

Foreign ministers' statement on legislation against United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East under consideration by the Israeli Knesset

October 26, 2024

"We, the Foreign Ministers of Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom, express our grave concern over legislation currently under consideration by the Israeli Knesset, aimed at revoking the privileges and immunities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA], forbidding any contact between Israeli state entities, officials and UNRWA, and prohibiting any UNRWA presence within Israel.

"UNRWA provides essential and life-saving humanitarian aid and basic services to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and throughout the region. Without its work, the provision of such assistance and services, including education, health care, and fuel distribution in Gaza and the West Bank would be severely hampered if not impossible, with devastating consequences on an already critical and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, particularly in northern Gaza.

"It is crucial that UNRWA and other UN organizations and agencies be fully able to deliver humanitarian aid and their assistance to those who need it most, fulfilling their mandates effectively. We urge the Israeli Government to abide by its international obligations, keep the reserve privileges and immunities of UNRWA untouched and live up to its responsibility to facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance in all its forms as well as the provision of sorely needed basic services to the civilian population.

"We once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the brutal and unjustified terror attacks by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023. UNRWA has taken steps to address allegations regarding individual employees' support for terrorist organizations and demonstrated its willingness to pursue and implement reform of internal processes in line with the independent review of April 2024, led by Ms. Catherine Colonna, on UNRWA neutrality. We call on UNRWA to continue its path of reform as a priority, demonstrating its commitment to the principle of neutrality, and ensure that its activities remain entirely in line with its mandate. We will continue to actively monitor and support this process."