

The Conflict of Palestine

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Figure 1 Al Am'ari refugee camp in Ramallah, West Bank. January 25, 2012. Activestills.org



Figure 2 The "security fence", which is 26 ft tall, separating the West Bank from Israel. Residents of the Southern West Bank on their way to work in the morning. Joshua Hough, www.vosizneias.com. July 22, 2009.

Introduction:

In 1948 with the establishment of the nation-state of Israel 700,000 thousand Palestinians were displaced from their homes. To help prevent starvation, and facilitate the relocation and integration of the Palestinian people into the neighboring countries the United Nations started the UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA). Sixty four years after the initial conflict, the UNRWA is still feeding, educating, and providing medical services to the Palestinians and operating refugee camps. Life in the refugee camps is difficult; most families are poor and living in one-room houses with few belongings. Refugees do not have the right to build and are heavily restricted in their movements, especially in Gaza and the West Bank where there are multiple checkpoints, where one can be delayed for hours. Israel controls the food supply, electricity, and other commodities used within the camps in Gaza and the West bank.

Hypothesis:

The UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) is preventing peace in the Middle East by perpetuating the refugee status of the Palestinian people.

Materials and Methods:

Our original research plan was to focus on a specific camp in the West Bank near Jerusalem. However, Michelle's contacts were unable to help us get in touch with the refugees. Our hope was to pass around notebooks within the camp to discover more about the refugees' lives and their desired quality of life. After a few failed attempts to find a person living in the West Bank who could help us, we changed the focus of our research. Due to William's limited knowledge of the conflict, he spent a great deal of time learning the history of the conflict and studying the role of the UNRWA. He used Web of Knowledge, an academic search engine and other websites, to find most information. He also read the book *The Yellow Wind* by David Grossman.

Results and Discussion:

Although the aid from the UNRWA seems to do a lot of good for the Palestinians (making sure refugees do not starve, providing schools and clinics), the UNRWA is preventing peace in the Middle East. The UNRWA has become a pseudo-solution to this conflict. By taking care of the refugees, the UNRWA is removing the motivation for the surrounding countries to integrate Palestinians into their countries. The fact that the UNRWA takes care of the refugees also allows Israel to oppress those living in the West Bank, removing the responsibility of the displaced people off of the Jews. Israel doesn't have to spend money on food, shelter, and relocation efforts; instead they are allowed to take the Palestinians' rights away.

Conclusions: Based on our results, we have accepted our hypothesis that the UNRWA is enabling the continued refugee status, and hence the conflict.

View of an Israeli journalist: "We have lived for 20 years in a false and artificial situation, based on illusions, on a teetering center of Gravity between hate and fear, in a desert void of emotion and consciousness, and the passing time turns slowly into a separate, forbidding entity hanging above us like a suffocating layer of yellow dust.." David Grossman 1988

Recommendations:

For peace to return to the Middle East I believe these three things need to happen.

1. The Israeli government needs to return rights to the Palestinian people. With the current limitations placed on the Palestinian refugees the aid from the UN Relief and Work Agency is a necessity for the refugees' survival.
2. Israel and the International community need to recognize Palestine as a Nation-State, leaving the Palestinians to rule themselves.
3. After helping the new nation establish itself, the UN should discontinue the UN Relief and Work Agency and work to close down the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.
4. On a personal level, use of the holistic process could be effective within individual families to provide a small measure of independence, self-determination, and personal dignity.

Literature cited:

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Adi Schwartz "UNRWA's existence is a failure", Adi Schwartz' Blog (an Unabridged version of an article published in Israeli daily newspaper "Israel HaYom"), 15 November 2010

Grossman, David. *The Yellow Wind*. N.p.: Picador, 1988. Print.

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Figure 3. Current map of West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel.