

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20010

September 6, 2023

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We, the undersigned 23 civil society organizations, are writing to respectfully request the immediate obligation of the funds provided by Congress in the FY2023 State, Foreign Operations appropriations bill for food assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, distributed through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Absent these funds, a devastating humanitarian crisis looms with more than 1.2 million people potentially left without food as early as mid-September, including hundreds of thousands of children who will be left hungry.

The immediate obligation of these funds is also entirely consistent with [your remarks](#) earlier this month in New York concerning the rising challenge of global food insecurity. As you rightly noted, “food is being used increasingly for leverage, for political purposes”. While we appreciate the Department’s extension of a notification courtesy to Congress, we are sure you agree it does not supersede the necessity to follow the terms set forth in Division K of P.L. 117-328.

Mr. Secretary, UNRWA food assistance is a critical lifeline for refugees in the Gaza Strip, who are the majority of the population there, accounting for 60% of the food staples imported into Gaza every month. Denying food assistance to Palestine refugees is inconsistent with your announced initiative on food insecurity and will strip away the last vestiges of hope for people who simply yearn for a dignified existence.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and hope you will continue to look out for the rights and needs of Palestine refugees.

Respectfully,

UNRWA USA National Committee

Anera

Oxfam America

Refugees International

American Baptist Churches USA

American Friends Service Committee

Arab American Institute

Americans for Peace Now

Churches for Middle East Peace

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Islamic Relief USA

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ

J Street

National Council of Churches

Reformed Church in America

Pax Christi USA  
Alliance of Baptists  
Migrant Roots Media  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.  
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
The Episcopal Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

