



How dilemmas faced by aid organizations in conflict zones are negotiated in the public sphere. An analysis using the UNRWA debate in Switzerland as a case study.

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

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Sophia Widmer, July 2025

Summary

This thesis explores how the dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations in conflict zones are negotiated and represented in the public sphere, using the UNRWA debate in Switzerland between October 2023 and January 2025 as a case study. The thesis investigates how different Swiss newspapers portray UNRWA and how these representations can influence public understanding and political discourse. Combining qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis with five expert interviews, the thesis examines the broader media narratives that shape perceptions of UNRWA. The media analysis revealed clear differences between Swiss German and Swiss French outlets. NZZ adopted a highly critical stance, focusing on allegations of Hamas infiltration and questioning UNRWA's neutrality. Tagesanzeiger acknowledged criticism but framed UNRWA's role more strongly in humanitarian terms. Le Temps portrayed UNRWA as an indispensable humanitarian organization, emphasizing the dangers of funding cuts. The interviews confirmed UNRWA's irreplaceable role in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), while highlighting how public accusations and media narratives complicate the organization's work. The findings show that media representations do not simply reflect reality but actively shape it – affecting public opinion and the operational space of humanitarian organizations. A more balanced and contextualized media discourse is therefore essential for sustaining humanitarian aid in complex and politically sensitive environments like OPT.

Key Words: Humanitarian Aid, UNRWA, Media Representations, Conflict Zones, Israel-Palestine Conflict, Humanitarian Dilemmas

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht, wie die Dilemmata, mit denen humanitäre Organisationen in Konfliktzonen konfrontiert sind, in der Öffentlichkeit verhandelt und dargestellt werden. Als Fallbeispiel dient die UNRWA Debatte in der Schweiz zwischen Oktober 2023 und Januar 2025. Die Arbeit analysiert, wie verschiedene Schweizer Zeitungen über die UNRWA berichten und inwiefern diese Darstellungen das öffentliche Verständnis sowie politische Diskurse beeinflussen können. Durch die Kombination einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse, einer kritischen Diskursanalyse und fünf Expert:inneninterviews wird untersucht, welche mediale Narrative die Wahrnehmung von UNRWA prägen. Die Medienanalyse zeigt deutliche Unterschiede zwischen der deutsch- und der französischsprachigen Schweiz. Die NZZ vertritt eine stark kritische Haltung, legt den Fokus auf Vorwürfe wie der Hamas-Infiltration und stellt die Neutralität der UNRWA infrage. Der Tagesanzeiger kritisiert die UNRWA zwar, stellt Ihre Rolle jedoch stärker in einen humanitären Kontext. Le Temps beschreibt die UNRWA als unentbehrliche humanitäre Organisation und betont die Gefahren eines Finanzierungsstopps. Die Interviews bestätigen die Unersetzbarkeit der UNRWA in den besetzten palästinensischen Gebieten, weisen jedoch auch auf die Herausforderungen hin, die öffentliche Anschuldigungen und mediale Narrative für die Arbeit der Organisation darstellen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Medienrealitäten nicht einfach die Wirklichkeit abbilden, sondern diese aktiv mitgestalten – sie beeinflussen die öffentliche Meinung und den Handlungsspielraum humanitärer Organisationen. Ein ausgewogener und kontextualisierter Mediendiskurs ist daher entscheidend, um humanitäre Hilfe in komplexen und politisch sensiblen Kontexten wie den besetzten palästinensischen Gebieten aufrechtzuerhalten.

Schlüsselwörter: Humanitäre Hilfe, UNRWA, Mediale Darstellungen, Konfliktzonen, Israel-Palästina-Konflikt, Humanitäre Dilemmata

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c. Abbreviations

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

EDA: Eidgenössisches Departement für auswärtige Angelegenheiten / Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

FDP: Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei der Schweiz / Free Democratic Party of Switzerland

ICC: International Criminal Court

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IDF: Israel Defense Force

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

NZZ: Neue Zürcher Zeitung

OPT: Occupied Palestinian Territory

PA: Palestinian Authority

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization

SVP: Schweizerische Volkspartei / Swiss People's Party

UN: United Nations

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the
Near East

1. Introduction

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has been ongoing for decades, marked by recurring escalations and brief periods of relative calm. Although the intensity of violence and political attention has varied over time, the core issues of the conflict have remained unresolved until today. The attacks carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023, followed by Israel's military response in Gaza, marked the beginning of yet another severe escalation. What began as a sudden and devastating outbreak of violence quickly developed into a prolonged crisis that continues to shape the political and humanitarian landscape in and beyond the region. During this crisis, humanitarian organizations, especially UNRWA, have increasingly come under public and political attention regarding the roles and limitations of humanitarian actors operating in conflict zones. UNRWA has been operating in the region for over 70 years and plays a crucial role in delivering education, healthcare and emergency aid to millions of Palestinian refugees. However, in the wake of the October 7, 2023 events, the organization has faced renewed accusations such as lacking neutrality, being infiltrated by Hamas or failing to ensure proper oversight – allegations that have led several donor countries, including Switzerland, to review or suspend their financial contributions. These developments and the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) have triggered widespread debate in Swiss media and politics about the role, responsibility and legitimacy of UNRWA. While humanitarian organizations are essential in delivering life-saving services, they frequently operate in politically and ethically challenging environments. In many cases, access to affected populations requires negotiation with armed groups or authorities accused of human rights violations.

By informing the public about humanitarian crises and conflict situations, mass media play a significant role in shaping opinions. Through selective framing and editorial decisions, media outlets not only inform the public but also shape the environment in which political debates and funding decisions are made. How a humanitarian crisis is portrayed can strongly influence the legitimacy and public image of aid organizations. Media narratives can therefore serve both as amplifiers of humanitarian messages and as filters that decide what information is getting published. This dual role makes them a powerful actor in public negotiations of humanitarian dilemmas.

Against this background, this thesis aims to investigate how the dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations in conflict zones are negotiated in the public sphere, using the UNRWA debate in Switzerland as a case study. Specifically, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question: How are dilemmas faced by aid organizations in conflict zones negotiated in the public sphere? This question is addressed through a qualitative content analysis of three major Swiss newspapers – *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Tagesanzeiger* and *Le Temps* – covering the period from October 7, 2023, to January 31, 2025. The media analysis is complemented by expert interviews with representatives of different humanitarian actors based in Switzerland.

It is important to emphasize that this thesis does not aim to take a position in favor or against any party involved in the conflict. Rather, it approaches the selected media articles with a critical lens, recognizing that media coverage always represents a constructed perspective rather than a neutral or complete reflection of reality. The representations analyzed in this research should be understood as one possible interpretation of events and not as absolute truths. At no point is it the intention of this thesis to assess the factual correctness of the media content, nor to claim the authority to determine the truth. Rather, the aim is to observe and analyze how Swiss media portrayed the events and controversies surrounding UNRWA during the above-mentioned period. To do so, the thesis is structured into different parts. First, historical and contextual background is provided on the Israeli Palestinian conflict, including the founding of Israel, religious and political dynamics in the region, the emergence of Hamas, the establishment and role of UNRWA and the happenings and consequences of the October 7, 2023 attack. Then, relevant theoretical perspectives are introduced, focusing on humanitarian aid in conflict zones and the role of media in shaping public discourse. This is followed by an explanation of the methodological approach, which combines content analysis and elements of critical discourse analysis. The core findings are then presented, highlighting the media narratives and discourse strands that emerged from the analysis, as well as insights from the expert interviews. In the final stages, the discussion connects these findings to the guiding research question and theoretical reflections.

2. The Israel – Palestine Conflict

The history of Palestine and Israel can be counted to one of the most enduring conflicts in modern history, rooted in a complex interplay of historical, political, cultural and religious factors. Over centuries, this conflict has evolved through various phases with both Palestinians and Israelis claiming historical connections to the same land. This chapter aims to provide a concise summary of this multifaced history while acknowledging the immense depth and complexity that cannot be fully captured in a single chapter. A significant focus of this chapter will be on religion as a central factor in the conflict. Jerusalem, in particular, stands as a symbol of the profound religious significance attributed to this region by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. The overlapping claims to sacred sites have not only fueled tensions but have also shaped the identities and political aspirations of the communities involved. In addition to examining the role of religion, this chapter will provide a brief overview of Hamas, including its origins and current role in the region, before introducing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Furthermore, this chapter will briefly examine the events of October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel, resulting in significant casualties and hostages, prompting Israel to declare war and begin a major military operation in Gaza that lasts until this day.

2.1 History and founding of Israel

The history of the land that is today known as Israel and OPT is long and complex. For the purpose of this thesis, however, the historical overview begins in 1922 with the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine. Between 1922 and 1947, Palestine was a British Mandate territory. While the primary goal of mandated territories was to eventually transit them into independent states, Britain pursued different objectives in Palestine. It aimed to implement the Balfour Declaration, which articulated the British support for the creating of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Consequently, under British administration, the local Arab population faced a wave of Jewish immigration, leading to significant demographic changes and escalating tensions between the communities. The influx of Jewish immigrants not only altered the demographic composition but also created economic competition over land and resources, further

worsening hostilities between Arabs and Jews. After initially attempting to address these tensions itself, Britain handed over the issue to the United Nations (UN) (United Nations, n.d.). The UN Partition Plan of 1947 proposed dividing Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. This solution envisioned two independent states, Israel and Palestine, coexisting peacefully side by side (Baumgart-Ochse, 2013). While Jewish leaders viewed this plan as a political opportunity, it was vehemently rejected by the Arab side, further deepening regional divisions. The following declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel in Tel Aviv in 1948 was met with immediate resistance from neighboring Arab states. The pre-existing tensions and the declaration of Israel's statehood triggered the 1948 war, which had devastating consequences: over 700,000 Palestinians were displaced, resulting in a big refugee crisis. Therefore, for one group, 1948 marks the celebration of their state's birth; for the other, it became known as Nakba, or "catastrophe". Since then, Palestine has ceased to exist on political maps. Between 1948 and the early 1990s, Israel engaged in conflicts with various Arab states as well as with the newly established Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Despite repeated efforts to destroy Israel, this goal was never achieved. Leadership changes within both Israel and the PLO then paved the way for future peace negotiations (Felsch, 2018). The Oslo Accords, signed in 1993 and 1995, marked a turning point in the relations between Israel and Palestine. These agreements initiated a process of self-governance for Palestinian territories and led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Oslo Accords were the results of negotiations aimed at creating a pathway toward a lasting peace solution (Baumgart-Ochse, 2013).

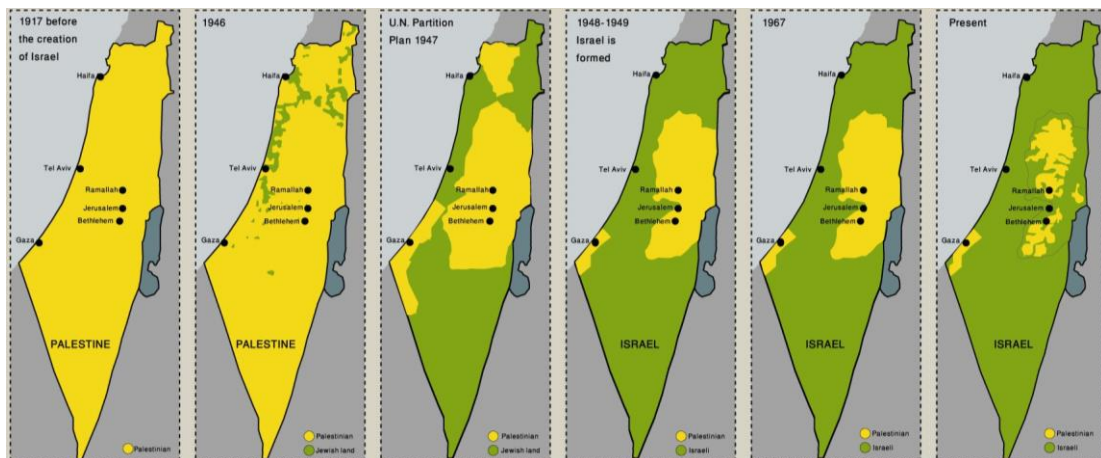


Figure 1: Change of the borders over time (Palestine Portal, n.d.)

For Palestinians, the vision of their own state always represented the central political goal of their national movement. However, the path to Palestinian statehood faces significant challenges. The Palestinian territories, despite the Oslo Accords, remain under varying degrees of Israeli occupation, with unresolved conflicts over security, territory, Jewish settlements, Jerusalem's status, Palestinian refugees and resource allocations (Baumgart-Ochse, 2013). That's why the subsequent years were marked by political and social challenges. Despite positive steps that offered opportunities for peaceful coexistence, the agreements remained unfulfilled. In particular, Israel's continued settlement expansion progressively altered territorial boundaries to the disadvantage of Palestinians, further undermining conditions for implementing other aspects of the accords. The first and second Intifadas – 'Intifada' being an Arabic term meaning uprising or resistance movement – highlight the intensity of violence and deep-rooted anger in the region. These uprisings occurred between 1987-1993 and 2000-2005, involving armed attacks, suicide bombings and widespread unrest against Israel. Both uprisings resulted in significant casualties and destruction on both sides, further eroding relations (Felsch, 2018).

In addition to conflicts with Israel, the Palestinian leadership faced internal challenges. There was a deep divide between the two major Palestinian political factions, Hamas and Fatah, regarding the approach to the conflict and the nature of a future Palestinian state. Following a change in government, it became increasingly difficult for the PLO to prevent Palestinians from resorting to violent resistance. Following failed attempts to form a unity government, Hamas gained popularity and won an absolute parliamentary majority in the 2006 election. However, this victory was not recognized by Israel or Western nations, leading to violent clashes between Hamas and the PLO. Since then, Hamas has governed Gaza while Fatah – under the PLO leadership – has controlled the West Bank (Marzano, 2021). This division has created two distinct political entities within Palestinian society that often pursue conflicting agendas, further complicating efforts to achieve national unity. In 2011, when the PA applied for full membership at the UN, it sent another strong signal of its claim to independence despite its territories remaining under Israeli occupation. This application was vehemently opposed by Israel as well as by other Western donor countries, who argued that a Palestinian state should emerge from peace negotiations with Israel rather than unilateral initiatives (Baumgart-Ochse, 2013).

Distribution of seats in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)

■ Change and Reform (Hamas)
 ■ Fatah
 ■ Independents
 ■ Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa (PFLP)
■ Third Way (Fayyad)
 ■ Alternative (DFLP, PPP, Fida)
 ■ Independent Palestine (Mustafa Barghouti)

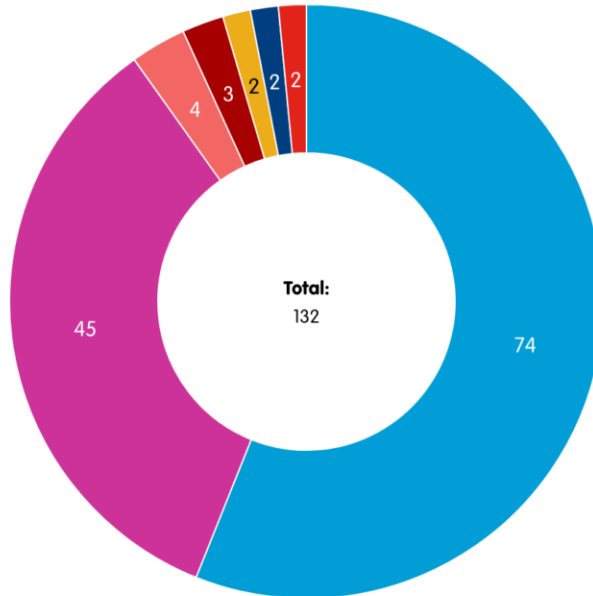


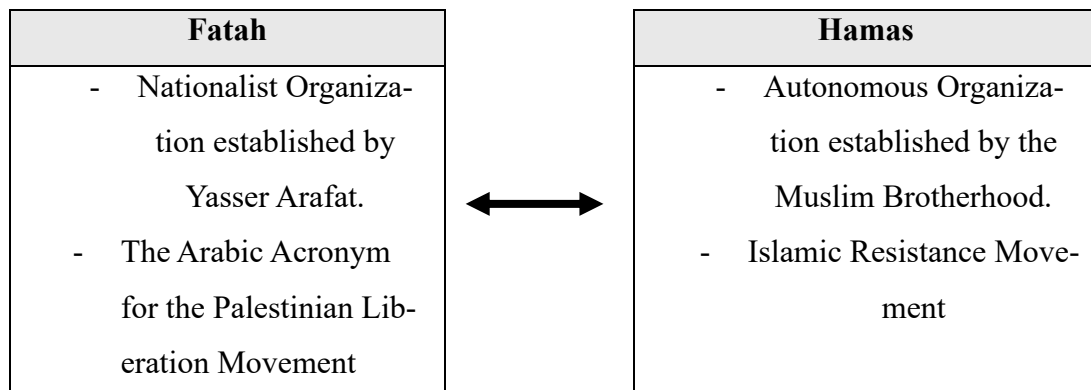
Figure 2: Hamas won the 2006 election (*Mapping Palestinian Politics, 2025*)

Today, political divisions between Gaza under Hamas and the West Bank under Fatah leadership present significant obstacles to a unified Palestinian representation. This fragmentation complicates peace negotiations (Felsch, 2018). Additional challenges include external players such as Egypt or Qatar, whose financial and political resources exert considerable influence on Palestinian strategies. Furthermore, internal divisions within both Hamas and Fatah make it nearly impossible for Palestinians to present a unified and strong position in negotiations with Israel’s government. As a result, prospects for establishing a Palestinian state with “territorial contiguity and reasonable borders” (Marzano, 2021: 310) are becoming increasingly remote (Marzano, 2021).

Table 1: PLO vs. PA (Mapping Palestinian Politics, 2025)

| | PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) | PA (Palestinian Authority) |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Founded | 1964 | 1994 (as part of the Oslo Accords) |
| Purpose | Political representation of all Palestinians worldwide. Participates in UN activities. | Administrative authority of OPT. |
| Relationship | Founder and political umbrella of the PA. | Executive Body of the PLO. |
| Status | Internationally recognized as the legitimate representation of the Palestinian People. | Not recognized as a sovereign state. |
| Leadership | Before: Yasser Arafat, Today: Mahmoud Abbas | Before: Yasser Arafat, Today: Mahmoud Abbas |
| Last elections | 2006 | |
| Since 2006 | Following the elections, Palestinian governance became divided between Hamas and Fatah, with Hamas controlling Gaza and Fatah exercising authority in West Bank. Since then, Hamas developed its own institutions in Gaza while the PA in West Bank received a lot of international support to build state institutions. | |

Table 2: Fatah vs. Hamas (Mapping Palestinian Politics, 2025)



2.1.1 Today's Situation

International involvement in the Palestine territories is substantial, with the region receiving one of the highest amounts of international aid per capita worldwide. However, this aid comes with contradictions. While donor countries support the development of state institutions, many say that this support simultaneously hinders the establishment of statehood by insisting that a peace agreement with Israel must precede any recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. The ongoing occupation and settlement activities by Israel are central issues that obstruct progress towards peace. Experts argue that establishing lasting peace requires developing robust state institutions capable of ensuring security, economic development and rule of law. The concept of "liberal peace" which emphasizes democratization and human rights among other pillars, guides international efforts in this context. Yet the Palestinian situation is distinct from other instances of international state-building, as it is not characterized by post-conflict reconstruction but by ongoing occupation (Baumgart-Ochse, 2013).

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza underscores the urgency of addressing these political realities. Even before recent escalations in violence, OPT was experiencing what aid agencies described as a "humanitarian implosion". Since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, conditions have decreased significantly; each new crisis has been characterized as one of the most severe since 1948. Gaza's isolation complicates matters further – most Palestinians cannot leave the territory or access their goods while outsiders face barriers to entry. This isolation has transformed Gaza into a unique humanitarian space where only military actors and humanitarian workers can operate. Therefore, Feldmann sees Gaza's humanitarian crisis "as a symptom of a political situation – a result of occupation – and that any discussion of humanitarian aid should be accompanied by such analysis" (2009: 34). Therefore, she insists that the recognition of Palestinians legitimate political demands alongside their humanitarian needs must remain at the forefront of discussions about aid and resolution efforts (Feldman, 2009). Ultimately, resolving the refugee issue remains critical for any potential Israeli Palestinian peace agreement; however, various obstacles have hindered progress in achieving a lasting resolution (Bocco, 2010).

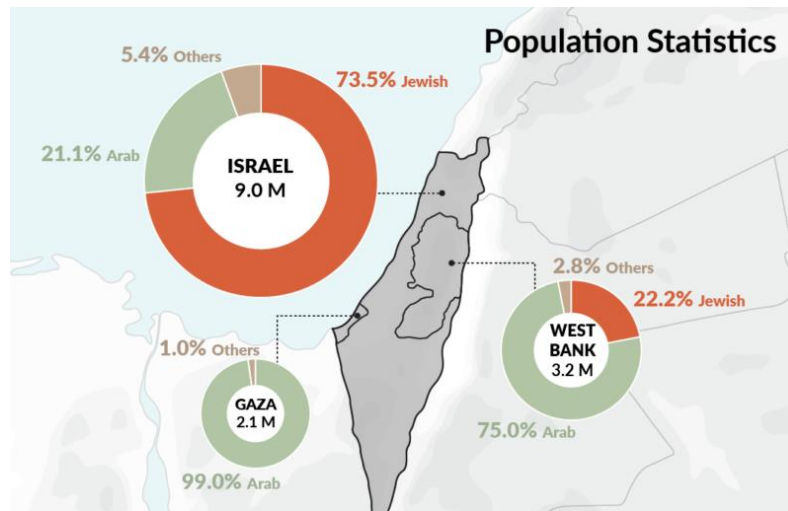


Figure 3: Population Overview (Noah Kennedy, 2024)

2.2 Religious Diversity

The conflict over Jerusalem is deeply entrenched in the religious and cultural significance of the city for Jews, Christians and Muslims. For Judaism, Jerusalem holds outstanding importance, as it is mentioned over 600 times in the Old Testament. Zion, another name for Jerusalem, embodies the holiness of the entire city. The Temple Mount plays a particularly pivotal role: according to Jewish faith, it is believed to be the site of the foundation stone of the Earth. To safeguard this sacred location, the mount was encircled by large stone walls. The remaining part of these walls is now known as the Western Wall, regarded as a place of divine presence where many Jews come to pray. Additionally, outside Jerusalem’s Old City, there are other significant Jewish sites that reinforce the vision of a unified Jerusalem as a holy city.

For Islam, Jerusalem also holds profound spiritual significance. The Temple Mount is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, considered the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. It serves as an important pilgrimage center for Muslims worldwide. Similar to Jewish beliefs, Muslims view the entire Temple Mount as sacred, further strengthening their claim to this location (Gertheiss, 2011). Both Judaism and Islam attribute deep religious significance to Jerusalem, leading to competing claims over the city. Extremists on both sides believe it is their sacred duty to protect the “Holy Land”, even by using violence (Felsch, 2018). However, perspectives on which religion has rightful authority over the city are highly contested and reflected on the many visible and invisible boundaries within Jerusalem. Clear divisions exist between

Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, which are often avoided by members of the other community and lead to a strong social and political fragmentation. This separation is also evident in the education system where schoolchildren are taught according to different curricula. Furthermore, legal distinction exist among residents: Palestinian Jerusalemites are typically not Israeli citizens and must regularly renew their status as “permanent residents”. Nevertheless, this status offers advantages compared to Palestinians living outside Jerusalem (Gertheiss, 2011). These divisions contribute significantly to the ongoing tensions and recurring conflicts surrounding the area.

2.3 Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement)

The Islamic Resistance Movement, known as Hamas, originated in Gaza in 1987 shortly after the First Intifada began. Its founder, Ahmad Yassin, built the group on the foundation of a Muslim organization that had been active in Gaza since 1973, primarily offering humanitarian assistance to the local population. From the very beginning, Hamas pursued the goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state that would include Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. In 1988, Hamas introduced its charter, aligning itself with the Muslim Brotherhood (political force advocating the implementation of Sharia law) and expressing its goal of creating an Islamic state across all of Palestine. The group adopted armed resistance (jihad) as a central strategy, organizing its military operations through the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Alongside its military activities, Hamas also developed a social outreach arm, known as Dawah, to provide community services. While Hamas initially refused to acknowledge Israel, it began to show some flexibility in agreements with Fatah in 2005 and 2007, indicating a willingness to accept a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, though still without recognizing the state of Israel (Barnea, 2024). Yet not all members of the Hamas’s leadership were pleased with the political development. They hold different positions on the possibility of signing some form of long term “agreement” with Israel (Marzano, 2021). The agreements from 2005 and 2007 were reiterated in a 2017 policy document, which supported a state within those borders but continued to withhold formal recognition of Israel. Since the mid-1990s, Hamas popularity among Palestinians has grown, fueled by its strong opposition to Israel and its involvement in attacks,

including suicide bombings against both civilian and military targets in Israel. The group has maintained control over Gaza since the election in 2006 (Barnea, 2024).

2.4 UNRWA

The UNRWA "was established by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 in December 1949 as one of two UN agencies mandated to fulfill the international community's obligations towards Palestinians refugees displaced and dispossessed by the partition of Palestine in 1948" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019: 31). Initially given a three-year mandate, UNRWA has seen its mission consistently renewed for the past 70 years, making it one of the largest and longest-standing humanitarian organizations (Farah, 2010). The agency's mandate extends to provide assistance and protection to Palestine refugees in its five areas of operation: Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, offering various services including health care, social services, education, microfinance, and direct cash emergency programs. However, UNRWA's operations have been characterized by financial precarity since its inception, with donor support often failing to sustain peace with the growing refugee population. This has led to a reduction in services and a shrinking of the groups entitled to receive UNRWA assistance over time (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019).

The agency's unique position is further highlighted by its role as a major employer, with approximately 95% of UNRWA employees being Palestinian refugees, making it one of the main sources of employment for Palestinians across the Middle East (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019). This is particularly significant in contexts where Palestinians face employment restrictions, such as in Lebanon. However, it's worth noting that inequities exist between local employees and international staff, with the latter having greater decision-making powers and higher salaries (Farah, 2010). Bian also talks about expatriate staff who are present for a short amount of time and are "mostly seen in leadership, consultancy, advisory, and decision-making positions. They are well-compensated. The local counterparts are nationals of the host state where aid organizations operate. Local staff members are found more on a commonly facilitating ground-level, physical aid delivery, monitoring and information retention positions. Their compensations are significantly lower than those of their expat counterparts" (Bian, 2022: 2). In 2021, UNRWA operated extensively in Gaza and the West Bank,

managing 65 health care facilities and 374 schools. These schools served a total of 336,354 pupils and were supported by 11,658 individuals working in the education sector. In June 2022, 6.58 million people were registered with UNRWA. By 2028, this number could exceed 7.3 million (UNRWA, 2023).

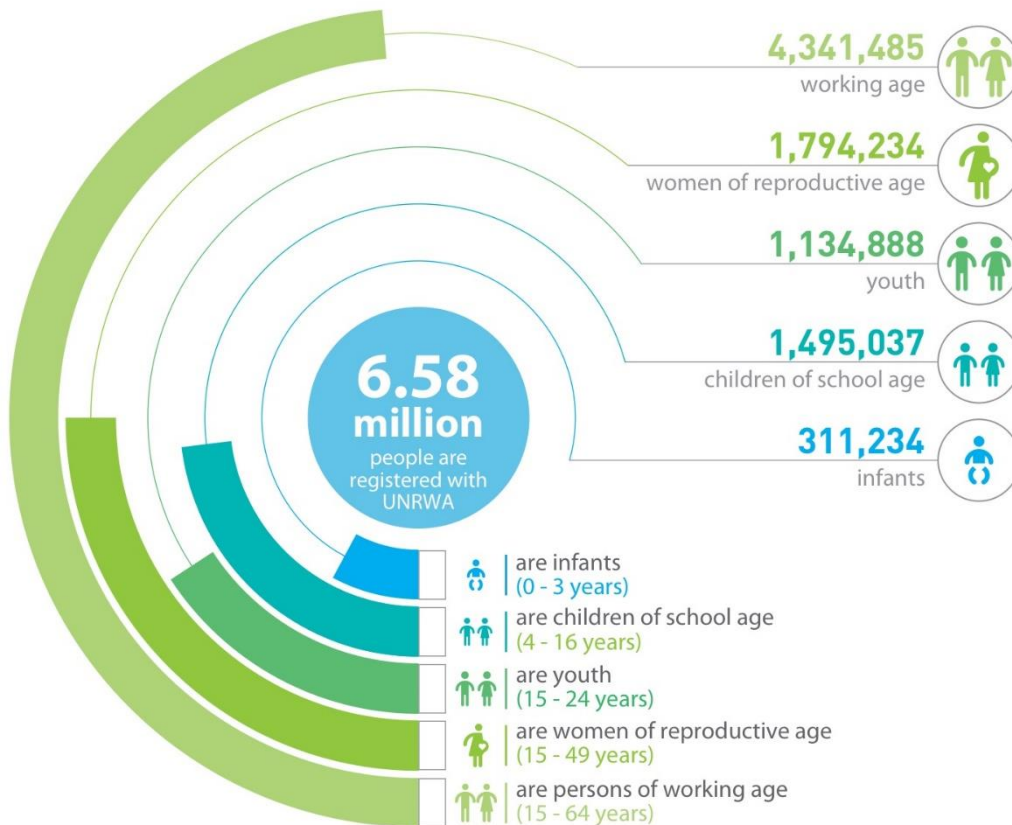


Figure 4: UNRWA Statistics (UNRWA, 2023)

UNRWA's definition of a Palestine refugee is administrative and "does not translate directly into recognition by international law" (Bocco, 2010: 238). It includes those whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the 1948 conflict and who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result thereof. This definition excludes refugees who left Palestine after 1948, with an exception for those displaced in 1967, and those who were not continually present in Palestine for the two years preceding 1948. Over the years, further exclusions were made, "as only the children of Palestine refugee men -not women- can register for UNRWA services" (Irfan, 2017: 15). The agency's work is often seen as an indicator of the UN's ongoing responsibility for resolving the Palestinian refugee situation. However, UNRWA has faced criticism from various sides. Some Palestinians hold the UN responsible for

enabling their dispossession by legitimizing the partition of Palestine, while supporters of Israel have claimed that both the UN General Assembly and UNRWA are biased towards Palestinians. Despite its long-standing presence, UNRWA retains its original status as a temporary agency, with its mandate renewed approximately every three years. This paradoxical long-term temporary status creates challenges for long-term planning and strategic decision-making. Additionally, UNRWA's funding comes entirely from voluntary donations, further complicating its operations and sustainability and questioning its independence (Irfan, 2017). This means that UNRWA is constantly proving its adaptability amidst political tensions. The organization must continuously adapt its strategies and services to political circumstances without compromising its humanitarian mandate (Bocco, 2010). This commitment to adaptability is being reflected in UNRWA's strategic plan for the years 2023 to 2028, which includes the agency's key priorities for improvement. Over the next years, UNRWA aims to enhance its operations by several points. These include fostering regular, transparent and in-depth dialogue, consistently providing clear, comprehensive and detailed information about its activities, and striving to become a more accountable, inclusive, transparent and agile organization. Additional efforts will be directed toward strengthening governance and management structures, improving organizational culture and ethical standards, and advancing the use of digital technologies (UNRWA, 2023).

The complex role of UNRWA is further illustrated by its operations in times of crisis, such as the ongoing conflict in Gaza. "Before October 7, 2023, UNRWA operated 22 primary health centers in Gaza, staffed by approximately 1000 health-care workers and serving 1.3 million Palestine refugees" (Al-Jadba et al., 2024: 723). However, due to intensifying bombardments, the number of operational centers shrunk to just six by early January 2024, with only about 650 health-care workers still able to work. The agency has had to adapt its operations, with some health centers adopting double-shift operations to manage the enormous numbers of patients. In the southern governorates of Gaza, UNRWA administers 93 shelters, primarily converted from UNRWA schools and other buildings, these shelters provide accommodation and health services for internally displaced people. Each shelter accommodates an average of 18'000 displaced individuals, stretching resources and compromising health and sanitary conditions beyond their limits. The crisis has exacerbated existing challenges with the patient load per health-care worker nearly doubling to an average of 113 patients per day. The

situation is further complicated by acute shortage of medical and non-medical supplies, restricted access for aid deliveries, and a critical state of water, sanitation and hygiene conditions (Al-Jadba et al., 2024). In conclusion, UNRWA plays a crucial role in providing assistance and protection to Palestine refugees, but its work is fraught with political, financial and operational challenges. The agency's unique position at the intersection of local, regional and international processes reflects the complexities of the Palestinian refugee situation and the broader political landscape in the Middle East (Farah, 2010).

Humanitarianism, often conducted under the auspices of the UN, has been a consistent aspect of Palestinian life "since the displacement and dispossession of the majority of the population on the 1948 war, known to Palestinians as the Nakba" (Feldmann 2009: 23). This long-standing humanitarian presence has had profound and complex effects on Palestinian society and politics, illustrating the intricate relationship between humanitarian action and political outcomes. The humanitarian approach, while often presented as apolitical, invariably has political implications. As Didier Fassin notes, the act of naming causes and identifying victims is crucial to humanitarianism's "politics of life" (Fassin, 2011). This underscores the fact that regardless of intent of mandate limitations, humanitarian interventions always produce political effects. These effects can be paradoxical, as highlighted by scholars like Fiona Terry and David Kennedy. Humanitarian action may inadvertently prolong conflicts, impede accountability for perpetrators due to principles of neutrality and confidentiality, impose restrictions on victims through identification and registration procedures, and potentially exploit people's suffering in the process of mobilizing international compassion (Feldman, 2009).

2.5 October 7, 2023

In the morning of the October 7, 2023, Hamas started a large-scale attack on Israel. Based on the scale and brutality of the attack, it can be said that this happening has been planned in detail (Bera, 2024). The assault began around 6:30 AM with a massive arrange of rockets targeting civilian areas in southern and central parts of the country. At the same time, armed groups from Gaza crossed into Israeli territory, targeting communities near the border. This led to intense clashes involving local residents,

police and the Israeli military. The violence resulted in the deaths of more than 1,300 Israelis and around 5,000 injured. In addition, over 200 people were taken as hostages into Gaza. Hamas described the attack as an effort to challenge Israeli control over Jerusalem and the broader region (Barnea, 2024). In response to the unprecedented scale and brutality of the attack, Israel officially declared war for the first time since 1973 and launched a full-scale military operation. This included airstrikes, naval attacks, artillery shelling and a ground invasion that began in the north of Gaza and later expanded to other areas (Barnea, 2024). The immediate aftermath also saw Israel imposing a total blockade on Gaza, cutting off electricity and sealing border crossings, which leaves the territory isolated and without power (Uzun, 2024).

The events of October 7, 2023 did not occur in a vacuum but were rooted in a history of unresolved tensions, failed peace processes and cycles of violence. The ongoing displacement of Palestinians and the absence of a Palestinian state have perpetuated instability, with Israel citing security concerns and Palestinians enduring military occupation and blockades. The attack and the subsequent Israeli response triggered an international investigation, in which both sides were charged with war crimes: Hamas for targeting civilians and taking hostages, and Israel for bombardments and collective punishment, including the use of controversial weapons and blockades that have severely impacted Gaza's civilian population (Shafi Awan & Malik, 2024).

As the conflict continues, the humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorates constantly. The region, already one of the most densely populated in the world and under blockade since 2007, faces relentless bombardment from Israeli forces by air, sea and land. Following Israel's announcement of a "complete siege", essential supplies such as food, water, medicine and electricity became scarce since. The collapse of water and sanitation services, along with the shutdown of the last functioning desalination plant, raises fears of dehydration and disease outbreaks. By late October 2023, over 6,500 deaths had been reported, with women and children comprising the majority of casualties. Aid deliveries are minimal, and the destruction of communication infrastructure further hampers relief efforts (Seita & Al-Jadba, 2023). The crisis worsened over the months. By January 2024, more than 75% of Gaza's population had been displaced, many of whom were forced to relocate several times in search of safety. Access to healthcare has been severely compromised and shortages of electricity, fuel, water and medicine have become acute (Al-Jadba et al., 2024). In February 2024, more than

60% of the housing units in the Gaza Strip were damaged, making them uninhabitable and worsening the suffering of the civilian population (Uzun, 2024).

International efforts to mediate the conflict and provide humanitarian aid relief have largely fallen short. Followed by Israeli allegations, that some UNRWA staff may have participated in the attacks of the October 7, 2023, many donor countries suspended their payments to the organization. The UN estimates 450\$ million USD to not reach UNRWA. Thereupon, an independent review group "was created to assess whether UNRWA is doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality and respond to allegations of serious neutrality breaches when they are made, taking into account the [...] context in which it has to work, especially in Gaza, and to make recommendations for UNRWA to improve and strengthen in this area, if necessary" (Colonna, 2024, 3). The group was led by Ms. Catherine Colonna whereby the Report is commonly known as the Colonna Report. The group analyzed the UNRWA mechanisms and procedures during nine weeks to be able to assess the level of neutrality given within the organization. The analysis included field visits, speaking to different stakeholders such as "UNRWA officials, donor Member States, host countries, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)" (Colonna, 2024, 3). The report published in April 2024 contains the following conclusions:

- "UNRWA's neutrality challenges differ from those of other international organizations due to the magnitude of its operations, with most personnel being locally recruited and recipients of UNRWA services" (Colonna, 2024, 4);
- "UNRWA remains pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services, particularly in health and education, to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank. As such, UNRWA is irreplaceable and indispensable to Palestinians' human and economic development"(Colonna, 2024, 4);
- "The Review revealed that UNRWA has established a significant number of mechanisms and procedures to ensure compliance with the humanitarian principles, with emphasis on the principle of neutrality, and that it possesses a more developed approach to neutrality than other similar UN or NGO entities" (Colonna, 2024, 4-5);

- "The UNRWA Neutrality Framework serves as a repository of existing standards, practices and procedures with regard to neutrality and to introduce new standards and procedures. The framework aims to ensure a consistent and coherent approach, agency-wide, to key issues relating to the neutrality of UNRWA operations. The Framework covers substantive areas including the neutrality of UNRWA staff and other personnel, including their use of social media; neutrality of UNRWA installations; neutrality of UNRWA assets, particularly vehicles; and other areas in relation to UNRWA operations, including donors, partners and agency assistance" (Colonna, 2024, 5);
- "Despite this robust framework, neutrality-related issues persist. They include instances of staff publicly expressing political views, host-country textbooks with problematic content being used in some UNRWA schools, and politicized staff unions making threats against UNRWA management and causing operational disruptions" (Colonna, 2024, 5);
- "The relationship with donors needs to be deemed a strategic partnership, including on the issue of neutrality. For this, transparency is crucial. UNRWA should engage donors early with neutrality concerns and provide greater financial transparency to restore trust and confidence in the organization" (Colonna, 2024, 6);
- "UNRWA has reviewed all external allegations of breaches of neutrality and opened investigations where it has found prima facie evidence of misconduct, more than half of the allegations brought up" (Colonna, 2024, 13).

Nevertheless, Israel suspended the aid activities of UNRWA by the end of January 2025. Palestinians have described the suspension of UNRWA's activities as a "death sentence", given their dependence on its services. The current situation in Gaza is marked by a severe humanitarian crisis, with numerous Palestinians killed, including a significant number of children, and many more missing. Gaza remains largely cut off from the outside world as Israel maintains control over entry and exit points, placing responsibility for the welfare of the Gaza population on the Israeli authorities. Despite calls from organizations such as Amnesty International for all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and to minimize harm to the civilian population, the conflict continues (Shafi Awan & Malik, 2024).

3. Theoretical Concepts

To contextualize the analysis of the UNRWA debate in Switzerland, two theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant and will therefore be discussed in this chapter: Aid in conflict and the role of media representations of aid in war. The first perspective offers insights into the moral, political and operational dilemmas that arise when aid is delivered in highly politicized environments. The second theoretical perspective highlights the powerful role of media in shaping public perception, political debate and institutional legitimacy. Together these theoretical perspectives help to contextualize the pressure humanitarian organizations face and how they are portrayed within public and political discourse.

3.1 Aid in Conflict

In today's political landscape, emotions tied to moral concerns have become a driving force. These sentiments shape political discourse and provide justification for various practices, especially when addressing the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. This focus extends from local issues concerning the poor, immigrants, and homeless to global matters involving victims of famine, disease outbreaks, or armed conflicts. These moral sentiments can be understood as emotional responses that draw our attention to others' suffering and motivate us to seek solutions. They create a bridge between our feelings and our values, connecting our capacity for empathy with altruistic behavior. Some philosophical perspectives even suggest that these emotions form the foundation of morality itself, proposing that our ability to empathize precedes our understanding of what is good or right. Among these sentiments, compassion stands out as a particularly powerful blend of emotional and rational responses. When we feel sympathy for someone else's misfortune, it often leads to a sense of moral outrage. This combination of heartfelt concern and reasoned indignation can be a potent catalyst for taking action to address the source of suffering and work towards positive change (Fassin, 2011: 1).

Expanding the role of moral sentiments in politics, they can significantly influence humanitarian aid in conflict zones. The compassion and moral outrage that arise from witnessing the suffering of civilians in war zones can motivate individuals and

organizations to act. "The humanitarian workspace is highly transitional in nature, characterized by its in-between-ness, situated between the powerful and the powerless, the political and apolitical, as well as the reality of conflict and aspired peace" (Bian, 2022: 3). Humanitarian aid represents a direct response to emotional triggers. Images and stories of those affected by conflict can lead to public support for interventions, highlighting a collective sense of responsibility to alleviate suffering. However, delivering aid in such complex environments poses many difficult challenges (Bian 2022).

Since the end of the Cold War, humanitarian aid organizations have become common features in armed conflicts, providing vital services and attempting to secure internally and externally displaced persons and civilians affected by violence. A large portion of humanitarian assistance is directed towards programs operating in or near areas affected by conflict (Wood & Sullivan, 2015), highlighting its critical role in these areas. This active involvement had led to a growing "controversy over the unintended consequences of aid" (Narang, 2015: 184), prompting a deeper examination of its impacts. The primary aim of humanitarian aid is to help the victims of conflicts without discriminating against them. It's designed to prevent disastrous consequences by intervening before victims' health deteriorates (Perrin, 1998). The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, along with numerous NGO's have published the following Code of Conduct that outlines guiding principles for disaster response programs:

1. "The humanitarian imperative comes first.
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
4. We shall respect culture and custom.
5. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
6. Ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
7. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
8. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.

9. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects." (ICRC, n.d.)

This code outlines the theoretical framework for humanitarian aid organizations. In addition to the Code of Conduct, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) adheres to seven fundamental principles that shall guide their actions and decisions in all operations worldwide: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, Universality (ICRC, 2015). "These codes were formulated to ensure that humanitarianism would be impartial in the context of conflict and war on vague space 'outside' to the Global North" (Dadusc & Mudu, 2022: 1211). However, the actual implementation of and adherence to the Code of Conduct and the seven principles remain a complex and nuanced challenge. Even a deeper examination of the concept of neutrality reveals its multifaced nature, with various interpretations that often conflict with one another. Neutrality can be understood in several ways: firstly, it implies impartiality, where aid organizations maintain neutrality towards conflicting parties by not actively participating in the conflict or supporting any side. Secondly, it encompasses non-discrimination, ensuring that war victims receive aid without any adverse distinctions. Aid organizations further refine this concept by emphasizing that need alone should determine who receives help. Another aspect of neutrality involves the protected status of aid workers, their facilities, and those they help, classifying them as non-combatants who should not be attacked or exploited. Neutrality also signifies independence, particularly for international aid organizations from non-involved countries, who must remain neutral towards their home states' interests and resist being used as tools for other agendas. Lastly, neutrality means providing aid without attempting to spread religious or ideological views. These varied interpretations of neutrality can lead to different approaches in humanitarian work, sometimes creating tensions between principles and practical implementation (Schade, 2007: 183-84). However, even "as international donors maintain political neutrality, aid given in conflict settings cannot and does not have a neutral impact on the conflicts where it is provided. The resources provided by donors, and the manner in which these resources are organized and delivered, play into and reinforce the relationships between contending groups in recipient societies" (Anderson, 2004: 2).

The overall aid strategy typically integrates a range of actions implemented at various stages throughout the production and distribution process of aid (Perrin, 1998). Humanitarian aid can take various forms, from limited one-time operations to complex long-term rehabilitation programs. These can include immediate relief work, medium-term rehabilitation, and operations aimed at preventing violations of humanitarian and human rights law (Perrin, 1998: 323). However, while essential for saving lives, relieving suffering, and restoring dignity, humanitarian aid can also have negative effects on victims and local systems (Perrin, 1998). In war zones, humanitarian supplies often become the largest external resource, making their control an objective itself (Terry, 1998). This leads to several issues:

- aid often encompasses looting and predation;
- rebels may perceive aid projects as challenges to their authority;
- as the typically weaker party, rebels face pressure to acquire resources, often through predation;
- aid organizations often seek to gain civilian loyalty by offering essential services and resources that rival those provided by rebel groups, such as food, medical care, sanitation facilities or protection measures.;
- refugee camps provide the opportunity for rebels to recruit new members (Wood & Sullivan, 2015).

When humanitarian assistance inadvertently bolsters insurgent activities, it can potentially escalate challenges to state authority, especially in situations where aid organizations function outside the state's control (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Talking about humanitarian aid as an external resource points to an additional problem. Perrin notes that "it should also be designed to prevent the growth of dependence on outside assistance" (Perrin, 1998: 322). However, there is a significant imbalance existing in many humanitarian aid and peacebuilding interventions. While such organizations should ideally draw on both local and thematic knowledge to be effective, there is a clear preference for foreign expertise over local knowledge. This preference manifests in various ways such as valuing the experience of foreign interveners trained in peacebuilding, humanitarian, or development techniques across multiple conflict zones, rather than prioritizing a deep understanding of specific local contexts. Consequently, many NGO's therefore underestimate the crucial importance of local context, leading to a problematic situation where organizations struggle to find individuals with both

technical expertise and local knowledge, ultimately devaluing the latter as it is perceived as less important and more difficult to acquire. The professionalization of the peacebuilding field has also brought some positive effects, but it falls short of really ensuring successful interventions. The emphasis on thematic expertise reinforces a hierarchy where expatriate aid workers or peacebuilders are seen as superior to local stakeholders. This creates an unequal dynamic in which local expertise is often valued only at the implementation level. Such practices can be counterproductive, potentially resulting in projects that unintentionally fuel violence. As a result, local populations often feel discriminated against and may react with violent protests against interveners. The lack of local ownership in international programs often results in resistance, distortion or opposition to foreign peace efforts, creating significant barriers to effective intervention. Ultimately, this situation raises critical questions about the sustainability of humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping activities. When local populations are minimally involved in organizing these efforts, it challenges the long-term effectiveness and appropriateness of such external interventions in fostering lasting peace and development (Autesserre, 2015: 6-98).

It is therefore not surprising that statistical analyses since 1945 indicate that humanitarian aid is associated with a decreased likelihood of resolving conflicts. This means that wars that receive greater amounts of relief appear to last longer on average or as Anderson stated: "International donor aid does not create conflicts, but it does influence whether they worsen or abate" (Anderson, 2004 11). Besides the above explained issues, this phenomenon can also occur as humanitarian agencies frequently face challenges in differentiating between rebels and civilians. This can lead to unintended provision of essential resources such as food, accommodation, and medical aid to insurgent forces. This gives combatants the opportunity to create protected spaces within humanitarian camps to launch attacks with relative immunity (Narang, 2015). Protected by international regulations and global empathy, settlement for displaced people can inadvertently offer ideal opportunities for rebels, potentially serving as operational hubs for planning and executing their military actions. However, "that there are militants among the refugees does not mean that all the civilians can be allowed to go hungry" (Barber, 1997: 9). It would be wrong to afford less protection for civilians within a camp due to the presence of combatants (Bryer & Cairns, 1997). This

creates a situation where "refugee aid has fed wars while attempting to abate their ravages" (Barber, 1997: 8).

In addition, aid organizations have taken on an expanded role in shaping public opinion and policy by providing information to media outlets and decision-makers. This information flow influences how conflicts are perceived internationally, affecting public and governmental reactions which in turn can influence the course of war and negotiations. This can have both positive and negative effects (for example the deployment or withdrawal of protection troops or aid) on humanitarian organizations (Schade, 2007). As a result, the distribution of aid can unintentionally intensify violence in the areas where it is provided (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). "Humanitarian aid can therefore influence conflict dynamics by affecting both its duration and level of violence" (Perrin, 1998: 328). The potential for humanitarian intervention to hinder conflict resolution is a significant concern for humanitarian actors. While many agencies prefer to maintain political neutrality, they hope that creating a "humanitarian space" can provide local actors with the necessary environment to resolve conflicts. The concept of space is crucial in humanitarian operations, encompassing both the crisis space that motivates interventions and the humanitarian space that allows assistance delivery. Aid agencies emphasize the importance of this humanitarian space for effective operations while recognizing its limitations. Despite these challenges, humanitarian action can inadvertently empower individuals politically and provide a platform for pressing claims (Feldman, 2009).

Addressing these issues openly poses a threat to humanitarian organizations. Funding providers may withdraw their support if aid recipients fail to achieve expectations or if they are found to be perpetrating significant acts of violence against civilians (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Much refugee relief money is raised from private sources however, the largest amounts of aid funding are sourced from government entities (Barber, 1997). The dependence on donors creates fear among aid organizations of losing donations, so they won't openly discuss failures (Terry, 1998). In addition, they must also constantly question whether the benefit of their help outweighs the misuse and the different side effects of their interventions (Bryer & Cairns, 1997). It can therefore be said that aid interventions are always extremely complex and present fundamental dilemmas (Terry, 1998). Perrin proposes that the "media have a role to play in reporting not only violation of human rights but also the successes of humanitarian aid"

(Perrin, 1998: 332). Emphasizing the actions that civilians take to support themselves during conflicts will provide a more accurate representation of the environment in which aid organizations operate (Bryer & Cairns, 1997).

Humanitarian organizations face complex ethical challenges that require a flexible approach to decision-making. Instead of adhering strictly to rigid moral frameworks, they must develop adaptive strategies that prioritize both immediate human needs and core humanitarian values. The focus should be on developing flexible strategies that allow them to negotiate effectively in challenging political and military environments. By doing so, they can navigate the complexities of humanitarian intervention without being constrained by ethical principles (Korf, 2006). Despite that aid situations often are invariably complex and pose fundamental dilemmas, humanitarian aid remains vital (Bryer & Cairns, 1997). When considering its immediate impact on preserving life and sustaining those who have lost their homes through the provision of essential resources, humanitarian efforts demonstrate clear and significant success. However, this positive assessment only reveals a fragment of the overall picture and may not accurately represent the full scope and complexity of humanitarian aid operations (Riddell, 2008).

3.2 Media Representation of Aid in War

"We are dependent on media, the news photographs, the stories of suffering on television – both long and short – the latest word from the Internet and social media accessed on our computers and hand-held devices, to bring the world to us. But the stories about the world are always, and can only be, media representations of the world and not the world itself" (Andersen, 2017: 13).

The complexity surrounding humanitarian aid extends far beyond the immediate challenges of delivering assistance to those in need. As discussed in the previous chapter, the unintended consequences of aid provision present a controversial issue that demands careful consideration. These consequences can range from creating dependency among recipient populations to unintentionally fueling conflicts or supporting corrupt practices. However, this multifaceted debate represents only one facet of the complex landscape. At the heart of this research lies an examination of the ongoing

debate in Switzerland surrounding the UNRWA. This focus asks for a deeper exploration of the role of media in shaping public perception and policy discussions. The power of information transmission in our interconnected world cannot be overstated, particularly when it comes to matters of international aid and conflict situations.

The mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy-making processes, particularly in the context of international conflicts (Joseph, 2014). In the absence of direct involvement or observation, we depend on others to be our eyes and ears. These intermediaries – photographers, reporters, videographers and storytellers – provide us with information through various media channels, including print, television, agency reports and social media platforms. However, the process of information transmission is complex and often problematic. News can be interpreted through many lenses, from local to global perspectives, some of which clarify while others may distort (Andersen, 2017). Their impact extends beyond that of international organizations, national governments and NGOs. The quality of information spread by the media can significantly affect social and political structures, contributing to the construction of the public sphere and democratic politics. Although the media do not directly dictate policy decisions, they significantly influence the environment in which those decisions are made (Joseph, 2014). That because the way disasters are portrayed can considerably influence our understanding of their nature, causes and implications (Andersen, 2017). Klein points out that there are various ways in which news stories can be reported:

- **Objectivity:** Objectivity is a key principle in journalism, even though it is not always easy to define or achieve. It involves striving for neutrality, avoiding personal bias, and ensuring that different viewpoints are presented fairly. Journalists aiming for objectivity also focus on accuracy, completeness and openness about their methods and sources;
- **Horse Race Coverage / Game Framing:** Horse Race Coverage also known as game framing is a style of framing that treats events or issues as competitions, often using language and imagery borrowed from sports. Instead of concentrating on the substance, this approach emphasizes the overall dynamics of the contest. Although this idea is often seen as reducing complex topics, it can also make the subject matter more engaging for the audience and draw greater public attention;

- Storytelling: In this approach, news are presented with narrative techniques to make it more engaging and relatable. By weaving facts into a compelling story, journalists hope to capture the audience's attention and make the story more attractive. Opinions differ on this method: some see it as the opposite of good journalism while others view it as a valuable way to communicate information effectively;
- News Softening or Tabloidization: This reporting style involves adopting features commonly found in tabloid media. The trend is often linked to increased competition and the need to attract readers. News softening can take many forms, but typically includes a focus on emotional stories, dramatic language, and visually striking images, all designed to evoke a strong response from the audience (M. Klein, 2023).

Through strategic placement, tone, repetition and selective framing of facts and analysis, the media often sets the agenda for public discourse. This may limit the range of policy options accessible to public officials (Joseph, 2014). Besides this, Wanta et al. noted that news directors also face constraints of time and space, forcing them to select only a handful of stories while leaving numerous news items unreported. This selective process is crucial in setting the public agenda, as issues that fail to pass through these gatekeepers also fail to gain attention in public discourse (Wanta et al., 2004).

In situations of international conflict, the media's role becomes even more pronounced. The manner and emphasis with which they approach their articles about a conflict have the potential to either foster peace and promote conflict resolution or intensify tensions and act as destructive agents. Although the media cannot determine the political outcomes of crises, their reporting can significantly influence public opinion, which in turn may influence policy-makers decisions (Joseph, 2014). In regard to fostering peace Scott et al. wrote that there can be a relationship between news story frequency and aid allocation, suggesting that each additional news story could potentially generate more money in disaster assistance (2022).

Regarding international conflicts, there's a growing recognition of the media's power to validate or justify the facts of the conflict. This awareness has led to increased efforts by conflict participants to manipulate news coverage, effectively using the media as a force multiplier (Joseph, 2014). It is therefore assumed that even politicians often

attempt to use media as a communication tool, effectively transforming it into a servant of governmental messaging (Olsen et al., 2003). As the process of news creating involves conscious selection of events, and in time of conflict, it can lead to enemy images being produced as propaganda and war preparation material. This can lead to the construction of negative stereotypes. The media's approach to framing and emphasizing threats significantly shapes public perception and reaction to these dangers. However, the commercialization of information introduces a problematic dynamic. To create a more sensational and marketable image, factual integrity may be compromised by producing more captivating narratives. This trend is worsened by the increasing market orientation of media organizations. Their dependence on attracting readers and advertisers can lead to news coverage that prioritizes shock value over depth and nuance (Joseph, 2014).

While media organizations may be inclined to create more captivating narratives, it's important to recognize that aid agencies could also have similar motivations (Joseph, 2014). Girardet et al. warn that humanitarian organizations might exaggerate or dramatize situations to attract media coverage. This practice could potentially lead to a distorting public perception of crises and their true nature (Girardet, 2002). This problem could be due to the fact that humanitarian organizations, both large and small, typically depend on a set of regular donors to fund their operations. Like businesses, these organizations need to show their relevance and value, demonstrating that their work makes a real difference in the lives of those they claim to help. They must be able to explain to their donors how and why they are carrying out planned activities and addressing the needs of individuals impacted by crises. In addition, some organizations aim to do more than just provide aid; they seek to drive change and promote human rights. These groups rely on public support to gain acceptance in the countries and communities where they work. They rely on public opinion to spread their messages and hope for public pressure to help raise awareness of the issues they react on. As a result, these organizations have two main reasons for communicating about their work and the issues they tackle. First, they show their donors that they are effectively working in their fields, using funds wisely. Second, they seek acceptance from the people they want to reach and work with. This dual purpose highlights the importance of communication for humanitarian organizations (Alrifai, 2017).

One can say that the global news landscape has been significantly shaped by western media. However, it's crucial to avoid broad generalizations about the function and impact of mass media across different societies. To properly understand media dynamics, one must examine them within the specific political, economic, and cultural frameworks of each nation. The media doesn't operate in a vacuum; rather, it's connected to various social structures. This interconnectedness often results in news coverage that reflects and reinforces prevailing national perspectives. As such, media output in different countries as well as within a country itself can vary considerably, shaped by local contexts and biases. Moreover, it is worth noting that the role of the media is also considerably influenced by the values prevalent among journalists. Additionally, the media's response in conflict situations is shaped by various factors, making true media objectivity in such circumstances often a myth (Joseph, 2014).

4. Methods and Data collection

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and data collection processes including in this thesis. It begins with a reflection on the researcher's positionality and the importance of self-awareness in qualitative research, particularly when investigating in politically sensitive and geographically distant conflict zones. The chapter then introduces the theoretical and analytical tools used to examine media discourses. Finally the chapter explains the reasons behind the selection of three Swiss newspapers, highlighting their regional contexts in order to ensure a representative media analysis.

4.1 Theoretical Input

4.1.1 Positionality

Research is an ongoing process that extends beyond the dissemination of findings. Its value lies in continuous reflection on various stages, including idea development, data collection, findings and implications. This reflection may manifest in different ways. During that process, the research space is shared and shaped by both researchers and participants with their identities potentially influencing the research process. Our perceptions and biases play a significant role in shaping this research space. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the data collection instrument. Consequently, the researcher's beliefs, political stance, and cultural background are important variables that can affect the research process. Just as participants' experiences are framed within socio-cultural contexts, so too are those of the researcher. The researcher's subjectivity inevitably influences the project and the reporting of findings, leaving a personal, subjective signature on the work (Bourke, 2014).

Positionality represents the intersection of objectivism and subjectivism. While achieving pure objectivism is an unrealistic goal, and we can never completely eliminate subjectivity, one can strive to remain objective while being mindful of one's subjective perspectives. This balance lies at the core of positionality. It requires acknowledging our individual identities, group membership and the social positions we occupy and move within. A key aspect of examining the research process in relation to one's positionality is through reflexivity. It involves self-scrutiny and a conscious

awareness of the relationship between the researcher and the “other” which makes it an ongoing mode of self-analysis (Bourke, 2014).

To approach my research with the most objective perspective possible, I recognize the critical importance of first becoming aware of my own personality and background. As a white, heterosexual, cisgender female who has lived in Zurich, Switzerland for the majority of my life, I bring a specific set of experiences, perspectives and potential biases to this work. It’s essential to acknowledge these factors as they may influence my approach to the research, my interactions with sources, and my interpretation of the data.

My academic journey has played a significant role in shaping my interest in this area of study. Previously, I wrote my Bachelor Thesis on the critique against humanitarian organizations in Lebanon. This experience not only provided me with valuable insights into the complexities of humanitarian work in the region but also sparked a deeper interest in humanitarian organizations active in Palestinian aid programs. Specifically, I became interested in learning more about these organizations and how their activities are portrayed in Swiss media. This research represents a natural progression of this interest. Through this research, I aim to develop a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which Swiss media handle and publish the news about UNRWA and their operations in Gaza since October 7, 2023. This focus allows me to explore the intersection of humanitarian aid, media representations, and public perception in the context of a complex and often contentious geopolitical situation.

To ensure that I maintain awareness of my positionality throughout the research process, I have a set of guiding questions that I will consistently reflect upon:

1. What role does my positionality as a white woman from Switzerland play in conducting research on events in a war of a foreign country?

This question prompts me to consider how my background might influence my perspective on the situation in Gaza, my interpretation of media coverage and my overall approach to the research.

2. How do I use my positionality in different spaces?

This question encourages me to be mindful of how I present myself and interact with others in various research contexts, whether it’s during interviews, when analyzing media content or when presenting my findings.

3. Does my positionality influence the interactions I have with the people I interviewed?

The third question reminds me to be aware of potential power dynamics or biases that might arise during interviews and to consider how my background might affect the responses I receive or the way I interpret them.

By consistently engaging in these questions, I aim to maintain a high level of self-awareness throughout the research process.. It also influences my methodological choices, pushing me to seek out diverse perspectives and to critically examine the sources I use. In addition to considering my positionality, I recognize the importance of understanding the broader context in which this research takes place. The situation in Gaza is complex, with a long history of conflict, humanitarian challenges and international involvement. Swiss media coverage of these issues does not exist in a vacuum but is influenced by various factors as already explained in more details in previous sections. Ultimately, by maintaining this level of self-awareness and critical reflection throughout the research process, I believe that this study offers valuable insights into the portrayal of the UNRWA and their actions after October 7, 2023, by Swiss media.

4.1.2 Content Analysis

Content or media analysis is an empirical method distinguished by its systematic and transparent description of both the content and formal characteristics of messages (Früh, 2017). As emphasized by Kessler et al. this method aims to draw inferences about external realities based on the communications being studied (Kessler & Wicke, 2023) (Kessler et al., 2023). The range of objects that can be analyzed is broad: traditional media products such as newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, films or advertisements can be examined, as well as newer forms of public communication like posts and comments on social media platforms (Kessler & Wicke, 2023). Rössler further highlights that, alongside traditional mass media such as television, newspapers and radio, digital content distributed via the internet is increasingly becoming a focus of analysis (2017).

A central distinguishing feature of content analysis is the degree of standardization. Qualitative content analysis takes into account the individuality of specific, deliberately selected media content. In contrast, quantitative content analysis is characterized

by the measurement and quantification of features and is usually applied to larger samples (Kessler & Wicke, 2023) (Kessler et al., 2023) (Rössler, 2017). The main goal of quantitative analysis is to reduce the complexity of media coverage by identifying central patterns and structures across a large number of media items. This approach makes it possible to formulate generalizable statements, even if the unique characteristics of individual objects are less emphasized as a result (Rössler, 2017). The process of standardized content analysis generally unfolds in four stages: planning, development, application and evaluation. During the planning phase, research questions are formulated, the existing amount of research is reviewed, and the content to be analyzed as well as the elements of analysis and coding are defined. This is followed by the development of the analytical framework, before the actual analysis and subsequent evaluation of the data take place (Kessler et al., 2023). One advantage of this method, as noted by Kessler, is that it is a time independent and non-reactive procedure, meaning the object of study remains unchanged throughout the analysis (Kessler & Wicke, 2023).

Content analysis is particularly prevalent in communication research. Many studies build on normative assumptions regarding the role of mass media in society and investigate how different topics are portrayed in the media. These analyses assess the quality, evidence based and potential biases of the coverage, as well as which themes, frames and actors are present and how these elements may influence the formation of public opinion (Kessler & Wicke, 2023). By examining media discourses on socially significant issues, the structure of these discourses can be reconstructed, for example, by systematically capturing the various perspectives and arguments presented in media reports (Rössler, 2017). In recent years, computer-assisted content analysis has gained increasing importance, expanding analytical capabilities and enhancing efficiency when processing large volumes of data. Overall, it is evident that content or media analysis is a valuable tool for investigating public communication (Kessler & Wicke, 2023).

4.1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged as a field in the late 1980s and has since become well-established in social science. It's an interdisciplinary research program that draws from various fields such as rhetoric, linguistic, anthropology, philosophy,

sociopsychology, cognitive science, and literary studies (Wodak, 2013). It understands discourse as both socially constitutive and socially conditioned, meaning it shapes and is shaped by social contexts, identities, and relationships. One focus of CDA lies on how discourse reproduces or challenges social domination and power abuse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Researchers aim to understand, expose and ultimately challenge social inequality through systematic analysis of data, including written, spoken and visual materials (Wodak, 2013).

The critical nature of CDA does not simply mean being negative (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) but involves making explicit and implicit relationships between discourse, power and ideology. The concept of power is a central point to CDA. Discourse is seen as a “carrier” of knowledge that exercises power by inducing behaviors and other discourses, thereby contributing to the structuring of power relations in society (Jäger & Jäger, 2007). CDA researchers often analyze the language use of those in positions of power, examining how discourse can be used to establish, maintain, or resist social domination (Wodak, 2013). CDA is characterized by its problem-oriented approach and its explicit ethical stance. Researchers aim to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables individuals to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. They see their work as potentially contributing to social change and improving the understanding of society by integrating insights from various social sciences (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA emphasizes the importance of transparency in research, with practitioners striving to make their positions, interests, values and criteria as explicit as possible (Wodak, 2013).

4.2 Methodology

To analyze the media debate surrounding UNRWA in Switzerland, I applied content analysis as the central methodological framework. Content analysis, characterized by its systematic and transparent examination of both the content and formal characteristics of media messages, enabled me to empirically assess how various media outlets portray the events involving UNRWA and the allegations made against the organization (Kessler & Wicke, 2023) (Rössler, 2017). This approach involved identifying recurring themes and frames across a range of different media to draw inferences about the broader media discourse (Früh, 2017) (Kessler et al., 2023). To deepen the

analysis, I additionally employed CDA, which served to examine different discourse strands that influence the overall narrative. CDA was useful in identifying underlying ideologies and power relations embedded in the language and framing choices of the media (Wodak, 2013) (Jäger & Jäger, 2007). While the content analysis provides a structured overview of media patterns and themes, CDA uncovered specific allegations against UNRWA as they are presented in the media. Furthermore, CDA helped to identify biases in the media analysis and assess how these biases affect the overall understanding of the conflict and UNRWA's role. Ultimately, this analysis should contribute to understand how media representations can influence their audience and the broader dynamics of humanitarian aid in conflict zones.

For the media analysis, I selected three newspapers whose articles I intended to examine in depth. Although discourses regarding UNRWA and developments in the Middle East had already been present in the media, there was a massive increase in coverage following the events of October 7, 2023. To be able to examine the characteristics of media messages, who portray the events involving UNRWA and the allegations made against the organization, I first defined a clear time frame for the study. I ultimately chose to focus on articles published between October 7, 2023, and the end of January 2025. After sourcing these articles from online archives, I organized them by date and systematically documented their content. While I noted the publication dates and content of each article, I chose not to track the authors of the articles, as authorship is not central to the scope of my analysis. Following a comprehensive reading of all articles, I identified the overall narratives each media outlet constructed in its portrayal of UNRWA during the defined period. To support these overall narratives, I analyzed and differentiated multiple discourse strands within the broader media discourse on UNRWA and the surrounding allegations.

To identify which discourse strands significantly influenced the overall narratives, I coded the collected data using a coding procedure. Coding can be approached in two ways: deductively, where codes are predefined, or inductively, where codes emerge during the analysis. These methods are not mutually exclusive (Glasze et al., 2021). Therefore, I opted to combine both approaches to allow for a more comprehensive analysis. I began by defining four thematic areas that appeared across selected media outlets. After an in-depth review of the articles, I systematically assigned relevant statements to these predefined categories. Based on the coded material, I formulated

interpretative theses. These theses are used in the analysis to show how different discourse strands support, reproduce or challenge the overall narratives identified earlier. To support and structure the analysis, I used MaxQDA 2024, a specialized software for qualitative analysis. Additionally, I supplemented the digital work with Excel spreadsheets and handwritten notes for each thematic area to maintain analytical depth and clarity.

4.3 Media Selection

When conducting a media analysis, it is essential to include multiple media outlets to enable meaningful comparison. At the beginning, I considered several possible approaches. One option was to compare Swiss media with foreign media that share similar political orientations. Another option was to compare Swiss newspapers that represent different political standpoints. It quickly became clear, that my focus should remain exclusively on Swiss media with varying political perspectives. This decision was driven by Switzerland's significant role in international humanitarian affairs and its close ties to several humanitarian organizations, making the national media landscape particularly interesting. Therefore, the focus was exclusively on Swiss newspapers to ensure relevance to the Swiss context. To capture a broad spectrum of perspectives, I aimed to include media outlets that differ both politically and geographically. Additionally, it was essential to verify that the chosen outlets provided comprehensive coverage of the events in Gaza. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)*, *Tages-Anzeiger* and *Le Temps* meet all these criteria, making them ideal choices for this analysis. All three are widely recognized as reputable and reliable sources of journalism.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ), one of Switzerland's most prominent newspapers in the German-speaking part, is traditionally viewed as conservative and right-liberal. In recent years, under the leadership of Eric Guyer, it has shifted further to the right, aligning closely with the liberal Swiss FDP and often addressing topics that resonate with right wing movements (euro topics, n.d.-b). In contrast, *Tages-Anzeiger*, another leading newspaper in German-speaking Switzerland, is characterized as left-liberal and tends to align with the Social Democrats (Freilich Magazin, 2023).

To include a perspective from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, I incorporated *Le Temps*. This newspaper is considered liberal and covers a diverse range of topics. Like *Tages-Anzeiger*, *Le Temps* leans towards the left-liberal spectrum, with a focus on balanced reporting (euro topics, n.d.-a). The cultural and political differences between German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland are particularly evident in votes and political debates. These distinctions make it crucial to include a newspaper from French-speaking Switzerland in the analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Swiss media landscape. By including these three newspapers – *NZZ*, *Tages-Anzeiger* and *Le Temps* – a wide range of political positions are encompassed, representing both right-liberal and left-liberal orientations, as well as different regional perspectives within Switzerland. This diversity is vital for identifying and analyzing the various discourse strands shaping the public debate.

5. Results

5.1 Overall Narratives

In the following, the focus lies specifically on how the selected media outlets have portrayed the UNRWA. As a key humanitarian actor in the context of the Gaza conflict, UNRWA has been subject to varying degrees of attention, critique, and support in Swiss media reporting. By analyzing the discursive framing of UNRWA, this section aims to uncover how the agency's role, legitimacy, and political positioning are constructed through different journalistic lenses.

5.1.1 NZZ

UNRWA as a controversial, politically compromised actor.

NZZ takes the most critical stance toward UNRWA. The coverage emphasizes alleged failures in neutrality, the employment of Hamas sympathizers, and the supposed role of UNRWA in perpetuating the refugee narrative rather than solving it. It frames Swiss contributions as questionable and highlights political efforts, especially from the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and FDP, to cut funding. There is a recurring discourse strand about UNRWA promoting antisemitism, alongside general skepticism about Swiss Middle East policy. While humanitarian needs are acknowledged, the focus lies on institutional accountability and political implications.

5.1.2 Tagesanzeiger

UNRWA caught in the crossfire of a collapsing humanitarian landscape.

Tagesanzeiger paints a big picture of human suffering and systemic collapse in Gaza. UNRWA is shown as the last resort for civilians, especially children and displaced persons. Although the reporting is somewhat more neutral than Le Temps, it implicitly supports UNRWA's relevance by highlighting the sheer scale of the humanitarian crisis and the organization's involvement. The newspaper includes reports on the devastation of infrastructure, the dependency of civilians on UNRWA services and the lack of viable alternatives. Criticism is occasionally mentioned but not central.

5.1.3 Le Temps

UNRWA as a humanitarian cornerstone under political attack.

Le Temps frequently presents UNRWA as an indispensable humanitarian actor, emphasizing its role in providing vital services to millions of Palestinians – especially in Gaza. The articles express strong concern about the defunding of UNRWA by Switzerland, criticize what they call politically motivated decisions, and frame the suspension of funds damaging Switzerland’s humanitarian tradition. The narrative is sympathetic to UNRWA, citing voices like Philippe Lazzarini, and often frames criticism to the organization as ideologically driven. There’s a repeated warning about the collapse of civil order in Gaza and the instrumentalization of aid in a geopolitical conflict.

5.2 Supporting Theses

To support the previously identified narratives, the following section applies the methodological framework of qualitative content analysis in combination with selected tools from CDA. The analysis focuses on recurring discourse strands that emerged prominently across all three newspapers. These include allegations against UNRWA, criticism of Israel, discussions around the financing of UNRWA, and demands for its prohibition. To examine how the identified discourse strands support the overarching media narratives, several theses have been formulated. Each theses reflects a pattern of representation observed in the media coverage and is substantiated through qualitative evidence from the news articles.

5.2.1 The allegations against UNRWA

Thesis: Despite of the different narratives, all three newspapers report on the UNRWA allegations and agree that the allegations against UNRWA are nothing new.

Since the events of October 7, 2023, various accusations against UNRWA have become a central focus of media attention. These accusations are framed as rather longstanding and recurring criticism. The most dominant allegations are:

- Infiltration by Hamas: It is claimed that Hamas has infiltrated UNRWA and exerts considerable influence over the organization. For example, NZZ reported: “Israel accuses UNRWA that hundreds of its 13,000 employees in the Gaza Strip were involved in the terrorist attack¹”(NZZ167_2025_01_30) and

¹ Israel wirft der UNRWA vor, dass Hunderte ihrer 13'000 Mitarbeiter im Gazastreifen am Terrorangriff beteiligt gewesen seien.

“Some of these cases have been proven beyond doubt: UNRWA employee Faisal Naami, for example, carried the body of a killed Israeli to the Gaza Strip²” (NZZ167_2025_01_30). In contrast, Le Temps wrote: “Israel accuses a dozen members of the UN refugee agency (UNRWA) of involvement in the Hamas attack of October 7. These allegations have not yet been substantiated by the Hebrew State³” (LT127_2024_02_13).

- Anti- Semitic teaching content: UNRWA schools are allegedly using educational material that promote antisemitic views and incite hate against Israel. According to NZZ: “For decades, there have been accusations that the organization educates children at its schools to hate Israel and the Jews⁴” (NZZ123_2024_02_13). Tagesanzeiger cited the think tank Impact SE: “Teaching materials are dominated by the delegitimization and demonization of the Jewish state... and violence is glorified⁵” (TA117_2024_01_26).
- Hamas sympathizers among staff: Some UNRWA employees are suspected of sympathizing with or even actively collaborating with Hamas. Tagesanzeiger reported: “At least fourteen teachers and UNRWA school staff are said to have publicly celebrated the October 7 massacre and other Hamas attacks on their social media accounts⁶” (TA122_2024_01_29).
- Promoting expectations of return: UNRWA has been criticized for fostering hopes among Palestinian refugees of returning to their former territories – expectations considered unrealistic and conflict-promoting. NZZ noted: “As refugee status is passed down from generation to generation with the hope of one day returning to the ancestral region, hostilities would never cease⁷” (NZZ140_2024_04_24). Tagesanzeiger added: “For the Palestinians, the existence of UNRWA is a guarantee that their refugee status is only temporary,

² Einige dieser Fälle sind zweifelsfrei belegt: So hat etwa der UNRWA-Mitarbeiter Faisal Naami die Leiche eines getöteten Israeli in den Gazastreifen verschleppt.

³ Israël accuse une douzaine de membres de l’agence onusienne de soutien aux réfugiés palestiniens (UNRWA) d’avoir participé à l’attaque du Hamas du 7 octobre. Des allégations pour lesquelles l’Etat hébreu n’a pas encore apporté de preuves.

⁴ Schon seit Jahrzehnten gibt es Vorwürfe, die Organisation erziehe die Kinder an ihren Schulen zu Hass auf Israel und die Juden.

⁵ In Unterrichtsmaterialien dominiere die Delegitimierung und Dämonisierung des jüdischen Staates... und Gewalt werde glorifiziert.

⁶ Mindestens vierzehn Lehrer und Mitarbeiter von UNRWA Schulen sollen das Massaker vom 7. Oktober und andere Hamas-Anschläge auf ihren Social-Media-Konten öffentlich gefeiert haben.

⁷ Da der Flüchtlingsstatus von Generation zu Generation mit der Hoffnung weitergegeben wird, eines Tages in die angestammte Region zurückzukehren, würden die Feindseligkeiten nie ruhen.

even after 75 years, and that there is still hope for their return and a state of their own⁸” (TA122_2024_01_29).

Among the newspapers analyzed, NZZ reports on these accusations most frequently and in the greatest detail. The newspaper repeatedly emphasizes that criticism of the organization is not new. “UNRWA has been criticized for years for being closely linked to Palestinian terrorist organizations - especially Hamas⁹” (NZZ143_2024_05_02). Another accusation highlighted by NZZ is that by maintaining the permanent refugee status of Palestinians, UNRWA perpetuates the problem rather than contributing to a solution. According to NZZ, this sustains the idea that a return to Palestine remains possible.

NZZ also regularly reports on accusations of antisemitic school materials in UNRWA institutions and alleged infiltration by Hamas. “This [school material] - partly produced by UNRWA itself - systematically indoctrinates the children against Israel and thus prevents peace solutions¹⁰” (NZZ168_2025_01_31) The newspaper also notes that some UNRWA employees are viewed as Hamas sympathizers. “When Hamas terrorists slaughtered women, children and the elderly on October 7, 2023, UNRWA teachers cheered in a Telegram chat. The group has 3,000 members. Not everyone was happy about the deaths, but no one disagreed¹¹” (NZZ117_2024_01_31). Another example of the strong criticism expressed by NZZ can be read in the following passage: “A position with UNRWA, which effectively takes over state functions in the Gaza Strip, means access to information, money and power for Hamas members. The Islamists have been abusing the organization for years for their own purposes. The aid organization and the UN were and are either unable or unwilling to correct the obvious abuses - instead, they continue to play them down with empty words¹²”

⁸ Für die Palästinenser ist die Existenz der UNRWA ein Garant dafür, dass ihr Flüchtlingsstatus auch nach 75 Jahren nur temporär ist, dass die Hoffnung auf Rückkehr und einen eigenen Staat noch besteht.

⁹ Die UNRWA steht seit Jahren in der Kritik, aufs Engste mit den palästinensischen Terrororganisationen verquickt zu sein – insbesondere mit der Hamas.

¹⁰ Dieses – zum Teil auch von der UNRWA selbst hergestellte – [Schulmaterial] indoktriniert die Kinder systematisch gegen Israel und verhindert damit Friedenslösungen.

¹¹ Als am 7. Oktober 2023 Hamas-Terroristen Frauen, Kinder und Alte abschlachteten, jubelten UNRWA-Lehrer in einem Telegram-Chat. Die Gruppe hat 3000 Mitglieder. Nicht alle freuten sich über die Toten, aber keiner widersprach..

¹² Eine Stelle bei der UNRWA, die im Gazastreifen faktisch staatliche Aufgaben übernimmt, bedeutet für Hamas-Mitglieder Zugang zu Informationen, Geld und Macht. Die Islamisten missbrauchen die Organisation seit Jahren für ihre Zwecke. Das Hilfswerk und die Vereinten Nationen waren und sind

(NZZ155_2024_10_30). Based on statements like the following, one might assume that the NZZ is convinced that UNRWA is infiltrated by Hamas:

- “[...] because there are close links between this UN organization and Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hamas¹³” (NZZ159_2024_11_16).
- "UNRWA is considered an important aid organization in the Gaza Strip but is criticized for its links to Hamas¹⁴ (NZZ164_2025_01_15).

Tagesanzeiger also addresses the issue that UNRWA has faced criticism for many years. The newspaper states that “the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) [...] has been repeatedly criticized but now faces an existential threat after the Hamas attack on Israel¹⁵” (TA128_2024_02_15). It also reports on the specific claim that certain employees were involved in the attacks: “An investigation that has been ongoing for months has concluded that evidence received indicates that UNRWA employees may have been involved in the armed attacks of October 7, 2023¹⁶” (TA157_2024_08_06). Additionally, the newspaper highlights the complex operational reality by quoting UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini: “Our employees are part of Gaza's social society. And Hamas is part of this society¹⁷” (TA127_2024_02_11). This suggests that it cannot be ruled out that Hamas may benefit from development aid in Gaza. At the same time, Tagesanzeiger critically reflects on the evidentiary basis of these accusations, noting: “Israel has not yet provided evidence to support its allegations that a significant number of UN are members of terrorist organizations¹⁸” (TA140_2024_04_23).

Le Temps takes a more reserved approach in its coverage. They do present the allegations made against UNRWA but using the subjunctive mood and indirect speech.

entweder nicht fähig oder nicht willens, die offenkundigen Missstände zu korrigieren - stattdessen spielen sie diese bis heute mit Worthülsen herunter.

¹³ ...weil es zwischen dieser Uno-Organisation und palästinensischen Terrorgruppen wie der Hamas enge Verbindungen gibt.

¹⁴ Die UNRWA gilt als wichtige Hilfsorganisation im Gazastreifen, steht aber wegen Verbindungen zur Hamas in der Kritik.

¹⁵ das UNO-Hilfswerk für Palästina Flüchtlinge (UNRWA) [...] stand immer wieder in der Kritik, ist nach dem Hamas Angriff auf Israel nun aber existenziell bedroht.

¹⁶ Eine seit Monaten laufende Untersuchung sei zu dem Schluss gekommen, dass erhaltene Hinweise darauf hindeuten, dass UNRWA-Mitarbeiter möglicherweise an den bewaffneten Angriffen vom 7. Oktober 2023 beteiligt waren.

¹⁷ Unsere Angestellten sind Teil der sozialen Gesellschaft von Gaza. Und die Hamas ist Teil dieser Gesellschaft.

¹⁸ Israel habe noch keine Beweise für seine Vorwürfe vorgelegt, wonach eine beträchtliche Anzahl von Mitarbeitern der UN-Organisation Mitglieder von terroristischen Organisationen seien.

Doing so, they mention the accusations of an Israeli representative who accused the agency “being a breeding ground for terrorists, being involved in the network of tunnels under Gaza and helping Hamas to use its infrastructure¹⁹” (LT131_2024_03_05). Therefore, while *Le Temps* acknowledges that UNRWA’s work may be subject to scrutiny, it argues that, given the current humanitarian crisis, now is not the appropriate time for such criticism. *Le Temps* notes that criticism of UNRWA has existed for several years but emphasizes that, following the events of October 7 “they (Philippe Lazzarini, the head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, and the Belgian Minister for Cooperation, Caroline Gennez) emphatically pointed out that the allegations were so far unsubstantiated, and that the UN’s internal investigation office had yet to rule on them²⁰” (LT126_2024_02_12).

Unlike the other two newspapers, *Le Temps* reports less extensively on the alleged connections between UNRWA and Hamas or the terrorist attacks. It frequently frames such claims as originating from Israeli sources, using formulations such as “the Israeli accusations” or “the Israeli authorities accuse”. Notably, *Le Temps* asserts that UNRWA is not infiltrated by Hamas but acknowledges that some degree of cooperation with Hamas may be inevitable due to operational realities.

All three newspapers acknowledge that the allegations against UNRWA are not new but part of a long-standing critical discourse. *NZZ* reports most extensively on the accusations, frequently reinforcing the narrative that UNRWA perpetuates the refugee issue. It regularly highlights allegations of Hamas infiltration, anti-Semitic teaching materials and structural dependency. At the same time, *NZZ* does note that some accusations remain unproven. *Tagesanzeiger* presents a similar but more differentiated view. While it reports on the serious accusations it also emphasizes the lack of evidence and sheds light on the operational complexity in Gaza. *Le Temps* by contrast, adopts a cautious and distanced tone. It largely frames the accusations using indirect speech and emphasizes that the allegations remain unsubstantiated. Instead of focusing on the agency’s possible faults, *Le Temps* stresses the urgency of humanitarian needs and questions whether now is the right moment to engage in such criticism.

¹⁹ d’être un repaire de terroristes, d’avoir participé au réseau de tunnels sous Gaza et d’aider le Hamas à exploiter son infrastructure.

²⁰ Ils ont souligné avec insistance qu’il s’agissait jusqu’ici d’« allégations » non confirmées, sur lesquelles doit statuer le bureau d’investigation interne de l’ONU.

5.2.2 Accusations against Israel

Thesis: Albeit occasionally reserved, all three newspapers agree that Israel has provided no or insufficient evidence for its accusations against UNRWA.

In contrast to the allegations against UNRWA, the newspapers report significantly less on the criticisms and accusations directed at Israel. However, while NZZ and Tagesanzeiger focus on a few central aspects, Le Temps invests more space to this topic and examines Israel's actions in greater depth.

NZZ describes Israel's actions as destructive and emphasizes that the attacks in the Gaza Strip have caused considerable destruction. It points out that UNRWA takes on the tasks that Israel itself does not wish to perform, thereby making the status quo bearable: "But UNRWA is also ultimately convenient for Israel: it can constantly complain about it, but at the same time is happy that it is stabilizing the social situation in the West Bank and Gaza. It takes on state tasks in the occupied territories and thus reduces the need to build a Palestinian state, which Netanyahu's Israel wants to prevent²¹" (NZZ114_2024_01_30). At the same time, NZZ criticizes that Israel does a great deal to restrict UNRWA's work, for example by refusing visas to staff and freezing UNRWA's bank accounts: "Since the beginning of the Gaza war, Israel has regularly put obstacles in the way of the aid organization in the form of entry permits²²" (NZZ152_2024_09_07). While NZZ prominently reports on Israeli accusations against UNRWA and notes that evidence has been presented, it also repeatedly emphasizes that this evidence is insufficient or unsubstantiated. This becomes evident in cautious formulations such as: "The Israeli government claimed to have evidence that twelve UNRWA employees from the Gaza Strip were involved in the Hamas massacre... However, Israel did not subsequently make the evidence public²³" (NZZ149_2024_08_07) or "how difficult it is for the Israel Defense Force (IDF) to provide clear evidence is shown by the example of the Hamas tunnel that the armed

²¹ Aber auch für Israel ist die UNRWA letztlich bequem: Man kann sich ständig über sie beklagen, ist aber gleichzeitig froh, dass sie die soziale Lage im Westjordanland und in Gaza stabilisiert. Sie übernimmt staatliche Aufgaben in den besetzten Gebieten und verringert so die Notwendigkeit, einen palästinensischen Staat aufzubauen, den Netanyahus Israel verhindern will.

²² Israel legt dem Hilfswerk seit Beginn des Gaza-Kriegs mit punkto Einreisebewilligungen regelmäßig Steine in den Weg.

²³ Die israelische Regierung behauptete, sie habe Beweise dafür, dass zwölf UNRWA-Mitarbeiter aus dem Gazastreifen am Hamas-Massaker beteiligt gewesen seien... Allerdings machte Israel die Beweise in der Folge nicht öffentlich.

forces claim to have found under the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza²⁴" (NZZ133_2024_03_02). Furthermore, NZZ raises allegations regarding the treatment of Palestinian prisoners, quoting Lazzarini's statement: "We have first-hand testimonies accusing Israel of systematic abuse and torture. I know from people who have been released that they were forced to give false testimony²⁵" (NZZ145_2024_05_31).

Tagesanzeiger shares several of these criticisms and also emphasizes that Israel has provided no concrete evidence for its accusations against UNRWA: "[...] Israel has not yet presented any evidence that the organization has been infiltrated by a significant number of Hamas or Islamic Jihad terrorists²⁶" (TA137_2024_04_22). The newspaper describes that Israel increasingly treats UNRWA as if it were an accomplice of a terrorist organization: "Israel, however, treats the entire aid organization as agents of Palestinian terrorists²⁷" (TA166_2024_10_30). Tagesanzeiger acknowledges, that Israel has so far not brought any evidence to proof their accusations: "The UN then commissioned an independent commission to investigate the allegations. It found no evidence for the allegations²⁸" (TA155_2024_07_11). It also addresses the mistreatment and torture of Palestinian prisoners, citing Lazzarini: "We have first-hand testimonies accusing Israel of systematic abuse and torture. He knows from people who have been released that they were forced to give false testimony²⁹" (TA132_2024_03_25). Tagesanzeiger, similar to NZZ tends to employ passive or indirect constructions when discussing Israel's actions, maintaining a cautious linguistic distance. Overall, Tagesanzeiger paints a picture of an increasingly hostile attitude by Israel towards UNRWA and its work but does so with slightly more emphasis on humanitarian consequences than NZZ.

²⁴ Wie schwierig es aber auch für die IDF ist, eindeutige Beweise zu erbringen, zeigt das Beispiel des Hamas-Tunnels, den die Streitkräfte unter dem UNRWA -Hauptquartier in Gaza gefunden haben wollen.

²⁵ Wir haben Zeugenaussagen aus erster Hand, die Israel systematische Misshandlung und Folter vorwerfen. Ich weiss von freigelassenen Personen, dass sie zu falschen Zeugenaussagen gezwungen wurden.

²⁶ "...habe Israel bisher keine Beweise dafür vorgelegt, dass die Organisation von einer signifikanten Anzahl an Terroristen der Hamas oder des islamischen Jihad unterwandert worden sei.

²⁷ Israel aber behandelt das gesamte Hilfswerk wie Erfüllungsgehilfen palästinensischer Terroristen.

²⁸ Die UNO beauftragte daraufhin eine unabhängige Kommission mit der Untersuchung der Vorwürfe. Sie fand keine Beweise für die Anschuldigungen.

²⁹ Wir haben Zeugenaussagen aus erster Hand, die Israel systematische Misshandlung und Folter vorwerfen. Er wisse von freigelassenen Personen, dass sie zu falschen Zeugenaussagen gezwungen worden seien.

Le Temps, by contrast, goes further in its criticism of Israel and uses a much more direct language. It describes the Israeli attacks as particularly bloody and accuses Israel of serious violations of international law: “But even from the point of view of self-defense, the current attack on Gaza exceeds all the limits set by international law. And whatever those who want to sort out the victims, this attack, which has already caused more than 30,000 deaths, many of them children, not to mention the injuries and traumas affecting the entire population, also massively violates international humanitarian law³⁰” (LT139_2024_04_05). The newspaper reports over 20,000 deaths resulting from Israeli bombings in the Gaza Strip: “Israel's military response has been extremely deadly in recent weeks in the Gaza Strip. The civilian population is being shelled and starved of essential supplies; the death toll is said to be close to 20,000. Appeals to the Hebrew state to respect international law have been in vain³¹” (LT114_2023_12_19). Le Temps also mentions that these attacks not only claim numerous civilian victims but also further fuel hate and radicalization in Gaza and are not comparable to the attacks on October 7, 2023: “Israel's attack on Gaza certainly follows on from that of Hamas on October 7, 2023, which deliberately targeted civilians and took them hostage, undeniable war crimes for which those who committed or ordered them must be punished, no one can dispute that³²” (LT139_2024_04_05). Le Temps criticizes that Israeli strikes have targeted areas previously declared “safe zones” by the Israeli army itself: “More than 270 people seeking refuge in UNRWA facilities were killed and almost 1,000 injured. Most of these shelters were located in the central and southern areas of the Gaza Strip, which were thought to be safer. The sad reality is that Gazans are not safe anywhere: not in their homes, not in hospitals, not under the UN flag, not in the north, not in the center, not in the south³³”

³⁰ Or même sous l'angle de la légitime défense, l'attaque actuelle de Gaza dépasse toutes les limites que fixe le droit international à celle-ci. Et n'en déplaie à ceux qui veulent trier les victimes, cette attaque, qui a déjà causé plus de 30 000 morts, dont de très nombreux enfants, sans parler des blessés et des traumatismes qui frappent toute la population, viole aussi massivement le droit international humanitaire.

³¹ La riposte militaire israélienne s'avère extrêmement meurtrière ces dernières semaines dans la bande de Gaza. La population civile se fait pilonner et manque de produits essentiels; on évoque le chiffre de près de 20 000 morts. Les appels au respect du droit international restent vains auprès de l'Etat hébreu.

³² L'attaque israélienne sur Gaza fait certes suite à celle du Hamas le 7 octobre 2023, qui a délibérément visé des civils et en a pris en otage, crimes de guerre indéniables dont ceux qui les ont commis ou commandités devront être punis, personne ne peut le contester.

³³ Plus de 270 personnes ayant cherché refuge dans les installations de l'UNRWA ont été tuées et près de 1000 autres blessées. La plupart de ces abris étaient situés dans les zones centrales et méridionales de la bande de Gaza, que l'on pensait plus sûres. La triste réalité est que les habitants de Gaza ne sont

(LT108_2023_12_13). Furthermore, it reports that Palestinian civilians now have no safe place to flee to: “One has to realize that there is nowhere safe in Gaza, and even the south, where the population has been forced to move, has not been spared by the bombardments³⁴” (LT103_2023_11_01). Gaza is being described as uninhabitable. Le Temps also sharply criticizes Israel for taking systematic measures to weaken humanitarian protection, such as freezing UNRWA bank accounts, denying visas to its staff, and obstructing humanitarian aid deliveries. Le Temps also reports serious allegations regarding the mistreatment of Palestinian prisoners, explaining them in great detail and denounces the closure of the Gaza Strip to foreign journalists: “Kept on the knees for sixteen hours, hands tied behind the back, blindfolded, forbidden to stand up. Forced to stand naked, on all fours, sometimes targeted with sticks and urine [...]. Images of prisoners crammed naked into trucks, tied to chairs or visibly mistreated have made the rounds of social networks. The Gaza Strip has been off-limits to foreign journalists for months yet remains largely closed to all independent information [...] [UNRWA] employees have reportedly been subjected to harsh interrogation, beatings and simulated drowning, as well as threats of execution, against themselves and their families, or rape³⁵” (LT140_2024_04_18).

The differing coverage not only shows varying journalistic approaches but also a broader pattern: while NZZ and Tagesanzeiger maintain a more reserved and cautious reporting style, Le Temps places great emphasis on the humanitarian consequences of the conflict and accuses Israel of serious violations of international law. The reason for the difference in the amount of information about the allegations and criticisms between UNRWA and Israel has also been addressed in several interviews taken for this work: Many organizations on the ground do not dare to disclose which sanctions have been imposed on them and what restrictions they have experienced. They fear

en sécurité nulle part: ni chez eux, ni dans un hôpital, ni sous le drapeau des Nations unies, ni au nord, ni au centre, ni au sud.

³⁴ Il faut bien se rendre compte qu’il n’y a aucun endroit sûr à Gaza, même le sud, où la population a été sommée de se déplacer, n’a pas été épargné par les bombardements.

³⁵ Maintenu à genoux pendant seize heures, les mains attachées derrière le dos, les yeux bandés, avec l’interdiction de se lever. Forcé de se tenir nu, à quatre pattes, parfois visé par des coups de bâton et des jets d’urine [...]. Les images de prisonniers entassés nus dans des camions, attachés à des chaises ou visiblement victimes de mauvais traitements ont passablement fait le tour des réseaux sociaux. Interdite par les Israéliens aux journalistes étrangers depuis des mois, la bande de Gaza reste pourtant verrouillée en grande partie à toute information indépendante [...] les employés [de l’UNRWA] auraient été soumis à des interrogatoires musclés, à des coups et à des simulations de noyade, mais aussi à des menaces d’exécution, contre eux et leurs familles, ou de viol.

that Israel could further hinder their work or impose additional sanctions on them or the civilian population. As a result, statements from UNRWA staff on the ground or other humanitarian workers are missing in the reports of all three newspapers. Therefore, reporting on Israel's specific actions against humanitarian organizations is usually only superficial. Nevertheless, all three newspapers agree that Israel has provided little or no evidence for its accusations against UNRWA. This commonality highlights that, despite different focuses in reporting, doubts about the credibility of many Israeli allegations persist.

5.2.3 UNRWA funding

Thesis: While Le Temps consistently supported the continued funding of UNRWA, the Swiss German media increasingly focused on reasons against such support.

The financing of UNRWA is a central issue in the current debate, which is examined differently by the three newspapers. While all three newspapers acknowledge the precarious financial situation of the aid agency, their perspectives on Switzerland's role as a donor country vary. The German-speaking Swiss newspapers focus more on reasons against financial support for the agency, whereas Le Temps consistently defends the necessity of continued funding and warns of the grave consequences of any cuts. Beyond content, a difference in language use becomes visible: while NZZ and Tagesanzeiger frame their arguments predominantly in technical and administrative terms such as "risk management" and "reputational damage", Le Temps adopts a more humanitarian and moral wording, speaking of "humanitarian catastrophe" and "historic responsibility".

NZZ's articles on UNRWA funding initially show a strong inclination against abolishing these payments. The newspaper adopts a critical stance toward UNRWA's financing and repeatedly highlights problematic aspects. For example, NZZ emphasizes that there is no guarantee that international aid money will not end up in the hands of Hamas. According to NZZ, supporting UNRWA plays into Hamas's hands, as it allows the group to avoid responsibility for social services like schools and hospitals, freeing up its resources for other uses: "But none of the money has led to economic and technical development there, only to the fact that Gaza's leaders are enjoying themselves as billionaires in Qatar³⁶" (NZZ107_2023_12_01). The newspaper points out that

³⁶ Aber nichts von dem Geld hat zur ökonomischen und technischen Entwicklung dort geführt, sondern alles nur dazu, dass die Führung Gazas es sich als Milliardäre in Katar gutgehen lässt.

Switzerland is among the ten largest donors to UNRWA and has so far transferred 20 million francs annually. However, after allegations that UNRWA employees were allegedly involved in the October 2023 massacre, several donor countries, including Switzerland, temporarily suspended their payments. In its detailed coverage of the parliamentary debate on whether to maintain or cut the aid, NZZ highlights that the parliament, following the Colonna report, agreed on a partial payment of 10 million francs: “Like other countries, Switzerland had initially suspended the contributions for 2024 and halved them this spring to CHF 10 million...The money for 2024 may only be used for emergency aid in Gaza, but not for UNRWA's general operating and administrative costs³⁷” (NZZ152_2024_09_07). Despite its critical stance, NZZ makes it clear that it does not support a complete withdrawal of funding, considering it counterproductive: “It is devastating that Switzerland will probably only pay out part of the money originally promised to UNRWA³⁸” (NZZ148_2024_07_12). It also notes that without donations, the agency would be forced to reduce its aid.

Tagesanzeiger shares some of these criticisms and appears not to support continued funding for UNRWA. It highlights that “one thing became clear: trust in the aid organization is broken - irreversibly³⁹” (TA160_2024_09_09) and questions whether it makes sense to continue transferring funds. In that regard, the newspaper presents different opinions as the other parties. Whereas the more right winged parties would like to stop the fundings, the middle class" and the center want to cut the charity's funding and redistribute it to other organizations⁴⁰ (TA147_2024_04_26), the left winged parties would like to continue to support the organization. However, Tagesanzeiger points out that the ones that would like to shift the money to a different humanitarian organization are not able to name any that could take over UNRWA's role: "Some critics of UNRWA argue that the CHF 20 million a year that the federal government has been paying could be given to other aid organizations instead. But they

³⁷ Wie andere Länder auch hatte die Schweiz die Beiträge für 2024 zuerst sistiert und diesen Frühling auf 10 Millionen Franken halbiert...Das Geld für 2024 darf ausschliesslich für Nothilfe in Gaza, aber nicht für die allgemeinen Betriebs- und Verwaltungskosten der UNRWA verwendet werden.

³⁸ Es sei verheerend, dass die Schweiz voraussichtlich nur einen Teil des ursprünglich versprochenen Geldes an die UNRWA ausbezahlen werde.

³⁹ Eines wurde deutlich: Das Vertrauen in das Hilfswerk ist kaputt – unwiderruflich.

⁴⁰ Bürgerliche und Mitte wollen dem Hilfswerk das Geld streichen und es an andere Organisationen umverteilen.

do not say which organizations these could be⁴¹" (TA142_2024_04_23). Like NZZ, Tagesanzeiger reports on the parliamentary debates in Switzerland, noting that parliament agreed on a compromise: "At the beginning of May, the Federal Council decided to transfer CHF 10 million to the controversial UN Palestinian Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to finance the most urgent living needs of the population in Gaza. The Federal Council wants to use a further CHF 13 million for humanitarian aid in the Middle East. The money is to go to national and international organizations, but not to the controversial UN Palestinian Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)⁴²" (TA162_2024_09_28). The paper also mentions that two petitions were submitted to resume payments to UNRWA but stresses that "The Federal Council decided last week to withhold Switzerland's contribution to UNRWA. The government wants to wait until the results of a further investigation into the organization are published⁴³" (TA149_2024_04_30). Even though Tagesanzeiger cites several reasons that speak against further funding, it also notes that a reduction in funding must be carefully considered beforehand.

Comparing the positions of NZZ and Tagesanzeiger with Le Temps, it is clear that Le Temps takes a much more critical stance toward cutting Swiss contributions, calling such a decision a mistake – especially given the high demand for humanitarian aid in Gaza. The newspaper warns by citing Lazzarini: "A withdrawal of Swiss subsidies directly jeopardizes essential UNRWA operations⁴⁴" (LT108_2023_12_13). Le Temps points out that several countries stopped their financial support after the allegations against UNRWA employees and describes this as dangerous for essential crisis response operations. It criticizes the conservative camp in German-speaking Switzerland for pressuring the Federal Council: "The food emergency is undisputed. But will the Federal Council now resume payments to UNRWA, the UN agency that feeds

⁴¹ Ein Teil der UNRWA-Kritiker argumentiert, man könnte die jährlich 20 Millionen Franken, die der Bund bisher zahlte, stattdessen anderen Hilfsorganisationen geben. Doch welche Organisationen das sein könnten, sagen sie nicht.

⁴² Anfang Mai beschloss der Bundesrat, 10 Millionen Franken ans umstrittene UNO-Palästinenserhilfswerk UNRWA zu überweisen, um die dringendsten Lebensbedürfnisse der Bevölkerung in Gaza zu finanzieren. Der Bundesrat will für humanitäre Hilfe im Nahen Osten weitere 13 Millionen Franken einsetzen. Das Geld soll an nationale und internationale Organisationen gehen, aber nicht ans umstrittene UNO-Palästinenserhilfswerk UNRWA.

⁴³ "Der Bundesrat entschied letzte Woche, den Schweizer Beitrag für die UNRWA weiter zurückzuhalten. Die Regierung will warten, bis die Resultate einer weiteren Untersuchung über die Organisation veröffentlicht werden.

⁴⁴ La suppression des subventions suisses met directement en danger des opérations essentielles de l'UNRWA.

Palestinian refugees? This is far from certain. The bourgeois camp, especially in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, is exerting insane pressure⁴⁵ (LT144_2024_04_29). However, *Le Temps* does agree that one can question the contributions to UNRWA but not at this precarious moment: "There is undoubtedly reason to question the way the UN agency operates, but not at a time when needs are at their greatest⁴⁶" (LT112_2023_12_14). The newspaper further argues a reduction in contributions would significantly deviate from Switzerland's previous Middle East strategy, including its goal of a two-state solution: "If fundings are cut to UNRWA, and thus to Palestinian civilians, Berne will be doing little to maintain the balance between the two parties, since it continues to trade and collaborate militarily with Israel, which it recognizes as having the right to defend itself. It will also clearly deviate from its Middle East strategy of promoting peace through a two-state solution⁴⁷" (LT144_2024_04_29). For *le Temps*, the attack on UNRWA funding is irrational, and it warns that missing donations could directly threaten the agency's existence.

In summary, there is a clear difference in perspectives: while *NZZ* and *Tagesanzeiger* focus more on reasons against financial support – such as possible links to Hamas or inefficient structures – *Le Temps* consistently defends the importance of continued funding and warns much more explicitly of the humanitarian consequences of cuts. These divergent positions highlight not only different political standpoints in the Swiss media landscape but to a certain extent, also the "Röstigraben" (the cultural divide) between German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland.

5.2.4 The Colonna report⁴⁸

Thesis: The Colonna report has not fundamentally changed the attitudes of the various media reports.

The so-called Colonna Report investigated the allegations against UNRWA. The results drawn from it were interpreted and assessed differently by the three newspapers.

⁴⁵ L'urgence alimentaire n'est pas contestée. Mais le Conseil fédéral va-t-il pour autant reprendre ses paiements à l'UNRWA, cette agence de l'ONU qui nourrit les réfugiés palestiniens? C'est loin d'être sûr. Le camp bourgeois, surtout en Suisse alémanique, met une pression folle.

⁴⁶ Il y a sans doute matière à questionner le fonctionnement de l'agence onusienne, mais pas au moment où les besoins sont les plus importants.

⁴⁷ S'il coupe les vivres à l'UNRWA, et donc aux civils palestiniens, Berne fera peu de cas de l'équilibre entre les deux parties, puisqu'il continue de commercer et de collaborer militairement avec Israël, à qui il reconnaît le droit de se défendre. Il s'écartera en outre clairement de sa stratégie au Proche-Orient, soit favoriser la paix via la solution à deux Etats.

⁴⁸ For further information regarding the Colonna Report, see chapter 2.5

Although all three newspapers recognize the report as an important contribution to the debate about UNRWA and mention the report several times, the use of its findings varies significantly – not only in terms of content, but also in the linguistic framing.

NZZ adopts a critical stance towards the Colonna Report, emphasizing that while it documents some problematic aspects of UNRWA's work, it misses the core of the issue. It states: "The Colonna report misses the point: UNRWA is part of the problem in the Middle East, an anachronism that serves all parties to the conflict to perpetuate an untenable situation⁴⁹" (NZZ139_2024_04_24). NZZ points out that the report confirms key allegations against UNRWA, including the disregard of neutrality standards and the use of UNRWA facilities for political or military purposes: "In fact, the 54-page Colonna report is by no means as exonerating as the project leader makes it out to be. Among other things, the report criticizes the use of teaching materials with antisemitic and violence-glorifying content at UNRWA schools. Particularly noteworthy: one of Israel's central accusations, namely that UNRWA facilities are misused for political or military purposes, is confirmed in the report. Political groups exert a strong influence on Hamas' decisions, and UNRWA does not even check whether its employees are members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad - although such membership is incompatible with the principle of neutrality, according to the authors of the report⁵⁰" (NZZ164_2025_01_15). In doing so, the paper tends to use definitive claims, such as: "The embellished UN investigation report on UNRWA (known as the Colonna report) also downplayed or simply ignored the negative findings on the inspection of school materials⁵¹" (NZZ168_2025_01_31). According to NZZ, the report confirms that UNRWA is not fulfilling its responsibilities and criticizes it for downplaying or ignoring negative findings. Therefore, the report did not really change the viewpoint of NZZ, as the newspaper had already adopted this stance prior to its publication.

⁴⁹ Denn der Colonna-Bericht zielt am Kern der Sache vorbei: Die UNRWA ist ein Teil des Problems im Nahen Osten, ein Anachronismus, der allen Konfliktparteien dazu dient, eine unhaltbare Lage zu perpetuieren.

⁵⁰ Tatsächlich ist der 54-seitige Colonna-Bericht keineswegs so entlastend, wie es die Projektleiterin darstellt. So kritisiert der Report unter anderem die Nutzung von Lehrmaterialien mit antisemitischen und gewaltverherrlichenden Inhalten an UNRWA -Schulen. Besonders bemerkenswert: Einer der zentralen Vorwürfe Israels, nämlich dass UNRWA-Einrichtungen für politische oder militärische Zwecke missbraucht werden, wird im Bericht bestätigt. Politische Gruppen üben starken Einfluss auf die Entscheide der Hamas aus, und die UNRWA prüft gar nicht, ob ihre Angestellten Mitglieder der Hamas oder des Islamischen Jihad sind - obwohl eine solche Mitgliedschaft nach Meinung der Autoren des Berichts unvereinbar mit dem Prinzip der Neutralität ist.

⁵¹ Der geschönte Uno-Untersuchungsbericht zur UNRWA (bekannt als Colonna-Bericht) hat zudem die negativen Ergebnisse zur Überprüfung des Schulmaterials heruntergespielt oder einfach ignoriert.

Overall, NZZ conveys the impression that while the report highlights some important shortcomings, it does not go deep enough to address the fundamental problems within UNRWA: “We need new, decentralized approaches that offer real prospects. The prospects for this are poor - and the Colonna report does nothing to change this⁵²” (NZZ139_2024_04_24).

Tagesanzeiger takes a more nuanced position and tries to present both the criticisms and mitigating statements of the Colonna Report in a balanced way. The reports coverage reflects an editorial effort to weigh conflicting perspectives. Tagesanzeiger emphasizes that UNRWA operates under increasingly difficult conditions – a situation that has worsened since the onset of the war. This is particularly evident in the newspaper's interview with Lazzarini where he said: "It is important for me to emphasize that all employees are checked when they are hired and reported to the relevant authorities via personnel lists. In the case of the Gaza Strip, this also includes Israel as the occupying power. It has not reported any concerns. But there is another problem. And that is that the war that has now broken out and the bombardments are making investigations much more difficult⁵³" (TA110_2023_11_14). Despite this recognition, Tagesanzeiger notes that the Colonna report mentions several improvements are needed – especially regarding the neutrality of staff and educational materials. It presents an image of an organization in need of a restructuring, but not fundamentally compromised: “The report recommends that the organization, under Swiss director Philippe Lazzarini, carry out more thorough checks on all employees, better protect UNRWA facilities from misuse by the military, revise the teaching materials in the schools run by the organization and take other measures⁵⁴” (TA146_2024_04_25). Furthermore, "the report concludes that the aid organization generally maintains its neutrality well, but that improvements are needed⁵⁵" (TA155_2024_07_11). Overall,

⁵² Es braucht neue, dezentrale Ansätze, die wirkliche Perspektiven bieten. Die Vorzeichen dafür stehen schlecht - daran ändert auch der Colonna-Bericht nichts

⁵³ Wichtig ist mir, zu betonen, dass alle Mitarbeiter bei ihrer Einstellung überprüft und den zuständigen Behörden via Personallisten gemeldet werden. Im Fall des Gazastreifens also auch Israel als Besatzungsmacht. Dieses hat keine Bedenken gemeldet. Es gibt aber ein weiteres Problem. Und zwar dass der nun ausgebrochene Krieg und die Bombardements die Untersuchungen stark erschweren.

⁵⁴ Der Bericht empfiehlt der Organisation unter dem Schweizer Direktor Philippe Lazzarini eine genauere Überprüfung aller Mitarbeitenden, einen besseren Schutz der UNRWA-Einrichtungen vor missbräuchlicher militärischer Nutzung, eine Revision des Lehrmaterials an den von der Organisation betriebenen Schulen und weitere Massnahmen.

⁵⁵ Der Bericht kommt zum Schluss, dass das Hilfswerk seine Neutralität im Grossen und Ganzen gut wahre, aber Verbesserungen nötig seien.

the newspaper recognizes both the positive and negative aspects and the importance of the report's results.

Le Temps, in turn, interprets the Colonna report predominantly positively and mainly highlights the exonerating findings. It frequently employs indirect speech and modal constructions, such as “Le rapport indique que...” or “Il n'existe pas de preuve que...”, which serve to distance the newspaper from the accusations and emphasize the tentative nature of the findings. The paper writes: “The report on the subject published in April 2024 concludes that there is no evidence of complicity with Hamas⁵⁶” (LT165_2024_10_16). Only some improvements regarding neutrality could be made: “A significant number of procedures enable UNRWA to respect humanitarian principles and neutrality, which could be improved, according to the report⁵⁷” (LT147_2024_04_30). The newspaper points out that UNRWA has mechanisms to prevent abuse. Although Le Temps acknowledges that improvements are needed – especially regarding inspections and staff neutrality – it does so cautiously, avoid harsh criticism. Compared to the other two newspapers, Le Temps is much more reserved regarding the allegations against UNRWA and focuses mainly on the aspects of the report that are exonerating. It conveys the impression of an organization whose work can certainly be questioned, but whose role remains indispensable. The red cross underlines this point by describing UNRWA as: “an irreplaceable organization whose closure will have serious consequences, adding to an already catastrophic humanitarian situation⁵⁸” (LT171_2024_10_29).

The differing coverage of the Colonna Report by the three newspapers clearly shows how much the interpretation of its findings varies. All three newspapers tend to use the report's findings to reinforce their existing position rather than to revise their opinions. While NZZ formulates sharp criticism of UNRWA and presents the report as insufficient in addressing core problems, Tagesanzeiger strives for a balanced presentation of criticism and exoneration. Le Temps, on the other hand, mainly highlights the exoneration aspects of the report and downplays many of the allegations. These

⁵⁶ Le rapport sur la question publié en avril 2024 conclut qu'il n'existe aucune preuve de complicité avec le Hamas.

⁵⁷ Un nombre significatif de procédures permet à l'UNRWA de respecter les principes humanitaires et de neutralité, laquelle pourrait être améliorée, selon ce rapport.

⁵⁸ «une organisation irremplaçable» dont la suppression «aura des conséquences graves qui s'ajoutent à une situation humanitaire déjà catastrophique».

divergent perspectives make it difficult to get a clear picture of what the report says and what specific measures are needed to improve UNRWA's work. The lack of consensus in interpreting the findings leaves room for uncertainty about which criticisms are justified, and which may be exaggerated or unfounded. However, one point on which all three newspapers agree is the need for greater neutrality. This seems to be the only aspect capable of reaching consensus, while other issues are assessed differently. The diversity of opinion not only reflects the complexity of the issue but also the challenge of defining clear and objective measures for improvement.

5.2.5 Abolition of UNRWA

Thesis: Despite the critical attitude of the Swiss German media towards the continued funding of UNRWA, they recognize the value of the organization and agree with Le Temps that at this point, UNRWA should not be abolished.

NZZ examines both sides of the debate, highlighting both the significance and the criticism of UNRWA. On one hand, NZZ repeatedly emphasizes that UNRWA has become indispensable in the region and plays a key role in organizing emergency aid in the Palestinian territories. It acknowledges that finding an alternative to UNRWA would be difficult, stating: "In the middle of the Gaza war, the discontinuation of the organization would have fatal consequences for the civilian population. UNRWA can hardly be replaced in the distribution of relief supplies on the Gaza Strip. The Red Cross and other aid organizations together have only a fraction of the 3,000 employees who are still working for UNRWA in Gaza during the war⁵⁹" (NZZ123_2024_02_13). NZZ also points out that a ban on UNRWA would have enormous consequences for the humanitarian situation in Gaza: "Moves such as the UNRWA ban do not help anyone but threaten to bring even greater suffering to the Palestinian people⁶⁰" (NZZ155_2024_10_30) so "UNRWA has become an integral part of the lives of millions of Palestinians⁶¹" (NZZ123_2024_02_13). On the other hand, NZZ also presents arguments for discontinuing cooperation with the organization: "The question arises as to what UNRWA is supposed to replace. But once you understand that UNRWA is

⁵⁹ Mitten im Gaza-Krieg hätte die Abschaffung der Organisation fatale Folgen für die Zivilbevölkerung. Die UNRWA ist bei der Verteilung der Hilfsgüter im Gazastreifen kaum zu ersetzen. Das Rote Kreuz und andere Hilfsorganisationen verfügen zusammen nur über einen Bruchteil der 3000 Mitarbeiter, die heute noch während des Kriegs für die UNRWA in Gaza tätig sind.

⁶⁰ Hüftschuss-Aktionen wie das UNRWA-Verbot helfen jedoch niemandem, sondern drohen noch grösseres Leid über die palästinensische Bevölkerung zu bringen.

⁶¹ Die UNRWA ist aus dem Leben von Millionen Palästinensern kaum mehr wegzudenken.

the arsonist and not the fireman, you realize how ridiculous it is. Why find a replacement for something that creates the ideological infrastructure for the continuation of the Palestinian refugee problem which ensures that there will never be peace. There is no reason for the continued existence of UNRWA⁶²" (NZZ151_2024_08_27). In the debate surrounding a potential discontinuation of the organization, the argument that UNRWA keeps the conflict alive by maintaining the belief in a return reemerges: "The discontinuation of UNRWA would send a message to the "refugees" that they have arrived in Gaza as their home⁶³" (NZZ151_2024_08_27). Despite these critical points, NZZ overall tends to support UNRWA and acknowledges that discontinuing it would not solve any problems.

Tagesanzeiger also takes a nuanced position and repeatedly points out the importance of UNRWA. The newspaper stresses that the organization is the only one capable of providing urgent emergency aid in Gaza, quoting: "There is no other aid organization that has as many staff and resources in the Gaza Strip as UNRWA. The Colonna report describes UNRWA in the report as simply "irreplaceable and indispensable" and "crucial to the provision of life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services" in the Gaza Strip ⁶⁴" (TA138_2024_04_23). It acknowledges that there is no other organization that could take over UNRWA's tasks. At the same time, Tagesanzeiger remains critical of UNRWA and states that it is not completely exonerated from the allegations. Nevertheless, the newspaper clearly speaks out against a ban and lists the possible consequences of such a step – including a worsening of the humanitarian situation and the risk of a complete collapse of aid in Gaza. Tagesanzeiger emphasizes that a ban on UNRWA would ultimately require Israel to seek an alternative solution, citing the following statement by Cassis: "Should UNRWA become incapable of acting, Israel must create an alternative solution⁶⁵"(TA165_2024_10_29).

⁶² Es erhebt sich die Frage, was denn die UNRWA ersetzen soll. Aber wenn man einmal verstanden hat, dass die UNRWA der Brandstifter und nicht der Feuerwehrmann ist, wird einem klar, wie lächerlich sie ist. Warum sollte man Ersatz für etwas finden, was die ideologische Infrastruktur für die Fortdauer des palästinensischen Flüchtlingsproblems schafft? Was sicherstellt, dass es niemals Frieden gibt. Es gibt keinen Grund für die Fortexistenz der UNRWA.

⁶³ Mit der Abschaffung der UNRWA wäre die Botschaft an die «Flüchtlinge» verbunden, dass sie in Gaza als Heimat angekommen sind.

⁶⁴ Es gibt keine andere Hilfsorganisation, die ähnlich viel Personal und Ressourcen im Gazastreifen hat wie die UNRWA. Der Colonna-Bericht bezeichnet die UNRWA im Bericht als schlicht «unersetzlich und unverzichtbar» sowie als «entscheidend für die Bereitstellung lebensrettender humanitärer Hilfe und wichtiger sozialer Dienste» im Gazastreifen.

⁶⁵ Sollte die UNRWA unfähig werden, zu agieren, muss Israel eine Alternativlösung schaffen.

Le Temps takes a consistently supportive stance toward UNRWA and vehemently opposes a ban. The newspaper repeatedly stresses that UNRWA is indispensable and is the only organization capable of providing effective aid in Gaza, quoting Lazzarini: “Until a Palestinian state is established, the agency will be essential in ensuring that Gaza's children are not condemned to a future in rubble, without education, and without hope. No other entity, with the exception of a functioning state, is in a position to educate hundreds of thousands of girls and boys or provide primary health care to millions of Palestinians⁶⁶” (LT178_2024_01_10). It makes clear that abolishing UNRWA would not solve any problems and would instead deprive millions of people of urgently needed support: “The UNRWA was established in December 1949. Since then, it has provided vital aid to these refugees and their displaced descendants in three Palestinian areas: the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. In Gaza, UNRWA currently assists 90% of the 2.4 million Gazans⁶⁷” (LT170_2024_10_29). Le Temps argues that while the question of abolition may be legitimate it should not be raised at this time – especially given the urgent need for aid for millions of people. The newspaper cites concrete obstacles to UNRWA’s work, such as lack of visas or denied cooperation, and criticizes Israel for opposing UN bodies with a ban. In its linguistic framing, Le Temps emphasizes humanitarian consequences much more explicitly, using emotionally charged vocabulary such as “catastrophe humanitaire” to stress the urgency of the situation.

In summary, despite different emphases, there is a consensus between the Swiss German media and Le Temps. All three newspapers recognize the value and central role of UNRWA and agree that its abolition is not the right solution. While NZZ and Tagesanzeiger initially focus more on points of criticism and arguments for discontinuation, their reporting makes it clear to acknowledge the humanitarian value of the organization – similar to Le Temps.

⁶⁶ En attendant l’établissement d’un Etat palestinien, l’agence sera essentielle pour veiller à ce que les enfants de Gaza ne soient pas condamnés à un avenir dans les décombres, sans éducation, et sans espoir. Aucune autre entité, à l’exception d’un Etat opérationnel, n’est en mesure d’éduquer des centaines de milliers de filles et de garçons, ou de dispenser des soins de santé primaires à des millions de Palestiniens.

⁶⁷ L’Agence onusienne pour les réfugiés palestiniens a été créée en décembre 1949. Depuis, elle fournit une aide vitale à ces réfugiés et leurs descendants déplacés, dans trois secteurs palestiniens: la bande de Gaza, la Cisjordanie et Jérusalem-Est occupées. A Gaza, l’UNRWA vient aujourd’hui en aide à 90% des 2,4 millions de Gazaouis.

5.2.6 Summary

The media analysis revealed clear divergence in how UNRWA is portrayed across different Swiss newspapers. NZZ, the most critical among the three, consistently framed UNRWA as a politically compromised actor, emphasizing alleged Hamas infiltration, antisemitic educational materials and the perpetuation of the refugee narrative. Its reporting often highlighted concerns about Swiss funding. Tagesanzeiger presented a more ambivalent picture, recognizing UNRWA's operational challenges more intensely as NZZ while also stressing its indispensable role in a collapsing humanitarian landscape. Its tone seemed to be more nuanced and acknowledged the complexity of UNRWA's operational context. Le Temps, in contrast, offered a predominantly supportive portrayal, emphasizing the agency's irreplaceable role in OPT, the devastating consequences of defunding and the political motivation behind the criticism. It framed much of the criticism against UNRWA as ideologically driven and strongly opposed any call for its abolition. Across all three newspapers, recurring discourse strands emerged around five central themes: the allegations against UNRWA, the accusations against Israel, the question of continued funding, the reactions to the Colonna Report and the debates about UNRWA's future. Notably, all newspapers acknowledged that accusations against UNRWA are not new and all three questioned – to varying degrees – the evidentiary basis of Israel's claims. However, their treatment of these topics varied: NZZ reported most frequently and in detail on the allegations, while Le Temps tended to use indirect speech and rather emphasized the absence of verified evidence. Tagesanzeiger positioned itself in between, noting both the allegations and the operational challenges UNRWA faces. A big difference also lies in the discussion around UNRWA's funding. Le Temps strongly advocated for continued Swiss financial support, warning of severe humanitarian consequences if aid were withdrawn. In contrast, NZZ and Tagesanzeiger focused more on the risks, though both acknowledged that a complete funding stop would be counterproductive. Similar patterns were seen in the newspapers' interpretations of the Colonna Report: NZZ emphasized its critical findings and perceived shortcomings, Tagesanzeiger provided a more balanced interpretation, and Le Temps highlighted the relieving conclusions of the report.

Despite political and editorial differences, all three newspapers agreed on one central point: UNRWA currently has no viable alternative in OPT. Even the most critical

voices acknowledged that its abolition would severely worsen the humanitarian situation. This shared recognition underscored the organization's unique position in a highly complex and politicized environment, and it reflects a broader consensus about the importance of maintaining at least a minimum operational capacity in the face of ongoing conflict. Overall, the media analysis demonstrates how narratives about humanitarian organizations are shaped. These narratives play a powerful role in shaping public understanding, influencing donor policy and ultimately affecting the operational space of actors like UNRWA. Therefore, the media does not simply report on humanitarian crises – it actively helps to construct the meaning of the actors involved.

5.3 Interviews

In addition to my media analysis, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the situation in Gaza, the challenges humanitarian organizations face when operating in conflict environments and how media representations influence their work. To explore these aspects, I conducted five interviews with representatives of humanitarian actors. As previously already mentioned, the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories remains highly sensitive. For this reason, all interviewees – and the organizations they represent – requested anonymity. Accordingly, no names or institutional affiliations are mentioned in this paper. All interviews were conducted in Switzerland with individuals based in the country. The findings presented below are supported by quotes from the interviews, which are included in the appendix. There, the responses have been grouped thematically and cited in random order to ensure anonymity.

5.3.1 Results

The findings of the interviews are presented thematically, structured around key topics that emerged consistently across the conversations. To ensure anonymity, the interviewees are referred to as Interview 1 through Interview 5. While individual wording varied, all interviewees expressed views that pointed clearly in the same direction, pointing out the importance of humanitarian aid and UNRWA in Gaza and OPT.

5.3.1.1 Importance of Humanitarian aid and UNRWA

Regarding the importance of humanitarian aid and especially the UNRWA, there was consensus among the interviewees that UNRWA's role in humanitarian assistance in the occupied Palestinian territories is unique, comprehensive and practically

irreplaceable in the actual context. Humanitarian assistance in Gaza is described as closely intertwined with governmental structures, essential to basic civilian infrastructure such as education, healthcare and sanitation. UNRWA specifically is highlighted as a crucial actor due to its unique international mandate and operational scale, often performing tasks typically handled by governmental institutions. One respondent stated clearly: "By virtue of its mandate, UNRWA actually fulfills quasi-governmental tasks in the civil infrastructure [...] especially in the areas of medical care and education"⁶⁸(Interview 2). It was further emphasized that UNRWA's operational significance is increased by Gaza's demographic realities, with more than half of the population being refugees or descendants thereof, all reliant on UNRWA services. The organization's extensive database of beneficiaries was mentioned as a crucial asset in ensuring effective aid delivery. The importance of UNRWA also extends beyond immediate crisis response. Interviewees mentioned UNRWA's role as the only provider of fuel to humanitarian organizations during recent conflict situations, highlighting its important logistical support. This broader service mandate including education, healthcare, psychological support and many more, clearly exceed what typical NGO's usually provide.

5.3.1.2 Allegations and media influence

Interviewees expressed substantial concerns regarding how allegations against humanitarian organizations and particularly UNRWA impact their operations, public perception and funding. These accusations were described as "sometimes very serious and very, very bad for the workers"⁶⁹ (Interview 1), causing substantial difficulties for organizations and their employees. An issue being highlighted was the significant influence of media narratives on public opinion. Interviewees noted that allegations persist in public debates even after being disproven, influencing the reader's perception. Also, many parliamentarians once formed an opinion, and it is very difficult to convince them of the opposite. In addition, it was mentioned that: "The tragic thing is that we have realized that facts and figures really no longer play a role in the debate"⁷⁰ (Interview 1). Specifically, the narrative portraying UNRWA as controlled by Hamas has become entrenched and correcting such misrepresentations have been

⁶⁸ UNRWA erfüllt eigentlich Kraft ihres Mandats quasi staatliche Aufgaben in der zivilen Infrastruktur [...] vor allem im Bereich medizinische Versorgung und im Bereich Bildung.

⁶⁹ teilweise sehr schwerwiegend und sehr, sehr schlimm für die Arbeiter

⁷⁰ Das tragische daran ist, dass wir gemerkt haben, dass in der Debatte Zahlen und Fakten wirklich keine Rolle mehr spielen.

challenging: " The narrative that UNRWA is fundamentally undermined and controlled by Hamas. We have not been able to eliminate that⁷¹" (Interview 1). People don't understand that UNRWA takes over quasi-governmental tasks in place of Hamas, but not with Hamas and not because of Hamas, but instead of Hamas. Such negative media portrayals affect funding directly, as donor countries face increasing pressure, impacting their willingness or ability to finance humanitarian work.

The interviews revealed that humanitarian organizations definitely acknowledge the benefits of media coverage or the creation of publicity in order to enable and promote the acceptance and funding of humanitarian work. However, they generally want to maintain a cautious approach towards media engagement to ensure the safety of their staff and continuity of operations. Many avoid public statements to protect employees from harassment or restrictions during entry and exit procedures: " Many organizations that operate locally, do not want to be in the media to ensure the safety of their employees⁷²" (Interview 1). For the organizations, ensuring continued local humanitarian support takes clear precedence over influencing public opinions or political debates. Additionally, frustration with media reporting strategies driven by audience engagement metrics has been expressed, noting that certain humanitarian issues receive less media attention due to perceptions of limited public interest: " We do a lot of media work and very often we hear 'we won't publish that, it won't be clicked'⁷³" (Interview 1). Interviewees further emphasized that reduced access for international journalists has a significant impact on the quality and depth of media coverage. Restrictions on movement and access to conflict areas have greatly diminished informational diversity, which impacts the accuracy and objectivity of reporting: "Authorization and freedom of movement were higher [...]. That has diminished considerably. And in this respect, the diversity of information and the multiple sources of protection are no longer as prevalent as they used to be⁷⁴" (Interview 2). However, the journalists

⁷¹ Das Narrativ, die UNRWA ist grundsätzlich von der Hamas unterlaufen und wird von dieser kontrolliert. Das haben wir nicht weggebracht.

⁷² Viele Organisationen, die vor Ort tätig sind, möchten nicht in den Medien stattfinden, um die Sicherheit ihrer Mitarbeiter sicherzustellen.

⁷³ Wir machen sehr viel Medienarbeit und sehr oft hören wir 'das bringen wir nicht, das wird nicht geklickt'.

⁷⁴ Die Zulassung wie auch die Bewegungsfreiheit war höher... Das hat sehr stark abgenommen. Und insofern ist auch die Informationsvielfalt und die mehrquellige Absicherung nicht mehr so gegeben wie früher.

that made it into Gaza or locals who'd like to report on the happenings are frequently targeted because of the powerful information they gathered.

Regarding neutrality, respondents argued that expecting absolute neutrality and complete control over employee's political beliefs is unrealistic in highly polarized environments like the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). It has been pointed out that "as an organization, you cannot look into the minds of your employees and have very little influence on what their political opinions and attitudes are"⁷⁵ (Interview 1), emphasizing the importance of strong internal compliance mechanisms. UNRWA, specifically, was noted as having well-developed internal control systems for addressing misconduct allegations, described as being "much better developed than many UN organizations"⁷⁶ (Interview 3). The accusation that UNRWA uses one-sided school materials that use a one-sided presentation was also discussed in the interviews, whereby it was described that this one-sidedness of school materials is not unique. In the Israeli media, the Nakba is not mentioned at all, it is even forbidden to teach anything about the Nakba in Israel. Therefore, each side promotes its own narrative.

5.3.1.3 Colonna Report

During the interviews the Colonna report was primarily discussed in terms of its role of addressing allegations and providing clarity regarding UNRWA's operations. The interviewees agreed that the existence of such a report itself demonstrates the seriousness with which UNRWA and international Stakeholders approach the allegations against the organization. It was agreed that, given the complexity and chaotic context of conflict areas such as Gaza, some problematic issues inevitably arise and need investigation. As noted, "in every such chaotic conflict context, there are things that need to be criticized or investigated"⁷⁷ (Interview 3). One respondent explicitly addressed the likelihood of individual misconduct, noting: "I assume that it is quite likely that there were certain employees or former employees who were involved in some way in the attack of October 7"⁷⁸ (Interview 3). However, the respondent also

⁷⁵ man als Organisation nicht in die Köpfe seiner Mitarbeitenden schauen und nur sehr schlecht beeinflussen kann, was die politische Meinung, die politische Haltung dieser Personen sind.

⁷⁶ viel besser ausgebaut als viele UN-Organisationen.

⁷⁷ in jedem so chaotischen Konfliktkontext gibt es Dinge, die zu beanstanden sind oder die man untersuchen muss.

⁷⁸ Ich gehe davon aus, dass es durchaus wahrscheinlich ist, dass es gewisse Mitarbeitende oder frühere Mitarbeitende hatte, die da in irgendeiner Form an der Attacke des 7. Oktobers beteiligt waren.

emphasized that such individual cases of misconduct should not be generalized to imply organizational complicity: " This does not mean that UNRWA supported this in any way⁷⁹" (Interview 3). Nevertheless, some disappointment was expressed about how the report was received publicly. Despite the initial hope that the Colonna Report would bring clarity to a debate lacking factual grounding, the opposite effect was observed: "We have been waiting very hard for this investigation report [...] and hoped that it would bring a little more clarity to the whole, very fact-free debate. We have seen that this report has been very strongly delegitimized⁸⁰" (Interview 1). This delegitimization, they argued, overshadowed the report's conclusion that UNRWA does indeed have and effectively implements the necessary neutrality measures. It was "not seen that the report actually says that UNRWA has the necessary measures in place and applies them in order to maintain its neutrality⁸¹" (Interview 1).

5.3.1.4 UNRWA alternatives

Regarding an alternative to UNRWA, the interviewees strongly emphasized that there is currently no alternative to UNRWA capable of immediately taking over its wide-ranging responsibilities in Gaza and OPT. The scale and complexity of UNRWA's operations were mentioned repeatedly as primary reason why replacing the organization would be impractical. One respondent explicitly stated: " There is no alternative⁸²" (Interview 1). Interviewees noted that even when alternative organizations were proposed – for example, during the debate the Swiss parliament suggesting organizations such as World Central Kitchen or Médecins Sans Frontières – these organizations themselves clarified they lacked the necessary capacity to take over UNRWA's responsibilities, particularly in Gaza. This point was reinforced with an interesting analogy - replacing UNRWA overnight would equate to transferring all educational, healthcare and social services currently provided by the cantons of Zurich and Aargau to another organization, given a comparable population of approximately two million people. Additionally, the act of immediately replacing approximately 13,000 UNRWA employees to address neutrality criticisms was mentioned to be

⁷⁹ Das heisst noch überhaupt nicht, dass die UNRWA das irgendwie unterstützt hat.

⁸⁰ Wir haben sehr fest auf diesen Untersuchungsbericht ... gewartet und haben uns erhofft, dass dieser etwas mehr Klarheit in die ganze, sehr faktenfreie Debatte bringt. Wir haben gesehen, dass dieser Bericht sehr stark delegitimiert wurde.

⁸¹ gar nicht gesehen, dass der Bericht eigentlich sagt, dass die UNRWA die notwendigen Massnahmen für die Einhaltung der Neutralität hat und diese auch anwendet, um ihre Neutralität einzuhalten.

⁸² Es gibt keine Alternative.

unrealistic. Furthermore, interviewees pointed out that alternative humanitarian organizations would inevitably face similar challenges regarding local staff. The assumption that another international organization could simply take over operations and improve neutrality by replacing local staff with international workers was described as an illusion. "It is also an illusion that if the ICRC took over UNRWA, they would fly in with their international staff and then everything would be better"⁸³ (Interview 1). However, these alternative proposals continued to resurface political debates: "All the organizations that were mentioned were able to say 'we can't do that'. And yet this demand has gone round and round in parliament and has come up again and again"⁸⁴ (Interview 1). The uniqueness of UNRWA, as described in one interview, lies in its broad mandate, exceeding that of other specialized UN agencies. Unlike organizations strictly focused on education, healthcare or refugee issues alone, UNRWA simultaneously addresses multiple sectors. That is what makes the takeover of UNRWA so difficult. While theoretically possible, creating such a successor organization would require significant time, legitimacy and cooperation from local authorities, as well as essential security guarantee – conditions currently unmet.

5.3.1.5 Current and future situation in Gaza & OPT

The interviewees described the humanitarian situation in Gaza as catastrophic with widespread suffering and a total collapse of basic infrastructure. The overall tone was of deep concern, uncertainty and urgency. One participant noted: "The current situation has of course been catastrophic since the beginning of the war [...]. The drastic nature of the situation can hardly be surpassed"⁸⁵ (Interview 2). Someone else stated: "The situation is not only difficult, it's a nightmare"⁸⁶ (Interview 5). Even the humanitarian staff on site were described as: "Some of our employees [...] can no longer concentrate because they haven't eaten"⁸⁷ (Interview 3). Another interviewee recounted horrific field realities, such as parents writing their names on their children's

⁸³ Das ist auch eine Illusion, dass wenn das IKRK die UNRWA übernehmen würde, dass die dann mit ihrem internationalen Staff einfliegen würden, und dann wäre alles besser.

⁸⁴ Alle Organisationen, die genannt wurden, konnten sagen, 'wir können das nicht leisten'. Und trotzdem hat sich diese Forderung im Parlament gedreht und gedreht und ist immer wieder aufgetaucht.

⁸⁵ Die aktuelle Lage ist natürlich seit Beginn des Krieges katastrophal [...]. An Drastik kaum zu überbieten.

⁸⁶ The situation is not only difficult, it's a nightmare.

⁸⁷ Unsere Angestellten [...] können sich zum Teil nicht mehr konzentrieren, weil sie nicht gegessen haben.

bodies to ensure identification after bombings, "its just massive, the level of pain and horror⁸⁸" (Interview 5).

The future outlook was described as highly uncertain, largely dependent on the emergence of a legitimate post-war governance structure. As one person explained, "the big unknown is what the post-war order actually is. A lot depends on it⁸⁹" (Interview 3). The lack of a stable political solution was mentioned as a structural barrier to any meaningful or sustainable humanitarian relief. "As long as there is no political peace, there is probably no short-term solution for efficient humanitarian aid that will function independently of UNRWA⁹⁰" (Interview 1). It was argued that lasting change requires a shift toward political peace and institutional accountability. There is the need to build institutions capable of delivering basic services without reliance on external actors. However, the establishment of such institutions is hindered by operational challenges caused by both Hamas and Israeli authorities. Cooperation with local power structures is necessary in humanitarian work, regardless of their international legitimacy.

5.3.1.6 Israel's barriers

The interviewees expressed deep concern over the structural and political barriers imposed by Israel that have restricted humanitarian operations in Gaza. "They want international aid and support for Palestine to be reduced⁹¹" (Interview 5). These obstacles affect both the ability of international actors to access the region and the operational capacity of organizations like UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies. A major point raised was the restriction of entry for international personnel, stating "over time, it became apparent that more and more international employees were not being let in⁹²" (Interview 1). In addition, the basic communication lines between UNRWA and Israel have been cut. The situation has been described as UNRWA "slowly being suffocated by the Israeli state⁹³" (Interview 1). Logistical barriers do add to the unbearable situation in Gaza. Israel has tightened control over the movement of goods

⁸⁸ its just massive, the level of pain and horror.

⁸⁹ die grosse Unbekannte ist, was ist eigentlich die Post-War-Order. Davon ist sehr viel abhängig.

⁹⁰ Solange es keinen politischen Frieden gibt, gibt es wahrscheinlich auch keine kurzfristige Lösung für eine effiziente humanitäre Hilfe die unabhängig von der UNRWA funktionieren wird.

⁹¹ They want international aid and support for Palestine to be reduced

⁹² mit der Zeit hat man gesehen, dass zunehmend internationale Mitarbeitende nicht hereingelassen wurden.

⁹³ langsam erstickt vom israelischen Staat.

by limiting humanitarian deliveries. "These [humanitarian deliveries] are very heavily controlled, which leads to major delays in the provision of aid⁹⁴" (Interview 1). It was reported that aid deliveries are obstructed wherever possible, contributing to widespread shortages and compounding the humanitarian crisis. The interviewees described that Israel is leading a campaign to undermine and delegitimize humanitarian organizations through the use of counter-terrorism framing: "The framing as terror or support for terror has come very strongly from Israel. This is a strategy⁹⁵" (Interview 3). This approach was described as being intensified after the International Criminal Court (ICC) began investigating against Israel, particularly in response to evidence gathered by several humanitarian organizations. These organizations were subsequently designated as terrorist groups by Israel and pressure was put on donors to withdraw support. "It is relatively obvious that the aim is actually to damage organizations that have presented evidence against Israel⁹⁶" (Interview 3). Similar patterns are now seen in how Israel handles its relationship with UNRWA.

5.3.1.7 Financing and media coverage of UNRWA in Switzerland

Discussions in the Swiss parliament have been dominated by the question of whether financial support for UNRWA constitutes indirect support for Hamas. The assumption underlying many political arguments was that UNRWA is infiltrated or controlled by Hamas and that aid delivered through UNRWA might reach terrorist actors. According to interviewees the line of reasoning has overshadowed the essential humanitarian function that UNRWA fulfills. The severity of the consequences of ending financial support was emphasized in reference to an internal analysis by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA), which reportedly found that cutting the donations could have big implications. As noted, "an analysis by the Swiss EDA has shown that Switzerland could be participating in genocide if it were to stop supporting UNRWA, as this would prevent the delivery of essential aid to the population in Gaza and OPT⁹⁷" (Interview 1). In addition to political concerns, one interviewee also talked

⁹⁴ Diese [humanitarian deliveries] werden sehr stark überprüft, was zu grossen Verzögerungen der Hilfeleistungen führt.

⁹⁵ Das Framing als Terror oder Unterstützung von Terror ist von Israel sehr stark ausgegangen. Das ist eine Strategie.

⁹⁶ Es ist relativ offensichtlich, dass es darum geht, eigentlich Organisationen zu schädigen, die Evidenz gegen Israel vorgelegt haben.

⁹⁷ Eine Analyse des EDA der Schweiz hat ergeben, dass sich die Schweiz möglicherweise an einem Genozid beteiligt, falls sie die UNRWA nicht mehr unterstützen würde, weil sie damit die essentiellen Hilfslieferungen für die Bevölkerung in Gaza und OPT verhindert.

about the decline in public donations. Despite the unprecedented scale of the crisis, fundraising results have remained very low. "We have rarely seen so little donated during a disaster of this scale⁹⁸" (Interview 3).

When talking about media coverage, the interviewees observed a big difference between the French-speaking and German-speaking parts of Switzerland regarding UNRWA and the broader Israel-Palestine conflict. This cultural division – often referred to as the "Röstigraben" – was described as highly visible in media narratives and political alignment. It was consistently noted that media in the French-speaking Switzerland engaged with the topic in a more open, differentiated and less accusatory way. One interviewee summarized this clearly: "French-speaking Switzerland presents the situation in a more differentiated or open-ended way than German-speaking Switzerland⁹⁹" (Interview 1). In contrast, the German-speaking press and particularly the NZZ was described as: "I have already observed a certain radicalization of the NZZ, with many articles that were very critical of Israel and very critical of UNRWA and sometimes also very, very undifferentiated critical of UNRWA¹⁰⁰" (Interview 1). This pattern was supported by multiple interviewees, with one describing the difference as "There is a huge difference between French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland. It's huge. This difference was enormous. Especially at the beginning. Crazy¹⁰¹" (Interview 4). Another simply stated: "In this sense, we see the cultural division very clearly in the media coverage¹⁰²" (Interview 1). Several people contextualized the disparity by pointing to broader geopolitical influences. Someone noted that "the discourse in German-speaking Switzerland is more similar to the discourse in Germany¹⁰³" (Interview 2), where the media is often more sympathetic to Israel due to historical reasons. This influence, they argue, spills over into Swiss-German media. In parallel, the French-speaking Swiss media was described as "more the French current which is more pro Palestine¹⁰⁴" (Interview 5).

⁹⁸ Wir haben es selten erlebt bei einer Katastrophe dieses Ausmasses, dass so wenig gespendet wurde.

⁹⁹ Die Westschweiz stellt die Situation differenzierter oder ergebnisoffener dar als die Deutschschweiz.

¹⁰⁰ Ich habe schon eine gewisse Radikalisierung der NZZ beobachtet, mit sehr viele Beiträge, die sehr israelnahe und sehr UNRWA-kritisch und teilweise auch sehr, sehr undifferenziert UNRWA kritisch waren.

¹⁰¹ einen Riesenunterschied zwischen der Romandie und der Deutschschweiz. Der ist riesig. Dieser Unterschied war enorm. Vor allem am Anfang. Krass.

¹⁰² In diesem Sinne sehen wir den Röstigraben sehr deutlich in der Medienberichterstattung.

¹⁰³ der Diskurs in der Deutschschweiz ähnlicher ist zum Diskurs in Deutschland.

¹⁰⁴ more the French current which is more pro Palestine.

While some interviewees acknowledged that critical coverage of UNRWA in the wake of October 7, 2023, was initially understandable due to shock and emotional impact, the lack of journalistic reflection and nuance in much of the reporting has been criticized. This lack led to accusations, and a scandal rather than a balanced analysis: "It was about accusation, scandalization and actually about discrediting, devaluing¹⁰⁵" (Interview 3). In addition to the imbalance in the framing, one interview criticized the media's failure to capture more human and hopeful dimensions of life in conflict areas – such as resilience, solidarity and mutual support among affected humans. However, the interviewees also noted the role of external pressure in shaping reporting by political actors. "There is a lot of self-censorship [...] and then immediately very harsh criticism comes from circles that also have connections to the Israeli embassy in Switzerland¹⁰⁶" (Interview 3). Despite these criticisms, some interviewees acknowledged that even newspapers that take a critical towards UNRWA, like NZZ, eventually recognized the organization's continued relevance.

5.3.2 Summary

The five interviewees, all representatives of different humanitarian actors, expressed broadly consistent views regarding the situation in Gaza and the role of UNRWA, despite individual differences in wording. Across all conversations, there was a clear agreement on the centrality and importance of humanitarian aid in OPT and especially on the irreplaceable role of UNRWA. The agency was described as fulfilling quasi-governmental functions, providing critical services such as education, healthcare, food, fuel and psychological support – often under conditions where no other organization could intervene at the same scale. There was also a shared concern about the impact of accusations directed at humanitarian organizations, especially UNRWA. Allegations regarding connections to Hamas and violations of neutrality were seen as not only damaging to public trust but also as having direct operational and financial consequences. The interviewees emphasized that such claims, even when unproved, tend to dominate media and political discourse, shaping donor decisions and reducing space for nuanced discussion. Facts and clarifications were often perceived as ineffective in shifting public or political opinion once a dominant narrative had taken hold.

¹⁰⁵ Es ging um die Anschuldigung, Skandalisierung und eigentlich um Diskreditierung, Abwertung.

¹⁰⁶ Es gibt viel Selbstzensur... und dann sofort sehr harsche Kritik kommt aus Kreisen, die auch Verbindungen haben zur israelischen Botschaft in der Schweiz.

Interviewees described a cautious approach to media engagement by many humanitarian organizations, driven by the need to protect their staff and preserve access to Gaza. While they acknowledged the importance of media visibility for humanitarian awareness and funding, they noted that safety and operational continuity have priority. There was frustration with media logic that prioritizes audience interest ("clicks") over complex humanitarian realities, leading to underrepresentation of important but less sensational aspects. Reduced access for international journalists was seen as further limiting the diversity and depth of coverage. Regarding neutrality, the interviewees acknowledged that full neutrality is extremely difficult to maintain in a highly polarized environment like Gaza. While misconduct can occur, they emphasized the importance of internal control systems, highlighting that UNRWA's mechanisms are more advanced than those of many other UN agencies. The use of one-sided school materials was noted as a problem across multiple parties in the conflict, not just UNRWA.

When discussing the Colonna Report, interviewees generally viewed it as a serious attempt to clarify key allegations and demonstrate UNRWA's compliance with neutrality standards. However, they expressed disappointment at how the report was received publicly. Despite its conclusions affirming UNRWA's internal safeguards, many felt it was quickly delegitimized in political and media discourse, leaving little room for constructive engagement with its findings. Another strong consensus emerged around the lack of an alternative to UNRWA. Suggestions from Swiss political actors to replace the agency with NGO's such as Médecins Sans Frontières or World Central Kitchen were dismissed by the interviewees as unrealistic. UNRWA's operational scale, local workforce and broad mandate were seen as unique. Any potential successor would require significant time, legitimacy and structural support to match UNRWA's impact – conditions that are currently absent.

The current humanitarian situation in Gaza was consistently described as catastrophic. Interviewees spoke of a collapse in basic infrastructure, extreme food insecurity and growing despair among both the civilian population and aid workers. Without a broader political resolution and legitimate post-war structure, sustainable humanitarian solutions were seen as unlikely. A particular concern was voiced about Israeli-imposed barriers, such as visa denials for international staff, disrupted coordination with UNRWA and severe restrictions on aid deliveries. These obstacles were seen as

part of a broader strategy to undermine humanitarian actors through "terrorism" framing. Some interviewees linked this strategy to efforts by Israel to discredit organizations involved in international accountability processes, including those collecting evidence for the ICC.

Finally, interviewees also commented on the nature of Swiss media coverage. A clear divide was noted between German and French speaking outlets, with the former – especially NZZ – being described as more critical and one-sided and the latter seen as more differentiated and open. This "Röstigraben" was interpreted as partly rooted in geopolitical alignment, with German speaking media seen as being more influenced by Germany's pro-Israel stance, and French speaking media as closer to France's more pro-Palestinian approach. Despite this, even critical outlets were said to have finally acknowledged UNRWA's importance.

6. Discussion

Building on the empirical findings and theoretical inputs, this chapter takes a closer look on how the findings of this thesis can be interpreted in light of the research question. The first section explores how the dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations in conflict zones are publicly addressed and framed, while the second section offers a critical reflection on the research process itself.

6.1 Dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations

This chapter brings together the findings from the media analysis and expert interviews to examine how the dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations in conflict zones such as maintaining neutrality or securing access are publicly represented, interpreted or contested. It explores how different media framings contribute to shaping public understanding around UNRWA's role, and how these representations influence organizational legitimacy and stability. Thereby, the crucial intersection between humanitarian practice and public perception in sensitive environments is being highlighted.

Humanitarian organizations operating in conflict zones face a series of interrelated dilemmas that shape nearly every aspect of their work. This is particularly evident in highly fragmented and militarized contexts like Gaza. Central among these dilemmas are the challenges of maintaining neutrality in a highly polarized environment, ensuring access to affected populations while cooperating with often controversial local authorities, and retaining legitimacy in the eyes of donors, governments and the public. UNRWA's long-standing role as a service provider, logistical coordinator and major employer illustrates how deeply humanitarian organizations can become embedded in local governance structures. The agency is not only responsible for delivering essential services – such as education, healthcare and food distribution – but often steps into roles that would typically fall under state responsibilities. This embeddedness, however, also generates specific dilemmas. For example, the perception that its operations blur the line between humanitarian and political functions or that it inadvertently sustains long-term dependency rather than promoting structural change. As mentioned in the interviews, neutrality in such a context does not mean complete

political detachment. Expecting full neutrality would be unrealistic, especially given that UNRWA performs quasi-governmental functions within the civil infrastructure. To maintain credibility with Palestinians, the organization must take their perspectives seriously – something that can be perceived as non-neutral by other actors. Therefore, neutrality requires carefully navigating relationships with local actors without becoming instrumentalized by them. UNRWA has taken concrete steps to safeguard this neutrality. According to the Colonna Report, the agency has established a comprehensive set of standards, practices and procedures also known as the Neutrality Framework. This framework guides its approach to neutrality across all areas of operations, including staff behavior (e.g. the use of social media), installation use, asset management (especially vehicles) and coordination with donors and partners. UNRWA systematically investigates all external allegations of neutrality breaches and opens internal inquiries whenever prima facie evidence is found. These mechanisms are widely considered – especially by the interviewees – to be more developed than those of many other UN or NGO entities.

These efforts to ensure neutrality demonstrate UNRWA's awareness for the topic. At the same time, the organization is under continuous pressure to prove its impartiality, especially in response to allegations linking it to Hamas. These challenges are being further complicated by the organization's full dependence on voluntary donor funding. Like many other humanitarian organizations, it must constantly justify its relevance, efficiency and impact not only to institutional donors but also to the broader public. Media representations play a central role in this dynamic. Positive reporting can help reinforce donor confidence and public support, while negative coverage can trigger funding cuts or undermine trust. In this way, media portrayals can significantly influence the stability and operational space of humanitarian organizations like UNRWA.

In the Swiss media landscape, representations of these dilemmas differ across different newspapers and reflect distinct editorial priorities. NZZ adopts a critical tone, frequently highlighting accusations such as Hamas infiltration, ideological biases in teaching materials and the perpetuation of the refugee status. In doing so, it draws attention to important debates around accountability and neutrality. Although such critique raises important questions about transparency and neutrality, they rarely contextualize the constraints UNRWA faces in Gaza, including its dependence on local staff. So, while the Colonna Report confirms that UNRWA has one of the most developed

neutrality frameworks among UN bodies, this aspect was not prominently featured in the NZZ reporting. Tagesanzeiger, while also acknowledging criticism, tends to place greater emphasis on humanitarian needs and the absence of alternatives to UNRWA. It reflects more of the tension between organizational challenges and humanitarian necessity. Le Temps, on the other hand, frames UNRWA primarily through a humanitarian lens. It focuses on the human consequences of funding cuts and operational disruptions, and highlights concerns about the criticisms raised. This more cautious and needs-based framework is closer to reflecting the practical challenges described in the interviews.

Another important insight from the interviews is that humanitarian organizations themselves often refrain from public statements in response to media allegations. These decisions are guided not by lack of concern, but by the need to protect their staff and to maintain access to Gaza and OPT. This form of strategic silence, though understandable from a field operations perspective, makes it more difficult and time consuming for the media to get concrete information to work with – especially when the access to affected areas is so limited. As a result, the practical dilemmas faced by aid organizations – such as coordinating with local authorities, operating under blockade conditions, or responding to inconsistent donor expectations – often remain underrepresented. These silences and access gaps shape public understanding through structural absence, leaving parts of the humanitarian reality effectively invisible in public debate.

Media coverage is shaped not only by what information is available or missing but also by how much effort is invested in researching and presenting complex issues. While the accusations against UNRWA are very present and attract readers interest, topics such as the operational challenges faced by the organizations require more journalistic effort to explore and can generate less public attention. This creates a situation where news articles may focus more on the accusations raised by Israel than on the daily work and challenges of humanitarian organizations like UNRWA. As a result, media reports do not always reflect the complex reality that aid organizations face in conflict zones – particularly the challenges faced to maintain access to the conflict zones, the compromises needed to operate in highly politicized environments and the structural limitations imposed by both host and donor governments. These editorial choices shape how both the public and political actors perceive humanitarian

organizations. However, this approach leads to a vicious circle because if media coverage focuses primarily on accusations without addressing the operational limits and structural challenges faced by aid organizations, it becomes difficult to grasp the complexity of the dilemmas involved. For instance, only rarely – mainly in *Le Temps* – is it mentioned that UNRWA has established internal mechanisms to safeguard neutrality or that it operates under extremely challenging conditions. Without this context, humanitarian work can easily be judged in a one-dimensional or overly critical way. One-dimensional in the sense that it reduces organizations like UNRWA to single narratives without acknowledging their achievements or highlighting challenges. Overly critical because it holds humanitarian actors responsible for outcomes or associations that are often unavoidable in highly fragmented conflict situations.

In this sense, media coverage influences not only the public image of UNRWA, but also political debates and decisions regarding its funding and support. The way a situation is framed can have a direct impact on how much trust and space humanitarian organizations are granted. This underlines the importance of asking to what extent media representations truly reflect the realities of aid work in conflict environments. Consequently, the way humanitarian organizations are represented in the media has a direct influence on their ability to operate and maintain legitimacy. As shown throughout this analysis, media narratives help shaping the environment in which organizations like UNRWA are evaluated, supported or challenged. Media shapes perceptions, especially in sensitive context where aid and politics are closely connected. Especially negative coverage can influence the stability of organizations such as UNRWA. Therefore, it can be said that the media play a key role in defining the legitimacy and perceived neutrality of humanitarian actors. Their reporting shapes how humanitarian dilemmas are understood and how much room organizations have to navigate them. A more nuanced and balanced representation of humanitarian work that goes beyond accusations and includes structural, ethical and logistical challenges would be essential for sustaining a functional humanitarian space. However, the question remains of how much public interest such in-depth, less sensational reporting would actually attract.

6.2 Critical reflection

This thesis combined qualitative content analysis, expert interviews and elements of the CDA to explore how humanitarian dilemmas are negotiated in the public sphere. The content analysis and CDA offered a structured way to identify recurring themes, frames and patterns across three major Swiss newspapers. The integration of CDA helped illuminate how discourse can shape public trust and opinions. At the same time, this approach required a strong commitment to reflexivity and caution to avoid projecting interpretations that extend beyond what is grounded in the data. The interviews added crucial depth to the research by offering insight into how representatives of humanitarian actors perceive and experience the challenges portrayed in the media. These conversations brought to light operational realities that were often underrepresented or missing in the analyzed media. The decision to keep all interviewees anonymous was essential due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the political pressure under which many humanitarian actors currently operate.

A central challenge faced during the research was the fear of misrepresentation. This concern emerged particularly in two areas: first, the translation of media content across different languages – German, French and English – raised the risk of subtle shifts in meaning that could influence the interpretation of tone, nuance or emphasis. Since my methodology relied on language use, small variations could affect the analytical outcome. To minimize that risk, all translated texts were carefully cross-checked and whenever uncertainties emerged, the original language source was revisited to ensure accurate understanding and interpretation. Secondly, the politically sensitive nature of the topic posed an additional challenge. Given the highly polarizing nature of the public debate surrounding UNRWA, even attempts at balanced reporting are often perceived as taking a side. Navigating in this environment required constant attention to language, framing and balance in order to account for different positions fairly. While this balancing act was challenging, the approach ultimately proved effective in capturing the complexity of the media discourse.

Finally, this thesis was grounded in the understanding that media coverage represents only one possible version of reality. As such, this thesis did not aim to judge the legitimacy of any particular political position. This required an ongoing awareness of my own positionality as a researcher. As a white woman from Switzerland, my background, education and geographical distance from the conflict inevitably shaped how

I approached both the media material and the interview data. Recognizing this, I engaged in continuous self-reflection to remain mindful of potential biases and power dynamics, particularly when interpreting sensitive content or interacting with different humanitarian actors. While maintaining this level of reflexivity was sometimes demanding, it proved essential and contributed to the quality of the research.

7. Conclusion

This thesis examined how dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations operating in conflict zones – such as neutrality, legitimacy and access – are negotiated and represented in the public sphere. Using the case of UNRWA and the media debate in Switzerland between October 7, 2023, and January 31, 2025, the thesis combined a qualitative media analysis with expert interviews to observe and analyze how Swiss media portrayed the events and controversies surrounding UNRWA during the above-mentioned period.

The media analysis revealed significant differences in how Swiss newspapers portray UNRWA and its role. NZZ and Tagesanzeiger focused on the allegations such as the neutrality violations, affiliations with Hamas and the perpetuation of the refugee status. However, Tagesanzeiger offered a more humanitarian-centered view than NZZ. UNRWA has been presented as a vital, though not unproblematic, actor. Criticism was occasionally noted but generally took a backseat to reports of civilian suffering and the lack of alternatives. Le Temps presented the most supportive view of UNRWA, portraying it as an irreplaceable humanitarian organization and laid importance on the dangers of suspending funding. Le Temps articles highlighted the organization's essential services, challenged the political motivations behind the criticism and warned about cutting the funding for UNRWA. These differences not only reflect varying editorial orientations but also broader socio-political influences such as the cultural division between French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland. The expert interviews further deepened this analysis by highlighting how media representations influence the operational realities of humanitarian organizations. Interviewees consistently emphasized UNRWA's irreplaceable role in OPT, while also pointing to the challenges caused by public allegations and political pressure. The interviews underscored the fact that organizations often remain publicly silent – not due to indifference, but out of concern for staff safety and access. This creates gaps in the information available to the media as insights from humanitarian organizations are often less accessible. As a result, the portrayal of humanitarian work can become one-sided or oversimplified, not necessarily by intent, but due to the limited availability of alternative perspectives. Through the integration of the chosen analytical tools, this thesis has shown how discourses can construct power relations and public legitimacy. Media narratives can

contribute to either the support or the delegitimization of humanitarian organizations, directly impacting their funding, reputation and operational space.

In conclusion, the public negotiations of humanitarian dilemmas – especially in polarized conflict contexts like Gaza – are shaped by a combination of editorial decisions, political dynamics and structural silences. Media representations do not simply reflect reality, but actively shape it – affecting public opinion and the conditions under which aid organizations operate. A more balanced, transparent and nuanced media discourse is essential not only for public understanding but also for sustaining humanitarian action where it is most urgently needed.

8. Literature

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9. Appendix

9.1 Data Material

NZZ

| Date | Code | Titel |
|------------|-------------------|---|
| 09.10.2023 | NZZ101_2023_10_09 | Die Schweiz soll die Hamas zur Terrororganisation erklären |
| 10.10.2023 | NZZ102_2023_10_10 | Cassis' Genugtuung |
| 12.10.2023 | NZZ103_2023_10_12 | Die EU hat noch nicht verstanden, was auf dem Spiel steht |
| 11.11.2023 | NZZ104_2023_11_11 | Die Entzauberung der Schweiz |
| 15.11.2023 | NZZ105_2023_11_15 | Die palästinensischen Flüchtlinge sind seit 1948 eine Quelle der Unruhe |
| 22.11.2023 | NZZ106_2023_11_22 | Es ist völlig absurd, Israel als kolonialistisches Projekt misszudeuten |
| 01.12.2023 | NZZ107_2023_12_01 | Kein Aufbegehren gegen die Hamas |
| 13.12.2023 | NZZ108_2023_12_13 | Der Wind in Bern wendet sich gegen die radikalen Palästinenser |
| 21.12.2023 | NZZ109_2023_12_21 | Dä Zubi gegen alle |
| 06.01.2024 | NZZ110_2024_01_06 | Pierre Krähenbühls langer Schatten |
| 15.01.2024 | NZZ111_2024_01_15 | Gaza war schon vor dem Krieg ruiniert |
| 27.01.2024 | NZZ112_2024_01_27 | UNRWA Mitarbeiter unter Verdacht |
| 29.01.2024 | NZZ113_2024_01_29 | Geberländer setzen Zahlungen aus |
| 30.01.2024 | NZZ114_2024_01_30 | Das Palästinenserhilfswerk gehört ersetzt |
| 30.01.2024 | NZZ115_2024_01_30 | Bundesrat wartet mit Zahlungsstopp |
| 30.01.2024 | NZZ116_2024_01_30 | Hilfswerk-Mitarbeiter soll an Entführung beteiligt gewesen sein |
| 31.01.2024 | NZZ117_2024_01_31 | Ignazio Cassis hat recht |
| 04.02.2024 | NZZ118_2024_02_04 | UNRWA-Chef Lazzarini muss Vertrauen wiederherstellen |
| 04.02.2024 | NZZ119_2024_02_04 | Der härteste Gegner sitzt in Genf |
| 11.02.2024 | NZZ120_2024_02_11 | Leserbriefe, Alle haben ihren Anteil zu leisten |
| 12.02.2024 | NZZ121_2024_02_12 | UNRWA-Chef in Erklärungsnot |
| 12.02.2024 | NZZ122_2024_02_12 | Israel entdeckt offenbar Datenzentrum der Hamas unter UNRWA-Hauptquartier |
| 13.02.2024 | NZZ123_2024_02_13 | Die UNRWA ist nur schwer zu ersetzen |
| 13.02.2024 | NZZ124_2024_02_13 | Das EDA geht auf Distanz zu Lazzarini |
| 15.02.2024 | NZZ125_2024_02_15 | Es wäre nicht vernünftig, das Schiff zu diesen Zeitpunkt zu verlassen |
| 15.02.2024 | NZZ126_2024_02_15 | Wir befinden uns in einer Existenzkrise |
| 17.02.2024 | NZZ127_2024_02_17 | Norwegen schickt mehr Geld nach Gaza |
| 19.02.2024 | NZZ128_2024_02_19 | Das humanitäre Biotop |
| 23.02.2024 | NZZ129_2024_02_23 | Die UNRWA steht vor dem Kollaps |
| 23.02.2024 | NZZ130_2024_02_23 | Die UNRWA will ihr Image aufpolieren |
| 24.02.2024 | NZZ131_2024_02_24 | Netanyahu präsentiert seinen Nachkriegsplan |
| 26.02.2024 | NZZ132_2024_02_26 | Veränderte Werthaltung |
| 02.03.2024 | NZZ133_2024_03_02 | Der Tunnel unter dem UNRWA-Zentrum |
| 17.03.2024 | NZZ134_2024_03_17 | Funkstille zwischen Cassis und dem Chef der UNRWA |
| 18.03.2024 | NZZ135_2024_03_18 | Grosse Zweifel an den Opferzahlen der Hamas |

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|--|
| 27.03.2024 | NZZ136_2024_03_27 | Wenig erfolgreiche Werbetour |
| 17.04.2024 | NZZ137_2024_04_17 | Die Schweiz verleugnet die Realität |
| 23.04.2024 | NZZ138_2024_04_23 | Palästinenser-Hilfswerk wird teilweise entlastet |
| 24.04.2024 | NZZ139_2024_04_24 | UNRWA Bericht ignoriert den Kern des Problems |
| 24.04.2024 | NZZ140_2024_04_24 | Cassis will dem Palästinahilfswerk den Geldhahn zudrehen |
| 25.04.2024 | NZZ141_2024_04_25 | Kein Geld für das Palästinahilfswerk |
| 29.04.2024 | NZZ142_2024_04_29 | Der schärfste Kritiker der UNRWA |
| 02.05.2024 | NZZ143_2024_05_02 | UNRWA soll vorerst Teilbetrag erhalten |
| 15.05.2024 | NZZ144_2024_05_15 | Ein ungeheuerlicher Vorwurf |
| 31.05.2024 | NZZ145_2024_05_31 | UNRWA Chef greift Bundesrat an |
| 17.06.2024 | NZZ146_2024_06_17 | Der Gaza Graben in den Schweizer Medien |
| 04.07.2024 | NZZ147_2024_07_04 | "ja, aber" zur Nothilfe für Gaza |
| 12.07.2024 | NZZ148_2024_07_12 | Rot-Grün unterstützt umstrittenes Hilfswerk in Gaza |
| 07.08.2024 | NZZ149_2024_08_07 | Palästinenser-Hilfswerk entlässt neun Mitarbeiter, weil sie sich am Mord an der Hamas beteiligt haben sollen |
| 19.08.2024 | NZZ150_2024_08_19 | Zürcher FDP geht juristisch gegen Spende an umstrittenes Uno-Hilfswerk vor |
| 27.08.2024 | NZZ151_2024_08_27 | Die UNRWA gehört endlich abgeschafft |
| 07.09.2024 | NZZ152_2024_09_07 | Lazarini darf nicht mehr nach Israel |
| 10.09.2024 | NZZ153_2024_09_10 | Nationalrat gegen Gelder für die UNRWA |
| 29.10.2024 | NZZ154_2024_10_29 | Israel verbannt die UNRWA |
| 30.10.2024 | NZZ155_2024_10_30 | Das UNRWA Verbot schafft nur neue Probleme |
| 30.10.2024 | NZZ156_2024_10_30 | Am UNRWA-Sitz herrscht Grabesstille |
| 15.11.2024 | NZZ157_2024_11_15 | Zürcher Stadtrat spricht 380'000 Franken für UNRWA |
| 15.11.2024 | NZZ158_2024_11_15 | Die Zahlung der Stadt Zürich ist naiv und unnötig |
| 16.11.2024 | NZZ159_2024_11_16 | Die UNRWA ist eine von Terroristen durchgesetzte Organisation |
| 20.11.2024 | NZZ160_2024_11_20 | FDP unterliegt mit Beschwerde zur UNRWA |
| 23.11.2024 | NZZ161_2024_11_23 | Ständerat reden jetzt selbst mit der UNRWA |
| 29.11.2024 | NZZ162_2024_11_29 | FDP reicht Aufsichtsanzeige wegen Zürcher Spende an UNRWA ein |
| 21.12.2024 | NZZ163_2024_12_21 | Schweden stoppt Unterstützung der UNRWA |
| 15.01.2025 | NZZ164_2025_01_15 | Die Stadt Zürich ignoriert die Kritik an der UNRWA Spende |
| 20.01.2025 | NZZ165_2025_01_20 | Wir stehen der Hamas nicht nahe |
| 23.01.2025 | NZZ166_2025_01_23 | In Zürich geben sich Linke und Islamisten die Hand |
| 30.01.2025 | NZZ167_2025_01_30 | Das Palästinenserhilfswerk steht auf verlorenem Posten |
| 31.01.2025 | NZZ168_2025_01_31 | Wir stehen der Hamas nicht nahe |
| 17.02.2025 | NZZ169_2025_02_17 | UNRWA und ihre willigen Helfer |

Tagesanzeiger

| Date | Code | Titel |
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| 10.10.2023 | TA101_2023_10_10 | Rund um den Gazastreifen bahnen sich blutige Schlachten an. |
| 10.10.2023 | TA102_2023_10_10 | Israel bereitet offenbar Offensive vor |
| 17.10.2023 | TA103_2023_10_17 | Die UNO ist vor Ort und schaut machtlos zu |

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| 21.10.2023 | TA104_2023_10_21 | Palästinenser hetzen gegen Israel - und kassieren Geld von der Schweiz |
| 22.10.2023 | TA105_2023_10_22 | Das ist nicht nur naiv, sondern Aufforderung zum Terror |
| 24.10.2023 | TA106_2023_10_24 | Humanitäre Hilfe kommt schneller, genügt aber nicht |
| 25.10.2023 | TA107_2023_10_25 | Was Guterres sagt ist richtig - und unerhört! |
| 01.11.2023 | TA108_2023_11_01 | Luftschlag im Gazastreifen: was wir über den Angriff auf das Flüchtlingslager Jabaliya wissen - und was nicht |
| 09.11.2023 | TA109_2023_11_09 | Eine solche Blockade ist eine kollektive Bestrafung |
| 14.11.2023 | TA110_2023_11_14 | Nationalrat streicht Millionen für Palästinenser - Chef des UNO-Hilfswerks übt scharfe Kritik |
| 19.12.2023 | TA111_2023_12_19 | Nationalrat beharrt auf Streichung des UNRWA Beitrages |
| 19.12.2023 | TA112_2023_12_19 | Hilfsgelder für die UNRWA: Cassis kämpft für Palästinenser-Hilfswerk - und hat die eigene Partei gegen sich |
| 20.12.2023 | TA113_2023_12_20 | Bundesrat Cassis kämpft für Palästinenser-Hilfswerk |
| 21.12.2023 | TA114_2023_12_21 | UNRWA Hilfswerk: Vorschläge für ein Kompromiss |
| 21.12.2023 | TA115_2023_12_21 | Das Parlament verliert sich in der Nahost Polemik |
| 22.12.2023 | TA116_2023_12_22 | Das Parlament verliert sich in der Nahost Polemik |
| 26.01.2024 | TA117_2024_01_26 | Schwere Vorwürfe gegen UNRWA: Uno-Hilfswerk prüft Beteiligung von Mitarbeitern an Hamas-Terror |
| 27.01.2024 | TA118_2024_01_27 | UNO-Hilfswerk prüft Beteiligung von Mitarbeitern an Hamas Terror |
| 27.01.2024 | TA119_2024_01_27 | UNRWA: Mehrere Länder stoppen Zahlungen, die Schweiz wartet ab |
| 28.01.2024 | TA120_2024_01_28 | Droht dem UNRWA nun der Kollaps? |
| 29.01.2024 | TA121_2024_01_29 | Strafaktion gegen Hilfswerk UNRWA trifft die Falschen |
| 29.01.2024 | TA122_2024_01_29 | Was wird an Schulen des UNO-Hilfswerkes gelehrt? |
| 30.01.2024 | TA123_2024_01_30 | Skandal um UNRWA laut Bericht grösser als gedacht |
| 02.02.2024 | TA124_2024_02_02 | Verhält sich die Schweiz im Nahen Osten richtig? |
| 05.02.2024 | TA125_2024_02_05 | Was die Lehre aus dem UNRWA Skandal ist - und was nicht |
| 06.02.2024 | TA126_2024_02_06 | Das sind die Lehren aus dem UNRWA Skandal |
| 11.02.2024 | TA127_2024_02_11 | Israel macht UNRWA nach Tunnel-Fund schwere Vorwürfe |
| 15.02.2024 | TA128_2024_02_15 | Kritik an UNRWA trifft auch die Schweiz - wie reagiert Bern? |
| 16.02.2024 | TA129_2024_02_16 | Kritik an UNRWA trifft auch die Schweiz |
| 17.02.2024 | TA130_2024_02_17 | Israel führt eine Kampagne um die UNRWA zu zerstören |
| 18.02.2024 | TA131_2024_02_18 | So eng ist das Rote Kreuz mit der UNRWA verbunden |
| 25.03.2024 | TA132_2024_03_25 | Schweizer UNRWA Chef wirft Israel Folter vor |
| 26.03.2024 | TA133_2024_03_26 | Gaza-Hilfsgelder bleiben blockiert: der erhoffte Befreiungsschlag des UNRWA-Chefs misslingt |
| 27.03.2024 | TA134_2024_03_27 | Erhoffter Befreiungsschlag des UNRWA-Chefs scheitert. Hilfsgelder bleiben blockiert |
| 17.04.2024 | TA135_2024_04_17 | Wollen wir, dass man uns in den Den Haag verklagt? |
| 17.04.2024 | TA136_2024_04_17 | Bürgerliche wollen UNRWA Gelder ganz streichen |
| 22.04.2024 | TA137_2024_04_22 | Keine Beweise für terroristische Verbindungen von Mitarbeitenden gefunden |
| 23.04.2024 | TA138_2024_04_23 | Bürgerliche wollen Palästina-Hilfswerk endgültig den Stecker ziehen |

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| 23.04.2024 | TA139_2024_04_23 | In puncto Neutralität gibt es beim Palästinenserhilfswerk Verbesserungsbedarf |
| 23.04.2024 | TA140_2024_04_23 | Israel liefert keine Beweise für die Nähe zur Hamas |
| 23.04.2024 | TA141_2024_04_23 | Cassis will Nahost Millionen deblockieren - mit einer Ausnahme |
| 23.04.2024 | TA142_2024_04_23 | Die Finanzierung der UNRWA ist ein Gebot der Menschlichkeit |
| 24.04.2024 | TA143_2024_04_24 | Bundesrat Cassis will an umstrittenes UNO-Hilfswerk kein Geld zahlen |
| 24.04.2024 | TA144_2024_04_24 | UNRWA Finanzierung - Gebot der Menschlichkeit |
| 24.04.2024 | TA145_2024_04_24 | Cassis gibt nach - kein Geld für die UNRWA |
| 25.04.2025 | TA146_2024_04_25 | Bundesrat verschiebt UNRWA Entscheid |
| 26.04.2024 | TA147_2024_04_26 | Bewährungsprobe für die Humanität |
| 30.04.2024 | TA148_2024_04_30 | Starker Zuspruch für Bundesgelder an UNRWA |
| 30.04.2024 | TA149_2024_04_30 | Schweiz soll doch wieder Geld an die UNRWA bezahlen |
| 01.05.2024 | TA150_2024_05_01 | Aussenpolitiker wollen UNRWA nun doch Geld auszahlen |
| 01.05.2024 | TA151_2024_05_01 | Die Schweiz soll doch wieder bezahlen |
| 06.06.2024 | TA152_2024_06_06 | Stadt Zürich soll Palästinenserhilfswerk finanziell unterstützen |
| 07.06.2024 | TA153_2024_06_07 | Stadt soll Palästinenserhilfswerk finanziell unterstützen |
| 22.06.2024 | TA154_2024_06_22 | Kommissionen stimmen für Nothilfe in Gaza |
| 11.07.2024 | TA155_2024_07_11 | Zürich will Geld an das UNO-Palästinenserhilfswerk spenden |
| 04.08.2024 | TA156_2024_08_04 | Palästinaflaggen am Nationalfeiertag |
| 06.08.2024 | TA157_2024_08_06 | Terror-Vorwürfe: UN kündigt neun UNRWA-Mitarbeitern |
| 19.08.2024 | TA158_2024_08_19 | Zürcher FDP geht gegen Spende an Hilfswerk vor |
| 06.09.2024 | TA159_2024_09_06 | Er darf nicht mehr nach Israel und Gaza |
| 09.09.2024 | TA160_2024_09_09 | Nationalrat will UNRWA ab sofort keinen Rappen mehr zahlen |
| 10.09.2024 | TA161_2024_09_10 | Nationalrat streicht finanzielle Hilfe für die UNRWA |
| 28.09.2024 | TA162_2024_09_28 | Bundesrat will 13 Millionen Franken für Nahen Osten einsetzen |
| 28.10.2024 | TA163_2024_10_28 | Israel verbietet UNRWA Arbeit auf seinem Staatsgebiet |
| 29.10.2024 | TA164_2024_10_29 | Wie Israel die Vereinten Nationen vertreibt |
| 29.10.2024 | TA165_2024_10_29 | Es gibt keine valide Alternative zur UNRWA |
| 30.10.2024 | TA166_2024_10_30 | Verbot der UNRWA: so wird palästinensisches Leben unerträglich |
| 31.10.2024 | TA167_2024_10_31 | Es geht um menschenwürdiges Leben |
| 05.11.2024 | TA168_2024_11_05 | Die Schweiz muss die UNRWA wieder voll unterstützen |
| 14.11.2024 | TA169_2024_11_14 | Stadtrat unterstützt umstrittenes Palästinenser-Hilfswerk UNRWA mit 380'000 Franken |
| 22.11.2024 | TA170_2024_11_22 | Was passiert, wenn die UNRWA wirklich schliessen muss? |
| 17.01.2024 | TA171_2024_01_17 | Umstrittene Spende an Hilfswerk sorgt weiter für Unruhe |
| 30.01.2024 | TA172_2024_01_30 | Arbeitsverbot für UNRWA soll in Kraft treten |
| 19.02.2024 | TA173_2024_02_19 | Die Schweiz soll UNRWA kein Geld mehr geben |

Le Temps

| Date | Code | Titel |
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| 09.10.2023 | LT101_2023_10_09 | Ignazio Cassis: La Suisse ne peut pas classer le Hamas comme organisation terroriste |
| 10.10.2023 | LT102_2023_10_10 | Au Proche-Orient, un rôle secondaire pour la Suisse |
| 01.11.2023 | LT103_2023_11_01 | Philippe Lazzarini, commissaire général de l'UNRWA: La situation à Gaza est insoutenable |
| 14.11.2023 | LT104_2023_11_14 | Israël et le Hamas seraient proches d'un accord sur la libération d'otages |
| 22.11.2023 | LT105_2023_11_22 | Berne adoube plusieurs ONG palestiniennes |
| 27.11.2023 | LT106_2023_11_27 | Khaled Mansour: A Gaza, plus de 100 employés des Nations unies sont morts, c'est sans précédent |
| 12.12.2023 | LT107_2023_12_12 | La Suisse s'apprête à couper les finances de l'UNRWA |
| 13.12.2023 | LT108_2023_12_13 | La suppression des subventions suisses met directement en danger des opérations essentielles de l'UNRWA |
| 14.12.2023 | LT109_2023_12_14 | Le Conseil des Etats refuse la suppression de la contribution à l'UNRWA et veut une croissance plus rapide des dépenses militaires |
| 14.12.2023 | LT110_2023_12_14 | Le budget de l'armée suisse augmente à marche forcé |
| 14.12.2023 | LT111_2023_12_14 | La contribution suisse à l'UNRWA gagne une manche |
| 14.12.2023 | LT112_2023_12_14 | Aide aux Palestiniens: le parlement suisse ne doit pas tout jeter dans la précipitation |
| 18.12.2023 | LT113_2023_12_18 | Le Conseil nationale réaffirme sa volonté de couper dans l'aide à destination de l'UNRWA |
| 19.12.2023 | LT114_2023_12_19 | Le Conseil des Etats veut épargner l'UNRWA |
| 20.12.2023 | LT115_2023_12_20 | Le National refuse le compromis du Conseil des Etats et veut toujours supprimer la contribution à l'UNRWA |
| 21.12.2023 | LT116_2023_12_21 | L'UNRWA ne subit finalement pas de mesure d'économies |
| 26.01.2024 | LT117_2024_01_26 | Des employés de l'ONU auraient participé aux "attaques terroristes" du 7 octobre |
| 26.01.2024 | LT118_2024_01_26 | Après la décision de la CIJ à La Haye, Israéliens et Palestiniens voient chacun midi à leur porte |
| 28.01.2024 | LT119_2024_01_28 | Sous le feu des critiques, l'UNRWA riposte |
| 29.01.2024 | LT120_2024_01_29 | Le Japon décide à son tour de suspendre son soutien financier à l'UNRWA |
| 29.01.2024 | LT121_2024_01_29 | Les dix jours d'affres des dirigeants de l'UNRWA |
| 30.01.2024 | LT122_2024_01_30 | Libération de 35 otages contre 45 jours de trêve: le Hamas étudie un nouveau cessez-le-feu avec Israël |
| 01.02.2024 | LT123_2024_02_01 | l'UNRWA menace d'arrêter ses opérations dans un mois |
| 03.02.2024 | LT124_2024_02_03 | Le scandale de l'UNRWA |
| 06.02.2024 | LT125_2024_02_06 | Un comité indépendant va passer à la loupe le fonctionnement de l'UNRWA |
| 12.02.2024 | LT126_2024_02_12 | l'Union européenne fait front derrière l'UNRWA face aux accusations israéliennes |
| 13.02.2024 | LT127_2024_02_13 | Philippe Lazzarini "Israël cible l'UNRWA pour la faire disparaître" |
| 26.02.2024 | LT128_2024_02_26 | A Genève, un "sommet" appelle à l'élimination de l'UNRWA |
| 29.02.2024 | LT129_2024_02_29 | Philippe Lazzarini "l'ONU n'était pas à l'origine du convoi dans le nord de Gaza" |

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| 05.03.2024 | LT130_2024_03_05 | L'argent Suisse en Palestine doit être mieux surveillé, juge le National |
| 05.03.2024 | LT131_2024_03_05 | L'UNRWA et Israël bataillent en direct au quartier général de l'ONU |
| 13.03.2024 | LT132_2024_03_13 | Des sénateurs américains s'en prennent vivement au CICR |
| 19.03.2024 | LT133_2024_03_19 | Faute de visas "c'est l'ensemble du secteur humanitaire qui se voit expulser de Cisjordanie et de Gaza" |
| 25.03.2024 | LT134_2024_03_25 | L'UNRWA se dit interdite de tout livraison d'aide dans le nord de Gaza |
| 26.03.2024 | LT135_2024_03_26 | Philippe Lazzarini répond aux parlementaires suisses |
| 27.03.2024 | LT136_2024_03_27 | La population gazaouie révoltée par l'interdiction de l'UNRWA |
| 30.03.2024 | LT137_2024_03_30 | L'UNRWA, cet autre Röstigraben |
| 04.04.2024 | LT138_2024_04_04 | Les 10 moments clés de la guerre entre Israël et le Hamas depuis l'attentat du 7 octobre |
| 05.04.2024 | LT139_2024_04_05 | La Suisse et le dossier israélo-palestinien |
| 18.04.2024 | LT140_2024_04_18 | Des employés de l'UNRWA auraient été torturés en Israël pour obtenir leurs aveux |
| 22.04.2024 | LT141_2024_04_22 | Le "rapport Colonna" prône des améliorations légères pour une plus grande neutralité de l'UNRWA |
| 29.04.2024 | LT142_2024_04_29 | Pierre Krähenbühl: "A Gaza, le CICR ne remplacera pas l'UNRWA" |
| 29.04.2024 | LT143_2024_04_29 | L'influence et la communication d'Israël mise en cause jusqu'au sein de l'administration fédérale |
| 29.04.2024 | LT144_2024_04_29 | Le Conseil fédéral et l'UNRWA: tradition humanitaire et neutralité sur le billot |
| 30.04.2024 | LT145_2024_04_30 | Une commission du parlement veut débloquer une partie d l'aide suisse a l'UNRWA, avant de s'en défaire |
| 30.04.2024 | LT146_2024_04_30 | Karolina Frischkopf "La Suisse doit aider à mettre en oeuvre les recommandations du rapport Colonna sur l'UNRWA" |
| 30.04.2024 | LT147_2024_04_30 | En video - La Suisse continuera-t-elle de financer l'UNRWA |
| 03.05.2024 | LT148_2024_05_03 | Initiatives cantonales: Genève saisit les Chambres fédérales sur le foot féminin et l'UNRWA |
| 06.05.2024 | LT149_2024_05_06 | Guerre à Gaza: les sénateurs veulent laisser le Conseil fédéral décider sur l'UNRWA |
| 07.05.2024 | LT150_2024_05_07 | Les occupations d'universités essaient partout en Suisse |
| 08.05.2024 | LT151_2024_05_08 | le Comnseil fédéral lache 10 millions à l'UNRWA pour le civils palestiniens de Gaza |
| 17.05.2024 | LT152_2024_05_17 | Avraham Burg: "l'UNRWA est devenue un punching-ball, comme tout ce qui concerne le Palestiniens |
| 24.05.2024 | LT153_2024_05_24 | Au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, la Suisse fait passer une résolution sur la protection des humanitaires |
| 26.06.2024 | LT154_2024_06_26 | Philippe Lazzarini, chef de l'UNRWA: "la Suisse pourrait en faire plus" |
| 27.06.2024 | LT155_2024_06_27 | Philippe Lazzarini, invité d'honneur du 1er Août à Lausanne, fait tousser des Vaudois |
| 01.08.2024 | LT156_2024_08_01 | Philippe Lazzarini, un invité du 1er Août chahuté mais écouté par les Lausannois |
| 07.08.2024 | LT157_2024_08_07 | Berne demande l'accès au rapport secret sur l'UNRWA |

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| 01.09.2024 | LT158_2024_09_01 | Hélas, Monsieur Cassis... |
| 09.09.2024 | LT159_2024_09_09 | Le Conseil national insiste pour stopper tout versement à l'UNRWA |
| 10.09.2024 | LT160_2024_09_10 | Suppression de l'aide à l'UNRWA: "Cela m'a frappé, cela m'a fait mal", déplore Joseph Deiss |
| 13.09.2024 | LT161_2024_09_13 | Il n'y a pas d'alternative à l'UNRWA, affirment l'ONU et le Conseil fédéral |
| 03.10.2024 | LT162_2024_10_03 | Pourquoi la Suisse officielle s'en prend-elle à l'UNRWA? |
| 07.10.2024 | LT163_2024_10_07 | Après le 7-October, la Suisse est critiqué pour la "rupture" sur sa neutralité et sa tradition humanitaire |
| 15.10.2024 | LT164_2024_10_15 | Il faut ancrer la tradition humanitaire suisse dans notre constitution |
| 16.10.2024 | LT165_2024_10_16 | UNRWA: des grands noms suisses appellent le conseil des Etats à "renverser la décision du Conseil national" |
| 16.10.2024 | LT166_2024_10_16 | Finul, UNRWA, Cour internationale de justice... Les Nations Unies sous le feu d'israel |
| 18.10.2024 | LT167_2024_10_18 | "Nous comptons beaucoup sur le soutien de la Suisse" insiste une dirigeante de l'UNRWA |
| 23.10.2024 | LT168_2024_10_23 | Suisse et Proche-Orient: enfin changer de lorgnette! |
| 25.10.2024 | LT169_2024_10_25 | Les sénateurs repoussent leur recommandation sur l'aide suisse aux civils palestiniens de Gaza |
| 29.10.2024 | LT170_2024_10_29 | Après l'exclusion de l'UNRWA, les Palestiniens face au "vide" les israéliens réjouis et les humanitaires catastrophés |
| 29.10.2024 | LT171_2024_10_29 | Au sein de la croix-rouge, angoisse le décision d'israel: "personne n'a les capacités de l'UNRWA" |
| 01.11.2024 | LT172_2024_11_01 | L'ONU contre-attaque après l'interdiction de l'UNRWA en Israel |
| 18.11.2024 | LT173_2024_11_18 | Philippe Lazzarini: "Il n'y a pas de plan B, à la présence de l'UNRWA dans les territoires palestiniens occupés |
| 19.11.2024 | LT174_2024_11_19 | Face à une catastrophe humaine, le silence n'est pas une alternative |
| 20.11.2024 | LT175_2024_11_20 | Alors que son sort se joue, l'UNRWA n'a toujours pas été auditonnée par le Conseil des Etats |
| 10.12.2024 | LT176_2024_12_10 | La Suisse aura un budget marqué par le repli sur soi |
| 10.01.2025 | LT177_2024_01_10 | Au sein de l'UNRWA, bientôt bannie en Israel |
| 10.01.2025 | LT178_2024_01_10 | L'UNRWA pourrait être contrainte de cesser de sauver des vies à Gaza: le monde restera-t-il de marbre? |
| 30.01.2025 | LT179_2024_01_30 | L'UNRWA arrête ses activités à Jerusalem-Est dans la confusion générale, un désastre pour les Palestiniens |
| 30.01.2025 | LT180_2024_01_30 | Bataille frontale autour de l'UNRWA |

Declaration of Independence

I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. AI-based tools were solely used to support the translation of content between German, English and French as well as to rephrase selected passages.



Sophia Widmer

Zurich, 28.07.2025