Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh was an UNRWA teacher - former agency official

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<https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-792791>

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh worked as a teacher for the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency](https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-791719) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the past, former UNRWA official Ahmad Oueidat revealed in an interview with the London-based Al-Hiwar TV channel last week, according to footage translated by MEMRI.

‘First and foremost, we can mention Ismail Haniyeh, who was an UNRWA teacher, and so was Dr. Talal Naji, Secretary-General of the PFLP-GC,’ said Oueidat.

The former UNRWA official said that UNRWA has tried ‘to constitute a national platform and a long arm, which would enable the Palestinian refugees to obtain their rights and first and foremost – the Right of Return.’

‘There used to be quality in [UNRWA's] education. The teaching cadres really embraced their profession. However, the Americans and the Zionists did not look at this favorably. This is why they insisted on interfering. We, as UNRWA employees, had to deal with that interference. My final position was head of the Professional Development and Curriculum Unit, so I had to deal with it directly. They forced us to remove pictures and various topics.

‘They planted [in the curricula] topics that have nothing to do with our values and our heritage, under the fancy slogans like neutrality, independence, impartiality, and humanity – as if UNRWA was not humane and neutral before,’ added Oueidat. ‘The Israelis, the Americans, and the Western politicians felt that as long as UNRWA upholds its goals, it constitutes a source of danger. This is why [they decided] to corrupt it.’

**UNRWA under fire for Hamas links**

UNRWA has come under fire in recent months as members of the UN agency were found to be linked to Hamas and some even took part directly in the October 7th massacre. Israeli media has also reported that several UNRWA teachers held some Israelis hostage in Gaza after the attack.

Sixteen countries suspended funding to UNRWA after the allegations [came to light](https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-785037). UNRWA fired some of the staff members accused of ties to Hamas, although others remain. The head of the agency, [Philippe Lazzarini](https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-786447) admitted in an interview with *The New York Times* in February that UNRWA knew that many of its members were tied to Hamas, but claimed that avoiding having Hamas members in the agency was impossible.

UNRWA has also been accused of helping Hamas’s military efforts, and tunnels and rockets have repeatedly been found in and under UNRWA facilities over the past decade.

In February, the IDF found a large tunnel containing extensive infrastructure for Hamas’s military intelligence wing under UNRWA’s headquarters in Gaza. Weapons were also found in the headquarters itself.

UNRWA’s schools have consistently been found to use material directly inciting students to terrorism and antisemitism.

The IMPACT-SE watchdog noted in its most recent report on the matter in November that [UNRWA textbooks](https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-779060) are ‘openly antisemitic and continue to encourage violence, jihad, and martyrdom while peace is not taught as preferable or even possible. Extreme nationalism and Islamist ideologies proliferate throughout the curriculum, including in science and math textbooks.’

Some examples of incendiary and antisemitic educational material include a reading comprehension exercise celebrating a Palestinian firebombing attack on a Jewish bus as a ‘barbecue party’ and material glorifying Dalal Mughrabi, a terrorist who murdered 38 Israeli civilians in the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre, as a role model for children.