# Biden’s neutrality on infrastructure of the war against Israel

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The [arrival in Israel](https://www.jns.org/thomas-greenfield-meets-top-israeli-leaders-promises-to-combat-anti-israel-bias-at-un/) of the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, was another example of the efforts that are being made by both governments to act as if relations between the two allies couldn’t be better. Thomas-Greenfield pleased her hosts by speaking about a common agenda at the world body in which both sought to “combat anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias,” as well as a common “approach to shared regional threats.” Bennett replied by calling her “a representative of a voice of reason and decency in an institution that I think we can both objectively say is pretty biased in terms of its treatment of Israel.”

That’s the sort of rhetoric expected from allies. But back at the United Nations, the Biden administration was undermining the notion that all is well between the two countries. The Americans [abstained](https://www.jns.org/us-abstention-on-anti-israel-unrwa-vote-marks-dangerous-backslide-in-policy-at-un/) last week on a U.N. resolution on “assistance to Palestinian refugees” that essentially called for the descendants of Arabs who fled what was then British Mandate Palestine to be compensated, as well as for an unlimited “right of return”—something that is incompatible with the survival of Israel as a Jewish state. It was one of a [series of resolutions](https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/gaspd743.doc.htm) that are linked to support for the UNRWA, the agency of the world body that is solely devoted to backing the Palestinian refugees.

Does an American refusal to oppose a document that essentially calls for Israel’s elimination matter as much as a warm embrace of leaders? The vote at the United Nations didn’t generate much of a protest from Jerusalem. Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid clearly feel that they have bigger problems than the mischief being made in New York by UNRWA. And with the government also dealing with a [visit by Robert Malley](https://www.israelhayom.com/2021/11/15/us-iran-envoy-in-israel-ahead-of-upcoming-nuclear-talks/), the administration’s special envoy for Iran, they have some reason for thinking so. While Lapid met with Malley—a longtime antagonist of the Jewish state—to tell him that Israel thinks Biden’s goal of reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal is both futile and dangerous, Bennett refused even to sit down with him.

Compared to the existential threat posed by Iran’s nuclear ambitions and the American desire for a rapprochement with Tehran, talk about a “right of return” that will never happen in the ideological fantasy world of the United Nations doesn’t seem too important. And other than some protests about the U.S. abstention from critics of Biden’s policies like the [Zionist Organization of America](https://zoa.org/2021/11/10444357-zoa-condemns-biden-admin-for-refusing-to-oppose-new-un-resolution-aimed-at-destroying-israel/), most of the world seemed to concur with that judgment by largely ignoring it.

But that is a mistake, both on the part of Israel and by many of those Jewish groups who are tasked with advocating for Israel. As with past failures to take U.N. incitement against Israel at the U.N. Human Rights Council where anti-Semitic initiatives are just business as usual, the problem with ignoring UNRWA is that it’s not just a matter of empty talk from extremists who want to destroy the Jewish state. Letting the “apartheid Israel” lies promoted at U.N. forums since the infamous 2001 Durban “anti-racism” conference go unanswered has led to those canards being accepted throughout the world in academic circles and political forums, proving that ignoring UNRWA comes with a cost.

The best word to describe the role that UNRWA plays in fueling the war on Israel is one that means a lot to the Biden administration these days: infrastructure.

Founded in 1949 in the wake of Israel’s War of Independence, UNRWA was different from the other U.N. refugee agency—the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees—that was created a year later to deal with every other such population on the planet. The UNHCR had as its purpose the goal of helping to resettle refugees. UNRWA seeks to perpetuate the Palestinian refugee problem by not trying to help them establish new lives and homes. Instead, it keeps them in place in refugee camps—now built-up urban neighborhoods—so as to maintain their status as political cudgels with which to beat Israel.

In this way, UNRWA, which is generally represented in the mainstream media as a charitable organization, provides the essential infrastructure of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The refugees—a multi-generational population of which the overwhelming majority are not truly refugees but their descendants—are a permanent obstacle to any hope of a peace settlement.

Their numbers have ballooned from the original 750,000 or more Arabs who fled their homes, largely in the hope of returning to them after Israel’s eradication, to estimates of up to 5 million today. No Palestinian Arab leader—not the supposed “moderates” of Fatah, who despotically govern the West Bank under the corrupt rule of Mahmoud Abbas or the Islamists of Hamas who lord it over Gaza—dare defy their hopes of one day coming back to places in Israel that their great-grandparents left in 1948. Indeed, Palestinian political culture revolves around their demands, which are incompatible with any notion of peace that doesn’t mean Israel’s destruction.

Funding for UNRWA, therefore, is not so much help for stateless people as it is ensuring that they remain without permanent homes so that the war on Israel can go on. UNRWA facilities and schools are incubators not just for Palestinian irredentism but also of hate for Jews and Israelis, not to mention material assistance for terrorists like those of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

As with its moves on Jerusalem, and its push for normalization between Israel and the Arab world that resulted in the Abraham Accords, the Trump administration broke with U.S. diplomatic tradition and sought to eradicate UNRWA by pulling funding. But, as with everything else Trump did, Biden’s foreign-policy team is determined to reverse that effort.

The foreign-policy establishment, whose members fill most of the posts in both the Obama and Biden administrations, applaud this as a return to a belief in diplomacy, support for multilateralism and an embrace of the possibility of peace. It is actually nothing of the kind. On the contrary, by treating UNRWA as untouchable, Biden is ensuring that the war on Israel will continue.

That’s exactly what those on the far-left want since the intersectional ideas embraced by many in the activist base of the Democratic Party demand that Israel be treated as a colonialist expression of white privilege and imperialism that must be destroyed.

And that is the opposite of what the Biden administration tells us it wants for the Middle East. Yet by choosing not to oppose UNRWA’s efforts to delegitimize Israel, officials are, just like their Jerusalem consulate plans, sending a signal to Palestinians that they don’t need to accept the reality of Israel—a reversal of the stand that was the hallmark of the policies of Biden’s predecessor.

Seen from this perspective, an obscure vote on a U.N. resolution in which the United States declares its neutrality is actually a lot more important than statements publicly exchanged between Israeli and American officials. As long as that is true, any claims about the pro-Israel sentiments of Biden and his appointees remain meaningless.