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One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2024

Mr. Philippe Lazzarini
Commissioner-General
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
Under-Secretary-General
United Nations

Dear Mr. Philippe Lazzarini:

Thank you for your January 25, 2024, letter indicating your willingness to appear before the members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in a closed, members-only setting. The letter cites UN privileges and immunities that forebear you from being compelled to testify in an open session.

With regards to your letter, we must first point out that UN privileges and immunities do not forbear voluntary testimony. Second, many members of this Committee are gravely concerned, but sadly, unsurprised, by allegations that employees of UNRWA participated in the horrendous October 7th attack and that thousands of employees have familial or direct ties to Hamas and other terrorist organizations.¹ Furthermore, we are outraged by recent reporting that a Hamas military installation and server room is located directly beneath UNRWA's Gaza headquarters. To make matters worse, Hamas operated this installation by siphoning electricity from UNRWA.²

While we support the pause of future funding to UNRWA, we know that the agency has received roughly \$121 million in funding from the State Department since October 1, 2023.³ Moreover, on January 30th, the Committee received public testimony from subject matter experts who testified to these recent allegations and other past UNRWA failures. Their statements stand in sharp contrast to UNRWA's claims.

¹ Keller-Lynn, Carrie and Luhnnow, David, "Intelligence Reveals Details of U.N. Agency Staff's Links to Oct. 7 Attack," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 2024.

² Lieber, Dov and Luhnnow, David, "Hamas Military Compound Found Beneath U.N. Agency Headquarters in Gaza," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2024.

³ Miller, Matthew, State Department Press Briefing, January 30, 2024.

Given their critical testimony, the allegations of connections to Hamas terrorists, and the millions of taxpayer dollars already sent to UNRWA this fiscal year, it is now more important than ever that the American people hear from you directly in a public setting.

Therefore, we request that you appear voluntarily before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to testify at a public hearing. While you initially indicated this was untenable, we will note that you appeared before the European Parliament on September 1, 2021, and August 31, 2022, for an Exchange of Views in the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET). If you are willing to appear before the AFET, you surely can and would be willing to appear before the House Foreign Affairs Committee especially given the United States' long term and considerable financial support to UNRWA.

Please indicate your willingness and availability to appear voluntarily for a public hearing by no later than March 14, 2024.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Brian Mast
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Accountability



Christopher H. Smith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Global Health, Global
Human Rights and International
Organizations



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress

CC:

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee