



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, UNRWA, 17 April 2024

Malta Statement delivered by the Hon. Ian Borg
Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta

I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

I begin by thanking UNRWA Commissioner General, Mr Phillippe Lazzarini, for his powerful briefing.

Malta firmly reiterates that UNRWA is an indispensable lifeline for Palestine refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and a stabilising force in the region.

Particularly amid the current catastrophic conditions in Gaza, Malta continues to be a regular contributor to the Agency.

Preserving the life-saving role and operations of UNRWA must be our primary objective.

In Gaza today, we continue to witness the failure to uphold the laws of armed conflict.

Personifying this is the staggering destruction and death of over 33,000 people in Gaza; the majority of whom are women and children.



It is further manifested in the continued onerous, arbitrary, and bureaucratic impediments preventing the necessary humanitarian scale up into, and throughout, the Gaza Strip.

We are witnessing an entire population being brought to the brink of conflict-induced starvation, with credible reports that famine has already taken hold in the north.

We are even seeing it in the lack of respect for the humanitarian notification and deconfliction system, despite the provisions of Resolution 2712.

This is evident in the recent killing of the seven World Central Kitchen workers which occurred on 1 April, and the attack on an ambulance trying to reach six-year-old Hind Rajab on 29 January which resulted in more casualties.

There are many more examples of this. Over 220 humanitarian aid workers, including over 100 UNRWA staff, have been killed since the beginning of this conflict. Many were killed providing urgent humanitarian assistance.



Malta welcomed the UN's swift response and the establishment of two investigations to the deeply concerning allegations regarding the involvement of UNRWA staff in the terror attacks of 7 October.

We also welcome the commissioning of an independent review into the Agency's adherence to the principle of neutrality.

We note that the interim report of this review has indicated UNRWA has in place a significant number of mechanisms and procedures to ensure compliance with the Humanitarian Principle of neutrality.

We now look forward to the outcome of both ongoing inquiries, including the Commission's final report due on 20 April, and call on all parties to fully cooperate with these inquiries.

Regrettably, due to these allegations, several critical donors took the decision to suspend their funding to UNRWA at a time when the people of Gaza were in greatest need and stability in the region, for which UNRWA is a major contributor, is threatened.



We commend those who have continued or have since resumed their contributions. We appeal to others to resume the desperately needed funding and ensure that the Agency has the necessary resources to operate. It is in this vein that Malta recently issued a further financial contribution.

In these difficult times, we need to avoid politicising the work of humanitarian actors, and undermining the work and legitimacy of the United Nations and humanitarian actors in Gaza.

It is also important to ensure that accountability for any violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, is ensured.

It is our responsibility to protect those, such as UNRWA staff, who risk their lives to help and protect others.

I thank you.