Foreign Ministry urges diplomats to cut UNRWA funding

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<http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/11/28/foreign-ministry-urges-diplomats-to-cut-unrwa-funding/>

Israel on Tuesday urged the international community to rethink its donations to UNRWA, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, [saying it should be shut down](http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/09/02/netanyahu-unrwa-harms-palestinian-refugees-should-close-down/).

"Israel's policy is to close UNRWA. They are the problem, not the solution," Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely said at a briefing with 50 foreign ambassadors and diplomats on Israel's policy on the matter.

Hotovely spoke of the shift in U.S. policy on UNRWA over the past year, with Washington ending its funding to the agency and demanding that it [undergo a "fundamental re-examination,"](http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/01/17/us-withholds-65-million-in-aid-to-palestinian-refugees/) and underscored how other refugee crises have been handled in the past.

"Over the years, we have seen how instead of settling the original refugees, UNRWA has acted to increase the number of refugees, as it did when it automatically transferred refugee status from generation to generation," Hotovely said.

"There is no parallel for this in the world, and it only perpetuates the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict. After 70 years, why are there still Palestinian refugees, when it is clear to all that fewer than 100,000 Palestinians from the time of the [1948] War of Independence are still alive?"

Tuesday's briefing was the first time that foreign ambassadors have been presented with the Israeli government's alternative model for aiding Palestinian refugees and their offspring, which Hotovely asked them to relay to their respective governments.

"The Jordanian model, in which Jordan de facto naturalized the refugees, is also the right model for Syria and Lebanon," she said.

"In addition, one must differentiate between east Jerusalem, in which there is Israeli control, and Palestinian Authority territory. There is no justification for running two parallel education systems for the same people. The responsibility for education in Area A is that of the Palestinian Authority and not UNRWA.

"In contrast, the situation in [the] Gaza [Strip] is complex, and U.N. organizations such as the UNDP [U.N. Development Program], which use an alternative pipeline to transfer humanitarian aid, should be found.

"There is no justification for maintaining millions of alleged refugees, fake refugees," she said.

Hotovely's statements were coordinated with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is also acting foreign minister.

Netanyahu has asserted in the past that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency is actually harming the Palestinians by perpetuating their status as refugees.

Also taking part in the briefing was former Labor MK Dr. Einat Wilf, [co-author of the book "The War for Return](http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/05/25/israel-keeps-the-palestinian-dream-of-return-alive/)."

Wilf told the diplomats that ongoing Western support for UNRWA constitutes an obstacle to peace, as it is perceived by the Palestinians as implied support for their demand to "return" to Israel.

Jordanian Ambassador to Israel Ghassan Majali said he was concerned that issues once seen as at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were being sidelined.

Swiss Ambassador Jean-Daniel Ruch and Norwegian Ambassador Jon Hanssen-Bauer‏, whose countries are two of the largest donors to UNRWA, said those referred to as "Palestinian refugees" should maintain that status.

Dozens of ambassadors and diplomats attended, from countries including  Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Russia and Sweden.