

Engineering UNRWA's Collapse: The United Nations' Strategic Assessment



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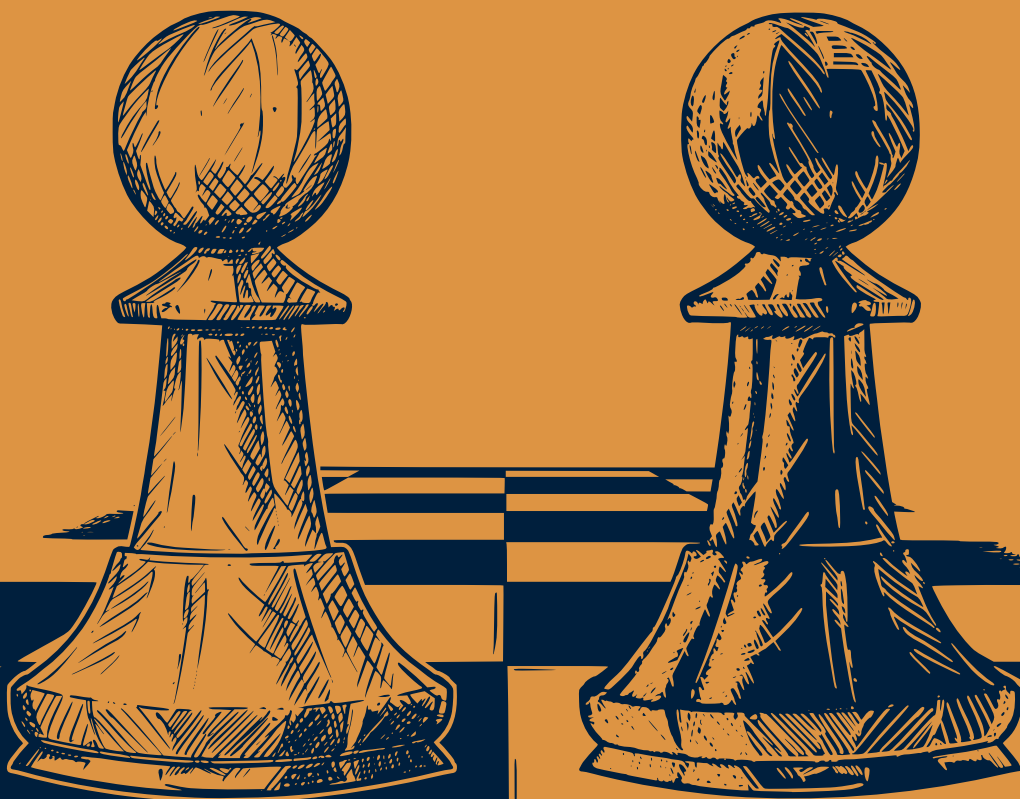
a strategic assessment to seemingly examine the implications of the presence of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Assessment focused on reviewing the Agency's impact and performance in fulfilling its mandate, particularly in light of the political, financial, operational and security constraints imposed on it by colonial states.

In June 2025, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini announced that the Strategic Assessment would propose ways to facilitate the protection of the rights of Palestinian refugees, given the circumstances facing the Agency. Instead, the Assessment proposed four scenarios that all envision the Agency's eventual dismantlement:

- **Inaction and Potential Collapse of UNRWA**
- **Reduction of Services**
- **Institutionalizing collective responsibility through the establishment of an Executive Board of donors**
- **Maintaining UNRWA's rights-based core while gradually transferring service delivery**



**What are the implications
of each scenario?**



Scenario

1

Inaction and Potential Collapse of UNRWA

What is it?

This scenario includes continuing to refrain from taking the necessary measures to prevent the Agency's collapse. That is taking no action until collapse occurs, due to states' defunding and lack of political support, as if it were an accidental, unintended event, or an automatic consequence of a natural process of accumulated decline.

The Issue with the Scenario

It normalizes the Agency's demise as if it were the result of unfortunate circumstances, rather than a direct consequence of decades of organized and systematic political sabotage by states, and the Israeli-US delegitimization and dismantlement campaign.

The Implications

The disappearance of services as a result of the Agency's sudden and disorganized collapse, leading to a humanitarian catastrophe and the deprivation of international protection and services for 5.9 million Palestinian refugees. As the last remaining UN institution that actively upholds their rights, its dismantlement would create a political and legal void.



Scenario **2**

Reduction of Services

What is it?

This scenario proposes transferring “replaceable” services to other UN or humanitarian agencies while keeping UNRWA’s core operations like education and health.

The Issue with the Scenario

This proposal institutionalizes UNRWA’s collapse, meaning it strips the Agency of its services under the pretext of transferring them to “more efficient and capable” agencies that do not have a mandate, thus keeping UNRWA in name only without an actual presence on the ground.

The Implications

Fragmentation of service provision and consequently the dispersal of services for Palestinian refugees among multiple service providers, blurs the unified legal status that unites Palestinian refugees and weakens, if not abolishes, UNRWA’s mandate.



Scenario **3**

Institutionalizing collective responsibility by establishing an Executive Board of donors

What is it?

This scenario calls for the establishment of a new Executive Board from outside of UNRWA, comprising of major donor states, to secure additional funding at higher international levels which in turn, grants greater control to states most invested in obstructing Palestinian refugee rights and weakening UNRWA.

The Issue with the Scenario

While this proposal may appear to be a step toward reforming the Agency, it essentially produces no tangible impact. This scenario maintains and even entrenches the funding structure that operates on a voluntary basis and subjects UNRWA to even more political conditions.

The Implications

This scenario detaches the Agency from its rights-based mandate and relegates it to the discretion of donor states. In other words, it leads to the capture and management of UNRWA by colonial donor institutions and states, marginalizing Palestinian refugee voices and non-donor states; depoliticizing the Palestinian refugee issue, and undermines UNRWA's neutrality.

Scenario 4

**Maintaining
UNRWA's rights-
based core, while
gradually
transferring service
delivery**

What is it?

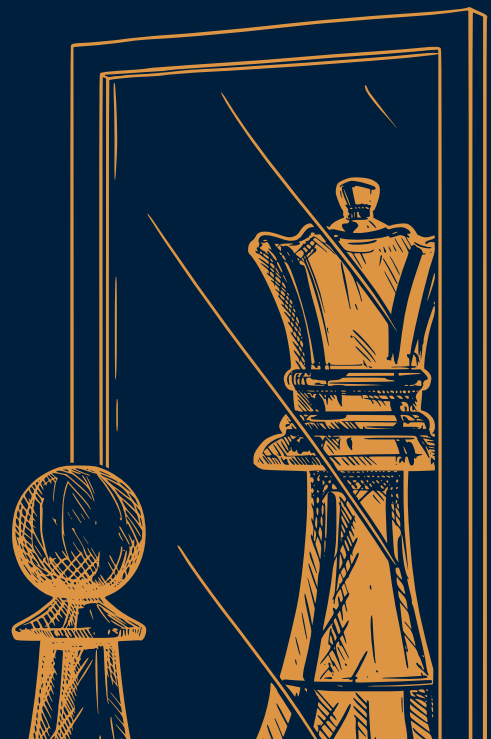
This scenario claims to preserve UNRWA's core by transferring its state-like public services to the governments of host states, while the Agency retains the minimal functions it previously performed.

The Issue with the Scenario

Under this proposal, UNRWA would share the fate of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), existing in name only without performing any tangible role on the ground.

The Implications

This proposal would entail abandoning Palestinian refugees and erasing their legal and political status, leading to increased marginalization, forced integration into host states that are themselves subject to colonial-imperialist domination, or displacement to other countries.



These proposed scenarios

do not aim to preserve and protect UNRWA's mandate. Rather, they reflect a growing trend among Western donors, the United States and the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime to dismantle and abolish the Agency, undermining the Palestinian right to return.

Whether the collapse is organized or not, these scenarios, as a whole, fundamentally contradict the primary objective of the Assessment, as they violate the founding mandate under which UNRWA operates, international law and UN Resolution 194.

The only just and legitimate reason for dismantling UNRWA is the full realization of the Palestinian inalienable right to return to their homes of origin.



Read the full paper [here](#)

UNRWA and its Services are Our Right until Return

