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Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis

Speech

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Dear Members of Parliament, distinguished delegates,

For two long years, the war in Gaza has marked an unprecedented erosion of the humanitarian norms we pledged to uphold — to protect civilians and ensure aid reaches those in need.

Today, we face the stark consequences of prolonged inaction and impunity.

Over 63,000 children have been killed or injured, according to UNICEF.

More than 370 UNRWA colleagues — teachers, doctors, counsellors — have also lost their lives.

Most of our facilities, including schools and health clinics, have been damaged or destroyed.

Famine has taken hold — not because of scarcity, but because principled humanitarian aid has been obstructed. Despite the recent ceasefire, UNRWA continues to be denied entry of critical supplies, including food and medicine. Humanitarian aid should not be subject to negotiation.

The implementation of Israeli legislation against UNRWA and a coordinated disinformation campaign targeting the Agency should not be taken lightly. They set a dangerous precedent aimed at undermining the Agency's humanitarian and development role for Palestine refugees.

These are not simply attacks on UNRWA. They are direct assaults on the UN Charter, on international law, and on the humanitarian principles that underpin global relief efforts.

When Security Council resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings are ignored, and when UN agencies become targets, the consequences are far-reaching.

Despite these challenges, the UN remains committed to staying and delivering in a time of unimaginable suffering in Gaza.

UNRWA currently holds enough food to feed Gaza's population for three months, enough blankets and tents for hundreds of thousands, and enough medicine to restock our health clinics.

It is time to allow large-scale humanitarian access, including through UNRWA.

It's time to restore healthcare and education.

It's time to bring Gaza's children back to learning

Honourable Members,

Humanitarian principles are not abstract values but the operational foundations of our work.

The blatant disregard for international law and international humanitarian law in Gaza must never be allowed to happen again.

There is a window of opportunity to end this conflict and, in keeping with the New York Declaration adopted at the last UN General Assembly, reaffirm our collective commitment to a two-state solution.

But it requires a collective commitment to uphold humanitarian principles and defend international law.

I appeal to all IPU members to:

- Help us preserve international law standards and accountability.
- Advocate for unimpeded humanitarian access and the rights and dignity of Palestine refugees;
- Reaffirm and defend UNRWA's protection and humanitarian mandate; not only in the oPt, but also in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.
- And sustain UNRWA through increased, reliable financial support.

We count on you.

Thank you.

End