

Written Statement to the 78th World Health Assembly – 2025

Submitted by United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(UNRWA)

Agenda Item: Health Conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to present [this statement](#) on the health conditions of, and assistance to, Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), including East Jerusalem.

UNRWA has long been the primary health provider for Palestine refugees. Today, this mandate continues under dire circumstances, particularly in Gaza, where the ongoing war since October 2023 has resulted in a near-total collapse of the health system. As of April 2025, over 50,000 people have been killed, more than 115,000 injured, and approximately 1.9 million people—90 per cent of Gaza's population—displaced. Among the dead are over 32,000 children. Gaza's health infrastructure lies in ruins, with only eight of 22 UNRWA health centres still functioning intermittently.

In response, UNRWA has adapted rapidly, establishing alternative health points and delivering over 5.8 million consultations in 2024—through fixed health centres, mobile medical points, and telemedicine. Services included outpatient care, vaccinations, maternal health, nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support, and rehabilitation. Despite immense operational challenges, over 1,000 health staff in Gaza provided 18,000 consultations daily, regardless of refugee status.

Mental health and psychosocial support services reached more than 60,000 people, despite insecurity and lack of privacy. UNRWA also helped contain a polio outbreak with three rounds of emergency vaccination, achieving almost 100 per cent coverage by February 2025. Nutrition interventions, including MUAC screening and ready-to-use therapeutic food distribution, responded to rising malnutrition—Gaza's Global Acute Malnutrition rate rose to 6.9 per cent by December 2024.

Since March 2025, no humanitarian aid—including food—has entered Gaza due to an Israeli-imposed siege, threatening lives, worsening malnutrition, and accelerating the complete collapse of the health system. Essential supplies, including medicines, are nearly exhausted. In this context, our healthcare staff continue to deliver, at great personal risk. To date, nearly 300 UNRWA staff have been killed, including 13 health workers.

In the West Bank, violence and access restrictions have increased sharply, disrupting service continuity. Staff face movement restrictions, and UNRWA relocated its central pharmacy from occupied East Jerusalem after new Israeli laws banned its operations there. In 2024, 80 per cent of UNRWA clinics report medicine stockouts, facing escalating challenges in procuring

pharmaceutical supplies internationally. The cost of local procurement is five times higher than international prices, placing unsustainable pressure on already strained UNRWA resources.

UNRWA is operating under extreme financial, political, and operational pressure. The Agency's capacity to deliver lifesaving care depends on predictable funding, safe access, and respect for humanitarian law.

We call on Member States to uphold the right to health for Palestine refugees. Health is not a privilege—it is a right. The international community must act now to protect it.

Thank you.