

World Vision CEO Speaks Out on Hamas Money Funneling Scandal

As a professional Christian, humanitarian organization, we take our commitment to truth and transparency very seriously. For more than 65 years, we have stayed true to our mission to work with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice around the world.

World Vision is seeking to understand the truth behind the allegations laid against Mohammad El Halabi. World Vision condemns any diversion of funds from any humanitarian organization and strongly condemns any act of terrorism or support for those activities.

We first learned of the accusations Thursday, Aug. 4, where the charges were officially presented for the first time. Due to the seriousness of the allegations, World Vision has already suspended operations in Gaza. We are conducting a full review, including an externally conducted forensic audit, and will remain fully engaged with the investigation that is underway.

We will examine all the evidence behind the charges, and from those who independently examine our accountability standards. If any of these allegations are proven to be true, we will take swift and decisive action. Unfortunately, we still have not seen any of the evidence. We look forward to an ongoing dialogue to be able to clarify discrepancies, and we call for a fair and transparent legal process.

World Vision's cumulative operating budget in Gaza for the past 10 years was approximately \$22.5 million, which makes the alleged amount of up to \$50 million being diverted hard to reconcile. Mohammad El Halabi was the manager of our Gaza

operations only since October 2014; before that time he managed only portions of the Gaza budget. World Vision's accountability processes cap the amount individuals in management positions at his level to a signing authority of \$15,000.

Our staff hiring processes aim to ensure that we employ people who are qualified, committed to our values and who pose no risk to our partners, communities or our programs. World Vision uses background checks and the well-regarded WatchDOG Elite system to screen staff against approximately 20 blocked-party lists.

Our work speaks for itself. World Vision has been working with children, families and communities in the Holy Land since 1975 and has five offices with 150 staff across Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza benefitting around 560,000 people.

Last year, our work in Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza directly benefited more than 92,000 children; nearly 40,000 of those were in Gaza. These projects focus on children's psychosocial needs, as well as providing medical and other supplies to hospitals, food relief, and re-establishing agricultural livelihoods. These projects have been visited and reviewed by officials from the German and Australian governments, by international donors and our staff and leaders from other countries.

It is tragic that this issue is taking us away from our work on important issues of injustice and poverty affecting billions of children around the world. We are committed to acting in a way that is transparent and respectful of the ongoing legal process, upholds our values as an organization and builds trust in humanitarian organizations working in Gaza and around the world. {eoa}

Kevin Jenkins is the president and chief executive officer of World Vision International.