



UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR  
PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

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HEADQUARTERS  
1 October 2020

**Organization Directive No. 30**  
**Terms of reference of the Ethics Office**

**PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of this Directive is to give effect to the Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11, which requires the separately administered organs and programmes, including UNRWA, to establish a separate Ethics Office.
2. This Directive sets out the terms of reference for the ethics function in the Agency.
3. This Directive is issued under the authority conferred upon the Commissioner-General as Chief Executive Officer of the Agency by Resolution 302(iv) of 8 December 1949 of the General Assembly of the United Nations.
4. This Directive is submitted to the Advisory Commission for its information.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

5. This Directive takes effect from 1 October 2020. It supersedes and replaces Organizational Directive No. 30 issued on 11 April 2011.

**REFERENCES**

6. This Directive should be read in conjunction with General Staff Circular 05/2007 "Allegations and complaints procedures and protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with audits and investigations", General Staff Circular 06/2010 – "Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment - including Sexual Harassment - and Abuse of Power", and General Staff Circular 07/2010 "Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints Procedure" as may be amended from time to time. Refer to Organization Directive No. 2 "Organization of UNRWA", Organization Directive No. 3 "Organization of Headquarters Organization Directive", Organization Directive No. 14 "Charter of the Department of the Internal Oversight Services", and Organization Directive No. 24 "Terms of Reference of the Advisory Committee on Internal Oversight" as may be amended from time to time. Refer also to the Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11.

**ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

7. The Ethics Office is established as an office within UNRWA, effective 1 September 2009. The Ethics Office is headed by the Chief, Ethics Office and is administratively attached to the Executive Office, although it operates with full independence, impartiality and confidentiality, as provided for in this Organizational Directive.
8. The Chief, Ethics office reports and is accountable to the Commissioner-General. He/she receives functional leadership from the Chairperson of the United Nations Ethics Panel. In addition, Chief, Ethics Office has informal access to the Advisory Commission.

9. The Chief, Ethics Office will have full and unrestricted access to the Commissioner - General in relation to any matter within his or her area of responsibility. He/she shall exercise operational independence and impartiality in the conduct of his/her duties and have the authority to initiate, carry out and report on any action, which he/she considers necessary to fulfill the Office's responsibilities for ethics as set forth in this Directive.
10. The Chief, Ethics Office is appointed by the Commissioner-General for a non-renewable six-year term including one year of probation. The Chief, Ethics Office shall not be employed for any other function within UNRWA upon completion of the term.
11. The Advisory Committee on Internal Oversight (ACIO), in addition to the Chairperson of the UN Ethics Panel, shall advise on the performance of the Chief of the Ethics Office. The ACIO, in line with its terms of reference (OD 24), also advises the Commissioner-General in respect of the Agency's ethics function. The Commissioner-General shall conduct a yearly performance evaluation of the Chief, Ethics Office based on feedback from ACIO, the Chairperson of the UN Ethics Panel and assessment of the annual report and other inputs.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

12. The objective of the Ethics Office is to assist the Commissioner-General in nurturing a culture of ethics, integrity and accountability, and thereby enhance the trust in, and the credibility of, UNRWA, both internally and externally; and thus safeguarding an environment free of harassment, including sexual harassment and abuse of power.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

13. The main responsibilities of the Ethics Office are as follows:
  - a. Developing standards, training and education on ethical issues, in coordination with the Department of Human Resources and other Departments, as appropriate, as well as the United Nations Ethics Panel, in order to ensure that there is a uniform and consistent application of ethics-related issues within the United Nations system;
  - b. Providing advice and support to management to ensure that Agency's rules, policies, procedures and practices reinforce and promote the standards of integrity called for under the Charter of the United Nations;
  - c. Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff on ethical issues;
  - d. Serving as a focal point for raising staff awareness within the Agency on ethical standards and expected behaviour within the context of oversight as well as human resources development policies, strategies and programmes and in close cooperation with the Department of Internal Oversight Services and the Department of Human Resources;
  - e. Undertaking the responsibilities assigned to the Ethics Office under the Agency's policy for the protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations;
  - f. Acting as focal point for the Agency's participation in the UN Financial Disclosure Programme;
  - g. Administering the Area Staff Declaration of Interest Programme;
  - h. Undertaking the responsibilities of Agency-wide Coordinator under the Agency's policies for preventing and responding to Prohibited Conduct (Discrimination, Harassment - including Sexual Harassment - and Abuse of Power) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

## **INDEPENDENCE AND THE RIGHTS OF STAFF MEMBERS**

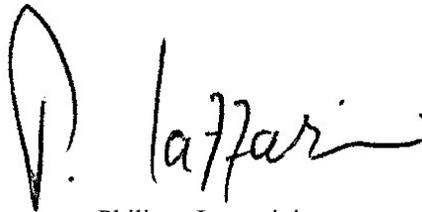
14. Independence, impartiality, objectivity and confidentiality are prerequisites for the functioning of the Ethics Office and they shall be fully respected with regard to the Ethics Office's responsibilities as set out in section 13, above.
15. The Ethics office shall be provided with the necessary resources in terms of adequate funds and professional staff to deliver on its mandate.
16. In order to safeguard and ensure that all matters associated with the discharge of duties and responsibilities of the Ethics Office are independent and free from any pressure and influence, solely at his or her discretion, the Chief, Ethics Office may refer any matter within his or her area of responsibility, at any time, to the Chairperson of the UN Ethics Panel for advice and guidance, and shall promptly inform the Commissioner-General of the referral made.
17. The Ethics Office will maintain confidential records of reports received and advice given.
18. In the performance of their responsibilities and duties, staff of the Ethics Office shall not be compelled by any Agency or United Nations official or body to disclose or testify about issues brought to his or her attention.
19. Staff may bring matters of concern to the attention of the Ethics Office by mail, email, fax, telephone or in person.
20. No person who brings a matter to the attention of the Ethics Office or provides information to it shall be subjected to reprisals because of such actions.
21. Staff members requesting advice on ethical issues or submitting a complaint in accordance with subparagraph (c) or (e) of section 13, above, shall seek recourse in the first instance with the Ethics Office and use the existing policies, procedures and resources available within the Agency to address ethical issues. In relation to its role on protection against retaliation in accordance with subparagraph (e) of section 13 above, the Ethics Office shall not investigate allegations of retaliation.
22. If, following the receipt of a request for advice or a complaint submitted by a staff member in accordance with subparagraph (c) or (e) of section 13 above, the Ethics Office does not, within forty-five days, formally consider the request, the staff member may then refer the matter in writing to the Chairperson of the UN Ethics Panel. If following a final determination by the Ethics Office of a matter referred to it by a staff member, the said staff member wishes to have the matter reviewed further, he or she may, in writing, refer the matter to the Chairperson of the UN Ethics Panel.

## **REPORTING**

23. The Ethics Office shall issue periodic reports on the status of implementation of its work plan to the Commissioner-General and the ACIO for information.
24. The Ethics Office independently prepares and submits an annual report of its work. A draft report is shared for review and advice with the ACIO and the UN Ethics Panel.
25. Subsequently, the Ethics Office submits the annual report to the Commissioner-General, and for information purposes to the Advisory Commission. The Commissioner-General may prepare a management response to the annual report and submit it to the Advisory Commission
26. The report shall include an overview of the activities of the Office and any evaluations and assessments relating to such activities. The Ethics Office may also comment on rules, regulations, policies, procedures and practices that come to its attention and may make recommendations as appropriate.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER OFFICES**

27. All offices and staff members shall cooperate with the Ethics Office and provide access to all records and documents requested by it, in accordance with the Agency's regulatory framework regarding confidentiality requirements. The exceptions to this are medical records that are not available without the express consent of the staff member and Department of Internal Oversight Services records that are subject to confidentiality requirements.
28. The Ethics Office will not replace any existing mechanisms available to staff for the reporting of misconduct, nor shall anything in the present Directive limit the ability of staff members to seek redress through the internal recourse mechanisms.
29. The Chief, Ethics Office shall be a member of the UN Ethics Panel chaired by the Director, UN Ethics Office, pursuant to the Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Lazzarini'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Philippe Lazzarini  
Commissioner-General