



Dear Partners and Siblings in Christ,

We send you greetings from Jerusalem. As many of you have likely seen in the news, the Israeli Knesset voted last week to ban UNRWA, **the organization responsible for providing aid and services to 5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees**, from conducting work within Israel, including areas of occupied and/or annexed East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. This legislation will go into effect in 90 days. In addition, the Knesset voted to designate UNRWA as a terror organization, thereby forbidding interaction between the organization and the Israeli government.

As many international governments and agencies have already warned, **this will have an incalculably devastating impact on the already existing humanitarian crisis.** UNRWA's role throughout the country in providing essential services cannot be replaced. UNRWA was established after the Nakba in 1948, which created hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Many of these people and their descendants still live in the 28 refugee camps throughout the Palestinian territories, relying on UNRWA for essential services like schools, hospitals, and vital infrastructure. **This ban could close 65 primary health-care facilities, shutter 380 schools, and devastate the 1.2 million Palestinian refugees currently receiving emergency food aid within the occupied territories.** This legislation will close the UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem, revoke work permits for thousands of UNRWA staff, and effectively cease all humanitarian aid entering Gaza through the Rafah crossing.

We ask you, our closest partners, to join us in condemning this action in the strongest possible terms. This is a transparent attempt by the Israeli government to limit aid to Palestinians at one of the most critical points in history, and to put an end to the Palestinian refugee cause. Palestinian refugees have been guaranteed to maintain their refugee status until the right of return to the lands from which they have been displaced, promised by UN resolution 194, is fulfilled. The cessation of services by UNRWA will make this status meaningless.

As UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said, "These bills will only deepen the suffering of Palestinians, especially in Gaza where people have been going through more than a year of sheer hell." The situation on the ground is already at a breaking point. **We ask**

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



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you to take steps to pressure your governments to demand that Israel reverse this legislation before it goes into effect. Restricting humanitarian aid to civilians is against international law and is against all our guiding Christian values.

Our prayers and actions at this time must be in service of justice, so that peace may finally come to this region.

May God's blessings be with you.

Your brother in Christ,

Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sani Azar', with a cross symbol at the beginning.

Bishop Doctor Sani Ibrahim Azar