

# De-functioning UNRWA:

## Decrease in Services, Staff, and Capacity

Fact Sheet 2023



Caricature by Artist Imad Hajjaj

## INTRODUCTION

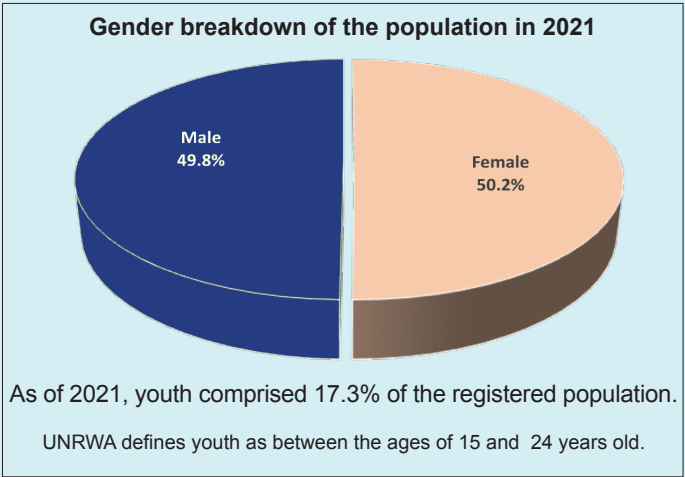
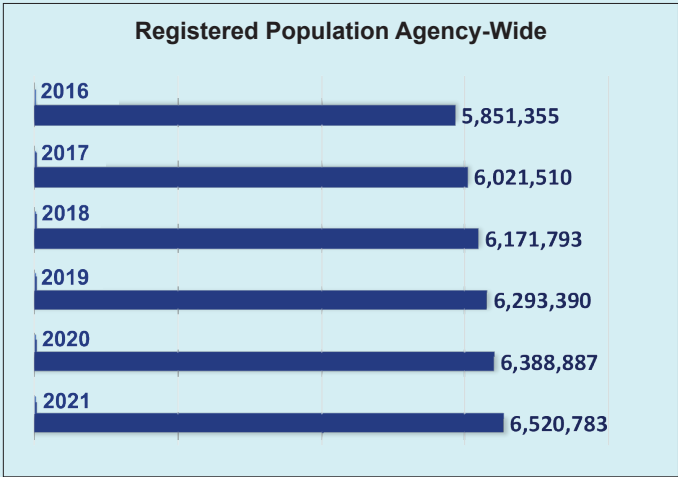
The purpose of this brochure is to highlight how the lack of financial and political support for UNRWA by the international community has resulted in a significant decrease and reduction in the services that UNRWA should provide to an increasing refugee population. UNRWA was established in 1949 with UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees and, to date, UNRWA provides services to registered Palestinian refugees through five main programs: education, health, relief and social services, microfinance, and emergency assistance. It also provides refugee camps with infrastructure and basic improvements and carries out specific emergency response programs where necessary.

With every year, UNRWA has been experiencing a sharp decrease in the funding it receives, primarily because of the structural issue of state contributions being voluntary, political influence in the form of conditional funding, and Zionist campaigns that culminate in the Israeli demonization and delegitimation of the agency. The weaknesses of the PLO and the marginalization of refugees' rights within the Oslo framework further increases the strain placed on UNRWA and not only widens the protection gap for Palestinian refugees, but significantly impairs UNRWA's ability to fulfill its mandate and provide assistance. UNRWA's updated statistics bulletin reflects this crisis.

See UNRWA Statistics Bulletin: <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/unrwa-statistics-bulletin>

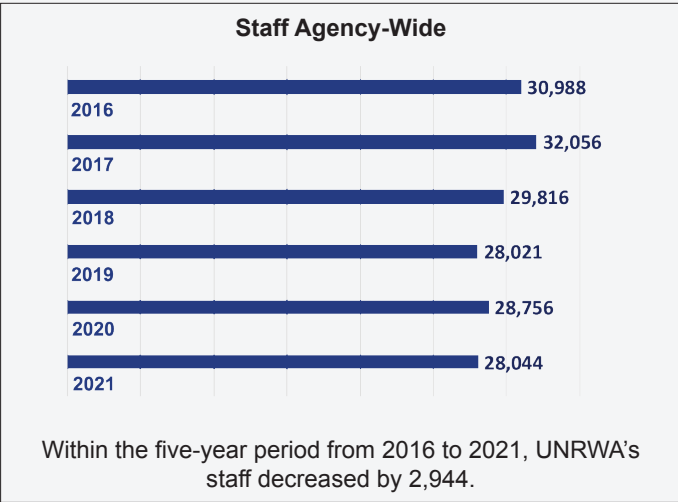
# PALESTINIANS ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE FROM UNRWA

The total registered population has increased by 11.4% over the five-year period.



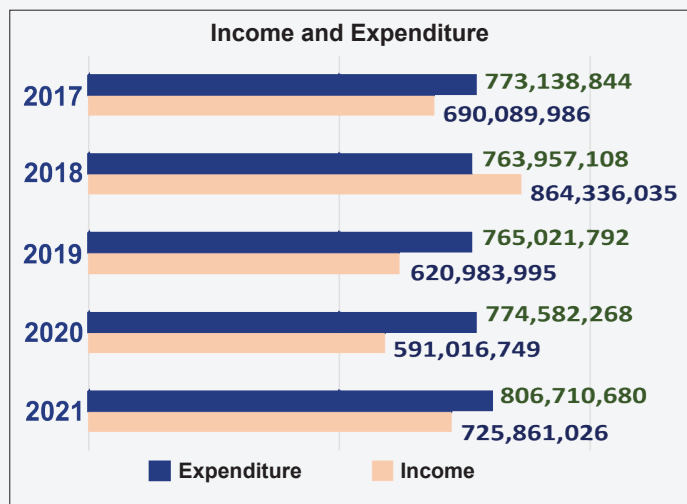
## UNRWA STAFF

An increase in the total registered population should naturally be followed by an increase in the staff that provides services to them. However, the five-year period has seen a drop in the number of UNRWA staff.



# UNRWA BUDGET

Despite there being an increase in UNRWA's expenditure, the income that the agency was receiving experienced sharp drops over the years and only began to rise again in 2021-2020.



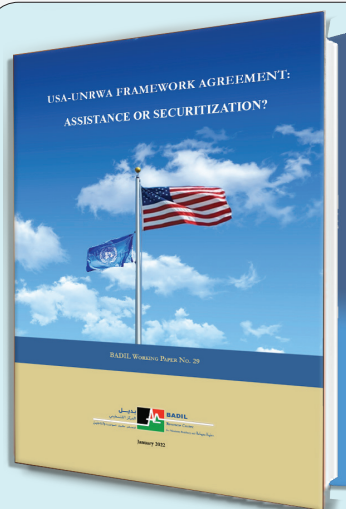
The drop in income received by UNRWA is largely due to the increased attacks on the agency, especially those led by the Trump administration and its decision to enact budget cuts to UNRWA in order to entrench UNRWA's financial crisis and cripple its ability to service Palestinian refugees, with other countries following suit. Similarly, conditional funding initiatives, such as the USA-UNRWA Framework Agreement and the 'UNRWA Accountability and Transparency Act' and the so-called counter terrorism clauses seek to further suffocate the agency and deprive Palestinian refugees of their ability to access assistance. These campaigns additionally overwhelmingly target UNRWA area staff, most of whom are Palestinian, which would explain the drop in area staff in comparison to the increase in international staff.

The 'UNRWA Accountability and Transparency Act' demands that

“no official, employee, consultant, contractor, subcontractor, representative, affiliate of UNRWA, [or] an UNRWA partner organization [...] has propagated or disseminated anti-American, anti-Israel, or anti-Semitic rhetoric, incitement, or propaganda, including: failing to recognize Israel's right to exist; showing maps without Israel; describing Israelis as 'occupiers' or 'settlers'; expressing support for [BDS]; claiming or advocating for a 'right of return' of refugees...”

[UNRWA Accountability and Transparency Act](#),

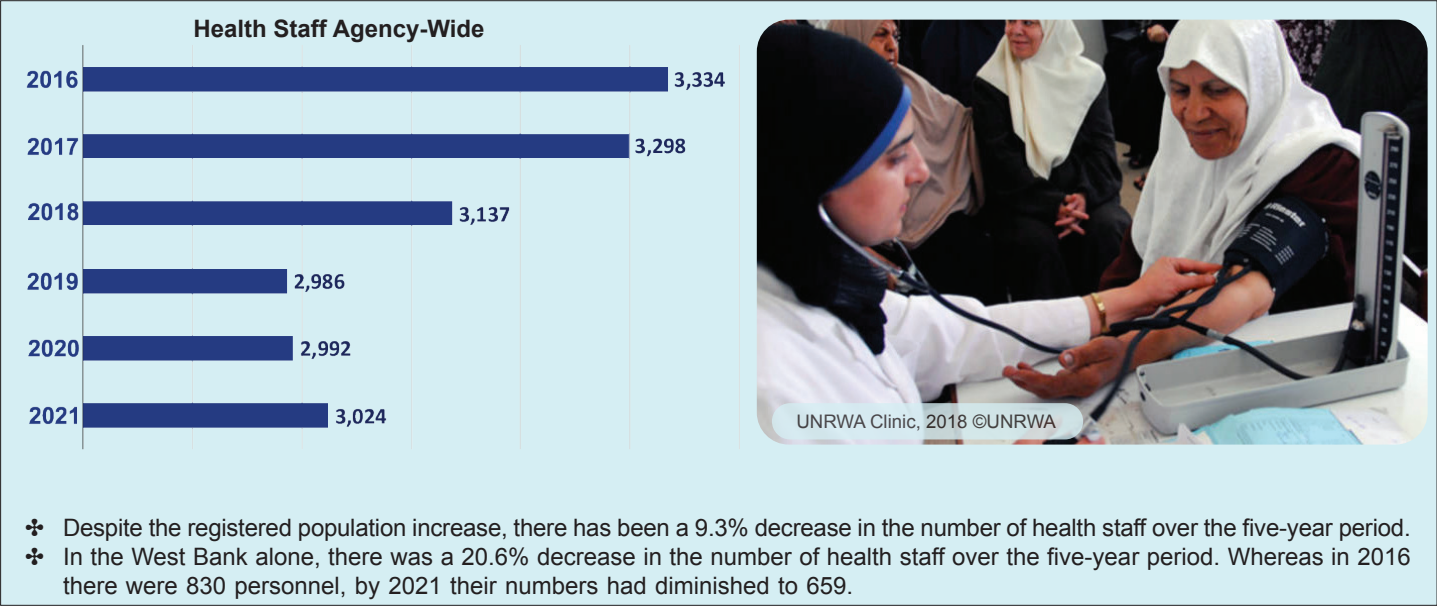
Section 3, art (c)(2)



For more information about the political and security conditions imposed on UNRWA, see:

[USA-UNRWA Framework Agreement](#), pg. 2.

# HEALTH STAFF



# HEALTH SERVICES



✦ There was a 32.2% decrease in the number of annual patient visits between 2016 and 2020, from 8.55 million to 5.8 million. Despite an increase between 2020 and 2021, the numbers are still well below those of 2016.

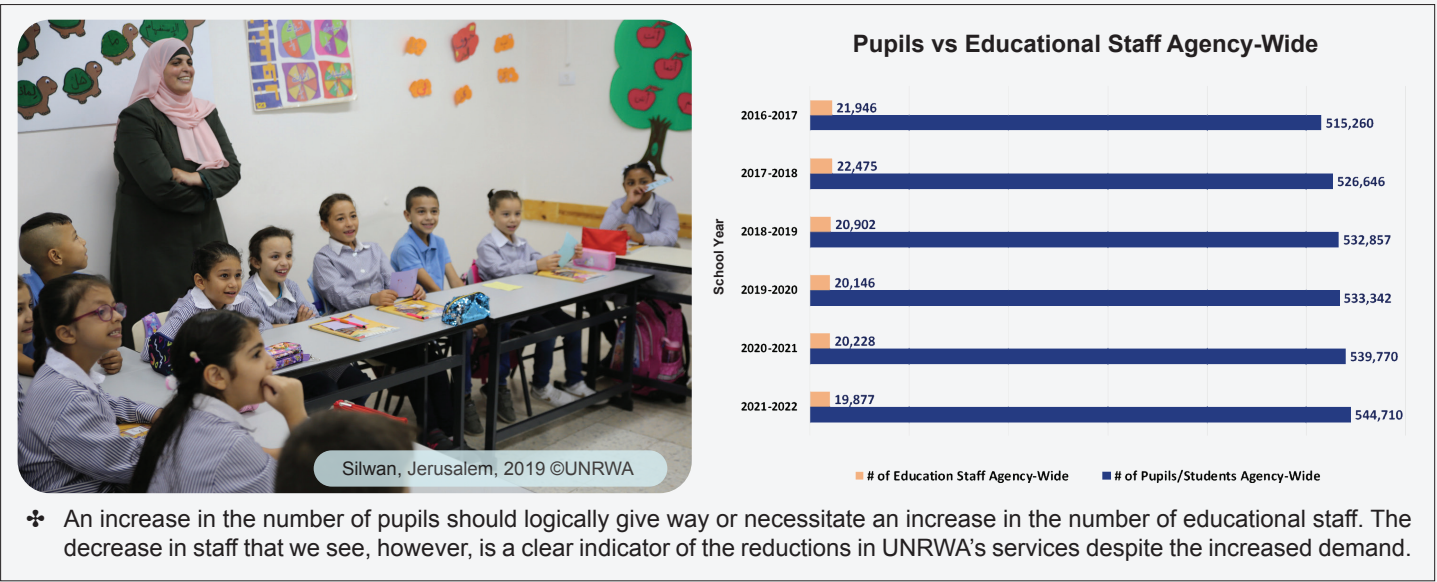


✦ There was a 24.2% decrease in the number of hospitalized patients between 2016 and 2020, from 101,990 to 77,324. Despite an increase between 2020 and 2021, the numbers are still well below those of 2016.

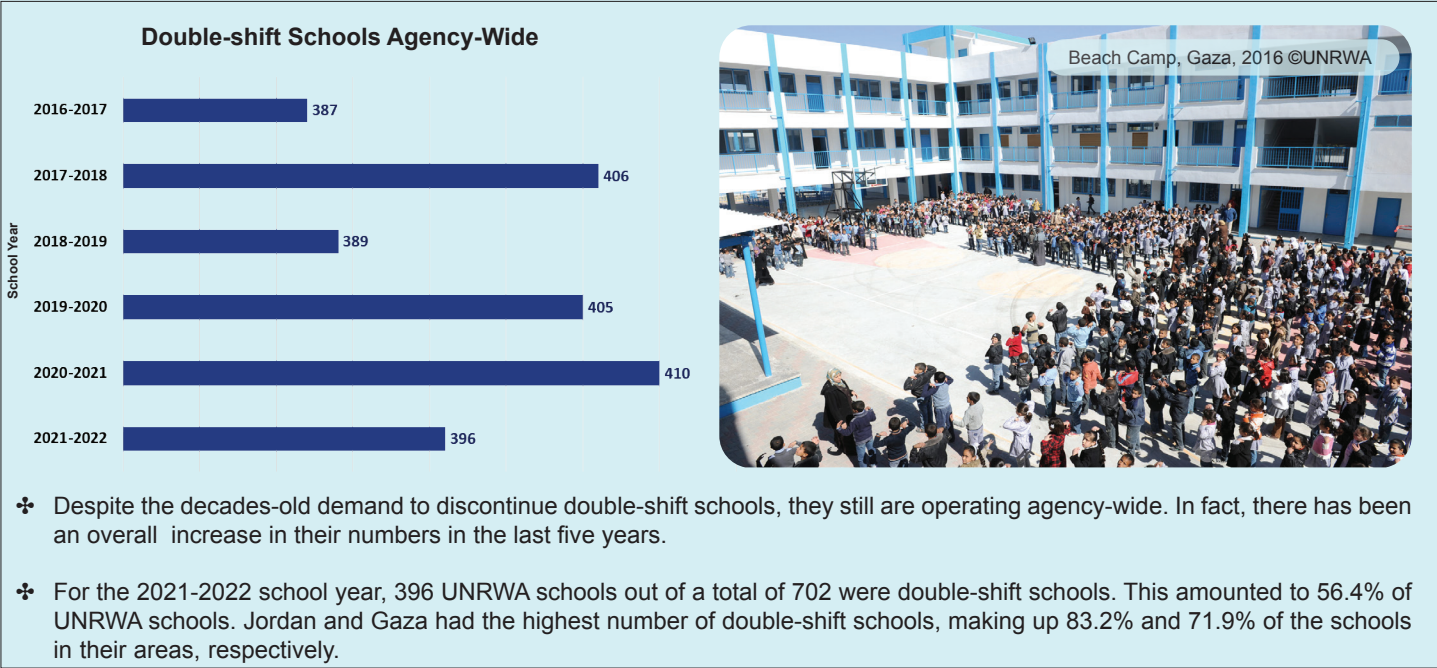


✦ Between 2020 and 2021 there was a 34.4% decrease in the number of individuals who received psychosocial support, from 130,486 to 85,530.

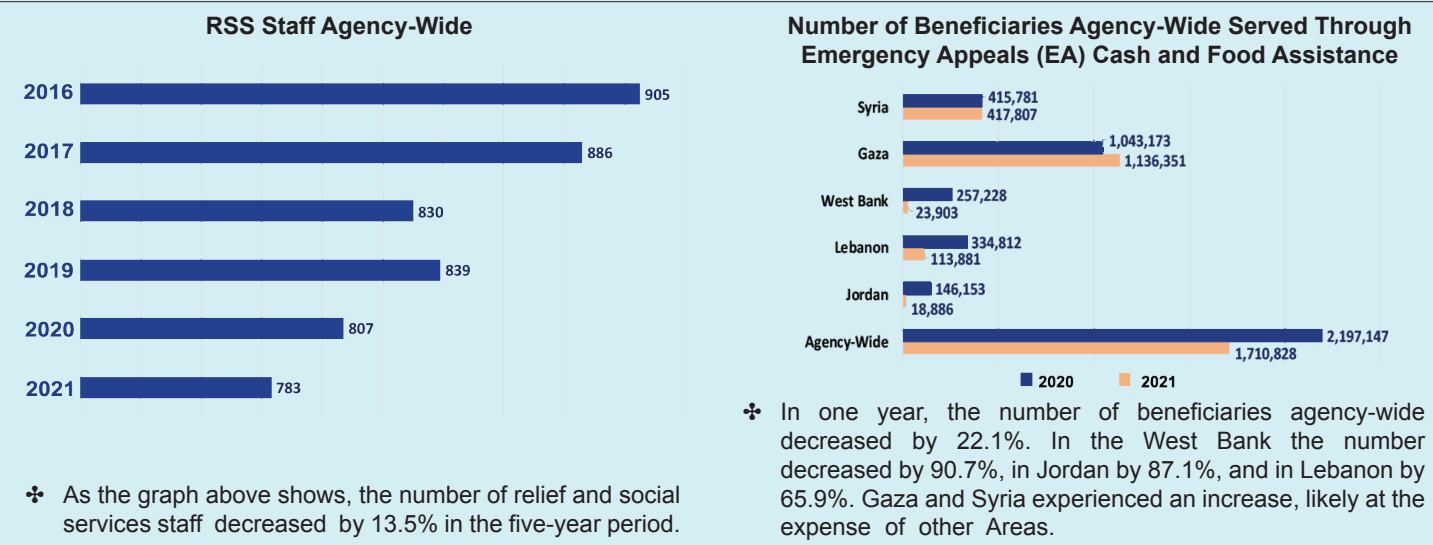
# PUPILS AND EDUCATIONAL STAFF



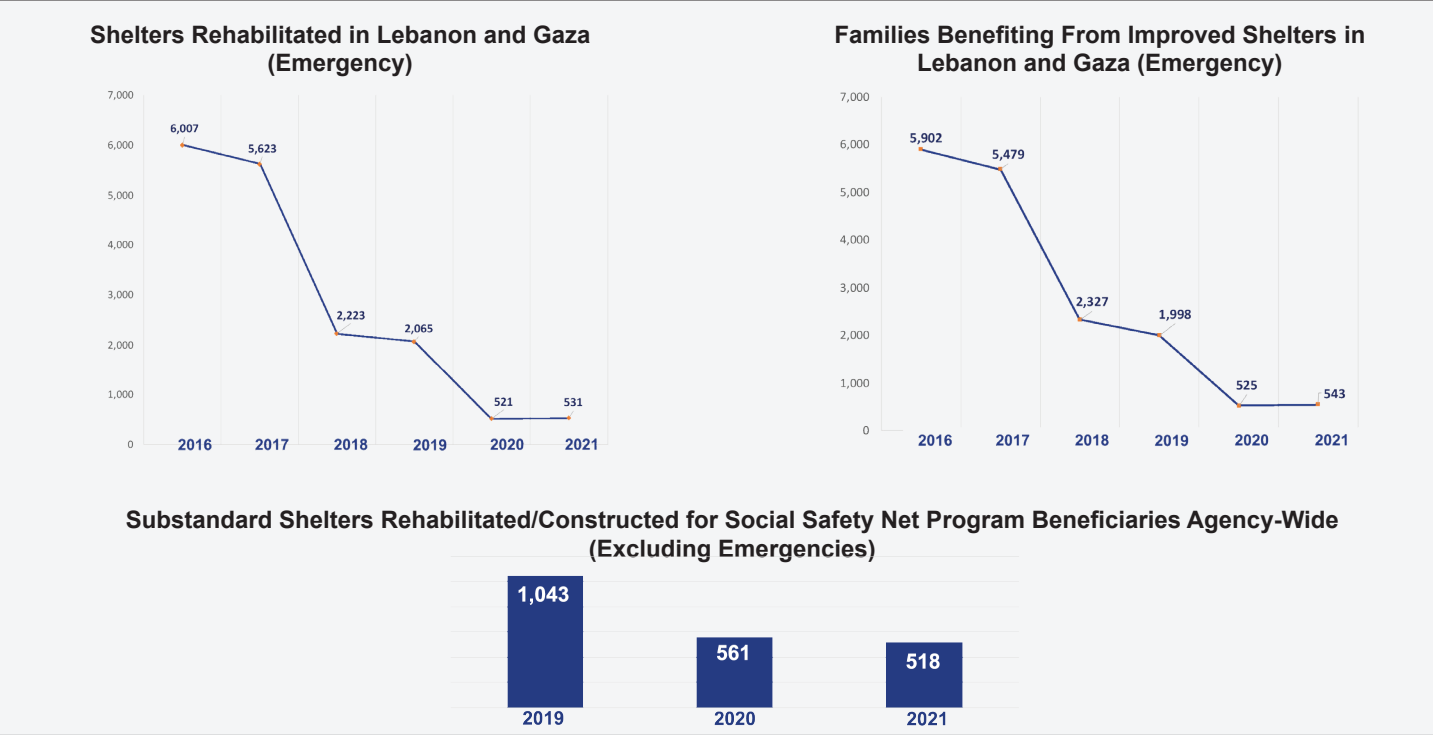
# DOUBLE-SHIFT SCHOOLS



# RELIEF AND SOCIAL SERVICES (RSS)



# INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAMP IMPROVEMENT



## CONCLUSION

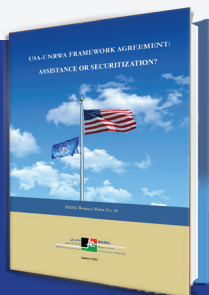
Currently, due to UNRWA's limited assistance mandate, along with its dependence on external voluntary funding which is subject to political influence, conditional funding and Zionist lobbying campaigns and attacks, UNRWA to a large extent has been de-functioned. It is unable to sufficiently fulfill its assistance mandate and cannot provide appropriate and adequate protection, enhancing the protection gap for Palestinian refugees.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, BADIL calls on:

1. The United Nations to convert state contributions to the UNRWA budget from voluntary to mandatory contributions and to reject the transfer of UNRWA's responsibilities to other UN agencies, iNGOs or host states. The UN General Assembly to reinforce its commitment to UNRWA by not only renewing its mandate but also addressing the various structural flaws associated with it.
2. The PLO, Department of Refugees Affairs, popular committees, political parties, and national Palestinian NGOs to direct States, UN agencies, iNGOs to deal with UNRWA as the essential partner and mandatory path to implement any project inside the camps.
3. International agencies to cooperate with UNRWA for the success of its programs according to Article 18 of UNRWA's statute (UNGA Res. 302), which means cooperating with these agencies and not authorizing them to provide services on behalf of UNRWA.
4. The International donor community to stop conditioning humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and UNRWA based on Zionist-Israeli allegations whereby the securitization of the Palestinian context based on Israeli criteria is a form of complicity in the Israeli colonial project.



For more BADIL resources on UNRWA and the situation of Palestinian refugees, see:

BADIL, '[USA-UNRWA Framework Agreement: Assistance or Securitization?](#)' (Working Paper No. 29).

BADIL, '[Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2019-2021](#)' (2022) X Survey of Palestinian Refugees & IDP.

