

UN Palestine aid agency short of funds to pay employees

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A Palestinian man protests against the reduction of the food basket provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). (Photo: AFP)

Ramallah, November 10 (RHC)-- The UN agency for Palestinian refugees says it lacks the needed funds to pay the salaries of its employees, months after the administration of outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump decided to cancel Washington's entire funding to the aid program for Palestinians.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said on Monday that it had to raise 70 million dollars by the end of the month to be able to pay full salaries for the months of November and December. The funding shortfall affects 28,000 staffers in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip, among other places in the region, it added.

Tamara Alrifai, a spokeswoman for UNRWA, said the agency never recovered from the total funding cut imposed by the Trump administration in 2018. This year, she added, “financial support waned.” And the coronavirus pandemic “didn't help” as key donors faced increased domestic financial pressures, she said.

Alrifai expressed optimism that the administration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden will restore Washington's annual 300-million-dollar aid. “We have engaged very close with the Biden campaign team and they do understand the uniqueness of UNRWA for the stability of the region.”

A year after taking office in 2018, the Trump administration decided to cancel all the U.S. funding to the United Nations aid program for Palestinian refugees, part of a policy to impose maximum pressure on the Palestinians to satisfy Israeli interests and Zionist constituencies in the United States.

The crisis of Palestinian refugees began in 1948 upon the emergence of the Israeli regime in the occupied Palestinian lands. UNRWA, established in 1949, is already suffering from a huge budget deficit that has forced it to scale back services to the Palestinian refugees in recent years.

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