

Senator Risch is holding up US funding for UNRWA? Kudos to him!



Senator Jim Risch (R) Idaho, Ranking Member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

by Lev Tsitrin

Can there be a difference between one's obligations and one's actions? Well, we all are supposed to be good citizens – but somehow, the jails are full, so the answer to that question is therefore a clear “yes.”

But not to one Khaled Elgindy, a “senior fellow and director of the Program on Palestine and Palestinian-Israeli Affairs at the Middle East Institute.” Writing in [The Hill](#), he lambasts the Biden administration for not releasing an additional \$75 million earmarked for UNRWA over an objection by Idaho Senator James Risch. “Risch has said that he will not release the

funds until he receives assurances from the Biden administration that UNRWA is not aiding Palestinian militants or promoting antisemitism. However, these and other conditions are already requirements UNRWA must abide by in its framework agreement with the State Department.”

Clearly, Mr. Elgindy implies that the fact that there are “requirements UNRWA must abide by” means that UNRWA abides by those requirements. Yet, if the two are one and the same, it is odd that he does not suggest an easy solution – that the administration issues the desired assurances to Senator Risch, and moves on with the release of funds. Instead, Mr. Elgindy proposes that President Biden should ignore Senator Risch’s hold, and hands over the money anyway: “To be clear, the senator’s ability to put a “hold” on the funds has no legal authority but rather is a courtesy extended by the executive branch to the legislative branch. ... the Biden administration could simply ignore the hold if it chose to do so.”

So why won’t the administration do it? And why would Mr. Elgindy suggest violating the balance of power between branches of government, and the accepted protocols, when a simple letter of assurance would produce the exact result he desires?

Perhaps because both the administration, and Mr. Elgindy know full well that such an assurance would be a lie. That UNRWA employs members of Hamas – an organization that is openly dedicated to the destruction of Israel – is not even a secret. “Professor Rashid Khalidi, a noted Hamas apologist at Columbia University, explains that UNRWA employs, ‘members of different political groups such as... Hamas and Islamic Jihad, without reference to their belonging to a specific group’” was on top of my google search for “does UNRWA employ members of Hamas?” Nor are the textbooks used in UNRWA schools free from antisemitism. On the contrary, according to the [recent examination of their contents](#), “UNRWA-produced educational literature ‘contains material that encourages jihad, violence

and martyrdom, promotes antisemitism, and promotes hate, intolerance, and lack of neutrality.'”

While he clearly understands what UNRWA is, and whom it supports, Mr. Elgindy pretends that some nefarious politics is at work here; in fact, his screed is titled “*Stop playing politics with Palestinian lives*” But, it seems to me, it is Mr. Elgindy who tries to play politics with lives – Israeli lives, that is, by demanding release of US funding to UNRWA despite its support for Palestinian terrorism.

It is perhaps not surprising that Mr. Elgindy, a Palestinian apologist, would do so, but it is rather a shock that *The Hill* would support him in this mission. And it is surprising too that Senator Risch would be the only member of the senate to bring to light the glaring inappropriateness of American support for UNRWA that is a primary source of Palestinian intransigence – and should have been defunded and dismantled years ago.

While it is gratifying that the Biden administration won't paper over a lie that UNRWA does not support terrorism – or that even Mr. Elgindy won't demand it, it is sad that the fact that UNRWA is an obstacle to peace is not being broadcast far and wide, but is merely whispered in the corridors of power.