

BLINKING AT THE LAW, THE STATE DEPARTMENT HELPS THE PLO

U.S. law prohibits American taxpayer funds from being given to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Yet, in apparent disregard for the law, State Department officials have been providing funding for United Nations projects which directly and indirectly aid the PLO. Says Mark Edelman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, the State Department has "chosen to interpret the law rather narrowly." This is a practice which he vows to change.

P.L. 97-241, enacted by Congress in August 1982 (replacing P.L. 96-60, enacted in August 1979), specifically requires that the U.S. withhold all of its share of the money that the U.S. budgets for the U.N. Committee on the Exercise for the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (Palestine Committee) and for the U.N. Special Unit on Palestinian Rights. The U.S. share amounts to 25 percent of the budgets for these committees. P.L. 97-241 also requires, according to paragraph (a)(3) of Section 104, withholding all U.S. money for "projects whose primary purpose is to provide political benefits to the PLO or entities associated with it."

The State Department claims that the U.S. has been obeying the law by working with figures supplied by the U.N. The U.S. then decides how much to withhold, although it presumably on occasion questions the accuracy of the U.N.-supplied numbers. State Department records indicate that the U.N. submitted the following figures on March 3, 1982, to Theodore Papendorp, counsellor at the U.S. Mission to the U.N.:

	(in thousands of U.S. dollars)					
	Direct Costs			Apportioned Costs		
	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Special Unit						
for Palestinian Rights	459.0	1,187.6	645.1	62.7	143.8	78.9
Palestine Committee	<u>59.7</u>	<u>39.2</u>	<u>32.6</u>	<u>263.1</u>	<u>529.7</u>	<u>440.5</u>
 Total	 <u>518.7</u>	 <u>1,226.8</u>	 <u>677.7</u>	 <u>325.8</u>	 <u>673.5</u>	 <u>519.4</u>

The trouble is that these figures are phony and may be deliberately misleading. Both in 1982 and 1983, the Special Unit's Regional Seminars on the Question of Palestine alone cost about \$2.5 million. Yet the

U.N. reports only about \$500,000 in "Apportioned Costs" for 1982 and 1983. This, says Edelman, "is ridiculous, of course." The U.N.'s 1983 figure, moreover, does not include the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, a major PLO propaganda effort scheduled for August 16-17, 1983, at the Paris headquarters of the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), expected to cost over \$5.7 million.

What is worse, the State Department so far is withholding for FY83 only the U.S. share of what the U.N. claims are "Direct Costs" of the Palestinian projects. Yet Edelman argues that the "Apportioned Costs" (all of them, not just the U.N.'s bogus figures) are definitely part of the expenses of the Palestine Committee and the Special Unit. Not to withhold the U.S. share of this money violates the law. Since the total to be spent by the U.N. for the various seminars and conferences sponsored by the Special Unit is \$8.2 million, the U.S. should be withholding at least \$2,050,000 and possibly more if other PLO "projects" in the U.N. are uncovered.

UNESCO is a case in point. According to State Department records, the U.S. withheld only \$30,659 from UNESCO last year. Yet UNESCO's own Approved Programme and Budget for 1981-1983 indicates that the total "Aid to Refugees and Liberation Movements" is at least \$8.8 million. Congress should determine how much of this is spent on the PLO--particularly considering UNESCO's strong anti-Israeli, pro-PLO record.

Why has the law been interpreted so laxly by the State Department? Why has it not closely examined the real expenditures of the Palestine Committee and Special Unit? Why has there not been a close scrutiny of other U.N. agencies regarding their PLO support? Richard Hennes, Executive Director of the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations says that the amount withheld by the U.S. for PLO activities is "largely symbolic," for it does not really prevent the U.N. from apportioning the full amount to the Palestine Committee and the Special Unit. Congress, however, did not enact the law as an empty symbol or to be enforced symbolically. For this reason, Congress should begin investigating how the State Department contributes to U.N. projects. Congress should scrutinize the whole range of help that the U.N. gives the PLO--not just through the U.N. Secretariat but through agencies such as UNESCO. And Congress should determine who is responsible for the State Department's permissive interpretation of U.S. law.

The Reagan Administration has stated clearly that it does not want to contribute to U.N. projects that violate the intent of the U.N. Charter to promote peace and respect for the territorial integrity of member states. The PLO openly is attempting to violate the territorial integrity of a member of the U.N. The American people, through their elected representatives, have declared their opposition to supporting the PLO through the U.N. Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Edelman says that he intends to ensure that the law at last is obeyed. Congress should make sure that this is done.

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For further information:

U.N. Documents A/C.5/26/83, 4 December 1981; A/C.5/37/64, 29 November 1982; Supplement No. 49 (A/37/49); A/C.5/37/4.
Thomas G. Gulick, "How the U.N. Aids Marxist Guerrilla Groups," Heritage Foundation Background No. 177, April 8, 1982.