

Written Statement to the 79th World Health Assembly - 2026

Submitted by the 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,

UNRWA thanks the World Health Organization for convening this important session and for its continued leadership in advancing health for all.

The health situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) remains critical.

In Gaza, large-scale hostilities since 2023 have devastated the health system. Against the backdrop of a near-total collapse of the system, UNRWA remains a primary provider of health care, delivering approximately 15,000 consultations daily and serving an estimated 1.7 million Palestine Refugees.

Since the ceasefire in October 2025, health conditions have improved only marginally, due to ongoing and systematic restrictions on the entry of humanitarian assistance, including medicines and medical supplies. Legislative restrictions imposed on UNRWA by the government of Israel, which entered into force in January 2025, have further affected UNRWA's ability to deliver essential medicines and supplies into the oPt.

While the restrictions on UNRWA have a unique negative impact due to the Agency's large footprint in Gaza's healthcare system, restrictions on other humanitarian actors compound the crisis.

Public health risks in Gaza have further intensified in recent months. The collapse of living conditions, repeated displacement, and prolonged exposure to violence continue to drive immense psychosocial distress in Gaza. UNRWA remains a key provider of mental health and psychosocial support. The crisis risks reversing decades of human development gains.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, heightened insecurity and movement restrictions have further constrained Palestine Refugees' access to essential health services. In January 2026, two UNRWA health centres in East Jerusalem were compelled to close, affecting access to primary health care for 55,760 Palestine Refugees. This disruption risks worsening health outcomes and increasing unmet needs, as many patients do not have alternative, accessible and affordable options.

These developments underscore concerns regarding the continuity and accessibility of health services for Palestine Refugees. Disruptions to routine services can have long-term, potentially

irreversible consequences. These consequences are not only limited to health but also affect the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights, including education and work.

The Agency's capacity to deliver life-saving care depends on safe and sustained humanitarian access and on full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

In this regard, we respectfully invite Member States to:

1. Uphold the right to health for Palestine Refugees and support measures that enable continuity of essential health services, including through sustained support for UNRWA.
2. Support safe, sustained, and timely humanitarian access, including for medicines and critical medical supplies, to reach those in need.
3. Reinforce respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and of health personnel and facilities.
4. Prioritize rebuilding the health system in Gaza in the framework of early recovery and reconstructions efforts.

UNRWA remains resolute in its commitment to its mandate. Our staff work every day under extraordinary risk to help ensure that Palestine Refugees can continue to access the essential health care they need, even under the most challenging circumstances. We call on this Assembly to match that commitment with decisive action.

Thank you.