



Scottish Palestinian Forum

STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S LEGISLATION TO BAN UNRWA

The Scottish Palestinian Forum utterly condemns the Israeli parliament's approval of two bills to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from operating in areas under Israeli control (Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories), and to designate UNRWA as a terrorist organisation.

The unprecedented move not only risks completely collapsing the aid distribution process in Gaza, already under pressure due to Israel's restrictions, but will also cut off vital services provided by UNRWA in the occupied West Bank. UNRWA provides essential health services, education, and vocational training for around 3 million Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Territories.

The designation of UNRWA as a terrorist organisation puts all UNRWA staff in danger. Over the past year 230 UNRWA staff members have been killed by the Israeli military in Gaza. Following previous allegations by Israel of links between UNRWA and Hamas, the UN Secretary-General launched an Independent Review of how UNRWA upholds neutrality in its work. This Independent Review published its findings in April, and found that UNRWA "*possesses a more developed approach to neutrality than other similar UN or NGO entities*".

Israel's ongoing campaign to eliminate UNRWA is a key part of its attempt to deny the right of Palestinian refugees to return home. The Forum reiterates the inalienable right of Palestinian refugees to return to the villages and towns they were ethnically cleansed from in 1948, in line with international law and UN resolution 194.

The UNRWA Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, has stated that "*The vote by the Israeli Parliament ... opposes the UN Charter and violates the State of Israel's obligations under international law.*" As Israel is now in violation of the UN charter, the Forum calls for the suspension of Israel's membership of the UN.