

UN Leaders Lit Memorial Flame for Hamas Commander Who Ran Schools and Recruited Children

A Hamas “martyr video” has exposed a decorated United Nations educator as a terrorist field commander who spent years recruiting Palestinian children into terror networks from inside classrooms. And top U.N. officials just honored him with a memorial flame.

The footage, recently released by Hamas, shows Imad El Samhouri emerging from underground terror tunnels, brandishing machine guns and grenades, and declaring that jihad and death were his ultimate aspirations. For years, El Samhouri worked as a teacher and principal for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, known as UNRWA.

Now U.N. Watch is demanding answers.

In an open letter sent last week, U.N. Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer called on U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and U.N. General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock to issue an immediate retraction and public apology to Hamas victims. The demand came after both officials participated in a June 8 memorial service where El Samhouri was honored alongside other fallen agency personnel.

“[H]ow many UNRWA teachers must emerge from Hamas tunnels before you admit that the terrorists are not merely beneath UNRWA’s schools, but actually inside them?” Neuer wrote.



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The revelations paint a damning picture of the so-called educator's true loyalties. According to U.N. Watch, El Samhuri served as a field commander in the Muhammad al-Shamali Battalion of Hamas' Al-Qassam Brigades. He didn't even try to hide it. His public social media accounts featured posts praising the murder and kidnapping of Israelis, alongside photos with high-ranking Hamas figures.

Worse still, El Samhuri allegedly turned his UNRWA classrooms into recruiting grounds. He routinely invited terror officials onto school property, using the facilities to draw young Palestinian students into Hamas-affiliated networks.

American taxpayers have long questioned whether their dollars were being funneled to organizations compromised by terrorist infiltration. These latest revelations suggest those concerns were well-founded.

USAID investigators have probed ties involving at least 1,500 current and former UNRWA staff, referring over 100 individuals to the State Department for potential exclusion from U.S. funding. Israeli intelligence documents have also revealed that dozens of UNRWA school administrators doubled as active Hamas fighters.

The pattern is impossible to ignore. This wasn't a case of one bad actor slipping through the cracks. The evidence points to systematic infiltration of an agency that receives hundreds of millions in international aid, with terrorists embedding themselves in positions of influence over children.

For years, critics have warned that UNRWA had become compromised. Defenders dismissed such claims as politically motivated attacks on humanitarian work. But when a memorial flame burns for a man who filmed himself crawling through terror tunnels with grenades, the defense becomes harder to maintain.

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