

US Confirms Additional Aid Cut to UN Relief Agency for Palestinians



Washington, January 19 (RHC- Agencies) -- The United States will not provide 45 million dollars in food aid for Palestinians that it pledged last month as part of the West Bank/Gaza Emergency Appeal led by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the U.S. State Department said on Thursday.

The State Department had said on Tuesday that Washington would withhold a separate \$65 million it had planned to pay the U.N. agency that serves the Palestinians, saying UNRWA needed to make unspecified reforms.

The measure is perceived by the international community as a punishment by U.S. President Donald Trump, after Palestinian sharp criticism of his announcement last month that he would move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Following the president's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Palestinians have said the United States is not an honest broker of peace. The announcement has led to unrest in the region, with one Israeli and at least 17 Palestinians killed.

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency, the main body providing aid to millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants across the Middle East, made an urgent appeal for international support Wednesday.

"After decades of generous support, dramatic reduction of US funding to @UNRWA results in most critical financial situation in history of Agency," the agency's commissioner general, Pierre Krähenbühl, wrote on Twitter. He called on member states of the United Nations to take a stand and demonstrate to Palestine Refugees that their rights and future matter.

On Thursday Belgium pledged 23 million dollars to UNRWA.

Deputy Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said in a statement that Brussels would allocate the funds over three years.

The first annual payment is being disbursed immediately "considering the financial difficulties that UNRWA currently faces", the statement said.

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