

ALLIANCE OF AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS

REPRESENTING OVER 200 MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS IN AUSTRALIA



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PUBLIC STATEMENT

Australia Must Reinstate the UNRWA Funding

The Alliance of Australian Muslims (AAM) is deeply concerned and disappointed by the Australian Government's decision to suspend funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). This action is not only deeply disappointing but also critically undermines the essential humanitarian support needed in Gaza, especially during a time of severe crisis and human catastrophe.

The World Health Organisation recently stated, "As the risk of famine grows, and more people are exposed to deadly disease outbreaks, a fundamental step change in the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza is urgently needed". The heads of the World Food Programme (WFP), it also warns "Gaza grapples with catastrophic hunger as new report predicts famine if conflict continues"

The Australian Government's suspension of UNRWA funding contributes significantly to the hardships and suffering endured by the Palestinian people in Gaza. This move can be seen as a form of collective punishment against millions of Palestinians, contradicting the principles of humanitarian aid and justice. Such a decision, particularly in light of the International Court of Justice's recent ruling on 26 January, which mandates immediate and effective measures to provide basic services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza, is disturbing and counterproductive.

It is concerning that this suspension was enacted in response to allegations made by Israel against a few UNRWA employees, without waiting for a thorough and independent investigation. UNRWA's prompt action in addressing these allegations, including the termination of contracts, demonstrates its commitment to transparency and humanitarian cause.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres has appealed to the countries, including Australia, that suspended funding to the UN agency assisting Palestine refugees (UNRWA) to reconsider their decisions, referring to the tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalised.

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has rightly pointed out that defunding UNRWA at this critical juncture blatantly disregards the ICJ's directives and could have serious legal implications. The Australian Government's current stance neglects the urgent need for effective humanitarian aid in Gaza.

The AAM, strongly urges the Australian Government to reconsider its decision. The suspension of funding to UNRWA will have catastrophic effects on over 5.9 million Palestinian refugees, particularly the 2 million in the Gaza Strip who rely on UNRWA's humanitarian assistance for survival.

We call on the Australian Government to immediately reinstate the UNRWA funding, fulfilling its moral and legal obligations to support those in dire need of the Gaza people.



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