With UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), the United Nations operates an aid organization solely for Palestinian refugees and their descendants. All other refugee groups recognized by the United Nations are looked after by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). The status of these non-Palestinian refugees is limited to the first generation and does not apply to their descendants.

Assertion

UNRWA is an apolitical, humanitarian organization that supports Palestinian refugees.

Facts

The UNHCR, which is responsible for all refugee groups except the Palestinians, does not employ any aid recipients in order to avoid conflicts of interest. The Palestinian refugee relief organization UNRWA, on the other hand, has no such restrictions: The majority of UNRWA employees are Palestinians. They have an interest in maintaining and growing their own organization. Some UNRWA employees have links to the Hamas terrorist group in Gaza. This was revealed by a fact check carried out by the organization UN-Watch.

Further information

UNRWA, for example, states that it checks all employees against the UN Security Council's sanctions list. However, Hamas is not even listed there. In the past, UN-Watch has been able to identify Hamas members in UNRWA on several occasions. These links to Hamas have been known for years, as the former head of UNRWA, Peter Hansen, confirmed in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 2004.
Several UNRWA employees celebrated the Hamas terror of October 7, 2023 on social media.
Hamas also uses UNRWA buildings , such as schools, to attack Israeli forces and civilian targets and to store weapons and ammunition.

Assertion

According to UNRWA, it pursues a teaching approach that emphasizes human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance.

Facts

More than half a million Palestinian children are taught in schools run by UNRWA. Since August 2000, lessons have been based on textbooks and the official curriculum of the Palestinian Authority. The schools incite violence against Israel, demonize Jews and encourage martyrdom. The anti-Semitic content has been documented and published here and in the extensive studies published in November 2023 by UN Watch and the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se).

Further information

Israel, for example, is not recognized in the teaching materials as an existing and legal state, but reference is made to “the Zionist entity” or “the Zionist occupation”. The maps also depict the entire territory of Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as one country, “Palestine”. According to IMPACT-SE, peace is not promoted as the goal of conflict resolution, but only a military victory against “the Zionists”.

Assertion

According to UNRWA, almost 6 million Palestinians are currently on the run.

Facts

The vast majority of Palestinians are not refugees, even though 5.9 million Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA today. This is because the Palestinians are the only refugee group in the world whose descendants are also

considered refugees. In 1948, around 750,000 Arabs fled or left the region in the wake of the founding of the Israeli state and the subsequent attack by the armies of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq. Fewer than 100,000 of them are still alive today. They are genuine refugees within the meaning of the UN Refugee Convention; their descendants, i.e. the remaining 5.8 million Palestinians who claim this status, are not.

Further information

The Palestinians pass on their status as refugees to the next generation through the paternal line, as can be read here on the UNWRA website – this inheritability of refugee status is contrary to the status of all other refugees in the world and contrary to the Geneva Refugee Convention.

This is the reason why UNWRA counts 1.7 Palestinian refugees in Gaza and almost 900,000 refugees in the West Bank. So they live in their ancestral territory, but are still considered refugees. If so, they should be referred to as “displaced persons” because they or their ancestors remained within the Palestinian Mandate.

In Jordan, more than two million Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA. However, the vast majority of Palestinians living there were born and raised in Jordan. They are Jordanian citizens with full rights. Many are successful business people and well integrated – but are nevertheless on UNRWA’s list. Syria(438,000 registered Palestinian refugees) and Lebanon (490,000) have always refused to integrate the Palestinians.

What is also hardly ever mentioned: At the same time, around 900,000 Jews fled from Arab countries. Today, there are hardly any Jews left in Arab countries, but around 21 percent of Israelis are Arabs.

Assertion

The Palestinian relief organization UNRWA needs more financial support.

Facts

In relative terms, UNRWA is far better funded than the UNHCR, which is responsible for all other refugee groups. UNRWA has an annual budget of over one billion dollars at its disposal. It employs around 30,000 people who support the almost 6 million registered refugees. This means that one employee looks after around 200 UNRWA beneficiaries. In contrast, around 19,000 people work for the UNHCR, looking after around 92 million people. Accordingly, one employee has to look after an average of 4,800 people. The financial contribution per refugee for both UNRWA and the UNHCR is around 200 dollars, although UNRWA supports significantly fewer refugees than the UNHCR.

Further information

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	UNRWA	UNHCR
Number of refugees assisted, incl. internally displaced persons	5.9 million	92 million
Donor contributions (incl. projects)	USD 1.2 billion	USD 5.9 billion
Contribution per refugee, incl. internally displaced persons	199 USD	201 USD
Donor contributions Switzerland (incl. projects)	USD 26 million	USD 58 million
Switzerland’s contribution per refugee	4.40 USD	0.60 USD

Employees	approx. 30’000	approx. 19’000
Number of refugees, including internally displaced persons, per person employed by UNRWA or UNHCR	approx. 200	approx. 4’800
Refugee status	Inherited	Limited to first generation according to the Geneva Refugee Convention