

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

8/11/2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development

Dear Administrator Power:

In 2020, I started an investigation into World Vision after allegations concerning a diversion of government funds to a terrorist-funding organization, the Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA).¹ The investigation found that World Vision had access to the appropriate public information and should have known how, but failed to, properly vet ISRA as a sub-grantee, resulting in the transfer of U.S. taxpayer dollars to an organization with an extensive history of supporting terrorist organization and terrorists. Additionally, the investigation found that a more “robust and fundamentally sound system of screening and vetting is needed to restore the public’s trust” in World Vision.² Since then, a former employee of World Vision, Muhammad Halabi was tried and convicted of funneling up to \$50 million to the terrorist group Hamas.³ Halabi was working as the Gaza manager of operations for World Vision and had worked for the organization since 2005 when he was arrested and ultimately convicted.⁴

In 2016, World Vision said they would suspend their operations in Gaza in response to the Halabi arrest.⁵ They also explained that they would conduct a full investigation and audit of their Gaza operations.⁶ In 2021, World Vision publicly claimed that they had hired the law firm DLA Piper and the consulting firm, Deloitte to complete the audit.⁷ World Vision claimed the

¹ Letter from Oversight and Investigations Unit, Fin. Comm. to Sen. Grassley, 2020-12-23 *World Vision Financial Transactions*, (Dec. 22, 2020), <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Oversight,%2012-23-20,%20Memo%20on%20World%20Vision%20Investigation.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ Shira Rubin, *Israel Sentences Gaza Aid Worker Convicted of Funding Hamas to 12 Years*, THE WASHINGTON POST, (Aug. 30, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/30/israel-gaza-halabi-world-vision/>.

⁴ Joe Dyke, *Has A Lone Palestinian Aid Worker Been Falsely Accused of the Biggest Aid Money Heist In History?*, THE GUARDIAN, (Aug. 19, 2021), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/19/aid-worker-mohammed-el-halabi-gaza-israel-trial-largest-theft-aid-money-history>.

⁵ *Update: Statement by World Vision International CEO In Wake of Staff Arrest*, WORLD VISION, (Aug. 8, 2016), <https://www.wvi.org/jerusalem-west-bank-gaza/pressrelease/update-statement-world-vision-international-ceo-wake-staff>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ The New Arab Staff, *Israel Extends Detention of World Vision Gaza Director After ‘Baseless’ Hamas-links Accusation*, THE NEW ARAB, (May 3, 2022), <https://www.newarab.com/news/israel-extends-detention-palestinian-aid-worker>.

audit “found no evidence of diversion of funds and no material evidence that El Halabi was part of or working for Hamas”; however, the audit was never released to the public.⁸ In a 2022 World Vision report, they listed a budget of \$9.6 million for the “Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza” region without providing any additional information about the extent of their involvement in Gaza.⁹

World Vision continues to receive funding from the government through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other agencies. In 2022, World Vision received \$491 million in “food, non-food commodities, and cash” from the U.S government.¹⁰ Additionally, World Vision is the “sixth largest implementor of USAID grants.”¹¹

Congress and the American people deserve transparency with respect to the steps USAID has taken to ensure taxpayer money is used as intended and not for illegal activity. Please provide answers to the following questions by August 25, 2023.

1. When did USAID first learn of funds being stolen, embezzled or otherwise misappropriated by Muhammad Halabi?
2. What steps has USAID taken since Muhammad Halabi’s arrest and conviction to prevent any further taxpayer dollars from going towards terrorist activities? Provide all records.¹²
3. Is USAID aware of whether World Vision restarted Gaza operations and, if so, what steps is USAID taking to ensure there is no influence on these operations from any terrorist organizations?
4. Is USAID aware of whether any taxpayer funds were used to pay for any legal defense expenses of Mohammad Halabi? If so, how much was used?
5. Has USAID been given access to World Vision’s DLA Piper and Deloitte financial audit of the organization? If so, please provide a copy of the audit?¹³
6. Does USAID have a complete list of World Vision’s partner organizations around the world? Provide all records.¹⁴

⁸ *World Vision Statement Regarding The Trial of Mohammad El Halabi*, WORLD VISION, (Dec. 18, 2020), <https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/jerusalem-west-bank-gaza/mohammad-el-halabi-trial-overview/world-vision-statement-regarding-trial-mohammad-el-halabi>.

⁹ *World Vision Report Jerusalem – West Bank – Gaza*, WORLD VISION, (Accessed July 10, 2023), <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/956821f7-aabe-4f6f-b77e-f9f40fa84ff6/World%20Vision%20Jerusalem%20-%20West%20Bank%20-%20Gaza%20-%20Our%20Programmes%20-%20June%202023.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Beauty Amid Pain, 2022 Annual Review*, WORLD VISION, (Accessed July 3, 2023), https://wvusstatic.com/2023/financial-accountability/BC18561_FY22_AR_F2.pdf.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Julian Wilson on my committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget