



PRESS RELEASE

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“THE EUROPEAN UNION IS NOW THE LARGEST DONOR TO UNRWA: IS IT AWARE OF THIS?”

**SINE QUA NON THINK TANK DENOUNCES THE LACK OF COORDINATION AND STRATEGY
FROM THE EU VIS-À-VIS THE UN AGENCY FOR THE PROTECTION OF PALESTINE REFUGEES**

Following Donald Trump’s decision to suspend US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the European Union has increased the budget for the UN agency to provide essential services (such as but not limited to health and education) to 5 million Palestine refugees spread between Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Brussels has pledged \$465 million to UNRWA, compared to the previous \$305 million allocated by the United States.

However, according to Rebecca Chacon Naranjo (researcher for Sine Qua Non and formerly of the UNRWA Education Department in Amman between 2018 and 2019), the lack of organization and communication between Brussels and the Member States prevents an effective use of each other’s contributions. On the contrary, Chacon Naranjo explains that in many cases, European states all fund the same projects or support the same department, which causes significant waste; a waste that is all the more dramatic considering the financial difficulties of UNRWA. Not only does the EU seem to not coordinate the European effort regarding UNRWA, but EU leaders even appear to misunderstand the Agency’s mandate, which is humanitarian, and not political. Thus, former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini has consistently affirmed during her tenure that **“UNRWA is essential for the realization of a two-state solution.”**

But **“if Brussels wants to expand the skills of UNRWA, it should first promote the revision of its mandate,”** says Chacon Naranjo. **“As the largest funder, the EU has responsibilities with regards to UNRWA. Either we abandon the idea of using the Agency as a political instrument and we focus on humanitarian projects financed in an intelligent and coordinated way, continues the researcher, or we act in the political field – which would be necessary - and we also consider the possibility of transferring certain responsibilities of UNRWA to host countries.”**

The EU does not seem to want to back down on its support for UNRWA. The priority **“is to continue to appear generous towards the tragedy of Palestine refugees, admits Chacon Naranjo, and for real political solutions and better use of taxpayer money, we will see about that in the future...”**

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