

Canadian officials cut off UNRWA funds despite not seeing evidence of Israel's claims



Ottawa, February 10 (RHC)-- Canadian officials have still not seen any evidence backing up Israel's allegations against Palestinians' foremost aid agency despite being one of the first countries to suspend

their funding to the group amid one of the most dire humanitarian crises in modern times.

Sources within the Canadian government say that Israel has not provided any evidence backing up claims made in an Israeli intelligence document which accused a dozen employees of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) of having an affiliation with Hamas forces, CBC reported Wednesday.

Recent reports have found that a six-page dossier that many countries have used as the basis for cutting off funding to the crucial agency does not back up the allegations, with multiple outlets across different countries reporting as such; Channel 4, in the U.K., reported that there is “no evidence to support” the claims. Sky News reported that even if the claims were true, they “do not directly implicate UNRWA.”

The agency swiftly fired several of the employees facing accusations last month, a decision that the agency made in reaction to the severity of the claims and not due to evidence of the allegations themselves.

Despite the lack of evidence, however, 16 countries have cut off funding to the agency, including its top two donors, the U.S. and Germany. Like U.S. officials, the Canadian government announced that it was suspending funding to the UNRWA just after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel to curtail its merciless military campaign in Gaza, which was already “plausibly” a genocide, the court said.

The dossier has been used as a major basis for countries suspending their funding to the crucial aid group. Not only does the dossier fail to back up its claims, Israel is refusing to provide further evidence to UN investigators, even as Israeli officials insist that they do have that information, France 24 reported this week. “I don’t think we need to give intelligence information,” Lior Haiat, an Israel foreign ministry spokesperson, told the outlet. “This would reveal sources in the operation. We gave information to UNRWA about employees that worked for UNRWA that are members of Hamas.”

Haiat went on to suggest that the entirety of the UNRWA and the UN’s independent investigators looking into the allegations are implicated in the Israeli military’s claims against the agency. “They think that we can give them intelligence information, knowing that some of their employees work for Hamas? Are you serious? Why don’t we invite Hamas to our headquarters and have them sit at our desk and have a look at all the information we have?” Haiat said.

Canada isn’t the only country to have suspended its funding without evidence — in fact, top foreign affairs officials from multiple countries that have cut funding have outright admitted that they have neither gotten further information on the allegations nor have they found evidence implicating the UNRWA themselves. “We haven’t had the ability to investigate them ourselves,” said U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a press conference last week, “but they are highly, highly credible.”

“UNRWA itself acknowledged that those allegations were serious, and I think it is incumbent upon me as Australia’s foreign minister to ensure that every dollar of aid that we provide is being used for the appropriate purposes,” said Australian foreign minister Penny Wong in an interview on Thursday.

Scrutiny over “every dollar of aid” is not applied to nearly the same standard when it comes to aid for Israel, which Western countries have sent in spades in recent months and years, despite reports for decades of Israel violating international human rights law in Palestine and the massive volume of evidence of war crimes amid Israel’s current genocidal assault.

The UNRWA has warned that the funding suspensions will leave it unable to perform its lifesaving duties in Gaza and beyond in just a few weeks’ time, saying that it is unconscionable for countries to cut off aid to millions of people due to unsubstantiated allegations against a dozen people.



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