

BIDEN GOVT. RESTORES AID TO PALESTINIANS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Significant step: The aid will provide \$150 million in assistance to the UN Relief and Works Agency. AFP

In a significant reversal to the Trump administration's policy towards the Palestine, the U.S. State Department on Wednesday announced the restoration of at least \$235 million in financial assistance to the Palestinians. The administration had already announced \$15 million in coronavirus relief to the Palestinians in March.

Economic assistance

Wednesday's announcement includes \$75 million in economic assistance to the West Bank and Gaza, \$10 million towards 'peacebuilding' programmes of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and \$150 million in humanitarian assistance to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The UNRWA funds, the State Department said, would include educational assistance for at least 5,00,000 Palestinian children living in West Asia.

The Trump administration had almost ended all funding to the organisation in 2018.

Mr. Trump's policies towards West Asia — which included the relocation of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem — were criticised for being heavily tilted towards Israel.

"The United States is committed to advancing prosperity, security, and freedom for both Israelis and Palestinians in tangible ways in the immediate term, which is important in its own right, but also as a means to advance towards a negotiated two-state solution," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement released on Wednesday.

'New political path'

The UN welcomed the move, hoping it would attract more funds to the body.

"We hope that others will now follow suit. There were a number of countries that had greatly reduced or halted contributions to UNRWA," Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for the Secretary General said on Wednesday.

Welcoming the move, the Prime Minister of the Palestine Authority, Mohammed Shtayyeh, called for "a new political path that meets the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people based on international law and UN resolutions" in a tweet.

Israel, which has accused UNRWA of anti-Semitism, objected to the funding plans. "Israel's position is that the organisation in its current form perpetuates the conflict and does not contribute to its resolution," the Israeli Foreign Ministry said as per the Associated Press.

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