

Q&A

On the Israeli-led Campaign against UNRWA



بديل
المركز الفلسطيني
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Resource Center
for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights

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1. What is UNRWA?

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a UN agency, mandated by UNGA Resolution 302 of 1949 to respond to the forced displacement of at least 800,000 Palestinians.

2. What does UNRWA do?

While UNRWA experiences chronic financial deficits, it aims to provide 3 core services - education, health care, and social services - to 5.9 million registered Palestine refugees. The quality and quantity of these services have suffered greatly due to Israel's ongoing attacks and campaign against the Agency.

3. Why was UNRWA established?

The international community created UNRWA to meet its obligations under international law, namely, to provide aid and services in order to ensure the basic needs and rights for at least 800,000 Palestinians who were forcibly displaced and transferred during the Nakba (1947-1949).

4. What are the limitations of UNRWA's mandate?



- **Protection** - providing humanitarian aid, assistance and basic services, the bare minimum of international protection owed to Palestinian refugees. It is not mandated to provide durable solutions (legal protection), or security and safety (physical protection).
- **Funding mechanism** - voluntary so it depends on the goodwill of states and the political climate.
- **Geographic scope** - areas of operation are limited to the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.
- **Duration** - its mandate is temporary and must be renewed every 3 years by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- **Refugee Definition** - is limited and based on a need for humanitarian assistance, rather than on fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or social affiliation as provided by the internationally recognized definition of refugee.

5. When can UNRWA be dismantled?

UNRWA's mandate is tied to the implementation of UNGA Resolution 194, which includes the right of displaced Palestinians to return, property restitution, and compensation. The revision or cessation of its mandate is the sole authority of the UNGA.



A protest against the reductions in UNRWA's services, The Gaza Strip, 2018 Source: (alresalah.ps)

6. Do states have a responsibility to support UNRWA?

Yes, supporting, funding, and enabling the operation of UNRWA is the responsibility of the international community until Palestinian refugees' right to reparations, including return, property restitution and compensation is achieved.



A protest in front of UN High Commissioner's Office, Ramallah, 2023: © (BADIL)

7. What is the aim of Israel's ongoing campaign against UNRWA?

To eliminate UNRWA, and with it, erasing Palestinian refugees and their right of return.

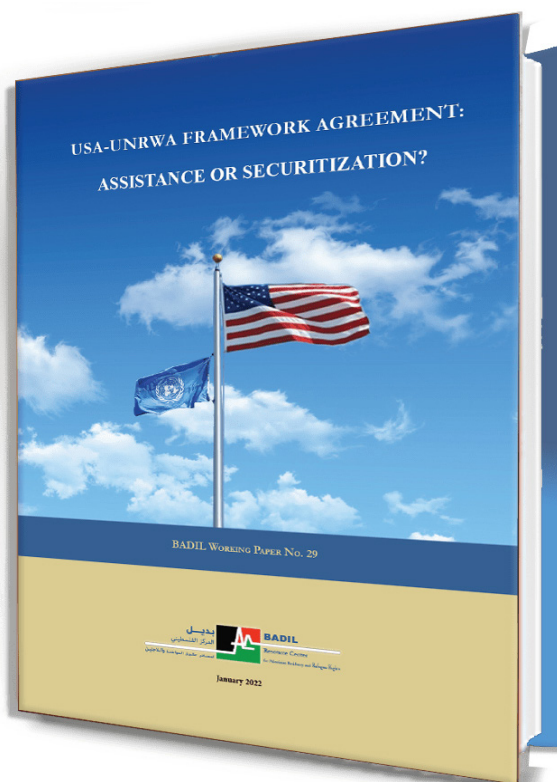
8. What are the components of Israel's campaign against UNRWA?

- Demonization and delegitimization
- Transferring UNRWA and its services to host countries and other international organizations
- Defunding UNRWA
- Obstructing its operations and the provision of its services

9. How has Israel obstructed UNRWA's work in the Gaza Strip?

- Demonizing the Agency through false allegations of supporting “terrorism” and “antisemitism” for which no evidence has been presented
- Forcing UNRWA to abandon its facilities in the north and center of the Gaza Strip
- Calling for its defunding and replacement with other entities
- Killing hundreds of its staff in Gaza
- Destroying hundreds of its facilities in Gaza

10. How do governments aid Israel's campaign against UNRWA?



- By defunding UNRWA
- By imposing funding conditions transforming UNRWA into a security agency
- By transferring its tasks to governments or other agencies and organizations
- By weaponizing aid to Gaza
- By replacing the efficient, effective and preferred land crossings for the passage of aid with airdrops and the maritime corridor
- By replacing UNRWA's responsibility under the UN to subject it to the direction of Israel and its allies

11. Is defunding UNRWA during the Israeli Genocidal War complicity in Genocide?

Yes, suspending UNRWA funds:

- Violates states' non-negotiable obligations to prevent and stop genocide
- Contradicts the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) order on provisional measures
- Weaponizes humanitarian aid
- Obstructs UNRWA's ability to provide lifesaving aid and assistance in the Gaza Strip
- Constitutes collective punishment of the 2.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

12. What consequences do Palestinians in the Gaza Strip face as a result of the Israeli campaign against UNRWA?

- 300,000 students enrolled in 188 UNRWA schools deprived of their education
- 3.4 million patients annually, serviced by 22 facilities, denied access to health care
- 98,935 Palestinians denied access to relief and social services
- 1 million Palestinians denied access to emergency food assistance
- 13,000 UNRWA employees faced with unemployment

13. What is the impact of eliminating UNRWA now?

- Escalation of the genocide in the Gaza Strip
- 5.9 million Palestine refugees in 58 registered camps in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan will not receive the humanitarian aid and services they are entitled to.
- 706 schools, 140 primary health care facilities and 113 community centers in the Agency's areas of operation will be shut down

14. What are the findings of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality?

- Israel has yet to provide evidence supporting its allegations against UNRWA
- Confirmed that UNRWA “possesses a more developed approach to neutrality than other similar UN or NGO entities.”
- “UNRWA remains pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services”
- “UNRWA is irreplaceable and indispensable to Palestinians’ human and economic development”



A protest organized by the GPRN and UNRWA's Arab Staff Union against the Israeli-led campaign to dismantle the UNRWA, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, 2023:© (BADIL)