



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### U.S. Humanitarian and Development Organizations Urge Trump Administration To Restore Funding for Programs for Vulnerable Palestinians

**Washington, D.C. (Sept 13, 2018)** — As a group of US-based humanitarian and development NGOs, we are deeply concerned by the Trump administration’s decision to stop funding programs that meet the basic needs of Palestinians at a time of acute suffering brought on by years of conflict and isolation.

In late August the administration announced that it would cut \$200 million in funding to international NGO programs that provide vulnerable Palestinians with clean water, food, education and medical services – all with the larger aim of tackling extreme poverty, promoting social justice, and saving lives. In tandem, the administration announced it would cease funding UNRWA, the UN agency created by a General Assembly resolution to provide humanitarian relief and development aid and to protect the rights of Palestinian refugees across Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank and Gaza, pending a just and lasting resolution to the conflict.

The \$200 million cut from Economic Support Funds, plus the \$300 million cut in what was originally budgeted for UNRWA, amounts to a \$500 million cut in U.S. support, leaving a gaping hole in humanitarian and development assistance that threatens provision of education and medical services to hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children and families and their communities.

We are further alarmed by the attacks on the status of Palestinian refugees as defined under international law. While there are specific internationally agreed criteria for Palestinian refugee status, the underlying principle that descendants of those displaced in 1948 qualify is consistent with the criteria applied to determine refugee status in other prolonged conflicts in places such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia.

Humanitarian aid should never be used as a political bargaining chip. These programs play a life-saving role, addressing the needs of vulnerable Palestinians while carefully steering clear of political partisanship. These are programs that previous administrations, both Republican and Democrat, have supported with bipartisan Congressional backing.

We urge the Trump administration to reconsider these decisions and urgently restore funding for programs meeting the basic needs of Palestinian civilians without conditioning them on the behavior of the political parties to the conflict.

ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid)	Islamic Relief USA
Basic Education Coalition	Mercy Corps
Better World Campaign	Norwegian Refugee Council USA
CARE USA	Oxfam
Church World Service	Presbyterian Church (USA)
Education Development Center	Refugees International
Global Campaign for Education - US	The Hunger Project
Global Communities	United Nations Association-USA
Global Water 2020	United Methodist General Board of Church and Society
InterAction	Women's Refugee Commission
International Medical Corps	Zakat Foundation of America
International Rescue Committee	

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