

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1619/09
by Paul van Buitenen (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: UNRWA's political culture

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 over the years a 'sense of being joined with the Palestinians against Israel' became part of UNRWA's. Among other things, the author gives the example of the second intifada, in which UNRWA focused on Israeli counterterrorism efforts (frequently condemned as war crimes) whereas the Palestinian terror attacks were only named as 'an afterthought'. When such a terrorist attack was not followed by an Israeli response such an event usually passed without any comment from UNRWA.

Likewise UNRWA's Commissioner-General AbuZayd has frequently made political statements such as describing the continuous firing of rockets and mortars into Israel as a response to 'military incursions in which civilian lives, livelihoods and property have been destroyed', thereby condoning acts of terrorism. Moreover, UNRWA chose to protest against the boycott of Hamas by the European Union and the United States (the two largest funders of UNRWA), claiming that such a boycott was undemocratic and a punishment of Palestinians for their choice in the elections.

As UNRWA's most important funder:

1. Does the Commission find it agreeable that UNRWA expresses and advocates political positions?
2. Does the Commission find it agreeable that UNRWA expresses and advocates political positions which are frequently contrary to views expressed by both the European Union and its partners?
3. Is the Commission willing to demand that UNRWA refrain from any political statements?