

US-Israel Implement Plan to Cut Food, Water and Medicine to Gaza

By [Mike Whitney](#)

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"In a normal world, it is Israel that should be punished for killing so many members of a humanitarian organization. (150 UNRWA staffers killed so far) But nope, it's the humanitarian organization that's getting punished, alongside the very vulnerable population it's committed to helping." —Arnaud Bertrand

Israeli leaders have settled on a plan that will increase the number of Palestinian deaths while diverting attention from the ICJ's claims of genocide.

On Friday, western news agencies reported that the UN's humanitarian agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency or UNRWA, may have employed militants who were involved in the October 7 attacks on Israel. The claims—which remain sketchy and unverified—were made on the same day that the International Court of Justice delivered its historic genocide ruling against the Jewish state. While it is possible that Israeli investigators uncovered new intelligence on Hamas' attack, it's more likely that the announcement was perfectly-timed to divert attention from the ICJ's ruling.

Not surprisingly, the United States and its allies—including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Finland and the Netherlands—have all accepted Israel's dubious allegations and announced that they will temporarily suspend funding for the UN agency. The speed at which these countries joined Israel in condemning the UNRWA, strongly suggests that they were tipped-off (and told what to do) prior to the announcement. All of this suggests that Israel is trying to minimize the reputational damage from the genocide indictment by creating a smokescreen that will leave the public confused and unable to assign blame. According to the *Times of Israel*:

A senior Israeli official told the Axios news site that the Shin Bet and the IDF provided

information that pointed to the active participation of UNRWA staffers along with the use of the agency's vehicles and facilities in the October 7 terror onslaught.

“This was strong and corroborated intelligence,” the official told Axios. “A lot of the intelligence is a result of interrogations of militants who were arrested during the October 7 attack.” [UNRWA sacks staffers who allegedly participated in Oct. 7 attack; US halts funding](#), *Times of Israel*

Whenever the media bases its coverage on information from an unidentified intelligence source, you must assume they ‘have nothing’, which supports our basic belief that the Hamas fable is largely a diversion. Surprisingly, an article at *CNN* helps to reinforce our thesis. Take a look:

Details remain scant. Neither Israel nor UNRWA have specified the nature of the alleged involvement of UNRWA employees in the events of October 7.

An Israeli official told CNN on Friday that Israel shared **information about 12 staffers allegedly involved in the October 7 attacks** both with UNRWA and the US...

In addition to the staffers' alleged October 7 involvement, **the Israel Defense Forces on Saturday also alleged that UNRWA facilities were used for “terrorist purposes”**, in a statement to CNN on Saturday.

Asked about the claim about UNRWA facilities, the agency told CNN, **“We don’t have more information on this at this stage.”** ([CNN](#))

Okay, let's review:

1. “Details remain scant.” (They have nothing.)
2. “Neither Israel nor UNRWA have specified the nature of the alleged involvement of UNRWA employees in the events of October 7.” (They have nothing.)
3. An Israeli official ... shared information about 12 staffers allegedly involved in the October 7 attacks both with UNRWA and the US.” (“allegedly”. They have nothing.)
4. The IDF “also alleged that UNRWA facilities were used for “terrorist purposes”. (“alleged”. Again, no evidence.)
5. “The agency told CNN, “We don’t have more information on this at this stage.” (Finally, an clear admission that they have nothing.)

None of Israel's claims have been corroborated, verified or proven. It's all speculative pronouncements packaged as credible intelligence. (It's embarrassing that they even publish this nonsense.)

All the same, Israel's closest allies have cut funding and are now doing their level-best to prevent the relief agency from operating in Gaza. **This is a very serious situation that could have dire consequences for Palestinians who currently have no access to food, medicine or clean water. As unbelievable as it sounds, Israel appears to be implementing a strategy aimed at deliberately starving millions of civilians to death.** If someone has a better explanation for Israel's behavior, I would be very interested in hearing it. This is from an editorial at the *Global Times*:

Since the start of this conflict, **1.7 million people have sought refuge or received services in over 150 UNRWA shelters and distribution sites. Food, water, education, and healthcare in Gaza largely depend on UNRWA. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is the last lifeline for 2.2 million people.** The funding of this agency is almost entirely provided by donors, and it has been in a financially tight or even crisis state for many years. The countries that have currently announced the suspension of funding are important donor countries, with their donations accounting for a significant proportion of the organization's funds. ...

Israel has previously stated that **the Israeli government will implement a policy to prevent UNRWA from operating in the Gaza Strip** after the current round of Israel-Palestine conflict ends. Considering UNRWA's pivotal position in local organizations within the UN, this will restrain the UN's role in Gaza and the Middle East, and deal a major blow to the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip....

there is currently no alternative to UNRWA, and it remains the only hope for Palestinian refugees. The international community has broad consensus that "collective punishment" against the Gaza population for condemning and combating terrorism is unacceptable and **humanitarian needs should be guaranteed...**

In the slow progress of the "two-state solution," **UNRWA has played an indispensable role in providing much-needed assistance to Palestinian refugees.** It is a shared responsibility of all parties to continue supporting and maintaining the authority and status of the UN. [*Global Times*](#)

The article underscores what we said earlier, that currently there is no substitute for the UNRWA. If they are prevented from assisting Gaza's nearly 2 million internal refugees, they will starve; it's that simple. So, as you can see, Israel's attack on the agency is not merely designed to obfuscate the genocide ruling, but to increase the probability of mass starvation. This type of barbarous behavior, is hard to process.

Check out this excerpt from the official statement from Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner General:

"Nine countries have as of today temporarily suspended their funding to UNRWA. These decisions threaten our ongoing humanitarian work across the region including and especially in the Gaza Strip.

"It is shocking to see a suspension of funds to the Agency in reaction to allegations against a small group of staff, especially given the immediate action that UNRWA took by terminating their contracts and asking for a transparent independent investigation....

"UNRWA is the primary humanitarian agency in Gaza, with over 2 million people depending on it for their sheer survival. Many are hungry as the clock is ticking towards a looming famine. The Agency runs shelters for over 1 million people and provides food and primary healthcare even at the height of the hostilities.

"In its ruling yesterday, the International Court of Justice ordered that "Israel must take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip". These

measures are aimed at preventing irreparable damage to the rights of Palestinians.

“It would be immensely irresponsible to sanction an Agency and an entire community it serves because of allegations of criminal acts against some individuals, especially at a time of war, displacement and political crises in the region...

“I urge countries who have suspended their funding to re-consider their decisions before UNRWA is forced to suspend its humanitarian response. The lives of people in Gaza depend on this support and so does regional stability”. [UNRWA's lifesaving aid may end due to funding suspension](#), *unrwa.org*

Is it fair to describe Israel's effort to block basic humanitarian aid to the Palestinians as “diabolical” or is too critical?

The best summary of this issue was written by Arnaud Bertrand and posted on his Twitter account on Sunday. I hope you will take the time and read it:

Whatever your position is, just take a moment to **reflect on just how dark this is.**

Just hours after the ICJ concluded that Israel was plausibly committing genocide and ordered it to dramatically step up humanitarian efforts, 7 Western countries sanctioned... not Israel but the Palestinians and the UN (!!!).

They cut funding for UNRWA, which is THE UN agency tasked with humanitarian assistance to Palestinians (and therefore their main lifeline).

Even if you were the world's worst cynic, you'd still have a hard time expecting such sheer level of cruelty and depravation. This is absolutely unfathomable.

They did so with the cheapest possible excuse, effectively using Israel's narrative that “UNWRA is Hamas” and allegations by Israel that some UNWRA staff were involved in the 7th Oct attack but 1) Israel has been making these accusations for months (so the timing of cutting funding right after the ICJ ruling is obviously not a coincidence) and 2) UNWRA has announced it's terminated the contracts of the staff members accused (12 people out of its 30,000 strong workforce) and launched an investigation, so it obviously doesn't condone this. **Even if the allegations were to be proven correct, how can an organization of 30,000 staff be held collectively accountable for the individual actions of 0.04% of its workforce?** Especially in the current context when its work is a life or death matter for millions of people.

To add to the cynicism here, **UNWRA staff are actually a major victim of the war with at least 152 UNRWA staffers killed by Israel in Gaza to date.** In a normal world, it is Israel that should be punished for killing so many members of a humanitarian organization. But nope, it's the humanitarian organization that's getting punished, alongside with the very vulnerable population it's committed to helping.”

—[Arnaud Bertrand](#)

That says it all.

Whatever your position is, just take a moment to reflect on just how dark this is.

Just hours after the ICJ concluded that Israel was plausibly committing genocide and ordered it to dramatically step up humanitarian efforts, 7 Western countries sanctioned... not Israel but the... <https://t.co/6DYT3v7EK1>

— Arnaud Bertrand (@RnaudBertrand) [January 28, 2024](#)

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