



[Israel Continues Its Illegal Campaign to Dismantle International Humanitarian Agencies That Aid Palestinian Refugees](#)

Over the course of the past month, Israel has continued its illegal campaign to dismantle the work of international humanitarian groups in both the occupied West Bank and Gaza, including those that aid Palestinian refugees such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). For years, analysts have outlined how Israeli authorities' longstanding efforts to hinder UNRWA in particular are rooted in a politically calculated attempt by right-wing voices to undermine the agency's work – and in their eyes – erase the Palestinian refugee issue and the universally recognized right of return to lands that Palestinians were forcibly displaced from. Thus, Israel has long sought to smear the work of UNRWA and other humanitarian groups as a means of trying to justify its dismantling of them. Back in early 2024, Israel made false accusations regarding UNRWA and the October 7th Hamas attacks that were subsequently debunked. Now, it has carried out widely condemned demolitions of the UNRWA headquarters in Jerusalem – merely one of Israel's latest attempts aimed at thwarting the aid agency and the important humanitarian role that it plays.

Israeli efforts to do so have always been about eroding Palestinian rights and stripping them of any potential refugee status that paves the way for their right of return under international human rights law. UNRWA serves as a constant reminder that Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their ancestral homes and has therefore been a target of Israeli officials for decades who seek to, in essence, sweep the Palestinian refugee issue under the rug. Many right-wing figures have even openly relayed their desire to abolish the term "Palestinian refugee" by stating that the children and grandchildren of refugees should not be granted the right of return. They have also tried to portray forcible displacement of Palestinian refugees as a distant historical occurrence, rather than what it actually is: an ongoing humanitarian, legal, and societal injustice. As such, UN agencies like UNRWA pose a threat to this ideology, so Israeli authorities have long sought to delegitimize and dismantle them as a way to stop people from using the aforementioned term and upholding this right under the principles of international law and social justice. Israel's attempts to destroy the agency are made even more egregious considering the vital role played by UNRWA and others like it. The agency provides critical health care, education, food, water, housing, employment, emergency, relief, and social services – resources that are especially needed given Israel's destructive war on Gaza and its escalating human rights violations in the occupied West Bank as well. The organization has

played a key role in aiding the lives of millions of civilians since its founding in late 1949. Dismantling UNRWA would be catastrophic, as the aid agency forms the backbone of humanitarian relief distribution in Gaza. Without it, many civilians will lose their last remaining access to food, water, medicine, and other basic resources.

Beyond UNRWA specifically, Israel has increasingly targeted the humanitarian systems that support Palestinian refugees and civilians, both in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. By undermining agencies that recognize refugee status across generations, Israeli authorities are attempting to normalize the idea that Palestinians no longer possess claims to restitution, protection, or right of return. This regrettable rhetoric has been accompanied by actions such as the demolition or seizure of aid organization offices as well as severe obstructions towards humanitarian operations. This week, eleven countries including Canada, France, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom condemned Israel's recent demolition of UNRWA headquarters in Jerusalem as an unprecedented act against a UN relief agency and an unacceptable move to undermine UNRWA's work.

Meanwhile, during the past month in Gaza, Israel has initiated atrocious operational bans and license revocations against several dozen major humanitarian organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, Mercy Corps, and Oxfam. These have consisted of movement restrictions and even outright exclusion – severely hindering their ability to provide medical care, food aid, and civilian protection. Observers have pointed out that from a humanitarian law perspective, there is no justification for obstructing neutral aid organizations, particularly when civilian infrastructure and humanitarian conditions have been devastated by two years of conflict in Gaza. The cumulative effect of these policies is not only the worsening of Gaza's already dire humanitarian crisis, but also the systematic dismantling of international mechanisms designed to protect forcibly displaced civilians and refugees. All told, the recent actions against UNRWA and others are only some of the latest in a long line of Israeli measures which represent a complete disregard for norms and principles of international law.