



Press Release

20 October 2020

Canberra, Australia

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funding cut to UNRWA

The Australian Government's recent decision to cut funding to UNRWA from \$20 million in 2019-2020 to \$10 million in 2020-2021 is regrettable and will have a considerable impact on both the livelihoods of Palestinian refugees and the stability of the Middle East region.

Whilst it is understood that COVID-19 has presented increased budgetary pressures, the Australian Government has not decided to reduce funding towards other United Nations departments or humanitarian agencies, yet funding to UNRWA has decreased by half. The impartial role UNRWA plays in providing humanitarian support to Palestinian refugees grants Australia with a unique opportunity in diplomatically contributing to the Middle East Peace Process and in turn, a two-state solution.

UNRWA provides life-saving services to over 5.6 million refugees, operating under an independent mandate to ensure these individuals receive access to emergency services, education and healthcare. This includes providing free education to over 530,000 children who would otherwise go without. This education is impartial and reflects the values and principles of the United Nations such as tolerance, neutrality, equality and non-discrimination. UNRWA also works to uphold Sustainable Development Goal 5, Gender Equality and Women's and Girls Empowerment. This is achieved through the provision of women's health services such as family planning and career support through Women's Training Centers. Essential funding from states such as Australia, ensures UNRWA can continue to guarantee vulnerable refugees receive access to their basic human rights.

Without UNRWA, the provision of these essential services becomes the responsibility of neighbouring states such as Jordan and Lebanon as well as Palestine. Considering the already fragile situation within these areas, UNRWA plays an essential role as a stabilising factor, ensuring the economic burden of these refugees is not felt by already struggling states. Indeed, it is the sole responsibility of UNRWA to provide services to the Palestinian refugees according to the UN resolution 302 (IV), until they will be able to return to their homeland.

In decreasing aid to UNRWA, Australia is heightening the risk of increased instability within the Middle East region, threatening the establishment of a two-state solution and potential peace processes.

The provision of Australian aid to UNRWA not only stands as essential in allowing Australia to contribute humanitarian support to Palestinian refugees, it acts in Australia's national interests as an uncontroversial mechanism for maintaining peace.



State of Palestine

The General Delegation of Palestine
to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific



دولة فلسطين

البعثة العامة لفلسطين
في استراليا ونيوزيلندا و الباسفيك

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific calls for the Australian Government to reinstate their original funding amount of \$20 million annually to UNRWA in ensuring humanitarian support to Palestinian refugees and preserving the possibility of a two-states solution.

For more information, please contact the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific: ph. 62869193.

