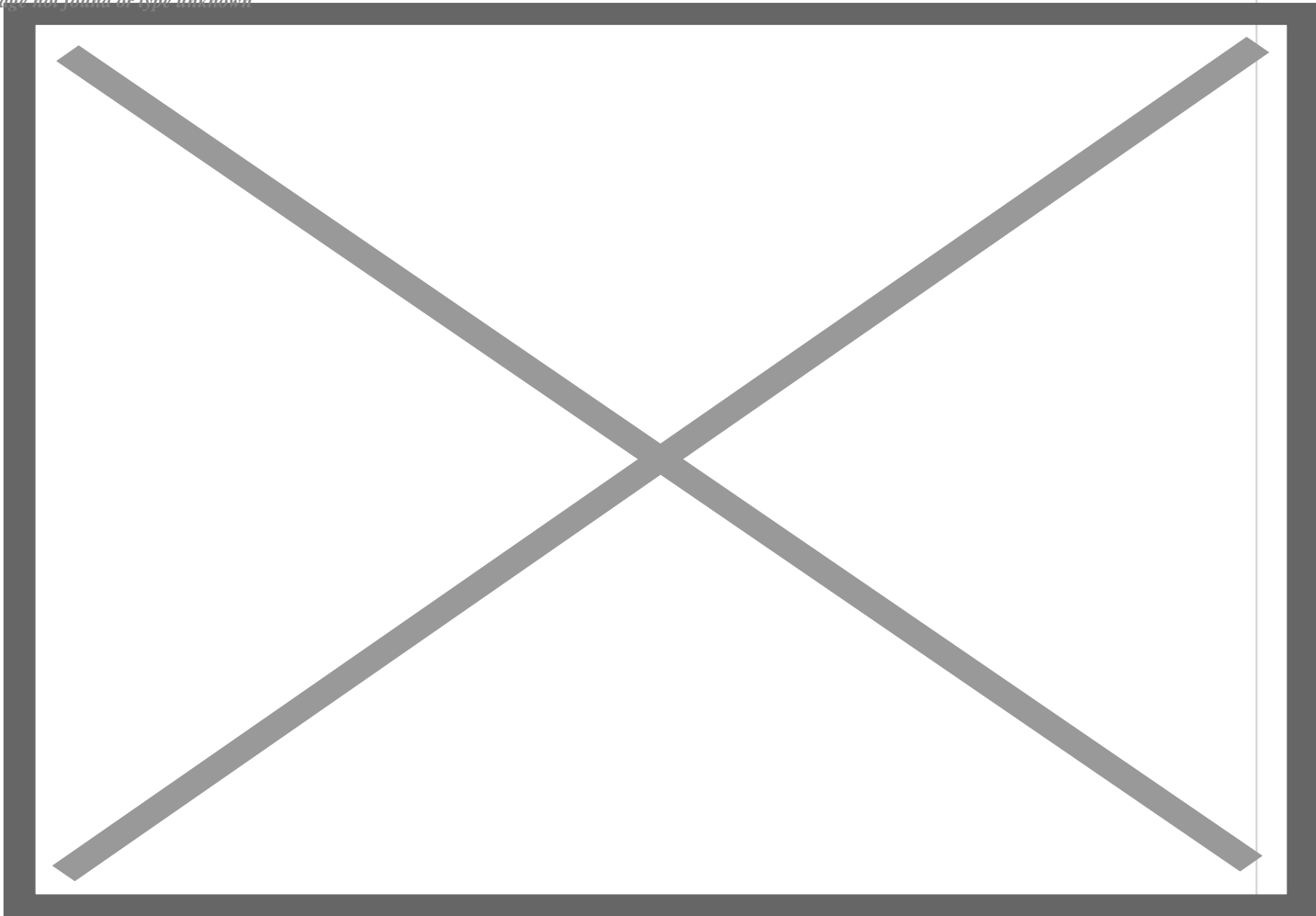


Japan to resume funding to UNRWA, following Sweden, Finland and Canada

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The UNRWA provides aid to some 5.9 million Palestinian refugees [Mohammad Abu Ghosh/AP]

Tokyo, March 30 (RHC)-- Japan is planning to resume funding to the United Nations aid agency for Palestinian refugees after suspending assistance over Israeli claims that some of its staff participated in

Hamas's October 7 attacks.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa met UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini in Tokyo on Thursday to discuss ways the agency could enhance its transparency and governance, including ensuring the traceability of funds and the neutrality of staff.

"Japan and the UNRWA confirmed that they will advance final coordination about necessary efforts to resume Japan's contribution," Japan's foreign ministry said in a statement. Tokyo's move follows the lifting of similar funding pauses by the European Commission, Canada, Australia, Sweden and Finland in recent weeks.

Lazzarini told Switzerland's Keystone-ATS news agency on Tuesday that UNRWA had secured funding until the end of May after previously warning the agency could be forced to halt operations in March.

More than one dozen countries suspended funding to UNRWA in January after Israeli authorities alleged that 12 of its staff were involved in Hamas's attacks on southern Israel. Israeli authorities subsequently claimed that more than 450 UNRWA employees are "military operatives in terror groups in Gaza."

The UN, which is probing the claims, has said Israel has not provided it with evidence to support the allegations.

Founded in 1949, UNRWA provides food, healthcare and education to some 5.9 million Palestinian refugees. The agency was pledged funding worth \$1.2 billion in 2022, with the biggest contributions coming from the United States, Germany and the European Union.

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