Knesset passes law barring UNRWA from operating in Israel

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The Knesset on Monday evening approved, with a historic majority of 92 out of 120 MKs, the bills to ban UNRWA activities in the territories of Israel. Only 10 MKs voted against the bills, with the Opposition parties National Unity, Yisrael Beytenu, and Yesh Atid supporting it. The Democrats party abstained.

Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman MK Yuli Edelstein, who presented the bills this evening, called them ‘historic’ and stated, ‘UNWRA long ago ceased to be a humanitarian aid agency, but in addition to it being an integral supporter of terror and hate, is an agency to eternalize poverty and suffering. The rationale is simple – in order to survive, UNWRA created demand for the product it provides. The circle of horror ended today, they are out!’

MK Boaz Bismuth, one of the initiators of the bills, stated, ‘UNRWA terrorists, your story here ends - enemies have no right to exist in the State of Israel.’

Shai Rosengarten, chairman of the Im Tirtzu organization, said, ‘A historic moment for the State of Israel, a very important moment for the Knesset. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, UNRWA has acted as a hotbed of incitement to terrorism instead of caring for the Arabs in Israel and in Gaza. Now the Knesset is finally correcting the distortion. Kudos to Knesset Speaker MK Amir Ohana and coalition chairman MK Ofir Katz for their determination, kudos to the Knesset members who initiated Bismuth, Illouz and Malinovsky, kudos to the chairman And also Yuli Edelstein for the hard work in the committee. After a year's struggle, justice has finally been done, the people of Israel live!’

According to the bills, the only agreement (from 1967) that allows UNRWA to operate in Israel will be annulled, and as a result, the organization’s activities will no longer be legal in Israel. In addition, any contact between officials from Israel and UNRWA personnel will be prohibited and, among others, they will not be given diplomatic visas and economic benefits. The bill also stipulates that any criminal procedure that has or will apply to a UNRWA employee in connection with the crimes they committed on October 7th or in any connection related to the anti-terrorism law will remain valid.

The annulment of the 1967 agreement will take place one week from the passage of the bill, while the ban on contact between Israeli and UNRWA officials will go into effect three months after the bill's passage.

The bills received [initial Knesset approval](https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/398032) in July.

UNRWA, which has long been criticized for cooperating with Hamas, has come under increased scrutiny as its workers have been found to have been directly involved in Hamas’ October 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

Israel [revealed](https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/384323) in January of this year that UNRWA staff participated in the October 7 Hamas attacks. It then presented a dossier showing that the UNRWA workers who participated in the Hamas massacre kidnapped a woman, handed out ammunition and actively took part in the massacre at Kibbutz Be’eri, where 97 people were murdered.

Last week, the IDF announced that the IAF struck and eliminated the terrorist [Mohammad Abu Itiwi](https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/398049), a Nukhba commander in the Al Bureij Battalion of Hamas' Central Camps Brigade. Mohammad Abu Itiwi has also been employed by UNRWA since July 2022.

On October 7th, Mohammad Abu Itiwi was involved in the murder and abduction of Israeli civilians. Abu Itiwi led the murderous attack on the bomb shelter on Route 232 in the area of Re'im in southern Israel.

Last month, [Sharif Abu al-Amin,](https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/396991) a senior Hamas official in Lebanon and chairman of UNRWA's teachers' union in that country, was eliminated in an airstrike in Tyre.

Ayelet Samerano, mother of Yonatan Samerano who was murdered on October 7th and his body abducted to Gaza, told the UN in May that her son was [kidnapped by an UNRWA social worker.](https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/390108)

Despite the accumulation of proof of UNRWA's employment of Hamas terrorists, Israel has faced significant international pressure not to pass the bills targeting UNRWA, including from the US. Foreign Ministry officials have warned that the move could lead to Israel's suspension from the UN.