

Demanding Stricter Oversight of Foreign Aid

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Reps. Rothman and Kirk Demand Stricter Oversight of U.S. Foreign Aid

Tax Dollars Possibly Going to Terrorist Organization Hamas – In Direct Violation of U.S. Law

(Washington, DC)— On Wednesday, September 27, Representatives Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) sent a strongly-worded letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, which outlined the need for stricter oversight of more than \$100 million in U.S. foreign aid provided to United Nations humanitarian programs each year. The money, which is the primary source of funding for the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), is possibly being used to employ members of the terrorist organization Hamas and distributed to Palestinian refugees with terrorist connections—in direct violation of U.S. law.

“U.S. anti-terror law explicitly prohibits taxpayer dollars from supporting terrorists. However, we know that a number of UNRWA staff ran for parliament in the Palestinian territory as official Hamas candidates earlier this year. We know that Hamas supports the indiscriminate killing of civilians. We know that UNRWA cannot account for large amounts of money it has spent. And we know that UNRWA does not check Palestinian beneficiaries against a list of known terrorists,” said Rothman. “With all of this information known, the United States must find out what is unknown: Are U.S. tax dollars funding terrorists through UNRWA?”

UNRWA is charged with the mission of providing services, including education, health, relief and social services to over 4.3 million registered Palestinians in the Middle East. However, despite its size and \$400 million dollar budget, the agency does not permit outside, independent audits of its books.

As members of the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, which makes decisions about all U.S. foreign aid, Reps. Rothman and Kirk have been vocal critics of the U.S. blindly giving over \$100 million a year to UNRWA without demanding transparency and accountability for these funds. Now, the United Nations’ own internal auditors have once again reported a number of financial inconsistencies in a new report that has not yet been made public.

Those problems include unaccounted for expenditures, inaccurate records that do not correspond to actual payments made by UNRWA, and \$46.5 million in loans granted to over three-fourths of the UNRWA staff. The UN auditors report that there is no record of how those loans are approved, dispersed, or collected, who is eligible to receive them, or exactly how much is owed.

The United States is UNRWA's top donor and UNRWA uses U.S. support to run a several hundred million dollar agency, which employs over 26,000 people. In their letter to Secretary Rice, Reps. Rothman and Kirk concluded that: "We have now read the auditor's report and now must insist that an independent, international audit be conducted to correct a documented record of UNRWA's lack of financial integrity, poor management and failure to comply with U.S. anti-terror law."

A full copy of their letter, which outlines the findings of previous UN audits with respect to UNRWA, is available online.

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