



Informal General Assembly Meeting on UNRWA, 6 November 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Mr Darren Camilleri
Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Mr President,

Thank you for convening this meeting. We also appreciate Commissioner Lazzarini's timely and troubling briefing. We thank him and his staff for their important work and tireless efforts on the ground. Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to make the following points in its national capacity.

Mr President,

UNRWA is facing extraordinary and unprecedented threats.

On 3 November, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General were informed by the Government of Israel of its withdrawal from the operational agreement with UNRWA, which has been in effect since 1967.



This decision is extremely concerning and worrying. It constitutes a significant, and troubling shift, at a time when Palestinians in Gaza, continue to suffer horrific conditions. Neither can we forget about the dire situation and difficult daily reality of Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Such a decision will have immediate devastating implications for millions of Palestinians and broad regional consequences.

It also reflects a disregard of this Assembly's collective calls, and Security Council resolutions, demanding Israel not to obstruct the work of the UN and its humanitarian partners in Gaza and the West Bank. We therefore call on Israel to revoke it with immediate effect.

Mr President,

Malta remains a steadfast donor and supporter of UNRWA, and a signatory of the UNRWA Shared Commitments. The Agency is irreplaceable. It serves as a stabilising force in the region, and a vital source of support for Palestinians. It is the backbone of humanitarian assistance to generations of Palestinian refugees, and its work remains essential.



239 UNRWA staff members have been killed in Gaza in the conflict that ensued following the horrific attacks of 7 October. Over 200 UNRWA premises have been damaged or destroyed.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, violence and restrictions have continued to impede the Agency's work.

We urgently reiterate our call for full respect for international humanitarian law. We highlight the critical need to protect humanitarian personnel and operations and condemn any attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Malta appreciates the UN's response to the allegations involving UNRWA staff implicated in the 7 October attacks.

We also welcome the neutrality review led by Catherine Colonna, which commended the Agency's mechanisms for compliance and stipulated recommendations to enhance its integrity and ensure its neutrality. We also applaud UNRWA for its continued progress on the implementation of these recommendations.



Mr President,

In these unprecedented circumstances, the Israeli legislation to end UNRWA operations in the oPt within three months highlights the critical need for unwavering international support, both political and financial, and action to allow the Agency to continue its mandate.

Attacks on the UN, humanitarian, and medical facilities and staff in Gaza must cease immediately.

Fundamentally, an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza is vital. This pervasive violence must end if we are to credibly pursue a political track towards the irreversible realisation of the two-State Solution.

In the interim, UNRWA must be allowed to operate its mandate conferred by the General Assembly.



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Millions of Palestine refugees and the stability of the region depend on it.

I thank you, Mr President.