

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000432/25
to the Commission
João Oliveira (The Left)
(30 January 2025)

Subject: Guaranteeing the continuation of UNRWA's work in Palestinian territories illegally occupied by Israel

Representatives of the State of Israel have said that laws passed by the Israeli Parliament banning the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in illegally occupied Palestinian territory will enter into force on 30 January 2025.

This indefensible decision poses a threat to the humanitarian aid UNRWA provides to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

The UNRWA Commissioner-General has said that the Israeli legislation will only deepen the Palestinian people's suffering, especially in the Gaza Strip, where people are in a living hell and an entire generation of children is at risk.

The UN Secretary-General views the implementation of the laws, which could have devastating consequences for Palestinian refugees, to be unacceptable.

In view of the above:

1. What steps does the Commission intend to take in the near future, including with regard to the State of Israel, to ensure UNRWA's work can continue in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories?
2. Does the Commission intend to propose suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement?
3. What steps does the Commission intend to take to ensure Palestinians have access to humanitarian aid?

Submitted: 30.1.2025

Answer given by Ms Šuica on behalf of the European Commission
(16 May 2025)

The EU has condemned any attempt by Israel to abrogate the 1967 agreement between Israel and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) or to otherwise attempt to obstruct its capacity to operate its mandate ⁽¹⁾. The EU has stressed the essential role of UNRWA, which provides crucial support to the civilian population in both Gaza and the wider region and committed to continuing its support to the Agency ⁽²⁾.

In 2024, following the fulfilment by UNRWA of all the conditions agreed for the 2024 EU funding, the Commission disbursed a total of EUR 92 million to the Agency ⁽³⁾. This came in addition to the EUR 48.5 million of EU humanitarian funding in 2024. In 2025, the EU is committed to continuing its support for the Agency, and as a part of its multiannual and comprehensive programme for Palestine ⁽⁴⁾ 2025-27 ⁽⁵⁾. The Commission is willing to propose to allocate EUR 82 million per year to provide services to Palestine refugees via UNRWA, both in the occupied Palestinian territory and the wider region. This will enable UNRWA to continue ensuring its crucial role both as a humanitarian and a development actor.

The EU has been consistently clear that political engagement and open dialogue are the most effective ways to convey concerns, including to the Israeli government. The current EU-Israel Association Agreement ⁽⁶⁾ is the legal basis for the ongoing dialogue and cooperation with Israel and it provides a useful mechanism to discuss and advance the EU stance. In this regard, the Association Council meeting that took place in February 2025 ⁽⁷⁾ was an opportunity to pass clear messages with regard to the situation in Gaza and the West Bank. The Commission keeps under constant review all EU agreements with third countries, and the principles and values upon which they are based.

The EU is extremely concerned by reports on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which suggest that food supplies brought in during the ceasefire are running out. Under international humanitarian law, humanitarian aid must reach civilians in need. The EU has repeatedly called on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza to allow humanitarian aid to start flowing at scale into and throughout the strip ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/2pebccz2/20241017-euco-conclusions-en.pdf> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6511-2025-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁽²⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6511-2025-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁽³⁾ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-disburses-additional-eu10-million-payment-unrwa-2024-12-20_en.

⁽⁴⁾ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individuals positions of the Member States on this issue.

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1055.

⁽⁶⁾ https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/israel/documents/eu_israel/asso_agree_en.pdf.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6511-2025-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁽⁸⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_25_1052.