

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 18, 2016

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

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

Dear Secretary Kerry and Administrator Smith:

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding recent reports that Hamas, a U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), has systematically exploited the funds and resources of numerous humanitarian organizations to support its terror and military activities. I urge you to investigate every allegation and use all resources to ensure American taxpayer dollars as well as individual private donations of Americans are not being used to fund terrorism.

In recent weeks, Israel arrested and charged employees from World Vision and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with providing material and/or financial support to Hamas. Hamas officials have allegedly infiltrated numerous aid organizations as employees and used their access to redirect western aid to terrorist groups. According to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

“Mohammed El-Halabi, currently employed as director of the Gaza branch of World Vision, is actually a major figure in the terrorist/military arm of Hamas. El-Halabi has been taking advantage of his position to divert the humanitarian organization's funds and resources from the needy to benefit Hamas' terrorist and military activities...”

Although these allegations are shocking, I am not surprised that Hamas uses humanitarian aid to further its terror campaign against Israel. Hamas routinely tortures journalists, kills dissidents, and uses civilians as human shields. Hamas is the leading cause of Palestinian suffering in Gaza, including apparently stealing millions of dollars of humanitarian aid that should have gone to the Palestinian people.

As the largest donor nation in the world, these reports of humanitarian assistance going to Hamas are very concerning. We must ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are not being siphoned off by murderous terrorist groups such as Hamas. U.S. taxpayers, many of whom donate their own money to charities such as World Vision, should also be able to do so with confidence that their money will not fund terrorism.

As you are aware, Germany and Australia have suspended funding for World Vision programs in Gaza until the investigation is complete. I urge you to suspend all U.S. assistance to Gaza until a

review of the controls in place to prevent a diversion of funds can occur. The review should examine the mechanisms that exist to identify and stop any potential misuse of taxpayer dollars in Gaza as well as the auditing processes of organizations working in areas controlled by Hamas or any other terrorist group.

Hamas is responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, including numerous Americans. The American people deserve to have strong assurances by their government that U.S. taxpayer dollars and private donations to groups doing work overseas are actually achieving their intended purpose to help those in need.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator