

After Canada Cuts Funds to UNRWA, US Announces \$40 Million Contribution

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Montreal, Feb. 5th, 2010 - Thursday, the US State Department announced an initial 2010 contribution of \$40 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to support UNRWA's regular budget and emergency programs. The announcement comes just weeks after Canada announced cuts and redirections in its annual contributions to UNRWA, supposedly according to "Canadian values."

\$30 million of the US contribution went to UNRWA's general fund, supporting core UNRWA services in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza. The remaining \$10 million was allocated to support UNRWA's emergency appeal for the West Bank and Gaza, including emergency food assistance, and job creation programs. Curiously, while the US begins 2010 reaffirming its commitment to the human development programs provided through UNRWA's general fund, Canada recently expressed accountability concerns about how money is spent through UNRWA's general fund. Vic Toews, president of the Treasury Board of Canada, who made the statements on behalf of Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation), suggested that UNRWA had made it "difficult" to monitor how Canadian contributions were used. Toews provided no justification for his assertions.

"The weakness of the government's assertions about UNRWA is laid in evidence through this recent US announcement," declared Thomas Woodley, President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME.) In factsheets issued by CJPME on UNRWA, CJPME cited two recent US Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports on UNRWA, which had confirmed UNRWA compliance with US controls on accountable usage of funds. Canada has reduced contributions to UNRWA overall from \$32 million in 2007, to only \$20 million in 2009. In addition, in the first ever such move, the Canadian government provided no contributions to UNRWA's general fund in 2009. "If the Canadian government has a justification for its new approach to UNRWA funding, it has not yet revealed it," continued Woodley.

The US is UNRWA's largest bilateral donor, providing \$267 million to UNRWA in 2009, including \$116.2 million to UNRWA's general fund. The US's initial contribution early in 2010 contrasts with Canada's last minute donation to UNRWA in 2009, when it gave 75 percent of its overall contribution only in mid-December. In contrast to the US's studied support for UNRWA, Canada's recent changes in funding approaches to UNRWA suggest that even more changes are imminent.

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.

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