

February 8, 2024

BY E-MAIL

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
OTTAWA, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Re: Reverse decision to suspend UNRWA funding

On behalf of six Canadian labour unions representing over 2 million workers, we are writing to raise concern about the recent announcement by the Government of Canada to suspend funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the primary aid agency for Palestinian refugees in Gaza and throughout the region. In the interest of safety and security for millions of Palestinians, we request that you reverse this decision.

UNRWA is an irreplaceable aid organization relied upon by millions of Palestinians for over 7 decades. It is particularly cruel for large donor countries to deny this critical organization its funding at this time, considering the current catastrophic humanitarian crisis caused by ongoing bombardment by Israel. Interim measures announced for funding to other aid organizations are not a sufficient response and do not mitigate the devastating impact the suspension of funding will have on the work of UNRWA.

The organization acted quickly to investigate the serious allegations that a small number of staff may have been involved in the October 7th attack. Given that the allegation implicates 12 individuals out of the 30,000 workers it employs, it appears this is a highly disproportionate action.

Humanitarian organizations have warned that the suspension of UNRWA funding will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, given UNRWA's critical role in the region. A [joint statement](#) signed by 20 international NGOs stated, "We are shocked by the reckless decision to cut a lifeline for an entire population by some of the very countries that had called for aid in Gaza to be stepped up and for humanitarians to be protected while doing their job." More than 150 UNRWA workers have been killed by Israel's assault on Gaza.

We also want to draw your attention to the broader implications of your actions. Doctors Without Borders [warned](#), "The consequences these cuts in funding will have on the ground contradict the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on Friday (26th January), which include immediate measures to ensure sufficient humanitarian aid flows into Gaza."

It is projected that UNRWA will run out of funding at the end of February. We urge you to work alongside fellow donor countries to remedy this situation before that time. We again call on the Government of Canada to reverse the suspension of funding to UNRWA until the UN completes its investigation, which will ensure that the urgently needed, lifesaving aid can continue to reach Palestinians.

Sincerely,



Jan Simpson, National President
Canadian Union of Postal Workers



Lana Payne, National President
Unifor



Mark Hancock, National President
Canadian Union of Public Employees



Marty Warren, Canadian National Director
United Steelworkers



Chris Aylward, National President
Public Service Alliance of Canada



Bert Blundon, President
National Union of Public and General Employees

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cc:

The Honourable M. Joly, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Honourable A. Hussen, MP, Minister of International Development

J.Singh, MP, NDP Leader

H. McPherson, MP, NDP Foreign Affairs Critic

B.Rae, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations in New York