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Alon Sahar

The Campaign against UNRWA and the Palestinian Right of Return in Germany

Israel-aligned Actors, Narratives, and Policy Uptake

STUDIEN

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Study commissioned by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Alon Sahar is a German-Israeli award-winning independent researcher, strategist, and filmmaker. His analysis and commentaries have appeared in leading international outlets, including Der Spiegel, EUobserver, The Jerusalem Post, and Verfassungsblog. He has collaborated on research projects with Breaking the Silence and B'Tselem and is the founding editor of Staatsräson Monitor.

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Foreword

This study, commissioned by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, offers the first systematic insight into the advocacy work of Israel-aligned political actors in the USA, Germany, and Israel. It focuses on the political campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), established in 1949.

The study traces the strategies and lines of argument used to discredit UNRWA and its work within the German political landscape by those who hope to contribute, over the medium term, to a defunding of the agency. Through the examination of this particular case, the research makes an important contribution to a fact-based, systematic understanding of the working methods and the interpersonal and political entanglements of organizations with close ties to Israel. It shows how these actors shape political, social, and media debates in Germany, and how they have influenced the decisions of governments and parliaments with respect to Israel-Palestine policy.

The United Nations and those of its institutions that are active in Israel and Palestine have long been at the centre of a polarized political debate about the catastrophic situation on the ground. This is particularly true since the Hamas massacre in southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and Israel's subsequent genocidal war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Against the backdrop of recent attacks on international law and, by extension, on the UN institutions that are committed to it, the political and media debates have become increasingly heated. The temporary suspension of German funds for UNRWA in early 2024 illustrates the political consequences of this development. The agency continues to report significant funding shortfalls that have hampered its work and exacerbated the catastrophic humanitarian situation facing Palestinians, not only in the Gaza Strip. As one of the world's largest donor countries, Germany plays a crucial role. Accordingly, it has become the centre of intense political campaigns aimed at halting funding and thereby permanently weakening UNRWA.

Given the highly polarized debate about the situation in Israel and Palestine, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation is committed to addressing this highly relevant political and social issue with the utmost care. This is particularly important in light of the enduring power of antisemitic conspiracy narratives of "Jewish" or "Zionist world domination" — as has once again become apparent, for example, in the antisemitic narratives surrounding the "Epstein Files". At the same time, we are seeing an ongoing narrowing of pluralistic spaces for discourse that also affects the German-speaking debate on Israel and Palestine. In the context of global authoritarian trends, this development poses a considerable threat to democratic societies.

Moreover, this study shows that political advocacy groups' access to policymakers in this field is highly uneven, making a transparent and critical examination of political influence necessary. This is all the more true given that, in principle, Germany has institutions and civil society organizations committed to ensuring the transparency of political decision-making processes and limiting the influence of lobbyists.

The meticulous research by our author Alon Sahar, founder of the Substack newsletter "Staatsräson Monitor" — and collaborator with the Israeli human rights organizations B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence, among others — sheds light on the key actors in the anti-UNRWA network across the United States, Israel, and Germany. The study demonstrates how these actors disseminate and repeat certain narratives and play different roles with the aim of getting their political demands adopted in Germany. In some cases, this is done at the expense of fundamental standards of political transparency, which are essential to a well-founded German policy on the Middle East and to a pluralistic debate on preventing antisemitism.

This seems all the more urgent given that substantial public funds have also been channelled into maintaining these networks. The study assumes that revealing these political structures and the key players shaping them is necessary for a better and more adequately contextualized understanding of political influence in Germany's Israel-Palestine policy. We therefore see this study as an invitation to dialogue addressed to all those who, drawing on systematically researched knowledge, wish to counter the tendency for the political debate to become more narrow.

A final editorial note: To improve the readability of this very dense text, not all references to sources were included in the printed version of the study. However, the footnotes list all the works cited by the author. For comprehensive references to the sources used, we recommend the digital PDF version with hyperlinks.

We wish you an enlightening read!

Gil Shohat
Head of the Israel office of the
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

1 Executive Summary

Between 2014 and January 2026, a transnational advocacy network of policy entrepreneurs, advocacy organizations, and state-sponsored entities aligned with right-wing Israeli positions consolidated around the claim that UNRWA perpetuates the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by failing to uphold neutrality. The report finds that promotion of this claim served a broader strategic objective: constraining the political scope of the Palestinian right of return by undermining UNRWA's institutional role prior to any negotiated settlement. Since refugee status and the right of return derive from UN General Assembly resolutions and international law rather than from UNRWA's existence, this strategy could not achieve its stated objective through institutional means alone, but it has nonetheless produced severe humanitarian harm. Because of limitations in the UN arena, advocacy efforts concentrated on donor-state pressure, above all on the United States and Germany.

The report is based on document analysis, parliamentary records, organizational financial disclosures, and process tracing across more than a decade and focuses on the network's influence on the German policy environment. A tight, transnational, well-resourced coalition of Narrative Originators maintained agenda salience through reports, policy briefings, parliamentary interventions, and media engagement. These narratives were translated into the local political discourse by Domestic Brokers, who adapted them to German legal, historical, and moral reference frames, which were later reinterpreted by Norm Shapers, actors in the fields of antisemitism prevention and political education. Claims by these groups were then circulated by Media Amplifiers and Cluster Groups, and finally acted upon by Political Uptakers, first from challenger parties, then in government coalition agreements and executive decisions. They reinforced each other through parliamentary interventions, producing recurring cycles of donor scrutiny, conditionality, and review. The cumulative effect of these dynamics is a displacement of the Palestinian refugee question from the realm of political negotiation and international law into donor-driven administrative decision-making — a register shift that structurally marginalizes relevant expertise, institutions, and legal frameworks. This displacement also reveals a growing tension within Germany's foundational commitments: the Staatsräson obligation to Israeli security and the commitment to international humanitarian law and multilateral norms are increasingly operationalized as mutually exclusive. This tension is actively shaped by an advocacy infrastructure that systematically delegitimizes international institutions and humanitarian aid organizations by recasting them as structurally biased or politically compromised, while Germany's constitutional commitments to the rules-based international order are reframed as obstacles to Staatsräson rather than expressions of it.

These processes have tangible humanitarian consequences and effects on the German political sphere. Advocacy-driven funding volatility and institutional uncertainty exacerbate already severe conditions in areas where UNRWA operates, increasing the likelihood that governance gaps are filled by politically instrumentalized and militarized entities, such as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which collapsed within months, or more radical and unaccountable actors. The ecosystem documented in this report is sustained by two complementary funding streams aligned ideologically: private philanthropic networks based in the United States, characterized by high donor concentration and limited transparency, and German public funding channeled through antisemitism-prevention and civic education frameworks. The report did not identify, in any of the institutional settings through which this ecosystem exercises influence — parliamentary briefings, publicly funded education programs, elite access networks, state-adjacent advisory roles — a comparably resourced, institutionally embedded, or narratively coherent counter-network operating from rights-based, humanitarian, or Palestinian-aligned perspectives. These structural imbalances point to several areas where the report identifies unresolved

institutional and political problems in the German context, particularly in governance, civil society, philanthropy, and media. First, humanitarian funding decisions increasingly operate under political and reputational pressures that weaken evidence-based criteria and produce recurring instability. Second, the fields of antisemitism prevention and civic education lack sufficient mechanisms for transparency, oversight, and pluralism, contributing to structural asymmetries in the narratives and actors they institutionalize. Third, access to policymaking processes remains uneven, with Palestinian, rights-based, and critical Israeli or Jewish perspectives substantially less institutionally embedded than actors aligned with dominant state and advocacy frameworks. Fourth, German foreign policy is increasingly compromised by political pressures rather than by established fact-based institutional analysis, international law, and multilateral humanitarian norms.

2 Introduction

2.1 Research Questions

This study examines how a transnational, Israeli-aligned advocacy network has shaped German debates on Israel, Palestine, the right of return, and UNRWA since 2014, with intensity after October 7th, 2023. Within this network operates a relatively coherent advocacy coalition, coordinated across borders and institutional arenas through shared interpretive frameworks, aligned funding environments, and institutional proximity — producing directional alignment without formal command structures — and united by a shared belief system. At its deepest level (or "Deep Core"), this belief system rests on a conception of exclusive ethno-national self-determination that frames Palestinian refugee claims as incompatible with Jewish sovereignty. At the policy core, it centers on rejecting the maximalist interpretation of the right of return. At the level of secondary beliefs, it promotes specific instrumental strategies, most notably the claim that defunding UNRWA can advance the elimination of the right of return.

The research asks how specific actors within this coalition generate narratives, how these narratives travel into the German political field, how they are translated into domestic institutional language and moral frames, and how they influence policymaking. The central question concerns not only what these actors claim, but how coordinated practices structure the discursive and institutional environment of German policymaking.

A second question concerns the interaction between this advocacy coalition and long-standing German policy foundations. Germany's commitments to the security of Israel, to humanitarian principles, and to multilateral norms coexist uneasily and form a distinct policy subsystem shaped by historical responsibility and memory politics. The research explores how external advocacy campaigns interact with these relatively stable commitments, how they activate existing normative constraints, and what this means for Germany's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

This report is not an academic study in the strict sense, but a piece of political research designed for policy-relevant analysis. It draws on established scholarship on transnational advocacy networks (or TANs),[1] advocacy coalitions,[2, 3] epistemic communities,[4] and narrative policy analysis[5]. In much of this literature, TANs are understood as mechanisms through which civil society actors mobilize across borders to bypass or constrain state power.

The case examined here subverts this model in a fundamental way. Rather than civil society actors bypassing the state, a small group of Israel-aligned right-wing organisations (named here narrative originators for their function in the network) backed by philanthropists based in the United States, advanced coordinated policy campaigns that pushed the Israeli state and its increasingly far-right coalition governments into alignment. Through parallel advocacy efforts abroad, including in Germany, these campaigns also shaped elements of Western foreign policy debates and policy orientations, exemplified here in relation to UNRWA and the right of return. In this configuration, diplomatic accountability was bypassed not by opposing the state, but by acting through civil society in Israel and abroad in ways

1 Keck, Margaret E., Sikkink, Kathryn. *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics.* Cornell University Press, 1998.
2 Sabatier, Paul A., Jenkins-Smith, Hank C. (1993). *Policy change and learning: An advocacy coalition approach.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
3 Jenkins-Smith, Hank C., Nohrstedt, Daniel, Weible, Christopher M., Ingold, Karin. The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Overview of the Research Program. In Weible, Christopher M., Sabatier, Paul A. (Eds.), *Theories of the Policy Process* (4th ed., pp. 135–172). Westview Press, 2018.
4 Haas, Peter M. "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination." *International Organization,* vol. 46, no. 1, 1992, pp. 1–35.
5 Roe, Emery. *Narrative policy analysis: Theory and practice.* Duke University Press, 1994.

that aligned with what they perceived as Israeli and German state interests.

This structural subversion of the conventional TAN model illustrates the analytical relevance of Clifford Bob's analysis of right-wing transnational advocacy groups, and specifically his concept of "Rights as Weapons,"[6] which highlights the underexamined ways in which not only weak, but also powerful actors (including states and major interest groups such as the National Rifle Association), deploy rights discourse as an instrument of political struggle. Bob shows how rights claims can function, for example, as "camouflage"[7] to obscure ulterior motives, as "wedges" to weaken or fracture rival coalitions, and as "dynamite" to undermine or destroy a weaker opponent's culture or community. Thus, rights appear not only as normative goals, but also as strategic tools. The typology has proven analytically useful for identifying and assessing the strategies at work. One illustrative example is the Jewish-Kurdish feminist group Pek Koach, discussed in section 4.5.1. In a preliminary reading, its framing could be interpreted as a form of what Bob terms "camouflage," insofar as a feminist and minority-rights discourse is foregrounded, while the conflict is predominantly interpreted through the lens of Islamist ideology and alternative political explanations remain largely absent. However, a systematic analysis of each technique, and a full justification of its application to this case, lies beyond the scope of this report.

The study treats the advocacy ecosystem as a layered structure. At its core is an advocacy coalition that shares key beliefs and engages in sustained coordination around policy-relevant claims— coordination that takes both documented and structural forms, as detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. Surrounding this core are adjacent actors who do not necessarily share the full belief system but contribute to diffusion, translation, amplification, or legitimisation of its narratives. This distinction allows the analysis to remain consistent with advocacy coalition theory while capturing the empirical breadth of the network.

A functional approach guides the mapping of actors. Rather than classifying them primarily by ideology or formal mandate, the analysis focuses on the roles they perform within the coordinated system. Narrative originators formulate causal stories and problem definitions. Translators adapt these frames to German institutions, legal language, and historical sensitivities. Norm shapers reinforce the boundaries of legitimate debate and acceptable speech. Media amplifiers transform specialist discourse into public controversy. Micro networks support diffusion through informal and professional ties. Parliamentary actors introduce and stabilise these narratives within formal political processes.

This approach moves beyond biographies and isolated interventions. Using thematic case studies with multiple empirical examples, it identifies recurring mechanisms, shared repertoires, and the cumulative effects of coordinated activity across different arenas, while remaining attentive to the specific institutional and political constraints of the German policy subsystem.

A further analytical distinction concerns the frequent rhetorical conflation of fundamentally different categories of claims. The analysis differentiates between legal rights recognised under international law (e.g., the right of return) and ongoing practices that constitute active violations of that law (e.g., illegal settlement building). In the material examined, these distinct categories are often collapsed into a single register of "obstacles to peace", thereby flattening normative hierarchies and obscuring differences between unimplemented legal claims and continuing unlawful practices. Identifying and unpacking this asymmetry is essential to understanding how certain narratives gain plausibility within policy debates, despite resting on legally and conceptually non-equivalent premises.

This study analyses advocacy as a political and institutional practice. It does not attribute collective intent, agency, or influence to Jews as a group, nor does it treat Jewish identity, religion, or community affiliation as explanatory variables. The actors examined include both Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and organisations, and are identified solely on the basis of documented organisational roles, public interventions, and observable coordination within specific policy arenas.

The analysis explicitly rejects antisemitic tropes that portray political influence as secretive, omnipotent, or exercised through hidden control. On the contrary, advocacy is treated as an ordinary feature of democratic politics, subject to constraints, failures, and countervailing pressures, and is analysed through a methodological focus on process tracing.

6 Bob, Clifford. Rights as Weapons: Instruments of Conflict, Tools of Power. Princeton University Press, 2019. See Table 1.1 on page 14 summarizing all techniques discussed in the book

7 Ibid. See detailed "Camouflage" definition on Chapter 4, p. 85

By reconstructing how narratives are produced, translated, and institutionalised, the study seeks to replace speculative or conspiratorial explanations with empirically grounded accounts of political influence. Making advocacy practices legible is understood not as an act of delegitimisation, but as a prerequisite for democratic accountability and informed debate.

2.3 Methodology and Sources

Within the Advocacy Coalition Framework scholarship, temporality is central to understanding how belief systems, strategies, and influence evolve over time. This research therefore, adopts a longitudinal perspective, examining the coalition's efforts, setbacks, and moments of policy traction across more than a decade. The report is based on document analysis, media sampling, parliamentary datasets, government records, organisational publications, and secondary scholarship. It also draws on background interviews and informal conversations with policymakers, diplomatic staff, researchers, and civil society representatives. These sources allow for triangulation between public-facing narratives, internal institutional reasoning, and the strategic intentions of advocacy actors.

The methodology emphasises process tracing. Rather than cataloguing nearly every statement or publication, (which did occur in early research stages for the report), the analysis reconstructs how specific narratives were produced, how they moved across institutional settings, and how they generated observable political effects over time. This longitudinal perspective enables identification of patterns of coordination and learning that are not visible in isolated moments.

Triangulation is particularly important in a field marked by political sensitivity and competing truth claims. Advocacy outputs are therefore systematically compared with multilateral assessments, independent research, and historical data. The result is a contextualised account that situates the advocacy coalition within broader structural dynamics, rather than treating its interventions as discrete communications.

2.4 Scope and Limitations

The report focuses primarily on developments in Germany between 2014 and January 2026, with particular attention to the period following October 2023. This timeframe captures both the consolidation of the advocacy coalition and the subsequent intensification of political contestation surrounding UNRWA and the right of return. Developments in the United States, the Middle East, and European institutions are considered only insofar as they shape dynamics within the German context. It is important to stress that Germany's material and strategic interests, as interpreted by political elites, were already broadly aligned in opposition to actors such as Russia, Iran, and related geopolitical challengers. Within this pre-existing orientation, the advocacy network operated by linking these strategic concerns to positions on UNRWA and the right of return, thereby extending established threat perceptions into adjacent policy domains. This reflects a relatively narrow but consequential margin of interpretive flexibility, which tends to expand in moments of crisis, such as after October 7. In such periods, epistemic communities, (such as the narrative originators outlined in chapter 4.2), are particularly well positioned to shape how events are framed and translated into policy responses.[8]

Several limitations must be acknowledged. Some actors operate with opaque funding and informal coordination structures, which restrict full transparency. Executive, ministerial, and at times securitized parliamentary decision-making processes also vary in openness, limiting the reconstruction of internal deliberations. The rapidly shifting political environment after October 2023 further complicates data consistency, as positions evolved under pressure from ongoing hostilities and public controversy.

Despite these constraints, the evidence base is sufficient to identify stable patterns of coordination, influence, and discursive transformation.

8 Haas, "Epistemic Communities," p. 14.

3 Contextual Frame

This chapter provides the historical, legal, and institutional context necessary to understand Germany's policy debates and decisions concerning UNRWA since 2014. It traces three intersecting strands, the evolution of German–Israeli relations and the doctrine of Staatsräson, the mandate of UNRWA and the refugee question, and Germany's long-standing role as a central humanitarian donor. Rather than offering a comprehensive history, the chapter highlights those structural commitments and tensions that shape Germany's room for manoeuvre.

3.1 Post-WWII German-Israeli relations

After the Holocaust and World War II, East Germany (DDR) avoided diplomatic relations with Israel from 1949 to 1990 because it denied responsibility for Nazi crimes, rejected restitution, aligned itself with the Soviet bloc and Arab states, and increasingly adopted a hostile anti-Zionist position amplified during the 1967 war. At times, the DDR provided material support to Arab states and Palestinian factions.[9, 10, 11] The DDR's refusal of responsibility was rooted in its founding self-conception: presenting itself as the legitimate anti-fascist successor state, built by those who had resisted or been persecuted by National Socialism, the regime claimed to have broken decisively with the Nazi past and thus to require no reparations or collective atonement.[12]

West Germany followed a very different path. In the early Cold War, its relationship with Israel was shaped by a triangular dynamic with the United States, and secret military aid in the 1950s and 1960s reflected the Federal Republic's strategic alignment against the Eastern Bloc.[13] The Luxembourg reparations agreement served West Germany's goal of rejoining the family of nations and culminated in official relations in 1965, while the 1968 student movements and Brandt's Ostpolitik in the 1970s reduced Bonn's dependence on Washington and increased its need for stable ties with Arab oil-producing states. This made open support for Israel more politically costly. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, West Germany gradually adopted a more balanced position on the Arab Israeli conflict and began to acknowledge Palestinian political claims. Throughout these shifts, Israel's core interest remained stable because it sought predictable financial, military, and diplomatic backing from Germany.[14] After reunification and during the Oslo years, German policy toward the conflict was structured by two core commitments. One was the protection of Jewish life and Israel's security, rooted in Germany's historical responsibility after the Holocaust. The other was Germany's commitment to international law and multilateral conflict resolution, expressed through support for a negotiated two-state solution and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian institutions and refugees. These commitments were generally presented as mutually compatible. In practice, however, they often pointed in different directions, and historical as well as strategic considerations frequently gave greater weight to Germany's security partnership with Israel.[15]

A more explicit formulation of the actual German Israeli framework appeared in 2008 when Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke to the Israeli Knesset, committing that Israel's security formed part of Germany's "raison d'être.", meaning a core national interest grounded in historical responsibility.[16] This principle, later solidified as a German Staatsräson became even more prominent after 2023, as German political leaders invoked it more frequently and more

9 Timm, Angelika. "Views on Zionism and Israel in East Germany." Shofar, vol. 18, no. 3, 2000, pp. 93–109.
10 https://kyleorton.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/jeffrey-herf-at-war-with-israel.pdf
11 https://zeitgeschichte-digital.de/doks/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/912/file/ke%c3%9fler_sed_juden_repression_toleranz_1995_de.pdf
12 Jeffrey Herf, Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 14–16, 80
13 Daniel Marwecki, Germany and Israel: Whitewashing and Statebuilding London: Hurst Publishers, 2020, pp.16–17.
14 www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/234763
15 www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/fachpublikationen/bss_i_p-4-12-58.pdf
16 https://m.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/Documents/SpeechPdf/merkel.pdf

categorically[17] while supplying and purchasing arms to and from Israel, even as the country faced genocide allegations at the International Court of Justice[18], from prominent Genocide scholars[19, 20] and by human rights organizations.[21, 22, 23]

3.2 UNRWA and the Right of Return

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, was created in December 1949, by General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), with the initial mandate to provide "direct relief and works programmes" to Palestinian refugees, to "prevent conditions of starvation and distress… and to further conditions of peace and stability"[24] while taking over from the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), established in 1948.[25] UNRWA's mandate covers the provision of education, health care, relief services, and camp infrastructure in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. It is funded almost entirely through voluntary state contributions rather than assessed UN dues.[26]

Contrary to a frequently repeated claim, UNRWA was not created to perpetuate the refugee problem. Its original mandate, shaped by the Economic Survey Mission and the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine, reflected the prevailing development thinking of the late-colonial era. Refugees were understood primarily through the lens of economic absorption and administrative management, not as people with political rights or national aspirations. When no political settlement emerged, and the reintegration schemes envisioned in the early UN plans collapsed, this approach lost relevance. Over the subsequent decades, UNRWA evolved into a humanitarian agency providing education, health care, and social protection in the absence of a durable political solution. Rather than "Arab refusal" or "western indulgence" as Wilf (discussed in 4.2.4) and others in the network suggest, the persistence of the refugee issue reflects the unresolved conflict, the structural power asymmetries between the parties, and the failure of the international community to produce a political settlement, not an institutional commitment to perpetuate refugeehood.[27, 28, 29]

UNRWA does not adjudicate or define the right of return. Instead, the agency registers refugees according to criteria established by the UN General Assembly.[30] The right of return is grounded in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 from 1948, which states that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so.[31] Palestinians interpret the right of return as a core political and individual right,[32] while Israeli policymakers continuously reject its implementation for demographic and security concerns.[33, 34] It is important to underline that suspending UNRWA's operations in Gaza and the West Bank, or even dismantling the agency altogether, would not affect the refugee status or internationally recognised rights of Palestinians. These derive from UN General Assembly resolutions and international refugee law and would not be extinguished by the suspension or dismantling of UNRWA. While Article 1D of the 1951 Refugee Convention anticipates that Palestinians would fall under the Convention if UNRWA assistance ceased for reasons beyond their control, this would not constitute a clean or automatic institutional transfer to UNHCR. Instead, it would likely generate significant protection gaps, legal uncertainty, and destabilisation, as no alternative framework exists to absorb UNRWA's functions at scale.[35]

What such a suspension could produce is a serious destabilisation of Gaza and the West Bank, since no other actor has the capacity or mandate to replace UNRWA's essential services in education, health care, food assistance, and social protection.

17 https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2024/03/we-are-all-israelis-the-consequences-of-germanys-staatsrason
18 www.icj-cij.org/case/192
19 www.nytimes.com/2025/07/15/opinion/israel-gaza-holocaust-genocide-palestinians.html
20 https://genocidescholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/IAGS-Resolution-on-Gaza-FINAL.pdf
21 www.btselem.org/publications/202507_our_genocide
22 www.phr.org.il/en/genocide-in-gaza-eng/
23 www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/
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32 https://yplus.ps/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Benvenisti-Gans-and-Hanafi-eds.-Israel-and-the-Palestinian-Refugees.pdf (pg. 141)
33 http://larryjhs.fastmail.fm.user.fm/The%20Birth%20of%20the%20Palestinian%20Refugee%20Problem%20Revisited.pdf (pg. 59, 69)
34 https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/israel/13113.pdf
35 https://youtu.be/s3YADPjFhdo?si=-9dFUYHyUcBtQKGV

3.3 Germany's History of Supporting UNRWA

German support for UNRWA began as early as 1952, according to UNRWA itself, making West Germany one of the agency's earliest non-founding donors, predating its UN membership by over two decades.[36] Cabinet protocols from 1966 and 1967 document that West Germany was already making annual contributions to "appease the Arab states".[37, 38] Budget records throughout the 1970s and 1980s confirm that these contributions became routine and were supplemented by special allocations for refugee relief in the Middle East.[39] This pattern shows that German engagement with UNRWA was rooted in a broader humanitarian policy that later aligned with West Germany's growing involvement in the UN system. At the same time, right-wing attacks already targeted Palestinian aid when, in a 1976 parliamentary inquiry by Carl-Dieter Spranger (CSU), who asked the government to clarify how it ensured that German contributions to UNRWA were not – even indirectly – benefiting the financing of Palestinian terrorism.[40]

After the Oslo Accords in 1993, Germany significantly expanded its financial contributions to Palestinian development and humanitarian institutions.[41] By the 2010s, Germany was regularly among UNRWA's top five donors. For example, in 2016, Germany's total contribution was 73,627,810 USD.[42] Germany has been UNRWA's second-largest donor, becoming the largest during periods when US funding was cut or suspended — under the first Trump administration from 2018, and again from 2025 onward under the second Trump administration.[43, 44]

3.4 Turning Points in German Policy Since 2023

3.4.1 The impact of the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023

Since the Hamas-led attacks of October 7, 2023, Chancellor Scholz has consistently framed Israel's security as German Staatsräson.[45] This translated into diplomatic, legal[46] and material support.[47] While gradually adding stronger humanitarian and legal expectations, this stance was also adopted by newly elected Friedrich Merz, who resumed arms deliveries to Israel, later halted certain categories next to Israel's ongoing aggressions[48] and resumed them approximately one month after October 2025's ceasefire deal.[49]

3.4.2 The UNRWA funding pause and subsequent review

In January 2024, the Wall Street Journal, citing an Israeli intelligence dossier, reported that a significant share of its 13,000 Gaza workers staff had ties to Islamist militant groups and that at least 12 UNRWA employees had connections to the 7 October attack.[50] These allegations prompted major donors, including Germany, to temporarily pause new funding commitments.[51] After an independent enquiry, only nine were to be dismissed even before evidence was corroborated.[52] The United Nations commissioned an independent review, chaired by former French foreign minister Catherine Colonna. The review, published in April 2024, concluded that while UNRWA had in place reasonable internal procedures and a stronger-than-average neutrality framework, there remained gaps that required reform.[53] After the release of the Colonna report, Germany announced it would resume cooperation with UNRWA, at least for operations outside Gaza.[54]

3.4.3 Reopening the debate on Staatsräson

Next to the political elite's support for Israel, beginning in late 2023 and accelerating in 2024, Germany saw a clear shift in public and political debate over the meaning of Staatsräson. Senior officials, civil servants, and prominent diplomats began openly questioning whether unconditional alignment with

36 www.unrwa.org/newsroom/news-releases/unrwa-eur-45-million-new-contributions-germany-services-palestine-refugees
37 https://kabinettsprotokolle.bundesarchiv.de/resources/pdf/f83c92d4-978c-4bc7-bf85-0ae6eb750a53.pdf
38 https://kabinettsprotokolle.bundesarchiv.de/resources/pdf/e79dfa0f-744d-4e20-90c0-cb9377cf07b4.pdf
39 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/09/023/0902364.pdf?
40 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/07/057/0705701.pdf
41 https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift_VN/VN_1997/Heft_6_1997/06_Beitrag_Kobler_VM_6-97.pdf
42 www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/donor_ranking_with_un_agencies_overall.pdf
43 www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/germany-invests-unrwa-education-health-cash-work-services-and-infrastructure
44 www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/top_20_donors_overall_ranking_002.pdf
45 www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2023/kw41-de-regierungserklaerung-970542
46 www.timesofisrael.com/germany-says-will-intervene-at-the-hague-on-israels-behalf-blasts-genocide-charge/
47 www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/10/germany-will-supply-more-weapons-to-israel-chancellor-scholz-announces
48 www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/statement-by-federal-chancellor-friedrich-merz-on-the-development-in-gaza-2377368
49 www.bbc.com/news/articles/clygdj9w23po
50 www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-intel-shows-10-of-unrwa-workers-in-gaza-have-ties-to-terror-groups-report/
51 www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68127544
52 www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/investigation-completed-allegations-unrwa-staff-participation-7-october
53 www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf
54 www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-resume-cooperation-with-palestinian-unrwa-agency-2024-04-24/

Israeli policy could be reconciled with Germany's obligations under international humanitarian law.[55] [56, 57] This was also reflected in multiple polls with the general public regarding relevant questions of recognition of a Palestinian state, weapon deliveries to Israel, and whether or not Israel is committing genocide.[58, 59, 60]

3.4.4 Humanitarian commitments amid security alignment

Germany increased humanitarian aid for Palestinians after October 2023.[61] In December 2023, Germany called for humanitarian relief and "paving the way to a ceasefire".[62] By the summer of 2024, this position was clearer, with Germany actively urging both sides to reach a ceasefire agreement.[63]

3.5 Israel and UNRWA: From Pragmatic Cooperation to Open Contestation

At first glance, Israel's role in the campaign against UNRWA appears straightforward. A closer examination adds nuance without altering the overarching picture.

Historically, and since 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza, the state maintained a pragmatic yet conflict-laden cooperation with UNRWA. Israel explicitly requested the agency to continue its operations in the newly occupied territories.[64, 65] For decades, UNRWA has acted as a central stabilizing institution in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.[66, 67] Even during the first Trump administration, Israeli officials expressed concern about the impact of United States defunding[68, 69, 70] and, according to Einat Wilf (more on Wilf in 4.2.4), Israel even encouraged Germany to increase its contributions following the U.S. withdrawal.[71, 72] These positions reflected a security-based calculus in which UNRWA functioned as a stabilizing subcontractor in occupied and neighboring territories. After 7 October, Israeli coalition government is its most right-wing extreme, and through public direct Israel advocacy, this logic gave way to a different strategic premise, namely that UNRWA is an undesirable actor.

Since 7 October, 2023, as detailed in 4.1, the Israeli government, alongside aligned political and advocacy networks, has repeatedly attacked or sought to constrain international institutions such as UNRWA, the ICJ, and the ICC.[73] This alignment accelerated agendas that, prior to 7 October, often stood in tension with Israel's own security-driven interest in preserving the existing humanitarian and governance status quo.[74, 75, 76] This pattern has the effect of weakening institutional and legal scrutiny of Israel's conduct in international forums. UNRWA has become a central target within this strategy. Weakening the agency undermines institutional support for Palestinian refugee status and, in the context of the Gaza war, contributes to the systematic deterioration of living conditions in the Strip. Since late 2023, Israeli officials have framed this campaign not as a political assault on a humanitarian agency but as a counterterrorism necessity. The government reports released in January and April 2025 explicitly portray UNRWA as structurally compromised and beyond reform, advancing the claim that continued funding or cooperation would amount to indirect support for Hamas.[77] This framing shifts the debate from oversight and reform to dismantlement and replacement.

55 https://staatsraison.net/
56 www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/deutschland-und-israel-die-staatsraeson-ist-kein-freibrief-110467839.html
57 www.deutschlandfunk.de/antisemitismusbeauftragter-klein-fordert-debatte-ueber-staatsraeson-108.html
58 www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/gaza-israel-and-german-foreign-policy-view-on-public-opinion
59 www.dw.com/en/germany-updates-most-support-palestinian-statehood/live-73585308
60 www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-868560
61 www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/humanitarian-aid-gaza-germany
62 www.gov.uk/government/speeches/why-the-uk-and-germany-back-a-sustainable-ceasefire-article-by-the-foreign-secretary-and-the-german-foreign-minister
63 www.reuters.com/world/gaza-war-cannot-be-solved-by-military-means-says-german-foreign-minister-2025-05-11/
64 www.gov.il/en/pages/exchange-of-letters-constituting-a-provisional-agreement-concerning-assistance-to-palestine-refugees
65 www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201006109246.pdf
66 https://fluchtforschung.net/understanding-unrwa-the-complex-history-and-politics-of-the-un-agency-for-palestine-refugees/
67 www.mako.co.il/news-military/2025_q1/Article-e260530f282e591027.htm
68 www.reuters.com/article/world/netanyahu-tiptoes-around-us-threat-to-cut-off-palestinian-aid-idUSKBN1EW0LT/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1764594587198025&usg=AOvVaw1_Uv1b4pT3afxaS_BcmMsC
69 www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-defense-officials-said-to-fear-unrwa-cuts-may-strengthen-hamas/
70 https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/29/unrwa-israel-palestine-trump-zilber/
71 www.inn.co.il/news/394247
72 www.mako.co.il/news-military/2025_q1/Article-e260530f282e591027.htm
73 See Chapter 4.1
74 In private communications, Israeli civilian and military authorities have repeatedly acknowledged that UNRWA is important for Israel's security because of its stabilizing effect.
75 https://web.archive.org/web/20120323100811/www.embassymag.ca/page/view/israel-07-06-2011
76 www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Memo204_e-67-71.pdf pg. 66-67
77 See Chapter 4.1

The campaign against UNRWA is thus less the product of a single decision than of a converging ecosystem of state agencies, coalition partners, and transnational advocacy networks. This escalation unfolded alongside the war in Gaza and aligned with Israel's broader objective of reshaping conditions of life in the strip,[78, 79, 80] including efforts to supplant UNRWA with alternative mechanisms such as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).[81] By late January 2025, Israeli authorities had suspended operational coordination with UNRWA,[82] while simultaneously assuming a more direct role in the public campaign against the agency through a series of government reports released between December 2023 and April 2025.[83, 84, 85, 86] These measures signal a strategic shift from contesting UNRWA's conduct to contesting its continued existence. The following chapter situates these state-level developments within the broader transnational advocacy ecosystem that has shaped the campaign against UNRWA.

3.6 Summary

German policy toward Israel and Palestine rests on three long-standing foundations shaped by historical responsibility, humanitarian engagement, and commitment to international law. These include a security partnership with Israel formalized as part of Germany's reason of state, sustained political and financial support for Palestinian refugees through UNRWA, and Germany's self-positioning as an advocate of multilateral legal norms. Since 2023 these pillars have increasingly collided. The Hamas attack of 7 October accelerated Germany's security alignment with Israel, while the UNRWA allegations and subsequent investigations placed humanitarian commitments under renewed political pressure. At the same time, criticism of an unconditional Staatsräson framework gained prominence within parts of the political system, the civil service, and public debate. Germany's humanitarian escalation after October 2023 and its calls for negotiations and a ceasefire beginning in 2024 illustrate an effort to reconcile historical responsibility, legal obligations, and the rapidly deteriorating conditions in Gaza.

78 www.phr.org.il/en/genocide-in-gaza-eng/
79 www.btselem.org/publications/202507_our_genocide
80 www.hrw.org/report/2024/12/19/extermination-and-acts-genocide/israel-deliberately-depriving-palestinians-gaza
81 www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/controversial-us-israel-backed-gaza-aid-distributor-ends-operations-2025-11-24/
82 www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/30/unrwa-staff-forced-to-leave-israel-after-ban-comes-into-effect
83 https://govextra.gov.il/media/hwforn25/the-activities-of-unrwa-swords-of-iron-27122023.pdf
84 https://digitaler.cld.bz/ministry-of-diaspora-unrwa
85 https://govextra.gov.il/mda/dismantling-philippe-lazzarini-s-falsehoods/january-2025/
86 https://govextra.gov.il/unrwa/unrwa/

4 Mapping the Network by Function

This chapter traces a transnational advocacy coalition that, over more than a decade, has produced, adapted, and embedded narratives critical of UNRWA and Palestinian refugee rights within German policy debates.

A few clarifications are necessary at the outset. In this report, the terms coalition and campaign are used descriptively to capture the cumulative effects of partially overlapping advocacy activities over time. As established in the conceptual framework, the coordination observed is functional rather than formal, as the following paragraphs detail. The instances discussed in this chapter and the next are not an exhaustive account of all criticism of UNRWA or Palestinian refugee rights advanced by this coalition, and many additional attacks, statements, and interventions are not included. Finally, references to Israeli alignment denote alignment with right-wing Israeli political positions specifically.

The order of sections should not be read as a ranking by importance, scale, or political influence, even if some functions do, in practice, correspond to greater structural power. **The organizing principle of the chapter is functional in the campaign** rather than organizational size, visibility, or resources. ELNET illustrates this logic clearly. Although it is a better-funded and transnationally connected actor, it appears in Section 4.2 because its primary role in the network is brokerage and access, not the upstream production of core claims.

Core claims are most consistently traceable to private U.S.-funded Israeli and transatlantic actors who generate ideological frames and evidentiary packages. These claims are then translated by domestic intermediaries into the normative, legal, and administrative language of German politics, particularly through registers of antisemitism prevention, donor responsibility, and political risk, before being normalized through state-adjacent civil society, circulated via media and expert arenas, and converted into parliamentary and executive action.

Connections between actors take two forms. **Some are direct and documented:** co-authored policy papers between UN Watch, NGO Monitor, and IMPACT-SE, official cooperation agreements, like the one between ELNET and UN Watch, and joint parliamentary briefings organized by NAFFO and MFFB drawing on the same upstream sources. **Others are structural**, operating through shared funding sources, overlapping personnel, and aligned interpretive frameworks or simply by producing convergent outcomes even where no explicit joint activity is recorded.

The overall picture therefore includes both documented instances of cooperation and a broader structural alignment. Some actors are in fact in competition for influence while pursuing similar goals (e.g. ELNET and NAFFO on briefings and delegations, or DIG/MFFB publications compete with Einat Wilf on narrative originating). The coalition nonetheless produces convergent outcomes through repeated interaction, funding incentives, and institutional proximity. The sections that follow therefore proceed by function, moving from narrative originators to translation and brokerage, norm-setting, micro-network circulation, mass-media amplification, and parliamentary uptake.

Two broader political conditions helped these narratives travel. First, the 2018 U.S. funding freeze[87] and later cut[88] established a high-profile precedent for treating UNRWA as a discretionary, conditional donor instrument rather than a stable humanitari-

87 www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/1/17/us-cuts-unrwa-funding-by-more-than-half

88 www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme

an commitment, which may reflect the outcome of earlier U.S.-facing advocacy efforts by some of the same actors, but falls outside the scope of this research. Second, an external shock emanating from the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, after which the debate shifted toward precautionary security logic, lowering the threshold for extraordinary measures such as suspensions, mandate skepticism, or replacement scenarios. These dynamics are not uniquely German. Germany becomes a focal point because it became UNRWA's largest state donor[89] until the Biden administration reinstated U.S funding, so shifts in German framing have outsized financial and political consequences, and are therefore a priority target for transnational advocacy.

To map this network, or ecosystem, systematically, the chapter relies on a set of observable indicators that allow functional linkages to be identified without presupposing formal coordination or shared intent. These indicators include, first, repeated co-publications, joint policy papers, or formally co-hosted initiatives that point to aligned output across organizations. Second, the recurrence of the same speakers, experts, or facilitators across events, briefings, hearings, and public forums hosted by different actors, indicating stable speaker and expert circuits. Third, documented personnel overlaps, including shared board memberships, advisory roles, staff transitions, or long-term collaborative relationships that create interpersonal bridges across institutional fields. Fourth, traceable citation and uptake chains in which claims or framings originate in advocacy outputs, are amplified through media reporting, and subsequently appear in parliamentary questions, hearings, or executive justifications. Fifth, recurring funding conduits, such as donor vehicles, foundations, or fiscal sponsors that appear across multiple nodes, suggesting shared resource environments rather than directive control.

Altogether, these indicators make it possible to trace pathways of narrative generation, translation, and institutionalization across heterogeneous actors. They are used descriptively to map connectivity and transmission mechanisms within the ecosystem, not to infer covert coordination or uniform political intent.

Before mapping individual actors by function, it is necessary to situate the Israeli state within the advocacy ecosystem. Rather than operating as a unitary actor directing external campaigns, Israel functions as a fragmented political environment in which government institutions, coalition dynamics, security bodies, and aligned advocacy networks interact to shape narratives, escalation thresholds, and policy horizons.

4.1 Israel as a Fragmented State Actor within the Advocacy Ecosystem

This section situates the Israeli state within the broader advocacy ecosystem, treating it as a fragmented actor whose institutions, coalition dynamics, and aligned advocacy networks interact in shaping the campaign against UNRWA. At this point, it is necessary to recall UNRWA's pre–7 October role as a stabilizing subcontractor in the occupied and neighboring territories within the security-oriented calculus of successive Israeli governments since 1967, including the period prior to October 7, 2023, as elaborated in Chapter 3.

Israel should be understood as a state with competing political actors rather than a unitary decision maker. Due to the structure of its parliamentary system, Israeli governments have consistently depended on coalition arrangements, including under Benjamin Netanyahu. Over time, these coalitions have incorporated increasingly radical factions. Netanyahu began to target UNRWA in 2017. However, he continued to adhere to the security calculus described above and avoided pressing for defunding by the Trump administration, citing concerns about destabilization in Gaza.[90, 91, 92]

Some of the leading groups in this report (NGO Monitor, UN Watch, IMPACT-SE and ELNET) receive funding from primarily family-based Jewish and Evangelical right-wing foundations. These funding ecosystems overlap with, and in some cases mirror, those supporting Likud, Netanyahu, and far-right parties, and function as tools for advancing conservative and settler-aligned interests.[93, 94, 95] The advo-

89 www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/germany-contributes-eur-21-million-support-unrwa-education-and-health
90 www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-un-idUSKBN1920L0/
91 www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-06-11/ty-article/netanyahu-i-told-nikki-haley-unrwa-should-be-dismantled/0000017f-df89-db5a-a57f-dfeb83810000
92 www.reuters.com/article/world/netanyahu-tiptoes-around-us-threat-to-cut-off-palestinian-aid-idUSKBN1EW0LT/
93 https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/jewish-federations-donated-millions-israeli-settlements-over-four-years
94 https://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Right-Wing-Funding.pdf
95 www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2018-12-09/ty-article-magazine/.premium/inside-the-evangelical-money-flowing-into-the-west-bank/0000017f-f4b0-d460-afff-fff6add90000

cacy coalition and far-right parties positions can be more hardline than those of successive Israeli governments themselves. These networks exert significant influence, shaping policy priorities and expectations.

A similar pattern is visible in the rise of libertarian policy agendas promoted by institutions such as the Kohelet Forum.[96] These agendas frequently clash with the social welfare demands of the ultra-Orthodox parties that regularly join Netanyahu's coalitions.[97] This tension helps explain why Netanyahu often adopts cautious or ambiguous public positions, while government ministries, military intelligence bodies, and aligned advocacy organizations advance more maximalist claims.

Following 7 October, the campaign against UNRWA intensified through the release of four Israeli government dossiers, beginning in December 2023,[98, 99, 100] alongside a wider set of interventions on related issues. The reports subscribe to what would be later explained as two out of the three narrative case studies - Educational and Securitization. The April 2025 intelligence dossier marked a qualitative escalation.[101] Rather than centring on discrete allegations, it advanced the claim that UNRWA in Gaza is systematically infiltrated at every operational level. By selectively declassifying intelligence material and presenting expansive quantitative estimates, the dossier functioned politically to eliminate intermediate policy responses such as conditional funding, enhanced oversight, or institutional reform.

This escalation unfolded alongside the war in Gaza and aligned with Israel's broader objective of reshaping conditions of life in the strip, including efforts to supplant UNRWA with alternative mechanisms such as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) initiated by Israel.[102, 103] On October 28, 2024, the Israeli parliament passed legislation prohibiting UNRWA's activities in Israel, a measure that primarily affected the agency's headquarters in occupied and annexed East Jerusalem.[104] This law was applied in January 2025,[105] culminating with the demolishing of the East Jerusalem UNRWA headquarters in January 2026.[106]

Thus, since October 2023, Israel's role within the advocacy ecosystem has changed in functional terms. The state has moved from being primarily a target of advocacy pressure to occupy two additional roles: that of a narrative originator, through the release of government dossiers, and that of a political uptaker, through legislative and administrative measures.

4.2 Narrative Originators

Narrative originators generate the primary ideological frames, claims, and evidentiary packages concerning UNRWA and Palestinian refugee rights. They operate upstream of German political debate and supply narratives that are later translated, normalized, and institutionalized by German intermediaries. Functionally, these actors tend to supply three recurring elements: a diagnostic framing of what UNRWA is understood to be, a causal account of why it is said to fail, and a set of policy scripts that follow from this diagnosis, including conditionality, defunding, replacement, or mandate review.

4.2.1 United Nations Watch (UN Watch)

UN Watch is a Geneva-based advocacy organization founded in 1993. While it presents itself as an "NGO that monitors the UN by the yardstick of its own Charter,"[107] its operational focus centers on contesting United Nations bodies and mechanisms perceived as hostile to Israel. Within the broader advocacy ecosystem, UN Watch functions as a delegitimizing actor toward UN institutions, reframing legal and humanitarian critiques of Israeli state policy as expressions of political bias or antisemitism.

Since 2004, the organization has been led by Executive Director Hillel Neuer,[108] who also serves as its primary public representative. UN Watch's advisory structures include a number of Israel-aligned political figures, among them Dr. Einat Wilf,[109] who simultaneously holds advisory or board roles in several allied organizations like NGO Monitor and ELNET Israel, (see 4.3.4) and Gert Weisskirchen,[110] a former member of Bundestag (SPD), and co-founder of

96 Segal, Amir A., Greenspan, Itay "The Creation and Americanization of Israeli Conservative Civil Society: Critical Community and Transnational Transference," in Israel Studies Review, 29(2) 2024, pp. 144–169.
97 www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/02/20/the-controversial-think-tank-behind-israel-s-justice-system-reform_6016561_4.html
98 https://govextra.gov.il/media/hwforn25/the-activities-of-unrwa-swords-of-iron-27122023.pdf
99 https://digitaler.cld.bz/ministry-of-diaspora-unrwa
100 https://govextra.gov.il/mda/education_eng/palestinian-education-eng/
101 https://govextra.gov.il/media/d21mw2f3/the-connection-between-unrwa-and-hamas-280425.pdf
102 www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-admits-gaza-humanitarian-foundation-was-israeli-initiative/
103 www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceEoIbNTJHw
104 https://fs.knesset.gov.il/25/law/25_lsr_5106948.pdf
105 www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/30/unrwa-staff-forced-to-leave-israel-after-ban-comes-into-effect
106 www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jan/20/israel-bulldozes-unrwa-headquarters-in-east-jerusalem
107 https://unwatch.org/
108 https://nationalpost.com/news/world/israel-middle-east/hillel-neuer-un-watch-unrwa
109 https://unwatch.org/about-us/mission-history/
110 https://unwatch.org/about-us/mission-history/

ELNET Germany.[111, 112, 113] Another defining feature of UN Watch's output is its orientation toward rapid political and media uptake as detailed in chapter 5.

United Nations Watch was previously affiliated with the World Jewish Congress between 1993 and 2000. In 2001, it became affiliated with the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and reportedly received funding from AJC too.[114] United Nations Watch now states that, as of 2013, it is no longer affiliated with any organization and operates as a fully independent entity.[115]. In recent years, the Geneva-based UN Watch does not publish comprehensive annual financial statements or detailed donor lists. Based on available public filings and tax disclosures from It's U.S branch (United Nations Watch USA) which reported total revenue of $2,361,747 in 2024. According to its 2024 IRS Form 990, the organization reported $1,617,248 in grants or other assistance to foreign organizations or individuals, recorded entirely as program service expenses.[116] The filing does not identify the foreign recipients of these funds. Given that UN Watch's primary operations are based in Geneva, it is reasonable to infer that at least part of this foreign assistance supports activities conducted outside the United States. Known UN Watch USA funding is derived almost entirely from private North American donors, primarily family foundations embedded in pro-Israel advocacy ecosystems. There is no evidence of direct state funding. The concentration of funding sources and the absence of itemized public disclosure, which in the US can only be partially derived from the donors and in Geneva is completely unavailable to the public, constitute a significant transparency gap.

UN Watch's leadership networks, advisory affiliations, and long-term cooperation with organizations such as NGO Monitor and ELNET place it squarely within conservative and nationalist Israel-aligned policy circles. Its advocacy positions consistently align with Israeli government narratives regarding UN bias, accountability mechanisms, and multilateral oversight. One example of both Israel-alignment and shared funding sources is that UN Watch is listed by the Impact Forum Foundation,[117] a Los Angeles-based Israel-aligned philanthropic network, among its supported organizations, indicating resource-environment proximity to other key nodes discussed in this chapter including NGO Monitor, ELNET, and Impact-SE. A previous full list of known funders from 2015 reveals similar patterns.[118]

Over time, UN Watch's claim production has become increasingly standardized and networked. In 2015, the organization began issuing joint or closely coordinated outputs with allied actors, including NGO Monitor of "information on dimensions that are likely to be absent from the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Gaza, initially known as the Schabas Commission".[119] Another representative example is an early-2023 joint intervention with IMPACT-SE with allegations concerning incitement and institutional failure in UNRWA-linked educational settings.[120]

UN Watch has played a central role in shaping international and German discourse on UNRWA. For more than a decade, it has portrayed the agency as structurally compromised, alleging systematic Hamas infiltration, politicized education, and misuse of humanitarian aid. Following the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, UN Watch accelerated its efforts and rapidly disseminated claims that UNRWA staff were directly involved in the violence and its celebrations, publishing reports and briefing Bundestag members before investigations had concluded. These allegations were widely cited in German media and parliamentary debate, even though subsequent UN reviews significantly narrowed the scope of substantiated cases.[121]

4.2.2 NGO Monitor

NGO Monitor operates under the legal entity Institute for NGO Research[122] and is based in Jerusalem. Founded in 2002, the organization positions itself as a watchdog promoting accountability and transparency in civil society. In practice, it functions as a politically engaged advocacy group targeting Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, United Nations agencies, and European donor frameworks involved in Israel-Palestine–related work.

111 www.israelkongress.de/history/media/filer_public/2013/11/10/magazin.pdf
112 https://europe-israel.net/en/raanan-eliaz-2/
113 https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/more-of-the-same-for-the-german-israeli-alliance/
114 https://militarist-monitor.org/images/uploads/Right_Web_Nov._2011_-_UN_Watch_Financing_.pdf
115 https://militarist-monitor.org/images/uploads/Right_Web_Nov._2011_-_UN_Watch_Financing_.pdf
116 https://app.candid.org/profile/9149632/united-nations-watch---usa-45-1683502?activeTab=7
117 www.impactforumfoundation.org/organizations - accessed January 2026
118 https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/files/167838176/Marusek_and_Miller_How_Israel_attempts_to_mislead_the_United_Nations.pdf
119 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014_Gaza_Conflict.pdf
120 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Report-UNRWA.pdf
121 See Chapter 5.2.1, example E
122 https://ngo-monitor.org/about/

NGO Monitor was founded and is led by Professor **Gerald M. Steinberg,** an emeritus academic at Bar-Ilan University. The organization emerged from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, a conservative Israeli think tank historically led by **Dore Gold,**[123] a long-standing foreign policy advisor to **Benjamin Netanyahu**[124, 125] and former Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. NGO Monitor's International Advisory Board includes figures such as Dr. Einat Wilf, Elliott Abrams, Douglas Murray, and Colonel Richard Kemp,[126] embedding the organization within transatlantic conservative and national-security networks.

Financial disclosures from the Israeli GuideStar registry and the German Bundestag Lobby Register indicate that **NGO Monitor's annual budget in 2024 amounted to ~1.5 million euros.**[127] The organization's funding structure is highly concentrated. In the same year, the U.S.-based donor vehicle **REPORT Inc.** transferred between 1.05 and 1.06 million euros to NGO Monitor, accounting for approximately seventy to seventy-five percent of its total annual income.[128] Beyond the concentrated transfers disclosed elsewhere, NGO Monitor is also listed as a supported organization by the **Impact Forum Foundation,**[129] that together with a previous 2015 list of funders,[130] suggests overlap in philanthropic ecosystems with other Israel-aligned advocacy actors. Additional funding derives from U.S.-based private foundations associated with conservative pro-Israel philanthropy, though full donor disclosure is not provided. This concentration and opacity have been the subject of repeated criticism by Israeli journalists and civil society watchdogs.[131, 132, 133]

As established here, both materially and ideologically, NGO Monitor is closely aligned with right-wing and nationalist Israeli policy frameworks. Its institutional origins, leadership affiliations, and thematic focus consistently reflect Netanyahu-era foreign policy priorities, particularly opposition to international legal scrutiny and human rights–based accountability mechanisms. Within the advocacy ecosystem mapped in this chapter, NGO Monitor's distinctive function lies in the **production of system-level delegitimizing frames.** Rather than focusing exclusively on alleged misconduct by individual organizations, its outputs repeatedly portray humanitarian agencies, UN mechanisms, and European donor structures as interlinked components of a politicized system hostile to Israel. This approach enables a shift from debates about reform or compliance toward claims of structural illegitimacy.

An early illustration of this framing logic is the 2015 joint report *Filling in the Blanks*, co-published with **UN Watch**.[134] Although the report did not focus specifically on UNRWA, it is analytically relevant because it articulated a diagnostic template later applied to UNRWA and related UN bodies. The report framed UN humanitarian and civil-society engagement in the Israel-Palestine context as a mutually reinforcing ecosystem driven by ideological bias rather than humanitarian necessity, thereby establishing a transferable narrative structure that could be redeployed across institutional targets.

NGO Monitor has maintained a sustained campaign against UNRWA for more than a decade.[135] It frames the agency as a political instrument that perpetuates Palestinian refugeehood, undermines peace, and operates within a broader humanitarian system allegedly hostile to Israel. Its reports have accused UNRWA of employing Hamas affiliates, tolerating incitement in educational materials, and misusing donor funds. These claims have been circulated directly to German parliamentarians and ministries and have repeatedly appeared in joint policy outputs with German and Israeli partners.

This system-level framing is clearly visible in NGO Monitor's more recent Germany-facing activity.[136] On 6 June 2024, NGO Monitor co-authored a policy paper together with **DIG** and **IMPACT-SE** titled *A Strategic Approach to Deradicalization of Palestinian Society, A 12-point strategic plan for recalibrating German development and humanitarian aid.*[137] The document explicitly addressed Germany's funding relationship with UNRWA and advanced recommendations in-

123 www.timesofisrael.com/dore-gold-to-join-netanyahus-team-as-an-adviser/
124 https://unwatch.org/former-israeli-ambassador-to-un-dr-dore-gold-speaks-at-un-watch-rally-against-anti-israeli-bias/
125 www.timesofisrael.com/dore-gold-former-un-ambassador-and-netanyahu-confidant-dies-at-71/
126 https://ngo-monitor.org/about/boards/
127 www.guidestar.org.il/organization/580465508
128 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R006576
129 www.impactforumfoundation.org/organizations - accessed January 2026
130 https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/files/167838176/Marusek_and_Miller_How_Israel_attempts_to_mislead_the_United_Nations.pdf
131 www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/2012-02-10/ty-article/0000017f-e0cf-d7b2-a77f-e3cf1e4a0000
132 https://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/RightWingFunding_Heb.pdf
133 http://policyworkinggroup.org.il/
134 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014_Gaza_Conflict.pdf
135 https://ngo-monitor.org/reports/the_role_of_john_ging_unrwa_director_in_gaza_in_political_warfare/
136 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/German-Funding-to-Problematic-UN-Frameworks-Agencies.pdf
137 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/pressemitteilung/fuer-eine-konsequente-deradikalisierung-in-den-palaestinensischen-gebieten/

cluding defunding, mandate review, and structural replacement scenarios. While the paper did not introduce substantively new empirical findings, its function lay in consolidating long-standing allegations into a policy-ready format tailored to German donor, parliamentary, and executive environments.

Across these outputs, NGO Monitor's contribution is the stabilization of a diagnostic frame that treats UNRWA not as a humanitarian partner with governance challenges, but as part of a politicized and security-compromised UN ecosystem. This framing supplies upstream interpretive material that is subsequently translated, legitimized, amplified, and institutionalized by domestic brokers, media actors, and parliamentary interfaces.

4.2.3 IMPACT-SE

IMPACT-SE (Institute for Monitoring Peace & Cultural Tolerance in School Education) is an Israeli watchdog that reviews schoolbooks and curricula,[138] founded in 1998, with a long-running focus on Palestinian Authority (PA) and UNRWA-linked education and related advocacy efforts.[139, 140]

The organization is led by Chief Executive Officer Marcus Sheff since 2016[141], who previously served in senior leadership roles at The Israel Project,[142, 143] a U.S.-based pro-Israel media and public affairs organization that ceased operations in 2019. Sheff is also a reserve officer in the Israeli Defense Forces and appears frequently in international media as an expert commentator.[144, 145] One of IMPACT-SE's early leaders, Itamar Marcus, later founded Palestinian Media Watch and resided in a West Bank settlement, illustrating early institutional proximity to settler-linked advocacy networks.[146]

IMPACT-SE is listed as a supported organization of the Impact Forum Foundation. According to the Israeli GuideStar registry, IMPACT-SE reported a 2024 budget of ~2.34 million euros.[147] In 2023, its funding structure was overwhelmingly external, with 87.7 percent of total income derived from foreign private donations. Executive compensation is notably high, with more than twenty-two percent of the overall budget allocated to the combined salaries of the CEO and COO. Despite the policy relevance of its outputs, IMPACT-SE does not publish a comprehensive or systematic donor list.[148]

Although IMPACT-SE presents itself as an educational research institute, with "Peace and Tolerance" in its full name, several observations detailed here noted that its publications frequently align with positions advanced by Israeli government officials and allied advocacy actors. While the organization has examined several education systems, its work is most widely publicized for analyses of Palestinian and Arab educational materials, including those used by UNRWA.

According to multiple long-standing critiques, IMPACT-SE's methodology relies heavily on selective quotation, decontextualized excerpts, and normative coding categories that treat national narratives and resistance symbolism as indicators of extremism or antisemitism. For example, the Georg Eckert Institute, 2021 study commissioned by the EU in 2019[149], notes misattributions, translation errors, and decontextualized quotations in some IMPACT-SE outputs. Notably, these repeat several rebuttals from 17 years before, implying a pattern in IMPACT-SE's research projects[150]. The esteemed Haaretz author Akiva Eldar published the 2004 article titled "Incitement? Not in our school" and cites Scholar Nathan Brown, from George Washington University and Nigel Roberts from the World bank as critics. Even Israeli officials from Israeli COGAT's researchers, Amos Gilad and Yosef Mishalv, and Dr. Matti Steinberg who was an adviser to the Shin Bet director heavily criticized claims originating from IMPACT-SE (then still labelled CMIP).

The organization examined Israeli curricula, but only in a limited and uneven way. It has published a small number of reports on parts of Israel's state education system (with a total of 5 reports from 1998 until January 2026).[151] More recently, it examined some ultra-Orthodox Israeli Jewish materials since they run a separate education system, yet this work is far less systematic, frequent, and granular than its sustained monitoring of Palestinian curricula. Large segments of Israeli education are often excluded or only partially covered, and the analytical framing

138 www.impact-se.org/about-us/
139 www.impact-se.org/unrwa/
140 www.impact-se.org/reports-2-2/palestinian-territories/pa-2/
141 https://il.linkedin.com/in/marcus-sheff-0683b920
142 www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/116769/witnesses/HMTG-118-FA17-Bio-SheffM-20240130.pdf
143 www.impact-se.org/about-us/team-impact/
144 www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jo51FRw42U
145 https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2023/10/24/exp-israel-kibbutz-collins-pkg-102403aseg1.cnn?cid=ios_app
146 www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2012-01-31/ty-article/0000017f-db44-df9c-a17f-ff5cc0490000
147 www.guidestar.org.il/organization/580351591
148 www.guidestar.org.il/organization/580351591
149 www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/presse/hib/2020_12/813554-813554
150 www.haaretz.co.il/misc/2004-09-09/ty-article/0000017f-e5d1-df2c-a1ff-ffd176bd0000
151 www.impact-se.org/reports-2-2/israel/

tends to emphasize reform and democratic values rather than structural problems. Other reviews of Israeli curricula[152], including ones from leading scholar Nurit Peled-Elhanan[153, 154], were far more thorough and critical of Israeli treatment of Palestinian identities and narratives. Thus, within the advocacy ecosystem mapped here, IMPACT-SE functions as a technical legitimizer, producing ostensibly empirical findings that are repeatedly used to justify political, funding, and institutional interventions.

Despite this, a defining feature of IMPACT-SE's output is its high degree of portability. Reports are written in a style that mimics academic assessment while remaining easily translatable into media coverage, parliamentary briefings, and donor-policy arguments. This portability enables IMPACT-SE findings to circulate across institutional arenas with minimal recontextualization. This upstream function is further illustrated by IMPACT-SE's joint report with UN Watch, *Reform or Regression? West Bank and Gaza School Curricula 2022–23*[155], published in early 2023. Although the report formally assessed Palestinian Authority textbooks rather than UNRWA as an institution, it operationalized analytical moves that later became directly transferable to UNRWA-focused interventions. These include treating host-authority curricula as a matter of donor liability, aggregating selective textbook excerpts into claims of systemic incitement, and framing educational content as a strategic obstacle to peace rather than as a context-bound pedagogical issue. IMPACT-SE's role as a technical legitimizer is also reflected in its contribution to later Germany-facing policy documents. As mentioned in Section 4.2.2, IMPACT-SE provided educational analysis for a joint policy paper published in June 2024 together with NGO Monitor and DIG. In this context, its findings were used to underpin broader recommendations on aid conditionality and institutional reform, rather than to advance standalone educational policy proposals.

A clearer post–October 7 illustration of IMPACT-SE's upstream function is provided by its coordinated joint intervention with UN Watch. On 5 November 2023, IMPACT-SE and UN Watch released separate but synchronized reports addressing UNRWA on the same day. IMPACT-SE published *UNRWA Education: Textbooks and Terror*[156], while UN Watch released *UNRWA: The Hate Starts Here*.[157] The reports linked alleged deficiencies in educational content with claims about staff conduct and institutional environment, creating a composite evidentiary frame that portrayed UNRWA as structurally implicated in radicalization.

IMPACT-SE has become one of the most frequently cited sources in German debates on UNRWA. Its reports alleging antisemitic incitement and glorification of violence in UNRWA educational materials have been presented in Bundestag briefings organized by MFFB[158] and NAFFO[159] and incorporated into joint advocacy documents calling for aid conditionality and institutional restructuring. These claims have persisted in political discourse despite EU-commissioned studies identifying methodological shortcomings, including selective quotation and lack of contextualization which were not cited as often as IMPACT-SE's claims.

Across the period examined, IMPACT-SE's reports function as epistemic infrastructure, supplying claims that move across organizations, media, and parliamentary arenas with low friction. By presenting politically charged interpretations as technical educational assessment, IMPACT-SE enables the conversion of ideological positions into administrative necessity, a function that is central to the advocacy ecosystem mapped in this chapter.

4.2.4 Einat Wilf

Einat Wilf is a former Israeli Knesset member, political theorist, and author who, as an individual, functions within as a conceptual anchor and policy entrepreneur within the network. Unlike organizations that generate empirical claims or conduct direct lobbying, Wilf supplies an overarching interpretive framework that links education, refugee policy, security, and international legitimacy into a single explanatory logic. Her role is not to introduce new allegations, but to render disparate critiques of UNRWA coherent, normatively compelling, and politically actionable.

152 Bar-Tal, Daniel, and Yona Teichman. Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict: Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
153 Peled-Elhanan, Nurit. Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education. I.B. Tauris, 2012.
154 Elhanan-Peled, Nurit. Holocaust Education and the Semiotics of Othering in Israeli Schoolbooks. Common Ground Research Networks, 2023.
155 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Report-UNRWA.pdf
156 www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Education-Textbooks-and-Terror-Nov-2023.pdf
157 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNW_119___UNRWA_Report_2023_November__2023-11-05__web.pdf
158 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/en/events/impact-se
159 https://naffo.de/frieden-toleranz-und-zwei-staaten-loesung/

Wilf served as a member of the Israeli **Knesset** between 2010 and 2013 and sat on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.[160, 161] Since leaving parliamentary office, she has operated primarily as an intellectual and advocacy figure embedded within transnational Israel-aligned networks. **She holds advisory or board roles** with several organizations central to the ecosystem mapped in this chapter, including **UN Watch**[162], **NGO Monitor**[163], and **ELNET Israel**[164]. These positions situate her at the intersection of upstream narrative production and downstream political brokerage.

Wilf's engagement with UNRWA predates her 2018 book. In a 2012 speech in the Knesset, she articulated an early version of her core thesis, arguing that UNRWA, alongside Israeli settlement policy, constituted an obstacle to peace by sustaining maximalist political demands through the perpetuation of refugee status. Notably, she did not initially call for the defunding of UNRWA, but for continued Western funding coupled with a structural transformation of the refugee regime, including the decoupling of humanitarian assistance from inherited refugee status and the transfer of responsibility to host states.[165] This position already contained the key elements that later became central to the ecosystem's end-state thinking.

Wilf's conceptual framework was consolidated and popularized through her 2018 book *The War of Return: The Battle Over the Palestinian Refugee Problem and How Israel Can Win It* (co-authored with Adi Schwartz),[166] which was later translated to English in 2020[167] with another secondary title: "The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream Has Obstructed the Path to Peace" and lastly translated to German in 2022 which had a similar secondary to the English one.[168] It was reissued in 2025, in Hebrew with a different title[169] and framing cementing the connection between the October 7 and the Right of Return. The book advanced the argument that the Palestinian right of return functions as the core mechanism through which the conflict is perpetuated, and that UNRWA's exceptional mandate and inherited refugee definition institutionalize this dynamic. Within the ecosystem, the War of Return book operates less as a standalone intervention than as a **reference text**[170, 171, 172, 173, 174] that provides ideological coherence across actors addressing education, humanitarian aid, and security. It allows claims about textbooks, staff conduct, or institutional neutrality to be interpreted as symptoms of a deeper structural problem rather than as discrete compliance failures.

In the German context, Wilf has functioned as a high-authority translator of this framework into elite political discourse. Since the mid-2010s, she has appeared repeatedly in Germany in formats that privilege strategic interpretation over evidentiary debate, including lectures hosted by **DIG**[175], closed briefings organized by **ELNET**[176], and Bundestag-adjacent events facilitated by **NAFFO**[177]. Towards the October 2026 elections Wilf started her own political party in Israel, titled Oz, which heavily features her views against "Palestinianism" and for "Arab Zionism". In March 2026 Wilf spoke at a far-right group Im Tirzu event to promote this message.[178]

A key feature of Wilf's role is **essentialism**[179] **and conceptual compression.** She collapses multiple policy domains, education, refugee law, humanitarian aid, and security, into a single causal narrative centered on recognition and sovereignty. This compression is particularly effective in the German context, where it resonates with established concerns about antisemitism, Staatsräson, and the legitimacy of Jewish self-determination. By framing the right of return as an existential negation of Jewish sovereignty rather than as a legal or rights-based claim, Wilf's framework redefines UNRWA from a humanitarian agency with governance problems into an ideological actor sustaining conflict.

160 www.wilf.org/English/einat-wilf/
161 www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/einat-wilf
162 https://unwatch.org/about-us/mission-history/
163 https://ngo-monitor.org/about/boards/#IAB
164 https://elnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ELNET-Israel-Monthly-Newsletter-April-2023.pdf
165 www.youtube.com/watch?v=mr7b9Ylgj8o
166 www.nli.org.il/he/books/NNL_ALEPH990044146280205171/NLI
167 https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250364845/thewarofreturn/
168 www.hentrichhentrich.de/buch-der-kampf-um-rueckkehr.html
169 www.e-vrit.co.il/Product/35867/%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%91%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%90%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%98%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8?srsltid=AfmBOor3Cvq7G5AWck69Ahbv4l9HAewk6YX5E27TGSiwVELoSyrIL1_b
170 https://unwatch.org/item-7/claim/claim-5-palestinian-refugees-have-a-right-of-return/
171 www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/116769/witnesses/HMTG-118-FA17-Wstate-NeuerH-20240130.pdf
172 www.jns.org/activists-and-experts-demand-german-transparency-on-unrwa-support/
173 https://ngo-monitor.org/webinars/the-war-of-return/
174 www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IejIlkVYhA
175 www.ikg-m.de/israel-tage-im-gasteig/
176 https://web.archive.org/web/20150304035602/http://elnetwork.eu/germany
177 https://naffo.de/unrwa_wilf/
178 https://imti.org.il/80301/
179 https://telem.berl.org.il/14510/

Following October 7, 2023, Wilf's role within the ecosystem was made more apparent. She became a central interpretive voice in German debates seeking to move beyond questions of reform toward discussions of institutional replacement. As early as October 22nd, 2023 DIG had invited Einat Wilf for a discussion "about the current situation in Israel and its roots, focusing in particular on the Palestinian „return" narrative and the role of Western actors in enabling it."[180] In late 2024, she addressed a Bundestag event organized by NAFFO[181] under CDU patronage, explicitly arguing that UNRWA should be dismantled and replaced by alternative humanitarian mechanisms.

Importantly, Wilf's function within the ecosystem is not one of coordination or command. There is no indication that she directs organizational strategies or messaging. Her influence operates structurally. By providing a stable ideological grammar, she enables heterogeneous actors, ranging from educational watchdogs to security-focused advocacy groups, to situate their claims within a shared horizon of meaning.

It is important to note that Wilf frequently invokes her left-leaning political origins as a persuasive device.[182, 183, 184] At times, however, closer examination of her statements reveals positions that complicate this self-presentation. Wilf who formally endorsed the two-state solution (TSS), albeit in a highly securitized and conditional form that significantly narrows its political substance, in 2016 claimed the settlements should be dismantled, while the occupation should remain in place[185]. On September 16, 2025 called the TSS, **"the two state illusion"** in an NGO Monitor youtube interview with Olga Deutsch from September 16th, 2025. In the same interview, Wilf also claims that **"Palestinianism"** is an ideology which unites "all Palestinians", and is the "complete negation of Jewish sovereignty".[186]

Within the functional mapping of this chapter, Einat Wilf thus occupies a distinct position. She does not produce the evidentiary building blocks of UNRWA criticism. Her contribution lies in supplying the **conceptual infrastructure** that allows recurring claims to accumulate political effect over time. By stabilizing an end-state logic in which UNRWA is framed as structurally incompatible with peace[187] or Jewish sovereignty,[188, 189, 190, 191] depending on context, her work contributes to the interpretation of recurring controversies as part of a broader policy imagination that may become actionable once political conditions shift.

4.3 Translators and Domestic Brokers

Translators and domestic brokers are German-embedded actors who operationalize the translation function outlined above through policy advocacy, elite networking, and media-facing interventions. Unlike narrative originators, these actors are embedded in German civil society and politics and often operate at the interface between publicly funded education work, elite networking, and targeted policy advocacy.

4.3.1 European Leadership Network (ELNET)

ELNET, founded in 2007,[192] is a transnational advocacy organization whose primary role is high-level access brokerage between Israeli political and security elites and European parliamentarians. It is widely considered, including by its founders, as somewhat of a European version of AIPAC, the powerful U.S.-based pro-Israel advocacy group.[193] It operates branches in several European capitals[194], including a DACH region branch based in Berlin[195, 196], and Israel. While it occasionally facilitates research, its core function within this ecosystem is elite networking, delegation management, and agenda setting. ELNET operates as an enabling platform, translating upstream narratives into policy common sense by structuring repeated access for European and German decision-makers.

Although ELNET presents itself as cross-party and dialogue-oriented, its funding environment, leadership backgrounds, and institutional partnerships are closely linked to right-leaning and settler-aligned Israeli policy circles. Its founder, Raanan Eliaz, previ-

180 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/diskussion-mit-dr-einat-wilf-zur-aktuellen-situation-in-israel/
181 https://naffo.de/unrwa_wilf/
182 www.jta.org/2011/09/13/ny/einat-wilf-sounds-off
183 www.timesofisrael.com/a-self-declared-leftist-wages-war-on-the-palestinian-right-of-return/
184 https://18forty.org/podcast/einat-wilf-jews-are-never-allowed-to-win-and-arabs-are-never-allowed-to-lose
185 www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/2016-12-26/ty-article-opinion/.premium/0000017f-f421-dc28-a17f-fc377b690000
186 www.youtube.com/watch?v=RELPE7mxo78
187 www.jns.org/50-million-in-new-u-s-funding-for-unrwa-an-obstacle-to-peace-legal-analysts/
188 https://x.com/EinatWilf/status/1969803759388897734
189 https://18forty.org/podcast/einat-wilf-jews-are-never-allowed-to-win-and-arabs-are-never-allowed-to-lose/
190 https://quillette.com/2025/09/30/schrodingers-palestine-einat-wilf-on-statehood-refugees-and-jewish-sovereignty/
191 www.jerusalemjournal.com/p/einat-wilf-why-i-founded-the-oz-party
192 https://elnet-deutschland.de/allgemeines/
193 https://thediasporist.de/mr-aipac-goes-to-europe/
194 https://elnetwork.eu/#
195 https://elnetwork.eu/contact-us/
196 https://x.com/ElnetD

ously worked with AIPAC, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and Israel's National Security Council, and later served as Senior Advisor to the Minister of Diaspora Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office. His family is among the founders of the Beit Horon settlement in the occupied West Bank.[197, 198, 199] ELNET-Israel was headed by Emmanuel Navon, who resides in the Efrat settlement,[200] and is affiliated with the conservative Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security[201] and the libertarian Kohelet Policy Forum.[202] According to ND, Navon declared before a parliamentary committee that ELNET works „in full coordination and cooperation with the Foreign Ministry, the National Security Council, and the Knesset." Navon's successor, Benjamin Touati, also lives in the occupied territories and was previously active in the national-religious Bnei Akiva movement, which was involved in the establishment of numerous settlements.[203] ELNET also maintains documented cooperation with Israeli state institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs[204] and the Ministry of Defense, and describes its activities as coordinated with Israeli diplomatic priorities.[205] The Israeli center-right consensus on Jewish sovereignty coupled with Staatsräson logic in Germany, allows it to include figures with center-left orientation, including former MK Einat Wilf,[206] and former member of Bundestag Gert Weisskirchen (SPD),[207] who is also co-founder of ELNET Germany[208, 209, 210], and sits on the board of UN Watch. These leadership profiles, and partnerships situate ELNET within right-wing and nationalist Israeli policy networks, which is further exemplified by ELNET's donors, some of which are Donald Trump's supporters.[211]

ELNET operates at a substantially larger financial scale than most organizations in this chapter. According to U.S. tax filings, Friends of ELNET (or FELNET), the organization's U.S.-based fundraising arm, reported income in 2024, equivalent to approximately 7.65 million euros.[212] The German branch's funding combines large-scale private donations from the U.S.-based pro-Israel philanthropists, including the Impact Forum Foundation[213] with project allocations from German federal ministries[214, 215] and the Berlin Senate.[216] Private donor transparency is partial, with aggregate figures disclosed but limited detail on individual contributors.[217]

ELNET has played a visible role in facilitating elite-level engagement between Israeli political actors and German and European decision-makers. One early example occurred in March 2015, when ELNET Germany invited Einat Wilf, then a Senior Fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute and a former member of the Israeli Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, to Berlin. During this visit, Wilf met with senior Bundestag figures, including the Chairman of the Defense Committee, the Deputy Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group for defense, and the Deputy Chairman of the German–Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group. She also addressed parliamentary staffers and government advisers in a lunch briefing at the Bundestag and participated in a panel discussion jointly hosted by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and ELNET Germany.[218]

More illustrative cases of elite-level engagement related to UNRWA include the launch of cooperation between ELNET Germany and UN Watch on 14 December 2020. This initiative was framed as an effort to promote what was described as a more "balanced" approach to human rights discourse within United Nations forums.[219] By March 2021, ELNET-linked briefings, papers and and policy discussions on UN institutions and Middle East policy increasingly incorporated references to UNRWA, with particular attention to the agency's mandate, its educational activities, and its neutrality obligations. These included meeting German officials with UN Watch representative Emmanuelle Kasavi, and Ambassador Meirav Eilon Shahar, Permanent Rep-

197 https://europe-israel.net/raanan-eliaz/
198 https://europe-israel.net/en/raanan-eliaz-2/
199 https://taz.de/Lobbyorganisation-Elnet/!6130001/
200 https://navon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TLVFaces.pdf
201 https://navon.com/
202 www.kohelet.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/KPF063_e-IAoIP_271216-elections.pdf
203 www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1196115.naher-osten-lobbyismus-aus-israel-staatlich-gelenkte-reisen-nach-israel.html
204 www.mediapart.fr/journal/politique/091125/le-senat-abrite-un-colloque-finance-par-israel
205 www.europarl.europa.eu/erpl-app-public/mep-documents/DAT/attachments/10/f31c420a-ea46-4eb4-aa73-40fa18b-cc2c6_1758788521127.pdf
206 https://elnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ELNET-Israels-Monthly-Newsletter-July-2023.pdf
207 https://unwatch.org/about-us/mission-history/
208 www.israelkongress.de/history/media/filer_public/2013/11/10/magazin.pdf
209 https://europe-israel.net/en/raanan-eliaz-2/
210 https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/more-of-the-same-for-the-german-israeli-alliance/
211 https://theintercept.com/2025/12/15/elnet-aipac-israel-lobby-europe/
212 https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/452212393
213 www.impactforumfoundation.org/organizations
214 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R002671/81600?backUrl=%2Fsuche%3Fq%3Delnet%26pageSize%3D25%26sort%3DRELEVANCE_DESC
215 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R002671/31664
216 https://elnet-deutschland.de/themen/antisemitismus/die-fragemauer-trifft-berlin/
217 https://theintercept.com/2025/12/15/elnet-aipac-israel-lobby-europe/
218 https://web.archive.org/web/20150304035602/http://elnetwork.eu/germany
219 https://elnet-deutschland.de/themen/politik/elnet-deutschland-startet-kooperation-mit-un-watch/

resentative of Israel to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva. [220, 221]

Following October 7, 2023, ELNET expanded its programming under crisis conditions. On 5–6 June 2024, ELNET and its Forum of Strategic Dialogue, together with the Abraham Accords Institute, the MENA2050 initiative, and representatives associated with CDU Bundestag member and Abraham Accords Institute founder, Armin Laschet, hosted the 4th Europe–Middle East Forum in Berlin. The meeting brought together approximately fifty political, diplomatic, and policy figures from Europe, Israel, and Arab states. Reforming UNRWA and potentially replacing it with another UN agency emerged as a key topic.[222] On 14 January 2025, ELNET-Israel hosted Hillel Neuer (UN Watch) as part of its quarterly Breakfast and Briefing with European Ambassadors. The ELNET webpage detailing this event also links to UN Watch's report "The Unholy Alliance: UNRWA, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad".[223]

These instances illustrate ELNET's consistent role in curating elite access and structuring repeated encounters between European decision-makers and selected Israeli political figures and advocacy organizations. ELNET provided institutional settings in which UNRWA-critical perspectives could be introduced, normalized, and revisited across time, first as questions of reform and donor responsibility and later, particularly after October 7, as part of broader strategic debates concerning governance, education, and institutional replacement. In this way, ELNET functioned as a transmission mechanism within the broader advocacy ecosystem, enabling upstream narratives to circulate as expert assessment within German and European policy arenas.

4.3.2 Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft (DIG)

DIG is a nationwide association founded in 1966 with the stated purpose of fostering German–Israeli relations across political, cultural, and civil-society spheres. It operates as a membership-based umbrella organization with regional branches throughout Germany and maintains long-standing, institutionalized access to federal ministries, parliamentary groups, and state-funded education and remembrance frameworks.[224, 225] At the federal level, DIG is governed by a presidium which includes representatives from both governing and opposition parties, enabling direct access to parliamentary bodies, including foreign aid committees.[226] In recent years, its leadership has included Volker Beck, a former Bundestag member for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, who has simultaneously held advisory or board roles in other Israel-aligned advocacy initiatives, including Tikvah Institut[227] and DEIN228 (see more on DEIN in 4.5.2).

DIG regularly platforms Israeli ambassadors and diplomats at events and briefings and organizes political delegations related to Israel policy.[229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234] Engagement with Israeli politicians or public figures from the left of center, including HaAvoda, Meretz, Hadash, or the Arab parties is rare.

It also maintains close ties with Israeli-aligned organizations, like the Christian Zionist - Christen an der Seite Israels (CSI) [235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242] and shares several personnel links with the MFFB,[243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248] situating the association within a broader Israel-aligned advocacy environment. It is worth noting that DIG generally distances itself from Israel's extreme right. On some occasions, it has con-

220 https://elnetwork.eu/country/germany/europe-israel-and-the-united-nations/
221 https://elnet-deutschland.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Israel-und-die-Vereinten-Nationen-Eine-Bestandsaufnahme.pdf
222 https://elnet-deutschland.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/EMEF-Synopsis-Policy-Recommendations-1.pdf
223 https://elnetwork.eu/country/israel/elnet-ambassadors-breakfast-hn-unwatch/
224 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/dig/
225 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/pressemitteilung/volker-beck-neuer-praesident-der-deutsch-israelischen-gesellschaft/
226 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/dig/praesidium
227 https://tikvahinstitut.de/team/
228 www.israelnetz.com/ausstellung-entlarvt-anti-israelische-propaganda/
229 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article165846965/Humboldt-Uni-in-Berlin-Knesset-Abgeordnete-auf-Podium-niedergebruellt.html
230 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/5339/
231 www.digberlin.de/veranstaltung-mit-dem-neuen-israelischen-botschafter-prof-dr-ron-prosor/
232 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/deutschland-und-israel-wie-geht-es-weiter-der-wachsende-antisemitismus-und-die-zukunft-der-deutsch-israelischen-beziehungen/
233 https://newsletter.israel.de/i/2Fkk9MXVE7JSylZbkFiXBV5nesWcSZ0BhVkhGghU8H0
234 www.digberlin.de/yom-fix-mit-botschafter-jerremy-issacharoff/
235 https://bodensee-region.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/05/2021-05-12-DIG-Newsletter.pdf
236 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/videos/israel-solidaritaetskundgebung-8-oktober-2023-am-brandenburger-tor/
237 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/dig-news/aktuelle-solidaritaetskundgebungen-mit-israel/
238 www.digberlin.de/bericht-350-menschen-kamen-am-7-oktober-zur-gedenkkundgebung-der-dig-in-potsdam/
239 www.dig-stuttgart.net/?p=4986
240 www.dig-stuttgart.net/?p=4763
241 www.dig-stuttgart.net/?p=5336
242 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DIG_Magazin_2011-1.pdf
243 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DIG_Boykott_gegen_Israel.pdf
244 https://kritischebildung.de/personen/joerg-rensmann
245 https://kritischebildung.de/personen/joerg-rensmann
246 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/israel-nach-dem-7-oktober-vortrag-und-diskussion-mit-joerg-rensmann/
247 www.facebook.com/jufoberlin/posts/wir-haben-mit-vertreterinnen-von-vier-demokratischen-berliner-jugendparteien-auf/875957894568775/
248 www.digberlin.de/keine-freunde-ausser-den-bergen/

demned settler violence and has called on the State of Israel, explicitly described as an "occupying power", to intervene.[249]

DIG's funding structure is transparent due to its disclosures in the Bundestag Lobby Register. For the fiscal year 2024, DIG received a single public institutional grant from the German Federal Foreign Office amounting to between 540,001 and 550,000 euros. In addition to this federal grant, DIG reported membership fee income of between 390,001 and 400,000 euros for the same fiscal year. These figures indicate a total annual income in 2024 of approximately 930,000 to 950,000 euros at the federal association level,[250] excluding any additional project-based funding or independent income streams held by regional chapters. To the best of this report's author knowledge, this funding structure, combining membership fees with stable federal funding from the Foreign Ministry, is consistent with the pattern observed in previous years.

Politically, Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft presents itself as non-partisan.[251] This claim is defensible within the German Staatsräson political context, where the organization emphasizes participation from "democratic parties" only.[252] In practice, however, this framing has coincided with the reduced visibility of actors from the left party, *Die Linke,* in Israel-focused advocacy platforms such as ELNET.[253] Since the mid-2010s, DIG's official positions and programming have increasingly aligned with narratives associated with center-right Israeli governments. The organization has taken explicit positions against the BDSs movement,[254] actively supported the Bundestag's 2019 resolution labeling BDS as antisemitic and actively advocated for cancellations of events and speakers for this reason,[255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261] and has consistently framed international criticism or sanctions of Israeli state policy as a form of delegitimization.[262, 263, 264] While DIG has, on occasion, condemned violence by settlers,[265] it recently called a solution within the 1967 borders an „illusion" and denied that all settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law[266], regularly platforms speakers and narratives that justify settlement policy,[267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272] and portray United Nations institutions as structurally biased against Israel.[273, 274, 275]

DIG's engagement with UNRWA predates the recent escalation cycles and reflects a long-standing pattern of reframing the Palestinian refugee question as a political and ideological problem rather than a humanitarian one. An early documented intervention occurred on 23 May 2013, when DIG Berlin/Potsdam cooperated with the Jewish Museum Berlin, the Jüdische Volkshochschule Berlin, Mideast Freedom Forum Berlin, and SPME to host an event titled „The UNRWA and the Instrumentalization of Humanitarian Aid." The announced discussion questions centered on UNRWA's refugee definition and on whether humanitarian assistance was being used to advance political agendas, a framing that would become central to later donor-conditionality arguments.[276]

This positioning was consolidated through DIG-linked textual and educational outputs. On 27 October 2016, the DIG Bremen branch circulated a lecture manuscript by Alex Feuerherdt titled *"Vereinte Nationen gegen Israel"* (The United Nations Against Israel). [277] The manuscript included an extended critique of UNRWA, arguing that the agency's treatment of Palestinian refugees and its role in education contributed to the perpetuation of conflict. This

249 https://x.com/DIGeV_de/status/1815651706417430802
250 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R005190
251 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/dig/leitsaetze/
252 https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/dig-solidarity-with-israel-in-germany/
253 www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1196115.naher-osten-lobbyismus-aus-israel-staatlich-gelenkte-reisen-nach-israel.html
254 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DIG_Magazin_2016-1-2.pdf
255 https://overton-magazin.de/top-story/in-nicht-nur-eigener-sache/
256 www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/muenchen-friedensgebet-nahostkonflikt-absage-reiter-reaktion-1.6299019
257 www.instagram.com/p/C8KfH_xs1os/
258 www.fr.de/kultur/tv-kino/swr-moderatorin-antisemitismus-vorwurf-helen-fares-rauswurf-instagram-israel-gaza-92995497.html
259 https://twitter.com/Volker_Beck/status/1735515760003305700
260 www.zeit.de/news/2023-12/13/hannah-arendt-preis-an-masha-gessen-kritik
261 www.instagram.com/p/C3Z8XP2tahL/?img_index=2
262 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/pressemitteilung/deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft-weist-amnesty-bericht-zurueck-vorwurf-eines-angeblichen-genozids-in-gaza-soll-israels-selbstverteidigung-delegitimieren/
263 www.digberlin.de/damonisierung-und-delegitimierung-die-vereinten-nationen-gegen-israel/
264 www.digberlin.de/boykottkampagnen-gegen-israel/
265 https://x.com/DIGeV_de/status/1815651706417430802
266 www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1189961.lobbyregister-millionen-euro-fuer-antisemitismusbekaempfung-n-wirklich.html
267 www.digberlin.de/ulrich-w-sahm-siedlungen-in-jerusalem/
268 www.timesofisrael.com/the-ex-gangsta-who-speaks-for-the-idf/
269 www.hentrichhentrich.de/autor-arye-sharuz-shalicar.html
270 www.achgut.com/autor/noll/P8#beitraege
271 https://live.tichyseinblick.shop/produkt/noll-theisen-verteidigung-der-zivilisation/
272 www.digberlin.de/israelreise-dig-berlin-und-potsdam-2016
273 www.digberlin.de/israels-stellung-im-system-der-vereinten-nationen/
274 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DIG_Magazin_2018-1.pdf
275 www.dig-bremen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Feuerherdt_Vereinte_Nationen_gegen_Israel.pdf
276 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/en/events/unrwa#c2210
277 www.dig-bremen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Feuerherdt_Vereinte_Nationen_gegen_Israel.pdf
278 www.dig-bremen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Feuerherdt_Vereinte_Nationen_gegen_Israel.pdf

text later served as the basis for Feuerherdt's 2018 book of the same title,[278] illustrating how DIG-affiliated educational formats could be converted into durable narrative resources that circulated beyond their original event context.

Following the Hamas-led attacks of October 7, 2023, DIG's UNRWA-related positioning became more explicit and securitized. On 22 October 2023, DIG hosted a discussion featuring Einat Wilf "about the current situation in Israel and its roots, focusing in particular on the Palestinian „return" narrative and the role of Western actors in enabling it."[279]

DIG's most consequential programmatic intervention occurred on 6 June 2024, when it jointly published a twelve-point policy paper together with NGO Monitor and IMPACT-SE. The document called for a fundamental recalibration of German development and humanitarian aid, questioned UNRWA's structural mandate, and challenged the inherited Palestinian refugee status framework.[280] This trajectory culminated in an explicit rejection of reform-oriented approaches. On 18 November 2025, DIG issued a press release titled *"UNRWA cannot be reformed. Germany must stop funding these structures."* The statement called on the German government to terminate funding for UNRWA and cited an Israeli government report published in April 2025 as proof of systemic connections between UNRWA and Hamas. [281] Similar statements were made by Beck that day in the Jüdische Allgemeine. [282]

These interventions illustrate DIG's distinctive function within the broader ecosystem. DIG can be understood as a broker of meaning, providing political translation, normalization, and narrative framing. At the same time, its events and organizational structures create recurring spaces for exchange among politically active members across party lines, including younger actors engaged in foreign-policy debates related to Israel. Through its institutional embeddedness and visibility within German political culture, DIG has contributed to the mainstreaming of UNRWA-critical narratives.

4.3.3 Mideast Freedom Forum Berlin (MFFB)

The MFFB is a registered non-profit association founded in 2007 and headquartered in Berlin. It presents itself as an organization engaged in political education and policy consulting, with a focus on democracy, antisemitism, and the Middle East.[283, 284] Within the ecosystem examined here, MFFB operates as a key German translation hub, reframing Israel-aligned narratives in the idiom of civic education, antisemitism prevention, and foreign policy responsibility. Similarly to Austria-based MENA-Watch, it functions as a medium sized, local source of parallel narrative distribution, particularly on issues related to the United Nations, UNRWA, Israel, and the right of return.

MFFB has been led since 2008 by Michael Spaney, who serves as chairman and executive director.[285] Key personnel include Jörg Rensmann, a political scientist who has served on MFFB's board and, since 2021, as head of RIAS NRW, the state-funded antisemitism monitoring body, while also being listed as a member of the presidium of DIG. [286] Another central figure is Ulrike Becker, a historian who served as MFFB's head of research until 2025 and now works at the AAS while remaining on MFFB's board.[287] These overlapping roles place MFFB personnel at the intersection of advocacy, state-funded monitoring, and civic education.

MFFB does not publish annual reports or full financial statements. However, documented public funding allows for a conservative minimum estimate of its budgetary scale. Based on available records, MFFB received at least 875,900 euros in public funding from federal ministries and the Berlin senate between 2015 and 2025, representing a conservative minimum. [288, 289, 290, 291] In addition, MFFB apparently received an undisclosed amount from Federal Agency for Civic Education (BPB)[292] and solicits private tax-deductible donations, but provides no public breakdown of private income or total annual budgets.[293]

279 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/diskussion-mit-dr-einat-wilf-zur-aktuellen-situation-in-israel/
280 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Germany-Policy-Paper-Deradikalisierung-der-pala%CC%88stinensischen-Gesellschaft-durch-Enntwicklungszusammenarbeit.pdf
281 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/pressemitteilung/unrwa-ist-nicht-reformierbar-deutschland-darf-diese-strukturen-nicht-weiter-finanzieren/
282 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/volker-beck-kritisiert-geplante-deutsche-millionenhilfe-fuer-unrwa/
283 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/start/deutschland/kontakt
284 https://antisemitismusbeauftragte.nrw/netzwerk/mideast-freedom-forum-berlin-e-v
285 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/about/spaney
286 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/about/rensmann
287 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/en/about/becker
288 https://taz.de/Gefoerderte-Antisemitismusprojekte/!6127489/
289 www.bmbfsfj.bund.de/resource/blob/163918/47d5ff4772d24554d0187e3cb34ea6df/abschlussbericht-demokratie-leben-erste-foerderperiode-2015-2019-data.pdf
290 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/078/2007884.pdf
291 www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1189961.lobbyregister-millionen-euro-fuer-antisemitismusbekaempfung-n-wirklich.html
292 www.demokratie-vielfalt-respekt.de/praeventionsangebote/antisemitismus/mffb-bildungsbausteine/
293 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/spenden

Ideologically, MFFB positions itself as pro-democracy and anti-extremist, but its substantive output aligns closely with Israeli government narratives on Israel-Palestine. It cooperates closely with DIG[294, 295, 296] and, at different points, with organizations such as NAFFO,[297] IMPACT-SE[298] and NGO Monitor,[299] and is linked to the Stop the Bomb campaign.[300] While MFFB is not a settler-supporting organization per se, its policy positions converge with right-wing Israeli frameworks that prioritize security and reject structural critiques of occupation.

Since 2015, MFFB has also operated a dedicated Israel-focused civic education program titled "Bildungsbaustein Israel." The program consists of seminars and modular workshops on the Arab–Israeli conflict, Israel's political system, and Israel-related antisemitism, and is directed at educators, students, and civil-society actors. [301, 302]

MFFB's engagement with UNRWA-related framing is documented well before its later Bundestag-facing activities. An early example occurred on 23 May 2013, (detailed under the DIG entry, 4.3.2).[303] MFFB's work later entered explicitly parliamentary-adjacent settings. On 10 November 2017, MFFB hosted an expert discussion in the Bundestag on Palestinian Authority school curricula for the 2017–18 academic year. The event featured speakers from IMPACT-SE following the publication of their report *"Reform or Radicalization: PA 2017–18 Curriculum"* and included opening remarks by Volker Beck. While formally focused on PA curricula, the format provided an early Bundestag-based setting in which concerns later associated with UNRWA's use of PA educational materials were introduced into parliamentary-adjacent discourse.[304] In subsequent years, MFFB continued to promote interpretations framing UNRWA as an obstacle to peace and a driver of radicalization through brochures, panel discussions, and cooperation with aligned organizations questioning inherited Palestinian refugee status. These activities intensified following October 7, 2023. In January 2024, MFFB publicly recommended that Germany push for transferring UNRWA's educational responsibilities to other institutions,[305] framing this position in terms of deradicalization, donor responsibility, and long-term conflict resolution rather than humanitarian continuity. This intervention aligned MFFB's output with contemporaneous calls for institutional replacement advanced elsewhere in the advocacy ecosystem.

Through its educational formats, including teacher training, university cooperation, and publicly funded civic education projects, MFFB has enabled UNRWA-critical frames to circulate beyond formal lobbying channels and into state-supported pedagogical environments. These activities allow narratives developed upstream to be reproduced as expert knowledge and prevention-oriented guidance rather than as explicit policy advocacy.

Despite its sustained and targeted engagement with federal policymakers, MFFB is not listed in the German Bundestag's Lobby Register. According to the German Lobby registration rules [Under §1(1) and §2(1)],[306] registration is required for any organization that seeks to influence the decision-making processes of the Bundestag or the Federal Government on a regular basis, a threshold that MFFB's pattern of activity plausibly meets. MFFB's non-registration therefore limits public transparency regarding its lobbying contacts, funding-linked influence, and policy targets.

4.3.4 Nahost Friedensforum (NAFFO)

NAFFO is a Berlin-based registered association founded in 2009. It presents itself as a pro-Israel, pro-democracy organization advocating peaceful political and social development in the Middle East.[307] In practice, NAFFO operates as a professional Israel-aligned advocacy organization specializing in targeted, largely non-public engagement with Bundestag members, ministerial staff, and political decision-makers. Its core instruments include closed briefings, parliamentary breakfast formats, background analyses distributed directly to MPs, curated delegations, and donor-oriented political events.[308, 309]

294 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/DIG_Broschuere_Der_Sechstagekrieg.pdf
295 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/Rueckkehrrecht-eine-palaestinensische-Forderung.pdf
296 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/DIG_Boykott_gegen_Israel.pdf
297 http://mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Veranstaltungen/Einladung_Menschenrechtslage_im_Iran_14_02_17-1.pdf
298 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/veranstaltungen/impact-se#c2784
299 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/presse/pressekonferenzen/ngos-gerald-steinberg-2014#c2337
300 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/start/deutschland/aktionen/muenchen-kundgebung
301 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/bildungsbaustein-israel
302 https://bildungsbaustein-israel.de/
303 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/en/events/unrwa#c2210
304 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/veranstaltungen/impact-se#c2784
305 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Artikel/Policy_Paper/Policy_Paper_MFFB_Gaza_PA_Region_Nach_dem_7_Oktober.pdf
306 www.gesetze-im-internet.de/lobbyrg/
307 https://naffo.de/ueber-uns/
308 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/597852/8570e59c5b253fcd6b04e9bd5e912ca7/WD-1-044-18-pdf-data.pdf
309 www.spiegel.de/politik/lobbyismus-im-bundestag-wiepolicy front-facingnewsletternewsletter-zwei-vereine-die-deutsche-nahostpolitik-beeinflussen-wollen-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000164871539

NAFFO is led by Executive Director **Mirjam Rosenstein**, who is listed in the Bundestag Lobby Register as one of the organization's principal lobbyists.[310] Another registered lobbyist is **Aras-Nathan Keul**, a political scientist who was also active in the Young Forum of the **DIG**[311] and occasionally publishes in Israel-aligneda German media.[312, 313, 314] NAFFO's board includes figures like Nathan Gelbart with senior roles in quasi-state Israeli institutions such as **Keren Hayesod**[315] and the **Jewish Agency**.[316] **Jardena Lande** is a former Director of NAFFO (2015 to 2019). After leaving NAFFO, Lande transitioned into the private sector and worked as Public Affairs Manager at **Dynamit Nobel Defence**, a German defense company that operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of **Israel's state-owned arms manufacturer Rafael Advanced Defense Systems,**[317, 318, 319] following Rafael's acquisition of the company in 2004. Earlier in her career, Lande was employed as a research staff member ("wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin") in the German Bundestag.[320] These affiliations situate NAFFO within a state-adjacent transnational network operating at the interface of civil society advocacy and Israeli institutional interests.

NAFFO's direct Israel state-ties were further revealed in a series of articles: Investigative reporting by *Der Spiegel* in July and August 2019 characterized NAFFO and **Werteinitiative** organizations that **conspicuously lobbied** in Berlin's government district and promoted positions aligned with the **Netanyahu government.**[321] (For more on this, see section 4.4.3 on Werteinitiative). Later investigative reporting from 2025, based on leaked emails from the **Israeli Ministry of Justice,** archived by the whistleblower platform DDoSecrets, documents NAFFO's participation since 2014 in a discreet, internationally operating working group initiated by the Israeli government to develop legal and legislative strategies against what is described as the "delegitimization of Israel."[322]

NAFFO's funding structure is transparent due to its disclosures in the Bundestag Lobby Register. For the financial year 2024, NAFFO reported lobbying-related expenditures between 290,001 and 300,000 euros and total donations and gifts between 390,001 and 400,000 euros. Its largest disclosed donor was the conservative **Gemeinnützige Stiftung Friedhelm Loh,** which contributed between 140,001 and 150,000 euros. In addition, NAFFO operates a U.S.-based fundraising arm, **Friends of NAFFO,** embedding it in a transatlantic pro-Israel donor environment.[323]

While NAFFO publicly endorses a two-state solution,[324] its concrete policy positions frequently reject international legal frameworks underpinning Palestinian statehood, accountability, and refugee rights as its concrete policy positions frequently contradict these claims. For example: Public opposition to a UN resolution in line with ICJ, of withdrawal from the West Bank, [325] arguing that recognizing Palestine now (August and September 2025) would "reward terrorism" and "undermine peace," and rejecting European recognition moves as reckless. [326, 327]

NAFFO's sustained engagement against UNRWA predates October 7 and follows a clear trajectory from critique to explicit dismantlement advocacy. Following the announcement by the United States that it would halt its contributions to UNRWA,[328] and in parallel with the German government's declaration that it would seek to compensate the resulting funding gap,[329] NAFFO made UNRWA the central thematic focus of its work in autumn **2018**. Prior to the Bundestag's budget deliberations, NAFFO organized a roundtable discussion inside the Bundestag with **Dr. Simon Waldman** of King's College London and conducted numerous bilateral meetings with Bundestag members and officials from the **Federal Foreign Office.** Across these formats, NAFFO advanced a consistent set of criticisms, including

310 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R002173/62227?backUrl=%2Fsuche%3Fq%3Dnaffo%26pageSize%3D25%26sort%3DRELEVANCE_DESC
311 www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1111537.als-antisemiten-diffamiert.html
312 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article243538565/Iraner-im-Gespraech-Wir-brauchen-endlich-Baerbocks-feministische-Aussenpolitik.html
313 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article250960170/Druck-auf-Israel-Warum-die-Hamas-den-Krieg-gewinnt.html
314 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/autor/aras-nathan-keul/
315 https://keren-hayesod.de/das-praesidium/
316 www.jewishagency.org/nathan-gelbart/
317 https://soldat-und-technik.de/2023/09/bewaffnung/35618/dynamit-nobel-defence-investiert-in-den-aufbau-von-produktionskapazitaeten-und-eroeffnet-giesszentrum/
318 www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2024/02/17/7442357/
319 https://dn-defence.com/de/invitation/
320 https://table.media/heads/jardena-lande
321 www.spiegel.de/politik/lobbyismus-im-bundestag-wie-zwei-vereine-die-deutsche-nahostpolitik-beeinflussen-wollen-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000164871539
322 www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1196115.naher-osten-lobbyismus-aus-israel-staatlich-gelenkte-reisen-nach-israel.html?sstr=naffo
323 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R002173/62227?backUrl=-%2Fsuche%3Fq%3Dnaffo%26pageSize%3D25%26sort%3-DRELEVANCE_DESC
324 https://naffo.de/
325 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/meinung/un-resolution-kein-beitrag-zu-einer-friedlichen-loesung/
326 https://staatsraesonmonitor.substack.com/p/srm-5-ceasefire-and-the-politics
327 https://staatsraesonmonitor.substack.com/p/staatsrason-monitor-newsletter-4
328 www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme
329 www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-palestinians/germany-to-boost-funds-for-palestinians-after-us-cut-idUSKCN1LG12L/

the extension of refugee status to descendants of those displaced in 1948, the alleged politicization of UNRWA in line with Palestinian positions, claims of anti-Israel content in UNRWA-run schools and staff links to Hamas, and assertions regarding opaque and corruption-prone financial structures. These positions were also articulated in a letter sent to Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on 6 September 2018. According to NAFFO's own account, these interventions contributed to the first instance in which German contributions to UNRWA were discussed critically in the Bundestag Budget Committee.[330]

After October 7, 2023, NAFFO published the analysis "UNRWA – Is its mandate still relevant today?", stressing that the organization had criticized UNRWA "long before October 7." The publication reiterates core claims that UNRWA's mandate is exceptional and obsolete, that refugee status is improperly extended to descendants, and that the agency perpetuates an "illusion" of return that obstructs peace.[331] In April 2024, it organized a Bundestag event titled "Alternatives to UNRWA – What's Next for Gaza?", featuring Likud MK Sharren Haskel. According to the announcement, the event was framed not around oversight or reform, but around alternatives to UNRWA in post-war Gaza governance.[332] In May 2024, NAFFO published the article "Gaza: The Facts Behind the Headlines," portraying UNRWA as structurally subordinate to Hamas, politically compromised, and ineffective as a humanitarian actor.[333] In December 2024, it hosted a closed event titled "Humanitarian aid for Palestinians – without UNRWA?", featuring Einat Wilf. [334, 335, 336] On 23 May 2025, NAFFO cooperated with NGO Monitor to lobby for withholding German funds from UNRWA.[337] On 8 July 2025, NAFFO circulated a position paper to Bundestag members via newsletter titled "Why UNRWA is an Obstacle on the Road to Peace." The document draws heavily on aligned sources including UN Watch, IMPACT-SE, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), and WINEP, and reiterates demands for defunding or strict conditionality, transfer of responsibilities to other UN agencies, and an end to inherited refugee status.[338] This trajectory culminated on 4 November 2025 with the publication of the position paper "Immediate measures for peace in the Middle East." In this document, NAFFO explicitly calls for the gradual dismantling of UNRWA and the end of inherited Palestinian refugee status and the right of return.[339]

Functionally, NAFFO operates as a professionalized lobbying actor that converts long-standing ideological critiques into sustained parliamentary pressure. Its role within the ecosystem is the systematic embedding of end-state policy positions into elite political environments through access, repetition, and coordination with aligned transnational actors.

4.4 Norm Shapers

Norm shapers define the boundaries of legitimate discourse by embedding particular interpretations of Israel, antisemitism, and international institutions within state-adjacent civil society, education, and public debate. Their authority derives from institutional recognition, public funding, and symbolic representative status. As a result, their positioning has a disproportionate effect on which perspectives are treated as credible or marginal in German political space.

4.4.1 The Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland (ZdJ)

ZdJ is the central umbrella organization of Jewish communities in Germany and is constituted as a corporation under public law. This grants the Jewish community, alongside major churches and other religious communities, the right to levy religious taxes, operate educational institutions, organize its own funeral services, and many other rights necessary for the practice of religion, thus ensuring the sustainable existence of a religious community.[340] It occupies a uniquely privileged position in German political life as the officially recognized representative body of Jewish communal interests, particularly in matters relating to antisemitism, remembrance culture, and Israel-related policy debates.[341] Within the ecosystem examined here, the ZdJ functions as a primary norm-setting authority, whose public statements strongly influence political and media interpretations of what constitutes legitimate Jewish perspectives.

330 https://naffo.de/naffo-thema-im-herbst-2018-die-unrwa-das-un-hilfswerk-fuer-palaestinafluechtlinge/
331 https://naffo.de/naffo-position-unrwa-ist-das_mandat-noch-zeitgemaess/
332 https://naffo.de/alternativen_zur_unrwa/
333 https://naffo.de/gaza-die-fakten-hinter-den-schlagzeilen/
334 https://naffo.de/unrwa_wilf/
335 www.linkedin.com/posts/sandra-bubendorfer-licht-b903821b7_dienstagabend-bei-einem-event-des-nahost-friedensforums-activity-7265423983582306306-bYw8/?originalSubdomain=de
336 www.instagram.com/p/DCpljXAv59h/?img_index=2
337 https://naffo.de/beweislastumkehr/
338 https://staatsraesonmonitor.substack.com/p/staatsrason-monitor-newsletter-2
339 https://staatsraesonmonitor.substack.com/p/staatsrason-monitor-6-ceasefire-realities
340 www.bpb.de/themen/zeit-kulturgeschichte/juedischesleben/328675/zentralrat-der-juden-in-deutschland/
341 www.zentralratderjuden.de/impressum/

ZdJ is led by its president, Josef Schuster, who has held the office since 2014.[342] Its leadership is closely integrated into federal political structures through formal consultation mechanisms, advisory roles, and regular high-level meetings with the federal government and Länder authorities. A central instrument of this norm-setting function is the ZdJ's ownership and publication of the weekly newspaper *Jüdische Allgemeine*,[343] which operates as the primary forum for articulating, consolidating, and disseminating Zentralrat-aligned positions. While *Jüdische Allgemeine* does not function as a mass media amplifier, it plays a key role in signaling supposed Jewish institutional consensus to political elites and mainstream media.

ZdJ's funding structure is transparent and substantial. Under a federal state treaty, it receives an annual lump-sum grant from the federal government, increased in 2023 from 13 million euros to 22 million euros per year.[344] In addition, affiliated communities receive further funding through Länder-level treaties and project-based public grants and budget lines, independently of any allocations distributed by the ZdJ K.d.ö.R..[345, 346, 347] In addition, both individual Jewish communities and the ZdJ are eligible to apply for separate, project-based public funding at the state and municipal levels. One documented example is the educational dialogue program *Meet a Jew*, which received funding from the Berlin Senat in both 2022 and 2023, amounting to €60,000 in total, as part of Berlin's antisemitism prevention and civic education funding.[348]

Politically, the Zentralrat has consistently articulated positions closely aligned with Israeli government narratives, particularly since the mid-2010s. This alignment is articulated explicitly in the Zentralrat's own institutional reporting. In its 2022 activity report, the organization stated that *"The Jewish community in Germany cannot and does not want to remain neutral when it comes to Israel."* [349] This formulation codifies alignment with Israel not as a contingent political position but as a normative institutional principle. It has publicly opposed EU labeling of settlement products,[350] strongly supported the Bundestag's 2019 resolution condemning the BDS movement,[351] and repeatedly framed some forms of non-violent criticism of Israeli state policy as a form of delegitimization.[352] While ZdJ does not endorse specific Israeli parties, its public interventions have increasingly converged with nationalist Israeli framings that treat criticism of Israel as existentially threatening.

With respect to UNRWA, the Zentralrat's public positioning has shifted over time from calls for reform toward a more fundamental rejection of the agency. Immediately after October 7, 2023, it demanded a freeze on all German funding for Palestinian organizations, explicitly including UNRWA.[353] In 2024, President Schuster publicly stated that UNRWA "has no future in its current form" and criticized the German government for resuming funding following the Colonna Review. [354] These positions were reinforced through sustained editorial coverage in *Jüdische Allgemeine,* which repeatedly amplified narratives originating from organizations such as UN Watch, IMPACT-SE, and NGO Monitor, alongside complementary opinion columns. [355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369]

342 www.zentralratderjuden.de/der-zentralrat/praesidenten/praesident/
343 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/mediadaten/
344 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/073/2007308.pdf
345 www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/_assets/kirche-und-weltanschauung/staatsvertrag_jued_gemeinde.pdf
346 www.lto.de/recht/nachrichten/n/lvg-sachsen-anhalt-urteile-112-212-staatsvertrag-juedische-gemeinschaft-landeszuschuss
347 https://bravors.brandenburg.de/de/vertraege-244346
348 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1270-v.pdf
349 www.zentralratderjuden.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ZdJ_tb2022_web.pdf, (pg. 26)
350 www.zentralratderjuden.de/presseerklaerungen/einseitiger-druck-auf-israel/
351 www.zentralratderjuden.de/presseerklaerungen/bundestag-verurteilt-boykottaufrufe-gegen-israel/
352 www.zentralratderjuden.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ZdJ_tb2019_web.pdf, (pg. 24-27)
353 www.zentralratderjuden.de/presseerklaerungen/alle-zahlungen-nicht-nur-staatliche-an-palaestinensische-organisationen-sofort-einstellen/
354 www.deutschlandfunk.de/schuster-zentralrat-der-juden-unrwa-100.html
355 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/israel/terrorismus-statt-rechnen/
356 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/bericht-israel-hass-an-unrwa-schulen-weit-verbreitet/
357 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/friedensaktivist-aus-gaza-wer-nicht-hamas-mitglied-ist-arbeitet-nicht-bei-der-unrwa/
358 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/die-schweiz-hat-die-richtigen-konsequenzen-aus-den-terrorvorwurfen-gegen-die-unrwa-gezogen-anders-als-berlin/
359 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/ngo-monitor-kritisiert-wdr-faktencheck/
360 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/israel/wie-die-hamas-hilfs-organisationen-gefuegig-machte/
361 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/euros-gegen-israel/
362 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/bericht-ueber-missbrauch-internationaler-hilfe-durch-hamas-im-bundestag-vorgestellt/
363 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/den-aermsten-der-armen/
364 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/neun-eu-staaten-weisen-vorwuerfe-gegen-ngos-zurueck/
365 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/neun-eu-staaten-weisen-vorwuerfe-gegen-ngos-zurueck/
366 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/man-muss-sich-der-problematik-stellen/
367 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/meinung/die-kuerzung-der-foerdermittel-fuer-antizionistische-vereine-ist-richtig/
368 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/ngo-fordert-entlassung-von-francesca-albaneses-ehemann/
369 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/meinung/warum-die-unrwa-seit-77-jahren-den-frieden-in-nahost-blockiert/

Through this combination of formal political access, public funding, and discursive authority, the Zentralrat has contributed decisively to shaping the normative environment in which UNRWA-related debates occur in Germany. Its interventions have framed UNRWA not primarily as a humanitarian agency subject to governance challenges, but as a structurally suspect institution implicated in radicalization, while recasting the Palestinian right of return from a human rights claim into a demographic and security threat to Jewish collective self-determination.

4.4.2 Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (AAS)

The Amadeu Antonio Stiftung is a Berlin-based non-profit foundation founded in 1998 and widely regarded as one of Germany's most influential civil-society actors in the fields of antisemitism prevention, right-wing extremism, and democracy promotion. [370] It operates at the intersection of civil society, academia, and state policy and is regularly consulted by federal and state authorities.

AAS's personnel and expert environment include individuals with overlapping roles in Israel-aligned advocacy and political education networks. Among them is Ulrike Becker,[371] formerly head of research at MFFB (see 4.3.3). Another relevant figure is Stella Leder, founder of the Institut für Neue Soziale Plastik,[372] (see 4.5.1) who has cooperated closely with AAS in the field of antisemitism prevention and political education. Stephan J. Kramer has been President of the Thuringian Office for the Protection of the Constitution since the end of 2015. Prior to this position, he served for many years as Secretary General of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (see 4.4.1) and as Director of the European Bureau Against Anti-Semitism of the American Jewish Committee (AJC)[373], an elite American Jewish advocacy organization that historically represented Jewish interests to U.S. policymakers and initially belonged to the non-Zionist camp of American Jewish politics,[374] later becoming one of the institutional actors[375] interacting with the emerging pro-Israel lobbying network in the early Cold War period.

The foundation is heavily publicly funded. Its annual budgets fluctuate but consistently reach the multi-million-euro range. According to publicly available funding disclosures, AAS reported a total budget of approximately 9.1 million euros in 2024, derived predominantly from federal and Länder-level ministries, including the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and the Federal Chancellery, as well as municipal authorities. Public funding constitutes the dominant share of its income, reinforcing its institutional authority in norm-setting processes.[376]

According to its statutes, the Amadeu Antonio Stiftung defines itself as an independent, non-partisan foundation committed to strengthening democratic culture and opposing racism and antisemitism.[377] In practice, its work on antisemitism relies heavily on expansive conceptualizations of "Israel-related antisemitism."[378, 379, 380, 381] This analytical approach has been critically examined by expert Peter Ullrich, who noted in 2022 that AAS employs abstract and formalist definitions of antisemitism.[382] Such definitions, while institutionally convenient, risk being instrumentalized to delegitimize dissenting or rights-based critiques of Israeli government policy, particularly when applied in state-funded educational and prevention contexts.[383]

While AAS does not produce original research on UNRWA, its publications shape the discursive environment in which UN institutions and refugee-related narratives are interpreted. In *Zivilgesellschaftliches Lagebild Antisemitismus #11* (2023), the United Nations is referenced critically in the context of Israel-related delegitimization in international forums.[384] UN General Assembly activity, including the commemoration of the Nakba, is framed as evidence of distorted institutional bias against Israel. While doing so, the report discusses the 1948 war and minimizes Israel's role in the refugees' flight, while omitting Israel's post-war refusal to allow Palestinian refugees to return. UN action is instead interpreted as part of a broader international discourse that allegedly relativizes antisemitism and undermines

370 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/575548/775b1cbf760aea8ad3484f88379b0b81/WD-1-019-18-pdf-data.pdf
371 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/about/becker
372 www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/511768/vita-von-stella-leder/
373 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/ueber-uns/vorstand-der-amadeu-antonio-stiftung/
374 www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/5a9d67768421d494163250a4/S2515045617000177a.pdf
375 www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41805051.pdf
376 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/027/2102709.pdf
377 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/satzung_amadeu_antonio_stiftung.pdf
378 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/w/files/pdfs/aas-israelfeindschaft.pdf
379 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/w/files/pdfs/handreichung_antisemitismus_internet.pdf
380 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/publikationen/leitfaden-fuer-israelkritik/
381 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/israelbezogener-antisemitismus-faltblatt.pdf
382 https://regener-online.de/journalcco/2022_1/pdf/ullrich2022_engl.pdf
383 www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2024-09-17_-_testimony_-_stern.pdf
384 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/230508_wigwam_aas_lagebild_2023-11-v06.pdf

Jewish historical experience. This framing becomes more explicit and securitized in *Zivilgesellschaftliches Lagebild Antisemitismus #14,* published on 19 June 2025, in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks. The report criticizes the United Nations for its response to October 7 and repeatedly cites advocacy organizations such as IMPACT-SE and UN Watch, both of which also appear prominently in parliamentary and advocacy briefings examined elsewhere in this study. The report includes a foreword by Felix Klein, the Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Antisemitism, who asserts that anti-Jewish agitation in the United Nations contributes to hatred of Jews within Germany. In addition, the report features a lengthy interview with Dina Rovner, legal advisor to UN Watch. In that interview, Rovner argues that since October 7 there has been a global explosion of antisemitism and claims that the UN contributes to this dynamic through its treatment of Israel, including allegations that UN discourse promotes Hamas propaganda.[385]

Across the analyzed publications, AAS does not systematically conceptualize the UN as a differentiated institutional system marked by multiple, countervailing structural imbalances. While Israel faces consistent opposition in the General Assembly (GA), it is simultaneously shielded in more consequential arenas, most notably the Security Council, where the veto power of key allies, above all the United States, provides substantial protection. AAS centers the former GA dynamic, portraying the UN primarily as a symbolic and discursive arena in which Israel-related antisemitism is expressed. By embedding these interpretations in publicly funded analytical reports that inform education, prevention efforts, and policy-adjacent work, AAS may contribute to delineating the boundaries of legitimate discourse. Within this framework, UN bodies associated with Palestinian narratives, including those linked to refugee claims, tend to be framed with heightened suspicion, often prior to case-specific institutional or evidentiary evaluation.

4.4.3 WerteInitiative. jüdisch-deutsche Positionen e.V. (WI)

WerteInitiative is a Berlin-based association founded by Elio Adler and Lydia Bergida in 2014[386] as a "group of Jewish, Christian, and atheist citizens who see themselves as part of the German and European community of responsibility and are committed to preserving and safeguarding the free and democratic values and basic order in Germany and Europe. [...] that conduct[s] background discussions with members of the Bundestag and other political and social representatives, and observe that most of our interlocutors share the same assessments."[387] It now presents itself as a Jewish civil-society voice committed to liberal democracy, human rights, and the fight against antisemitism.[388]

Organizationally, WI is characterized by a highly centralized structure. Voting membership is capped at 20 individuals, while the majority of registered members (220) hold no formal decision-making power.[389] Strategic authority is concentrated in the executive leadership, headed by Elio Adler. This governance model can be noted for a representational gap between the organization's public claim to articulate "Jewish-German positions" and its actual internal decision-making base, especially considering critique from leading mainstream Jewish figures.[390, 391]

WerteInitiative's resource base is notable for its heavy reliance on public funding combined with professionalized lobbying expenditure. According to disclosures in the Bundestag Lobby Register, the organization received between 760,001 and 770,000 euros from the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) in 2023, alongside an additional 1 to 10,000 euros from the Berlin State Office for Equal Treatment Against Discrimination (LADS).[392] In 2024, WI again received substantial federal funding, reporting 740,001 to 750,000 euros from the BMI.[393] These figures indicate a high degree of state dependence, with core organizational activities financed predominantly through federal interior-ministry programs related to democracy promotion and antisemitism prevention. In parallel, WI reports significant lobbying expenditures. For 2023, the organization disclosed lobbying-related spending of 220,001 to 230,000 euros in the Bundestag Lobby Register, which is analytically relevant given WerteInitiative's consistently interventionist positions on foreign poli-

385 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/publikationen/zivilgesellschaftliches-lagebild-antisemitismus-14/
386 https://werteinitiative.de/vorstellung-der-werteinitiative-in-ard-radiobeitrag/
387 https://web.archive.org/web/20161031114056/http://werteinitiative.de/aktuelle-positionen.html
388 https://werteinitiative.de/
389 https://werteinitiative.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/WerteInitiative-Satzung-Vers-3.1.pdf
390 www.deutschlandfunk.de/debatte-um-berliner-werteinitiative-juedische-wahlbausteine-100.html
391 www.deutschlandfunk.de/debatte-um-berliner-werteinitiative-juedische-wahlbausteine-100.html
392 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R001599/45713?backUrl=%2Fsuche%3Fq%3Dwerteinitiative%26pageSize%3D25%26sort%3DRELEVANCE_DESC
393 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R001599/69197?backUrl=%2Fsuche%3Fq%3Dwerteinitiative%26pageSize%3D25%26sort%3DRELEVANCE_DESC

cy, migration, and UNRWA-related questions.[394] The organization's financial structure thus reinforces its capacity to act simultaneously as a norm-shaping actor in publicly funded discourse and as an agenda-setting advocacy actor within parliamentary and ministerial arenas.

WerteInitiative's core policy positions are consistent and publicly documented. It strongly advocates for the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism as the authoritative standard, frames Israel-related antisemitism as the dominant contemporary form of antisemitism since October 7, 2023,[395] and portrays BDS as inherently antisemitic.[396, 397] Beyond discourse, the organization promotes a security-oriented agenda, including the expansion of criminal law provisions against antisemitic speech[398, 399] and proposals to amend residence and nationality law to restrict the stay or naturalization of persons identified as antisemitic.[400] These positions place WerteInitiative at the restrictive end of Germany's antisemitism and civil-liberties debate.

WerteInitiative has been an early and consistent advocate for far-reaching measures against UNRWA. In August 2021, it circulated a policy paper arguing that unconditional German funding of UNRWA should be ended, alleging systemic antisemitic indoctrination in educational materials and calling for the agency's integration into UNHCR".[401] This position was expanded in the 2022 WerteInitiative Reader, which argues that UNRWA's refugee definition perpetuates rather than resolves the conflict by extending refugee status across generations, and that UN-supported Palestinian education has allowed antisemitic content to persist. On this basis, WI calls for UNRWA's mandate to be terminated and its responsibilities transferred to UNHCR, and urges Germany to advocate for this shift at the international level.[402] UN Watch's Hillel Neuer, also contributed an article to the reader titled „Germany is not keeping its promise to oppose the anti-Israel orientation of the UN". After October 7, 2023, these demands were reiterated in increasingly securitized language, including calls to suspend funding and to establish alternative humanitarian channels,[403] and on June 26th, 2025, WI drew a comparison between UNRWA, the Ku Klax Klan (KKK), and the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF).[404]

In parallel to its UNRWA advocacy, WerteInitiative has intervened directly in historical and ideological debates related to Palestinian refugee claims. On 30 April 2025, it launched the *Reclaim Zionism* campaign, presented as a civic-education initiative and explicitly financed with public funds from the BMI.[405] The campaign advances a contested framing of the events of 1948. While acknowledging large-scale Palestinian displacement, it emphasizes wartime contingency, flight, and reciprocal population movements over structural causes or state responsibility.[406] The campaign foregrounds the continued presence of a Palestinian minority within Israel, juxtaposes Palestinian displacement with Jewish expulsions from Arab countries, and frames Zionism as a decolonisation project of an indigenous people rather than as a settler-colonial movement.[407] Within this framework, Palestinian statelessness is primarily attributed to political rejection and leadership decisions,[408] and the right of return is not engaged as an unresolved legal or political claim but appears embedded in broader ideological disputes over the legitimacy of Jewish sovereignty. The Reclaim Zionism campaign is institutionally significant because it blurs the boundary between state-funded civic education and the promotion of a specific ideological interpretation of Zionism.

WerteInitiative's methods and political influence have been subject to public controversy. Two investigative reports by *Der Spiegel* in 2019 documented aggressive lobbying practices linked to WerteInitiative and NAFFO, including fundraising events targeting members of the Bundestag active in foreign and Middle East policy. At the time, Elio Adler, then chair of WerteInitiative and vice chair of Nahost Friedensforum (NAFFO), featured centrally in the reporting. The investigation raised concerns about expectation-linked donations and coordinated politi-

394 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R001599/45713?backUrl=%2Fsuche%3Fq%3Dwerteinitiative%26pageSize%3D25%26sort%3DRELEVANCE_DESC
395 https://werteinitiative.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/WI-Positionspapier-Fundament-des-Kampfes-gegen-Judenhass_IHRA-Arbeitsdefinition-von-Antisemitismus-1.pdf
396 https://werteinitiative.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/WI-Positionspapier-Fundament-des-Kampfes-gegen-Judenhass_IHRA-Arbeitsdefinition-von-Antisemitismus-1.pdf
397 https://werteinitiative.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WI-Positionspapier-BDS.pdf
398 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/suche/R001599
399 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/inhalte-der-interessenvertretung/regelungsvorhabensuche/RV0001868/213
400 www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/inhalte-der-interessenvertretung/regelungsvorhabensuche/RV0001872/443
401 https://img.welt.de/bin/werteinitiative_bn-233346801.pdf
402 https://werteinitiative.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/WerteInitiative_Reader_final_web.pdf pg. 18-19, 23, 39
403 https://werteinitiative.de/pressemitteilung-unrwa-terrorunterstuetzung/
404 https://x.com/WerteInitiative/status/1938356208437792804
405 https://reclaim-zionism.de/impressum/ - BMI logo appears on bottom of the page. BMI supports the institutional funding for WI according to the lobbyregister
406 https://reclaim-zionism.de/debunked/ - Myth number 2
407 https://reclaim-zionism.de/debunked/ - Myth number 6
408 https://reclaim-zionism.de/debunked/ - Myth number 11

cal pressure. While no illegality was established, the reporting highlighted practices that went beyond conventional civil-society advocacy.[409, 410]

Within the advocacy network examined here, WerteInitiative functions as a discursive hardliner and policy-advocacy actor, advancing securitized interpretations of antisemitism and promoting far-reaching foreign-policy demands. Its influence derives from sustained access to policymakers and substantial public funding.

4.5 Micro Networks

Israel-aligned cluster-based micro networks link small organizations and individuals across policy and funding fields. Their main advantage lies in drawing resources from multiple domains, enabling access to diverse funding streams and influence across education, culture, advocacy, and media. This section examines two such clusters: a Berlin-based civil-society and education network rooted in publicly funded democracy programs, and a national pro-Israel advocacy and political interface centered in Frankfurt and Munich with links to federal politics. Together, they illustrate how decentralized coordination and overlapping personnel translate narrative alignment into institutional influence, largely outside formal lobby registration and comprehensive funding transparency requirements.

4.5.1 Berlin Civil-Society and Education Cluster

The Berlin cluster comprises small to medium-sized organizations operating across political education, cultural production, antisemitism prevention, and Jewish communal life. Although formally decentralized, it functions as a coherent ecosystem through overlapping personnel and common interpretive boundaries regarding Israel, antisemitism, and legitimate political speech. Its influence is primarily exercised through agenda-setting within cultural, educational, and state-adjacent advisory contexts. Another defining feature of this cluster is the density of personal bridges across institutions. Lulu Alvizuri Sommerfeld has held roles within Masiyot as well as the Institut für Neue Soziale Plastik, linking project-based political education with arts-based civic programming.[411, 412] Stella Leder, founder of the Institut für Neue Soziale Plastik, has also held positions at the Amadeu Antonio Stiftung and at Zurückgeben, a foundation promoting Jewish women in arts and sciences, thereby connecting publicly funded antisemitism prevention, cultural policy, and Israel-related discourse.[413] Maria Kireenko has been a board member in Masiyot[414] and co-founder of the Jewish–Kurdish feminist initiative Pêk Koach,[415] while also serving as a former federal board member of the Young Forum of DIG,[416] thus creating a bridge between grassroots activism, identity-based organizing, and established Israeli-aligned institutional frameworks.

Within this cluster, Masiyot – Bildung, Aufklärung, Kritik e.V. plays a distinctive role as the most explicit producer of UNRWA and refugee-focused messaging. Masiyot is a Berlin-based political education association working on Israel/Palestine, antisemitism, racism, and political violence. Its admission in May 2024 to the NeuköIln Migration Advisory Council, an official advisory body to the district administration, is analytically significant, as it positions Masiyot as a legitimate Jewish stakeholder within migrant and integration policy structures. Masiyot were approved for 220,523 € in total funding from the Berlin Senat.[417] Masiyot's UNRWA-related positioning is unusually direct for an organization operating within publicly funded education frameworks. In December 2024, it organized an event titled "Vereinte Nationen gegen Israel," with author Alex Feuerherdt at Bajszel,[418] the venue hosting the event, and a recurrent host for Israel-aligned narratives. The Bajszel page portrays UNRWA as "an organization with close personnel and ideological ties to Hamas" that contributes to the delegitimization of Israel. [419] The Masiyot brochure *Mythos #Israel 1948* acknowledges Palestinian displacement in 1948 but rejects the right of return as a viable or legitimate claim, omits UN General Assembly Resolution 194 entirely, and frames refugee return primarily as a political instrument incompatible with Jewish self-determination rather than as a rights-based issue.[420]

409 www.spiegel.de/politik/lobbyismus-im-bundestag-wie-zwei-vereine-die-deutsche-nahostpolitik-beeinflussen-wollen-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000164871539
410 http://spiegel.de/politik/deutsch-juedische-werteinitiative-frag-wuerdige-methoden-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000165218710
411 www.companyhouse.de/Lulu-Alvizuri
412 https://neue-soziale-plastik.de/de/institut/team/
413 www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/511768/vita-von-stella-leder/
414 www.masiyot.de/aktuelles
415 https://pek-koach.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/SPEAK-NOW_online.pdf pg.54
416 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DIG_Magazin_012022.pdf
417 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.E-v.pdf
418 https://bajszel.de/18-12-24-alex-feuerherdt-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel/
419 https://bajszel.de/18-12-24-alex-feuerherdt-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel/
420 https://masiyot.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Mythos_23Israel1948_Masiyot.pdf

Institut für Neue Soziale Plastik (INSP) is an arts-based civic education and institutional advocacy. In the last decade, the organization has received **at least 2.09 million Euros in public funding across federal and state levels**, with ~1,700,000, through the Demokratie leben! Program,[421] and the remaining sums through the Berlin Senate and the Brandenburg government.[422, 423, 424, 425, 426] In one case, notably, Members of the advisory board reviewing the applications included Hannah Dannel (from INSP).[427] INSP was also **supported by the Israeli embassy** in Berlin for one project.[428] While INSP does not engage directly in UNRWA-specific advocacy, it advances Israel-aligned positions through sustained opposition to cultural boycotts, framing BDS as antisemitism,[429] and embedding these positions within publicly funded cultural and educational institutions. Its founder, **Stella Leder**, has publicly framed early Zionist settler movements like Hachshart Hayeshouv movement (literally: "Training the Settlement) as "progressive and life-saving", reinforcing revisionist historical narratives that circulate within the cluster.[430] The INSP does not itself advocate around the Palestinian right of return too. However, in its publications the right of return appears almost exclusively as a core demand of the BDS movement and is framed as a position whose implementation would negate Israel's existence as a Jewish state.[431] The institute therefore treats the right of return not as a legitimate refugee claim, but as part of a political program analyzed under the rubric of antisemitism.

Pek Koach – jüdisch-kurdische Frauenallianz e.V. which defines itself as an "intersectional feminist platform"[432], established after October 7, 2023[433] and thus represents another node in the Berlin cluster operating at the intersection of feminist organizing, identity politics, and antisemitism. Publicly documented and itemized funding to Pek Koach amounts to **€73,145** from Berlin Senate sources.[434, 435] Beyond these grants, Pek Koach participates in publicly funded frameworks whose internal allocations are not transparent. The organization is a member of the **Partnerschaft für Demokratie Neukölln (PfD)**, which received **€432,574** in federal *Demokratie leben!* funding between 2015 and 2019[436] and **€140,000** in 2025.[437, 438] However, sub-grants to individual member organizations are not publicly itemized, making it impossible to determine whether or to what extent Pek Koach benefited financially. In addition, Pek Koach has documented support from the **Amadeu Antonio Stiftung**, but no public information is available on the amount, duration, or purpose of this funding.[439]

In the absence of published financial statements, Pek Koach's total level of public and foundation support cannot be determined from open sources. This constitutes a transparency gap rather than evidence of improper funding, but it limits public accountability and independent assessment of the organization's funding structure. While Pêk Koach does not focus systematically on UNRWA, its brochure *Speak Now* exemplifies how humanitarian and aid-related issues are securitized within the cluster. The brochure presents itself as an intervention in debates on Islamist violence and antisemitism in Germany. It advances the claim that Islamist threats are persistent, escalating, and insufficiently addressed by political institutions and civil society. The production of the brochure was funded by the **MONOM** Foundation for Change, with the grant formally awarded to **Masiyot** and used by Pek Koach who published it.[440] **The brochure's treatment of Germany's decision to resume UNRWA funding in April 2024 places this policy choice alongside incidents of Islamist violence**, implicitly reframing humanitarian aid as a security risk and contributing to a broader discursive shift that casts UN institutions as politically suspect actors.

421 www.demokratie-leben.de/resource/blob/255816/ba255c9eb4df3cb-541888928c4df572f/fp2-projekte-modellprojekte-data.pdf
422 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.B-v.pdf
423 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.B-v.pdf
424 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.B-v.pdf
425 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.E-v.pdf
426 www.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/bb1.c.660451.de
427 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.B-v.pdf
428 neue-soziale-plastik.de/en/projects/writing-about-the-situation/
429 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/1128306/Stellungnahme-Stella-Leder.pdf
430 www.aviva-berlin.de/aviva/content_Interviews.php?id=1430011382
431 neue-soziale-plastik.de/files/INSP-chasak-kunst-und-konformismus.pdf
432 pek-koach.de/ueber-uns/
433 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/unsere-woche/gemeinsam-stark-4/
434 www.parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/19/Haupt/vorgang/h19-1675.E-v.pdf
435 https://pardok.parlament-berlin.de/starweb/adis/citat/VT/19/SchrAnfr/S19-23031.pdf
436 www.demokratie-leben.de/resource/blob/252438/699a8df5b62e79df459710d4108f99c7/fp1-bundesprogramm-abschlussbericht-2015-2019-data.pdf
437 www.demokratie-leben.de/resource/blob/252438/699a8df5b62e79df459710d4108f99c7/fp1-bundesprogramm-abschlussbericht-2015-2019-data.pdf
438 www.demokratie-leben.de/dl/projektpraxis/projekte-finden/partnerschaft-fuer-demokratie-berlin-neukoelln-261390
439 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/diaspora-und-dasein-gefuehrte-spaziergaenge-erzaehlen-juedische-und-kurdische-lebensgeschichten-in-berlin-kreuzberg-152081/
440 https://pek-koach.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/SPEAK-NOW_online.pdf

Within the Berlin cluster, UNRWA-critical and Israel-aligned positions are articulated primarily through publicly funded educational, cultural, and advisory settings, rather than through formal lobbying structures.

4.5.2 Frankfurt–Munich Israel-aligned Advocacy and Political Interface Network

The second micro network operates on a more explicitly political and media-oriented basis and is centered in Frankfurt and Munich, with strong links to national advocacy and federal politics. This network is even more tightly integrated than the Berlin cluster, characterized by recurring leadership figures, shared platforms, and coordinated messaging across organizations, events, and media interventions. At its core are organizations founded or led by Leo Sucharewicz and Sacha Stawski. Sucharewicz, a Munich-based political psychologist, is the founder of I Like Israel e.V.,[441] (ILI) the initiator of the nationwide Israeltag, and a co-founder of the advocacy and education organization DEIN e.V.[442] Stawski, founder of Honestly Concerned e.V. and current chairman of I Like Israel,[443] has been responsible for sustaining and professionalizing these initiatives since the late 2000s. Their collaboration has produced a dense advocacy infrastructure combining mass events, continuous media monitoring, and direct engagement with political actors.

I Like Israel e.V. functions as the central mobilization and visibility platform of the network. Based in Frankfurt, it used to organize the Israelkongress, and still organizes Israeltag nationwide, disseminates Israel-aligned and anti-UNRWA content through newsletters and social media.[444, 445, 446, 447, 448] ILI does not publish detailed budgets. UNRWA-related positioning within ILI is primarily amplificatory. At Israeltag 2024, Israeli ambassador to Germany Ron Prosor used the ILI platform to publicly describe UNRWA as a "aid organization for terrorism," a statement that was neither contextualized nor challenged and was subsequently disseminated through network channels.[449]

Honestly Concerned e.V., founded by Stawski in 2002, operates as a media-monitoring and advocacy initiative focused on antisemitism and Israel-related reporting.[450] Its UNRWA-related activity is extensive, consisting of the continuous aggregation and dissemination of articles alleging Hamas ties, ideological bias, and institutional complicity,[451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456] often accompanied by editorial commentary that reinforces securitized framings.[457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462]

DEIN e.V., founded by Leo Sucharewicz in 2017, operates at the intersection of advocacy and political education, organizing lectures, campaigns, and exhibitions.[463] DEIN does not publicly disclose comprehensive funding information. DEIN's most prominent project is *1948 – Die Ausstellung*.[464] The exhibition, organized by DIG and partners for Israel's 70th anniversary, addresses the establishment of UNRWA and advances a historical narrative that challenges the legitimacy of the Palestinian refugee framework.[465] It has been presented in coop-

441 https://i-like-israel.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PROGRAMM-2.-VIRTUELLER-ISRAELTAG-2021.pdf
442 www.dein-ak.com/israelvortr%C3%A4ge-im-mai2021
443 www.linkedin.com/in/sstawski/?originalSubdomain=de
444 www.il-israel.org/nl/240331/
445 www.il-israel.org/nl/210214/
446 https://i-like-israel.de/palaestinenserhilfswerk-und-wieder-ist-israel-der-suendenbock/
447 https://i-like-israel.de/unrwa-einsicht-in-berlin/
448 https://i-like-israel.de/unrwa-friedenshindernis/
449 https://i-like-israel.de/grusswort-von-s-e-ron-prosor-botschafter-des-staates-israel-in-deutschland-zum-israeltag-2024/
450 https://honestlyconcerned.info/uber-uns/
451 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/impact-se-report-exposes-deep-terror-ties-to-unrwa-education-impact-se/
452 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/israels-un-botschafter-zeigt-terror-video-mit-un-personal-erdan-die-unrwa-hat-sich-als-massgeblicher-teil-der-terrormaschinerie-der-hamas-erwiesen-juedische-allgemeine/
453 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/israel-slams-eus-decision-to-release-50-million-euros-to-unrwa-the-move-legitimizes-the-involvement-of-unrwa-employees-in-terrorist-activities-and-cooperation-with-hamas-jns-org/
454 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/alle-gegen-rechts-wer-ist-gegen-unrwa-von-berlin-bis-muenchen-berichten-tv-stationen-aktuell-ueber-hunderttausende-die-derzeit-fast-taeglich-gegen-rechts-auf-die-strasse-gehen-s/
455 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/report-unrwas-terrorgram-evidence-shows-widespread-support-for-october-7th-terrorists-among-unrwa-teachers-in-gaza-un-watch/
456 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/oct-7-is-the-logical-conclusion-of-unrwa-gaza-schools-propagated-hamas-antisemitic-extremism-experts-tell-congressional-committee-algemeiner-com/
457 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/alexandroni-brigade-the-idf-troops-fighting-hamas-in-unrwa-sites-the-magazine-talks-to-the-colonel-who-fought-hamas-at-an-unrwa-site-in-gaza-city-the-jerusalem-post/
458 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/unrwa-chef-denkt-nicht-an-ruecktritt-trotz-der-terror-vorwuerfe-gegen-seine-mitarbeiter-verlangt-philippe-lazzarini-geld-juedische-allgemeine/
459 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/eu-fm-says-israel-failed-to-prove-unrwa-hamas-links-advocates-funding-spain-announces-it-will-send-additional-funding-after-numerous-countries-suspended-aid-to-un-agency-for-palestinians-i24news/
460 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/unrwa-spanien-kuendigt-millionenhilfen-fuer-das-uno-hilfswerk-fuer-palaestinensische-fluechtlinge-an-die-groessten-geldgeber-der-unrwa-stoppten-ihre-zahlungen-nachdem-vorwuerfe-ueber-die-beteiligu/
461 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/germany-freezes-aid-for-unrwa-operations-in-gaza-amid-internal-review-the-wide-german-support-for-freezing-funds-came-in-light-of-findings-that-palestinian-learning-materials-were-used-to-teach-hat/
462 https://honestlyconcerned.info/links/us-officials-hamas-pushes-misinformation-to-play-the-victim-false-information-is-being-spread-in-part-because-the-media-and-unrwa-the-un-agency-responsible-for-palestinian-refugees-parrot-hamas-l/
463 https://juedischerundschau.de/article.2022-06.mehr-als-nur-eine-ausstellung-mit-historischen-fakten-gegen-anti-israel-propaganda.html
464 https://70-jahre-israel.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/1948-die-ausstellung/#:~:text=Zusammenh%C3%A4nge%20verzerrt
465 https://1948-ausstellung.de/unwra.php

eration with established pro-Israel institutions and figures, including advisory and supporting roles by Elio Adler (Werteinitative, frmr. NAFFO)[466, 467, 468, 469] and Volker Beck (DIG, Tikvah Institut),[470, 471] both of whom are connected to DEIN through exhibition-related activities and advisory functions.

A key connective figure within this network is Melody Sucharewicz, daughter of Leo Sucharewicz and an Israeli-German communications person. While she does not formally lead ILI or DEIN, she has been closely associated with their activities through hosting roles.[472, 473] In 2023–24, Melody became a co-founder of the "For Yarden" foundation and a driving force behind the international campaign to support Israeli hostages of Hamas. Additionally, Melody Sucharewicz sometimes collaborates with ELNET Germany[474, 475, 476, 477] and NAFFO.[478] Melody Sucharewicz's UNRWA criticism is consistent and dates back to at least March 2018[479, 480]

4.6 Media Amplifiers

While narrative originators generate claims and domestic brokers translate them into the German political context, mass media determine which claims achieve salience, repetition, and institutional uptake. In the German case, two high-reach outlets, WELT and BILD, appear to play an outsized role, in the material reviewed, in amplifying Israel-aligned and UNRWA-critical narratives contributing to their uptake in parliamentary debate and donor-policy discussions. Both stand out due to their common ownership, reach, editorial orientation, and recurring reliance on the same transnational advocacy sources identified in earlier sections. This section relies on qualitative reading of selected coverage and does not claim to provide a comprehensive quantitative analysis of sourcing patterns, reach effects, or causal influence.

4.6.1 WELT

WELT's readership is comparatively large and leading in cross-media reach.[481] Between 2014 and 2025, WELT can be read, in the material reviewed for this chapter, as functioning not merely as a reporting outlet but as a recurring amplification site within a transnational advocacy circuit focused on delegitimizing UNRWA and reframing the Palestinian refugee question. Already during the 2014 Gaza war, this orientation was visible. WELT's coverage of Israeli strikes on UNRWA schools in Beit Hanoun foregrounded allegations that rockets had been found in UNRWA facilities and raised, via Israeli legal experts, questions about UNRWA's possible "indirect complicity" after rockets were reportedly handed back to "local authorities."[482, 483] A month later WELT consolidated these claims, portraying UNRWA as structurally entangled with Hamas through alleged tunnel entrances near schools, staff affiliations, and problematic curricula, while Palestinian civilian harm, refugee-law frameworks, and independent academic research appeared only marginally or in reactive form.[484]

Across the subsequent decade, WELT coverage repeatedly drew on a narrow epistemic community of Israel-aligned watchdog organizations and policy entrepreneurs, most prominently UN Watch, NGO Monitor, IMPACT-SE, and Einat Wilf, who appeared as expert authorities, agenda-setters, and primary sources. For example, from January 2021 onward, this pattern became routine in reporting on UNRWA education. On 13 January 2021 and 5 February 2021, WELT articles relied centrally on allegations by IMPACT-SE concerning antisemitic content and glorification of violence in UNRWA learning materials distributed during COVID-19 school closures.[485, 486]

466 www.facebook.com/WerteInitiative/posts/pfbid02kCkUZWS9dRxZfTfqGiuivu7yjsCEK1f7yXibJeZrsrqWv1Fq58jk6xE5nboYKszal
467 www.facebook.com/events/1833703170067035/?post_id=1858589724245046&view=permalink
468 www.facebook.com/ElioAdler/posts/pfbid0BLALTnoyRcirdfuKrXUBnVMgbx7iygmjK3cYkQb3ArGBBAoe2oBYi67pgKLJ13whl
469 https://dpg-netz.de/wp-content/uploads/DPG-Schreiben/Stellungnahme17.07.20181948Die-Ausstellung.pdf
470 www.israelnetz.com/ausstellung-entlarvt-anti-israelische-propaganda/
471 https://tikvahinstitut.de/team/
472 www.israelkongress.de/history/de/archive/2011/press-english.html#:~:text=Israeli%20security%20and%20subjects%2C%20such,Sucharewicz%20will%20be%20the%20host
473 www.israelnetz.com/kongress-in-frankfurt-gemeinsam-fuer-israel/#:~:text=Kongress%20in%20Frankfurt%3A%20,verlas%20zu%20Beginn%20ein
474 https://elnet-deutschland.de/themen/antisemitismus/elnet-awards-gala-2024/
475 https://elnet-deutschland.de/themen/im-morgengrauen-buch/
476 https://elnet-deutschland.de/themen/politik/familien-deutsch-israelischer-geiseln-im-bundestag/
477 https://elnet-deutschland.de/themen/politik/deutsch-israelisches-strategisches-forum-impulse-kooperation-sicherheit-wiederaufbau/
478 https://naffo.de/briefing-mit-politik-beraterin-melody-sucharewicz-zur-neuen-israelischen-regierung/
479 www.israelnetz.com/die-unrwa-ist-dringend-reformbeduerftig/
480 www.audiatur-online.ch/2018/03/01/die-eu-als-retterin-der-unrwa/
481 https://meedia.de/news/beitrag/19621-lae-2025-reichweitenverluste-fuer-fast-alle-medienmarken.html
482 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article130538472/Nahost-Konflikt-Blutbad-in-Schule-der-Vereinten-Nationen-in-Gaza.html
483 www.welt.de/print/welt_kompakt/print_politik/article130540367/Raketen-in-Schulen-und-Kliniken.html
484 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article131074146/Vereinte-Nationen-Die-dubiose-Rolle-der-UN-im-Gazastreifen.html
485 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus224247714/Schulbuecher-in-Palaestinensergebieten-Homeschooling-Dschihad.html
486 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article225698271/Palaestina-Fluechtlinge-Israelhass-an-Schulen-Bundesregierung-verteidigt-UNRWA.html
487 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article225821259/UNRWA-Palaestinenser-muessen-ohne-Indoktrination-zu-Hass-aufwachsen-duerfen.html

On the same day, 5 February 2021, WELT political editor Frederik Schindler published an opinion column calling for Germany to freeze its funding to UNRWA, explicitly building on IMPACT-SE claims and extending them into a broader critique of UNRWA's mandate and refugee definition. In these instances, advocacy material functioned not as a contested political intervention but as a credible evidentiary input, with UNRWA responses framed defensively and briefly.[487]

This pattern is closely aligned with WELT's institutional affiliation to the Axel Springer media group, whose editorial "Essentials" explicitly commits the company to supporting the State of Israel and opposing antisemitism.[488] Axel Springer holds a portfolio of successful media brands in Europe and the US includes, amongst others, BILD, BUSINESS INSIDER, POLITICO and WELT.[489]

After 7 October 2023, WELT increasingly amplified claims of terror infiltration and institutional compromise under crisis conditions, often with tight temporal coupling to the outputs from Narrative Originators detailed in 4.2, and parallel political debate.[490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503] It is important to note that throughout the decade, on some occasions, individual WELT pieces diverged from this vector, within more balanced, international-law or pragmatic frameworks.[504, 505, 506, 507, 508] The dynamics of this accelerated cycle, including the compression of claim production, media amplification, and parliamentary processing, are traced as a full advocacy cycle in Chapter 5.

Crucially, WELT's opinion pages recurrently moved beyond calls for reform to legitimize arguments advocating the dismantlement or replacement of UNRWA, thereby expanding the range of defensible policy options within mainstream conservative discourse. In this way, WELT contributed to reframing the Palestinian refugee question from a political and legal issue into a donor-administrative problem centered on oversight, conditionality, and institutional redesign.

4.6.2 BILD

Bild is Germany's highest-circulation newspaper and was for decades the best-selling newspaper in Europe.[509, 510] It occupies a different but complementary position within the German media ecosystem, and even within Axel Springer's portfolio. While operating under broadly similar pro-Israel editorial commitments as *WELT,*[511] BILD translates these positions into a populist register that emphasizes moral urgency and personalization. As Germany's highest-circulation newspaper, it plays a central role in mass agenda-setting through emotive, scandal-driven framing. [512, 513, 514] This orientation is reflected in the assessment by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung's media-monitoring site Eurotopics, which describes BILD as both "Germany's highest-circulation newspaper" and "Germany's most often reprimanded newspaper for violations of the German Press Code."[515]

488 www.axelspringer.com/en/inside/the-essentials-what-we-have-adapted-and-why
489 www.axelspringer.com/en/ax-press-release/axel-springer-implements-new-corporate-structure
490 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video248525690/Unterricht-im-Gaza-Streifen-Hamas-Terrorpropaganda-in-Schulbuechern-finanziert-mit-deutscher-Hilfe.html
491 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article248595190/Deutsche-Kritik-am-UNRWA-System-hat-versagt.html
492 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus249583036/Gaza-Streifen-Wenn-ein-Lehrer-der-UN-den-Hamas-Terror-preist.html
493 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article249781978/Vorwuerfe-gegen-UN-Palaestinenserhilfswerk-Die-verhuschte-deutsche-Haltung-zum-UNRWA.html
494 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article249797724/Gaza-Streifen-Die-Helfershelfer-des-Terrors.html
495 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/plus251191118/Deutschlands-Geld-fuer-UNRWA-Die-Bundesregierung-beluegt-sich-selbst-und-uns.html
496 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video251540350/WELT-Gespraech-Melody-Sucharewicz-zu-Verbindungen-zwischen-Hamas-und-UNRWA.html
497 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video251903156/Palaestinenserhilfswerk-Das-UNRWA-hat-die-Kontrolle-verloren.html
498 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article251895550/UNRWA-Israel-appelliert-wegen-deutscher-Gaza-Hilfen-an-Bundestagsabgeordnete.html
499 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/plus255547240/Hilfswerk-mit-Hamas-Verbindung-Deutschland-ist-aktuell-groesster-UNRWA-Geldgeber-Diese-Unterstuetzung-hat-lange-Tradition.html
500 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus255567582/UNRWA-Protokolle-Die-deutsche-Rolle-im-Hintergrund-der-Palaestinenser-Hilfen.html
501 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video256181970/hilfsgueter-fuer-gaza-streifen-ich-verstehe-das-misstrauen-der-israelis-gegenueber-dem-unhcr.html
502 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article690496456af191ff5d2887f2/gaza-unterwandert-von-agenten-der-hamas-neue-vorwuerfe-gegen-palaestinenserhilfswerk-unrwa.html
503 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article255303502/Hilfswerk-UNRWA-Die-Lebensluege-der-Palaestinenser.html?icid=search.product.onsitesearch
504 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article181395394/Nahostkonflikt-Ist-Trumps-Druck-auf-die-Palaestinenser-der-richtige-Schritt.html
505 https://unwatch.org/hillel-neuers-appearance-on-open-to-debate-the-u-n-is-not-the-firefighter-they-are-the-arsonists/
506 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus253825728/UNRWA-Verstrickungen-mit-der-Hamas-Mitglieder-tragen-keine-T-Shirts-mit-Aufschrift.html
507 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article255303502/Hilfswerk-UNRWA-Die-Lebensluege-der-Palaestinenser.html
508 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article255962246/Explosive-Mischung-Wenn-das-Westjordanland-kippt-wird-es-sich-nicht-darauf-beschraenken.html
509 https://germany.mom-gmr.org/en/media/print/outlet/bild-113393/
510 https://web.archive.org/web/20180115184445/http://anp.cl/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/WAN-IFRA_WPT_2016_3.pdf
511 www.axelspringer.com/en/ax-press-release/axel-springer-implements-new-corporate-structure
512 www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13183222.1998.11008684
513 www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/0118/German-tabloid-Bild-takes-down-politicians-with-its-unmatched-megaphone
514 www.spiegel.de/international/sex-smut-and-shock-bild-zeitung-rules-germany-a-412021.html
515 www.eurotopics.net/en/148423/bild

In its UNRWA-related coverage, BILD reproduced allegations originating from Israeli-aligned NGOs and intelligence sources, with corroboration and evidence limits not always made explicit in the article text. An early example of this pattern can be found in a 2 February 2017 article based on UN Watch research, which alleged that UNRWA teachers had praised Hitler.[516] A later and more prominent example is the 21 April 2023 headline "Germany continues to pay for hatred of Jews," which relies heavily on claims advanced by UN Watch and IMPACT-SE concerning antisemitism in UNRWA-associated educational materials. These allegations are framed as established or decisive, while UNRWA responses, existing UN review mechanisms, and academic counter-evidence appear only briefly and in defensive or minimizing roles. [517] Oversight questions are thereby reframed as immediate moral emergencies that directly implicate German taxpayers and invoke Germany's historical responsibility toward Jews.

Following 7 October 2023, the general debate in German media shifted toward more Israeli-aligned narratives,[518] and BILD continued to operate within the populist tabloid register described above.[519, 520] From January to February 2024, BILD prominently amplified Israeli military allegations that Hamas operated tunnel systems and a data-center complex beneath UNRWA facilities in Gaza, and that UNRWA staff members participated directly in the October 7 attacks. These claims were attributed largely to Israeli intelligence or military briefings and were presented with strong visual and narrative emphasis, while UNRWA denials and calls for independent investigation were noted only briefly and without equivalent evidential weight.[521, 522, 523]

Through this mode of reporting, BILD contributes to delegitimizing UN oversight mechanisms. Independent reviews such as the Colonna Report are framed as insufficient or self-serving,[524, 525] while NGO and Israeli intelligence dossiers are treated as more credible sources of truth. This asymmetry sustains the perception that UNRWA is inherently untrustworthy, regardless of investigative outcomes, and that dismantlement or replacement is the only responsible policy response.

4.6.3 Media Amplification and Agenda Formation

Across both outlets, media amplification follows a recurring logic. Advocacy-generated allegations are taken up by WELT and BILD as newsworthy revelations and, through repetition, acquire authority beyond their original evidentiary basis. A narrow and recurring set of Israeli-aligned sources dominates coverage, producing an appearance of consensus through source convergence rather than pluralistic debate. Emotive and moral framing further narrows the range of acceptable responses by situating UNRWA primarily within registers of antisemitism prevention, historical responsibility, and security risk, displacing questions of humanitarian necessity, international law, and refugee rights.

By shaping when UNRWA enters the news cycle and under what framing, media amplification lowers the reputational threshold for political intervention and prepares contested claims for parliamentary uptake. These media amplifiers thus function as a central accelerant within the advocacy ecosystem, linking upstream narrative production to downstream political processing.

4.7 Parliamentary Uptake and Executive Translation

From the late 2010s onward, narratives questioning UNRWA's mandate, neutrality, and institutional viability increasingly migrated from civil-society advocacy into the German parliamentary arena, eventually producing tangible executive consequences and finding reflection in formal government planning documents. It is essential to stress that, similarly to the Bundestag resolution on BDS adopted in 2019,[526] the earliest explicit parliamentary demands for far-reaching measures against UNRWA — including suspension of funding or institutional delegitimation were initially advanced by the AfD, which, as a constant challenger party, had the biggest number of parliamentarian interventions in the forms of parliamentary inquiries

516 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/vereinte-nationen/un-mitarbeiter-verbreiten-judenhass-50078952.bild.html
517 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/antisemitismus-an-palaestinensischen-schulen-deutschland-zahlt-weiter-fuer-juden-83613256.bild.html
518 https://upcommons.upc.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/2b6ad5c4-9f9b-4b26-a44b-366d3dffa052/content
519 www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2%3A1881031/FULLTEXT02.pdf
520 https://jacobin.com/2025/08/germany-media-bias-gaza-israel
521 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/unter-zentrale-von-un-hilfswerk-israel-findet-server-der-hamas-in-gaza-87114094.bild.html
522 www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/kritik-an-guterres-auf-sicherheitskonferenz-kann-man-nicht-ernst-nehmen-87185636.bild.html
523 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/schock-details-ueber-hilfsorganisation-un-mitarbeiter-klaut-leiche-87207564.bild.html
524 www.bild.de/politik/ausland-und-internationales/hamas-terror-hilfswerk-unrwa-bericht-spricht-uno-behoerde-frei-662789b5f-dbf760a599807a3
525 www.bild.de/politik/ausland-und-internationales/palaestinenser-hilfswerk-baerbock-will-millionen-an-judenhasser-zahlen-66290d79a183437ed0fb4ca6
526 www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/textarchiv/2019/kw20-de-bds-642892

(Kleine Anfrage) and written questions (Schriftliche Frage). Pretty soon, elements of this framing were subsequently taken up, by FDP, another challenger party at the time. CDU/CSU used the same tools when it became a challenger party between 2021-2025. Notably, even center-left Green intervened once.[527]

This pattern of frame migration from the political fringe toward the mainstream did not go uncontested: following the 2018 decision by the first Trump administration to cut United States funding to UNRWA, even conservative voices within parliament emphasized the risks of institutional destabilization – which, as explained in 4.1 was in line with Israeli demands from Germany. CSU member Alois Karl, for instance, argued in favour of stabilizing UNRWA's capacity precisely in the wake of the 2018 U.S. defunding,[528, 529] reflecting a competing current of opinion that saw continued engagement as a prerequisite for regional stability. Still, members of the Bundestag from different parties repeatedly raised these issues through inquiries (Kleine Anfragen), plenary speeches, and committee discussions,[530 531, 532, 533, 534] gradually normalizing skepticism toward UNRWA as a legitimate position within mainstream parliamentary discourse. The FDP's subsequent entry into government in 2021 provided one mechanism through which these challenger-party framings could migrate into governing coalition language.

By the late 2010s, references to UNRWA oversight and reform had begun to appear in German government coalition agreements, shifting from supportive reform language (during the U.S. funding freezing which later developed to full defunding) in March 2018,[535] to continued support combined with monitoring in 2021,[536] to explicit conditionality in 2025.[537] This progression suggests that earlier advocacy-driven critiques were progressively reflected in governing consensus documents with increasing intensity. While these references typically stopped short of calling for defunding or dissolution, they framed UNRWA as an object of structural concern and reform, rather than as an unproblematic humanitarian partner. The inclusion of such language in coalition agreements marked an important step in the institutionalization of critical narratives, embedding them in forward-looking executive commitments rather than ad hoc responses to crises.

The 2018 coalition agreement (CDU/CSU–SPD) represents one of the earliest explicit references to UNRWA in German government planning documents. Crucially, however, its framing was explicitly supportive: Germany committed to launching an EU-level initiative for both adequate and sustainable financing and reform of UNRWA, pairing structural critique with a clear commitment to institutional continuity. This stands in contrast to the 2021 formulation, which maintained continued financial support while introducing dedicated monitoring language and no longer included an explicit commitment to expand or secure funding at the EU level, recasting Germany's commitment in purely bilateral and domestic terms, and to the 2025 agreement, which introduced explicit conditionality, tying the scope rather than the existence of future support to comprehensive reforms. The progression across three consecutive coalition agreements, from reform-with-support (2018), to continued support with monitoring (2021), to conditional engagement (2025), traces a gradual but measurable hardening of Germany's institutional posture toward UNRWA, consistent with the incremental norm diffusion outlined in this chapter.

Of these three moments, the 2021 agreement signed in December of that year merits closest attention, as it illustrates one of the first explicit monitoring-oriented institutionalizations of critical language within an SPD-led coalition government (SPD–Greens–FDP), outside immediate crisis response dynamics. The text committed Germany to continued financial support for UNRWA while calling for support of an independent monitoring process to counteract "aberrant developments." This formulation is analytically significant in two respects. First, although UNRWA had been subject to donor evaluations and oversight mechanisms prior to 2021, institutional independent reviews did not identify systemic problems requiring a dedicated donor monitoring regime. In fact, the MOPAN report of June 2019, commissioned by a group of ma-

527 See Appendix 3 detailing all parliamentary inquiries scrutinizing Germany's UNRWA funding, with AfD at the lead. AfD first in March 2018 (19/1126), FDP from November 2018 (19/5941), CDU/CSU from May 2022 (20/1679)
528 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/19/19048.pdf#P.5104
529 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/19/19130.pdf
530 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/19/19029.pdf
531 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/1057428/2025-01-29-Kurzprotokoll.pdf
532 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/1056690/2024-11-06-Kurzprotokoll.pdf
533 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/1056678/2024-10-16-Kurzprotokoll.pdf
534 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/21/21052.pdf
535 www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/847984/3d417686a16696f156611b06a1508ad0/2018-03-14-koalitionsvertrag-data.pdf?download=1
536 www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf pg. 123
537 www.koalitionsvertrag2025.de/sites/www.koalitionsvertrag2025.de/files/koav_2025.pdf pg. 127

jor UNRWA donors that included Germany, found UNRWA to be "competent, resilient and resolute"[538] and the Georg Eckert Institute report on Palestinian Authority textbooks published in June 2021 — books used by UNRWA teachers — returned a mixed verdict: while identifying elements consistent with UNESCO standards and a human rights framework, it also noted antagonistic representations of Israel, maps omitting the Israeli state, and passages presenting Palestinian violence against civilians as legitimate resistance. Crucially, it did not recommend a dedicated donor monitoring regime or identify systemic failures requiring structural intervention.[539] To put it more precisely: just before the coalition agreement demanded a monitoring regime, neither of the most relevant independent assessments had recommended one. The MOPAN report found UNRWA organizationally sound; the GEI report, though mixed in its textbook findings it did not call for a structural donor-level response.

This parliamentary and programmatic environment, itself transformed by the October 7 attacks, formed the backdrop for **a series of executive decisions beginning in 2024**. In January 2024, the federal government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) announced the temporary suspension of German funding to UNRWA following allegations that a small number of UNRWA employees had been involved in the October 7 attacks.[540] The decision was taken prior to the conclusion of any independent investigative process and was publicly justified on precautionary and security grounds. Chronologically, this marked the first interruption of Germany's long-standing funding continuity for UNRWA and represented a decisive translation of parliamentary and public pressure into executive action. In April 2024, after the Colonna Review found no systemic neutrality failures and recommended continued engagement, the same government announced the resumption of funding.[541] However, this decision was framed explicitly as conditional and corrective.[542] As earlier exemplified, and further detailed in example E in chapter 5, parliamentary debates and media commentary following the announcement continued to reference UNRWA as institutionally problematic, indicating that the January suspension had produced a durable shift in the terms of debate even as funding flows were reinstated. A further consolidation of this shift became visible in November 2025, when **Germany abstained on the renewal of UNRWA's mandate** in the United Nations General Assembly.[543] Unlike the January 2024 funding decisions, this abstention did not occur under conditions of immediate crisis. Instead, it served as a longer-term normative signal, departing from Germany's historical practice of routinely supporting UNRWA mandate renewals and signaling sustained ambivalence toward the agency at the multilateral level. This abstention followed a **change of federal government** in May 6 2025, with the transition from the Scholz-led "traffic light" coalition to a government led by Chancellor **Friedrich Merz**, heading a **CDU/CSU–SPD coalition**.[544] Notably, references to UNRWA reform and conditional engagement persisted throughout this transition, appearing in coalition-level policy language and in the public positioning of the new government. The continuity of this framing across electoral cycles underscores that the shift in Germany's UNRWA policy cannot be attributed solely to the composition of a single governing coalition.

Altogether, these developments illustrate how the October 7 attacks and the subsequent allegations against UNRWA staff operated as a catalytic shock within an already contested policy field, significantly lowering the political threshold for executive action. Rather than creating new critiques, this conjuncture enabled the rapid translation of previously articulated parliamentary positions into concrete executive decisions and longer-term policy commitments, providing a chronological bridge to the cross-actor patterns examined in the following section.

4.8 Cross-Actor Patterns

This section identifies cross-actor patterns that emerge from their interaction over time. Rather than treating advocacy outputs, media coverage, and parliamentary interventions as isolated events, it highlights recurring mechanisms through which narratives critical of UNRWA and Palestinian refugee rights are generated, validated, escalated, and institutionalized across civil society, media, and political arenas. These patterns reflect structural convergence — shared interpretive frames, incen-

538 www.mopan.org/content/dam/mopan/en/publications/our-work/evidence/unrwa/unrwa-2019/mopan-unrwa-assessment-report-2019.pdf
539 https://owncloud.gei.de/index.php/s/FwkMw8NZgCAJgPW?dir=/&editing=false&openfile=true
540 www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/2641762-2641762
541 www.politico.eu/article/germany-resume-cooperation-unrwa-relief-agency-palestine-israel/
542 www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/2654388-2654388?isLocal=false&isPreview=false
543 www.spiegel.de/politik/gaza-krieg-deutschland-stimmt-erstmals-einer-mandatsverlaengerung-fuer-das-uno-palaestinenserhilfswerk-nicht-zu-a-752d633f-f7b4-4773-8bf3-b8d45dca45cf
544 www.reuters.com/world/europe/merz-fails-be-elected-chancellor-by-german-parliament-2025-05-06/

tive structures, and institutional proximity — producing aligned outcomes across heterogeneous actors. Five such patterns are particularly salient in the German context.

4.8.1 Narrative Cascades

A central dynamic within the ecosystem is the cascade-like transmission of core narratives from transnational advocacy actors into domestic political discourse. Initial framing typically originates with a small set of upstream organizations that present allegations in categorical and morally charged terms. These framings are subsequently moderated rhetorically but stabilized structurally as they move through domestic translation, media amplification, and parliamentary uptake. At each stage, claims become less traceable to their origin and acquire the appearance of consensus through repetition. By the time they reach parliamentary processing, disagreement is often displaced from the validity of the diagnosis to the appropriate form or timing of political response. This cascading process helps explain how contested claims reshape the center of gravity in policy debate without requiring singular coordination or a single triggering event.

4.8.2 Evidence Repertoires

A second recurring pattern is the standardization of evidence repertoires. Across organizations with different mandates and institutional positions, there is strong convergence in the types of documentation used to substantiate claims against UNRWA. These include selective textbook excerpts, isolated personnel cases, and secondary citations of earlier reports. Through repeated circulation across NGO publications, media reporting, parliamentary questions, and policy briefs, these materials function less as evidence to be assessed than as tokens of credibility. Repetition produces an appearance of corroboration even when the underlying empirical base remains narrow or contested. Counter-evidence is rarely engaged symmetrically, contributing to an evidentiary monoculture that stabilizes dominant narratives over time.

4.8.3 Securitization Cycles

A third pattern concerns cyclical securitization. Moments of political violence or escalation, like the 2014 or 2023 wars, trigger the rapid reframing of previously contested claims as urgent security imperatives. Arguments that earlier centered on reform or oversight are recast as threat claims, linking humanitarian aid to terrorism, radicalization, or antisemitic incitement. During these cycles, evidentiary standards shift from verification to precautionary risk logic. Measures such as funding suspensions or mandate skepticism are advanced before investigative processes conclude, and subsequent corrective steps rarely restore the prior normative baseline. Each cycle leaves behind a residue of normalized suspicion and conditionality, producing cumulative ratchet effects. Indeed, as illustrated by the 2021 coalition language, baseline erosion can precede rather than follow a securitization trigger.

4.8.4 Functional Coordination

The ecosystem exhibits clear patterns of functional coordination, in which different actors specialize in complementary roles: narrative production, domestic translation, media amplification, norm setting, and parliamentary brokerage. This coordination takes both direct and documented forms — joint reports, shared briefings, overlapping personnel — and structural forms emerging from shared frames and aligned funding environments. This is the distinction that runs throughout this report: functional coordination produces convergent outcomes through message alignment, shared timing, and repeated interaction, not through explicit joint structures or shared directives.

This model is also structurally resilient: because alignment emerges from shared frames and funding environments rather than explicit joint structures, it is not dependent on any single actor or coordinating body and continues to function even when individual nodes are disrupted or contested.

Decentralized advocacy producing convergent outcomes through shared frames and funding is the normal operating logic of democratic politics. What distinguishes this case is not the coordination mechanism but the structural asymmetry of the field: the ecosystem documented here operates largely without organized counter-advocacy of comparable resources, access, and narrative infrastructure, which means its cumulative effects on the evidentiary and normative baseline are amplified beyond what the same mechanism would produce in a contested environment.

4.8.5 Institutional Feedback Loops

Finally, once advocacy-generated narratives are partially adopted by state actors, institutional feedback loops consolidate their authority. Parliamentary debate, executive statements, and coalition-level language are recycled by advocacy organizations and media as proof of validation, blurring the boundary between advocacy and official assessment.

When contested framings appear in executive planning instruments or multilateral positioning, they are converted from reactive crisis responses into forward-looking governance commitments. This stabilization reinforces resource flows, access, and legitimacy for aligned actors, while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Over time, narrative advantages compound, making reversal increasingly difficult without deliberate political intervention.

4.9 Summary: Functional Mapping and Analytical Implications

A central finding of the chapter is the gradual displacement of a political and legal question by an administrative and security-oriented framing. The Palestinian refugee issue, rooted in international law and final-status negotiations, is increasingly reconstituted as a problem of donor oversight, institutional design, and risk management. UNRWA becomes the primary object of contestation, while underlying causes of displacement and refugee rights recede from view. This shift is not attributable to any single actor. It is the product of interaction across functions, reinforced through feedback loops once narratives are partially adopted by state institutions. It also reflects the movement of political actors between institutional positions — challenger parties that developed UNRWA-critical framings in opposition carried them into governing coalitions (FDP in 2021, CDU/CSU in 2025), converting advocacy-adjacent parliamentary instruments into coalition-level language from within rather than solely through external pressure. Recognizing this dynamic is what distinguishes the analysis from both conspiratorial accounts, which overstate capabilities, and pluralist accounts, which understate structural alignment.

5 Case Studies

This chapter operationalizes the ecosystem analysis developed in Chapter 4 through three case studies examining how advocacy claims acquire political relevance within the German policy ecosystem.

The cases follow different structural trajectories. The first two trace vertically organized advocacy cascades, moving from upstream claim production into elite access, media uptake, and parliamentary processing. The third proceeds primarily through horizontal diffusion in civic and cultural arenas, where normalization precedes selective political uptake.

The three cases focus on education, securitization, and the right of return. Together, they cover the humanitarian, security, and ideological dimensions of the campaign against UNRWA. Across all cases, trajectories are shaped by political brokerage, understood as the translation of claims between arenas, even in the absence of formal coordination.

5.1 The Education Narrative

This subsection traces how education-related allegations become politically actionable in Germany, regardless of their empirical resolution. The analysis focuses on claim circulation, elite validation, and institutional uptake, not on determining the accuracy of allegations. Examples A–C are selected because they demonstrate three distinct advocacy-cycle dynamics: early insertion without stabilization, elite-certified translation, and crisis-compressed normalization.

5.1.1 Originating Claims

The education narrative constitutes the most persistent and socially resonant line of critique directed at UNRWA. Its core claim is that UNRWA-run schools systematically transmit antisemitic, violent, or terror-glorifying content, thereby radicalizing Palestinian children and perpetuating the conflict. While framed as a concern about educational standards, the narrative consistently implies institutional failure, donor complicity, and long-term security risk.

These claims originate primarily from UN Watch, IMPACT-SE, as well as MFFB in some cases. Despite differences in tone, they converge on three propositions: problematic host-authority textbooks, supplementary materials or staff conduct that reproduce incitement, and donor oversight failures. From the mid-2010s, the critique increasingly links education claims to broader allegations of institutional compromise, especially in Gaza.

Example A captures an early, low-intensity insertion of the education narrative in a cycle lasting from February 2017 to March 2018. In February 2017, UN Watch published "Poisoning Palestinian Children," targeting UNRWA's education system.[545] In April, MFFB released a thematically aligned report on Palestinian Authority schoolbooks.[546] In November 2017, IMPACT-SE published "Reform or Radicalization: PA 2017–18 Curriculum."[547] Although formally focused on PA materials, the report explicitly raised concerns about UNRWA's reliance on host-authority curricula, enabling PA textbook allegations to be recoded as a donor-liability issue for UNRWA. At this stage, the claims circulated primarily within advocacy, parliamentary-adjacent, and sympathetic media environments. They entered German political space through signaling, but did not yet stabilize as a sustained governance concern.

A more consequential originating-claim cycle is captured in Example B, which begins in August 2020. One of the triggers was a leaked document described by the GEI as an unauthorized third-party PDF based on an internal discussion and by others as an interim report produced by the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research as part of an EU-commissioned evaluation of Palestinian

545 https://unwatch.org/poisoning-palestinian-children-unw-report-on-unrwa-incitement-2/
546 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/MFFB_Bildung_-_Palaestinensische_Schulbuecher_2017.pdf
547 www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/PA-Curriculum_2017-Grades-5-11.pdf

Authority textbooks.[548] IMPACT-SE alleged that the document was an interim report that suffered from serious methodological flaws and systematically downplayed or omitted antisemitic stereotypes, praise of jihad and terrorism, and content glorifying violence against Jews and Israelis. The organization further claimed that several positive examples cited in the presentation had been drawn from Arabic-language thank Jerusalem Municipality textbooks (which are under Israeli supervision due to annexation) rather than from the Palestinian curriculum under review. At this stage, the dispute was framed as a technical and methodological controversy. The allegations circulated initially through Israel-aligned media, including Israel Hayom,[549, 550, 551] and through advocacy channels that had previously engaged with education-related critiques. EU officials, including representatives of the European Commission, defended the evaluation process, emphasized that the leaked document was neither final nor representative of the completed study, and further contended that the East Jerusalem textbooks had been included within the study's mandate as a distinct and explicitly labelled category[552] — not the methodological error IMPACT-SE alleged. IMPACT-SE publicly rejected these defenses, maintaining that the interim findings revealed a deeper institutional failure in donor-funded oversight.[553]

The third originating-claims cycle, Example C, follows the external shock of the October 7, 2023 attacks. On 5 November 2023, both UN Watch and IMPACT-SE released reports on the same day that reactivated and intensified the education narrative under crisis conditions. UN Watch published *UNRWA: The Hate Starts Here,*[554] alleging that UNRWA staff members had celebrated or justified the attacks on social media. IMPACT-SE simultaneously released *UNRWA Education: Textbooks and Terror,*[555] arguing that educational materials used in UNRWA-run schools promoted violence, normalized antisemitism, and glorified militant jihad. The report asserted that UNRWA graduates later joined Hamas and highlighted instances of educators publicly celebrating the October 7 attacks. At the level of originating claims, these reports extended existing critiques rather than introducing fundamentally new allegations. Indeed, both reports explicitly positioned themselves as cumulative: UN Watch referenced over 150 staff profiles documented since 2015 and a joint report from March 2023, while IMPACT-SE grounded its findings in years of PA curriculum analysis predating October 7. Individual incidents, such as social-media posts or emergency-era worksheets, were generalized into claims of systemic failure. While the reports acknowledged that UNRWA schools formally teach the PA curriculum, distinctions between PA curricula, Hamas governance in Gaza, and UNRWA's own institutional responsibility were effectively collapsed in the argumentative logic of the reports. This structural elasticity allowed the narrative to remain resilient in the face of corrective measures, external reviews, and internal investigations, as the problem was framed as inherent to UNRWA's educational role rather than contingent on specific violations.

5.1.2 Domestic Translation

In the education narrative, this translation occurred through a combination of parliamentary-adjacent events, elite signaling, and reputational brokerage by organizations with access to decision-makers. Key roles were played by parliamentary-adjacent conveners and access brokers. These actors consistently framed education-related allegations not as technical disputes, but as moral and political questions tied to Germany's historical responsibility and its commitment to combating antisemitism.

In Example A, domestic translation combined notable elite access with only limited institutional follow-through. The education narrative entered German political space through an MFFB report published in April 2017, which carried a foreword by four Members of the Bundestag, Michael Leutert (Die Linke), Volkmar Klein (CDU), Sven Christian Kindler (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), and Johannes Kahrs (SPD).[556] The report did not cite IMPACT-SE directly. While MFFB organized a Bundestag-based event with IMPACT-SE and Volker Beck in November 2017, the focus formally remained on Palestinian Authority education rather than on UNRWA itself.[557] The event functioned as a low-threshold awareness mechanism, signaling that curriculum issues were considered relevant to German policy-

548 www.gei.de/en/research/projects/report-on-palestinian-textbooks-paltex/faq-answers-to-frequently-asked-questions question 22
549 www.israelhayom.com/2020/09/24/report-palestinian-textbooks-remain-openly-anti-semitic-despite-revision-promise/
550 www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/eu-report-into-pa-hate-education-unsatisfactory-uk-mp-ngo-tell-post-638290
551 www.timesofisrael.com/leaked-eu-review-giving-high-marks-to-pa-textbooks-allegedly-studied-wrong-books/
552 https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2021-0105/CDP-2021-0105.pdf
553 https://ejpress.org/eu-palestinian-textbook-study-riddled-with-errors-reviews-wrong-textbooks-and-ditches-uk-preliminary-report/
554 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNW_119___UNRWA_Report_2023_November__2023-11-05__web.pdf
555 www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Education-Textbooks-and-Terror-Nov-2023.pdf
556 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/MFFB_Bildung_-_Palaestinensische_Schulbuecher_2017.pdf

makers, but it did not yet translate the claims into a sustained governance concern. Translation at this stage was exploratory rather than consolidating. This limited consolidation also reflects timing. Example A unfolded in the context of the federal election in September 2017, and the subsequent coalition negotiations, which concluded only in mid-March 2018, a period in which foreign policy agenda-setting capacity was constrained and elite signaling did not readily translate into new governance priorities.

By contrast, Example B marks a decisive translation moment. In early October 2020, a cross-party group of 21 Members of the European Parliament sent a joint letter to EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.[558, 559] The letter cited IMPACT-SE's allegations about the leaked document and reframed the controversy as a question of institutional credibility, donor oversight, and political risk for the European Union. Among the signatories were the German MEPs Niclas Herbst (CDU) and Dietmar Köster (SPD). The letter did not assess the accuracy of the allegations. Instead, it treated the dispute as a governance problem, warning that weaknesses in educational oversight exposed the EU to reputational damage and undermined assurances that EU funding would not indirectly support antisemitism or incitement. The participation of German signatories was consequential because it signaled that the issue had become a legitimate concern within mainstream elite political discourse, lowering the reputational barriers for subsequent references in German media and parliamentary arenas.[560]

In Example C, the translation dynamic differs again. Following the October 7, 2023 attacks, the education narrative entered German discourse with minimal temporal separation between claim production and public uptake. Policy papers circulated by organizations such as NAFFO[561] and MFFB[562] framed education reform, funding conditionality, or institutional replacement as matters of strategic necessity rather than political choice citing both educational and securitized narratives. The combination of crisis conditions, simultaneous report releases by UN Watch and IMPACT-SE, and the prior normalization of education-related critiques of UNRWA reduced the need for intermediary elite signaling. Translation occurred less through discrete political brokerage than through narrative saturation and moral urgency. Existing frames linking UNRWA education to antisemitism and violence were readily available and could be activated without formal certification.

Across all three examples, domestic translation operates as a gatekeeping mechanism. It determines whether education-related allegations remain confined to advocacy networks or acquire standing within German political institutions. Example B illustrates this mechanism most clearly. Elite political validation, rather than evidentiary resolution, marks the point at which claims become policy-relevant and prepares the ground for media amplification and parliamentary processing examined in the following subsections.

5.1.3 Media Uptake

Media amplification was decisive in transforming education claims into a durable political issue. BILD and WELT repeatedly presented IMPACT-SE and UN Watch findings as revelations, often using emotionally charged language involving children, hatred, and terror, as exemplified further in this section. Coverage typically foregrounded allegations while minimizing methodological caveats or the scope of documented incidents. Responses by UNRWA, references to EU-commissioned reviews such as the Georg Eckert Institute study, or distinctions between PA and UNRWA materials were routinely marginalized or framed as evasive. Over time, the repetition of coverage itself became a form of validation, producing an impression of unresolved and escalating crisis.

In November 2017, shortly after the MFFB event highlighting IMPACT-SE's findings, Example A entered public discourse primarily through media as MdB Johannes Kahrs (SPD), then budget policy spokesperson for the SPD parliamentary group, published an op-ed in Jüdische Allgemeine reiterating IMPACT-SE's claims that the new Palestinian curriculum fostered hostility toward Israel and Jews and normalized violence.[563]

Following elite translation through the MEP letter, Example B entered the German mainstream media as a politically pre-validated controversy rather than as an investigative story. On October 10, 2020,

557 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/veranstaltungen/impact-se
558 https://x.com/lukasmandl/status/1313836268158177280
559 https://transatlanticinstitute.org/tfi-press-release/over-20-meps-demand-eu-funding-cut-palestinian-authority-over-incitement-textbooks
560 For media and parliamentary uptake following the MEP letter, see sections 5.1.3 and 5.1.4.
561 https://naffo.de/naffo-position-unrwa-ist-das_mandat-noch-zeitgemaess/
562 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Artikel/Policy_Paper/Policy_Paper_MFFB_Gaza_PA_Region_Nach_dem_7_Oktober.pdf
563 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/wenn-schulbuecher-gewalt-foerdern/

WELT published an article reporting IMPACT-SE's allegations concerning the leaked interim evaluation by the Georg Eckert Institute and explicitly referencing the parliamentary letter to Josep Borrell. [564] The existence of cross-party political concern functioned as a credibility anchor, allowing the claims to be presented as a matter of public relevance rather than advocacy dispute. Subsequent coverage in WELT throughout early 2021 reproduced the same narrative structure while expanding its scope. Articles in January and February focused on COVID-era worksheets distributed in UNRWA schools, again citing IMPACT-SE as the primary source and framing the issue as evidence of systemic failure rather than isolated oversight lapses. UNRWA responses, including acknowledgements of errors and corrective measures, were typically reported in abbreviated form and framed as reactive, reinforcing the impression of an unresolved and recurring problem.[565, 566] Media normalization was further reinforced through editorial intervention. In February 2021, WELT political editor Frederik Schindler published an opinion piece arguing that Germany should freeze its funding to UNRWA until antisemitism and the glorification of terrorism were fully eliminated from educational materials. The op-ed did not introduce new evidence but synthesized previously circulated claims into a policy demand, signaling that the issue had moved from reporting into agenda-setting commentary.[567] This selective pre-framing contributed to a perception of continuity between the contested interim presentation and the finalized evaluation, further stabilizing the narrative. In mid-2021, the education narrative escalated after a leaked version of the Georg Eckert report in BILD.[568] Its prior circulation functioned as implicit validation of the allegations that had already entered parliamentary arenas earlier that year.

In Example C, media uptake followed almost immediately after the release of the initial reports, reflecting a compressed advocacy cycle shaped by the October 7 attacks. Unlike earlier education-related controversies, the claims advanced by UN Watch and IMPACT-SE entered German mainstream coverage with minimal delay and without the gradual validation typically provided by intermediary political signaling. On November 14, 2023, WELT aired a video segment citing IMPACT-SE allegations of "Hamas terror propaganda" in Palestinian schoolbooks and explicitly linking these claims to German funding of UNRWA.[569] The framing treated the allegations as an established problem rather than as contested assertions, situating education-related claims within a broader narrative of donor responsibility and security risk. Subsequent reporting throughout mid and late November reinforced this framing.[570] Media coverage increasingly blurred distinctions between individual staff misconduct, emergency wartime statements, and long-standing critiques of educational content, producing an impression of structural continuity. References to prior investigations by UN Watch and IMPACT-SE were repeatedly invoked as cumulative evidence, reducing the need for renewed substantiation. UNRWA responses, including acknowledgements of investigations and reiterations of zero-tolerance policies, were typically either missing with no mention of asking for a response, or presented as reactive and insufficient to resolve the underlying concern.[571, 572] Notably, media coverage during this phase frequently anticipated or mirrored political debate rather than merely reporting on it. Statements by Bundestag members across party lines were incorporated into reporting as confirmation of the narrative's legitimacy, even where positions diverged on policy conclusions. This mutual reinforcement between media and political arenas further accelerated normalization, allowing education-related allegations to function as a default reference point in discussions of UNRWA's role.

Through this process, Example C became a low-threshold media trigger. Education claims linked to UNRWA no longer required contextualization to justify coverage. The combination of crisis conditions, repeated citation of familiar advocacy organizations, and alignment with pre-existing discursive frames enabled rapid stabilization of the narrative as a matter of public concern, setting the stage for intensified parliamentary intervention and policy consequences addressed in the following subsection.

564 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus217556034/Schwere-Fehler-in-EU-Studie-Wie-antisemitisch-palaestinensische-Schulbuecher-wirklich-sind.html
565 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus224247714/Schulbuecher-in-Palaestinensergebieten-Homeschooling-Dschihad.html
566 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article225698271/Palaestina-Fluechtlinge-Israelhass-an-Schulen-Bundesregierung-verteidigt-UNRWA.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com
567 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article225821259/UNRWA-Palaestinenser-muessen-ohne-Indoktrination-zu-Hass-aufwachsen-duerfen.html
568 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/eu-bericht-palaestinensische-schulbuecher-hetzen-kinder-auf-76662574.bild.html
569 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video248525690/Unterricht-im-Gaza-Streifen-Hamas-Terrorpropaganda-in-Schulbuechern-finanziert-mit-deutscher-Hilfe.html
570 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article248595190/Deutsche-Kritik-am-UNRWA-System-hat-versagt.html
571 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article248595190/Deutsche-Kritik-am-UNRWA-System-hat-versagt.html
572 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video248525690/Unterricht-im-Gaza-Streifen-Hamas-Terrorpropaganda-in-Schulbuechern-finanziert-mit-deutscher-Hilfe.html

5.1.4 Parliamentary Processing

Once stabilized in media discourse, education claims entered parliamentary arenas through inquiries, debates, and motions. AfD actors used them to demand immediate defunding and dissolution of UNRWA. FDP and CDU figures more often framed them as grounds for conditionality, reform benchmarks, and enhanced oversight.

Despite the low intensity of Example A, the education narrative achieved early elite visibility and cross-party parliamentary-adjacent signaling, but it did not translate into sustained parliamentary action. Parliamentary processing occurred primarily through the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which had entered the Bundestag for the first time following the September 2017 elections. In March 2018, Beatrix von Storch (AfD) submitted a Bundestag inquiry asking whether the federal government was aware that UNRWA schools used Palestinian Authority textbooks containing anti-Jewish and anti-Israel content, and how Germany ensured that its funding was not used for such purposes.[573] In support of her inquiry, von Storch cited research comparable to IMPACT-SE's work, produced by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center under the title *Palestinian Authority textbooks: the attitude to Jews, Israel and peace.*[574] State Minister Michael Roth replied that UNRWA is bound by UN neutrality principles, that it uses host-country curricula within an UNRWA framework, and that Germany relies on internal controls and ongoing dialogue with the agency to address problematic content.[575] Two further AfD inquiries followed in May and August 2018, and by August the framing already combined education concerns with hereditary refugee status and right-of-return skepticism.[576]

Once stabilized through sustained media coverage, Example B entered the German parliamentary arena as an established governance problem rather than a contested allegation. The education narrative no longer required detailed evidentiary restatement. Its repeated circulation in mainstream outlets had already framed UNRWA education as a persistent risk requiring political response. Parliamentary uptake unfolded in two stages. In November 2020, the FDP parliamentary group submitted a first minor inquiry to the federal government, citing IMPACT-SE findings on PA textbooks and asking the government to clarify Germany's financial contributions to Palestinian education and whether Berlin intended to pursue curriculum reform through donor conditionality or EU-level coordination.[577] The inquiry explicitly referenced the MEP letter to Josep Borrell as evidence that the issue had acquired cross-party European salience. The government's response acknowledged the IMPACT-SE reports but pushed back directly, noting that scientific studies had not found Palestinian textbooks to systematically incite hatred and violence, and pointing to the pending GEI assessment as the appropriate evidentiary basis for policy decisions.[578] A second and more targeted inquiry followed in February 2021, when FDP members of parliament escalated the framing.[579] This inquiry explicitly cited IMPACT-SE findings on allegedly antisemitic and violence-glorifying content in educational materials distributed by UNRWA during COVID-related home schooling, shifting focus from PA curriculum to UNRWA's institutional responsibility. The government's response defended UNRWA's corrective measures and emphasized existing monitoring mechanisms,[580] but no longer directly challenged the underlying premise that UNRWA education constituted a recurring problem. Taken together, the two inquiries illustrate how the education narrative moved from a contested policy question to an accepted governance concern within the space of a few months. In June, the AfD opposition party filed a motion calling for a complete halt to German funding for UNRWA, accusing the agency's schools of promoting hatred toward Jews and glorifying jihad and terrorist violence. While the motion did not command majority support, it functioned as a radicalized reference point that expanded the range of positions considered legitimate within parliamentary debate.[581] The debate shifted from whether the allegations were accurate to how Germany should manage reputational and political risk associated with continued funding.

The longer-term effects of Example B became visible in late 2021 during coalition negotiations following the federal election. While the coalition agreement between the SPD, Greens, and FDP committed to continued support for UNRWA, it simultaneously emphasized Germany's determination to oppose perceived anti-Israel bias in international organizations.[582] Education-related concerns were thus

573 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/011/1901126.pdf
574 www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2018/07/E_184_18.pdf - later updated in June 2018
575 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/011/1901126.pdf
576 See appendix 3
577 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/243/1924322.pdf
578 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/248/1924868.pdf
579 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/265/1926511.pdf
580 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/268/1926853.pdf
581 www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/846812-846812
582 www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf

absorbed into a broader framework of conditional engagement and heightened scrutiny, ensuring that UNRWA remained a standing item of parliamentary oversight rather than a settled policy issue. Example B illustrates how media-stabilized allegations translated into routine parliamentary instruments and normalized recurring scrutiny of UNRWA education. Notably, this monitoring language emerged in the same year that the Georg Eckert Institute published its independent assessment of Palestinian Authority textbooks, largely finding them compliant with human rights standards — and just two years after the MOPAN report had rated UNRWA as competent and resilient. As detailed in Chapter 4, the 2021 coalition language therefore reflects advocacy-driven baseline erosion rather than a response to new independent evidence of institutional failure.

Following rapid media normalization, Example C entered parliamentary arenas as an acute crisis requiring immediate political response rather than as a contested policy issue. Unlike earlier education-related cycles, parliamentary processing unfolded in parallel with media coverage and was shaped by heightened security sensitivity in the aftermath of October 7. Initial parliamentary interventions came from the far right. AfD members submitted inquiries pressing both state and federal governments on its cooperation with UNRWA.[583, 584, 585] These inquiries framed the agency as structurally compromised by corruption, antisemitism, and alleged ties to Hamas, and called for far-reaching measures, including the suspension of funding, the dissolution of UNRWA, or the transfer of its mandate to UNHCR.[586] While these positions remained marginal, they functioned as agenda-expanding signals that widened the spectrum of acceptable parliamentary debate. More consequential, however, was the uptake of education-related claims within mainstream parties. Statements by Bundestag members from the SPD, CDU, Greens, and FDP were widely cited in media reporting and parliamentary discussions,[587] often converging on the assertion that a return to the pre–October 7 status quo was untenable. While positions diverged on remedies, ranging from reform and stricter oversight to institutional replacement, the shared premise that UNRWA's educational role constituted a serious and persistent problem went largely unchallenged. This shift was reinforced through party-political and civil-society interventions that blurred the boundary between parliamentary debate and policy advocacy. Motions and resolutions within party structures, including at the SPD federal party congress,[588] echoed claims about antisemitic indoctrination and staff complicity. External reinforcement came from Israeli government reporting that portrayed UNRWA education as inseparable from broader security threats, further legitimizing calls for decisive action. Within this environment, executive decision-making accelerated. On January 28, 2024, the German Federal Foreign Office announced a temporary halt to UNRWA funding, coordinated with other donor states, pending the outcome of internal and external investigations.[589] The decision was justified publicly as a precautionary measure and framed as compatible with Germany's commitment to humanitarian principles, while implicitly acknowledging the political untenability of continued funding under conditions of unresolved suspicion. In this final stage, Example C demonstrates how education-related allegations were transformed into immediate policy consequences through a compressed feedback loop between media, parliamentary signaling, and executive action. Parliamentary processing did not primarily involve deliberation over evidence, but rather the management of reputational and security risk under crisis conditions. As a result, UNRWA's educational role was no longer treated as a technical issue of compliance, but as a liability requiring decisive political intervention.

Together, Examples A–C illustrate how education-related allegations move from low-intensity insertion, to elite-certified translation, to crisis-compressed normalization.

5.2 The Securitization of UNRWA

This section examines how UNRWA is reframed as a security-relevant institution and how that reframing travels into German political debate. Securitization here refers to a specific shift in meaning. UNRWA is no longer treated primarily as a humanitarian organization operating under constraints, but as an actor whose structures, personnel, and mandate are portrayed as generating security risk. Once this framing takes hold, humanitarian performance becomes secondary to concerns about infiltration, complicity, and donor liability.

583 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/087/2008739.pdf
584 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/092/2009291.pdf
585 www.landtag.nrw.de/portal/WWW/dokumentenarchiv/Dokument/MMD18-6444.pdf
586 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/087/2008739.pdf
587 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/20/20127.pdf
588 https://parteitag.spd.de/fileadmin/parteitag/Dokumente/Antraege/2023_SPD_oBPT_Antragsbuch.pdf
589 www.bmz.de/en/news/archive-press-releases/joint-statement-federal-foreign-office-bmz-on-unrwa-200132

Two securitization cycles are analyzed. An earlier cycle (Example D, 2014–2018) traces the formation of a securitization template that remains latent for several years and fails to stabilize domestically despite repeated upstream articulation. A post–October 7 cycle (Example E) shows how similar claims escalate, normalize, and ultimately produce institutional effects in Germany. The contrast illustrates that securitization depends not only on the content of claims, but on how they are translated, circulated, and processed within the political system.

5.2.1 Originating Claims

This section traces how UNRWA is framed upstream as a security problem before any domestic translation or institutional processing occurs.

Example D traces the emergence and early circulation of a securitization template between 2014 and 2016, and its subsequent failure to fully consolidate within German political institutions through 2018.[590] The cycle begins following the 2014 Israeli–Gaza war when Israel-aligned NGOs articulate a security framing of UNRWA that is not yet fully securitized in content. In joint NGO Monitor and UN Watch's report "Filling in the Blanks", first released in June 2015, and later updated in March 2016.[591] In the report, UNRWA is repeatedly referenced in connection with claims about aid delivery, security risks, and information flows during and after the 2014 Gaza war. The report describes UNRWA as an organization whose facilities and aid operations were affected by alleged Hamas theft, while also emphasizing UNRWA's central role in implementing a large share of humanitarian projects in Gaza. It attributes to UNRWA a series of allegations concerning staff screening practices, the presence of weapons and tunnels associated with UNRWA facilities, and the handling of weapons discovered on UNRWA premises, drawing in part on findings cited from a UN Board of Inquiry. In addition, the report links UNRWA and its officials to the dissemination of casualty figures and public messaging during the conflict, presenting the agency as a key institutional node in the circulation of humanitarian and conflict-related narratives.[592] Notably, these allegations first appear in a series of reports in WELT, with no mention of the coalition narrative originators, in the summer of 2014, when Israel allegedly attacked an UNRWA school killing 15 Palestinians (see 5.2.3).[593, 594, 595]

Example E traces a post–October 7 securitization cycle in which similar claim types escalate rapidly and harden over time. The defining feature is sequencing. Claims move from staff expression, to institutional exposure, and finally to assertions of structural non-viability. The cycle begins immediately after October 7, 2023. On 5 November 2023, UN Watch publishes *UNRWA: Hate Starts Here,*[596] alleging that UNRWA-affiliated educators celebrated or justified the attacks on social media. The significance of this intervention lies less in evidentiary breadth than in framing. Individual staff expression is treated as a proxy for an organizational environment in which sympathy for Hamas violence is normalized within UNRWA's workforce. This frame is formalized at the state level in late December 2023, when Israel's Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism releases *The Activities of UNRWA during the "Swords of Iron" War.*[597] The report recodes UNRWA through a security register, arguing that its embedment in Hamas-controlled territory creates persistent exposure to armed actors and enables exploitation of its facilities and infrastructure during wartime. At this stage, the focus shifts from expression to operational vulnerability. In January 2024, advocacy actors escalate from allegations of individual misconduct to claims about a collective environment. UN Watch issues a report alleging that a Telegram group associated with UNRWA teachers in Gaza contained celebratory and extremist content following October 7 titled *UNRWA's Terrorgram.* The report presents the Telegram group as evidence of normalized incitement and operational sympathy for terror-aligned violence among UNRWA-linked staff.[598] The securitization frame broadens again on 31 January 2024, when NGO Monitor publishes *The UNRWA Constellation: Partnerships with UN Agencies and Terror-Linked NGOs*.[599] This intervention shifts the focus from staff behavior to institutional connectivity, arguing that UNRWA operates within a wider UN–NGO partnership ecosystem in which links to terror-designated actors may emerge through implementing partners, coordination mechanisms, and local civil society environments. Across

590 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article131074146/Vereinte-Nationen-Die-dubiose-Rolle-der-UN-im-Gazastreifen.html
591 https://ngo-monitor.org/books/filling-in-the-blanks/
592 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014_Gaza_Conflict.pdf
593 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article130538472/Nahost-Konflikt-Blutbad-in-Schule-der-Vereinten-Nationen-in-Gaza.html
594 www.welt.de/print/welt_kompakt/print_politik/article130540367/Raketen-in-Schulen-und-Kliniken.html
595 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article131074146/Vereinte-Nationen-Die-dubiose-Rolle-der-UN-im-Gazastreifen.html
596 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNW_119___UNRWA_Report_2023_November__2023-11-05__web.pdf
597 https://govextra.gov.il/media/hwforn25/the-activities-of-unrwa-swords-of-iron-27122023.pdf
598 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/UN-Watch-UNRWA-Terrorgram-.pdf
599 https://ngo-monitor.org/reports/unrwa-constellation-partnerships-with-un-agencies-and-terror-linked-ngos/

spring 2024, Israeli state reporting advances the argument from compromise to incompatibility through circulation of an *UNRWA Special Report*.[600] Here, UNRWA's mandate, scale, and governance model are framed as structurally embedded in social and administrative systems allegedly susceptible to Hamas influence. Reform is increasingly presented as insufficient. In June 2024, NGO Monitor extends upstream production into a donor-risk register with *German Funding to Problematic UN Frameworks/ Agencies*.[601] While not limited to UNRWA, the report generalizes the securitization frame by arguing that certain UN agencies in Gaza and the West Bank partner with, or employ, terror-linked actors, thereby translating securitization into a systemic due-diligence problem for donor states. Consolidation follows in January 2025 with UN Watch's *The Unholy Alliance: UNRWA, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad.*[602] Unlike earlier interventions, the report provides temporal depth, compiling examples across multiple years and arenas to argue that patterns of accommodation, coercion, and contact with armed factions produce recurring, non-episodic neutrality failures. The most consequential escalation occurs in April 2025, when the state of Israel publishes *The Connection Between UNRWA and Hamas in Gaza*[603] on an official government portal. Presented as a declassified intelligence-style synthesis, the document advances quantitative claims about staff affiliations and institutional overlap, framing UNRWA not as a neutral actor under duress but as part of the security problem itself. Finally, upstream production is operationalized for sustained reuse in November 2025, when UN Watch launches an interactive "UNRWA Terror Network" database.[604] This tool transforms accumulated allegations into an updateable infrastructure designed for repeated media and policy intervention.

In summary, Example E shows how securitization hardens through accumulation. Early post–October 7 claims centered on staff expression evolve into network and partnership arguments, and culminate in state-issued intelligence-style summaries and advocacy databases that treat UNRWA as structurally compromised rather than reformable.

These originating claims establish the evidentiary and rhetorical foundation for the domestic translation analyzed in the next subsection.

5.2.2 Domestic Translation

This subsection examines how securitizing claims produced upstream are re-coded into German political language and made actionable within elite policy environments.

In Example D, domestic translation in Germany remains limited in scope. Israel and Israel-aligned civil-society actors transmitted securitizing claims about UNRWA largely without rearticulating them into German legal or administrative categories — relying instead on direct assertion rather than engagement with frameworks such as German budget law, donor compliance obligations, or alliance risk assessment. Translation efforts did not engage mainstream policy channels. As a result, securitization remained confined to ideologically aligned audiences. Even when terror-tie allegations reached parliamentary awareness, they lacked the bureaucratic grammar required for broader institutional authority. Claims about terror ties and institutional misconduct were not embedded in elite administrative processes, nor were they adopted as actionable policy language by relevant ministries or budget authorities. The distinction, then, is not between presence and absence of translation, but between shallow and deep institutionalization. The securitization frame developed after 2014 persisted as a reference repertoire — available, occasionally invoked, and politically legible — but remained latent rather than operational. Translation occurred, but it failed to scale beyond ideologically aligned audiences and isolated political moments into sustained governance routines.

In Example E, domestic translation unfolds through a denser and more effective brokerage environment than in earlier cycles. Israeli state claims and transnational advocacy reports enter Germany already coded as alliance-relevant and credible, but they are actively re-articulated by local brokers into forms legible to German decision-makers. A first translation layer appears rather quickly, on 22 October 2023, when DIG hosts Einat Wilf in an elite-facing forum. The event links October 7 violence to mandate politics and the "right of return". The function at this stage is interpretive, establishing a framework through which subsequent claims can be read.[605] By December 2023, translation becomes more formalized and policy-facing. On 14 December 2023, NAFFO circulates a position paper under the title "UNRWA – Is the Mandate up-to-Date?"[606] not

600 https://digitaler.cld.bz/ministry-of-diaspora-unrwa
601 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/German-Funding-to-Problematic-UN-Frameworks-Agencies.pdf
602 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/UNW-129-%E2%80%94-The-Unholy-Alliance-%E2%80%94-2025-01-09-%E2%80%94-Web-%E2%80%94-Singles.pdf
603 https://govextra.gov.il/media/d21mw2f3/the-connection-between-unrwa-and-hamas-280425.pdf
604 https://unwatch.org/unrwa-terror-network/
605 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/diskussion-mit-dr-einat-wilf-zur-aktuellen-situation-in-israel/
606 https://naffo.de/naffo-position-unrwa-ist-das_mandat-noch-zeitgemaess/

merely as a moral or political problem, but as a donor-risk issue and explicitly raises the need to consider alternative institutional arrangements. In January 2024, domestic advocacy translation was quick to respond through smaller actors including above cited policy papers circulated by organizations such as NAFFO[607] and MFFB[608] which framed reform, funding conditionality, or institutional replacement as matters of strategic necessity rather than political choice citing both educational and securitized narratives. This translation was coupled with German media and political debates increasingly framing UN Watch and NGO Monitor materials as indicators of donor risk. Nine countries, at the time, including Germany, temporarily suspended their funding to UNRWA, after the release of UN Watch's *UNRWA's Terrorgram* and before NGO Monitor's *The UNRWA Constellation* functioned as translation tools that allow German and EU[609] brokers to discuss UNRWA in the language of compliance, oversight, and systemic risk rather than ideology or intent. This number quickly rose to 18 countries.[610] Following the release of the Colonna report in April 2024 and the reinstatement of funding to UNRWA, the network actors publicly objected to both.[611, 612, 613] In May 2024, ambassador Ron Prosor used his greeting at Israeltag, organized by I Like Israel, to sharply attack UNRWA, accusing it of long-standing collaboration with Hamas and declaring it part of the problem rather than the solution.[614] From mid-2024 onward, translation is accelerated and stabilized through elite access mechanisms. ELNET organizes delegations, closed briefings, and meetings, including sessions under its Forum of Strategic Dialogue, together with the Abraham Accords Institute led by CDU member, and chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Armin Laschet where reforming UNRWA and potentially replacing it with another UN agency also emerged as a key topic.[615] Simultaneously, NGO Monitor releases a joint policy recommendation brief with DIG and IMPACT-SE titled "A Strategic Approach to Deradicalization of Palestinian Society A 12-point strategic plan for recalibrating German development and humanitarian aid" where they make several pointed recommendations regarding Germany's funding relationship with UNRWA. Next to usual recommendation transparency and review of educational materials, the paper questions the structural mandate of UNRWA, arguing that its broad and inherited definition of "Palestinian refugee".[616] These formats do not introduce new claims. Instead, they package already circulating securitized interpretations into policy-ready menus, including reform conditionality, alternative funding channels, and scenarios for institutional replacement. According to NGO Monitor documents, this brief was presented in the Bundestag.[617]

Across 2024 and 2025, these dynamics consolidate primarily through elite and policy-facing interventions on a "post-UNRWA" future, with civil society remaining a secondary and uneven transmission channel. NAFFO and Einat Wilf advanced more detailed proposals concerning the transfer of UNRWA functions to Bundestag members[618], while ELNET briefings, sometimes with UN Watch increasingly emphasize post-UNRWA scenarios rather than reform alone.[619, 620, 621] DIG contributes to this consolidation by reframing Israeli intelligence-style reports as civil-society authority claims, extending their legitimacy beyond state-to-state channels.[622] Securitized allegations were further stabilized through the antisemitism prevention field. The Amadeu Antonio Stiftung's 2024 *Civil Society Situation Report on Antisemitism #14*[623] repeatedly cited UN Watch and IMPACT-SE and framed United Nations institutions as contributors to contemporary antisemitism. This intervention did not resolve empirical disputes but reclassified contested claims as matters of moral urgency and democratic self-defence, reinforcing the treatment of UNRWA not as a neutral humanitarian actor but as a standing object of moral and security concern. Public-facing civil-society interventions existed simultaneously. Two illustrative cases show how securitized claims occasionally travel beyond

607 https://naffo.de/naffo-position-unrwa-ist-das_mandat-noch-zeitgemaess/
608 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Artikel/Policy_Paper/Policy_Paper_MFFB_Gaza_PA_Region_Nach_dem_7_Oktober.pdf
609 www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/lieber-in-camera-und-ohne-kameras/
610 www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/states-must-reinstate-and-strengthen-support-unrwa-amid-unfolding-genocide
611 https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UNRWAs-Rigged-Independent-Review.pdf
612 https://werteinitiative.de/pressemitteilung-unrwa-terrorunterstuetzung/
613 www.zentralratderjuden.de/presseerklaerungen/statement-dr-schuster-zur-deutschen-unrwa-finanzierung/
614 https://i-like-israel.de/grusswort-von-s-e-ron-prosor-botschafter-des-staates-israel-in-deutschland-zum-israeltag-2024/
615 https://elnetwork.eu/strategic-dialogues/elnet-4-th-europe-middle-east-forum-the-day-after-gathers-in-berlin/
616 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Germany-Policy-Paper.pdf?
617 https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/NGO-Monitor-Annual-Report-24-Digital.pdf
618 https://naffo.de/unrwa_wilf/
619 https://elnetwork.eu/country/israel/elnet-ambassadors-breakfast-hn-unwatch/
620 www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz5ag2AyGMs
621 https://elnet-deutschland.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/UNRWA-%E2%80%93-Probleme-und-Perspektiven-1.pdf
622 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/pressemitteilung/unrwa-ist-nicht-reformierbar-deutschland-darf-diese-strukturen-nicht-weiter-finanzieren/
623 www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/en/publications/civil-society-situation-report-on-antisemitism-14/

elite arenas into distinct social fields. On 30 July 2024, Thomas von der Osten-Sacken spoke in the lecture series *The Self-Righteous Among Nations – Reactions to October 7,* organized by the Initiative Interdisciplinary Research on Antisemitism under the patronage of Felix Klein. This event addressed an academic and politically engaged audience and according to the event's description examined the unique special status of Palestinian refugees — including UNRWA's role as a dedicated agency and the extension of refugee status to descendants — and its consequences, among them the perpetual growth of refugee numbers, the displacement of integration-oriented frameworks by a ‚right to homeland', and the resulting points of connection to völkisch and reactionary ideologies.[624, 625] By contrast, the 18 December 2024 event at Bajszel, organized by Masiyot e.V. and featuring Alex Feuerherdt, was held in a community venue setting and adopted a more directly adversarial register. According to its description, the United Nations was portrayed as systematically hostile to Israel, while UNRWA was cast as ideologically and personally entangled with Hamas rather than functioning as a humanitarian organization.[626] A notable feature of this phase is that domestic translation largely bypasses the usual grassroots advocacy layer. Unlike earlier UNRWA debates, post–October 7 securitization enters German discourse primarily through elite and administrative channels. Civil-society brokerage is present, but it operates upward, targeting policymakers rather than mobilizing public constituencies. Example E demonstrates that domestic translation succeeds not through evidentiary resolution, but through the effective re-coding of securitized claims into German governance language. Through elite brokerage, closed briefings, position papers, and donor-risk framing, UNRWA is transformed from a humanitarian partner into a security-conditioned object of policy concern, setting the stage for subsequent media normalization and parliamentary processing.

5.2.3 Media Uptake

This subsection examines how domestically translated securitizing claims are amplified, normalized, and stabilized through German media, transforming elite security interpretations into widely shared reference points through selective repetition and hierarchization rather than through the production of new allegations.

In Example D, media uptake remains episodic and event-bound. During the summer of 2014, WELT reported on allegations concerning UNRWA facilities in the context of Israeli military operations, including reporting on an alleged Israeli strike on a UNRWA school resulting in civilian casualties.[627, 628, 629] However, these reports did not initiate sustained agenda-setting coverage. They remained tied to wartime events and did not generate follow-on investigative cycles, cross-media repetition, or institutional referencing. As a result, securitizing claims circulate as movement knowledge rather than as broadly validated security concerns. Without repetition, cross-referencing, or authoritative confirmation, the narrative does not stabilize. Media non-resonance is a decisive factor in the failure of Example D to consolidate fully.

In Example E, media uptake is immediate, sustained, and cumulative. Alongside Israeli allegations and the German government's precautionary funding pause, securitized interpretations of UNRWA enter agenda-setting media outlets. Coverage in WELT and BILD foregrounds claims that UNRWA employees were involved in or sympathetic to the October 7 attacks, framing the issue in terms of German taxpayer exposure, Hamas infiltration, and donor liability.[630, 631, 632, 633] At this stage, reporting combines scandal logic with security framing. Allegations are presented as urgent and morally charged, while references to UN investigations and UNRWA responses are included but positioned defensively. The effect is asymmetrical. Claims of risk receive headline status, while uncertainty is treated as provisional rather than exculpatory. During February and March 2024, media uptake continues event-driven reporting next to interpretive consolidation.[634, 635] A second peak occurs in April 2024, when the German government announces the resumption of cooperation with UNRWA following the Colonna review. Media coverage frames the decision less as procedural

624 www.uni-trier.de/universitaet/fachbereiche-faecher/fachbereich-iii/faecher/geschichte/studium-und-lehre/initiative-interdisziplinaere-antisemitismusforschung/projekte-1/vortragsreihen/online-vortragsreihe-die-selbstgerechten-unter-den-voelkern
625 www.youtube.com/live/h0WMzu_Qn4k
626 https://bajszel.de/18-12-24-alex-feuerherdt-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel/
627 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article130538472/Nahost-Konflikt-Blutbad-in-Schule-der-Vereinten-Nationen-in-Gaza.html
628 www.welt.de/print/welt_kompakt/print_politik/article130540367/Raketen-in-Schulen-und-Kliniken.html
629 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article131074146/Vereinte-Nationen-Die-dubiose-Rolle-der-UN-im-Gazastreifen.html
630 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus249583036/Gaza-Streifen-Wenn-ein-Lehrer-der-UN-den-Hamas-Terror-preist.html
631 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/unter-zentrale-von-un-hilfswerk-israel-findet-server-der-hamas-in-gaza-87114094.bild.html
632 www.dw.com/en/israel-hamas-war-germany-joins-states-pausing-unrwa-funding/live-68104834#:~:text=Israel%2DHamas%20war:%20Germany%20joins,DW%20%E2%80%93%2001/28/2024
633 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article249797724/Gaza-Streifen-Die-Helfershelfer-des-Terrors.html
634 www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/kritik-an-guterres-auf-sicherheitskonferenz-kann-man-nicht-ernst-nehmen-87185636.bild.html
635 www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/schock-details-ueber-hilfsorganisation-un-mitarbeiter-klaut-leiche-87207564.bild.html

compliance and more as both a political burden and risk-taking.[636, 637] Media appearances with critical reactions by FDP parliamentarians[638] and by Josef Schuster, [639] President of ZdJ, receive prominent placement, while the Colonna review itself is ignored or often summarized selectively, with emphasis on remaining doubts rather than on corrective findings. This reinforces a logic of residual suspicion, in which reform is acknowledged but never sufficient. Media uptake intensifies again in June 2024, following reports that Israel sent an urgent letter to members of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee warning that German funds could indirectly benefit terrorist organizations through UNRWA. Coverage emphasizes alliance sensitivity and diplomatic urgency, amplified by FDP members, Frank Müller-Rosentritt and Christoph Hoffmann, some citing NGO Monitor's recommendations to redirect funding through alternative channels. [640, 641] Here UNRWA is framed not only as a problematic aid provider, but as a liability within Germany's relationship with Israel. Rather than dissipating, this framing persists through late 2024 and into 2025, acquiring a routinized quality. UNRWA is increasingly referenced through shorthand descriptors such as "scandalous aid organization," "terrorist aid organization," or "arsonist" by both commentators or Israeli officials.[642, 643, 644] The publication of UN Watch's *The Unholy Alliance* in January 2025[645] does not trigger renewed coverage specifically mentioning the report, but similar messages continue being echoed sporadically, mainly on WELT with appearances from MFFB and ambassador Ron Prosor.[646, 647, 648, 649] By mid and late 2025, media uptake becomes partially infrastructural. Interactive tools and databases, such as UN Watch's "UNRWA Terror Network," are treated on WELT as authoritative reference points.[650] At this stage, securitization no longer depends on novelty or breaking revelations. It is sustained through repetition, aggregation, and the normalization of doubt. Across this period, three dynamics define media uptake in Example E. First, securitization is temporalized, with each new report positioned as part of a long-standing trajectory of failure. Second, the burden of proof shifts decisively. UNRWA is expected to demonstrate the absence of risk, while allegations retain presumptive credibility. Third, humanitarian necessity is treated as a separate register from institutional legitimacy. Acknowledging civilian suffering no longer functions as an argument for UNRWA. Instead, it is redirected toward calls for institutional replacement — typically invoking UNHCR as an alternative[651, 652, 653] — without accounting for the fundamental differences in mandate, historical context, and operational capacity between the two agencies.[654] Humanitarian necessity is thus absorbed into coverage without disturbing the security frame.

By the time Germany approaches abstention-era positioning at the United Nations in November 2025, media uptake has stabilized UNRWA as a public security problem within German discourse. This environment does not itself determine parliamentary outcomes, but it narrows the range of defensible political positions and amplifies the reputational costs of continued engagement, preparing the ground for the institutional processing analyzed in the next subsection.

636 www.bild.de/politik/ausland-und-internationales/palaestinenser-hilfswerk-baerbock-will-millionen-an-judenhasser-zahlen-66290d79a183437ed0fb4ca6

637 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/plus251191118/Deutschlands-Geld-fuer-UNRWA-Die-Bundesregierung-beluegt-sich-selbst-und-uns.html

638 www.bild.de/politik/ausland-und-internationales/palaestinenser-hilfswerk-baerbock-will-millionen-an-judenhasser-zahlen-66290d79a183437ed0fb4ca6

639 www.deutschlandfunk.de/zentralrat-der-juden-fordert-ende-der-deutschen-unterstuetzung-fuer-palaestinenserhilfswerk-der-uno-100.html

640 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video251903156/Palaestinenser-hilfswerk-Das-UNRWA-hat-die-Kontrolle-verloren.html

641 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article251895550/UNRWA-Israel-appelliert-wegen-deutscher-Gaza-Hilfen-an-Bundestagsabgeordnete.html

642 www.bild.de/politik/meinung-kommentare-kolumnen/kommentar-zur-unrwa-finanzierung-ampel-macht-uns-zu-terror-sponsoren-66b218182af40b41bb48fc94#:~:text=Es%20ist%20amtlich%3A%20Die%20Bundesregierung,wurde%20auch%20von%20Deutschland%20gezahlt

643 www.bild.de/politik/ausland-und-internationales/boss-von-palaestina-hilfswerk-er-gab-unser-steuergeld-den-hamas-terroristen-66b2155ebbc68865e502d501#:~:text=F%C3%BCr%20Israels%20Botschafter%20in%20Berlin%2C,dichtmachen%E2%80%9C%2C%20sagt%20der%20Diplomat%20BILD

644 www.nzz.ch/meinung/das-leben-waehlen-nicht-den-tod-warum-eine-aufloesung-der-unrwa-der-schluessel-zum-frieden-im-nahen-osten-ist-ld.1842874

645 https://unwatch.org/the-unholy-alliance-unrwa-hamas-and-islamic-jihad/

646 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article255303502/Hilfswerk-UNRWA-Die-Lebensluege-der-Palaestinenser.html

647 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/plus255547240/Hilfswerk-mit-Hamas-Verbindung-Deutschland-ist-aktuell-groesster-UNRWA-Geldgeber-Diese-Unterstuetzung-hat-lange-Tradition.html

648 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/plus255567582/UNRWA-Protokolle-Die-deutsche-Rolle-im-Hintergrund-der-Palaestinenser-Hilfen.html

649 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article255962246/Explosive-Mischung-Wenn-das-Westjordanland-kippt-wird-es-sich-nicht-darauf-beschraenken.html

650 www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article690496456af191ff5d2887f2/gaza-unterwandert-von-agenten-der-hamas-neue-vorwuerfe-gegen-palaestinenserhilfswerk-unrwa.html

651 www.bild.de/politik/meinung-kommentare-kolumnen/kommentar-zur-unrwa-finanzierung-ampel-macht-uns-zu-terror-sponsoren-66b218182af40b41bb48fc94

652 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article249797724/Gaza-Streifen-Die-Helfershelfer-des-Terrors.html

653 www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/plus251191118/Deutschlands-Geld-fuer-UNRWA-Die-Bundesregierung-beluegt-sich-selbst-und-uns.html

654 The explanation on differences in roles and the shift from aid to resettlement is eloquently detailed here https://www.ejiltalk.org/on-unrwa-palestine-refugees-and-international-law/ and by UNRWA https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-claims-vs-facts-may-2024-23may24/

5.2.4 Parliamentary Processing

This subsection traces how securitized interpretations of UNRWA are converted into institutional action within German executive and parliamentary arenas, translating stabilized security narratives into procedures, conditions, and positional shifts even in the absence of consensus or definitive proof.

In Example D, securitizing claims enter the Bundestag but fail to consolidate into a durable security posture. This may well be since domestic challengers using securitization frames were institutionally absent or marginal in this period. AfD and FDP had not entered parliament until September 2017, and the subsequent coalition formation took 171 days — the longest in Germany's history — meaning no new governing coalition was in place to respond to parliamentary pressure until March 2018, at which point CDU/CSU, as the senior governing party alongside SPD, had no institutional incentive to adopt the securitizing framing being advanced from the opposition benches. The first parliamentary interventions occur in March 2018 through two minor inquiries submitted by the AfD, which question whether UNRWA employees have links to Hamas and whether German funds could indirectly benefit terrorist organizations.[655, 656] These inquiries carry little agenda-setting force. A more consequential step follows in September 2018, when the Bundestag's Scientific Services produce a briefing in response to a parliamentary request (which, in line with standard practice, remains institutionally anonymous). Unlike partisan inquiries, this document translates terror-tie allegations into technical parliamentary knowledge, noting accusations that UNRWA's humanitarian role may indirectly relieve governing actors such as Hamas of responsibility and that aid delivery dynamics warrant closer scrutiny.657 The briefing is cautious and non-conclusive, but it marks a threshold. Security concerns enter the Bundestag's internal analytical infrastructure rather than remaining confined to advocacy discourse. Civil-society brokerage intersects briefly with parliamentary access in late September 2018, when NAFFO facilitates a Bundestag roundtable with Dr. Simon Waldman and conducts follow-up meetings with MPs and Foreign Office officials. While much of NAFFO's critique extends beyond securitization, its intervention reiterates claims regarding staff links to Hamas and donor exposure to terror-financing risk.[658] The most significant centrist uptake occurs in November 2018, when FDP MPs led by Marcus Faber submit an inquiry on UNRWA reform implementation.[659] Although framed in terms of governance and financial oversight rather than security, the inquiry nonetheless casts UNRWA as a source of political and operational risk. Continued German funding is implicitly tied to stricter monitoring and auditing. The 2018 coalition agreement (CDU/CSU–SPD), concluded earlier that year, reflects the same dynamic at the governing-document level. UNRWA appeared in a German coalition agreement for the first time, but in a framing that paired structural reform with a commitment to adequate and sustainable financing — a supportive posture rather than a securitizing one.[660] The governing coalition thus acknowledged UNRWA as a subject of policy attention while explicitly declining to adopt the security register being advanced by advocacy actors and AfD inquiries. Parliamentary processing therefore remains partial. UNRWA is scrutinized, but not securitized. This, as mentioned before, could also well be the case due to Israeli demands to increase UNRWA funding, contrary to the network's goals. In any case, the securitization frame circulated, was occasionally referenced in parliamentary arenas, and left traces in the Bundestag's analytical infrastructure — but it did not harden into durable institutional language. That hardening would only begin with the shift in coalition agreement language in 2021, when monitoring replaced financing as the dominant framing,[661] and accelerate decisively after October 7, 2023.

In Example E, parliamentary processing unfolds in distinct phases that cumulatively produce a durable institutional shift. The first material institutionalization occurs on 27 January 2024, when the Federal Government suspends new UNRWA funding commitments following Israeli allegations that UNRWA employees were involved in the October 7 attacks. This executive act translates precautionary framing into practice. It is subsequently anchored in parliamentary record on 2 February 2024, when Parliamentary State Secretary Niels Annen (BMZ), replying to a written question by CSU's Wolfgang Stefinger, confirms the pause and details multilayered safeguards, including staff vetting, procurement controls, and reliance on UN investigative processes. Through this exchange, securitization is recognized as a legitimate basis for interrupting cooperation,

655 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/011/1901126.pdf
656 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/020/1902015.pdf
657 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/577264/01e2d8aa818c1d8d4c06b72cd2cf33ab/wd-2-131-18-pd-data.pdf
658 https://naffo.de/naffo-thema-im-herbst-2018-die-unrwa-das-un-hilfswerk-fuer-palaestinafluechtlinge/
659 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/059/1905941.pdf
660 www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/847984/3d417686a16696f156611b06a1508ad0/2018-03-14-koalitionsvertrag-data.pdf?download=1
661 www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf

even in the absence of final findings.[662] A second phase follows in April 2024, when the Federal Government resumes cooperation with UNRWA after the Colonna review.[663] The resumption is framed as conditional and tied to the swift implementation of reforms and enhanced internal and external monitoring. Rather than closing the issue, this decision reopens parliamentary contestation. Coalition FDP MdBs Rainer Semet, Michael Link, and Christoph Meyer publicly criticize the move as premature, arguing that unresolved security concerns persist.[664] This position sat in tension with the Colonna review's findings, which had concluded that UNRWA's internal procedures were reasonable and stronger than average, and which formed the explicit basis for the resumption decision. These reactions ensure that securitization remains politically unresolved despite executive reassurance. Parliamentary processing deepens on 5 June 2024, when UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini briefs the Bundestag Human Rights Committee. Questioning centers on staff dismissals, investigative procedures, neutrality safeguards, and reform timelines. The hearing demonstrates that resumed funding does not restore UNRWA's prior status. Instead, the agency is subjected to heightened, security-inflected scrutiny.[665] Days later, reports that Israel sent an urgent letter to members of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee warning of indirect terrorist benefit through UNRWA funding further intensify committee-level pressure and explicitly contest the executive's resumption decision.[666] From late 2024 onward, securitization becomes proceduralized through repetitive parliamentary instruments. On 11 December 2024, the CDU/CSU parliamentary group submits a minor inquiry focused on UNRWA's reform capacity and prevention of influence by Hamas and other terrorist organizations.[667] In January 2025, a further CDU/CSU inquiry follows,[668] and in February 2025, FDP MPs submit an inquiry explicitly invoking §8a of the Federal Budget Code and Germany's counterterrorism obligations.[669] Government replies confirm dismissals of implicated UNRWA staff, reaffirm conditional engagement, and emphasize ongoing reliance on UN oversight mechanisms. At this stage, securitization is no longer crisis-driven. It is embedded as standing parliamentary oversight. A limited form of mainstream boundary-setting is also visible in public MP responses. On 21 February, two days before the upcoming federal elections, Green MP Robin Wagener treated the UNRWA allegations as politically serious and reform-relevant, while stating that he saw no viable short-term alternative to UNRWA for necessary humanitarian assistance.[670] This illustrates how securitized suspicion can be absorbed while the "replacement" conclusion is explicitly refused. This routinization found formal expression in the 2025 coalition agreement between CDU/CSU and SPD, which introduced explicit conditionality language on UNRWA. Unlike the January 2024 funding suspension, which was framed as precautionary and temporary, the coalition agreement converts conditionality into a standing governance commitment — embedding securitized framing in executive doctrine and ensuring its continuity regardless of how the immediate conflict context evolves. Together with the 2018 and 2021 agreements, this completes a measurable progression from reform-with-support, to monitoring-alongside-support, to conditional engagement as governing doctrine.

The cumulative downstream effect appears in Germany's behavior at the United Nations. In late 2025, Germany abstained, departing from its prior automatic affirmative votes, [671] while the General Assembly subsequently renewed the mandate with broad international backing. This shift was publicly linked by donor countries to unresolved concerns about oversight, reform, and security risk within UNRWA's operations. The abstention is politically contested domestically. Resistance comes from the opposition parties Grüne's Luise Amtsberg and Die Linke's Lea Reisner parliamentarians in charge of foreign affairs in their parties,[672, 673] as well as church-based aid organizations.[674] This move was also in line with Israeli policies, including the anti-UNRWA bills and the demolition of its facilities in East Jerusalem.

This abstention closes Example E's securitization cycle at the level of UNRWA. Upstream allegations,

662 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/102/2010233.pdf
663 www.bmz.de/en/news/archive-press-releases/joint-statement-foreign-office-bmz-on-unrwa-210014
664 www.bild.de/politik/ausland-und-internationales/palaestinenser-hilfswerk-baerbock-will-millionen-an-judenhasser-zahlen-66290d79a183437ed0fb4ca6?utm_source=chatgpt.com
665 www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/kurzmeldungen-1006500
666 www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article251895550/UNRWA-Israel-appelliert-wegen-deutscher-Gaza-Hilfen-an-Bundestagsabgeordnete.html
667 www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/kurzmeldungen-1034364
668 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/145/2014534.pdf
669 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/148/2014865.pdf?
670 www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/profile/robin-wagener/fragen-antworten/wie-stellen-sie-sich-die-zukunft-de-unrwa-vor-welche-massnahmen-sehen-sie-als-geeignet-den-einfluss-von
671 www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2025-11-20/ty-article/germany-withholds-support-for-unrwa-extension-for-first-time/0000019a-a27a-d7d6-ab9f-fffa62f00000
672 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/031/2103136.pdf
673 www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/palaestinenserhilfswerk-bundesregierung-bleibt-bei-vagen-vorwuerfen-gegen-unrwa-a-33f82ee7-3659-4bb6-865f-41ccdd9c0e90
674 www.misereor.de/en/presse/press-releases/un-general-assembly-misereor-calls-for-german-support-for-unrwa

once translated, normalized, and routinized through parliamentary processing, produce a **symbolic but consequential multilateral rupture**. UNRWA is not defunded or dismantled, but it is **institutionally downgraded**, transformed from a presumed humanitarian partner into a permanently contested object of security-conditioned governance. This closure, however, does not mark the exhaustion of the securitization dynamic itself. On 14 January 2026, **Rainer Kraft**, an **AfD** member, submitted a parliamentary inquiry extending a securitized framing beyond UNRWA to the **International Committee of the Red Cross** (ICRC).[675] This intervention coincided with the publication of a new NGO Monitor report, *"Puppet Regime: Hamas' Coercive Grip on Aid and NGO Operations in Gaza,"* which advanced allegations against a range of humanitarian organizations, including **Oxfam**,[676] as well as with Israeli measures restricting the operation of 37 international aid organizations in Gaza.[677] Together, these developments mark a widening of securitization from UNRWA toward a broader set of humanitarian actors, rather than an isolated escalation targeting a single agency.

5.3 Ideological Infrastructure and the Right of Return

This case study examines how the Palestinian right of return is reframed, stabilized, and operationalized within the German policy ecosystem. Unlike the education and securitization narratives, which target UNRWA's practices or alleged security risks, the right of return narrative operates at a foundational, horizontal level. It challenges the legitimacy of Palestinian refugeehood itself and recasts the refugee question from a humanitarian and legal issue into a demographic, ideological, and sovereignty-threatening project. Tracing this narrative reveals a long arc, beginning with intellectual production, diffused by validation, and culminating in measurable sustained civil society uptake. The case demonstrates how an initially technical differentiation becomes the backbone of a far-reaching campaign to condition, reform, or dismantle UNRWA and to delegitimize the right of return as a political claim.

5.3.1 Reframing the Right of Return

The German policy environment was primed for later reframing well before the rise of coordinated advocacy. As established in Chapter 3, UNRWA does not adjudicate the right of return, which derives from UNGA Resolution 194 and remains a matter for final-status negotiations; the agency's mandate is to provide humanitarian assistance and human development services to registered Palestinian refugees pending a political solution. On 20 December 2006, the **Bundestag's Scientific Services** published a report on the legal status of Palestinian refugees. The briefing reviewed international refugee law, UN General Assembly Resolution 194, and the special regime established under Article 1D of the 1951 Refugee Convention.[678] While formally descriptive, it highlighted two elements that later advocacy would amplify, namely the inherited nature of Palestinian refugee status and the fact that several Arab host states had largely declined full integration. The report thus portrayed Palestinian refugeehood as legally exceptional and politically unresolved, distinct from the general international refugee regime.

Shortly afterward, the Bundestag adopted reforms to the Residence Act and the Asylum Procedure Act in 2007 and implemented the EU Qualification Directive.[679] The directive excludes from refugee recognition persons who receive protection or assistance from United Nations agencies other than UNHCR. In practice, this provision primarily concerns Palestinians receiving assistance from UNRWA. The reform therefore incorporated this exclusion clause into German asylum law, reinforcing a separate legal category that later narratives could mobilize.

From the early 2010s onward, domestic advocacy actors began reframing the Palestinian refugee question ideologically. The 2013 release[680] (and re-editing in 2019), of **MFFB** and **DIG** of the publication **"The Nakba Myth - Facts about the history of Israel's founding"**[681], marked a new frontier in German discourse. The brochure rejected dominant Nakba framings, denied the existence of a Palestinian nation in 1948, emphasized Jewish historical continuity and legal land purchase, and framed the refugee flight as a war-induced outcome shaped by Arab leadership decisions. Crucially, it argued that UNRWA's inherited refugee definition sustains maximalist political demands, including the right of return, rather than resolving displacement. That same year, an **MFFB** panel, organized in cooperation with the **Jüdische Volkshochschule Berlin, SPME,** and **DIG** at

675 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/041/2104143.pdf
676 https://ngo-monitor.org/pdf/NGOM_Guarantors2025.pdf
677 www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1evp7weyv2o
678 www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/479396/d55fb0aa176b46cca-5ca159a30401174/wd-2-219-06-pdf-data.pdf
679 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/16/050/1605065.pdf pg. 2, 153
680 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/veroeffentlichungen/broschueren/mythos-nakba
681 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/Der_Mythos_Nakba.pdf

the Jewish Museum Berlin titled "UNRWA and the Instrumentalization of Humanitarian Aid" extended this argument into public discourse. UNRWA was presented not merely as a humanitarian agency, but as an institution whose refugee definitions reinforce political agendas.[682] These interventions are notable because they precede the publication of Einat Wilf's later published work, yet already articulate its core premise, that the right of return functions as a strategy to reverse Jewish sovereignty.

Einat Wilf's early presence in German civil society further reinforces this continuity. In July 2014, she spoke at the Israel Days at the Gasteig in Munich, in an event supported by the DIG.[683] While not yet focused exclusively on UNRWA, the lecture addressed recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and foreshadowed her later framing of return claims as incompatible with Jewish self-determination. This marks the earliest documented connection between Wilf and German advocacy networks later central to right of return debates.

The reframed right of return narrative was further consolidated through a 2016 manuscript from a DIG-initiated lecture[684] that later developed into a book[685] titled *The United Nations against Israel,* authored by MENA-Watch affiliated Florian Markl and Alex Feuerherdt. The publication functioned as a central reference text within the advocacy ecosystem, systematizing earlier claims about UN institutions and embedding the right of return within a broader interpretive frame that cast the United Nations as structurally opposed to Israel. Within this framework, UNRWA was presented not as a neutral humanitarian agency but as a political actor whose continued operation sustains the right of return and, by extension, undermines Israel's legitimacy. By translating a contested political claim into a coherent, citation-ready format, the manuscript provided a durable textual anchor that enabled subsequent validation, repetition, and uptake across policy-adjacent and educational contexts.

The reframing crystallized in 2018 with the publication of *The War of Return* by Wilf and Adi Schwartz.[686] The book, which was later translated to both English[687] and German,[688] argued that the Palestinian right of return is the central obstacle to peace, sustained by UNRWA's inherited refugee regime and Western indulgence. Both English and German secondary titles and their reception cast Western engagement with Palestinian refugee claims not as legal obligation but as political enabling.[689, 690] The release timing coincided with the Gaza border protests known as the "Great March of Return," demonstrations organized around the Palestinian refugee return demand. Commentary within the same advocacy ecosystem interpreted the protests through a similar lens. For example, the German-language outlet *Mena Watch* di veriescribed the marches as mobilizations conducted under the banner of the Palestinian "right of return," a demand it argued would entail the entry of millions of refugees into Israel and would therefore end Israel's existence as a Jewish state.[691] In October 2021, the MFFB and DIG jointly published *Right of Return – history and present of a Palestinian demand,* the most direct and explicit German-language intervention on the topic.[692]

Through repeated civil society interventions, public events, and citation-ready publications, this frame detached the right of return from its grounding in international law and humanitarian protection and repositioned it as a demographic and sovereignty-threatening project. At this stage, the narrative no longer required continuous justification. It functioned as a taken-for-granted premise that could be mobilized across arenas.

5.3.2 Elite Validation and Diffusion

In February 2018, this framing entered high-level venues, when DIG Berlin held a discussion at the Federal Foreign Office with Ambassador Patricia Flor that explicitly included UNRWA, inherited refugee status, and the right of return.[693, 694]

Parallel brokerage occurred in parliamentary-adjacent spaces. In September 2018, NAFFO brought Dr. Simon Waldman to the Bundestag for a roundtable on UNRWA and followed this with meetings at the Foreign Office and a formal letter to Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. Their critique focused on inherited refugee status, rejection of integration, and the claim that

682 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/en/events/unrwa#c2210
683 www.ikg-m.de/israel-tage-im-gasteig/
684 www.dig-bremen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Feuerherdt_Vereinte_Nationen_gegen_Israel.pdf
685 www.medimops.de/alex-feuerherdt-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel-wie-die-uno-den-juedischen-staat-delegitimiert-taschenbuch-M03955652491.html
686 www.nli.org.il/he/books/NNL_ALEPH990044146280205171/NLI
687 https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250364845/thewarofreturn/
688 www.hentrichhentrich.de/buch-der-kampf-um-rueckkehr.html
689 www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/book-reviews/schwartz-wilf-review-the-war-of-return
690 https://newbooksnetwork.com/adi-schwartz-and-einat-wilf-the-war-of-return-how-western-indulgence-of-the-palestinian-dream-has-obstructed-the-path-to-peace-all-point-books-2020
691 www.mena-watch.com/der-marsch-der-rueckkehr-ein-fazit/
692 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/fileadmin/editors_de/Broschueren/Rueckkehrrecht-eine-palaestinensische-Forderung.pdf
693 www.digberlin.de/israels-stellung-im-system-der-vereinten-nationen/
694 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DIG_Magazin_2018-1.pdf

a full right of return would render a two-state solution impossible. This represented a clear step in translating ideological claims into policy-facing language.[695]

The diffusion intensified in 2019. An MFFB roundtable with Einat Wilf and Adi Schwartz focused explicitly on UNRWA's role in perpetuating refugeehood.[696] Later that year, Wilf appeared at a UN Human Rights Council side event organized by UN Watch together with former UNRWA official James Lindsay, advocating for dismantling the agency.[697] Shortly afterward, a public lecture in Konstanz, documented in the annual report of the German Coordination Council of Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, (DKR) framed UNRWA as a peace obstacle because of its support for the right of return.[698, 699] The inclusion of this event in interfaith reporting structures indicates diffusion beyond narrowly pro-Israel advocacy spaces.

Another diffusion occurred through large public advocacy platforms in the Frankfurt–Munich environment. Together, these settings combined civil-society mobilization with Israeli state representation, carrying simplified anti-UNRWA and anti-return narratives into mass-attendance venues. At Israeltag 2024, organized by I Like Israel, Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor participated via an official video greeting published on the organizers' website in which he described UNRWA as "part of the problem, not part of the solution," asserting that the agency operates in close alignment with Hamas and portraying it as a "terrorist aid organization." Notably for the Right of Return narrative discussed in this subchapter, Prosor referred to Palestinian refugees in quotation marks.[700]

Cultural and historical leaning framings were articulated in exhibition initiatives such as DEIN's "1948", in 2021,[701] and highly popularized within the Berlin civil-society and political-education cluster.

Media validation accompanied these processes. Opinion columns in *WELT* repeatedly framed defunding or reforming UNRWA as a means to weaken return claims, even when warning of humanitarian risks. The English and German translations of Einat Wilf's *The War of Return* in 2020, followed by promotion through Israeli diplomatic channels in Germany,[702] further enhanced the book's accessibility and authority in German debates.

5.3.3 Civil Society Uptake and Policy Effects

Once articulated and validated, the reframed right of return narrative was diffused through a dense network of events for the general public. Between 2016 and 2025, a repeated lecture series titled 'The United Nations against Israel' were held across German cities,[703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710] organized by overlapping constellations involving DIG branches, the MFFB, and Austrian partners MENA-Watch and the book's authors, Florian Markl and Alex Feuerherdt, with later diffusion into Berlin-based political education settings including Masiyot.[711] These events consistently framed UNRWA as a political actor sustaining the right of return and delegitimizing Israel.

Following October 7, 2023, narrative uptake accelerated dramatically. Only three days later, The AfD submitted a Bundestag motion explicitly rejecting the Palestinian right of return and calling for an end to UNRWA funding, framing inherited refugee status as a threat to Israel's security and to German Staatsräson.[712]

Civil society initiatives mirrored this shift. Educational materials depicting the Nakba as a historical myth were distributed at the municipal level. Lecture series supported by political foundations and patronized by the Federal Government's Antisemitism Commissioner framed inherited refugee status as an ideological trap diverting attention from civil rights toward unattainable territorial claims. [713, 714]

695 https://naffo.de/naffo-thema-im-herbst-2018-die-unrwa-das-un-hilfswerk-fuer-palaestinafluechtlinge/
696 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/index.php?id=512
697 https://unwatch.org/israeli-author-and-former-member-of-knesset-dr-einat-wilf-speaks-on-the-future-of-unrwa/
698 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/en/events
699 www.deutscher-koordinierungsrat.de/sites/default/files/downloads/DKR/DKR_Jahresberichte_2019_komplett_compressed.pdf
700 https://i-like-israel.de/grusswort-von-s-e-ron-prosor-botschafter-des-staates-israel-in-deutschland-zum-israeltag-2024/
701 www.dein-ak.com/israelvortr%C3%A4ge-im-mai2021
702 www.facebook.com/events/654958088680825/
703 www.facebook.com/events/forum-der-jugend-mannheim/die-vereinten-nationen-gegen-israel/1695506447354348/
704 www.hentrichhentrich.de/buch-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel.html
705 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel-wie-die-un-den-juedischen-staat-delegitimiert/
706 www.deutsch-israelische-gesellschaft.de/veranstaltungen/vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel-2/
707 www.mideastfreedomforum.org/veranstaltungen/die-vereinten-nationen-gegen-israel?limit=all&cHash=3f48158822a61e548b86d6f380b479ab
708 https://kritischebildung.de/veranstaltungen/die-uno-und-israel
709 https://proaktiv.nbkk.de/event/die-israel-boykottbewegung/
710 www.hemsbach.de/veranstaltungskalender/vortrag/vortrag-von-alex-feuerherdt-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel
711 https://bajszel.de/18-12-24-alex-feuerherdt-vereinte-nationen-gegen-israel/
712 https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/087/2008739.pdf
713 www.uni-trier.de/universitaet/fachbereiche-faecher/fachbereich-iii/faecher/geschichte/studium-und-lehre/initiative-interdisziplinaere-antisemitismusforschung/projekte-1/vortragsreihen/online-vortragsreihe-die-selbstgerechten-unter-den-voelkern
714 www.youtube.com/live/h0WMzu_Qn4k

Parliamentary questions and government responses show that inherited refugee status and the right of return had become explicit points of contention, with right-wing and challenger parties invoking them as justifications for their parliamentary interventions — marking the transition from advocacy narrative to routine parliamentary instrument. For these parties, invoking the right of return also served a competitive political function: claiming ownership over the defense of Jewish safety and Israel's Jewish character within Germany's Staatsräson framework.

5.3.4 Discursive Effects and Baseline Shift

The right of return case illustrates how a technical legal distinction can be translated into an interpretive baseline through sustained publication, convening, and elite brokerage. Early German legal and administrative differentiations created a receptive foundation that advocacy actors later reframed as evidence of Palestinian „exceptionalism" and political instrumentalization. While transnational actors such as UN Watch and NGO Monitor developed their critiques primarily through operational and evidentiary channels, German domestic actors such as MFFB and DIG targeted the legitimacy of return claims from the outset. Repeated civil society interventions and policy-adjacent validation entrenched both tracks, jointly positioning UNRWA as the embodiment of a demographic and sovereignty-threatening project. The primary effect is not a single decisive policy break, but a durable change in what becomes easier to say and harder to defend in mainstream arenas: Within the terms of this reframing, UNRWA appears less as a humanitarian instrument under constraints and more as the institutional carrier of a claim increasingly treated by these actors as incompatible with conflict resolution.

5.4 Summary

The three case studies demonstrate how critiques of UNRWA and the right of return are produced, translated, and stabilized within the German policy ecosystem through recurring advocacy sequences that share functional stages (claim production, translation, uptake, processing) while differing in sequencing and arena dominance.

The education case shows how morally charged framing creates routinized scrutiny, with evidentiary elasticity allowing specific incidents to be generalized into systemic failure across repeated cycles, making conditionality the default posture even among actors who support continued humanitarian engagement.

The securitization case shows that identical claim types can fail or succeed depending not only on their translation environment but on whether governing actors have the incentive to adopt available frames — in Example D, the securitization frame was translated but refused at the coalition level, while the post–October 7 cycle demonstrates how crisis conditions remove that resistance and convert latent securitization into durable institutional repositioning.

The right of return case shows how a technical legal distinction is reframed through sustained publication and elite brokerage into an ideological threat — distinguishing itself from the other two cases in that German domestic actors targeted the legitimacy of return claims from the outset, rather than arriving there through operational critique.

Across the three cases, cluster-based micro networks are not treated as separate 'actors' but as diffusion infrastructure. They do not originate most upstream claims, but they help convert them into repeatable formats (events, educational materials, monitoring recirculation, mass platforms) that reduce friction between elite translation, media uptake, and parliamentary processing.

The chapter's central finding is that policy effects accumulate through repetition and procedural embedding rather than through single decisive interventions. Narratives travel because they can be re-coded into German normative vocabularies (antisemitism prevention, Staatsräson, donor responsibility), and because they are carried by brokers who provide institutional access, generate policy-ready summaries, and reduce reputational risk for mainstream actors. Parliamentary processing then embeds these frames in routine instruments (inquiries, hearings, letters, voting rationales), which further legitimizes media uptake and future cycles.

The overall effect is not a uniform policy outcome, but a durable recalibration of Germany's relationship to UNRWA, in which continued engagement increasingly requires constant justification, while reform, conditionality, or institutional replacement becomes the default horizon for debate.

6 Implications

This chapter translates the network outlined earlier into its concrete effects on German and European policymaking, humanitarian operations in Gaza, and broader European stability.

6.1 Systemic Implications for German and European Policy

The influence structure mapped in earlier chapters has a cumulative effect on German policy formation and risk assessment. The mechanisms responsible are those traced in Chapters 4 and 5: upstream claim production by a narrow set of Israeli-aligned actors, domestic translation through brokerage and elite access, media normalization, and parliamentary routinization, a sequence that progressively shifted the evidentiary baseline without requiring decisive new evidence or formal coordination. The result is that decision-making has increasingly drawn on securitized and identity-shaped framings produced by a narrow, Israeli-aligned epistemic community, while assessments grounded in international law, humanitarian principles, or field-based evidence have carried higher reputational and political costs. This is the systemic effect of register displacement: when the Palestinian refugee question is reconstituted primarily as a donor-administrative problem, its legal and political dimensions — including the institutional frameworks sustaining refugee status and right of return claims — are progressively deprioritized in decision-making. This has a further effect: the progressive sidelining of the legal and political claims themselves from diplomatic consideration, with consequences for the viability of Israeli-Palestinian final status talks in which refugee status and right of return remain unresolved core issues.

Germany's handling of UNRWA between 2014 and January 2026 illustrates how repeated external advocacy, domestic political uptake, and reputational pressure can reshape donor behaviour without formal coordination or decisive new evidence. The result is reduced institutional pluralism (that is, a narrowing of the range of actors and frameworks informing policy), weakened evidence-based policymaking, and greater scope for domestic political imperatives to override legal commitments and factual assessments, with direct implications for multilateral institutions and unresolved final status issues.

6.2 Humanitarian and Operational Impact of UNRWA Disruption in Gaza

The disruption of UNRWA operations since October 2023 has compounded an already severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza.[715, 716, 717] This disruption has multiple causes, but the policy trajectory traced in Chapter 5 is among its contributing factors: the funding suspension of January 2024, the conditionality framework embedded in the 2025 coalition agreement, and Germany's abstention at the United Nations in late 2025 each translate the advocacy-driven securitization of UNRWA into concrete reductions in humanitarian capacity and political support. Where the war itself constrained humanitarian access through military operations, the policy trajectory traced here reduced the political will and institutional capacity to defend UNRWA from Israeli executive decisions, sustain funding and diplomatic support for the primary UN agency equipped to respond, thus compounding operational disruption beyond what the conflict alone produced. The disruption of UNRWA must be read within the broader strategic context documented in previous chapters: dismantling the primary service infrastructure for Palestinian refugees is a legible and documented instrument in a campaign to foreclose right of return as a political outcome, and European donor acquies-

715 www.emro.who.int/emhj-volume-31-2025/volume-31-issue-2/unrwas-health-service-in-gaza-challenges-and-response-to-the-october-2023-crisis.html

716 www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-198-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem

717 www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-182-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem

cence — whether intentional or not — enables that campaign.

UNRWA and other UN bodies report that at least 851 persons sheltering in its facilities have been killed, while prolonged restrictions on humanitarian access have severely disrupted healthcare, water and sanitation, food provision, and education.[718, 719] The situation escalated to the point of creating conditions that multiple inquiries have deemed „unliveable" or to the point of the destruction of conditions of life.[720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725] These conditions do not remain confined to Gaza, but can generate broader instability beyond the territory.

6.3 Instability Risks for Europe

The dynamics traced in this report carry implications that extend beyond Germany and beyond the immediate humanitarian situation in Gaza. They bear on Europe's capacity to act coherently as a rule-based international actor at a moment when that capacity is already under significant pressure.

The most direct risk concerns credibility. Germany's Staatsräson commitment, its foundational obligation to Israeli security, has historically attempted coexistence with its commitments to international humanitarian law, multilateral institutions, and the rules-based international order. The policy trajectory documented here reveals a growing tension between these commitments. When Germany suspended UNRWA funding ahead of any independent investigative conclusion, abstained on a mandate renewal that the overwhelming majority of UN member states supported, and embedded conditionality language in a coalition agreement that treats a UN humanitarian agency as a security liability, it signaled that domestic advocacy pressure and identity-political considerations can override legal and evidentiary standards. This, together with Germany's material support through weapons deliveries and diplomatic backing for the war, sends signals that are not contained. Other states observe it, and it weakens the normative architecture that Germany has an interest in defending.[726, 727, 728]

The second risk concerns the precedent for humanitarian multilateralism. UNRWA is unusual in the UN system as a dedicated agency with a specific population mandate, whose disruption cannot be absorbed by a generic substitute. The sustained campaign to reframe it as a security problem rather than a humanitarian instrument, and the partial success of that campaign in shaping German and European donor behavior, establishes a template. If sufficiently organized advocacy can convert a UN agency's humanitarian mandate into a donor-risk liability, the implications extend beyond UNRWA to the broader architecture of UN humanitarian operations in conflict zones, and more specifically to the political frameworks under which Palestinian refugee status and right of return claims exist — frameworks to which European states are parties and whose erosion carries consequences beyond humanitarian optics. This dynamic raises questions about the transparency of foreign-funded advocacy operating within German democratic institutions — including domestic actors who receive German public funding and have become integrated into the same advocacy coalition — and the extent to which the aims and funding structures of this network have been subject to adequate public scrutiny. Where such networks instrumentalize democratic institutions and public funding to advance agendas that are in tension with the rules-based international order, the interference dynamic itself becomes a question of democratic integrity.

More immediately, humanitarian collapse in Gaza generates instability that does not remain territorially contained — displacement, erosion of governance, and radicalization dynamics produce pressures that affect neighboring states, migration patterns, and European security environments directly, as documented in European security assessments.[729, 730] At the same time, Europe's credibility as a defender of humanitarian norms and multilateral order is weakened when aid is politicised and legal commitments are inconsistently applied. A European policy pos-

718 www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-327-gaza-strip
719 http://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/emergencies-trauma-care/who-phsa-opt-111125-final.pdf
720 www.phr.org.il/en/genocide-in-gaza-eng/
721 www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/MDE-1586682024ENGLISH.pdf
722 www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf
723 www.btselem.org/publications/202507_our_genocide
724 https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/2021-dha-docs/who-phsa-opt-190525.pdf
725 www.economist.com/interactive/graphic-detail/2025/08/06/how-much-of-gaza-is-left-standing
726 www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-donor-statement-humanitarian-aid-gaza%C2%A0_en
727 https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/joint-statement-humanitarian-situation-gaza-2025-08-12_en
728 www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/defunding-unrwa-would-be-both-disproportionate-and-dangerous_en
729 www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2024-2025.pdf
730 www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EU_TE-SAT_2025.pdf

ture shaped primarily by domestically managed advocacy pressure rather than evidence-based assessment is poorly calibrated to manage these risks.[731, 732, 733] Addressing the Gaza crisis is therefore not only a moral or legal obligation, but a strategic interest tied to European stability, security, and international influence.

The Staatsräson framework, as it has been operationalized in German policy, increasingly treats support for Israel and adherence to international humanitarian law as mutually exclusive rather than complementary obligations. That framing is not only analytically mistaken, it is strategically costly: both for Germany's international standing, and for EU multilateral order, given that Germany's size and normative weight mean its deflection of critical EU-level action on Israeli policies carries disproportionate consequence for the Union's collective posture.

731 www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library---content--migration/files/shangri-la-dialogue/2025/transcripts-final/keynote/keynote-address_president-macron_as-delivered.pdf

732 www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library---content--migration/files/shangri-la-dialogue/2024/transcripts/final/p3/josep-borrell-fontelles-high-representative-for-foreign-affairs-and-security-policy-vice-president-of-the-european-commission.pdf

733 https://securityconference.org/assets/02_Dokumente/01_Publikationen/2024/MunichSecurityBrief_1_2024_Standard_Deviation.pdf

7 Conclusion

This study set out to explain how debates and policy decisions concerning Israel, Palestine, and UNRWA in Germany have been shaped over the past decade, particularly since October 7, 2023, and with what consequences. The findings show that recent shifts in German policy toward UNRWA are not just the result of sudden empirical revelations or ad hoc crisis management, but of a long-term advocacy process whose coherence derives from structural alignment, shared frames, funding environments, and institutional access, and which connects transnational funding, domestic political uptake, civil-society normalization, and executive decision-making.

7.1 Synthesis of Findings

The central finding of this report is that a relatively small, well-resourced, right-wing Israel-aligned advocacy ecosystem has exerted substantial and documentable influence on German debates and policy outcomes concerning UNRWA and the Palestinian refugee question, concentrated in a narrow range of actors and narratives. This influence operates through both documented cooperation between specific actors — joint reports, shared briefings, overlapping personnel, as traced in Chapters 4 and 5 — and a broader structural alignment of shared frames, funding environments, and institutional proximity. Together these drive a directional and cumulative process in which narratives travel along a consistent vector from upstream production to downstream institutionalization.

At the origin of this vector are a limited number of Israeli and transatlantic actors that generate core ideological frames and evidentiary packages (called here, narrative originators, or epistemic communities elsewhere). These actors are primarily financed through **private philanthropic networks based in the United States,** often characterized by high donor concentration and limited transparency, and in several cases complemented by German public project funding once their narratives are translated into the language of civic education, antisemitism prevention, or expert consultation. The core claims advanced within this upstream space portray UNRWA as structurally illegitimate, politically compromised, and inseparable from the perpetuation of Palestinian refugeehood and the right of return, which is itself framed as a demographic and security threat rather than a legal or political claim. Understood in terms of the advocacy coalition framework introduced in Chapter 2, these claims operate across all three belief levels: at the deep core, an ideological commitment to exclusive ethno-national self-determination; at the policy core, rejection of the right of return; and at the level of secondary beliefs, the tactical argument that defunding UNRWA advances that rejection.

These narratives first gain political traction in Germany through challenger parties, most consistently the AfD and, in a different register, the FDP. As shown in the parliamentary record in Appendix 3, these parties have repeatedly introduced UNRWA-critical, right-of-return-skeptical, and securitized framings into Bundestag debate at an early stage. While initially controversial, these interventions serve a crucial agenda-setting function. They push specific claims into the parliamentary arena, compel ministerial responses, and generate media attention, even when they are formally rejected or rhetorically distanced by governing parties. In this phase, the narratives remain visibly partisan and are often associated with ideological positioning. In the case of the FDP, this trajectory took a more direct form: having developed UNRWA-critical framings through sustained parliamentary inquiry while in opposition from 2018 onward, the party carried these positions into the 2021 coalition negotiations, providing a direct personnel channel through which challenger-party language migrated into governing-coalition commitments.

Simultaneously, these same frames are taken up, moderated, and legitimized by established Jewish and Israel-aligned organizations in Germa-

ny. State-adjacent civil-society actors, publicly funded antisemitism-prevention institutions, and long-standing German–Israeli associations translate earlier partisan claims into morally authoritative and institutionally credible language. Through this process, positions that originated in ideologically explicit contexts are reframed as responsible, security-conscious, or ethically necessary responses to antisemitism, terrorism, or historical responsibility. The involvement of organizations with formal recognition, public funding, or privileged access to policymakers is critical here, as it detaches the narratives from their partisan origins. Together with cluster-based micro networks they diffuse these narratives horizontally into civil society through educational formats, cultural programming, community venues, and publicly funded prevention frameworks, operating through normalization rather than lobbying, and converting contested positions into pedagogical common sense that reaches audiences beyond the formal advocacy and political infrastructure.

Media amplification further accelerates this normalization. High-reach outlets repeatedly rely on a narrow epistemic community closely aligned with the upstream advocacy network, creating an appearance of expert consensus through repetition rather than pluralistic debate. Over time, contested claims become routinized reference points in reporting, commentary, and political discussion. The Palestinian refugee question and UNRWA's mandate are progressively reframed from matters of international law and unresolved political conflict into administrative and security problems centered on risk management, conditionality, and institutional redesign.

By the time these narratives reach executive decision-making, they no longer appear as demands advanced by specific political actors or ideological camps. Instead, they function as taken-for-granted constraints shaping the range of acceptable policy options. Germany's temporary funding suspension in January 2024,[734] the conditional framing of its subsequent resumption,[735] and its abstention on UNRWA's mandate renewal in November 2025[736] illustrate how this process translates into concrete outcomes. Each step reflects not a rupture but a gradual reorientation, in which humanitarian policy becomes increasingly politicized and subordinated to securitized and identity-shaped considerations.

Diffused responsibility is the normal outcome when multiple actors pursue compatible goals through ordinary democratic channels. What makes this case analytically significant is not the mechanism but the structural conditions under which it operates: the advocacy ecosystem documented here faces no comparably resourced, institutionally embedded, or narratively coherent counter-network. Palestinian-aligned, liberal Jewish groups, and rights-based actors in Germany remain fragmented and under-resourced, meaning the narratives traced in this report encounter little organized resistance as they move from upstream production to downstream institutionalization. The result is supposedly ordinary advocacy politics, with foreign interests, operating on an unusually uncontested field.

7.2 Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it relies on publicly accessible and verified leaked documents, media records, and process tracing into closed-door deliberations within ministries, parliamentary groups, and diplomatic channels. Informal interactions and non-public coordination can only be reconstructed indirectly.

Second, financial transparency varies significantly across actors. While some organizations disclose funding through the Bundestag Lobby Register or public grant reporting, others operate with limited or opaque disclosure, particularly regarding private transnational donations. This limits the precision with which financial influence can be quantified, even where structural patterns are evident.

Third, the analysis is focused on Germany as a primary case. Germany's historical responsibility toward Israel, its role as one of UNRWA's largest donors, and its distinctive civil-society and memory-politics landscape shape the dynamics observed here. While many elements of the advocacy ecosystem are transnational, the findings should not be uncritically generalized to other national contexts without comparative research.

Finally, the rapidly evolving post-October 2023 environment poses challenges for longitudinal assessment. Positions and policies shifted under the pressure of war, legal proceedings, and domestic political change. Although the study captures stable

734 www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/2641762-2641762
735 www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/2654390-2654390
736 www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2025-11-20/ty-article/germany-withholds-support-for-unrwa-extension-for-first-time/0000019a-a27a-d7d6-ab9f-fffa62f00000

patterns across more than a decade, some recent developments may require reassessment as further evidence emerges.

7.3 Future Research Directions

Future research should examine similar advocacy vectors in comparative perspective, particularly in other major donor states. This would clarify how different political cultures and institutional arrangements mediate the transmission of transnational advocacy narratives into domestic policy.

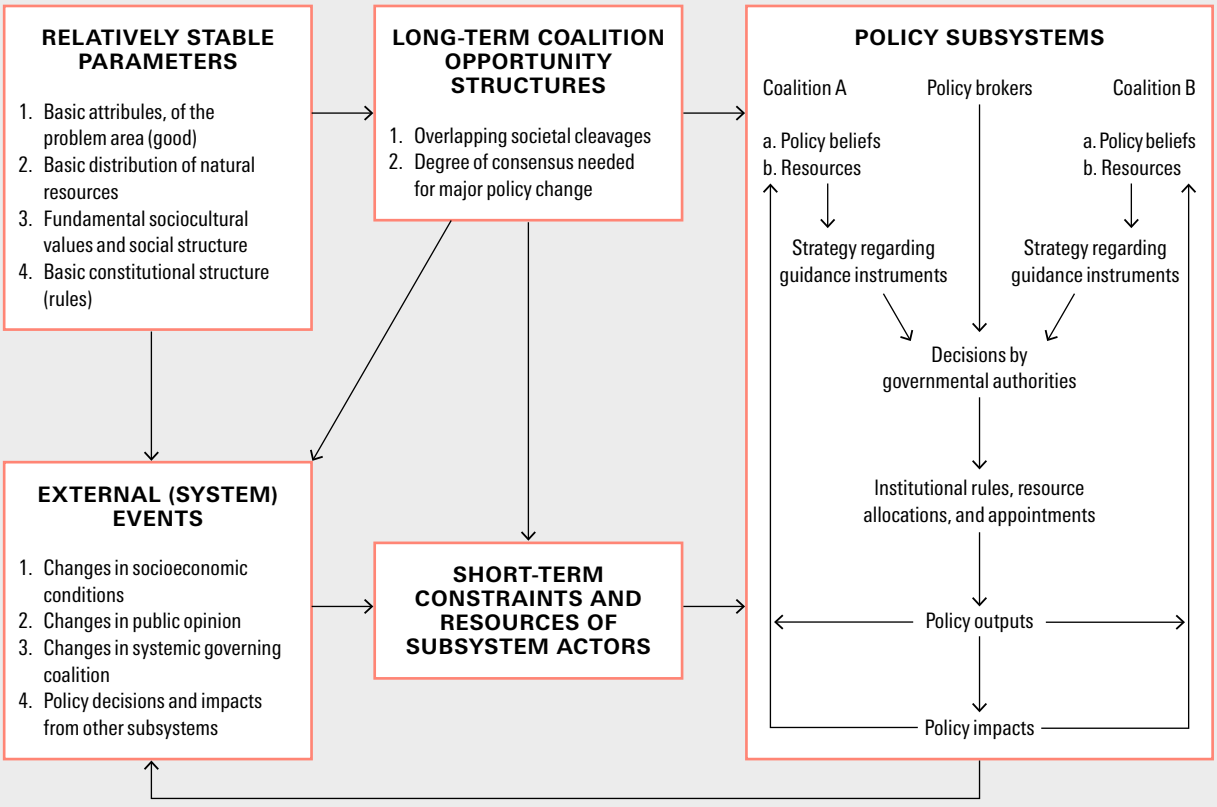
Further work is also needed on the structural imbalance identified in this report. Systematic research into how funding regimes, public sensitivity, and institutional risk aversion shape this asymmetry would deepen understanding of contemporary foreign-policy governance — and specifically why liberal Jewish voices, and Palestinian diaspora organizations in Germany operate on a structurally uneven playing field relative to the network documented here.

At a broader level, the UNRWA case highlights the vulnerability of humanitarian institutions in polarized political environments. Future studies should explore how humanitarian governance is transformed when aid becomes entangled with identity politics, securitization, and moral boundary-drawing, and what this means for international law, multilateralism, and donor credibility.

In sum, the findings of this study suggest that recent German policy shifts on UNRWA cannot be understood as technical adjustments or crisis responses alone. They are the product of a long-term advocacy process that reshapes what can be said, funded, and decided. Recognizing this process is a prerequisite for restoring evidence-based policymaking, humanitarian integrity, and meaningful political debate on Israel and Palestine in Germany.

Appendix

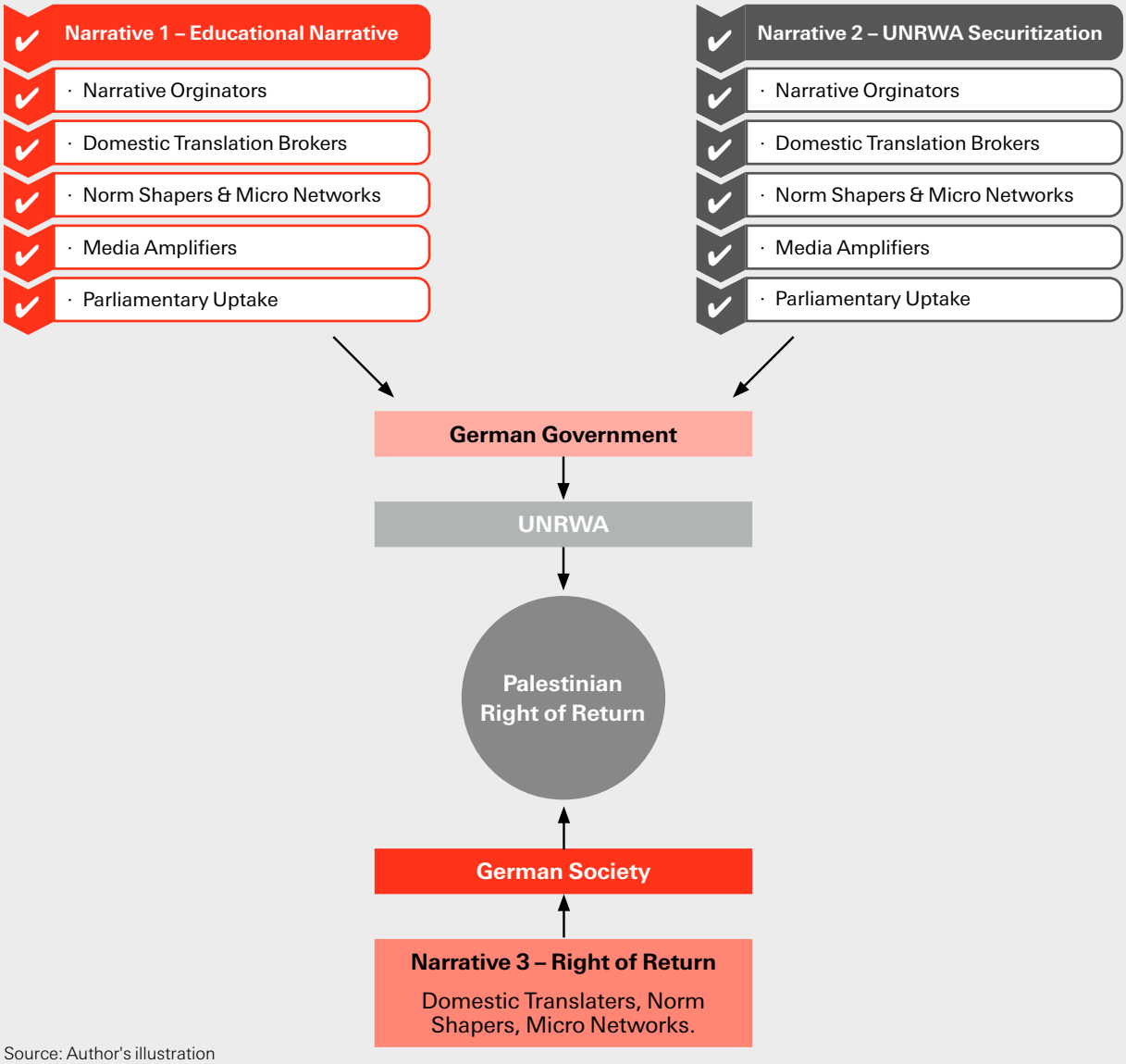
Appendix 1: ACG diagram (Advocacy Coalition Framework Flow Diagram)



2007 Advocacy Coalition Framework Flow Diagram

Source: Jenkins-Smith, Hank C./Weible, Christopher M. (Eds.): The Advocacy Coalition Framework, Basingstoke 2025, p. 14.

Appendix 2: Narrative Cascades



Source: Author's illustration

Appendix 3: UNRWA-Critical Parlamentary Initiatives

This appendix compiles identified parliamentary interventions critical of UNRWA across the Deutscher Bundestag between 2014 (effectively from 2018 onward) and January 2026. It includes *Kleine Anfragen*, motions, written questions, and corresponding government responses. General inquiries concerning recurring funding totals, as well as oral questions *(Mündliche Fragen)*, are excluded.

Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Number	Date	Type	Document number	Focus	Link
1	7 March 2018	Schriftliche Frage	19/1126	A question raising concerns about educational content in UNRWA schools	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/011/1901126.pdf
2	07 May 2018	Kleine Anfrage	19/2015	German funding to UNRWA, alleged Hamas links, antisemitism.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/020/1902015.pdf
3	7 August 2018	Kleine Anfrage	19/3871	Asks about measures against the BDS campaign; UNRWA referenced indirectly via critique of hereditary refugee status and its link to right-of-return claims	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/038/1903871.pdf
4	09 June 2021	Motion	19/30414	Termination of German funding to UNRWA, transfer to UNHCR.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/304/1930414.pdf
5	08 April 2022	Schriftliche Frage	20/1355	German financial contributions to UNRWA (2022–2023).	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/013/2001355.pdf
6	6 May 2022	Schriftliche Frage	20/1679	Inquiring on Monitoring UNRWA	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/016/2001679.pdf
7	10 October 2023	Motion	20/8739	Immediate halt of German funding to UNRWA.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/087/2008739.pdf
8	14 November 2023	Kleine Anfrage	20/9291	UNRWA funding, alleged antisemitism, staff links to Hamas.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/092/2009291.pdf
9	7 February 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/10292	What specific findings led to the cutting of funding to UNRWA in Gaza	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/102/2010292.pdf
10	7 February 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/10292	Timing and sources of German government knowledge regarding alleged links between UNRWA staff and Hamas.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/102/2010292.pdf
11	7 March 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/10565	Did the government have any prior knowledge of Hamas ties before the attacks?	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/105/2010565.pdf
12	22 March 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/10791	Inquiring on measures taken in 2022 regarding UN Watch allegations	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/107/2010791.pdf
13	7 June 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/11712	A question pushing for formal terrorist designation of alleged UNRWA-linked perpetrators	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/117/2011712.pdf
14	12 February 2025	Kleine Anfrage	20/14945	UNRWA alternatives in light of growing strain and changing geopolitical landscape (Q 22)	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/149/2014945.pdf
15	20 June 2025	Schriftliche Frage	21/512	Monthly breakdown of German payments to UNRWA.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/005/2100512.pdf
16	2 September 2025	Kleine Anfrage	21/1030	UNRWA staff background checks	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/010/2101030.pdf
17	24 October 2025	Schriftliche Frage	21/2387	The question links future reconstruction funding to skepticism about past aid to UNRWA	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/023/2102387.pdf
18	2 December 2025	Kleine Anfrage	21/3017	Gaza reconstruction funding and UNRWA	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/030/2103017.pdf
19	14 January 2026	Kleine Anfrage	21/3603	German contributions to UNRWA and IKRK, diversion and affiliation allegations.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/036/2103603.pdf

Total AfD initiatives: 19

Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

Nr.	Date	Type	Document	Focus	Link
1	4 May 2022	Schriftliche Frage	20/1679	ensure that Palestinian children and young people are educated toward peace and tolerance without political indoctrination	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/016/2001679.pdf
2	2 February	Schriftliche Frage	20/10233	Measures to insure 2022 housing project for UNRWA is not funneled to Hamas	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/102/2010233.pdf
3	7 February 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/10292	Disciplinary and funding consequences for UNRWA staff allegedly expressing support for Hamas attacks.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/102/2010292.pdf
4	3 May 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/11250	Why did Germany reinstall UNRWA funding	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/112/2011250.pdf
5	3 May 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/11250	Exclusion of terrorists from UNRWA support	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/112/2011250.pdf
6	26 June 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/12372	Consequences on 100 UNRWA employee allegations	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/123/2012372.pdf
7	25 September 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/13047	Measures to ensure prevention of funneling UNRWA funds to terror	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/130/2013047.pdf
8	11 October 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/13317	Fateh al-Sharif ties	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/133/2013317.pdf
9	25 October 2024	Schriftliche Frage	20/13511	Inquiry on UNRWA alternatives for humanitarian aid	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/135/2013511.pdf
10	11 December 2024	Kleine Anfrage	20/14155	UNRWA reform capacity and German oversight after 7 October 2023.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/141/2014155.pdf
11	3 February 2025	Schriftliche Frage	20/14894	Claims of hostages in UNRWA facilities	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/148/2014894.pdf

Total CDU/CSU initiatives: 11

Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Nr.	Date	Type	Document	Focus	Link
1	21 November 2018	Kleine Anfrage	19/5941	UNRWA reform projects, oversight, conditionality.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/059/1905941.pdf
2	27 December 2019	Schriftliche Frage	19/16264	Inquiring on alleged Hamas ties to UNRWA	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/162/1916264.pdf
3	03 March 2020	Kleine Anfrage	19/17497	Humanitarian funding transparency, including UNRWA.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/174/1917497.pdf
4	13 November 2020	Kleine Anfrage	19/24269	Inquiring on alleged UNRWA ties to Islamic Relief and Muslim Brotherhood	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/242/1924269.pdf
5	16 November 2020	Kleine Anfrage	19/24322	Alleged indirect funding of antisemitic content in Palestinian schoolbooks using German and EU public money	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/243/1924322.pdf
6	27 January 2021	Schriftliche Frage	19/26311	Questions German funding to UNRWA until verifiable reforms are achieved, specifically regarding problematic content in educational materials	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/263/1926311.pdf
7	09 February 2021	Kleine Anfrage	19/26511	Antisemitic content in UNRWA teaching materials.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/265/1926511.pdf
8	03 February 2025	Kleine Anfrage	20/14865	Budgetary safeguards, neutrality requirements, UNRWA.	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/148/2014865.pdf

Total FDP initiatives: 8

Alliance 90/The Greens

Nr.	Date	Type	Document	Focus	Link
1	4 June 2021	Schriftliche Frage	19/30285	Measures to insure UNRWA funding is not funnelled to terror	https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/302/1930285.pdf

Summary

Party	Number of initiatives
AfD	19
CDU/CSU	11
FDP	8
Greens	1

Appendix 4: UNRWA Bill

רשומות

ספר החוקים

כ"ח בתשרי התשפ"ה 3296 30 באוקטובר 2024

עמוד

חוק להפסקת פעילות אונר"א, התשפ"ה–2024 4

חוק להפסקת פעילות אונר"א, התשפ"ה–2024*

פקיעת חילוף האיגרות בין ישראל ובין אונר"א

1. (א) הזמנת אונר"א בהסתמך על חילוף האיגרות בין ישראל ובין אונר"א מיום ו' בסיוון התשכ"ז (14 ביוני 1967)[1], תפקע ביום ה' בתשרי התשפ"ה (7 באוקטובר 2024).

(ב) שר החוץ יודיע לאומות המאוחדות על פקיעה לפי סעיף קטן (א) בתוך שבעה ימים מיום קבלתו של חוק זה בכנסת.

אי־קיום מגע עם אונר"א

2. רשות מרשויות המדינה, לרבות גופים ואנשים אחרים הממלאים תפקידים ציבוריים על פי דין, לא תקיים כל מגע עם אונר"א או עם מי מטעמה.

שמירת דינים

3. אין בהוראות חוק זה כדי לייתר כל הליך פלילי כנגד עובדי אונר"א ובכלל זה הליך כאמור בשל אירועי 7 באוקטובר 2023 או מלחמת חרבות ברזל, או כל הליך פלילי אחר לפי הוראות חוק המאבק בטרור, התשע"ו–2016[2], או הפעלת סמכויות כנגדם במסגרת הליך כאמור.

תחילה

4 תחילתו של חוק זה שלושה חודשים מיום פרסומו; ואולם תחילתו של סעיף 1 ביום ה' בתשרי התשפ"ה (7 באוקטובר 2024) או ביום פרסומו של חוק זה, לפי המאוחר.

דיווח לכנסת

5. ראש המטה לביטחון לאומי או נציגו ידווח לוועדת החוץ והביטחון של הכנסת, אחת לשישה חודשים, ובשנה הראשונה מיום תחילתו של חוק זה – אחת לחודשיים, על יישום הוראות חוק זה.

בנימין נתניהו
ראש הממשלה

יצחק הרצוג
נשיא המדינה

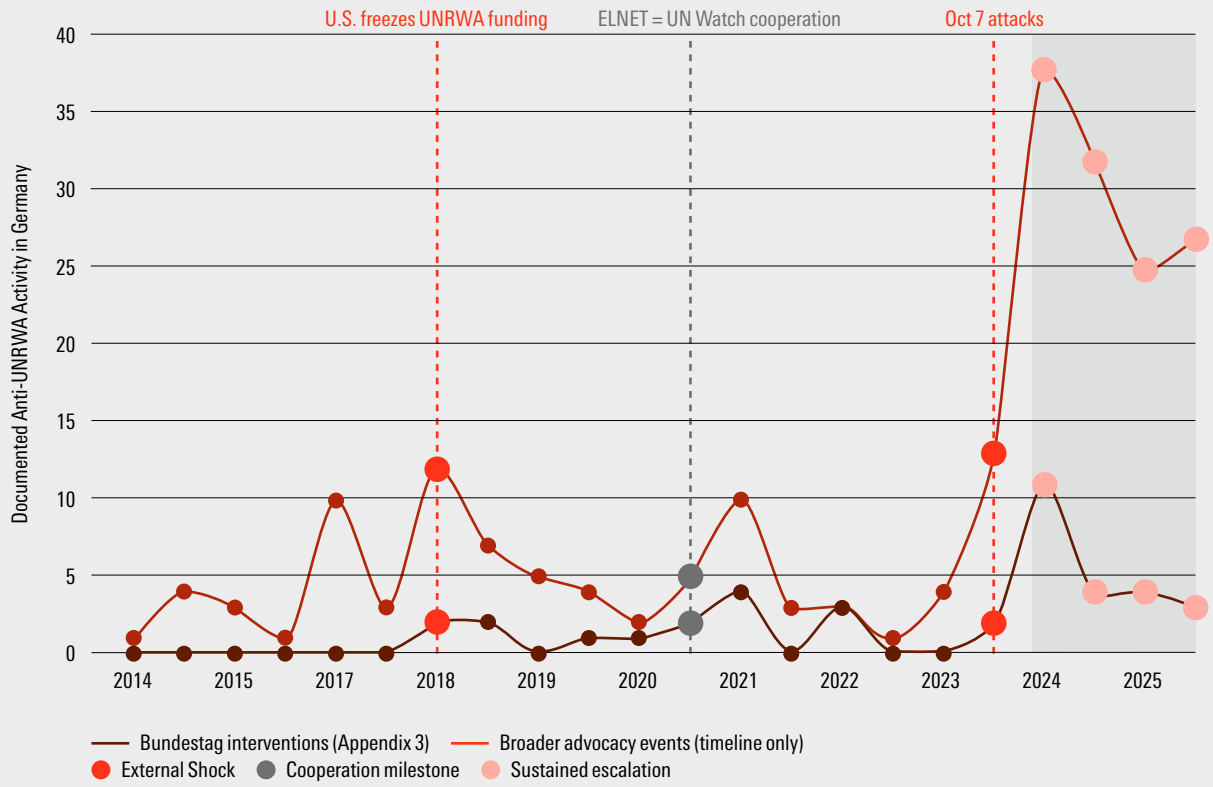
אמיר אוחנה
יושב ראש הכנסת

* התקבל בכנסת ביום כ"ו בתשרי התשפ"ה (28 באוקטובר 2024); הצעת החוק ודברי הסבר פורסמו בהצעות חוק הכנסת – 1044, מיום ט' בתמוז התשפ"ד (15 ביולי 2024), עמ' 277.

[1] כ"א 775, כרך 22, עמ' 411 (נכנס לתוקף ביום 14 ביוני 1967).

[2] ס"ח התשע"ו, עמ' 898.

Appendix 5: TAN activity and parliamentary correleation



Source: Author's illustration

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