



THE CENTER FOR
NEAR EAST POLICY
RESEARCH LTD.

WWW.ISRAELBEHINDTHENEWS.COM

Beit Agron International Press Center
37 Hillel Street
Jerusalem 94581 Israel
TEL. 02 6236368
Calling from North America: 215-240-4919

The Incitement Report

VOL. I, ISSUE 4

Incitement by UNRWA

April – mid-May 2010

This report addresses the misrepresentation and incitement that is routinely found in the words of official representatives of **UNRWA**.

That incitement focuses on a handful of major themes, which are repeated again and again in order to deliver their messages. Damage is maximized because one statement to the press runs in a number of media outlets internationally, sometimes garnering major attention.

The major theme at this time is the "blockade of Gaza" by Israel and the suffering of the innocent people there as a result.

That "blockade" in reality does not exist, as humanitarian supplies and some commercial supplies are permitted to enter Gaza from Israel.¹ Additionally, while Israel has for some time been reluctant to allow certain building materials into Gaza, out of concern that they would end up being utilized by Hamas for building rocket bunkers, of late some building material has also been permitted to enter.

This factual information in no way inhibits **UNRWA** officials from lending the distinct impression, again and again, that there is a blockade and that the people of Gaza are suffering horrendously.²

In addition to this incitement, we find instances of statements by UNRWA staff that are politicized and as such, inappropriate coming from a humanitarian organization.

© On April 1, 2010, **UNRWA** commissioner-general Filippo Grande declared that the problems faced by Gaza – as a result of the "blockade" – "are not just humanitarian," but "encompass every aspect of society." He pronounced the situation as being "increasingly dire."³

⊙ On April 3, 2010, **John Ging**, Director of **UNRWA** operations in Gaza – ignoring the years of radicalization of the population of Gaza under the influence of UNRWA schools run by Hamas (more on this below) – laid the blame for all problems with Gaza youngsters at the feet of Israel:

"...if you have no reason to live, you will seek a glorious death. It's worse now than it ever was before. A whole generation of Palestinians will have never got out of the besieged strip, never interacted with foreigners or even met Israelis except as enemy soldiers intent on killing and destruction. Their violent behavior and disrespect to their parents is symptomatic of the desperation they are growing up in."⁴

⊙ **At UN headquarters, on April 22, 2010, Ging gave an extensive press conference, several facets of which merit examination:**

➤ He depicted a situation in which the people of Gaza were "struggling to survive" because of the "political situation."

Speaking of the people, he said, "That's one of the features that strikes people when they come to the Gaza Strip. There is a distance between the mischaracterization of Gaza, as a so-called 'hostile entity,' and the scale of the civility of the people who populate the Gaza Strip in these very uncivilized circumstances. They are very civilized people who manifest very clearly interact with visitors."⁵

"The mischaracterization of Gaza, as a...'hostile entity,'" is a highly politicized statement. When rockets are fired from Gaza at Israeli civilians, and the governing party of Gaza, Hamas, is sworn to Israel's destruction, it indeed does mark Gaza as a hostile entity. Ging would have it understood that the people inside of Gaza are devoid of associations with Hamas – which he never mentions – and totally innocent bystanders. The totally gratuitous statement that residents respond to certain "visitors" with civility is intended to lend this impression.

➤ He characterized an announcement by Israel that there would be an easing of restrictions on some goods permitted into Gaza – including building materials such as wood and aluminum – as "a drop in the bucket." "A drop in the bucket, of course, is not a half-full glass," he said. "The context is so great, the scale of the need is so large."⁶

At the same time, he totally brushed aside Israeli security concerns regarding the risk that building materials getting into the hands of Hamas would allow them greater ease in constructing rocket bunkers. The implication was that Israel used this simply as an excuse:

The easing provided "practical proof ... that it can be done. So if we can have 25 truckloads of aluminum a month, then why not 50. And if you can have 50, then why not 100, and so on.

"The arguments that have been put forward to in some way excuse this blockade ... are now being of course undermined by these positive developments because ... it is now demonstrated that there are ways of overcoming the security challenges."⁷

➤ He elaborated more broadly on the situation in Gaza: "It's bewilderingly difficult for them on a daily basis. It's a struggle to survive [with] the infrastructure and water and sanitation in a state of collapse and all that goes with that.

"That leads to the impoverishment of the people, and the physical suffering of so many continues on a daily basis, not just physical suffering, but psychological suffering because people are at their wits' end to understand when all of this will come to an end."⁸

➤ Perhaps most startling for its misrepresentation of the facts was Ging's insistence during this press conference that UNRWA teachers are carefully vetted so as to make certain that education remains non-political.⁹

The reality is that Hamas, via its affiliate Islamic Bloc, has dominated the UNRWA teachers' union in Gaza for 15 years, and in 2006 gained full control of the executive council of the union: Hamas enormously influences the education in the classroom.¹⁰

Said Ging, "We use the textbooks of the Palestinian authority...and we enrich those textbooks with human rights curriculum built around the values of the Universal Declaration. Its about academic development, its about the development of values and its also about critical thought and a positive mindset."¹¹

⊙ On April 27, 2010, Ging charged that Gaza children do not have schools because of the "occupation."¹²

Just as there is no blockage, so, in reality, is there no "occupation." In fact, there is no Israeli presence in Gaza at all.

⊙ On May 3, 2010, in an interview in his Gaza office with the Norwegian paper *Aftenposten*, Ging suggested that the international community has a responsibility to act with regard to the situation in Gaza. The situation now, he suggested, is that "Israel refuses to act reasonably."

"Therefore we ask the international community: Bring us the supplies we need to rebuild schools and run them, bring us the equipment we need to hospitals and health centers. Everybody knows how desperate the situation is in the Gaza Strip after almost three years of blockade. We need action now..."

"And who would stop the ship with such things as teaching materials and materials to building schools? In that case we would get a new reality for the international community. Then the purpose of the blockade would be to destroy Gaza, not to protect Israel."¹³

⊙ On May 4, 2010, John Ging called upon the international community to break the siege on the Gaza Strip by sending ships loaded with desperately needed supplies to the beleaguered territory. "We believe that Israel will not intercept these vessels because the sea is open, and human rights organizations have been successful in similar previous operations proving that breaking the siege of Gaza is possible."¹⁴

This made news internationally and was repeated in a variety of media sources. It is blatantly inciteful as it motivated and justified action against Israel. A "Freedom Flotilla" is on the way to Gaza as this is written.

⊙ On May 6, 2010, **UNRWA** spokesman Chris Gunness said, "There is a dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the blockade is disrupting education for thousands of five- and six-year olds in Gaza, while **UNRWA** has been forced to turn away 39,000 students."¹⁵

¹ Information on what Israel permits into Gaza can be found at:

http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2010/Increased_humanitarian_aid_Gaza_after_IDF_operation_Jan_2009

According to the spokesman for the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) goods go into Gaza via two different avenues.

Some goods go under the auspices of humanitarian organizations -- UNRWA, World Food Plan, etc. Israel makes every effort to allow through all humanitarian supplies (food and medicines, etc.) that these organizations seek to bring in -- although sometimes there are items that are questioned or prevented from going in.

Totally aside from the goods transported by humanitarian organizations -- which are distributed to those in greatest need -- are those permitted in commercially. The PA cooperates here in determining what the needs of local merchants are, and those goods are shipped by truck. On an average week, roughly 500 trucks will go into Gaza with such merchandise. Products allowed in include meat, fish and chicken; grains; staples such as sugar, salt, flour and yeast; spices; dairy products; legumes; fresh fruits and vegetables; cooking oil, a variety of other foodstuffs; animal feed; medicines; clothing; and hygienic supplies.

What is not permitted in, in the way of foodstuff, are gourmet items, as it is felt that only Hamas people have the sort of ready cash that would allow them to purchase this.

In addition, cooking gas and heavy-duty diesel fuel for the power station go in. Approximately 70% of Gaza's electric power comes from Israel as well, and this has never been cut off.

Then there are "specialty" items. Examples:

Last November: 12 new transformers and other pieces of electrical equipment were allowed in for the power plant in Gaza and 7,000 heads of cattle were imported for the Eid al-Adha holiday.

In December: 6 advanced water desalination systems were transferred to the Gaza Strip; glass was brought in for home repairs before the onset of winter; 750 tons of aggregate were transferred for maintenance of the North Gaza Wastewater Treatment plant.

Over the course of 2009, some 4,000 people were permitted to cross out of Gaza to receive medical care in Israel or elsewhere.

² As to the terrible suffering, it is informative to view this link to a Palestinian magazine, which ran photos of Gaza on December 25, 2009:

<http://www.paltoday.com/arabic/News-64161.html>

³ <http://streetroots.wordpress.com/2010/04/01/palestinian-people-held-captive/>

⁴ <http://journeytogaza.blogspot.com/2010/04/guns-n-teddy-bears.html>

⁵ http://e.gov.kw/News/KUNAMoreNews_Eng.aspx?NewsId=76672

⁶ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34455&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

⁷ http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN22118549.CH_.2400

⁸ www.un.org op. cit.

⁹ <http://talkradionews.com/2010/04/security-no-barrier-to-lifting-gaza-blockade-says-un-official/>

¹⁰ See "UNRWA: Its Role in Gaza," by Arlene Kushner at:

http://www.israelbehindthenews.com/library/pdfs/MY_UNRWA_Report_2009_US_.pdf

Citing Lt. Col. (res.). Yoni Dahoah Halevy, the report says:

"The Islamic Bloc (known in Arabic as *Al-Kutla Al-Islamiah*) maintains broad programs in these UNRWA schools, beginning as early as junior high school, which promote radical incitement for jihad and opposition to Israel. Its goal is winning the hearts and minds of students so they can be recruited into the Hamas military wing during high school or after graduation."

¹¹ talkradionews.com op cit.

¹² <http://4international.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/>

¹³ Cited by <http://shiptogaza.se/en/news/un-chief-urges-world-send-relief-gaza>

¹⁴ Al-Jazeera, May 5, 2010. Also www.ikhwanweb.net, the official English website of the Muslim Brotherhood, Paltelegraph.com, and other sources.

¹⁵ <http://shiptogazasweden.wordpress.com/2010/05/07/a-%E2%80%9Cfreedom-flotilla%E2%80%9D-is-planning-to-sail-for-gaza-by-the-end-of-the-month/>