



ICVA Statement

UNRWA's Mandate Must Be Respected

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), on behalf of our member organisations operating across Gaza, the West Bank, and other areas in the Middle East, expresses profound concern regarding the Knesset's recent passage of two legislative bills that effectively terminate UNRWA's (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) ability to operate within Israel, and severely restrict its activities within Gaza and the West Bank.

UNRWA is an indispensable partner to humanitarian NGOs working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt). As the primary provider of health, education, and essential services to Palestine refugees, UNRWA fills a critical gap that NGOs alone cannot cover. Our member organisations rely on UNRWA's support, data, infrastructure, and coordinated response mechanisms to effectively deliver aid to the most vulnerable. The loss of UNRWA's operational capacity would therefore not only harm refugees directly but would also cripple the broader humanitarian network serving the region.

The implementation of this legislation would strip countless individuals of vital services and intensify the humanitarian crisis, forcing NGOs to face unprecedented challenges in meeting urgent needs. For decades, UNRWA has provided a unique continuity of care, and without it, NGOs would face considerable obstacles, including a lack of secure access, resources, and coordinated frameworks that currently facilitate effective operations.

ICVA stands in solidarity with the UN Secretary-General and other international leaders in urging the Israeli government to uphold its obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, including the protection of UN agencies' mandates, privileges, and immunities. National legislation cannot replace, change, or breach obligations under the UN Charter and International Humanitarian Law.

Our call is clear: UNRWA's mandate must be respected, and it must be allowed to continue its work without interruption. As the region's humanitarian conditions worsen, UNRWA's presence and partnership are more vital than ever. Disrupting its operations undermines not only humanitarian goals but also the prospects for a just and sustainable peace in the region.

ICVA reaffirms its commitment to supporting our members and will continue to advocate for a stable environment in which NGOs and UNRWA can collaborate to meet urgent needs effectively and uphold human dignity.