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**Paper: Repercussions of Barring the agreement of UNRWA on Palestinian women
and girls refugee**

After the Israeli Knesset decision on Barring UNRWA work “ a humanitarian crisis threatens the lives of more than 2 million Palestinian refugees, half of them are Palestinian women, and accordingly the Ministry of Women’s Affairs warns about the repercussions of such decision”.

On November 4, 2024, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially, announced the United Nations of its decision to suspend the agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This decision of the Israeli Knesset was issued by the majority voting of the Israeli Knesset (92 votes to 10 votes) to ban UNRWA’s activities inside the Palestinian territories. Furthermore, the decision poses a direct threat to 2 million Palestinian refugees, including more than 750,000 refugees in the West Bank and Jerusalem exceeding to more than 1.3 million refugees in the Gaza Strip (half of whom are women), including 324,000 children studying in UNRWA schools, and thousands of patients who depend on its health services, especially pregnant women and their children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. It also leads to the cut off of the social safety net and humanitarian assistance for hundreds of thousands of Refugees, at a time when the need for UNRWA services is growing in light of the war of extermination and genocide that Gaza Strip has been witnessing since October 7, 2023, and the destruction of most of the institutions operating there. We hereby, the Ministry of Women's Affairs are closely monitoring the repercussions of this decision, and warn of its disastrous effects on refugee women and their families in light of the difficult humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem. The following are the repercussions of this decision:



1st: Barring UNRWA means depriving 324.000 (female/ Male) student from the right to education and threatening the future of a whole generation.

The decision of barring UNRWA leads to deprivation of 324.000 (female/male) student in the Palestinian Territories from the education opportunities, among these are 278.000 in Gaza Strip and 46.000 in the West Bank, in addition to, students that are trained in the vocational level.

2nd: Barring the UNRWA means deprivation of the Palestinian women from the health basic need endangering the lives of thousands, especially pregnant women and the elders, the disabled, the young girls and those confronting chronic diseases.

UNRWA provides vital medical services to the Palestinian refugees through 140 medical and health service centers distributed among Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, which causes a human dilemma and crisis that increases pressure among Palestinian local hospitals which suffer from resources and medical supplies shortages. This deteriorating situation jeopardize directly the lives of women and children health, in particular in Gaza strip, where medical and humanitarian situations exacerbate to be the worse. Around 31.441 000 female refugee in Gaza Strip, and 10.130 thousand in the West Bank benefitted from the basic health care services in 2022.

3rd: Barring UNRWA activation, means the loss of jobs, and job opportunities for thousands of the Palestinian women, which increases non employment and poverty averages.

UNRWA employs over 19,877male/female, among them 9.443 in Gaza Strip and 2.215 in the West Bank, meanwhile, around 4851 employee work in the health sector among them, there are 1015 women (21% of workers in the health sector are women). In addition to, women who works in the relief and consultation institutions under the supervision of UNRWA, which increases non employment and poverty between women and females headed households and bread winners of their families.

Also, males loss of their jobs will directly affect women and children within these families, this will deepen the economic difficult situation, and in particular in Gaza Strip, that endures



and suffer from a complete destruction of the institutions operating there

4th Barring UNRWA means the deprivation of the Palestinian women from the financial aid of small projects, which increases poverty percentages.

The UNRWA provides funds and donation for small projects in Palestine, targeting females, graduates and the dis abled. Around 39% of females in the West Bank and 43% in Gaza Strip benefitted from these funds to enhance and improve their financial and social circumstances.

This act of barring UNRWA will deprive women from vital fund opportunities which will suspend and risk their small projects from continuation and sustainability, and cause an increase in poverty percentages and a lot of challenges arise at the educational, health and social levels. it's worth mentioning that small projects are considered as a safe haven for Palestinian families, yet, when these projects stop, it increases the possibility of women high potential exposure to violence.

5th: Barring UNRWA means Deprivation of the Palestinian women from digital transformation projects that leads to widen the digital gap.

UNRWA works on the implementation of digital transformation projects that aims to empower female and male graduates, especially women, to integrate them in the digital labor market by providing trainings and opportunities to rehabilitate and empower their capacities in digital technology. Meanwhile, freezing and barring the UNRWA work will deprive Palestinian women from digital transformation opportunities, and deepens the digital gap, reduce their capacities and minimize their skills potentials that will hinder them from participation in the digital economy, and resulting an increase in the gender gap.

6th: Barring UNRWA means deprivation of the Palestinian population from infrastructure services and increase their sufferings.

UNRWA implements the housing projects, enhance the roads and streets, provides basic services in the refugee camps. These projects mitigate the suffering of Palestinians especially women who shoulder a big burden in managing family affairs.



The deactivation of such projects will increase the difficult living conditions in the camps, it will worsen the economic, social circumstances and even make it harder on women and their families. Furthermore, this will exacerbate the daily burdens and raise the challenges the Palestinian families encounter while covering their basic needs.

7th: Barring UNRWA means the deprivation of the Palestinian women from the basic protection services and increase their sufferings.

Barring the work of UNRWA will deprive refugee women from protection programs and services provided by UNRWA in different regions, targeting marginalized and vulnerable people, in particular women, children, the elderly and the disabled. The protection programs and services provided by UNRWA to refugees are food assistance, and essential means of aid for the elderly and the disabled.

In addition to, activities that raise women awareness about their issues, and they will also be deprived from legal consultations aid, advocacy and lobbying provided by UNRWA to protect the refugee rights in accordance to the international law.

8th: Barring UNRWA means an additional pressure on governmental institutions and the private sector which will increase burdens on Palestinian women.

Barring and Deactivation of UNRWA will increase the pressure on governmental Palestinian institutions that provides similar services to UNRWA, which will enforce a negative impact on the Palestinian National Authority capacity in providing the basic services, especially during the financial dilemma the PNA is facing, and the Israeli occupation imposing piracy of clearance revenues, withholding funds that formulates 65% out of the general revenues.

The absence of the basic needs will force families to adapt to costly and expensive strategies increasing drastically averages of poverty and nonemployment. It will additionally, lead to food insecurities leaving Palestinian women behind, depriving themselves from all the basic needs and necessary services. As an outcome to this dilemma, the absence of the essential basic needs like health and food means a real danger threatening the lives of Palestinian women.



Based on the above mentioned, and since this decision constitutes a dangerous precedent, as it seriously targets refugees by revoking and diminishing their right to return. The decision poses a real threat to the lives of refugee women of all categories and ages (elderly women, children, women with disabilities, girls, and adolescent girls) and threatens their educational and professional future and their social and economic stability. Yet, based on the implications mentioned in this paper, and in implementation of the international resolutions that granted the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) the right to work on providing its services to the Palestinians since 1949, we demand the following:

1. Pressure Israel, the occupying power, to reverse its decision to suspend UNRWA, as it constitutes a blatant violation of international law and disrupts the humanitarian services provided by the Agency to Palestinian refugees.
2. Provide the necessary funding and international support to continue UNRWA's work, in order to ensure its continued provision of basic services to Palestinian refugees, especially in the education, health and relief sectors.
3. Mobilize international support for development projects and support technology-based business initiatives that contribute to securing a stable and sustainable income for women and help empower them economically and socially.
4. Strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the international community to ensure the protection of the rights of Palestinian refugees, provide them with basic services, and provide humanitarian support to women and children who have been greatly affected by this decision.