

UNHRC Session #55 Item 3

Oral Statement

General Debate on the Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights

The Minimum Protection Required for Palestinian Refugees

The 1951 Refugee Convention outlines the requirements for comprehensive protection owed to refugees under three pillars: physical, legal and humanitarian. The 8.36 million Palestinian refugees are neither provided with physical protection to ensure their safety and security, nor legal protection, including the right for durable solutions. Now, they are also being denied humanitarian aid. Therefore, Palestinian refugees are faced with an ever-expanding protection gap that enables daily violations of all their rights.

The protection gap is most obvious in the Gaza Strip, where 81 percent of the (Palestinian) population are refugees, who have been internally displaced, multiple times. Ensuring international protection requires enabling UN agencies and international organizations to operate. However, the agency mandated by the UN to provide humanitarian protection, UNRWA, has been targeted again by another Israeli delegitimization campaign that has led to its defunding.

Israel has further obstructed the work of UNRWA, by targeting its facilities and staff, and denying it access to Gaza, especially in the north. By defunding the UNRWA, powerful western states have supported Israel's goal to disable the Agency, facilitate its elimination and deepen the protection gap.

To ensure the bare minimum protection for Palestinian refugees, States must: enforce a ceasefire and support and enable UNRWA's work, especially in the Gaza Strip.