

UNRWA has no replacement in Gaza, UN warns amid funding cuts

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Palestinian refugees gather outside the offices of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, on January 30, 2024 to protest against some countries' decision to stop funding the organization. (AFP)

United Nations, February 1 (RHC)-- The UN aid coordinator for the Gaza Strip says no organization could ever replace the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees due to UNRWA's "tremendous capacity" in handling the situation in the besieged Palestinian territory.

"There is no way that any organization can replace or substitute (the) tremendous capacity, the fabric of UNRWA — (their) ability and their knowledge of the population in Gaza," Sigrid Kaag said on Wednesday.

Several Western countries, not least the United States and Britain, have suspended funding UNRWA following unproven allegations by the Israeli regime that some of the agency's staff were involved in Operation al-Aqsa Storm of October 7, 2023.

Norway, one of the few major donors, has urged fellow donor countries to reflect on the wider consequences of cutting their funding to UNRWA. The people in Gaza are already suffering from lack of food, water and basic supplies.

Also on Wednesday, the United Nations warned of a "humanitarian collapse" in Gaza in the wake of the funding cuts. In a joint statement, the heads of organizations that form the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee said the halt in funding was perilous.

"Withdrawing funds from UNRWA is perilous and would result in the collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza, with far-reaching humanitarian and human rights consequences in the occupied Palestinian territory and across the region."

And on Tuesday, the political bureau chief the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, said the funding cuts go against an interim ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on January 26 to increase humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

Britain's former Ambassador to Uzbekistan Graig Murray recently told Press TV that the defunding is a reaction to the ICJ's ruling against Israel.

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh of the Palestinian Authority has accused Israel of a "premeditated political attack" on UNRWA and called for the restoration of aid funds

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