

Ten Reasons for the UK Government to Support UNRWA

- 1. The Consequences of Instability.** Should UNRWA be forced to cease its services to Palestine refugees, it is widely expected that instability in the host countries will ensue. Given the fragility of state structures and services in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, and given the eroding of what little PA governance is left in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), if UNRWA was left to unravel, the result will most likely be a further fragmentation of the region and emigration. The costs and commitment involved to address these outcomes will enormously exceed those that are currently being expended in supporting UNRWA now.
- 2. Countering accusations of complicity with genocide.** The UK government's continued military and other support to Israel, despite Israel's commission of genocidal actions in Gaza, has eroded the UK's standing in the international community and particularly in the global south. Exhibiting strong support for UNRWA will go some way in mitigating the negative impact of being associated with Israel's actions.
- 3. The Multiplier effect.** Hitherto, the UK has had a good reputation in the international humanitarian field. With its professionalism and value-for-money ethos, the UK's involvement in projects and programmes is often seen as an indicator to other donors of the quality of the programmes being supported. If the UK engages even further with UNRWA, it will trigger off support from other European countries and more widely.
- 4. No rational alternative in sight.** No other actor is mandated or suited to take on UNRWA's wide range of responsibilities in education and health. UNRWA's resilience has been remarkable. Despite an Israeli legal ban and active attempts at prevention, it continues to provide essential services across Gaza and the rest of the OPT the scale of which completely dwarfs the combined operations of other UN agencies and NGOs. To carry out the humanitarian work that UNRWA does in Gaza today, a new UNRWA-type agency will need to be created. UNRWA is already up and running.
- 5. Leadership Vacuum.** The cessation of US aid to UNRWA has led to a leadership vacuum amongst the supporters of UNRWA. Further UK engagement will build both on its long history of support for UNRWA and its familiarity with UNRWA's decision-making and also provide a platform for UK leadership. The absence of a strong international player supporting UNRWA means that the UK will be pushing at an open door.

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6. **A Seat at the Top Table.** With the US and Israel paying lip-service to heeding the advice of its allies regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and wider Middle East tensions, avenues for the UK government to influence the trajectory of US policy is limited. Taking a lead role in supporting UNRWA - which, it should be emphasized, has a presence in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, as well as the OPT - will place the UK in an influential position in the region.
7. **A Distinctive Foreign Policy.** The discarding of the rules-based international order by the Trump administration has drawn the UK government in its wake. Taking an independent line on UNRWA will not only illustrate a clear distinction between UK and US policy in the region it will also offer a blanket of respectability and credibility come the post-Trump period in 2028.
8. **Soft Power.** During a period when the UK foreign aid budget has been ruthlessly cut, the UK's soft power outreach is undermined. UNRWA needs rescuing from a decline which - when its financial liabilities (rents due, pensions, severance pay etc.) will inevitably come to the fore - may descend into acrimony and chaos. The UK has the capacity and competence to contribute in a valuable way to avoid this scenario. Such a role will only enhance its standing in the UN family. In addition, supporting UNRWA is very likely to further UK interests in the region at a relatively modest cost. The symbolism of additional financial support will be more valuable than the pounds sterling actually spent. It is a "more bang for its buck" strategy.
9. **Moral Responsibility.** The British Mandate for Palestine ended in failure and conflict in 1948. It is the responsibility of the UK government to make amends to those Palestinians who were dispossessed a result of the fighting in 1948. Supporting UNRWA is a tangible action to take in this regard. Rather than decreasing with the passage of time, in the light of Israeli actions in Gaza, the UK's responsibility to mitigate the adverse consequences of the Mandate failure has simply increased.
10. **Reparations.** A momentum is building up in the "Britain owes Palestine" campaign for the UK to offer reparations for the dispossession and exile of the Palestinians from their land. Supporting UNRWA more extensively and generously can be included in the mix of options open to the government to deal with this challenge. It will considerably strengthen its position when negotiating a settlement in the future.

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