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SCRIPT:

“For the Sake of Nakba”

(Voiceover)

The so-called “right of return” for Palestinian Arab refugees and their descendents is not a new idea. Yet this claim — that the refugees have the right to return to villages they left in 1948 — is now being promoted with a new vigor. Proponents of this position include the Palestinian Authority and a seemingly unlikely international advocate. That partner is UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees. UNRWA was established as a temporary agency 60 years ago in the wake of the 1948 war to aid the refugees in their plight, which they call the Nakba or catastrophe.

Funded by direct allocations from 38 democracies across the globe, UNRWA has an annual budget of more than one billion dollars. In recent years, its budget has ballooned, with US and EU each contributing more than \$230 million a year. Other major donors include Canada, Japan, Norway and Australia.

While many assume they understand the plight of the refugees, their story is a complex and singular tale. It is a 60-year-old narrative of a people encouraged by UNRWA and the Palestinian leadership to remain as refugees, so that their steadfast goal of the “right of return” might be fulfilled, - which would create a Palestinian state that would essentially replace the state of Israel.

Those advocating the right of return claim that it has a legal basis in Resolution 194 passed in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. That resolution, which is actually nothing more than a non-binding proposal, has no basis in international law.

While it does say that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so, it also speaks of resettlement of refugees in another country and compensation for those who do not return.

Sixty years ago UNRWA helped feed anywhere from 450,000 to 750,000 refugees from the 1948 war. Now, UNRWA recognizes not only the original Arabs who claimed to have been displaced, but their descendents as well. Thus the number of people on the UNRWA rolls has grown to more than 4 million. They live in and near 59 UNRWA camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

While UNRWA is responsible for the camp’s education, health, relief and social service programs it leaves the day to day operations to local Palestinian known as “popular committees,” who operate inside the UNRWA facilities.

Meanwhile, UNRWA spends about half of its budget each year — more than \$500 million – on schools. It has a massive payroll, employing more than 7,000 teachers. UNRWA does not produce its own textbooks. Its policy is to adopt the texts and curriculum of the host entity. In the West Bank and Gaza, it uses new textbooks and course guidelines produced and utilized by the Palestinian Authority.

In Jerusalem, we met with UNRWA representative Christopher Guinness to discuss UNRWA operations. (:06)

11:19-12:12 (Tape 10) Christopher Guinness, UNRWA spokesman

What's the most important service UNRWA provides?

“You have to ask the refugees that question; it’s easy for me to answer. I would say education because through our education we educate half a million children in the Arab countries and territories on the borders of Israel. That means in UNRWA’s hands, is the ability to educate the next generation of children who will be living in countries around Israel.” (:20)

(Voiceover)

If education is one the core missions of UNRWA, it appears that the next generation of UNRWA graduates will be espousing anything but peace with their neighbor, Israel. In May, we visited UNRWA schools and camps in Bethlehem, Nablus and East Jerusalem. There, teachers and students expressed a collective voice that suggested that only through renewed violence would they be able to attain their goal of achieving their right of return, and liberating Palestine. (:30)

11:59-12:22 CG (:23) Hussam Khader, Palestinian Minister of Refugee Affairs

“We will stand against anyone, Abu Mazen, Yassir Arafat, any other president who will sign on behalf of the refugees to jump over the right of return. This is a personal and collective right.”

(dissolve to) ...

12:34-12:52 (:18) Hussam Khader, Palestinian Minister of Refugee Affairs

“No one dare and if any president or if any political function did so sure we should kill him or rebel against him.”

(Voiceover)

While UNRWA denies that their lobbying for the right of return has led to violence, its offices and schools sit side by side with what could only be called a culture of war.

Perhaps the most striking example of this culture is in UNRWA’s schools. Many of the nearly 10,000 teachers employed by UNRWA belong to Hamas-dominated unions, which call for the destruction of Israel. Inside the schools, teachers adhere to a curriculum that inculcates anti-Israel teachings at every level. Students are taught that all of Israel is occupied Palestinian land, and Israelis are portrayed as snakes and murderers. Zionism is described as a racist movement. (:40)

Martyrdom is also another important part of the students lessons.

A Grade 12 science textbook suggests that death by martyrdom is akin to taking a wedding vow.

“Oh my homeland, I wouldn’t cry at this wedding party because our Arabness refuses that we cry over the martyrs.” (CG - Video over school yard or text) (:20)

(Voiceover)

In public, UNRWA distributes glossy folders and informational packets extolling the virtues of their work with refugees. But there’s no mention of the 41 former UNRWA students who became suicide bombers and killed 83 people and injured 436.

A visit to UNRWA schools and camps confirms that martyrdom is extolled in the most public places. At the UNRWA Deheishe refugee camp elementary school near Bethlehem, students pass by murals of several suicide bombers every day in front of the school. One prominent suicide bomber was Ayat al-Akhras.

In 2002, the 18 year-old-girl blew herself up at an Jerusalem supermarket. Two people were killed.

One was an America citizen, Rachel Levy. Here, the former UNRWA student pledges that the Intifada will continue until victory. (55 seconds)

Video: 28 seconds.

Ayat al-Akhras (super)

(Voiceover)

After the student blew herself up, the UNRWA school held a memorial for her and commissioned paintings of her throughout the school.

On the streets of the refugee camps, UNRWA students speak openly about becoming martyrs. Two eighth graders said it dying for his country is the duty of a Palestinian. (20 seconds)

Izadeen Musa Karam, 14 (**12 seconds, Tape 49:55- 50:07**)

Aida UNRWA Refugee Camp

“Of course we have to strive be a martyrs and to do it so we can achieve victory. We need to join the other martyrs and the righteous [in heaven], and in order to help all of the Muslims to defend our land.”

Safwan Abu-Srul, 14

Aida UNRWA Refugee Camp

Tape 3, 44:34-44:39

“I consider them [martyrs] as God’s heroes and heroes of Palestinian society. “

Dissolve to:

Tape 3, 45:55-45:59 (total 10 seconds)

“I’ll do the impossible in order to return to my homeland.”

(Voiceover)

In Gaza, on Nakba Day in 2009 at an UNRWA school, a student stood with his teacher and declared his right to liberate Palestine. (10 seconds)

00:17:14-41:08 (24 seconds)

“We still hold the keys for the return (to Palestine), we still hold our weapon. We will defend our country, until, with God’s help, we will achieve our rights and the land will come back to its owner. We will liberate the Al-Aksa mosque and our beloved homeland from the hands of the pigs and the infidels, the sons of Zion. We will return, we will return. We will never recognize what is called Israel.”

In the Shuafat UNWRA camp in East Jerusalem, Palestinian parliament member Jihad Abu Zneid held an impromptu class on a street. (10 seconds)

Use 10 seconds before (Tape 1 15:42-16:21)

(Super: Palestinian parliament member Jihad Abu Zneid)

“What’s going to be your part in liberating Palestine? How? How?”

“We are going to fight in order to liberate our country.

“How? How?”

“With weapons. With guns.

“What else?”

“By negotiating.

“With whom are you going to talk?”

“With stones.

“By guns.

With rockets and RPGs.

“We don’t have rockets and RPGs.

“Don’t worry we’re going to get them.

When we met with Palestinian Education Minister Lamis Al Alami to ask her about what UNRWA is teaching about Israel, she denied that Israel was even part of the curriculum. (Video of Alami) (:12)

Alami: (31:10 – 31:21) (:11) **(Super: Palestinian Education Minister Lamis Al Alami)**

Are you teaching about Israel now?

No

Not really?

No.

For the last several years, Dr. Arnon Groiss, a Jerusalem professor, has conducted an intensive examination of Palestinian textbooks. Groiss believes that Palestinians have created a curriculum for war. (:13)

29:31-30:12 (Tape 9 and 10, SOT) (:51) (Super: **Dr. Arnon Groiss
Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace**)

“The parameters of Palestinian textbooks, I mean the line or the goal or the mission of Palestinian education, is that there is denial of legitimacy, demonized description of the other and no peace with the other is advocated. Now non-recognition, demonization, no peace advocacy, emphasis on armed struggle for liberation with no geographical limit, all that makes a curriculum of suspended war. It is not a curriculum for peace.”

(V/O) But Alami praised the textbooks and school curriculum. (:05)

11:00-11:17 (:14) (Super: **Palestinian Education Minister Lamis Al Alami**)

“Well I must say in the first place that it’s a Palestinian curriculum and we’re free to do with it whatever we want, whatever we feel is important.”

(dissolve to)

12:21 – 12:53 (:22)

“I mean when the Palestinian curriculum was designed, I think that the people in charge did an excellent job, because they researched most of the curricula in the Arab world and they looked at European models and others, and came up with the curriculum that suits our needs. So it was not haphazardly done. And I think with the Palestinians, they have long experience in education and everybody knows that.”

Voiceover:

Al Alami is no stranger to UNRWA schools. She worked as an UNRWA educator for 22 years. We asked her about teaching the right of return in Palestinian schools. (:10)

27:35 (:05)

Video of Alami:

Is that included in the curriculum, the right of return?

“No.”

(Voiceover)

But according to Arnon, and the **Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, the right of return is an integral part of the school curriculum. (:10)**

For example, Palestinian fifth graders are taught this poem entitled We Shall Return. (:19)

Video of graphic below, read by narrator:

We Shall Return By Harun Hashem Rashid

We shall return

[We] shall return to the homes, to the valleys, to the mountains

Under the flags of glory, Jihad and struggle

With blood, sacrifice [*fida'*], fraternity and loyalty

Our Beautiful Language, Grade 5, Part 1 (2009) p. 88

(Voiceover)

Even as Alami denies teaching the right of return, Palestinians say it is the core issue of the conflict. (:06)

Video: (:09)

Woman: “With God’s help, we will return.”

Old man: “One hundred percent for sure with God’s help we will return.”

Middle aged man: “With God’s help today we will return.”

UNRWA worker: “People are sure we will return.”

Israeli Cabinet minister Dan Meridor took part in the failed peace talks in 2000 at Camp David between Yasir Arafat and Ehud Barak. He said the issue of the right of return, not Jerusalem, was the main reason why the talks failed. (14 seconds)

**Dan Meridor
Israeli Cabinet Minister**

2:08 -3:28 (30 seconds)

“At Camp David, if I ask myself what made the talks collapse in July 2000 I do believe this is exactly it. Because in fact, on settlements, this was not the main issue. We more or less agreed about the idea of a Palestinian state on the borders – we were not far from an agreement. Security was practically agreed. On Jerusalem, Barak offered against my best advice a division, a partition. This was not accepted because they had to say: end of conflict, no more claims. In other words, no right to return to Israel.”

(Voiceover☺)

In UNRWA schools and refugee camps, Palestinians say the issue of the right of return builds morale and is always on their minds. A major symbol for refugees are maps of current day Israel, which mention only Arab cities while ignoring existing Israeli cities. In front of the UNRWA elementary school in Dhetia is

a 30 foot stone monument in the shape of the map of Israel. It is dedicated to martyrs from the refugee camp and for former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. (30 seconds)

(Voiceover)

Here, an UNRWA worker, explains the significance of the map in his office.

**Super: Hader Deeb
UNRWA City Planner**

Tape 1, 43:34-43:59 (24 seconds)

“The map shows all of the Palestinian cities and villages. For example, Acre, Safad, Beit Shean, Nazereth, Haifa, Jaffa, Lod, Ramle, Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv is Tel El Rabia. Gaza, the West Bank, Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus. All the villages.”

(Voiceover)

Another symbol is the key, representing, for them, keys that once opened doors to houses in Palestinian villages before 1948. At the entrance of the UNRWA Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, residents commissioned the largest key in the world to sit atop an entrance to the camp. The key weighs two tons and was placed on top of a massive keyhole in 2008.

Inside the UNRWA refugee camp director’s office, a key hangs on the wall. The UNRWA director declined to speak with us. But others were enthusiastic to discuss the right of return. (:30 seconds)

Tape 4, Aida –

Super: Munzer Amira, UNRWA Aida resident

33:26 -33:53 (25 seconds)

“Right of return. We are living for a right of return. We are dreaming every day, every night that we will return for our homeland. The key is a symbol of return. The key means that we will return one day for our homeland. Because of that we are carrying this key on our houses, on our minds, on our souls that we will return one day for our homeland to establish our own state.”

Tape 1 10:33-10:36 (3 seconds)

**Super: Jihad Abu Zneid
Palestinian parliament member**

“Is there any such thing as peace without the right of return completely?”

“No way”

Tape 5 01:48-01:58 (10 seconds)

**Super: Mohammed Laham
Palestinian Parliament**

“There will be no peace or historical reconciliation without solving the core of the problem, and that is issue of the Palestinian refugees.”

Tape 5: 22:10 (26 seconds)

(Super) Haled Sweaty

UNRWA teacher, Deheishe elementary school

“There is a difference between the curriculum and its focus of teaching, and the way that we, as refugees, teach as teachers. The curriculum is narrow and focuses on simple comprehension. We are trying to enrich the subjects outside of the frameworks so the children can understand the real meaning of the right of the return. There is a difference between the curriculum and our culture, and the way we teach.”

23:20 – 23:36 (16 seconds)

“There is a difference in style between the teachers. For example, if students are being taught by religious teachers, the children will be taught that Israel must be wiped out.”

Tape 1 55:39-56:03 (23 seconds)

(Super) Haled Mohammed Ali

UNRWA tutor, Shuafat Refugee Camp

“The most important thing in our life is that we will dream and be prepared to return to our villages. Life in the refugee camp is just temporary and it has no meaning in our life. We believe that this period of time will end soon and we will use all of our means in order to return to our houses.

Dissolve to:

Tape 1 56:32-56:43 (11 seconds)

“We will implement our rights and return to our homes that we were forced to leave because this is our land. It never belonged to the Jews. Not in the past and not in the present.”

(Voiceover)

In the UNWRA institutions, the most venerated and respected Palestinians are older residents who still carry keys to homes. But many, like Halil Mohammed Leham, say there is no room for peace talks. (:12 seconds)

Tape 5, part 3, 35:51-36:08 – 17 seconds

Part 36:11-36:24

(Super) of Halil Mohammed Leham, Dehetia UNRWA resident

“War? The world is swirling and developing. In the past, we fought with swords. Then we fought with guns. Then we used mortars. Then came the jets. And today, there is an atomic bomb.

“If God will grant us the power to return to our homes – then just as others prepared the atomic bomb, we also will develop an atom bomb.”

(Voiceover)

Every May 15, Palestinians mark Israeli Independence Day with their own ceremony. They call the celebration Nakba Day, or day of the catastrophe. In villages and cities in the West Bank and Gaza, they gather to rally and the focus of the day is always on the right of return.
(:15 seconds)

(Tape 12 - 36:41-36:47 – six seconds)
Video of Jerusalem Nakba Day
Crowd shouting in unison:

Nakba calls to us to come back and liberate the land.

(PLTV, :053-01:01 - **8 seconds**)
(Super) Abdul Rahim Maluch
PLO High Cabinet Minister

“Our people, which struggle for their national rights, have the complete right to return their land, houses and villages.”

0:27-0:41 14 seconds
Speaker at Nakba Rally in Ramallah

“In our hearts, beats the dream of returning to the olive trees of Haifa and to the lemons of Jaffa, and the walls of Acre.”

Abdul Rahim Maluch
PLO High Cabinet Minister

00:44-01:03 (18 seconds)

“The only organization in the UN that has achieved success is UNRWA. UNRWA has a political mission and not is just a humanitarian organization.”

01:18-01:27 (**9 seconds**)

‘And I say that we have to protect UNRWA and not allow UNRWA to end its mission.’

(Voiceover)

When we met with Education Minister Al-Alami we asked her about teaching the Nakba in Palestinian schools. Al-Alami equated the Nakba with the Holocaust.

(17:50 – 18:06) **16 seconds**
(running time 17:30)

“To the Palestinians, the impact of this Nakba I would say has the equal status on the Palestinians the way the Holocaust has on the Israelis.”

(Count from here seconds new)

28:15-28:41 26 seconds

“We will return. If not this year then next year. If not in the next decade, then after 10 years. Occupation has never lasted forever anywhere. The Crusaders didn’t last, Hitler didn’t last, and his reign ended. The Turkish occupation didn’t last. The same thing will happen with the Israelis.”

Voiceover

UNWRA spokesman Chris Gunness would not comment on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but Israeli officials are now calling for reform at UNRWA. (:08)

When we spoke with Israeli Cabinet Minister Dan Meridor we asked him about UNRWA’s role in the conflict and its \$1.2 billion annual budget (:08)

10:05 – 10:58 UNRWA (53 seconds)

“The question for me is not the money, it’s what you do with the money. If this money was given to them to build houses in normal life, to help them have an occupation they can live on in their regular life, make them regular citizens it’s good. But if the money is given to perpetuate the problem life, it’s bad.”

And now the money’s being used?

“Well, the money’s being used the way UNRWA does it and there is a lot of incitement and keeping the dream alive to go back to where your grandparents or your father lived, it’s not helping it’s just the opposite. If you look for those who helped the conflict resolve or those who make it more difficult, unfortunately the attitude that you see in the refugee camps held by UNRWA and others it’s not making the solution closer. It’s making it more distant.”

42:09-42:47 (:38)

Dr. Mordechai Kedar

Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies

“As much as I know large part of the budget of UNRWA is being paid either directly or indirectly by the Americans; by the American taxpayer. Personally I think this is something very negative because America happened to perpetuate this problem. Well, I’m not advocating a sudden stop of this, but a gradual stop in order to let them understand that their game is over, that the game of returning to somewhere which never belonged to them is over.”

(Voiceover)

Meanwhile, Palestinian leaders say they are now preparing for the next war. At the cemeteries reserved for martyrs in the Balata and Dhetia refugee camps they have already prepared fresh graves for the next group of fighters they call shaheeds. Their posters are everywhere in the refugee camps and their attacks are celebrated long after their violent deaths.

(Tape 7, 17:34-18:07 – 32 seconds)

Hussam Khader

Palestinian Minister of Refugee Affairs

“Sooner or later, the Palestinian people will make a new intifada. But it needs time, it needs atmosphere, it needs a real leadership, not this traditional and corrupt leadership, so the circumstances preparing the atmosphere for a new kind of uprising in which the violence will reach the high levels.”

(18:17-18:56 – 39 seconds)

Hussam Khader

Palestinian Minister of Refugee Affairs

“The Palestinian people will start from where this uprising finished from the bomb attacks, from the rockets, and now, sure Hamas have these kind of rockets in Gaza, and we the Palestinians manufactured, and many Palestinians sure take courses how to manufacture local rockets. So the violence is behind the door.”

(Running time: approximately 21 minutes)