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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ROSA L. DELAURO
3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

July 26, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I am writing to urge your immediate action to obligate the funding provided through the International Organizations and Programs account of the fiscal year 2023 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs bill.

The voluntary contributions provided by this account are critically needed to sustain programs, but none more so than the \$75 million provided by the fiscal year 2023 appropriations bill to provide additional food support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA provides food assistance to 1.2 million Palestinians, 40% of which are children. Three out of four Gazans rely on external food assistance through UNRWA or the World Food Programme, who has also recently announced cuts. The situation is urgent.

The impact of the Ukrainian conflict on global food security has been well documented, but increased food prices are having the most negative impact on those environments with the least ability to cope with shocks including the West Bank and Gaza. Recognizing this, Congress took the extraordinary step of providing these resources through UNRWA specifically to “maintain food assistance to vulnerable Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in response to rising food and transport costs” in the fiscal year 2023 Appropriations Act. As you are well aware, rising hunger and desperation in such a volatile situation is not in the United States interest or productive for peace and stability in the region.

These funds were notified to Congress in CN#23-139 on May 2, 2023, yet UNRWA reports that no contribution for such purposes has been received. Per Sec. 7019 of the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, funds made available through the International Organizations and Programs table must be made available as if incorporated into the bill text. These funds are only available for obligation until the end of September and, if received after September 1, will likely lead to a pipeline break of commodities to the Gaza Strip.

The recent breakdown of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and the immediate increase in global food prices, makes the situation even more urgent. There are real consequences to any further delay and I urgently request that the State Department make this contribution as soon as possible as required by the fiscal year 2023 Appropriations Act. I look forward to your update on the status of these funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosa L. DeLauro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations