



[Biden Administration Restores Millions of Dollars in Humanitarian Aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees](#)

The Biden administration recently announced that it would be providing \$235 million in U.S. aid to the Palestinians, including the restoration of millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The UNRWA offers health, education, and social services to Palestinian refugees and the United States had long been the largest single financial contributor to the agency until 2018, when the previous Trump administration decided to cut American funding. During the unveiling of this latest move, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken outlined that the full aid package consists of \$150 million to the UNRWA, \$75 million in U.S. economic and development assistance, and \$10 million for peace-building programs. The Trump era's harmful and biased stances regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process alienated the latter and therefore the Biden administration's policy reversal is part of its ongoing efforts to emphasize a commitment towards a more even-handed approach to the issue. As such, the plans for the resumption of aid have been widely praised by impartial observers as a positive step forward.

In its role as a strictly humanitarian agency, the UNRWA's sole purpose is to provide aid services and it does not involve itself in the political intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, despite some false and vicious claims to the contrary. Analysts point to the fact that the organization is bound by the principles of independence and neutrality which are enshrined in its founding mandate. Abiding by and sticking to these core values allows the entity to fulfill its mission of offering humanitarian support in the health, education, and social service sectors. Most of the refugees that the UNRWA aims to assist are descendants of the estimated 700,000 Palestinians who were forced from their homes or fled the fighting during the 1948 war which led to the establishment of the state of Israel. Therefore, the agency and its wide array of proponents feel that they have an obligation to help these individuals who have been negatively impacted by the refugee crisis through no fault of their own.

Unbiased experts acknowledge the important work that the UNRWA does and as a result, the reaction to the Biden administration's recent decision to restore assistance to it was largely welcomed. The United Nations applauded the move and expressed their hope that the resumption of U.S. support would serve as a signal for other countries to also follow suit and renew their funding. They added that the relevance of the action cannot be understated considering that there were a number of nations that had either greatly reduced or halted their contributions altogether in the aftermath of what the Trump administration did back in 2018. Furthermore, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas commented that Washington's re-established commitment to the UNRWA sends the right signal.

The restoration of American aid comes at a critical time for a couple of key reasons. Firstly, the UNRWA has been struggling financially in recent years due to the cessation of U.S. contributions under the previous Trump administration, funds that the agency relies heavily on. In fact, prior to the Trump era, the United States was consistently the biggest donor to the UNRWA. Secondly, the organization seeks to provide health care to millions of people, and these services have been strained because of the impacts of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, analysts are hopeful that the revival of U.S. backing will allow the UNRWA to continue its vital humanitarian work supporting vulnerable segments of the population.