Expert: U.S. Must Pull $40 Million from U.N. Agencies over Palestinian Membership

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## International legal scholar Eugene Kotorovich argues in a new paper that the U.S. must, by law, withdraw $40 million in funding from two United Nations agencies because they granted membership to the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The agencies are the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which the PA joined in May.

U.S. law theoretically prevents American taxpayers from funding U.N. bodies that admit “Palestine” as a member state, because it is not a state and because the U.S. wants to encourage Palestinians to seek statehood through negotiations with Israel.

In the new paper, “Palestinian Membership in UN Agencies: Mandatory Defunding Under US Law,” Kontorovich argues:

U.S. law prohibits funding UN “affiliated organizations” that accept the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a member state. In the past two years, the PA has been accepted into four such organizations, two of them in the past months. Yet thus far, none of these organizations have had their funding stopped.

This is part of the PA’s strategy of seeking a fait accompli of statehood through international recognition, rather than as the result of negotiations with Israel. Such international recognition only hardens Palestinian positions and encourages the Palestinians to make maximalist and unrealistic demands in the peace process, while politicizing the technical agencies involved.

…

In May 2018, the Palestinian Authority (PA) sought and received membership in several UN organizations, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The move was taken in retaliation for U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and as part of a long-range Palestinian strategy of seeking statehood recognition through international organizations, rather than through negotiations with Israel.

Kontorovich notes that the PA did not simply did not start seeking membership in U.N. bodies after President Donald Trump moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, but actually began doing so while President Barack Obama was in office: “In 2016, the PA also joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and in 2017 it joined the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).” The Obama administration’s failure to respond encouraged the PA to continue, he argues.

Obama did [cut funding](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/11/20111119120755995.html) to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011 after the PA joined. However, the Obama administration sought to find legal loopholes to avoid cutting funds after the PA joined other U.N. bodies.

The Trump administration [cut funds](https://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2018/01/05/trump-suspends-aid-u-n-agency-dealing-palestinian-refugees/) earlier this year to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the special U.N. agency dealing solely with Palestinian refugees, over hostile Palestinian reactions to the U.S. embassy moving to Jerusalem.

Kontorovich argues that far from inflaming tensions with the PA, the U.S. will lose credibility as a Middle East peace broker if it does not live up to its own laws and respond to unilateral Palestinian moves that threaten peace.

He told Breitbart News on Wednesday:

U.S. law bans funding U.N. organizations that give the PLO the status of a member state. But President Obama refused to apply the law when they joined one such organization two years ago. Not surprisingly, they have since joined three more. The State Department must restore American credibility by stopping funding to all these U.N. agencies. The constitutional primacy of Congress in deciding how taxpayer money is spent is what is at stake here. And if some should object that defunding these U.N. bodies would interfere with valuable work they do, that is something the U.N. obviously has decided is less important than helping Palestinian unilateralism.

Breitbart News reported [earlier this year](https://www.breitbart.com/jerusalem/2018/05/26/u-s-mulls-cutting-funds-to-un-agencies-chemical-weapons-pact-over-palestinian-membership/) that the Trump administration is, indeed, considering further funding cuts to U.N. bodies that admit the Palestinian Authority. However, no decisions have yet been taken to do so.

Kontorovich’s paper was published by the [Kohelet Policy Forum](https://en.kohelet.org.il/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), which seeks to promote nationalism, individual liberty, and free market principles.