



GROUP OF FRIENDS
IN DEFENSE OF THE
CHARTER OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. MR. JOAQUÍN PÉREZ AYESTARÁN,
AMBASSADOR, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE ON AGENDA ITEM 49, ENTITLED
“UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)”, WITHIN THE
FRAMEWORK OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

New York, 06 November 2023

Mr. President,

1. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honor to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations, whose Member States take note of the various reports presented in connection with this agenda item.

Madam President,

2. The plight of the refugees of Palestine has been protracted for way too long. We underscore, in this context, the importance of ensuring that the right of the refugees of Palestine to return be a reality, without further delays.
3. Absent of the conditions for doing so and absent also of a just and lasting solution for the Question of Palestine, however, we commend the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which, despite many difficulties, particularly in terms of financing, continues to have a key impact and a real incidence in the daily life of over 5.9 million registered refugees of Palestine scattered in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, particularly through the provision of humanitarian and development assistance, including in the health and education fields.
4. We also recognize, in this regard, UNRWA's decades-long contribution to the wellbeing, human development and protection of the Palestine refugees and the promotion of their rights and dignity.

Madam President,



5. Our Group of Friends seizes this opportunity, on the one hand, to pay tribute to the memory of those 72 courageous heroes from UNRWA who have recently lost their lives on the line of duty, in the Gaza Strip, since the latest and regrettable spiral of violence, death and destruction, while, on the other one, to condemn all attacks against UNRWA's infrastructures, including refugee camps, which are currently sheltering over 690,000 Palestinian civilians, including women and children; that is, over a fourth of the entire population in Gaza.
6. In this regard, we cannot overemphasize the importance of ensuring full respect for and adherence to the provisions of international humanitarian law, including the principles of proportionality and distinction, as well as the safety and security of all civilians and of all humanitarian and medical personnel on the ground, including that of UNRWA, in line with relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution A/ES-10/21.
7. Moreover, we appeal to those in a position to do so to consider increasing their financial contributions to the Agency, which provides indispensable support to the refugees of Palestine, particularly at this dire time, in order to ensure that it can continue providing its vital services to all those in desperate need. It is imperative to ensure that UNRWA, which has the needed means, resources and presence on the ground, is enabled to fund its core budget, pay salaries of staff on the frontlines and deliver to those desperately in need.

Madam President,

8. Given the scale of the ongoing atrocities, humanitarian needs on the ground are growing by the minute, as confirmed by UNRWA in its daily situation reports. Thus, we reiterate our call for ensuring that UNRWA is allowed to operate safely and effectively, without obstructions, alongside other humanitarian actors on the ground. Similarly, while recognizing ongoing efforts to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including crucial life-saving supplies, such as fuel, food, medicines and water, enters the Gaza Strip, we stress that the available assistance remains insufficient to cover the basic needs of the affected population. As the Secretary-General has said, "the level of humanitarian assistance that has been allowed into Gaza up to this point is completely inadequate and not commensurate with the needs of the people in Gaza, compounding the humanitarian tragedy".
9. The international community cannot turn blind eye to this humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding before us. The least we can do is reaffirm our firm and unwavering political support for UNRWA, while renewing our call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for unimpeded humanitarian access to be granted



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consistently, safely and to scale in order to meet the urgent needs created by the catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. This is key for avoiding a catastrophe and the total collapse of critical infrastructure, which will inevitably lead to more civilian casualties, widespread hunger, disease, poverty and even greater human suffering and despair, thus, further deepening the already dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which is largely comprised of Palestine refugees.

10. To conclude, we reaffirm our full commitment to preserving, promoting and defending the prevalence and validity of the Charter of the United Nations, a historical treaty that constitutes a true act of faith in the best of humanity, and which, to date, although under attack, keeps us all bound, among others, to our promise of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to ensuring respect for the dignity and worth of the human person. Let us act collectively and responsibly, without delay, to uphold our solemn duties under the UN Charter.

I thank you, Madam President.