

September 23, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned 105 civil society organizations, write to respectfully request your administration's support for the restoration of United States funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) consistent with the recently introduced H.R. 9649: "UNRWA Funding Emergency Restoration Act of 2024".

UNRWA remains the backbone of the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip, as recently evidenced in the UN response plan to address the outbreak of polio. As U.S. Ambassador Wood rightly stated before the UN Security Council, "other United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations have reiterated they are not equipped to replace UNRWA, as UNRWA performs essential government-like functions their organizations do not have the capacity or structure to deliver."

Following UNRWA's and the UN's swift and decisive response to the concerns raised by the Administration when it paused funding in January, we believe it is now time for the Administration to actively reengage with Congress with the goal of resuming US funding for UNRWA.

Fifteen other governments joined the United States in pausing funding to UNRWA; however, after having performed their own due diligence and rigorous oversight, all 15 have since resumed support to the Agency -- leaving the United States the only holdout. In fact, several donor nations have even increased their contributions. While this is welcome news, it does not make up for the funding lost from UNRWA's largest contributor -- the United States. With the situation nearing its one-year mark, the needs are even greater as the risk of famine and disease mount. UNRWA's role in responding to the acute humanitarian crisis is paramount to prevent widespread famine and disease outbreak.

Securing an immediate ceasefire, unconditional release of all remaining hostages, and unfettered humanitarian access are only a starting point for a long and difficult rebuilding process. Safeguarding the role of UNRWA, particularly as a provider of primary healthcare and education, is critical for the future of Gaza. Strong congressional support for H.R. 9649 will reflect the growing support of the American people for immediate and effective responses to the unimaginable humanitarian suffering in the Gaza Strip.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and hope we can continue to rely on your support for the humanitarian needs and human rights of displaced Palestinians.

Respectfully,

UNRWA USA National Committee
ACCESS of WNY
Action Corps
Al Otro Lado
Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Churches USA
American Friends Service Committee
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Americans for Peace Now
Amnesty International USA
ANAR
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Avaaz
Carolina Peace Center
Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
Center for Economic and Policy Research
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for International Policy
Center for Security, Race and Rights
Center for Victims of Torture
Charity & Security Network
Church World Service
Civic Ark
Climate Refugees
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Common Defense
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
DAWN
Demand Progress
Detention Watch Network
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Peace Fellowship
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC
Engage Action
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Every Campus A Refuge
Faith In Texas
Families For Freedom
First Friends of New Jersey & New York
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Foreign Policy for America

Free Migration Project
Freedom Forward
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Hindus for Human Rights
Human Rights First
IfNotNow
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
J Street
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice
Jewish Voice for Peace Action
Just Foreign Policy
MADRE
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Middle East Democracy Center (MEDC)
Migrant Roots Media
Minnesota Peace Project
MoveOn
MPower Change Action Fund
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Justice League
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Partnership for New Americans
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Never Again Action
Nonviolent Peaceforce
Norwegian Refugee Council USA
Oasis Legal Services
Oil Change International
Oxfam America
Pax Christi USA
Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus
Peace Action
Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition
People's Action
Pittsburgh Area Pax Christi
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Project South
Reformed Church in America
Refugee Congress
Refugees International

ReThinking Foreign Policy
RootsAction.org
Society of the flora, fauna & friend
The American Task Force on Lebanon
The Episcopal Church
The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
The United Church of Christ
THRIVE Center for Survivors of Torture
Transformations CDC
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights Action (USCPR Action)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
Virginia Coalition for Human Rights
We Are All America (WAAA)
Welcoming America
Win Without War
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Witness at the Border
Women's Refugee Commission
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights