

LA Jews for Peace Policy Statement

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United States Must Immediately Restore UNRWA Funding

LA Jews for Peace is shocked that the United States and eight other Western countries would cut off funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that is the key organization facilitating humanitarian aid to the 2.2 million people facing homelessness, disease, and famine in the Gaza Strip.

The U.S. acted in response to Israel's accusations that a dozen UNRWA employees are active Hamas members. But surely that is no surprise to the U.S. that has dozens of diplomats and intelligence agents in and around Gaza. The U.S. knows that UNRWA has 30,000 employees, 13,000 in Gaza. And the U.S. knows that Hamas has been the dominate political-religious-social organization in the Gaza Strip for the past 17 years.

Rather than being surprised that a dozen UNRWA employees took part in Hamas' Oct.7 attack, **LA Jews for Peace** is surprised that that number is so tiny, just one tenth of one percent of UNRWA Gaza employees.

Israel has been attempting to destroy UNRWA for decades as a way to delegitimize the Palestinian refugee problem. Israel has particularly targeted NRWA facilities in its present war on Gaza including killing over 150 UNRWA employees¹.

That puts Israel and its U.S. and Western supporters in a quandary because Israel needs UNRWA to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza and provide medical care for a large fraction of the Gaza population. The funding suspension may force UNRWA to end its lifesaving aid in Gaza.²

Just last week the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Israel "must ... take steps to improve the humanitarian situation" in Gaza. Without UNRWA, Israel would be directly responsibility for the well-being of the Gaza population. How could the Biden Administration cut UNRWA funding as the Gaza population is dying of starvation, disease, and exposure?

¹ *The New Arab*, Jan.28, 2024. <https://www.newarab.com/news/why-israel-trying-destroy-unrwa>.

² NBC News, Jan.28, 2024. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/live-blog/israel-hamas-war-live-updates-rcna135991>