

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the Special Rapporteur on the right to development; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; the Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967; the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

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19 February 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Special Rapporteur on the right to development; Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967; Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

of children; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 49/10, 55/5, 55/21, 51/7, 53/14, 54/14, 53/7, 53/4, 49/13, 52/9, 50/17, 52/10, 52/4, 50/6, 57/7, 53/5, 51/13, 52/5, 1993/2A, 54/9, 52/36, 52/26, 51/15, 50/7, 51/19 and 50/18.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the **Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities, 5784-2024 and the Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities in the Territory of the State of Israel, 5784-2024, both adopted on 28 October 2024 ("the Laws")**. We are concerned that certain provisions in these laws may fail to meet Israel's obligations under international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international refugee law, and public international law.

The Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities, 5784-2024 terminates the invitation to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) based on a 1967 exchange of letters between Israel and UNRWA,¹ effective on 7 October 2024 (section 1) and prohibits Israeli State authorities from maintaining any contact with UNRWA and its representatives (section 2).

Under the 1967 exchange of letters, Israel agreed to ensuring the protection and security of UNRWA personnel, installations and property; permit the free movement of UNRWA's international staff and trucks into, within and out of Israel and the Palestinian areas; permit the free movement of local staff within the Palestinian areas; provide certain communications, transport and logistics; maintain exemptions from custom duties and taxes; and cover certain expenses.

The Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities in the Territory of the State of Israel, 5784-2024 proclaims its purpose to "prevent any activity of UNRWA within the territory of the State of Israel" (section 1) and prohibits UNRWA to "operate any representation, provide any services, or conduct any activities, directly or indirectly, within the sovereign territory of the State of Israel" (section 2).

Since Israel claims sovereignty over East Jerusalem, under Israel's legal system, this Law applies to UNRWA there, including its headquarters (which helps to coordinate UNRWA operations also in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, where the Laws does not apply). Under international law, Israel's purported sovereign annexation of East Jerusalem is illegal and void and has been rejected by the International Court of Justice on multiple occasions, in many resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council, and by most States.

Likely effects of the Laws

The Laws took effect on 30 January 2025. They are expected to impede the operation of UNRWA throughout Palestine. requiring UNRWA to cease its activities in Israel (including illegally annexed East Jerusalem). The purported removal of the

¹ Exchange of letters constituting a provisional agreement concerning assistance to Palestine Refugees, 14 June 1967.

inviolability of UNRWA premises, including its headquarters in East Jerusalem, could lead to the physical eviction of UNRWA. By prohibiting the Israeli authorities to deal with UNRWA, for instance to issue visas and entry permits for UNRWA personnel and permits for vehicles, and the movement of goods The right to work of 17,000 of UNRWA's 32,000 personnel will likely be affected. The "no contact" "requirement will also prevent coordination by the Israeli military with UNRWA on the conduct of military operations, including warnings and evacuations, potentially endangering its humanitarian operations, personnel, and civilian beneficiaries".

The Laws will effectively prevent UNRWA from providing goods and services to civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory and aggravate the humanitarian crisis resulting from the Israeli response to the 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel by Palestinian armed groups² and the protracted blockade of Gaza since 2007. Many UNRWA premises have been damaged or destroyed and over 200 UNRWA personnel have been killed by Israel military attacks.³ As noted by the United Nations Secretary-General in his letter to the General Assembly and Security Council of 10 December 2024 (A/79/684-S/2024/892), UNRWA has also been "the backbone" of the United Nations humanitarian relief response in Gaza for the population of 2.3 million people during the crisis since 7 October 2023, including food assistance to 1.9 million people, primary healthcare for 60 per cent of the population and shelter for hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.⁴ It has also provided psychosocial support to address war-related traumas. The majority of those that it assists are women and children. In the first three days after the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas starting on 19 January 2025, UNRWA delivered food for one million people in Gaza. UNRWA has also been instrumental in facilitating the humanitarian response of actors outside the United Nations.

Before the disruptive violence following 7 October 2023, across the occupied Palestinian territory, UNRWA educated 350,000 children in almost 400 schools,⁵ provided 5 million annual health consultations, and provided vital poverty relief and social services, including a social safety net, emergency assistance and food vouchers benefiting over 1.2 million people (A/79/684-S/2024/892). UNRWA facilitates more than 67,000 prenatal visits per year. In Gaza, UNRWA has been the main provider of these basic and essential services such as shelter, water and sanitation. Other UNRWA activities include infrastructure, microfinance, development projects, community rehabilitation, vocational training, awareness campaigns, and support, services, and inclusion of groups in particularly vulnerable situations such as orphans, persons with disabilities, and older persons. It is estimated that 90 percent of persons with disabilities in Gaza lost their assistive devices due to the conflict and multiple displacements since October 2023.

² Military attacks in Gaza since October 2023 have killed over 47,000 people and injured over 111,000 (leaving many with life-long impairments), displaced 1.9 million people, and damaged or destroyed the majority of housing, schools and public infrastructure. About 1.84 million people in Gaza experience acute food insecurity (classified in IPC Phase 3 or above – "crisis or worse") in late 2024, with 133,000 people facing catastrophic food insecurity (IPC Phase 5). In November 2024 the IPC's Famine Review Committee issued an about an imminent and substantial likelihood of famine occurring due to the rapidly deteriorating situation, to draw attention to the need to take urgent.

³ See press release on [8 July 2024](#), see also [A/79/171](#).

⁴ See communication [ISR 11/2023](#); see also press release on [17 January 2025](#).

⁵ See press release on [18 April 2024](#).

The United Nations and other experts have warned that dismantling UNRWA outside a political process that includes an orderly conclusion of the Agency’s mandate and the handover of its services to Palestinian institutions, ultimately in a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, risks undermining the ceasefire.⁶ In the long term, it may also hamper whatever is left of the peace process; including the ability to revive the two-state solution (see the Saudi/EU Arabian/European Union initiative).

Israel’s justifications for the Laws

The Government of Israel states⁷ that the Laws are necessary to address the alleged participation in terrorist acts or groups by some UNRWA personnel and the alleged misuse of UNRWA premises by terrorists. It also asserts it has been putting in place alternative means for providing the services that UNRWA has hitherto provided; and the Palestinian Authority is responsible for civilian services in the West Bank under the Oslo Accords. Parliamentary debates on the bills in the Knesset indicate that the Laws may additionally aim to undermine UNRWA’s role in maintaining the visibility of the Palestinian refugee “problem”, enable illegal deportations from Gaza to Egypt, and strengthen Israel’s unlawful claim to sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including by expanding illegal Israeli settlements on land vacated by UNRWA.

The justifications for the Laws in context: counter-terrorism

On 26 January 2024, in response to Israel alleging their involvement in the 7 October 2023 attack, UNRWA terminated the employment of 12 UNRWA staff, in order to protect its ability to deliver humanitarian assistance. UNRWA asserts that this was done in accordance with staff regulations, although there were reportedly concerns that the required standard of proof to establish misconduct was not met.

At the request of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services investigated the allegations into 19 UNRWA staff and found, on 5 August 2024, that there was no evidence to support the allegations in one case; the evidence was insufficient in nine other cases; and in the remaining nine cases, the evidence, if further authenticated and corroborated, could indicate that the staff members may have been involved, and their employment was terminated.

On 20 April 2024, the Final Report for the United Nations Secretary-General was issued on the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality (“Colonna Report”). While confirming that Israel had failed to produce evidence to back up claims against UNRWA employees, it confirmed UNRWA’s long standing commitment to uphold the humanitarian principle of neutrality and concluded that UNRWA has a more developed approach to neutrality than similar United Nations entities or NGOs. It found further that UNRWA has established and updated a significant number of policies, mechanisms, and procedures to ensure compliance with neutrality, to ensure rapid and adequate responses to allegations, and to implement disciplinary sanctions for breaches. It also confirmed that over the previous two years UNRWA reviewed all external allegations made and opened an investigation when warranted.

⁶ See press releases on [17 May 2024](#) and [02 February 2024](#).

⁷ Israel’s response to Israeli Supreme Court (High Court of Justice) Petition 41922-01-2025.

The Colonna Report noted that UNRWA shares staff lists annually with Israel and that Israel had not informed UNRWA of any concerns relating to any UNRWA staff based on these staff lists since 2011. While after 7 October 2023 Israel claimed that a significant number of UNRWA employees were members of terrorist organizations, it did not provide any supporting evidence to the Colonna Report or UNRWA. The Colonna Report also found that UNRWA, as a United Nations agency, does not have policing, military or wider investigative capacities or competencies required to detect breaches such as the misuse of UNRWA premises by armed groups, and recommended closer dialogue between UNRWA and Israeli and Palestinian authorities to address their shared responsibilities. UNRWA itself noted that its staff members would be endangered if they were to investigate staff or beneficiary involvement in terrorism or take action against any terrorists or terrorist organizations. The Colonna Report concluded that despite UNRWA's "robust framework", some neutrality related issues persisted. UNRWA has committed to implementing all 50 recommendations of the Colonna Report, including through a High-Level Action Plan.

In response to Israel's allegations that UNRWA personnel were involved in terrorism, 16 Member States donors suspended or paused US\$450 million in funding, and others indicated conditionality. Following the Colonna Report, the Office of Internal Oversight Services investigation, and the failure of Israel to substantiate its allegations with evidence, most donors resumed funding.

The justifications for the Laws in context: alternatives to UNRWA

In relation to Israel's pursuit of alternatives to UNRWA, United Nations General Assembly resolution ES-10/25 (11 December 2024), entitled "Support for the Mandate of UNRWA", stresses that UNRWA is "indispensable" (paras. 4 and 31) and the "backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza" and that "no organization can replace or substitute" its capacity and mandate to serve Palestine refugees and civilians in urgent need of life-saving humanitarian assistance" (para. 7), including because of UNRWA's "personnel capacity, operational agility, network of facilities, decades of proven humanitarian and human development expertise and cost-effective operations in comparison to other organizations" (para. 8). It warns that "any attempts to dismantle or diminish the operations and mandate of" UNRWA would have "severe humanitarian consequences for millions of Palestinian refugees... and also implications for the region" (para. 9).

The resolution accordingly deplores the adoption of the Israeli Laws and calls on Israel to "abide by its international obligations, respect the privileges and immunities of the Agency and uphold its responsibility to allow and facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance in all its forms into and throughout the entire Gaza Strip, including the provision of sorely needed basic services to the civilian population" (para. 2). It reaffirms its full support for the mandate of UNRWA and the unimpeded continuation of its work "pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees in line with the relevant resolutions" (paras. 1, 3 and 31). It demands Israel respect UNRWA's mandates and privileges and immunities, "enable its operations to proceed without impediment or restriction", including "to allow and facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance in all its forms into and throughout the entire Gaza Strip" (para. 12). It demands that Israel comply without delay with all its legal obligations under international law (para. 13) and calls on it to:

“abide by articles 100, 104 and 105 of the Charter of the United Nations and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations in all aspects and to ensure the safety of the personnel of the Agency, the protection of its installations and the safeguarding of the security of its facilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, at all times, to comply with international humanitarian law, and to cease obstructing the movement and access of the staff, vehicles and supplies of the Agency and levying taxes, extra fees and charges on the Agency” (para. 14).

In Security Council Press Statement SC/15874 (30 October 2024), the members of the Security Council emphasize the “vital” role of UNRWA in providing life-saving humanitarian assistance; underscore “that UNRWA remains the backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza, and affirmed that no organization can replace or substitute UNRWA’s capacity and mandate to serve Palestinian refugees and civilians in urgent need of life-saving humanitarian assistance”; “strongly warned against any attempts to dismantle or diminish UNRWA’s operations and mandate”; expressed “grave concern over legislation adopted by the Israeli Knesset”; and “urged the Israeli Government to abide by its international obligations, respect the privileges and immunities of UNRWA and live up to its responsibility to allow and facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance in all its forms into and throughout the entire Gaza strip”.

In his identical letters to the General Assembly and Security Council, the United Nations Secretary-General stated that “there is currently no realistic alternative to UNRWA which could adequately provide the services and assistance required” and warned that the Israeli Laws “could prevent UNRWA from continuing its essential work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as mandated by the General Assembly”, with “devastating consequences for Palestine refugees” (A/79/684-S/2024/892 (10 December 2024)). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) similarly declared that UNRWA’s work is “essential” to millions of Palestinians. The above-mentioned Colonna Report found that “UNRWA is irreplaceable and indispensable to Palestinians’ human and economic development”, since it is “pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services” in the absence of any political solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

In the case of *South Africa v Israel*, concerning the applicability of the Genocide Convention in Gaza, the International Court of Justice issued a second provisional measures order in March 2024 which required Israel to “[t]ake all necessary and effective measures to ensure, *in full cooperation with the United Nations*, the uninterrupted provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance”.

Inconsistency with international human rights law and international humanitarian law

We are deeply concerned that these Laws are not consistent with Israel’s obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory. Under international human rights law, Israel has the obligation to respect, protect and ensure economic, social and cultural rights in the

occupied Palestinian territory (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991; Israel Wall ICJ Advisory Opinion 2004), including the rights to education, health care, an adequate standard of living (including safe drinking water, sanitation, food and housing), work and social security. Israel is required to refrain from interfering directly or indirectly with the rights enshrined in the Covenant, immediately ensure a minimum essential level of these basic rights, and as necessary take steps through international assistance and cooperation to fully realize them (ICESCR, article 2(1)). Serious violations of some of these rights, such as the rights to health, water, sanitation, food and housing, may also result in violations of the right to life under article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991. Moreover, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Israel is required to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies.

Under international humanitarian law, in occupied territory, Israel has obligations to provide for the education of children and ensure food, medical supplies and health care (Fourth Geneva Convention 1949, articles 50, 55 and 56), as elements of its wider obligation to ensure public order and safety (Hague Regulations 1907, article 43) and administer occupied territory for the benefit of the population. It owes specific obligations towards groups with particular needs and vulnerabilities, including women, children, the sick, the elderly and persons with disabilities (International Committee of the Red Cross, Customary International Humanitarian Law Rules 134-138 and various Provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention). It has the further obligation to “agree to relief schemes” where the population is “inadequately supplied” and to “facilitate them by all means at its disposal” (ibid, article 59). Israel must “allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control” (International Committee of the Red Cross, Customary International Humanitarian Law Rule 55). Israel continues to occupy the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip.⁸

Israel has largely not directly provided all of the requisite material assistance in the occupied Palestinian territory to fulfil its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law as the occupying power. Instead, Israel has long depended on international organizations, especially UNRWA (including pursuant to the 1967 exchange of letters), to provide and facilitate assistance. As a consequence of the blockade of Gaza and the further severe restrictions on humanitarian relief since 7 October 2023, and despite the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, even with international assistance the level of material support entering Gaza has not been sufficient to meet Israel’s human rights and humanitarian law obligations, mainly because Israel has deliberately restricted aid as military tactic in violation of its obligation to allow and facilitate humanitarian relief and not to deploy the starvation of civilians as method of warfare.

In this context, as the General Assembly, Security Council, Secretary-General, OCHA and many States have insisted, the vast scale of humanitarian needs in Gaza

⁸ See e.g. Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (Advisory Opinion), International Court of Justice, 19 July 2024, paras. 86–94.

currently addressed by UNRWA cannot be immediately fulfilled by Israel directly or through alternative organizations. Israeli planning for alternative humanitarian relief arrangements has not been sufficiently developed or operationalized to the point that it can substitute for UNRWA, including as regards UNRWA's personnel capacity, local expertise, operational agility, coordination functions, network of facilities, decades of proven humanitarian and human development expertise, cost-effectiveness, oversight and accountability, and legitimacy amongst the beneficiary population and the international community. Prohibiting UNRWA's operations would worsen the existing humanitarian crisis, intensifying Israel's existing violations of human rights law and humanitarian law.

Further, since Israeli planning for alternatives to UNRWA has been focused on the humanitarian response in Gaza, it has not addressed the wider spectrum of assistance traditionally provided by UNRWA through all of the occupied Palestinian territories (Gaza and the West Bank) that would be impeded by the laws, particularly basic education and primary health care (but also other essential services, relief and social services, vocational training, microfinance, infrastructure and camp improvement). There are currently no adequate substitute means available to provide these, given the absence of direct provision by Israel, the lack of capacity among Palestinian actors, and the lack of mandates and/or capacity among international partners (including UNESCO and WHO).

Where Israel is unable to meet the needs of Palestinian refugees, it has an obligation to continue to allow and facilitate the provision of humanitarian relief, and the fulfilment of human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, by UNRWA.

Consequences of the Laws under international refugee law

The Laws would also have consequences under international refugee law. As Israel is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the cessation of UNRWA's operations in "sovereign" Israel, including illegally annexed East Jerusalem, automatically triggers the application of article 1D(2) of the Convention, with the result that Palestinian refugees in East Jerusalem "shall ipso facto be entitled to the benefits" of refugee status under the Convention. Further, as the occupied Palestinian territories as a whole are under Israel's effective control, the cessation of UNRWA protection will similarly trigger the application of article 1D(2) with respect to Palestinian refugees residing in Gaza and the remainder of the West Bank, thus entitling them to the benefits of the Convention, as well as attracting the protection mandate of UNHCR.

The principle of "durable solutions" under international refugee law additionally means that the long-term status of Palestinian refugees (75 per cent of whom originate from the territory of Israel) should be resolved in accordance with three possibilities: (1) the possibility to stay in their place of refuge (Gaza); (2) voluntary return to their place of origin, i.e. Israel; or (3) voluntarily resettlement in a third country. Given that the Israeli Laws limit UNRWA's practical capacity to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees, voluntary durable solutions, including return to Israel, should be pursued.

Duty to cooperate with UNRWA and respect its privileges and immunities

As a member of the United Nations, Israel is required to cooperate with UNRWA under the international law of international organizations. While the 1967 exchange of letters between Israel and UNRWA clarifies the specific modalities of cooperation, that treaty is not the sole source of Israel's obligation to cooperate. In recognition of the vulnerabilities of Palestinian refugees, UNRWA was established by General Assembly resolution 302(IV) (8 December 1949) to provide "assistance for the relief of the Palestine refugees" in order to "prevent conditions of starvation and distress among them and to further conditions of peace and stability" (para. 5). Assistance is to be carried out through "direct relief and works programmes" in collaboration with governments" (paras. 6 and 7). The resolution also called upon the Governments concerned to accord UNRWA the privileges, immunities, exemptions and facilities necessary for the fulfilment of its functions (para. 17).

Crucially, like UNHCR, UNRWA was established as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly (under article 22 of the UN Charter), operates under the authority of and reports to the General Assembly, and only the General Assembly can decide on UNRWA's mandate and cessation. UNRWA was conceived to support and complement the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). The UNCCP's "refugee mandate" centred on achieving durable solutions for Palestine refugees through resolution of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, with emphasis on voluntary repatriation. UNRWA was intended to support the economic welfare and development of the refugees in the host countries, pending the resolution of the conflict. Since UNCCP's mandate was put on hold by the General Assembly in 1962, UNRWA continued to operate, embodying the permanent responsibility of the United Nations toward Palestine refugees. This responsibility stemmed from the critical role that the United Nations played in the events that led to the creation of the State of Israel, and the consequent Palestine refugee question that in 2025 will enter its 77th year. In light of this responsibility, which will last until all of the aspects of the Palestinian question is resolved in line with international law, both UNRWA in its operational areas (including Gaza and the West Bank including East Jerusalem), and UNHCR where UNRWA is not present or in case of cessation of UNRWA's operations or mandate, must ensure these refugees' rights to safety, basic services, and opportunities. The United Nations remains obligated to provide effective registration, legal protection, and assistance. The current scope of services offered by UNRWA is the bare minimum until a lasting solution is found, in accordance with relevant international laws and practices.

As a Member of the United Nations, Israel is required under article 2(5) of the United Nations Charter to give UNRWA "every assistance in any action it takes" in accordance with the relevant decisions of competent principal organs adopted pursuant to the Charter, including General Assembly resolution 302(IV) and subsequent resolutions renewing UNRWA's mandate (see A/79/684-S/2024/892). Over 75 years of consistent State practice concerning the implementation of UNRWA's mandate and cooperation by the concerned governments, and the international community's position expressed through recurrent General Assembly resolutions, confirms the obligatory character of this duty to cooperate with UNRWA, which cannot be unilaterally and arbitrarily terminated. Further, since the purpose of UNRWA is assistance and relief to Palestinian refugees, a refusal to cooperate resulting in violations of human rights – a purpose of the United Nations under article 1(3) of the Charter – and humanitarian law,

as detailed earlier, would constitute an aggravated breach of the duty to cooperate.

By prohibiting any UNRWA activities within Israel (and illegally annexed East Jerusalem) and any Israeli contact with UNRWA, thus impeding its operations elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Israeli Laws additionally impair Israel's obligation under article 104 of the Charter to ensure the legal capacity required for UNRWA to carry out its functions and fulfil its purposes; and its obligation under article 105 of the Charter to extend to UNRWA the privileges and immunities as are necessary for the fulfilment of its purposes. The latter are detailed more fully in the General Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations 1946, to which Israel became a party in 1949, and include the inviolability of UNRWA premises and property (section 3) – an absolute obligation even in armed conflict. Relevantly, General Assembly resolution ES-10/25 (11 December 2024) calls on Israel to abide by articles 104 and 105 and the General Convention, ensure the inviolability of UNRWA premises and property, protect UNRWA personnel, and cease obstructing the movement and access of UNRWA staff, vehicles and supplies and levying taxes, extra fees and charges on UNRWA (paras. 10, 14 and 16).

We emphasize that non-cooperation with UNRWA seriously violates international law, especially at a time when UNRWA's humanitarian mission is utterly needed. Depriving the Palestinian refugees of UNRWA's presence, services not only may and protection also undermines the "conditions of peace and stability" that relief aims to advance under UNRWA's mandate and impedes, but also the prompt recovery of Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere from systematic Israeli violations in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel's duty to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory

We emphasize that Israel's international obligations in relation to the continuation of UNRWA are without prejudice to its obligation, as declared by the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, to bring an end to its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible. We note that in resolution A/ES-10/L.31/Rev.1 (18 September 2024), the General Assembly fixed such date as 17 September 2025.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all situations brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned observations.
2. Please indicate how the Laws are consistent with Israel's international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law obligations owed to Palestinians in occupied territory.
3. Please explain how the Laws are consistent with Israel's obligations as a Member State of the United Nations, including as regards the duty to cooperate with UNRWA and to respect its privileges and immunities, as a subsidiary organ under the United Nations.

4. Please indicate whether the Laws will be urgently repealed by the Knesset and whether your Excellency's Government will restore full legal and operational cooperation with UNRWA pending Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory as requested by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of July 2024.

While awaiting a reply, we respectfully urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to ensure that the new Laws are not enforced pending their review and repeal.

This communication, as a comment on pending or recently adopted legislation, regulations or policies, and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) after 48 hours. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter is being sent to the Government of the State of Palestine.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Ben Saul

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Alexandra Xanthaki

Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

Elizabeth Salmón

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Surya Deva

Special Rapporteur on the right to development

Heba Hagrass

Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities

Gabriella Citroni

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Farida Shaheed

Special Rapporteur on the right to education

Morris Tidball-Binz

Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Michael Fakhri

Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Irene Khan
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion
and expression

Gina Romero
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Balakrishnan Rajagopal
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate
standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Paula Gaviria
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons

George Katrougalos
Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order

Cecilia M. Bailliet
Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity

Jovana Jezdimirovic Ranito
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of
violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-
determination

Nicolas Levrat
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Francesca Albanese
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory
occupied since 1967

Geneviève Savigny
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people
working in rural areas

K.P. Ashwini
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination,
xenophobia and related intolerance

Mama Fatima Singhateh
Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children

Tomoya Obokata
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and
consequences

Reem Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Pedro Arrojo-Agudo
Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Laura Nyirinkindi
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls