



Al-Haq Position Paper

One Year After UNRWA Advisory Opinion

Israel Escalates Attacks Against UNRWA to Force Mass Palestinian Displacement in Conditions Unfit for Survival



Israeli authorities demolish an UNRWA compound in occupied East Jerusalem (January 20, 2026)

Al-Haq Position Paper

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1. Why UNRWA was established

Between 1947 and 1949, approximately 800,000 Palestinians, roughly 80 percent of the population of Palestine, were forcibly expelled from their homes and ancestral lands by Zionist militias and the Israeli military, laying down the groundwork for the establishment of the State of Israel. This mass dispossession and displacement is commonly known as the Nakba, or “catastrophe” in Arabic.¹ This mass dispossession includes the forced displacement of approximately 200,000 Palestinians who fled Zionist militia’s and the Israeli military and were concentrated into nine refugee camps in Gaza.² In 1967, another 430,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced during the Naksa, the illegal appropriation by Israel of thousands of dunams of Palestinian land following the so-called “Six-Day” War,³ expanding its settler colonial apartheid regime across Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

Against this backdrop, the paramount role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) since its establishment on 8 December 1949 cannot be overstated. UNRWA was created “as a temporary agency until a just and durable solution for Palestine refugees was achieved”⁴ and mandated “to carry out [...] direct relief and works programmes” for Palestine refugees.⁵ While initially created to provide services to Palestine refugees displaced between 1947 and 1949, UNRWA’s mandate evolved over the years. UNRWA now “offer[s] services to certain other persons who require humanitarian assistance, on an emergency basis as and when required, in UNRWA fields of operations”. This includes persons who are not registered as Palestine refugees such as those “currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the 1967 and subsequent hostilities”.⁶

¹ Al-Haq, “Nakba at 77: Israel’s Territorial Control and Demographic Manipulation Amidst Gaza Genocide- Towards Annexation and Resettlement”, (15 May 2025), <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/26404.html>.

² United Nations, Palestine Refugees in the Gaza Strip, (1 January 1954), <https://media.un.org/photo/en/asset/oun7/oun7500420>

³ Al-Haq, “Israel’s Genocide in Gaza: The Latest Episode in the Ongoing Nakba Against the Palestinian People”, 15 May 2024, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/23099.html>.

⁴ UNRWA, “About UNRWA”, (1 January 2022), https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/UNRWAFactsheet_150922.pdf.

⁵ UN General Assembly, Resolution 302 (IV), (8 December 1949).

⁶ UNRWA, “Frequently Asked Questions, Who is UNRWA Mandated to Serve?” <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions>

2. The Crucial Role of UNRWA in Palestine

Israel's systematic denial of the Palestinian people their inalienable right to self-determination and its continuing relentless colonisation of their lands, coupled with the forced refugeehood of the Palestinian population, and denial of their right of return, has made protecting the role of UNRWA in maintaining the displaced Palestinian refugee population within Palestine, even more urgent. UNRWA "continues to provide essential services for the well-being, human development and protection of Palestine refugees,"⁷ including primary and vocational education, physical and health, care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response⁸ to over 930,000 Palestinian refugees in the West Bank.⁹

The entire population of Gaza, over two million people, relies on the aid provided by UNRWA.¹⁰ Since Israel's genocidal military onslaught against the Palestinian people, over half of this population has been sheltering in UNRWA schools, clinics, tents, and other public buildings.¹¹ As of 10 September 2026, 65,000 Palestinians shelter in over 114 UNRWA emergency shelters.¹² In the West Bank, approximately "a quarter of the nearly one million Palestinian refugees there live in refugee camps where UNRWA provides crucial services . . . in all the 19 camps, administering 96 schools, 43 primary health facilities, and 19 women centres."¹³

It is precisely because of UNRWA's paramount role for the Palestinian people — ensuring their viability and continued presence in the Palestinian territory — that Israel has done its utmost to curtail its activities, through legislation, physical attacks or smear campaigns,¹⁴ in an effort

⁷ UNRWA, "about UNRWA", (1 January 2022), https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/UNRWAFACETSHEET_150922.pdf.

⁸ UNRWA, 'What we do', available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do>.

⁹ UNRWA, "UNRWA remains a lifeline in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem", (10 November 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/videos/unrwa-remains-lifeline-occupied-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

¹⁰ United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC), "Gaza: why we must continue to support UNRWA", (31 January 2024), <https://unric.org/en/gaza-why-we-must-continue-to-support-unrwa/#:~:text=UNRWA%2C%20created%20in%201949%2C%20provides,Jordan%2C%20where%20>.

¹¹ Al-Haq, "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)" (2024), p. 10, referring to UNRWA, "Where we work", <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work>

¹² UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #234 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (10 September 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-234-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>

¹³ Al-Haq, "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)" (2024), p. 9, referring to UNRWA, "Where we work", <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work>.

¹⁴ Final Report for the United Nations Secretary-General: Independent Review of Mechanism and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, (20 April 2024), https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf.

to deprive Palestinians of this vital help and aggravate conditions of life leading to their destruction as a people. To the extent that UNRWA's existence reinforces the rightful status of Palestinian refugees and their right to return home, Israel considers the existence of UNRWA a threat to the Zionist project.¹⁵

3. Israel's Escalating Attacks on UNRWA prior to the Advisory Opinion

While Israel's attempts to destroy UNRWA — both in direct military attacks and in campaigns targeting UNRWA's financing — are nothing new, throughout 2024, Israel adopted a number of laws targeting UNRWA. In previous reports, Al-Haq has highlighted how the IOF routinely attacked UNRWA in prior military offensives¹⁶ and continuing genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza.¹⁷ For example, on 11 March 2024, the Israel Occupying Forces (IOF) presented a plan for the full dismantling of UNRWA in Gaza and the West Bank.¹⁸ As part of this plan, Israel froze UNRWA's bank account alleging that this would “effectively block the transfer of tax and exemption-free funds to Hamas”.¹⁹

On 28 October 2024, the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, adopted two laws purported to disrupt UNRWA's operations and essential services. The adopted legislation prohibits UNRWA from operating, providing any services, or conducting any activities in what is referred to as “the sovereign territory of the State of Israel”.²⁰ The laws also terminated the 1967 agreement between Israel and UNRWA. They further barred contact between the Israeli authorities and UNRWA, regardless of its irreplaceable role amid Israel's ongoing genocide.²¹ As a consequence, Israel has “not granted the Agency's international staff visas or permits to enter the [OPT], including the Gaza Strip, since the end of January 2025”.²² After the adoption of the *Bill for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities* in November 2024, Israel forced UNRWA to vacate

¹⁵ Al-Haq, “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)” (2024), p. 14.

¹⁶ See also, UNRWA, “UNRWA Strongly Condemns Israeli Shelling of Its School in Gaza as a Serious Violation of International Law”, (30 July 2014), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-strongly-condemns-israeli-shelling-its-school-gaza-serious>.

¹⁷ Al-Haq, “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)”, (2024), p. 11; Al-Haq, “The Systematic Destruction of Gaza's Healthcare System: A Pattern of Genocide”, 2025, p.78, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/health/sr/cfis/health-and-care-workers/subm-health-care-workers-cso-30-al-haq.pdf>.

¹⁸ “Israel Moves to Dismantle UNRWA Without Replacement Body to Manage Aid for Palestinians in Gaza”, Haaretz, (11 March 2024), <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-03-11/ty-article/.premium/israel-to-dismantle-unrwa-without-replacement-body-to-manage-aid-for-palestinians-in-gaza/0000018e-2e08-dcb3-a58f-ef8d480b0000>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Bill for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities, 5784-2024, 15/01/2024, (unofficial translation from the original Hebrew by Adalah), https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/UNRWA_bills_translation_October_2024.pdf.

²¹ Al-Haq, “Israel Bans UNRWA, Gaza's Lifeline: Latest Move in Ongoing Campaign Against the Palestinian People and Their Right of Return”, (29 October 2024), <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/24814.html>.

²² UNRWA, “UNRWA Situation Report #234 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem”, (10 September 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-234-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>

its headquarters in East Jerusalem and ordered the closure of six UNRWA schools therein.²³ As UNRWA refused to vacate the two sites in Jerusalem and continued paying the utility bills for the properties, the Knesset adopted a bill to prohibit the supply of water and electricity to the buildings, and for the confiscation of the UNRWA sites absent judicial proceedings.²⁴

On 9 May 2024, Israeli settlers set fire twice to the perimeter of the UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem, putting UN staff on the compound at great risk. Israeli settlers chanted “burn down the United Nations” and threw stones at UN staff and the buildings of the compound.²⁵ This arson attack caused extensive damage to the agency’s perimeters and forced “UNRWA to close its headquarters until the Israeli occupation authorities take the necessary measures to protect the agency from any attacks by settlers.”²⁶ The involvement of the Israeli authorities in this attack is evident in the delayed intervention of the Israeli police and fire-fighters, compelling UNRWA staff to extinguish the fire themselves,²⁷ as well as the lack of investigation of the incidents and prosecutions of identified perpetrators. These incidents had been followed by previous similar attacks over the past months that have damaged and vandalised the UN compound, and threatened UN staff with guns.²⁸

In Gaza, Israel has imposed a total and unrelenting blockade, destroying all critical infrastructures in its genocidal onslaught on the Palestinian people. At the same time, Israel has prevented humanitarian organisations from entering Gaza and has targeted aid workers already present in the territory. These attacks include air strikes against UNRWA’s densely populated shelters. For instance, on 17 October 2024, the IOF hit a tent located inside an UNRWA school, killing 25 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and injuring another 150.²⁹

²³ “Israel cuts power, water to UN agency for Palestinian refugees”, Middle East Monitor (15 July 2025), <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250715-israel-cuts-power-water-to-un-agency-for-palestinian-refugees/>.

²⁴ “Israel Moves to Cut Water and Electricity, Seize UNRWA Properties in Jerusalem”, Haaretz (10 July 2025), <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-07-10/ty-article/.premium/israel-moves-to-cut-water-and-electricity-seize-unrwa-properties-in-jerusalem/00000197-f448-de26-a1ff-f5db9cc70000>; see also “Israel plans to cut water, electricity to UNRWA, confiscate Jerusalem properties”, The New Arab, (12 July 2025), <https://www.newarab.com/news/israel-cut-utilities-seize-unrwa-sites-jerusalem>; “Knesset passes law blocking provision of electricity and water to UNRWA facilities”, (29 December 2025), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-passes-bill-blocking-provision-of-electricity-and-water-to-unrwa-facilities/>

²⁵ UNRWA, “This evening, Israeli residents set fire twice to the perimeter of the UNRWA headquarters in Occupied East Jerusalem”, (9 May 2024), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/evening-israeli-residents-set-fire-twice-perimeter-unrwa-headquarters>.

²⁶ Al-Haq, Field report, 31 May 2024, on file with Al-Haq.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ UNRWA, “UNRWA Situation report #145 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem”, 25 October 2024, available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-145-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

4. The UNRWA Advisory Opinion (October 2025)

In response to this pattern of Israeli attacks, both physical and legislative, against UNRWA, 137 States adopted in December 2024 a UN General Assembly resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the ICJ.³⁰ In the context of Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people, a significant increase in the state support offered to this request can be observed in comparison with the 2022 UN General Assembly resolution requesting the Advisory Opinion on the *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, adopted with 87 votes in favour.³¹

On 22 October 2025, the ICJ handed down an Advisory Opinion on the *Obligations of Israel in Relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations and Other International Organizations and Third States in and in Relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (UNRWA Advisory Opinion). The ICJ ruled that it is incumbent on Israel, as an Occupying Power, to “agree and facilitate” relief operations conducted by UNRWA and found that “UNRWA's unique mandate relates to the core aspects of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination”.³²

5. Israel's Worsening Attacks on UNRWA After the Advisory Opinion

However, Israel's campaign against UNRWA has intensified and taken various forms, and has continued in breach of the International Court of Justice landmark advisory opinion in October 2025. It is the acceleration of attacks on UNRWA since the Advisory Opinion, to which this paper turns.

5.1 Attacks on UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem

Less than one month after the UN issued its Advisory Opinion, a Bill was tabled in then Israeli Knesset to cut off the electricity and water supply to UNRWA claiming that UNRWA “has no right to exist”.³³ On 8 December 2025, the Israeli police and municipal officials raided the UNRWA compound in East Jerusalem. UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini wrote that “police motorcycles, trucks and forklifts were brought in and all communications were

³⁰ UNGA Res 79/232 of 19 December 2024.

³¹ Al-Haq, “The UNWRA Advisory Opinion”, 2025, p. 7, https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/2025/08/19/unrwa-advisory-opinion-report-1755590330.pdf

³² UNRWA Advisory Opinion, para. 221.

³³ Eli Cohen, @elicoh1, Tweet (19 November 2025), <https://x.com/elicoh1/status/1991182845084053763?s=20>

cut, he said, while furniture, IT equipment and other property were seized.”³⁴ They further replaced the UN flag with an Israeli flag.³⁵ On 28 December, the Knesset passed legislation “cut[ing] off water, electricity, fuel, and communications from UNRWA and grant[ing] the government of Israel authority to expropriate UN properties in East Jerusalem, including UNRWA’s headquarters and its main vocational training centre.”³⁶

On 14 January 2026, the IOF stormed an UNRWA health centre in East Jerusalem, ordering the Centre to be closed within 30 days, depriving Palestine refugees in Jerusalem access to primary healthcare.³⁷ In a statement the UN Secretary General warned that:

These measures are a violation of the inviolability of United Nations premises, and an obstacle to the implementation of the clear mandate of the General Assembly for UNRWA’s continued operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. As recently confirmed by the International Court of Justice, any executive, administrative, judicial or legislative action against United Nations property and assets is prohibited under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.³⁸

On 20 January 2026, the IOF entered the UNRWA headquarters, confiscated equipment and expelled the private security guards hired to protect the site, which they then bulldozed. UNRWA was informed of the operation in the early hours of the morning on the same day. Israel’s foreign ministry stating: “UNRWA-Hamas had already ceased its operations at this site and no longer had any UN personnel or UN activity there. The compound does not enjoy any immunity and the seizure of this compound by Israeli authorities was carried out in accordance with both Israeli and international law.”³⁹ Standing at the entrance to UNRWA in Jerusalem, Aryeh King, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem issued a video statement announcing, “in the great battle for all of the land of Israel, we will drive out, annihilate, kill and eliminate

³⁴ UN News, “UN strongly condemns Israel’s unauthorised entry of UNRWA compound in East Jerusalem”, (8 December 2025), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/12/1166530>.

³⁵ UNRWA, “UNRWA Situation report #200 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem”, (9 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-200-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

³⁶ Philippe Lazzarini, @UNLazzarini, Tweet, (29 December 2025), <https://x.com/UNLazzarini/status/2005783683765043400?s=20>

³⁷ UNRWA, UNRWA Commissioner-General: Israeli Actions Undermine International Law and Threaten Refugee Services (14 January 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-commissioner-general-israeli-actions-undermine-international-law>

³⁸ UN The Question of Palestine, “Statement of the UN Secretary-General on the unauthorized entry into the UNRWA Jerusalem Health Centre” (15 January 2026), <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/statement-of-the-un-secretary-general-on-the-unauthorized-entry-into-the-unrwa-jerusalem-health-centre/>

³⁹ “Israel bulldozes UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem”, The Guardian (20 January 2026), available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jan/20/israel-bulldozes-unrwa-headquarters-in-east-jerusalem>.

Addressing a High-Level Meeting in New York on the Agency's work on 22 September 2026, the UN Secretary General, António Guterres warned that UNRWA's entire "mandate and work are in jeopardy."⁴⁸

5.2 Israel's Genocidal Attacks on UNRWA in Gaza

At the same time Israel has continued its pattern of genocidal attacks against UNRWA in Gaza, while directly blocking UNRWA from bringing humanitarian personnel and aid into Gaza, leaving UNRWA's humanitarian aid including "food parcels, flour, and shelter supplies for hundreds of thousands of people" outside Gaza.⁴⁹ UNRWA reports that "Israeli authorities have not granted the Agency's international staff visas or permits to enter the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the Gaza Strip, since the end of January 2025."⁵⁰

Since 7 October 2023, some 394 UNRWA staff and support staff have been killed, and 312 (nearly all) UNRWA facilities have been impacted, some repeatedly in 1032 incidents; of these 14 UNRWA staff have been killed and 90 UNRWA facilities damaged or destroyed since the ICJ Advisory Opinion was issued on 22 October 2025.⁵¹ The first day after the Advisory Opinion was issued, on 23 October, an UNRWA Job Creation Programme staff member was killed by an Israeli quadcopter in Bani Suhila, east of Khan Younis.⁵²

Since 22 October 2022, the IOF has continued to attack UNRWA's health facilities, providing vital health care to Palestinian population in Gaza, including shooting at Maghazi health centre

⁴⁸ "Secretary-General's remarks at the Ministerial Meeting on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) [as delivered]" (24 September 2026), https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2026-09-24/secretary-generals-remarks-the-ministerial-meeting-the-united-nations-relief-and-works-agency-for-palestine-refugees-the-near-east-%28unrwa%29-delivered?_gl=1*a5g4nx*_gcl_au*NDMwNTE2NjM3LjE3ODUzNTY.

⁴⁹ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #230 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem)" (16 July 2026), https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/download_unrwa_gaza_sitrep_230.pdf?_cf_chl_tk=OStQlcyV.CEqJRn1eXwwh3O8jLS9DjLN5ohcD8Tt3Js-1784736687-1.0.1.1-fgSd3KeeT6xfzT9LVz9lt6_A4zyFa2oOIG_OmRtSWs#1#1, p. 2.

⁵⁰ UNRWA, UNRWA Situation Report #236 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (7 October 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-236-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>

⁵¹ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #236 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem" (7 October 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-236-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>; UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #194 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem" (27 October 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-194-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

⁵² UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation report #195 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (4 November 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-195-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

in Deir Al Balah in repeated attacks,⁵³ using quadcopters, and carrying out airstrikes on UNRWA's health centre in Muawiya, northwest of Rafah in July, among others.⁵⁴

UNRWA reported that two of its vehicles were found destroyed on 25 November, left "on a large pile of rubble in the vicinity of an UNRWA installation in Gaza City, reportedly due to the Israeli Forces military operation in the area on 30 November 2025".⁵⁵

Israel has continued its relentless attacks on UNRWA's schools, sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza. Israel has *inter alia* used quadcopters to fire at UNRWA schools in Jabaliya refugee camp, damaging facilities;⁵⁶ has carried out airstrikes on a house beside an UNRWA school causing damage;⁵⁷ targeted a tent inside an UNRWA school in Bureij with airstrikes;⁵⁸ shelled a school in Daraj, east of Gaza City;⁵⁹ and detonated a robotic tank in Gaza City, causing significant damage to an UNRWA school. In August, the IOF firing near an UNRWA school sheltering the displaced in Beit Lahiya Project Area, killed a Palestinian child.⁶⁰ Another two displaced Palestinians were shot by gunfire in an UNRWA shelter in Jabalia, including a seven-year-old, who was injured as they slept,⁶¹ in attacks carried out by Israel along the expanding so-called 'Yellow Line'.

⁵³ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Gaza Humanitarian Response Situation Report No. 43", (10 December 2025) <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-humanitarian-response-situation-report-no-43>; UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #202 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (26 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-202-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

⁵⁴ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #232 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem)" (12 August 2026), https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2026/08/mil-260819-unrwa01_unrwa_gaza_sitrep_232.pdf#1#1

⁵⁵ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation report #200 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (9 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-200-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

⁵⁶ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation report #199 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (2 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-199-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>;

UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation report #200 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (9 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-200-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

⁵⁷ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #202 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (26 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-202-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

⁵⁸ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation report #196 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (11 November 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-196-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

⁵⁹ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation report #200 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem", (9 December 2025), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-200-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

⁶⁰ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #233 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem" (27 August 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-233-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>

⁶¹ UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #236 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem" (7 October 2026), <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-236-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>

Israeli government ministers while ensuring that the conditions for human survival are defunct in Gaza, have called for so-called “voluntary immigration” or forcible displacement of the entire Palestinian population of Gaza and that Israel will “finish the job”.⁶² Israel’s Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Gila Gamiel noting that:

75% of the entire [Gaza] Strip we have already annihilated completely. There remains 25% which, as you know, it too . . . now we are taking over [the city of] Gaza - there will be nothing left there that would really [have] the potential to be habitable . . .

Now, just for your information: one million and seven hundred thousand [Palestinians] inside the Gaza Strip are defined as UNRWA refugees. Meaning, once they get out of there, they are not coming back! Because as refugees, this is not the place where they actually have the right of basic belonging.⁶³

On 13 October 2026, UNRWA’s Director of Health, Akihiro Seit, warned that the populations living environment in Gaza had collapsed, and that “Gaza is becoming more and more a place where it is impossible for humans to live”.⁶⁴

5.3 Trumps Unelected ‘Board of Peace’ Targets UNRWA

One month after the ICJ delivered its landmark *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion protecting the function of UNRWA and the access of international organisations including UNRWA into the Gaza Strip, the UN Security Council adopted UN Security Council resolution 2803 on 17 November 2025. Part 3 of the resolution underscored the

importance of the full resumption of humanitarian aid in cooperation with the BoP into the Gaza Strip in a manner consistent with relevant international legal principles and through cooperating organizations, including the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Red Crescent.⁶⁵

Notably absent from resolution 2803 and Trump’s 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, annexed to the resolution, was any mention of UNRWA.

On 1 July 2026, the so-called ‘Board of Peace’, the administration installed in Gaza — which includes Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu, and is chaired by U.S. President Trump under UN Security Council 2803 — announced that “UNRWA has no place in the new Gaza. We are turning the page on the complex of perpetual aid dependency & conflict. The people of Gaza deserve better.”⁶⁶ On 25 September 2026, the ‘Board of Peace’ once again stated:

⁶² “Israel will ‘finish the job’ in Gaza and seek Palestinians’ migration — defense minister” (16 September 2026), https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/israel-will-finish-the-job-in-gaza-and-seek-palestinians-migration-defense-minister/

⁶³ Kippah News, Minister Gila Gamiel: We will not leave a habitable place in Gaza, this will force citizens to emigrate (7 September 2025), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yjc_Ktug_6Q

⁶⁴ Quds News Network @QudsNen, Tweet (13 October 2026), <https://x.com/QudsNen/status/2109983517060759624>

⁶⁵ UNSC RES 2803 (2025), para. 3.

⁶⁶ Board of Peace @BoardOfPeace, Tweet (1 July 2026), <https://x.com/BoardOfPeace/status/2072219124265050606?s=20>

We will only work with trusted partners who will deliver for the people of Gaza and contribute to a deradicalized Strip. UNRWA fails on those litmus tests. Our approach is the right one to reduce perpetual dependency and lead Gaza towards a self sustained, thriving economy that delivers opportunity and better conditions for Palestinians.⁶⁷

The position echoes that of Prime Minister Netanyahu — wanted by the International Criminal Court for international crimes in Palestine, and who is unlawfully present in Palestine. In 2017, in meetings with Nikki Haley, Netanyahu advised her and then U.S. President Trump, that “the time has come for the UN to reconsider the continued existence of UNRWA”.⁶⁸

6. Legal Analysis

Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territory has been recognised by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion on the *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel (Palestine Advisory Opinion)* as unlawful, breaching peremptory norms governing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and the prohibition of the acquisition of territory through use of force.⁶⁹ There the ICJ notably clarified that although status the OPT is unlawfully occupied by Israel, “Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip has not entirely released it of its obligations under the law of occupation. Israel’s obligations have remained commensurate with the degree of its effective control over the Gaza Strip.”⁷⁰

It follows that Israel is bound by the law of occupation. Yet, attacks against UNRWA are in breach of many provisions of international humanitarian law.

6.1. Israel’s Obligations regarding Provision of Supplies to Palestinian population in OPT

First and foremost, Israel’s attacks against UNRWA stand in sharp contrast with its obligations as an Occupying Power to ensure the adequate provision of food, medical supplies, as well as other supplies essential to the survival of the civilian population, including clothing, in the occupied territory.⁷¹ The ICJ emphasised in the *UNRWA Advisory Opinion* that this list of supplies is non exhaustive, as indicated by the terms “in particular” in Article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and can encompass “water, bedding and shelter . . . adequate supplies of fuel, which are essential for cooking, heating and transportation, as well as the functioning of

⁶⁷ Board of Peace @BoardOfPeace, Tweet (25 September 2026), <https://x.com/BoardOfPeace/status/2103554074247360833>

⁶⁸ Benjamin Netanyahu, @netanyahu, Twitter, (29 September 2018), <https://x.com/netanyahu/status/1046088589090738177>

⁶⁹ ICJ, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Advisory Opinion 9 July 2004, (*Palestine Advisory Opinion*) <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>.

⁷⁰ *Palestine Advisory Opinion* para. 94.

⁷¹ Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention), Articles 55-56, 59; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts 1977 (Protocol I), Article 69.

intensive care units, including incubators for newborn babies” and “relief supplies in this context also encompasses those necessary for special medical needs, including assistive devices for people with disabilities, such as wheelchairs.”⁷²

Under the law of occupation, Israel must also allow access to humanitarian protective organisations.⁷³ That such organizations are delivering relief does not relieve Israel of any of its own responsibilities as an Occupying Power to ensure the well-being of the local population.⁷⁴ As ruled by the ICJ in the *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion, those two sets of obligations, namely the general duty to ensure the food and medical supplies under Article 55 and the obligation to facilitate collective relief if the local population is inadequately supplied under Article 59 , are not alternative, and Israel’s basic obligations to ensure the availability of food and medical supplies essential to the survival of the local population remains — notwithstanding its obligations to agree to and facilitate the entry of humanitarian relief into an occupied territory under Article 59. This is a literal interpretation of Article 60 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to which “[r]elief consignments shall in no way relieve the Occupying Power of any of its responsibilities under Articles 55, 56 and 59”.⁷⁵

Israel cannot either invoke security reasons to limit the above obligations:

The Court observes that, while certain provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other rules of customary international law allow the occupying Power to take considerations of security or military necessity into account, the protection of security interests is not a free-standing exception permitting a State to depart from the otherwise applicable rules of international humanitarian law. Any limitations on Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law based on its security concerns must be grounded in a specific rule.⁷⁶

Article 60 of the Fourth Geneva Convention specifies that the Occupying Power can only “divert relief consignments from the purpose for which they are intended” in case of “urgent necessity, in the interests of the population of the occupied territory and with the consent of the Protecting Power”. Accordingly, the ICJ did not consider “that Israel’s security concerns limit the scope of Israel’s obligations as an occupying Power”, and underscored “that reliance upon such concerns must be exercised in accordance with the principle of good faith.”⁷⁷ It also held that the so-called fight against terrorism does not relieve States from their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human right law.⁷⁸

To the extent that the diversion of relief allowed for by Article 60 “must remain exceptional, temporary and only for the narrowly defined purposes set forth in the Fourth Geneva

⁷² ICJ, *Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organizations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (22 October 2025), (*UNRWA* Advisory Opinion) para. 96, available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/196/196-20251022-adv-01-00-en.pdf>

⁷³ Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 59-62; Protocol I, Articles 30, 55, 143.

⁷⁴ Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 59-62; Protocol I, Articles 69-71.

⁷⁵ *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion, para. 98.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 89.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion, para. 90.

Convention”, “[a]ny large-scale diversion of humanitarian aid constitutes a violation of obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention”.⁷⁹ Furthermore, considering the significant interplays between Articles 55, 56 and 59, “the diversion of aid must never undermine the general obligations of an occupying Power to ensure that the population is adequately supplied.”⁸⁰

The ICJ added that “Israel’s obligation under the first paragraph of Article 59 to agree to and facilitate relief schemes if the local population is inadequately supplied is unconditional.”⁸¹ Hence, while Article 59 grants rights to States allowing the free passage of consignments, “no State may exercise these rights to impede the delivery of relief consignments in a manner that undermines the performance of its obligations as set out in Article 59.”⁸²

Contrary to the above provisions, not only has Israel systematically denied Palestinians the supplies and services necessary for the population’s mental and physical health,⁸³ it has also consistently attacked (both physically and figuratively) a UN agency, “solely responsible for the survival of a large proportion of Palestinians in the OPT” and questioned its legitimacy, which reveals a larger, far more insidious objective — to strip Palestinians of all means, or chances, survival in their homeland.

Not only has Israel attacked UNRWA, but also Palestinians seeking supplies it provides. Yet, as ruled by the ICJ in the *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion:

“[A]n occupying Power must do more than simply allow the passage of essential items into the occupied territory. It must also use all means at its disposal so that these items are distributed in a regular, fair and non-discriminatory manner, including by facilitating access to them and refraining from threats or use of violence or lethal force against the civilian population seeking to access such humanitarian relief. Relief schemes must be carried out in a manner that respects the dignity of the local population”.⁸⁴

This assertion finds support in Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which enshrines the right of protected persons to be treated humanely.

In terms of relief consignment, it is beyond dispute that Article 59 is applicable to the Gaza Strip, i.e., that its population is inadequately supplied, as asserted by “a large majority of participants” in the proceedings leading up to the *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion and determined by the Court itself.⁸⁵ The Court further considered that there was “no evidence that UNRWA,

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 99.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, para. 94.

⁸² *Ibid.*, para. 97.

⁸³ UN News, “Global Perspective Human Stories, Israel has ‘concerted policy to destroy Gaza healthcare system’” (30 October 2024) <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2024/10/1156281#>; Al-Haq, “Room 376, Ibn Sina Hospital, Jenin: A Multi-layered Crime in a West Bank Hospital”, (3 February 2024), <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/22567.html>; “West Bank: Access to medical care at risk as Israeli incursions gain in intensity” *Médecins Sans Frontières*, (5 September 2024) <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/west-bank-access-to-medical-care-at-risk-as-israeli-incursions-gain-in-intensity/>.

⁸⁴ *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion, para. 101.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, paras 102-109.

as an entity, breached the principle of impartiality within the meaning of Article 59.”⁸⁶ UNRWA is not only an impartial organisation, it is also “an indispensable provider of humanitarian relief in the Gaza Strip” that cannot be realistically replaced. Therefore, “Israel is under an obligation to agree to and facilitate relief schemes provided by the United Nations and its entities, including UNRWA.”⁸⁷

Israel’s multiform attacks against UNRWA represent a pattern depriving Palestinians in the OPT of their basic needs on a systematic basis, and with genocidal intent to destroy the “Palestinian group, in breach of the Convention on the Prevention and Repression of the Crime of Genocide (“Genocide Convention”). Article 1 thereof, defines genocide as the intentional destruction of a racial, national, ethnic or religious group as such, in whole or in part. One of the genocidal acts listed under the Genocide Convention is “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”.

In September 2025, the UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israel had carried out genocidal acts in Gaza and concluded that “the destruction and denial of access to medical facilities and units”, as well as “[s]topping entry of humanitarian aid, electricity, water and fuel supplies to Gaza”, among other criminal conducts, constitute such genocidal conditions of life.⁸⁸ Considering that humanitarian aid is a *sine qua non* condition for Palestinians’ survival in Gaza — now more than ever, and that UNRWA is the main provider thereof— targeting UNRWA and paralysing its operations further aggravates these conditions of life inflicted on Palestinians by the Israeli authorities.

6.2. Israel’s Obligations regarding UNRWA Relief, Staff and Property

As mentioned above, the IOF have attacked a significant number of UNRWA staff members and facilities since October 2023, violating core prohibitions reflecting customary international law. Israel is prohibited from attacking UNRWA personnel under international humanitarian law (IHL) and its cornerstone, the principle of distinction, which requires parties to an armed conflict to distinguish between combatants and civilians, including humanitarian relief personnel. Civilians cannot be attacked⁸⁹ unless and for such time as they directly participate in the hostilities.⁹⁰

IHL provides more specific norms derived from the principle of distinction. Rule 31 of the Customary International Humanitarian Law Study protects humanitarian relief personnel against such attacks as well as humanitarian relief personnel is protected under the principle

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 101.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 124.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Council, “Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide- Conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel”, A/HRC/60/CRP.3, (16 September 2025), paras 96-106, 110-126, 137-147.

⁸⁹ ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law- Rule 1. The Principle of Distinction between Civilians and Combatants, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule1>.

⁹⁰ ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law- Rule 6: Civilians’ Loss of Protection from Attack, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule6>.

of distinction against harassment.⁹¹ Only in “cases of imperative military necessity” can the activities and movements of relief personnel be limited.⁹² As regards Israel’s attacks on UNRWA’s health facilities, civilian hospitals and medical personnel exclusively assigned to medical duties are further protected against attacks.⁹³

6.3. Israel’s obligations to respect Palestinians’ human rights

In the *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion, the ICJ observed “that the local population has been capable of enjoying many of these human rights in the [OPT],” which “has been largely enabled and ensured through the work of the United Nations, particularly through UNRWA, supported by the activities of other international organizations and third States”. It follows that “any diminution by Israel of the capacity of UNRWA and these other actors to ensure these basic human rights means that the obligations of Israel to respect, protect and fulfil these rights increase to a commensurate degree”.⁹⁴

The ICJ further noted that, conversely to the above obligations, Israel has adopted laws, policies and practices that have resulted in depriving Palestinians of essential needs, whether by targeting the Palestinian population as a whole (starvation) or UNRWA itself (for example by the laws of 28 October 2025). Notably, Israel is under the obligation to protect the right to life, the nature of which is absolute, meaning that it must be respected even “in time of public emergency”,⁹⁵ by taking “measures addressing widespread hunger and malnutrition as well as extreme poverty and homelessness” and to “ensure that individuals have access without delay to essential goods and services such as food, water, health care, electricity and sanitation.”⁹⁶

Considering the importance of UNRWA in terms of education in the OPT, Israel’s attacks against its schools, breach its obligation to protect the human rights to education enshrined in Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) as well as Article 13(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Israel is also obliged as an Occupying Power “to facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children” in the OPT, which include first and foremost UNRWA.⁹⁷

Ultimately, attacks on UNRWA contribute to depriving Palestinians of their “essential means of subsistence”, threatening “the fundamental conditions that are indispensable for that people to exercise its right to self-determination”. The right to self-determination, like the prohibition of genocide, has a special status as it constitutes a *jus cogens* norm, i.e., a

⁹¹ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 31: Safety of Humanitarian Relief Personnel, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule31>; Protocol 1, Article 71(2).

⁹² Protocol 1, Article 71(3).

⁹³ Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armed Forces in the Field of 12 August 1949, Articles 24-26; Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 18, 20.

⁹⁴ *UNRWA* Advisory Opinion, para. 152.

⁹⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 4(1).

⁹⁶ *UNRWA*, Advisory Opinion, paras 153-154.

⁹⁷ Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 50.

peremptory norm of international law that cannot be derogated from,⁹⁸ the violation of which, calls for concrete and decisive actions. Third States for example, are obligated not to recognise the situation arising from these violations as lawful, not to render aid or assistance allowing for maintaining the situation and to collaborate towards bringing to an end the internationally wrongful act.⁹⁹

6.4. Israel's obligations towards the United Nations

As a member of the UN, Israel must comply with the UN Charter, which provides obligations that must be fulfilled in good faith,¹⁰⁰ including notably the obligation to co-operate with the UN, defined as the duty to “give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes”.¹⁰¹ This obligation includes complying with the resolutions by the UN Security Council and General Assembly as well as decisions by the ICJ, main judiciary organ of the UN.

Yet, Israel has failed to comply with the three Provisional Measures Orders in 2024 handed down by the ICJ in the case *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (South Africa vs. Israel)*. As mentioned above, Israel has deprived Palestinians in the Gaza Strip of their basic needs, ignoring that the ICJ has ruled that the situation in Gaza constitutes a plausible case of genocide. The Court ordered Israel to take measures enabling the “provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip”.¹⁰² Israel also failed to implement the binding provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2278 demanding an “immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire”.¹⁰³

These failures to co-operate with the UN have had a significant adverse impact on UNRWA's ability to accomplish its mandate in the Gaza Strip, in a context of relentless bombardments and complete siege. Far from rendering assistance to UNRWA, a subsidiary organ of the UN, Israel has prohibited its activity in the OPT, acting as a sovereign power therein in blatant violation of IHL.¹⁰⁴ Importantly, the ICJ held in the *UNRWA Advisory Opinion* that “Israel is not entitled to withhold its co-operation with the United Nations by unilaterally deciding on the presence and activities of United Nations entities in and in relation to the [OPT]”.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, Israel's recent raid on the UNRWA compound in East Jerusalem, in addition to violating the abovementioned customary rule prohibiting intimidation and harassment of

⁹⁸ ICJ, *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, Advisory Opinion, (19 July 2024), para. 233, available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Commission of International Law, Draft Article on Responsibility of States for International Wrongful Acts (2001), Article 41.

¹⁰⁰ UN Charter (1945), Article 2(2).

¹⁰¹ UN Charter (1945), Article 2(5).

¹⁰² ICJ, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa vs. Israel)*, Order of 26 January 2024, para. 86, available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203447>.

¹⁰³ UN Security Council Resolution 2278 (2024).

¹⁰⁴ *UNRWA Advisory Opinion*, para. 176.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 177.

humanitarian relief personnel, also violates the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities, which makes UN premises “inviolable”, as enshrined in Article 2 thereof:

The property and assets of the [UN], wherever located and by whomsoever held, shall be immune from search, requisition, confiscation, expropriation and any other form of interference, whether by executive, administrative, judicial or legislative action.¹⁰⁶

UN privileges and immunities are further protected by Article 105 of the UN Charter.

6.5. Israel’s obligations regarding Palestinians’ rights of return

Moreover, under international human rights law, the right to move out and then return to one’s own country is inherently attached to the freedom of movement.¹⁰⁷ Palestinians’ right to return was recognised on 11 December 1948 by the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III): “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date”. The resolution preceded Resolution 302 (IV) which established UNRWA. That Israel is under the obligation to allow the return of all “Palestinians displaced during the occupation to return to their original place of residence”, has been reaffirmed by the ICJ in the *Palestine* Advisory Opinion.¹⁰⁸

In this regard, Al-Haq contends that:

UNRWA represents much more than its mandate. Since its creation . . . UNRWA is a testament to Palestine refugees’ inalienable right to self-determination and their collective right of return. Israel, not only intends to destroy all means of survival for Palestinians as a group, it also seeks to erase any legal or international recognition of the refugee status of Palestinian families forcibly displaced during the creation of the State of Israel in the course of its illegal expansion. To achieve these goals, it is not enough to kill, injure and subject Palestinians to subhuman unliveable conditions. It must destroy UNRWA too . . . Attacks on UNRWA must be seen as a wider attack on the global refugee regime and the broader international humanitarian system.¹⁰⁹

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

A key point developed in this position paper is that Israel’s attacks against UNRWA are not only attacks against an international presence in a territory it seeks to unlawfully annex. These various and relentless attacks play a key role in Israel’s genocidal campaign against the Palestinian people. UNRWA is the main provider of humanitarian supplies in the OPT and Israel’s attempt to destroy UNRWA is intended to destroy the Palestinian people and their

¹⁰⁶ Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the UN (1946), Article II, Section 3.

¹⁰⁷ ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law- Rule 132: Return of Displaced Persons, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule132>.

¹⁰⁸ *Palestine* Advisory Opinion, para 270.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Haq, “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)”, (2024), pp. 4, 13.

historical and indigenous presence in the OPT. It is therefore a far-reaching policy aimed at erasing Palestinians' inderogable rights and status as refugees, in blatant violation of international law.

In light of the above, Al-Haq urges the international community and Third States to:

- Condemn Israeli attacks against UNRWA, including the adoption by the Knesset of laws intended to stop UNWRA's operation as genocidal acts;
- Immediately take concrete and decisive measures to compel Israel to comply with its legal obligations, including by imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions and a two-ways arms embargo on Israel;
- Resume support or continue supporting UNRWA in Palestine, including through financial contributions;
- Ensure that UNRWA continues its vital support to Palestinian refugees with full access to the all parts of the OPT;
- Resume and increase financial support to other aid organisations operating in Gaza, including the World Food Programme;
- Implement the recommendations to Third States enshrined in the ICJ Palestine Advisory Opinion and UNRWA Advisory Opinions, including by not recognising, aiding or assisting any Israeli acts which maintain its unlawful presence in the OPT;
- Act internationally to realise the inalienable right of Palestinian refugees to return, and dismantle Israel's apartheid laws, policies and practices, systematically preventing Palestinian return and self-determination.