



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Samantha Power  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power:

We write to express our deep concern about Pierre Krahenbuhl's appointment to be Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which he is currently slated to assume on April 1, 2024. After his disastrous tenure as Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), he is not fit for this leadership role.

Established in 1863, the Switzerland-headquartered ICRC implements the Geneva Conventions and carries out a variety of other humanitarian tasks on behalf of the international community. According to its mission statement, the ICRC "is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance."<sup>1</sup>

The United States has contributed approximately \$5 billion to the ICRC's work since 2013.<sup>2</sup> To conduct its work, which often includes access to both sides during armed conflicts, ICRC must maintain a reputation for discretion, tact, and impartiality. As such, it is vital that the professional character and impartiality of the individual chosen to lead the ICRC be unquestionable.

Regrettably, by these criteria, Mr. Krahenbuhl's tenure at UNRWA disqualifies him for this role, especially at a time when ICRC's impartiality is under question for its posture toward the Israel-Hamas war. Mr. Krahenbuhl served as Commissioner General of UNRWA from March 2014 until his resignation in November 2019. UNRWA asserts that "neutrality is essential" in executing its mandate to "assist and protect Palestine refugees."<sup>3</sup> Under Mr. Krahenbuhl's leadership, however, UNRWA employees displayed a clear bias against the State of Israel as he

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<sup>1</sup> "The ICRC's mandate and mission", ICRC, <https://www.icrc.org/en/mandate-and-mission>

<sup>2</sup> "Annual Reports of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Fiscal Years 2013-2022." (<https://www.icrc.org/en/annual-report>)

<sup>3</sup> "UNRWA and Neutrality," United Nations, The Questions of Palestine, 2018. (<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-and-neutrality-factsheet/>)

tolerated a climate of antisemitism and incitement. UNRWA's Gaza staff regularly posted antisemitic content and called for violence against Jews. Employees reporting to Mr. Krahenbuhl also demonstrated disturbing anti-Israel biases in their official capacities.<sup>4,5,6,7</sup>

Worse, the UN found that rockets were stored at the Jabalia Elementary "C" and the Ayyobiya Boys School, and that it was "highly likely" that rockets were launched from the Jabalia School on July 14, 2014.<sup>8</sup> By the time of Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, according to intelligence reviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*, approximately 10 percent of UNRWA's Gaza staff "have ties to Islamist militant groups" including Hamas.

Furthermore, UNRWA operates more than 700 schools and teacher training facilities in the Middle East. According to Marcus Sheff, the CEO of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in Education (IMPACT-se), between 2014 and 2016 the Palestinian Authority devoted "an enormous amount of time and money" toward developing a curriculum which centered on jihad, antisemitism, and hate.<sup>9</sup> UNRWA accepted its radical content "without changing a line."<sup>10</sup> IMPACT-se found that at least 100 Hamas terrorists who participated in the October 7 attacks against Israel were educated by UNRWA in Gaza.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Krahenbuhl's troubled tenure, however, extends far beyond antisemitism. In November 2019, he resigned as Commissioner General of UNRWA amidst allegations of "sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination, and other abuses of authority for personal gain" according to an internal UNRWA report.<sup>12</sup> Although the UN ultimately cleared Mr. Krahenbuhl of fraud or misappropriation of funds, it did find evidence of "serious managerial issues," which prompted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to place Mr. Krahenbuhl on administrative leave.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "UNRWA posts anti-Semitic cartoons inciting murder of Jews," UN Watch, August 23, 2015. (<https://unwatch.org/unrwa-posts-anti-semitic-cartoons-inciting-murder-of-jews/>)

<sup>5</sup> "UN Watch Report: UNRWA Officials Operating 12 Separate Facebook Accounts Inciting Anti-Semitism," UN Watch, September 3, 2015. (<https://unwatch.org/issue-546/>)

<sup>6</sup> "UNRWA Employees Incite to Murder on Facebook," UN Watch, October 19, 2015. (<https://unwatch.org/issue-551-unrwa-employees-incite-murder-facebook/>)

<sup>7</sup> "Issa Issa, Director at UNRWA, Posts Image of Hitler and Condone Hamas Rocket Fire," UN Watch, February 7, 2017. (<https://unwatch.org/issa-issa-director-unrwa-posts-image-hitler-condone-hamas-rocket-fire/>)

<sup>8</sup> "Explosive: UN admits Palestinians fired rockets from UNRWA schools," UNRWA, April 27, 2015. (<https://unwatch.org/confirmed-un-admits-palestinians-stored-rockets-in-unrwa-schools-and-highly-likely-used-school-premises-to-launch-attacks/>)

<sup>9</sup> "Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories," IMPACT-se, January 2021. (<https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories%E2%80%94Jan-2021.pdf>)

<sup>10</sup> "UNRWA Exposed: Examining the Agency's Examining the Agency's Mission and Failures," House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Oversight Hearing, February 5, 2024 (Testimony of Marcus Sheff, IMPACT-se)

<sup>11</sup> "UNRWA Exposed: Examining the Agency's Examining the Agency's Mission and Failures," House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Oversight Hearing, February 5, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> "Report alleges ethical abuses at UN agency for Palestinian refugees," France 24 (France), July 30, 2019. (<https://www.france24.com/en/20190730-palestinian-territories-United-Nations-Relief-Works-Agency-UNRWA-refugees>)

<sup>13</sup> "Report alleges ethical abuses at UN agency for Palestinian refugees," France 24 (France), July 30, 2019. (<https://www.france24.com/en/20190730-palestinian-territories-United-Nations-Relief-Works-Agency-UNRWA-refugees>)

Given the vast scope of Mr. Krahenbuhl's problematic tenure at UNRWA, and the ICRC's need to reestablish impartiality with respect to Israel, we believe that his demonstrated lack of discretion and impartiality makes him thoroughly unqualified to assume the leadership role of the ICRC. With this in mind, we urge you to use your roles to persuade the ICRC to reconsider this appointment. We request that you inform Congress of the steps you have taken by March 29, 2024.

Sincerely,



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Darrell Issa  
Member of Congress



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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



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Joe Wilson  
Member of Congress



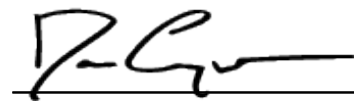
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Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress



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Andrew Ogles  
Member of Congress



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Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress



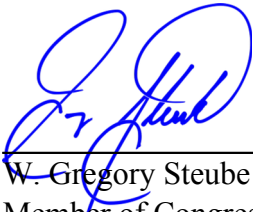
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Beth Van Duyne  
Member of Congress



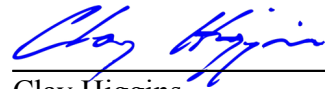
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Bryan Steil  
Member of Congress



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W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress




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Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress



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Keith Self  
Member of Congress



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Claudia Tenney  
Member of Congress



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Bill Huizenga  
Member of Congress



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Roger Williams  
Member of Congress



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Rich McCormick, MD, MBA  
Member of Congress