

UN General Assembly president calls for sustainable support for UNRWA amid funding cuts



Palestinians gather for a demonstration in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on January 30, 2024, calling for continued international support to the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) amid a genocidal Israeli war. (Photo by AFP)

United Nations, February 26 (RHC)-- Dennis Francis, the president of the UN General Assembly, has called for UN member states to provide “sustainable and predictable financial and political support” to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees operating in Gaza.

Francis, responding to a letter from UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, said “UNRWA has been an indispensable lifeline for millions of Palestinians.” UNRWA, which provides healthcare, education and other vital services to the Palestinian people, currently struggles to address the “biggest humanitarian crisis since its establishment”.

The agency was accused by Israel last month of having links to the October 7 operation launched by the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas against the occupying entity.

The regime's allegations against UNRWA, which were not publicly backed by evidence, have prompted more than 10 donor countries, including the United States, Germany, the European Union, Canada, and Japan, to suspend financial support. The funding from these countries makes up the bulk of all funding received by the UN agency.

UNRWA said being cut off in this way means the agency will run out of money altogether within weeks.

A U.S. intelligence assessment recently cast doubt on Israel's accusations against UNRWA, citing the regime's bias against the UN agency. The National Intelligence Council (NIC) report released last week assessed with "low confidence" that a handful of UNRWA staffers had taken part in the October 7th operation launched by the Hamas resistance movement against the occupying entity. The four-page intelligence report indicated that the NIC could not independently confirm the allegations.

Separately, the UN agency in a post on X said shelters in the besieged coastal region were severely overcrowded. "Clean water is scarce. Solid waste is accumulating. Spread of diseases is on the rise," UNRWA said. "The situation is catastrophic, but UNRWA teams continue working to provide critical aid."

The developments come amid reports that people in Gaza have been facing a humanitarian crisis and starvation as Israel has continued relentless bombardment and blocked the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid.

Samer Abdeljaber, the World Food Program's (WFP's) director for emergencies, says there is enough food stocked up across Gaza's borders to feed the entire population, but it cannot safely reach the war-torn population due to the extensive checks by Israeli forces.

"We have enough food across the borders, even from Jordan and Egypt, to be able to support 2.2 million people," said Abdeljaber. "But we need to make sure we have the right access to Gaza from different crossings so that we can actually reach the people – whether they are in the north or the south or in the central areas."

He noted that the WFP hoped to specifically resume operations in the north of Gaza, where it has had to suspend work due to the unsafe conditions but where there are "lots of people in need".

On the 142nd day of the U.S.-Israeli genocide in Gaza, fresh Israeli strikes on the besieged strip leave nearly 100 Palestinians dead, as the death toll from the onslaught is fast approaching 30,000.

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