

PRESS RELEASE: For immediate release

70+ INGOs foresee deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the oPt

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AIDA, an INGO coordination body consisting of more than 70 international non-governmental organizations working in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), expresses alarm at the United States government's recent decision to politicize its assistance to millions of Palestinian refugees. Reducing funding to UNRWA, the UN agency whose primary mandate is to serve Palestinian refugees, will have a highly adverse humanitarian impact.

The impact is likely to be particularly grave in the Gaza Strip, where more than 70% of a total population of nearly 2 million are refugees, out of whom 80% depend on foreign aid to meet their daily living requirements. US funding cuts, on top of the last 10 years of Israeli blockade, will lead to increased food insecurity, aid dependency, poverty, isolation, unemployment and hopelessness, and will be a further blow to Gaza's already crippled economy.

International Humanitarian Law stipulates that, where humanitarian and development needs of protected persons living under military occupation are identified, the occupying power bears ultimate responsibility to provide for those needs. Where an occupying power is unable or otherwise fails to provide for their wellbeing, third states and parties may step in to support the unmet needs of the occupied population.

For the last 50 years, as Israel continues its military occupation of the Palestinian people in the oPt, third states have relieved Israel of its obligations under International Humanitarian Law, by covering the costs of humanitarian and development support for the Palestinian people.

Humanitarian assistance should be provided based on identified needs, and must not under any circumstances be used as a tool to impose political demands.

AIDA therefore calls on Israel, the United States, and other third states to ensure the continued orderly provision of humanitarian and development assistance to vulnerable Palestinians living under military occupation to avert humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, AIDA urges the United States and other third states to apply pressure on Israel to end its 50 year-long occupation of the oPt, including to lift its illegal blockade on Gaza, and to work towards a just and lasting resolution to the conflict, which will restore dignity, guarantee human rights and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

ENDS

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