



February 2024

Resuming payments to UN aid agency for Palestinians, UNRWA

Dear Senator Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs:

I write to ask the Australian Government to reverse its decision to freeze funding to the UN aid agency for Palestinians, UNRWA, as a matter of urgency.

As you know, many thousands of Palestinians, including children, have been killed or injured in Gaza. Many health workers, aid workers and journalists have lost their lives. There is massive displacement of people in Gaza, and much distress.

Many people in Gaza are facing starvation and most health facilities are crippled. There is an extreme need for more food, fuel, and medicines to keep people alive and restore services.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Israel is legally bound to “take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article 2 of the convention, in particular (a) killing members of the group [Palestinians], (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, (c) deliberating inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.”

This ruling obligates all parties to the Genocide Convention, including Australia, to prevent and punish the crime of genocide. As the UNRWA is the only organisation currently distributing the limited aid that Israel permits into Gaza, it is vital that Australia and its allies reverse the cuts to UNRWA. This would show its support for the ICJ ruling as well as its commitment to the welfare of Palestinian people.

We ask the Government to call for an immediate unconditional ceasefire and resume funding UNRWA.

In addition, we ask the government to critically examine the ways in which Australia provides military support for, and its contracts with Israel, to ensure that Australia is not involved in any way with attacks against Gaza.

In Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Henry', with a horizontal line underneath.

Bruce Henry
Presiding Clerk
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Cc: Richard Marles, Minister for Defence; Simon Birmingham, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs; Andrew Hastie, Shadow Minister for Defence