



## Joint statement: The UK must show leadership on UNRWA and the rights of Palestinian refugees

7 September 2018

As a group of UK-based humanitarian, development, human rights and faith organisations working to support the rights of the Palestinian people, we are deeply concerned by the implications of the US' decision to end all funding to UNRWA and call upon the UK government to demonstrate its support for the agency and the Palestinian refugees it serves at this critical time.

UNRWA is mandated by the General Assembly to provide humanitarian relief, human development and protection of the rights of more than five million Palestinian refugees across Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a just and lasting resolution to their plight. The US' funding cuts amount to a reduction of nearly a third of UNRWA's operating budget, and thus critically endanger its ability to fulfil its mandate, jeopardising vital services, including health clinics, social services, and more than 700 schools providing education to 526,000 Palestinian refugee children. The cuts demonstrate a dangerous politicisation of aid, and are part of an unprecedented attempt to undermine the international legal consensus on the protected status of Palestinian refugees.

We call upon the UK government, with its unique historical relationship with the Palestinians as the Mandatory Power when the displacement of the majority of the Palestinian people began in 1947-1948, to work to end UNRWA's financial crisis so that it can fully exercise its UN mandate. While we welcome the UK's announcement of some additional funding to UNRWA this year, we call on the government to expand its financial support further and encourage its partners to do the same. The UK must show principled leadership on this issue, working to ensure UNRWA services are maintained and the rights and dignity of Palestinian refugees upheld, and opposing any and all attempts to undermine international law as pertains to the status of Palestinian refugees and the rights of the Palestinian people.

Statement endorsed by the following 15 organisations:

**ABCD Bethlehem**

**CAFOD**

**CARE International**

**Christian Aid**

**Council for Arab-British Understanding  
(Caabu)**

**Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in  
Palestine & Israel (EAPPI) - UK & Ireland**

**Embrace the Middle East**

**Friends of Birzeit University (FOBZU)**

**Friends of Nablus and the Surrounding Areas  
(FONSA)**

**Interpal**

**Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)**

**Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)**

**Quakers in Britain**

**War On Want**

**Welfare Association**