



The United Nations said it regrets the decision of the United States to stop funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees ([UNRWA](#)) and called on other countries to help fill the remaining financial gap.

“We regret the United States’ decision to provide no further funding to UNRWA, which provides essential services to Palestine refugees and contributes to stability in the region,” Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, said in a statement Friday.

“The Secretary-General calls on other countries to help fill the remaining financial gap, so that UNRWA can continue to provide this vital assistance, as well as a sense of hope to this vulnerable population.”

The United States has traditionally been UNRWA’s largest donor. In January 2018, the US announced that its annual contribution to UNRWA would be \$60 million, which meant a \$300 M reduction in income. This remaining contribution has now been cut as well.

Other donors have stepped in and increased their financial contributions but UNRWA is still “in critical need of over \$200 M to survive this year’s crisis and call on donors to sustain the collective mobilization to succeed in this crucial endeavour,” Pierre Krähenbühl, the UNRWA Commissioner General said in an [open letter to Palestinian refugees and UNRWA staff](#) .

“At no time over the past eight months were we notified of the specific reasons for the dramatic cut,” Krähenbühl says in his open letter. “It appeared clearly related however to the tensions between the United States and the Palestinian leadership following the US announcement on Jerusalem and not to UNRWA’s performance.”

In his statement the UN Secretary-General expressed his “full confidence” in Mr. Krähenbühl and pointed out that the agency has expanded the donor base, raised considerable new funding, and explored new avenues of support, as well as reducing costs.

“UNRWA has a strong record of providing high-quality education, health and other essential services, often in extremely difficult circumstances, to Palestine refugees who are in great need,” he said.

UNRWA was [established](#) by the General Assembly in 1949 to provide assistance and protection to a population of some five million registered Palestine refugees in various countries throughout the Middle East. Its services include education, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, health care and emergency assistance.

Mr. Krähenbühl says that “the attempt to make UNRWA somehow responsible for perpetuating the crisis is disingenuous at best.” “It, therefore, represented an evident politicization of humanitarian aid. The announcement made yesterday further challenges the notion that humanitarian funding should be depoliticized. It risks undermining the foundations of the international multilateral and humanitarian systems.”

“I say again to all Palestine refugees: we will not fail you,” concluded the head of UNRWA in his open letter.

UN pleads to donors as US cuts all contributions to Palestinian refugees

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