



Australians understand the importance of giving generously to help people in need .

Israel's occupation of Palestine has created a humanitarian crisis. Palestinians endure ongoing threats to the health and safety of themselves, their children and their communities. This crisis is at catastrophic levels in the Gaza Strip, which has been under Israeli and Egyptian blockade since 2007 and has endured four major Israeli military operations since 2008.

Australian aid cannot resolve the political causes of the humanitarian crisis in Palestine. But aid can help alleviate the effects of that crisis on the most vulnerable and support the capacity of Palestinians to decide their own lives and futures.

AUSTRALIAN AID TO PALESTINE—SOLID BUT UNDERMINED

Australia has maintained a long-term commitment of overseas development assistance (ODA) to Palestine, particularly through the United Nations and non-government organisations (NGO's). During the period of the coalition government, significant unwarranted political attacks led to the slashing of aid to Palestine, the axing of programs, and an extreme level of risk-management.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) estimates the Australian Government's ODA to Palestine for 2023-2024 to be \$32.2 million, somewhat more than the last few years. However this figures is still \$10 million less per year than it was in 2017; and more than \$20million less than in 2012-2 (when the annual budget was \$56.7 million).

Bilateral funding— AXED

Australia provides bilateral funding to many governments directly. Australia was providing ongoing funding to the Palestinian Authority through the World Bank. However in July 2018, following a Trump Administration decision to suspend funding, the Australian Government also ceased funding the Palestinian Authority. There was no evidence by any agency, including the World Bank, that the Palestinian Authority had misused any funds. This funding has not been restored.

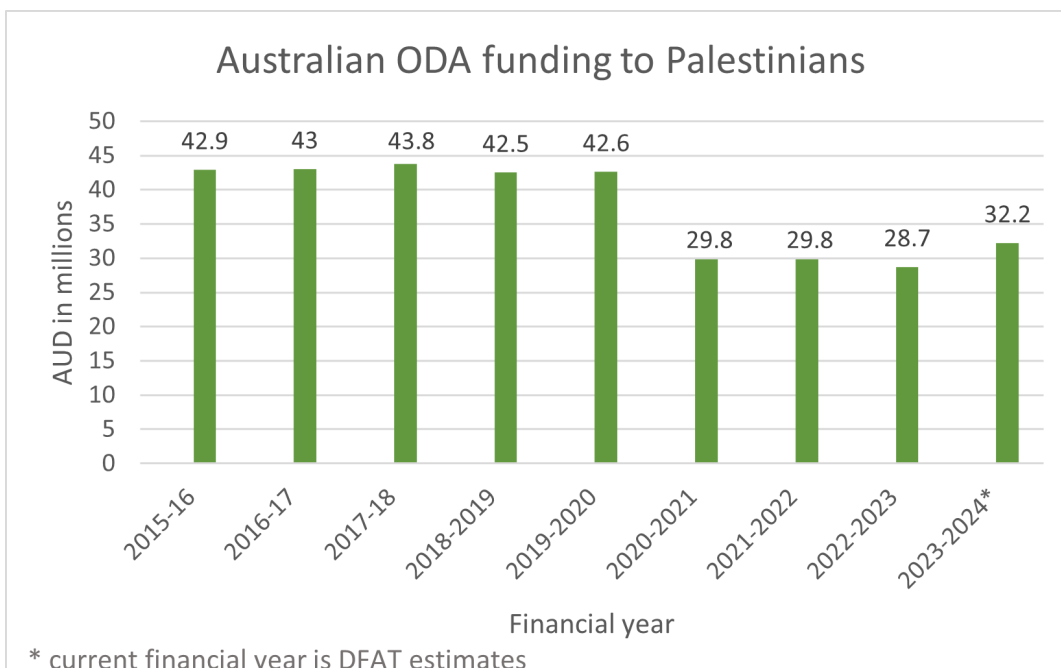
UNRWA—funding restored by needs to be increased

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) provides basic services, such as schools, medical clinics and food to the 5.9 million Palestinian refugees registered with them. Most of these refugees are stateless, and live in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza as well as in neighbouring countries.

UNRWA is funded by voluntary contributions by member states. From 2012-2020 the Australian Government contributed about \$20 million a year to UNRWA through multi-year agreements. Partisan groups opposed to Palestinian refugee rights undermined UNRWA by spreading misinformation about the organisation and making false claims about the use of these funds.

In 2019, Senator Wong, then Labor's Shadow Foreign Minister committed to increase UNRWA's funding to \$40 million per year. However in 2020 the coalition Government cut funding to UNRWA in half to \$10m per annum.

With the election of the Labor Government this funding cut has been restored - the last two years has seen \$20 million per year committed to UNRWA.



Funding through Australian Aid Agencies

Australian aid agencies can propose small projects and receive matched funds from DFAT through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

From 2005 until 2021 there was also a major funding agreement between the Australian Government and aid agencies (CARE, Oxfam, APHEDA, and World Vision). The project was called the Australian Middle East NGO Cooperation Agreement (AMENCA). Publicly available reviews of the AMENCA program recorded that it “achieved considerable success”, noting particularly the program’s achievements in social inclusion for women and young people. In 2021 this project was unexpectedly concluded, without an external end of project evaluation.

It is vital that Australia restores a long-term project with NGO’s, codesigned with Palestinian partner organisations.

Attacks on NGOs delivering AMENCA:

In August 2016, Israeli forces arrested Mohammed El Halabi of World Vision accusing him of supporting terrorism. DFAT suspended the World Vision component of AMENCA. World Vision and DFAT investigations found no credible evidence to support the charges. 7 years later Mohammed El Halabi remains in an Israeli jail, his trial dubbed a sham by UN experts. Amnesty have identified him as a prisoner of conscience and World Vision attest to his innocence.

In 2018, The Daily Telegraph alleged that APHEDA had links by association to terrorism. DFAT suspended the APHEDA component of the AMENCA program and ran an audit. The audit found no wrongdoing and the program was reinstated.

Dealing with these allegations involves a huge commitment of time, money and effort on the part of Australian aid agencies and DFAT, and a huge impact on aid programs.

Attacks to undermine the legitimacy of aid to Palestine originate from partisan organisations that seek to undermine assistance to Palestinians. Aid programs must be protected from the impacts of nefarious allegations.

“Australia Awards” scholarships program

Since 2011, scholarships have been offered for Palestinians to study post-graduate degrees in Australia, and a significant focus is on those employed by the Palestinian Authority. There are currently around 12 scholarships offered each year and in 2021-2023 were allocated \$2 million.

Other funding

The current funding allocations in the current year has not been announced by the Government, but the following are some organisations that have been supported by Australian assistance in the past.

In the last two years the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has received \$15million from the Australian Government, and DFAT cites this as an ongoing partnership.

In 2021-2 UNICEF received \$4.95 from the Australian Government, and while they didn’t appear to receive funds in the last financial year, DFAT cites this as an ongoing partnership.

The St John Eye Hospital Group received \$2 million in the 2021-2022 financial year.



Australian parliamentarians visiting agricultural industries funded by Australian aid and delivered by Oxfam Australia in the West Bank.

Humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Palestinians is essential but it is no substitute for permanent political resolution

Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA): 50 years of occupation

AUSTRALIAN AID TO PALESTINE SHOULD

- Acknowledge the humanitarian crisis in Palestine is caused Israel’s refusal to allow Palestinians self-determination;
- Reinstatement a major NGO partnership program, grounded in a co-design process with Palestinian partner organisations;
- Increase funding to UNRWA to at least \$40 million a year through multi-level agreements and contribute generously to UNRWA's calls for emergency funding;
- Develop a mechanism that efficiently and rapidly deals with allegations against aid agencies working in Palestine that does not penalise the agencies or deprive the intended recipients.