

July 12, 2023

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Risch:

We, the undersigned 25 civil society organizations, are writing to respectfully request your assistance in releasing the funds provided in the FY2023 State, Foreign Operations appropriations bill for food assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, distributed through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Absent these funds, a devastating humanitarian crisis looms with more than 1.2 million people potentially left without food as early as mid-September, including hundreds of thousands of innocent children who will be left hungry.

The discontinuation of this food assistance will have enormous humanitarian and regional security implications. The situation is already dire following the announcement by the World Food Programme of its suspension of food assistance to over 200,000 Palestinians due to a severe lack of funds. The plight of Palestine refugees, who are already enduring immense hardships, will be intensified to the point of an unprecedented catastrophe.

UNRWA food assistance is a critical lifeline for refugees in Gaza, who are the majority of the population, accounting for 60% of the food staples imported into Gaza every month. The conditions in Gaza are well-documented, with the per capita GDP now reaching levels comparable to sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately three out of four people in Gaza rely on UNRWA and WFP for more than half of their nutritional needs.

The generosity of the American people toward those in need has always been commendable and this critical assistance can alleviate further suffering. Denying food assistance will strip away the last vestiges of hope for people in Gaza who simply yearn for a dignified existence. The repercussions of such a situation could also be catastrophic for regional stability, negatively impacting both Palestinians and Israelis alike.

We trust you will give careful thought to this urgent plea knowing your release of these funds holds the power to make an immediate and life-saving impact on thousands of refugees who rely on this food for their very survival.

We appreciate your commitment to humanitarian causes and look forward to your positive response.

Respectfully,

UNRWA USA National Committee
Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Churches USA
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Americans for Peace Now
Arab American Institute
Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ
Islamic Relief USA
J Street
Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Mercy Corps
Migrant Roots Media
National Council of Churches
Oxfam America
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Reformed Church in America
Refugees International
The Episcopal Church
Virginia Coalition for Human Rights



cc:
The Honorable Robert Menendez
The Honorable Gregory Meeks