

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1409/09
by Paul van Buitenen (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: UNRWA's (lack of) resettlement policy

In January 2009, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy published the report 'Fixing UNRWA: repairing the UN's troubled system of aid to the Palestinian refugees' written by James Lindsay, who served as a senior legal advisor of UNRWA, where he oversaw all of UNRWA's legal activities.

The author states that UNRWA's original objective was to resettle the refugees, but that this policy stumbled upon objections from refugees and host countries alike. Now UNRWA's objectives have shifted to 'providing services and protection to them until their preference (i.e. to return to Israel) is realized'.

As UNRWA's most important funder:

1. Does the Commission agree with UNRWA's shift in objectives?
2. Is the Commission willing to investigate whether UNRWA staff have discouraged 'movement away from the camps in order to maintain refugees' claim to return to what had become Israel'?
3. Is the Commission willing to demand that UNRWA promotes initiatives of resettlement and thus self-sustainment, which is more in line with UNHCR policies?