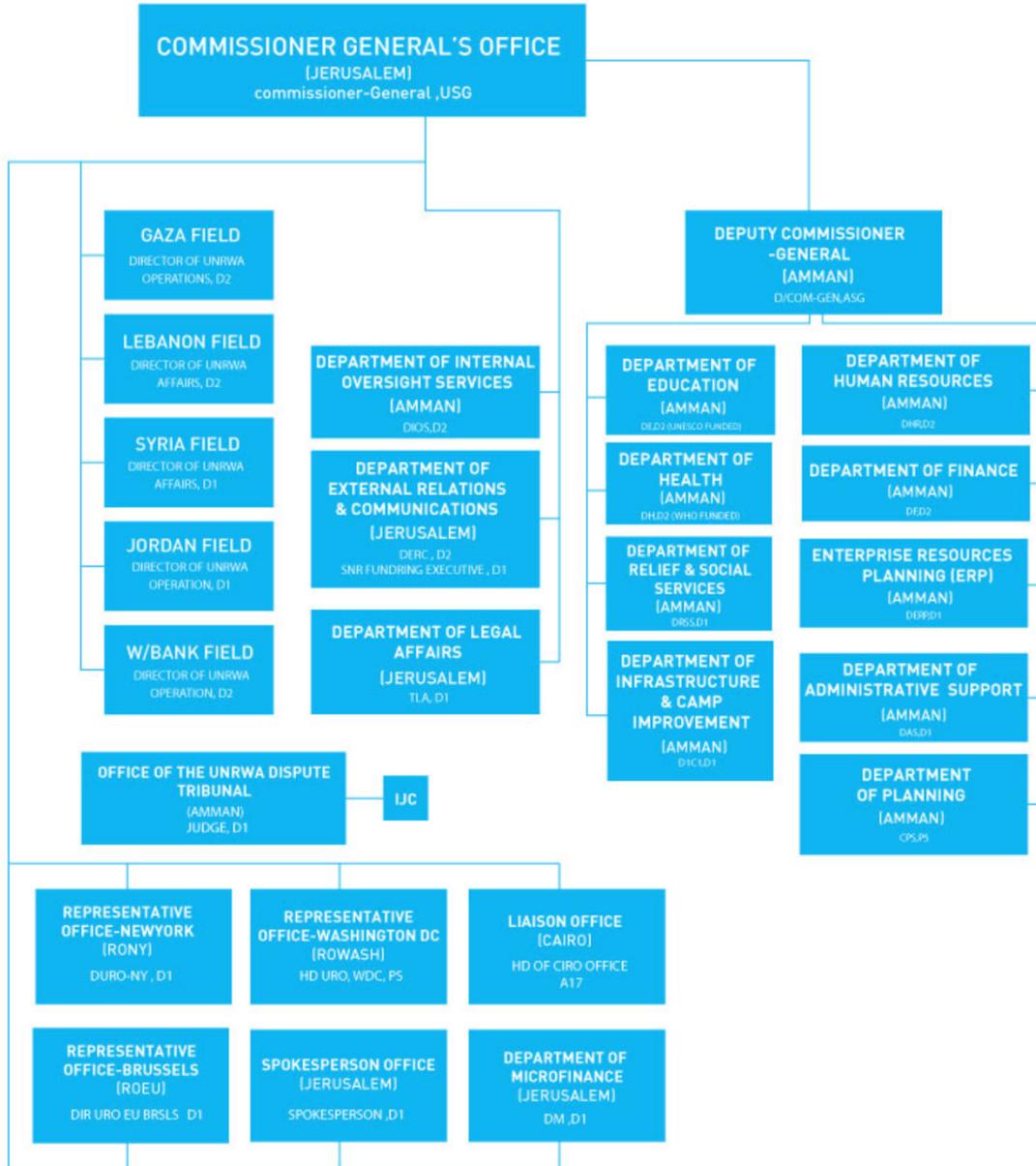
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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF UNRWA



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