



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-fourth session

Item 51 of the provisional agenda\*

### United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

## Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/95](#). On 6 May 2019, the Secretary-General sent notes verbales to all Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of resolutions [73/92](#), [73/93](#), [73/94](#) and [73/95](#), and requesting that they submit information by 5 July 2019 concerning any action that they had taken or envisaged in relation to the implementation of those resolutions. In response to the requests contained in paragraph 4 of resolution [73/92](#), paragraph 4 of resolution [73/93](#), paragraphs 41 and 42 of resolution [73/94](#) and paragraph 4 of resolution [73/95](#), the Assembly received information from Australia, Belgium, Iraq, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Turkey and the State of Palestine. The full texts of the replies are reproduced in the present report.

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\* [A/74/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution [73/95](#) on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues.
2. On 6 May 2019, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States, as well as to the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of resolutions [73/92](#), [73/93](#), [73/94](#) and [73/95](#) and requesting them to send information to him by 5 July 2019 on any action that they had taken or envisaged in relation to the implementation of those resolutions.

## II. Replies received from Member States

### Australia

[Original: English]  
[11 June 2019]

Australia has been a long-standing supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), providing funding every year since 1951. The Government's current multi-year funding agreement (2016–2020) with UNRWA for \$A 80 million is a practical and genuine demonstration of our assistance to Palestinian refugees.

Recognizing the dire financial situation of UNRWA, in March 2018 the Australian Government brought forward \$A 5 million in funding originally scheduled for payment in 2018/19. This contribution came in addition to the \$A 20 million annual commitment to UNRWA in 2017/18. Australia also made a supplementary payment of \$A 1.5 million in June 2018 to support the UNRWA emergency appeal to the Palestinian Territories.

In 2018/19, Australia provided \$A 43 million in aid to the Palestinian people. The programme was focused on offering basic services for Palestinian refugees through UNRWA, as well as activities to support sustainable economic growth and meet the humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians.

### Belgium

[Original: French]  
[22 July 2019]

Belgium is committed to maintaining its financial, moral, political and institutional support for UNRWA in its key role as service provider and in the protection of Palestinian refugees.

In the absence of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Belgium recognizes that UNRWA remains vital for the refugees. Support for UNRWA is essential for several reasons:

- First, its humanitarian role in supporting more than 5 million Palestinian refugees, including in the context of the war in Syria. UNRWA is therefore an essential factor for regional stability;
- Second, its major role in education, health, relief and social services, which allows the refugees not only to survive but also to project themselves into the future and to make extremist and violent speech less attractive to them. Belgium also continues to rely on UNRWA for the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services.

Belgium acknowledges that UNRWA has been able to reduce its financial deficit through its reforms. In that regard, Belgium supports the position adopted by the European Union in the recent consultations on UNRWA funding, stressing the following main points:

- The need to boost voluntary contributions, increase the number of donors and seek innovative funding in order to enable the Agency to work under acceptable conditions and to better meet the needs of the Palestinian refugees;
- The need to improve the Agency's efficiency and to focus on its core mandate;
- The need to seek synergies with other actors and United Nations organizations that could take over activities that are not part of its core missions.

In early 2018, in order to support the Agency's mandate, Belgium renewed its three-year funding for the programme budget with an amount of €18.75 million. The second tranche (2019) was disbursed quickly to help the Agency address its liquidity problem.

In 2019, Belgium will also renew its support for the "Education in emergencies" programme with an amount of €4,350,000. One million euros in funding will also be provided for Palestinian refugees from Syria.

## **Iraq**

[Original: Arabic]  
[18 June 2019]

Iraq is committed to the international position in support of the Palestinian people and its legitimate aspiration for the establishment of the State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

Iraq is keenly aware of how Palestine refugees have suffered for over six decades after losing their land, homes and livelihood.

Iraq commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its continued action and its vital role in alleviating the hardship of Palestine refugees. Its work comes at a time when the Middle East is mired in conflict and instability and UNRWA is facing a difficult financial situation caused by a structural funding gap and growing needs and costs.

Iraq urges the international community to increase its donations in order to bridge the acute gap in the Agency's budget and ensure that UNRWA can continue to provide services to Palestine refugees.

## **Israel**

[Original: English]  
[31 July 2019]

Israel has decided to vote against these resolutions in the light of their politicization and one-sidedness, as it has done with similar resolutions in the past.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu stated on 7 January 2018: "UNRWA is an organization that perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem. It also perpetuates the narrative to the right of return, as it were, in order to eliminate the State of Israel; therefore, UNRWA needs to pass from the world. This is an agency that was established 70 years ago, only for the Palestinian refugees, at a time when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) deals with global refugee problems. Of course, this creates a situation in which there are great-

grandchildren of refugees, who are not refugees but who are cared for by UNRWA, and another 70 years will pass and those great-grandchildren will have great-grandchildren and therefore, this absurdity needs to stop.”

Furthermore, the Prime Minister presented the way forward: “UNRWA support funds need to be gradually shifted to the UNHCR, with clear criteria for supporting genuine refugees, not fictitious refugees as happens today under UNRWA. I have brought this position to the attention of the United States. This is how to rid the world of UNRWA and deal with genuine refugee problems, to the extent that such remain.”

While UNHCR works to resolve problems by means of repatriation, local integration or resettlement, UNRWA offers no solutions that would alleviate the situation for the Palestinians other than perpetuating their plight. The Agency’s adoption of the Palestinian “refugee” narrative amounts to support for only one solution – the repatriation of 5 million Palestinians to Israeli territory. This “solution” would mean the end of the one and only Jewish State, contradicting General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Israel’s right to self-determination, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It should be emphasized that it was the Palestinian and Arab rejection of that resolution that led them to wage a war against the Jews at the end of the British Mandate, the same 1948 war that caused the refugee problem in the first place. Had the Palestinians accepted the right of the Jews to self-determination, not a single Palestinian would have become a refugee.

UNRWA sets itself apart from the neutral and purely humanitarian standards appropriate for United Nations bodies and politicizes the plight of its beneficiaries, leveraging its important humanitarian services to fortify the maximalist Palestinian positions with regard to the conflict.

Moreover, the Agency’s one-sided, biased advocacy activity on behalf of the Palestinian political campaign against Israel and its persistent and cynical use of humanitarian funding for that purpose represents, in addition, a politically motivated departure from its primary role as a relief and works agency. By devising its own expanded definitions as to who is a refugee and expanding its legal mandate to protect and advocate for the refugees, UNRWA only justifies the claim that it is part of the problem and not the solution.

Furthermore, UNRWA capitalizes on the plight of the people whom it serves by inflating the numbers of so-called refugees, rendering the problem harder and harder to solve as time passes. According to the definition of the term “refugee” stipulated in the “Refugee Convention”, most UNRWA refugees would not have been recognized as such, since one criterion is that the person be “outside the country of his nationality”. However, many so-called “Palestinian refugees” have never left the territory of Mandatory Palestine, and thus they cannot qualify as refugees, but rather as internally displaced persons.

The false narrative of “return” that UNRWA helps to foster explains, in part, why the authorities in Gaza prefer to use their limited resources to build tunnels rather than schools and hospitals – they do not consider Gaza to be their true home. It also explains why young people would risk their lives in violent attempts to cut and cross the fence with Israel during the so-called “March of Return”.

More than 2 million UNRWA “refugees” already settled or have citizenship in other countries, where they live safely. According to international law, they would not qualify for refugee status. Moreover, only at UNRWA is the status of refugee inherited automatically. Although inheritance also happens at UNHCR, it is done on a case-by-case basis. At UNRWA, the status is automatically inherited, even in those cases that do not meet international standards for refugee status. As a result, refugee status now applies to the fourth generation of Palestinians, dramatically increasing the number

of registered refugees from an UNRWA estimation of 700,000 back in 1949 to more than 5,000,000. It is both possible and reasonable that UNRWA could offer its services to the next generations without providing them with refugee status. This, however, has not happened, as it would harm the Agency's political agenda. It should be mentioned that the exponential growth in the number of "fake" refugees is one of the main reasons for the organization's ongoing financial crisis. The conclusion drawn should be only one: the Agency's current model is unsustainable.

The Agency's mandate was limited to directing relief programmes in collaboration with local governments in order "to provide relief, humanitarian, human development and protection services" to "those who are entitled to be registered in its Registration System and/or to receive the Agency's services", and UNRWA is not mandated to recognize refugees, nor to grant refugee status under international law. The claim that UNRWA determines whether a Palestinian is a refugee conflates granting refugee status with qualifying for the eligibility for UNRWA assistance programmes. While UNRWA may develop its own criteria to determine who qualifies for its assistance programmes, that qualification does not grant refugee status under international law.

UNRWA officials operate far beyond the boundaries of their mandate and have a continuous tendency to echo the Palestinian narrative while distorting facts and disregarding Israel. For instance, the Agency's public statements and tweets exempting Hamas from its involvement in the violent confrontations along the security fence between Gaza and Israel during the past year and a half, or ignoring the responsibility of Hamas for the detrimental humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. This is yet another testimony to the biased anti-Israel agenda promoted by the organization.

Israel expects UNRWA and its employees to keep to the highest values of the United Nations, which they are meant to represent, such as neutrality and impartiality, which UNRWA staff fail to uphold time and time again. Furthermore, in the light of recent reports, Israel calls for a thorough and transparent investigation of UNRWA over alleged misconduct and to promote rigorous standards of integrity and accountability.

## Japan

[Original: English]  
[2 July 2019]

The Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General and, with reference to his note verbale dated 6 May 2019, has the honour to inform him of the following actions taken by the Government of Japan to implement the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution [73/95](#) with regard to UNRWA.

### Financial contributions

<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Disbursement date</i>
Emergency grant aid	7 000 000	18 March
Supplementary budget	22 999 997	25 March
Core contribution	1 810 141	22 April

**Contribution to expand/diversify the donor base**

Japan initiated the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian Development, which is a regional initiative to discuss assistance to Palestine by utilizing the resources and experiences of economic development of East Asian countries.

The Senior Officials' Meeting will be held in July in Palestine. At that meeting, an individual session dedicated to UNRWA is scheduled in order for UNRWA to reach out to Asian countries and further expand/diversify its donor base.

**New Zealand**

[Original: English]  
[13 May 2019]

The Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to refer to his letter dated 6 May 2019 concerning his reporting responsibility under paragraph 6 of resolution [73/95](#).

The Permanent Mission of New Zealand is pleased to inform the Secretary-General that New Zealand will provide three core contributions of \$NZ 1 million to UNRWA for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

**Poland**

[Original: English]  
[3 July 2019]

Poland, for years, has actively and regularly supported UNWRA and will maintain its support for Palestinian refugees through annual contributions to the Agency. Also, in 2019, Poland committed a contribution of Zł 2 million (approximately US\$ 530,000) to the UNRWA general budget (the payment is currently being processed).

We express high appreciation for the work of the Agency, which has been providing consistent support to Palestinian refugees and delivering them a measure of dignity, stability and self-reliance for more than 60 years now.

**Turkey**

[Original: English]  
[5 July 2019]

UNRWA is a vital actor for the continued well-being of approximately 5.4 million Palestine refugees. It is a significant symbol of the international community's solidarity with Palestine refugees. The Agency's operations and services are also essential for the national security and welfare of the host countries, making it an important factor for stability in the volatile region.

Turkey was one of the founding members of the Advisory Commission in 1949 and has strived over the years to become a strategic partner for UNRWA and the Palestinian refugees. Since the beginning, Turkey has strongly supported the Agency and its activities in the fields of education, health care and social services.

Turkey assumed the chairmanship of the UNRWA Advisory Commission from July 2018 to July 2019, adding a new dimension to its relations with the Agency. As Advisory Commission Chair, Turkey's ultimate objective was the continuation of

staunch advocacy for UNRWA. Another priority was establishing the Waqf Fund under the umbrella of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and, as a much welcomed result of those efforts, the Statute of the Waqf Fund was adopted during the forty-sixth Foreign Ministers Meeting of OIC, held on 1 and 2 March 2019. It is hoped that the Waqf Fund will be a useful tool in providing sustainable funding for the Agency's operations. Turkey, for its part, is planning to contribute US\$ 1 million to the Fund.

The Agency's financial sustainability has always been a major focus area for Turkey as the Chair of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. Given the extraordinary financial difficulties that UNRWA has recently been facing, Turkey has continued to make every effort to further mobilize the international community for its continued contributions to the Agency. The recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his 2017 report are pertinent as long-term objectives in search for a durable solution to the Agency's financial crisis.

During the reporting period, while striving to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General, Turkey also sought to widen the Agency's donor base. One concrete outcome on that front has been the allocation of US\$ 1 million by Afghanistan in support of UNRWA. Turkey, for its part, has pledged to contribute US\$ 10 million to UNRWA for the year 2019 and, at the time of writing, work was under way to determine Turkey's in-kind contribution.

As from the second half of the year, the extension of the Agency's mandate without any modifications will be an issue of the utmost importance. Turkey stands ready to work with all partners to that end.

## State of Palestine

[Original: English]

[8 July 2019]

The question of the Palestine refugees and displaced persons remains among the highest national priorities for the State of Palestine. It constitutes one of the core, final status issues that must be justly resolved in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions in order to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine in its all aspects.

For more than seven decades, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued to deny and obstruct the realization of the rights of Palestine refugees, foremost their right to return to live in peace in their homes and to just compensation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948. The seventy-first anniversary of the Nakba of the Palestinian people was solemnly observed in 2019 at a time when the refugee community was facing great fears owing to cynical attempts to negate their status and rights and heightened vulnerability and instability owing to the crises wracking the region and the Agency's financial fragility.

The protraction of that injustice has forced the Palestine refugees, more than 5.4 million of whom are registered with UNRWA, to continue to endure exile, dispossession, hardships and marginalization. They continue to suffer recurrent violence, repeated displacement and deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as well as the impact of the devastating conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic with its serious impact on Jordan and Lebanon and the Palestine refugee communities in those host countries.

The absence of a just solution to their plight and attempts to undermine the Agency's mandate have made the annual adoption of General Assembly resolutions

under the agenda item on UNRWA – which include resolution 73/92 on assistance to Palestine refugees, resolution 73/93 on persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities, resolution 73/94 on operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and resolution 73/95 on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues – even more necessary and indispensable. It remains imperative that the Assembly reaffirm the fundamental rights and principles pertaining to the Palestine refugee question, as well as authorize the provision of humanitarian assistance and emergency relief support to the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, with a renewal of the Agency's mandate in order to ensure their well-being, protection and human development, pending a just solution to their plight on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Against a backdrop of regional tensions and instabilities and rising humanitarian needs, it is imperative that the international community continue to advocate for the rights of the Palestine refugees, to support the Agency's mandate and its uninterrupted provision of assistance in all fields of operation, and to ensure a dignified life for them and their families. UNRWA assistance is crucial for their protection and social resilience, and essential for the stability of the refugee communities and their host countries, which is equally essential for preserving the prospects for peace and fostering its realization.

Since the commencement of its operations in 1950, the Agency has played an indispensable role, providing education, health, relief and social services, and life-saving emergency assistance to the Palestine refugees, alleviating their suffering and reinforcing their resilience. The Agency's stabilizing role in the region is also widely recognized by the international community. It is vital that these essential roles be supported and sustained during the current critical period and until the achievement of a just solution to the Palestine refugee question, which remains central to the achievement of a just solution to the Palestine question as a whole and lasting Palestinian-Israeli peace.

Along with its humanitarian and emergency assistance, the Agency has contributed significantly to the refugees' human development, ensuring their ability to be productive members of their communities, society and host countries. Key services have included vocational training, sports and recreation, microfinance and microenterprise capacity-building, particularly for youth and women, promoting economic development and self-reliance and mainstreaming gender equality, and psychosocial support and counselling.

In that regard, the State of Palestine hopes that the Agency will be enabled to continue its mental health programme in the Gaza Strip. The programme has been critical for assisting the many whose coping capacities have been depleted by the inhumanity of Israel's 12-year blockade on Gaza, which has compounded the occupation's impact, inflicting ever deteriorating humanitarian conditions, recurrent violence, severe economic hardship and isolation on the population, which have caused broad psychosocial consequences requiring urgent mitigation.

Addressing the Agency's recurrent funding crisis remains, therefore, a matter of urgency. Immediate funding is needed to remedy the immense shortfall and more sufficiently, sustainably and predictably support the Agency's mandate to ensure the continuity of its education, health, relief and emergency programmes. Any interruption or suspension of assistance would have a disruptive and far-reaching impact, undermining both the situation of Palestine refugees and the stability of their host countries, and must be averted. In that regard, the State of Palestine is very grateful to all States, organizations and institutions that have extended generous

support to the Agency, both financially and politically, as recently reflected at the annual pledging conference held on 25 June in New York. Delegations unanimously commended the efficacy of the Agency's humanitarian programmes, its role in preserving the rights and dignity of Palestine refugees, and the commitment and efforts of its staff to the human development of the Palestine refugees, most notably in the field of education, offering opportunity and hope to more than a half-million children currently enrolled in UNRWA schools.

It is also important to note that, despite the immense, sudden shortfall of voluntary contributions during 2018, UNRWA was able to remedy its shortfall and continue operations without interruption. This is a testament to the international community's strong support for the Agency's mandate and to what can be realized when collective responsibility is upheld and fulfilled. It is also a testament to the Agency's strong management and the impact of its cost-efficiency measures.

Today's realities make the Agency's hybrid humanitarian and development mission even more necessary, making it essential for the international community to provide the Agency with the needed political and financial support to ensure continuity of operations across all fields of operations, in line with all relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolutions [73/92](#), [73/93](#), [73/94](#) and [73/95](#).

In that regard, the Palestinian Government is deeply concerned by statements made throughout 2018 and 2019 by Israeli officials threatening the Agency's presence and operations in Occupied East Jerusalem and calls on the international community to take action to protect the Agency's mandate and operations, in respect of the relevant resolutions, including with regard to the immunity and protections that must be accorded to the United Nations.

The Palestinian Government remains committed to providing every necessary facilitation and support for UNRWA in the implementation of its mandate, as per General Assembly resolution [302 \(IV\)](#) and all subsequent resolutions. The Government is keen to continue its regular consultations with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA with a view to addressing the operational concerns and challenges facing both the Palestine refugee community and the Agency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to ensure proper coordination with the directors of operations in the West Bank and Gaza.

Also, the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations stands ready to continue its constant cooperation with the UNRWA Representative Office in New York on all of these important matters, to advocate for the necessary legislation in the General Assembly to address the needs and challenges faced by the Agency in the implementation of its mandate, and to ensure the necessary support, including through outreach, to redress its unprecedented financial crisis.

In addition, the Palestine Liberation Organization Department of Refugee Affairs continues to work with all relevant stakeholders, including donors, host countries, and members and observers of the Advisory Commission, towards maintaining strong international and regional support for the rights of the Palestine refugees and for the Agency's mandate and operations. It is responsible for coordination with the host countries to ensure unity of positions on the Palestine refugee question and to support the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions within the framework of the League of Arab States and OIC.

In that connection, the State of Palestine persists in its appeals for support to UNRWA at the United Nations, whether at the General Assembly or the Security Council, as well as within different international platforms and forums, including within the framework of the Arab Group, the Group of 77 and China, OIC, and the Non-Aligned Movement, stressing the importance of such multilateral support.

Palestine has also actively engaged in successive international and regional meetings mobilizing support for UNRWA, including, most recently, at the OIC Summit in Mecca in May 2019, the Arab League Summit in Tunisia in March 2019, and European Union-League of Arab States Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in February 2019.

Furthermore, the State of Palestine continues to expend efforts with the partners concerned to follow up on the report of the Secretary-General on the operations of UNRWA (A/71/849) and the recommendations made to secure more sufficient, sustainable and predictable funding for the Agency, as called for by the General Assembly. Palestine has cooperated with UNRWA and all Member States concerned to advocate for and mobilize efforts on actionable recommendations.

In that regard, Palestine has actively engaged with OIC and its member States, including during the forty-sixth session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Abu Dhabi in March 2019, towards the adoption of a decision to establish a Waqf development fund to support Palestine refugees, with UNRWA as the implementing partner. We welcome the important decision made in that regard and look forward to its implementation by the Islamic Development Bank and urge OIC countries to give their generous support.

The State of Palestine will continue all its efforts to help UNRWA to remedy its funding shortfall and implement its mandate. However, it is important to reiterate that the only sustainable solution for the Palestine refugee question is a political one, by which rights of the Palestine refugees can be ensured in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Until the achievement of such a just solution, the plight of the Palestine refugees will tragically continue to demand international attention and compassion. Thus, the General Assembly's annual resolutions under its agenda item on UNRWA remain relevant and must once again be considered and strongly supported during the seventy-fourth session of the Assembly. Their implementation must be actively pursued as a contribution to the well-being, development and protection of the Palestine refugees, as a contribution to regional stability, and as a contribution to the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in relation to the question of Palestine, which is vital for peace in the Middle East according to the long-standing international consensus.