Trump Administration Cuts $200 Million in Palestinian Aid

The Trump administration's support of Israel got another potential boost with reports it is planning to remove the so-called "right of return" from the negotiating table, Israel's Channel 2 news reported over the weekend.

According to the report, the U.S. administration will present the new plan in stages, beginning in early September. The plan details the Trump administration's rejection of the United Nation's definition of Palestinian refugee status.

The news follows the U.S. State Department announcement to Congress that it will cut more than $200 million in bilateral aid to the Palestinian Authority and redirect the funds to "high priority projects elsewhere."

The funding has been in question for years due to the PA's controversial policy known as "pay to slay," which compensates Palestinians and their families for attacking Israelis. In March, Congress passed the Taylor Force Act to target that policy.

When it comes to the "right of return" issue, UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) defines Palestinian refugees as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict."

Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law & Justice, who also serves as counsel to President Trump, wrote a response to Foreign Policy saying UNWRA has changed its definition of refugee more than once.

“In 1965, UNRWA changed the eligibility requirements to be a Palestinian refugee to include third-generation descendants, and in 1982, it extended it again, to include all descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, regardless of whether they had been granted citizenship elsewhere,” Sekulow wrote, calling it “inconsistent” with the classification of all other refugees worldwide. {eoa}

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