

Israel says UNRWA must evacuate occupied territories within 48 hours



A boy walks with a humanitarian aid package provided by UNRWA in al-Shoka, east of Rafah in

the southern Gaza Strip on January 21, 2025. (AFP)

Tel Aviv, January 29 (RHC)-- Israel says it will terminate all ties with the UN agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA) and any other body acting on its behalf in the occupied territories, despite warnings that the move will undermine the Gaza ceasefire.

Under legislation enacted by Israel's Knesset in October, Tel Aviv bans UNRWA from operating in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. "The legislation forbids UNRWA from operating within the sovereign territory of the State of Israel, and forbids any contact between Israeli officials and UNWRA," Israel's UN envoy Danny Danon said Tuesday.

Speaking ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on the legislation, Danon said, "Israel will terminate all collaboration, communication and contact with UNRWA or anyone acting on its behalf." He said that the agency "must cease its activities and evacuate all its facilities" in al-Quds within 48 hours.

UNRWA, which is considered the backbone of humanitarian operations for Palestinians, provides aid to some six million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

Israel's ban will undermine Gaza ceasefire

Addressing the Security Council meeting, UNRWA's chief Philippe Lazzarini described Tel Aviv's actions against the agency as a "relentless assault" that is "harming the lives and future of Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory."

"It is eroding their trust in the international community, jeopardizing any prospect for peace and security."

Lazzarini warned that the ban on the agency's activities "will sabotage Gaza's recovery," and "undermine the ceasefire."

He said in a previous statement that despite the ban, the local staff will remain and continue to provide emergency assistance and where possible, education and primary health care to the people of Palestine. He also warned that the absence of communication between UNRWA and Israeli authorities will make the agency's work even more dangerous in Gaza.

The besieged Palestinian territory faces a dire humanitarian crisis after more than 15 months of a U.S.-backed campaign of death and destruction.

The United States, however, "supports the implementation of the ban on UNRWA's activities," and accuses Lazzarini of "overstating the impact of the decision," according to Dorothy Shea, Washington's representative to the United Nations.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES]

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