

Israel bans UN Palestine relief agency as part of Gaza mass starvation campaign

Kevin Reed**5 November 2024**

The Israeli government formally notified the United Nations on Monday that it was banning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the most important and critical Palestinian relief agency, from operating within the occupied territories.

In its communication, Israel said it was withdrawing from the 1967 agreement with UNRWA based on a new law passed by the Israeli parliament on October 28.

The decision to ban UNRWA from Israel, which officially begins in January 2025, effectively blocks the organization from operating in Gaza and the West Bank. The decision is recognized by human rights officials throughout the world as an act of collective punishment, which violates international law.

UNRWA was founded by the United Nations in 1949 following the expulsion and flight of 700,000 Palestinians from their homes in the Nakba of 1948. The organization has provided crucial assistance to their more than 5.6 million Palestinian descendants who are registered as refugees.

The organization has 30,000 employees, most of whom are Palestinian refugees, and has been focused on providing education, healthcare and social services to the refugee population in the region, including the occupied territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

UNRWA says the new Israeli law leaves its operations in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza at risk of complete collapse. It is considered the most critical element of the humanitarian response to the Israeli genocide in Gaza which has been underway for 13 months.

Stephane Dujarric, a spokesperson for UN Secretary Antonio Guterres, has said that "UNRWA is the principal means by which essential assistance is

supplied to Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory" and that "UNRWA is indispensable."

The Israeli parliament used an investigation by the UN in August which said nine members of UNRWA "may have been involved" in the October 7, 2023 uprising in Gaza against the Zionist regime as cause for banning the organization.

Juliette Touma, the main spokesperson for the UNRWA, said, "It's outrageous that a member state of the United Nations is working to dismantle a UN agency which also happens to be the largest responder in the humanitarian operation in Gaza."

The reality is that the shutting down of critical humanitarian assistance in Gaza is central to the strategy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the leaders of the Israel Defense Forces to cleanse the territory of Palestinians entirely as part of the "final solution" of the Palestinian question.

After 12 months of air strikes on hospitals, schools, mosques and refugee camps, which have been focused on killing Palestinian civilians and especially women and children, the Israeli regime is now engaged in a Nazi-like starvation of those still in Gaza. Banning UNRWA is necessary to cut off the most important source of food and medical aid to the desperate Palestinian population.

As they have done throughout the Gaza genocide, the leaders and spokespersons of world imperialism powers mouthed reservations about Israel's decision while continuing to provide the Zionist regime with critical military and financial support. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was "gravely concerned" and that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza was "simply unacceptable."

Similarly, US State Department representative

Matthew Miller said Washington was “deeply concerned” and urged Israel to “pause implementation” of the UNRWA ban because it could have “implications under US law.” No one takes Miller’s comment seriously since US law states that military aid cannot be provided to countries that restrict humanitarian aid, but such laws are only enforced against the enemies of US imperialism and never against its attack dog Israel, which is guilty of some of the greatest war crimes in history since World War II.

On October 30, the 15-member UN Security Council adopted by consensus a statement which did not condemn Israel but urged it to “abide by its international obligations, respect the privileges and immunities of UNRWA and live up to its responsibility to allow and facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance in all its forms into and throughout the entire Gaza Strip.”

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, a total of more than 43,300 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza genocide to date, and over 102,000 have been injured.

On Saturday the ministry said, “Israeli forces killed 55 people and injured 192 others in seven massacres of families in the last 24 hours,” adding, “Many people are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them.”

On Monday, Israel also launched air strikes in Syria, south of the capital of Damascus in an expansion of its war to another country in the Middle East. While Israel claimed it struck “Hezbollah intelligence assets” and “pro-Iranian militia fighters,” the Syrian government said the air strikes targeted civilian sites in the Sayeda Zeinab area.



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