

The Honorable Amb. Samantha Power
U.S. Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
USA

10 December 2014

Dear Ambassador Power,

We are shocked by UNRWA's call to boycott one of Israel's oldest newspapers and appeal to you to speak out and hold the organization to account. With the U.S. being the largest donor to UNRWA—giving \$398 million this year alone—your clear voice on this matter can play a vital role in upholding the principles of the UN Charter.

Barely has the ink dried on the 2015 UNRWA-U.S. Framework for Cooperation—in which Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl solemnly promised that UNRWA would respect impartiality—and its top spokesman Chris Gunness, tweeting on Thursday from his official account, called to "*Boycott the Jerusalem Post!*" The statement remains there and has not been renounced in any way by UNRWA, nor by the DC-based representatives of UNRWA USA whom we approached on this matter.

What so outraged Mr. Gunness was an op-ed by Palestinian human rights activist Bassam Eid that called for an audit of all allocated funds to UNRWA and the dismissal of its Hamas-affiliated employees. ("Proud Palestinians must lead the fight to reform UNRWA," Dec. 1, 2014.) Rather than respond rationally, UNRWA lashed out. Never before has a UN humanitarian organization called to boycott a newspaper.

This was a political act inconsistent with the neutrality requirements applicable to all humanitarian agencies. Moreover, it violates the Framework agreement with the U.S., under which the agency is obliged to ensure "adherence to principles of neutrality," and, specifically, "the neutrality of UNRWA's staff."

Mr. Gunness is a repeat offender. In July, to name one of numerous examples, he urged reporters to interview Dr. Mads Gilbert, a pro-Hamas Norwegian activist who in September 2001 supported the "moral right" of Al Qaeda to perpetrate the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Mr. Gunness is flagrantly abusing his humanitarian mandate for political advocacy. If you don't hold him and UNRWA to account, I fear, no one will.

Sincerely,



Hillel C. Neuer
Executive Director