



**CHAIR OF
THE COORDINATING BUREAU
OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT**



**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
AZERBAIJAN, ON BEHALF OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT
(NAM), UNDER AGENDA ITEM 52, ENTITLED “UNITED NATIONS
RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE
NEAR EAST (UNRWA)”, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE 75TH SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York, November 2020

Mr. Chair,

1. The Republic of Azerbaijan is honored to submit this statement on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in connection with the agenda item on a matter to which we have historically attached special importance.
2. At the outset, we seize this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the invaluable work done and the essential assistance provided by UNRWA to the Palestine refugees. UNRWA's humanitarian and protection mission remains vital, considering the continuing and rising needs of the refugees in the absence of a just solution for their plight and in the context of the crises, instability and conflicts affecting all fields of operation in the region, including the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as a result of the continued violations by Israel, the occupying Power.
3. We reiterate the Movement's firm appreciation to UNRWA's entire staff for their tireless efforts, courage and dedication to serve the Palestine refugees, even under the most adverse and dangerous conditions that regrettably in some cases have led to the loss of their lives while on duty.
4. In regards to the recent investigation into allegations of misconduct by UNRWA senior staff, the Movement takes note of the conclusion of investigation and that no fraud, corruption or misuse of funds was found. We are reassured by the administrative measures taken by the Secretary-General, and welcome the appointments of Mr. Philippe Lazzarini as Commissioner-General of UNRWA and of Ms. Leni Stenseth as the Deputy Commissioner-General. As strong supporters of UNRWA's mandate, the Members of the Movement wish Mr. Lazzarini success in carrying out the duties of this important post at this critical time.



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Mr. Chair,

5. Returning focus to the core issue before us, the Non-Aligned Movement underscores the importance of the work carried out by UNRWA, and reiterates its strong support to the Agency and its mandate given by the General Assembly, to provide humanitarian, development and emergency assistance and protection for over 5.6 million Palestine refugees, pending the achievement of a just solution to their plight on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, including resolution 194 (III), which affirmed, *inter alia*, their right to return and fair compensation.
6. The Member States of the Movement believe that the mandate and operations of UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, since 1949, remain essential and indispensable until the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including for the plight of the Palestine refugees. The longstanding, strong and generous support of the international community, including the host countries, has been critical for ensuring the continuity of UNRWA services over the years, and is especially needed now in light of the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and instability in the region, which have been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recurrent, severe financial shortfalls that still affect its vital humanitarian programmes. In this regard, we reaffirm the urgency of providing UNRWA with sustained, predictable and uninterrupted support, as called for by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
7. In this context, Non-Aligned Movement deeply regrets the exacerbation of the Agency's severe funding crisis, particularly following the punitive and unjustified decision of the U.S. Government to suddenly terminate its funding to the Agency, which not only targets the most vulnerable segment of Palestinian people by undermining the provision of vital humanitarian and development assistance to them, but also threatens the region's stability, as UNRWA has been repeatedly acknowledged as making a significant contribution to regional stability. Similarly, the Movement expresses its concern over the provocative announcement of Israeli authorities to terminate UNRWA service provision in the Occupied East Jerusalem, and call for the respect of the UN Charter and the privileges and immunities of the Organization and relevant UN resolutions, including the mandate of the Agency.
8. The annual report of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly, contained in document A/75/13, noted that in 2020 UNRWA continues to face challenges on many fronts.



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9. As a result of prevailing conditions, including the volatility in the region and widespread violence, as well as the marginalization and poverty that continue to affect them, Palestine refugees still face serious protection challenges. The ongoing Israeli occupation, which has now been imposed for over 53 years, inflicting armed conflict, collective punishment and forced displacement on the Palestinian people, including refugees, among them thousands of Bedouins, has compounded the hardships endured by refugee families. In many cases, these people face existential threats and sink deeper into poverty and desperation, as has been particularly the case for Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the protracted plight of the Palestine refugees has been exacerbated due to ongoing crises in the region, including the conflict in Syria, which has intensified the need for humanitarian assistance, and has resulted in further displacement and flight of thousands of refugees to other countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and beyond.

Mr. Chair,

10. The Gaza Strip has been crippled by the illegal blockade imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, for more than thirteen years, imposing untold humanitarian, social and economic suffering on the more than 2 million Palestinian children, women and men there, the majority of whom are refugees. This unilateral blockade still severely affects every aspect of life, including by obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic materials to Gaza Strip, impeding the reconstruction of the thousands of homes and infrastructures, including refugee shelters and refugee camps that have been destroyed, hindering economic and social recovery, deepening needs and aid dependency, and impairing the fragile health system even in this critical time of pandemic. In these conditions UNRWA is compelled to respond as more and more families descend into poverty and face food insecurity, which now affects over 80% of the population in Gaza, and are in need of assistance.
11. The Member States of the Movement seize this opportunity to stress that the crisis in Gaza must be comprehensively addressed, in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and the relevant UN resolutions, in the context of the overall efforts to bringing an end to the illegitimate, belligerent, Israeli foreign occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967. Similarly, we call once again for the full and immediate lifting of the illegal Gaza blockade, which is the only way for the Palestine refugee population in Gaza to decrease its dependency on UNRWA.



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12. Moreover, we reiterate our concern over the increased restrictions on movement and access imposed on Palestine refugees and UNRWA's staff within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, we call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately meet its obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, including relevant UN resolutions, the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, and the 1967 Comay-Michelmores Agreement, to enable UNRWA to discharge its duties freely, without hindrance or additional costs. Similarly, we call for the full respect of the immunity of the United Nations and the inviolability of all United Nations premises and installations, including of UNRWA, and for an end to the violations in this regard.

Mr. Chair,

13. The Movement commends the support extended by several NAM Member States in support of UNRWA and urges continued, and where possible, increased support from the international community for the Agency in light of the severe and recurrent funding crisis and continuing budgetary shortfalls that UNRWA continues to face and the urgent appeals made by the Commissioner-General at the Ministerial Pledging Conference held on 23 June 2020. The continuity of UNRWA operations and service delivery must be ensured in line with its General Assembly mandate, which was renewed by a resounding majority in December 2019.

14. The Non-Aligned Movement hopes that the Member States of the United Nations will continue to give their strong support to all of the draft resolutions under this item. Such support would constitute a clear reaffirmation of the international community's long-standing political and financial commitment to the Agency in support of its mandate to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to alleviate the plight of the Palestine refugees and ensure their well-being and protection, pending the achievement of a just solution.

15. The Movement once again urges all Member States, especially the traditional donors, to continue and, if possible, increase their contributions to UNRWA, which will help avoid further uncertainty and instability among the refugees, and we also urge new donors to come forward with generosity to meet the growing needs, in line with the permanent responsibilities and obligations of the international community towards the question of Palestine, until a just solution is realized.



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16. To conclude, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its unwavering support to UNRWA's mandate, efforts and contribution to the human development and protection of the Palestine refugees and the promotion of their rights and dignity as well as regional stability, while also reiterating the need to continue all efforts to bring an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and to fulfill the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees.

17. We once again reaffirm our commitment to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Question of Palestine in all its aspects, including for the plight of the Palestine refugees, and reaffirm our support to the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice and fulfill their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including to self-determination, freedom and independence in their sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.