

Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee: We cannot abandon the people of Gaza

30 Jan 2024

NEW YORK/GENEVA/ROME, 30 January 2024 – The allegations of involvement of several UNRWA staff in the heinous attacks on Israel on 7 October are horrifying. As the Secretary-General has said, any UN employee involved in acts of terror will be held accountable.

However, we must not prevent an entire organization from delivering on its mandate to serve people in desperate need.

The harrowing events that have been snowballing in Gaza since 7 October have left hundreds of thousands of people homeless and on the brink of famine. UNRWA, as the largest humanitarian organisation in Gaza, has been providing food, shelter and protection, even as its own staff members were being displaced and killed.

Decisions by various Member States to pause funds from UNRWA will have catastrophic consequences for the people of Gaza. No other entity has the capacity to deliver the scale and breadth of assistance that 2.2 million people in Gaza urgently need.

We appeal for these decisions to be reconsidered.

UNRWA has announced a full, independent review of the organization, and the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services has been activated.

Withdrawing funds from UNRWA is perilous and would result in the collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza, with far-reaching humanitarian and human rights consequences in the occupied Palestinian territory and across the region.

The world cannot abandon the people of Gaza.

Signatories:

- Mr. Martin Griffiths, Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- Dr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Ms. Jane Backhurst, Chair, ICVA (Christian Aid)
- Mr. Jamie Munn, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
- Ms. Amy E. Pope, Director General, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- Ms. Paula Gaviria Betancur, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (SR on HR of IDPs)
- Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Mr. Michal Mlynár, Executive Director a.i., United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat)
- Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Ms. Sima Bahous, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women
- Ms. Cindy McCain, Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)
- Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO)