

Top Israeli Officials Acknowledge Failure of Campaign to Halt UNRWA International Funding

Thursday 25 April 2024, by [TIBON Amir](#) (Date first published: 24 April 2024).

Germany joined the list of countries that announced they will be renewing funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. Israel is concerned that the U.K. and U.S. will also reverse their decision to freeze funding

Palestinians flock to receive flour distributed by The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza, where there is a food crisis due to Israeli attacks in Deir Al-Balah, Gaza in March. Credit: Ashraf Amra / Anadolu via Reuters Connect

Senior Israeli officials have admitted over the past day that the Israeli campaign against international funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has failed.

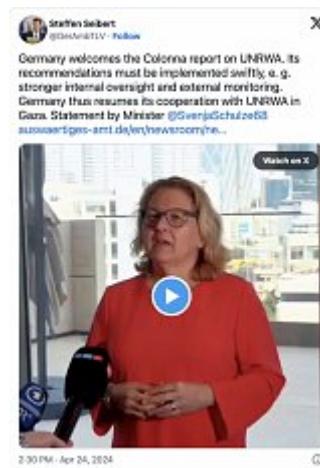
Several countries have announced over the past few weeks that they will renew the funding to [UNRWA](#) which they froze at the start of the Gaza war in the wake of Israeli claims that the organizations was cooperating with Hamas, and that some of its employees had actively participated in the October 7 attack.

Germany, one of Israel's biggest international backers, [said on Wednesday](#) that it would restore funding to UNRWA, which it had frozen in January. A spokesperson for the German foreign ministry said in a statement that after examining Israel's claims Germany was convinced that supervision of UNRWA and its projects should be improved but that it would resume cooperation with the agency as several other countries have already done.

Palestinians storming an UNRWA warehouse in Gaza City last month. Credit: Mahmoud Issa/Reuters

The statement also stated that the agency continues to play a "vital and currently irreplaceable role" in addressing the [humanitarian crisis](#) in the Gaza Strip, and that other international organizations operating in Gaza also rely on UNRWA's existing infrastructure. Germany also believes that "in light of the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza, this is more important than ever" to support the various UN agencies operating in Gaza, and to do so before funding to UNRWA suffers in a way that makes it impossible to continue its welfare and education projects.

The German announcement comes amid a report published over the weekend by Catherine Colonna, the former French foreign minister, who was appointed by the UN to investigate UNRWA's operations.



Colonna visited Israel about a month ago and met with senior government and military officials to get an overview of the allegations against the organization. The Colonna report stated however that Israel [did not present](#) credible evidence that many UNRWA employees were members of terrorist organizations operating in Gaza, and it did not address Israel's allegations of participation by UNRWA employees in the October 7 attacks.

The UN report was harshly criticized by Israel, and the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem said in an official response that the report "ignores the severity of the problem and offers cosmetic solutions that do not deal with the enormous scope of Hamas' infiltration of UNRWA. This is not what a real and comprehensive examination looks like."

Political sources in Israel have acknowledged in talks with foreign diplomats in recent days that Jerusalem had not succeeded in influencing the report in the way it had had hoped, and that it is clear following the report's publication, other countries will join Germany and renew funding for the agency. According to reports published over the weekend, the United Kingdom is also now considering renewing funding to UNRWA.

Rubble of destroyed buildings in northern Gaza, on Monday. Credit: Mahmoud Issa/Reuters

So far, the most important countries that have already decided to renew funding to UNRWA - most of them did so before the publication of the Colonna report - have been France, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Spain, and Japan. Israel is mainly concerned that the United States and the United Kingdom, its two strongest supporters in the international arena today, will reverse [their decision](#) to halt funding to the UN agency.

An Israeli source involved in the diplomatic effort to halt funding to UNRWA told Haaretz that the failure was not in the field of public relations and communications, but rather stemmed from the lack of a convincing alternative to UNRWA.

According to the source, Israel managed to raise doubts about UNRWA among its friends around the world but did not present suitable alternatives to the agency. The defense establishment also assessed, back in January, that the main would not be convincing the world that the agency was problematic but convincing it that UNRWA could be replaced.

A diplomat from one of the European countries that already renewed funding to UNRWA told Haaretz that his government's decision to do so resulted from two reasons.

"The evidence presented by Israel wasn't convincing," the diplomat said. "It didn't sufficiently prove

that this was a widespread phenomenon.”

The same diplomat added that as the humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorated in recent months, it became clear that there was no immediate alternative to UNRWA. “If there was one, we’d be willing to consider it.” According to this diplomat, there is a consensus among EU countries that support for UNRWA should continue in the current situation, despite Israel’s claims.

Amir Tibon

P.S.

- Haaretz. Apr 24, 2024 7:22 pm IDT:
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-04-24/ty-article/.premium/top-israeli-officials-acknowledge-failure-of-campaign-to-halt-unrwa-international-funding/0000018f-104e-d97f-abcf-fccf9f300000>