



**International
Development
Committee**

Friday, 9 May 2025

Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Foreign Secretary
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
By email

Subject: UNRWA schools in East Jerusalem

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I write to raise the issue of the continued harassment and undermining of UNRWA by the Government of Israel. In addition to the Knesset's anti-UNRWA laws that came into effect in late January, armed guards this morning forced UNRWA into closing three schools that it operates across East Jerusalem and another three that it operates within the Shu'fat refugee camp. These closure orders will affect some 800 boys and girls, with no alternative provision for their continuing education yet announced by the Government of Israel.

UNRWA is clear: its schools are protected by the privileges and immunities of the United Nations, as provided for by the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the UN. Its premises are inviolable.

These closures represent simply the latest in a long line of actions intended to undermine the work of UNRWA across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNRWA also operates health centres across East Jerusalem that meet the needs of 40,000 citizens. We have no guarantees that these will not be the next targets of the Government of Israel.

Israel's adherence to international law has been the subject of significant scrutiny in recent months, including by my Committee. As the occupying power of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, article 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention requires Israel to ensure the provision of food and medical supplies to the population to the fullest extent of the means available to it. In circumstances in which the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention requires the occupying power to agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and to facilitate them by all the means at its disposal. UNWRA is an impartial humanitarian organisation for the purpose of this article 59.



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Given these latest provocations by the Government of Israel, we join UNRWA in calling for:

- the immediate reopening of the UNRWA schools
- the freezing of the implementation of the anti-UNRWA Knesset laws, which violate Israel's obligations as a UN member state
- the reinstatement of access for UNRWA international staff to the Occupied Palestinian Territory
- the restoration of respect by Israel for UNRWA's privileges and immunities as a UN agency, as required by international law
- unhindered, continued access of Palestinian refugees to UNRWA services, including education and health, in the whole West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

I would be grateful to receive your response by 16 May. In line with our usual practice, we will place this letter and your response in the public domain.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the International Development Committee