Neutrality is critically important to United Nations humanitarian agencies – as well as ICRC and NGOs – to gain and maintain the confidence of all needed to operate independently, safely and effectively, especially in politically-charged or conflict situations. Neutrality is also a core obligation and value of UN staff and an important condition for our donors’ continued trust and financial and political support.

**Nexus between UN neutrality and donor conditions**
UNRWA has agreed with the US to “take all possible measures to ensure that no part of the United States contribution is being used to furnish assistance to any refugee who is receiving military training as a member of the so-called Palestinian Liberation Army or any guerilla-type organisation or anyone who has engaged in any act of terrorism” (Section 301(c) of the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961). There are similar provisions in other donor agreements.

UNRWA’s adherence to UN neutrality is absolutely incompatible with funding or in any way assisting terrorism, terrorists or members of guerrilla-type organisations, i.e., conduct covered by Section 301(c). As a neutral, impartial UN agency providing humanitarian assistance, UNRWA has a legal framework for operations that requires neutrality of staff, third parties, facilities and beneficiaries.

**UNRWA’s legal framework**
UNRWA’s legal framework proscribes a broad range of conduct, including – but going beyond – conduct falling within donor conditions relating to neutrality. For example, staff member involvement in a militant group or terrorist activities would be clearly contrary to UNRWA’s staff regulations and rules and would certainly result in dismissal.

**UNRWA processes and mechanisms supporting UN neutrality**
There are many Agency processes and mechanisms for implementation and enforcement of its rules, regulations and policies relating to UN neutrality and issues related to donor conditions such as Section 301(c).

- All vacancy announcements include neutrality statement in Arabic/English
- Application form includes question about prior convictions
- Assessment of candidate suitability for UN during recruitment process - interview panels take into account the need to uphold the values of integrity, neutrality and impartiality
- Reference check and security clearance prior to/on appointment
- Letter of appointment refers to neutrality provisions of staff rules and regulations
- Applications to governmental authorities for visas for all international staff members
- Permit applications to Government of Israel for local staff (West Bank and Gaza Strip)
- Induction and training address UN neutrality
- Regular circulars
- Annual pledges not to engage in political activities (e.g., Gaza Strip)
- Regular staff meetings with Agency management
- Promoting UN culture at workplace
- Monitoring of staff activity during and outside work hours by management and through media and other sources
- Staff members have an obligation to report misconduct and are protected from retaliation
- Information sought from authorities whenever staff are detained, convicted, refused a permit or targeted
- Field and HQ investigation mechanisms operating in accordance with Agency
UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 4.8 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight. The Agency’s services encompass education, health care, social safety-net, camp infrastructure and improvement, community support, microfinance and emergency response, including in times of armed conflict. Through these services UNRWA strives to help Palestine refugees achieve a decent standard of living, long and healthy lives, knowledge and skills and full enjoyment of human rights. These goals are formulated according to the UN criteria for human development.

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