

# CIDA Reveals That Even Israel Opposes Canada's UNRWA Cuts

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

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Montreal, July 7, 2011 — A recently released August 24, 2010 CIDA memo reveals that Canada was asked by the US and even Israel to restore its funding to the UNRWA General Fund. The revelation that Israel was among those requesting that Canada reverse its 2009 decision to cut funding to UNRWA's core programmes has surprised some observers. In recent years several Canadian pro-Israel lobby groups have smeared UNRWA, claiming that it had been infiltrated by Hamas and was unworthy of Canadian support.

There are indicators that the Harper government's 2009 decision to cut funding for UNRWA's General Fund was made primarily at the behest of Canadian pro-Israel groups. Significantly, it was made public during Public Safety Minister Vic Toews' January 2010 trip to Israel. The announcement's timing indicates that the Harper government believed that Israeli officials and Canada's pro-Israel groups would welcome it. Moreover, the cuts were made when civilians in Gaza were reeling from Israel's 2008-09 assault, and urgently needed UNRWA support.

"Israel's opposition to Canada's reduction in funding to UNRWA is an indication of the stabilizing role that UNRWA plays within the Palestinian refugee population," says Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) President Thomas Woodley. CJPME notes that pro-Israel elements within Canada regularly issue disinformation about UNRWA's role and practices, and that the Harper government was likely influenced by these elements. Canada cut all its funding to UNRWA's General Fund in 2009, a year in which Palestinians in Gaza were at their neediest. CJPME believes that logic and compassion would have dictated increases, not cuts, to Canada's UNRWA funding.

Canada has provided \$15 million in funding for UNRWA in 2011: \$10 million for food in Gaza, and \$5 million for job creation in the West Bank. The food aid is needed to address severe impoverishment among Palestinians in Gaza, especially given Israel's imposition of a sweeping blockade on Gaza since 2007. However, the blockade is also causing 45 percent unemployment and keeping Palestinians dependent on foreign aid. UNRWA's General Fund finances core education, health care and infrastructure — all of which Palestinian refugees need in order to eventually achieve self-sufficiency, and a stable civil society.

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