

February 17, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We wish to thank you for the Biden administration's restoration of humanitarian assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), including your December 2021 decision to provide an additional \$99 million to the Agency.

In your support of UNRWA, you are also reinforcing the importance of the UN-led multilateral system, ensuring that US humanitarian assistance is provided on the basis of need alone and not politics, and contributing to regional stability and security. As we have seen over and over, respected outside organizations including the [World Bank and UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), [British Council](#) and the [Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network](#), have validated both the effectiveness and cost efficiency of UNRWA's programs.

We are concerned by the continuation of inaccurate and unfounded criticisms of UNRWA. The goal of some of the Agency's most vocal critics is to deny the very status of Palestinian refugees, and thereby limit the horizon of hope for a just and durable solution to their plight, the prerequisite for ending the UNRWA mission.

Particularly alarming are efforts to demonize UNRWA education. In fact, UNRWA's positive educational outcomes have been acknowledged through myriad of studies and awards. An [outside review](#) of UNRWA operations conducted on behalf of its Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS) noted, "UNRWA also provides more than half a million students with an education that enshrines a human rights culture, seeking to embed tolerance in social and political contexts where children are exposed to conflict and violence [...]. Without UNRWA's schools, it is not clear whether these children would have received an education at all; and if they had, it is unlikely to have emphasized a human rights culture."

Given the challenging political and humanitarian environments in which UNRWA operates, it places a high priority on neutrality. US assistance is an important element in strengthening and enhancing its commitment to the [UN's humanitarian principles](#).

Again, thank you. We hope your efforts in support of the UNRWA mission will continue and indeed grow during the upcoming year. This funding is entirely consistent with our shared belief

that “US foreign assistance for the Palestinian people serves important US interests and values.”

Respectfully,

UNRWA USA

American Baptist Churches USA

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Americans for Peace Now

Anera

Churches for Middle East Peace

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

Islamic Relief USA

J Street

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NRC USA

Oxfam America

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Refugees International

The Episcopal Church

Unitarian Universalist Association

cc: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)

Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA)

Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO)

USUN Washington