



The UNRWA Funding Emergency Restoration Act

Introduced By: Senators Peter Welch (D-Vt.); Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.); Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.); Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.); Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii)

Background:

Founded after the 1948 War, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has long been recognized as an important source of stability in one of the world's most volatile regions. As the only organization currently capable of comprehensively addressing the humanitarian crisis and providing essential services in both Gaza and the West Bank, UNRWA plays an invaluable role in the humanitarian response to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

In early 2024 the Israeli government made a series of allegations against UNRWA, including that [approximately 19](#) of 13,000 UNRWA employees in Gaza may have participated in the October 7th, 2023, attacks on Israel. After the Israeli government relayed these allegations, UNRWA fired the employees in question. Further, UNRWA has undergone an independent review and developed a high-level action plan [to implement reform recommendations](#).

The United States Congress included language in the *FY24 Appropriations Act*, passed on March 23, 2024, which prohibits U.S. funding to UNRWA until March 25, 2025.

Following the completion of mitigation steps and by the conclusion of the United Nations review, every country that had paused funding to UNRWA has since resumed funding, with the lone exception of the United States. With the Israeli legislature's recent passage of [legislation](#) to terminate UNRWA operations in East Jerusalem and prevent deconfliction necessary to operate in Gaza, Congress must urgently restore funding to UNRWA to ensure the Agency can continue its essential role in providing humanitarian assistance to starving civilians, medications for the injured, and shelter to the displaced.

Legislation:

The *UNRWA Funding Emergency Restoration Act* will end the congressionally and administratively mandated pause on funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This legislation:

- Repeals funding prohibitions on UNRWA included in the *FY24 Appropriations Bill* and the *Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2024*;
- Directs the Secretary of State to rescind the temporary pause in funding for UNRWA and resume funding to UNRWA under current authorities of the Department of State;
- Outlines Congressional support for appropriating critical funds to UNRWA for FY25;
- Requires the Secretary of State to report to Congress on a quarterly basis on the steps UNRWA is taking to implement recommendations from the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Independent Review Group to further ensure the neutrality of its workforce.

Endorsing Organizations: The *UNRWA Funding Emergency Restoration Act* is endorsed by 75 organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), and the UNRWA USA National Committee. [Read the full list of endorsers here.](#)