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The Shia Muslim Council of Australia  
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**Subject: Condemnation of the Israeli regime's decision to ban UNRWA**

We turn your attention to the decision of the Israeli regime to ban and work towards dismantling UNRWA operations in the occupied Palestinian territories. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) more than 1.9 million Palestinians are now displaced. The continued violation of international humanitarian law has led to widespread shortages of food, water and medicine in Gaza.

The lack of action despite the ICJ ruling makes member states, including Australia, potentially complicit and vulnerable to future action. The decision to ban UNRWA is a clear intention by the Israeli regime to violate the ICJ's binding orders to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance in Gaza. The only way into Gaza is through Israeli territory, apart from the closed Rafah border crossing. By banning UNRWA, the leading agency facilitating humanitarian aid into Gaza, Israel is actively preventing the supply of such aid into Gaza in breach of these binding orders. This is affirmed in circumstances where "there is no way any organization can replace or substitute the tremendous capacity and the fabric of UNRWA and its ability and knowledge," as stated by Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, particularly in relation to the facilitation of aid into Gaza.

The barbaric behaviour of the Israeli regime is an assault on world democracy. We, as Australian Muslim citizens, fear that the continued unwillingness to reign in the Israeli regime and implement the obligations as set out by the ICJ is a failure of responsibility. The decision to allow people to starve to death is inhumane, and prevention must rank as a priority from a human rights perspective. Sadly, Australia has not renounced the war on a helpless people which is now spread to neighbouring countries.



**SHIA MUSLIM**  
COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

We urge the Australian government to be proactive in their condemnation of the Israeli regime's unconscionable move. We remind the Australian government the use of starvation as a weapon of war is a crime against humanity that must be prosecuted and punished.

It is our understanding that even the US state department spokesperson, Matthew Miller, indicated that implementation of the legislation could "have implications under US law" and that UNRWA had an "irreplaceable role" in the region. We understand that Australia, along with other western nations, have all accepted that such action could lead to "devastating consequences". Words are not enough, and unless action is taken against the Israeli regime, the already catastrophic situation will only worsen. Australia must take all actions within its capacity to help end the continued violation against innocent civilians.

The Shia Muslim Council of Australia

*The Shia Muslim Council of Australia is an umbrella organisation for Shia Muslim communities in Australia. It currently has 35 member organisations from across the 8 states and territories of Australia.*