

UN Security Council expresses deep concern over Israel's ban on UNRWA

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Staff work at a health center run by United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), in Deir

Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, October 29, 2024. (Photo by Reuters)

United Nations, October 31 (RHC)-- The United Nations Security Council has expressed “grave concern” over Israel’s ban on the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), warning against the dismantling of the aid agency.

The Security Council sounded the alarm on Wednesday, two days after the Israeli parliament adopted a bill banning UNRWA that will take effect in three months. The ban also restricts UNRWA’s delivery of critical support to the Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank.

The Security Council called on the regime to “abide by its international obligations” and “respect the privileges and immunities” of the agency, which is under constant attack by Tel Aviv, particularly since October 2023.

The 15-member body urged “all parties to enable UNRWA to carry out its mandate, as adopted by the General Assembly, in all areas of operation,” saying the agency has been the “backbone” of humanitarian relief in war-torn Gaza.

“No organization can replace or substitute UNRWA’s capacity and mandate to serve Palestinian refugees and civilians in urgent need of life-saving humanitarian assistance,” the statement said.

Founded in 1949, the agency provides services for over six million Palestinian refugees living across the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. In Gaza, it is the primary UN agency delivering healthcare, and essential humanitarian support to the Palestinians trapped in the blockaded territory.

Many of UNRWA's 13,000 staff are Palestinian.

Israel has repeatedly equated UNRWA staff with members of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, claiming that the agency has links to the group without providing any proof of the allegations.

Israel has also been lobbying hard to have UNRWA closed as it is the only UN agency to have a specific mandate to look after the basic needs of Palestinian refugees.

Iran calls on the international community to prevent the Israeli regime from uprooting UNRWA. All members of the Council, including the United States, on Wednesday “strongly warned against any attempts to dismantle or diminish UNRWA’s operations and mandate.”

“Any interruption or suspension of its work would have severe humanitarian consequences for millions of Palestinian refugees who depend on the Agency’s services and also implications for the region,” the statement read.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has already said that Israel's ban on UNRWA would breach international law, the UN Charter, and a 1946 convention concerning diplomatic privileges and immunities for UN operations.



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