

*European Union is reportedly
gravely concerned over Israeli
legislation seeking to ban
UNRWA*

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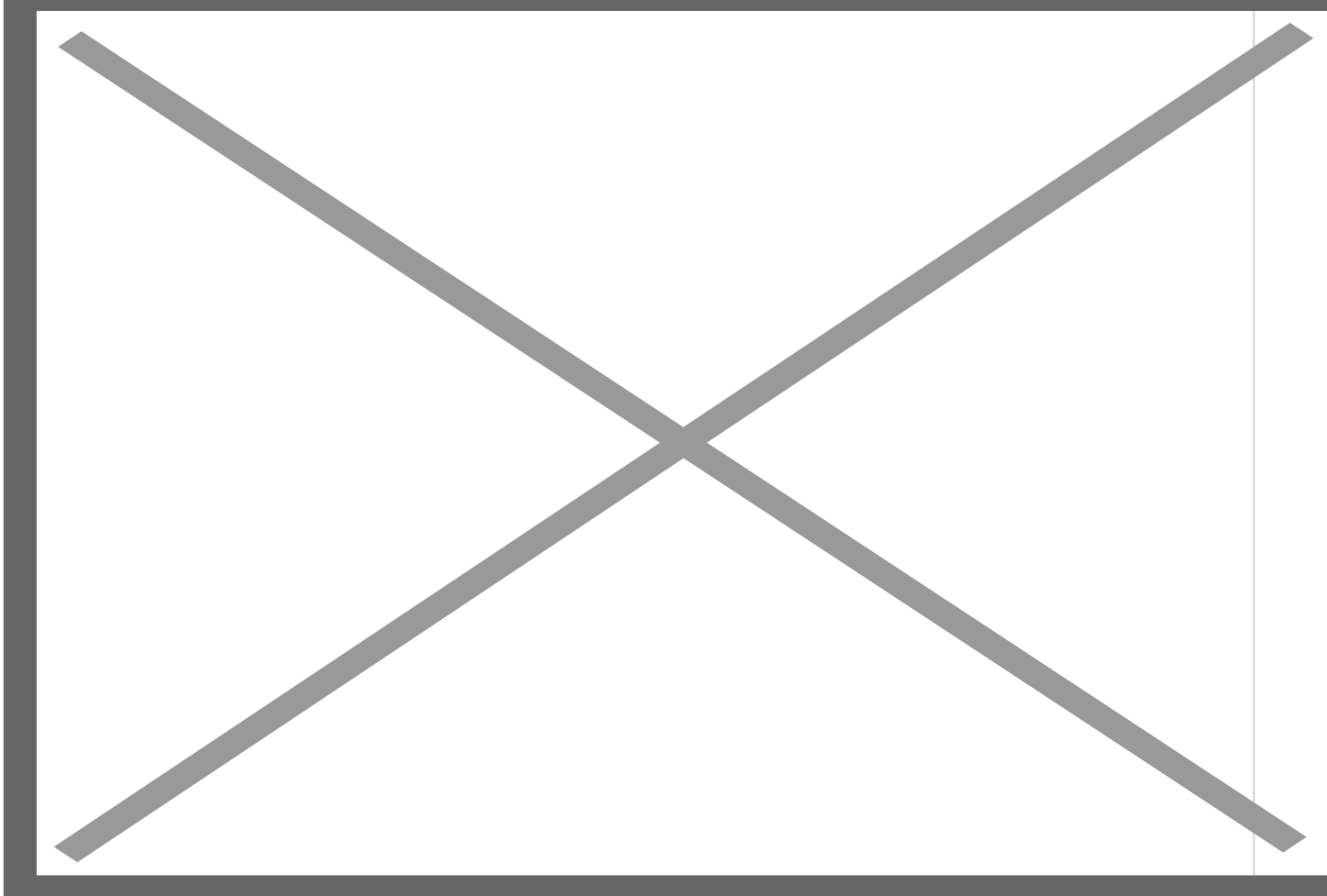


Photo shows the damaged Gaza City headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works

Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), amid ongoing battles between Israel and Hamas.

Brussels, October 13 (RHC)-- The European Union has said it is deeply concerned about draft Israeli legislation that would ban the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees from operating in Israel and likely scale back aid distribution across war-ravaged Gaza.

Earlier this week, an Israeli parliamentary committee approved a bill that would ban UNRWA from operating in Israeli territory and end all contact between the government and the UN agency. The bill needs final approval from the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

"The European Union expresses its grave concern about the draft bill on UNRWA currently discussed in the Israeli parliament," it said in a statement released on Saturday. The EU emphasised its strong support for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's position regarding the draft bill that, if passed, could have "disastrous consequences" for the UN agency's ability to assist and protect Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

"The EU urges the Israeli authorities to ensure that UNRWA is allowed to continue carrying out its crucial work in line with its mandate adopted by the UN General Assembly," the EU noted.

"UNRWA provides essential services to millions of people in Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and across the region, including Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and is a pillar of regional stability. It also plays a fundamental role in ensuring the conditions on the ground for a credible pathway towards the two-State solution."

Israel has campaigned for years against UNRWA, the main organisation delivering humanitarian aid to Palestinians in occupied Palestinian territory and providing services for Palestinian refugees in other countries since 1949, claiming it has connections with "terrorists" and lobbying for its closure.

Earlier this year, Israel alleged that some of the agency's staff participated in the Hamas-led October 7 attacks on Israel, leading more than a dozen international donors to suspend support.

The UN launched an investigation into Israel's accusations and dismissed nine staff, while the records of others were still being reviewed. However, most donors have since reinstated funding.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES]

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