Gottheimer to call on U.N. secretary-general, UNRWA chief to step down

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Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) is expected to lead a letter to Secretary of State Tony Blinken on Tuesday calling for U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres and U.N. Relief and Works Agency Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini to resign following what the New Jersey lawmaker described as the ‘appalling and disturbing saga’ of  the U.N.’s response to the Oct. 7 attack in Israel, including UNRWA employees’ participation in the Hamas assault, *Jewish Insider* has learned.

‘I have lost all confidence in Secretary-General António Guterres’ ability to ensure that the U.N. is not actively supporting terrorism or giving refuge to known terrorists,’ the letter, excerpts of which were obtained by JI, reads. ‘Therefore, I ask you to call on Secretary-General Guterres and UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini to immediately resign from their posts. They can no longer be trusted to maintain international peace and security, protect all nations, and uphold international law.’

Gottheimer’s letter will point to a series of U.N. responses and reactions to the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel, including allegations that UNRWA employees were involved in the attacks, other ties between UNRWA and Hamas, the U.N.‘s equivocal initial response to the attack and UN Women’s slow response to acknowledge Hamas’ sexual violence.

Gottheimer plans to circulate the letter on Capitol Hill on Tuesday morning for additional signatures, JI has learned.

The letter will ask the G7 nations to investigate Hamas’ involvement in UNRWA and implement ‘strict ongoing oversight’ of its activities.

‘We must ensure not a dollar more of aid for innocent civilians ends up in the hands of terrorists. UNRWA also should immediately replace its senior leadership,’ the letter reads. ‘It is unacceptable that U.S. tax dollars, allocated to assist innocent Palestinians, instead funded tunnels [under UNRWA buildings](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-un-aid-refugees-29932f8d12c4fa748daa03e3689dc536), and paid for terrorists to murder, rape, kidnap, and hold innocent civilians hostage.’

The letter is expected to be sent to Blinken ahead of a House hearing on UNRWA on Tuesday afternoon. It comes as other moderate pro-Israel Democrats have told JI that they’re open to seeing the organization disbanded and replaced.