

UN Employees in Gaza Stage Mass Strike Over U.S. Aid Cut



Gaza City, January 30 (RHC)-- Thousands of the United Nations employees have staged a mass strike in the besieged Gaza Strip over Washington's plans to cut annual aid to a relief agency that renders aid to Palestinian refugees. Some 13,000 employees went on a one-day strike on Monday, closing schools, clinics and food distribution centers in the Gaza Strip in protest at the U.S. administration's decision earlier this month to cut its financial contribution to the United Nations' Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA), which runs 278 schools in the region attended by some 300,000 Palestinian students.

The employees also marched to the UN headquarters in Gaza City, waving Palestinian flags and brandishing banners that read "Dignity is priceless." UNRWA spokesman Abu Hasna said the agency, which has launched an international appeal for funds, had only enough money to operate for three months.

On January 16, the U.S. State Department announced that Washington would hold back 65 million dollars to UNRWA - more than half its planned contribution this year - and demanded that the agency make unspecified reforms. In a tweet on January 2, U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington gave the Palestinians hundreds of millions of dollars a year, but got "no appreciation or respect."

UNRWA was established by the UN General Assembly in 1946, one year after the creation of the Israeli regime. More than half of the two million people in the Gaza Strip depend on support from UNRWA or

other humanitarian organizations.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos last week, Trump also criticized the Palestinian leadership for what he called disrespecting Vice President Mike Pence during his visit to the region and suggested such behavior provided grounds for cutting aid. U.S. President Donald Trump has accused the Palestinians of "disrespecting" the United States.

The Monday strike comes as relations between the U.S. and Palestine have been strained since December 2017 when Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and vowed to relocate the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to the occupied city.

The entire city of Jerusalem is currently under Israel's control, while the regime also claims the city's eastern part, which hosts the third holiest Muslim site. The city, which Palestinians want as the capital of their future state, has been designated as "occupied" under international law since the Six-Day War in 1967.

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