

Brussels, 17th December 2024

Letter for the attention of:

Ursula von der LEYEN, President of the European Commission

António COSTA, President of the European Council

Kaja KALLAS, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-

President of the European Commission

Dubravka ŠUIČA, Commissioner for the Mediterranean

Members of the European Parliament Call for Rescindment of Israeli Knesset Bills Targeting the Agency

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, express our deep alarm at the adoption of bills by the Israeli Knesset on October 28th, which ban Israeli authorities from engaging with UNRWA and prohibit the Agency's operations within Israel. The bills are to come into force after 90 days, on 28 January 2025.

UNRWA stands as the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza, representing the largest organization on the ground. Its work extends far beyond immediate relief for the vulnerable population through food assistance, medical care or mental health support. The entire operation relies on UNRWA's infrastructure, logistics, distribution capacity, and thousand of staff.

Before the war, UNRWA provided education to over 350,000 children, and 5 million annual primary healthcare consultations in Gaza and the West Bank. If implemented, these bills risk severely compromising these essential services, jeopardizing lives and livelihoods.

Moreover, the loss of thousands of local jobs in education and healthcare would further threaten the stability in the region.

The European Union has long recognized and supported the essential role of UNRWA, and the European Council has repeatedly condemned any attempt to obstruct its mandate. As stated by UN officials and relevant international organisations, in the current context no other UN agency or entity can take over UNRWA's unique mandate – which encompasses the provision of essential public-like services.

We commend the decisive actions taken by the UN Secretary-General and UNRWA following allegations against Agency's staff allegedly involved in the October 7th terror attack by Hamas. Similarly, we commend UNRWA's commitment to a "zero tolerance" policy toward breaches of its neutrality. There should be no place for anyone responsible for such atrocities anywhere. However, unjustifiable acts by single individuals cannot reflect on an organization employing 30,000 people across the region, collectively punishing those who rely on its basic services for survival.

UNRWA's adherence to UN codes of conduct and its neutrality framework have undergone independent reviews. We emphasize the importance of the commitments and the steps taken by the Agency to strengthening its neutrality as a result of the Colonna report.

The prolonged mandate and ongoing necessity of UNRWA is a reflection of the international community's collective failure to achieve a political solution to the conflict. UNRWA's mission

should only be concluded in the context of a sustainable, negotiated peace - not as the result of unilateral actions.

Ensuring UNRWA's continued operations is not only a humanitarian imperative, but a necessary step to preserve the hope for a just and enduring peace, including the prospect of a two-state solution - a cornerstone of the EU's approach. We must stand firm in our commitment to human dignity, international law, and the pursuit of peace and stability in the region.

We call on the European Union, its institutions and its Member States to apply all diplomatic means to urge the Israeli government to rescind or suspend the Knesset bills before they come into force. A failure to act now will result into much greater cost if UNRWA's vital operations are fundamentally impaired. Safeguarding UNRWA's role is safeguarding international law and our shared humanity.

Sincerely,

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