

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1741/09
by Paul van Buitenen (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Commercial Bank of Syria

The website of UNRWA (as visited on 6 March 2009) shows UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealing to international donors to provide the crucial funds needed for Gaza's reconstruction. Individuals are also invited to contribute and donate to the 'UNRWA Special Gaza Appeal'. They can choose to channel their donations through three banks, one of which is the Commercial Bank of Syria.

On 11 May 2004, the US Department of the Treasury designated Commercial Bank of Syria a 'financial institution of primary money laundering concern'. According to the US Treasury, Commercial Bank of Syria has been used by terrorists and their sympathisers and acted as a conduit for the laundering of proceeds generated from the illicit sale of Iraqi oil.

As the largest single funder of UNRWA, can the Commission clarify:

- how it is possible for UNRWA to be a client of Commercial Bank of Syria?
- whether the EU funds donated to UNRWA are channelled through Commercial Bank of Syria?
- whether UNRWA funds, through Commercial Bank of Syria, have been diverted to terrorists, their sympathisers or other criminals?
- whether the Commission is prepared to investigate this matter?