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Russia Condemns ‘Collective Punishment’ of UN Agency in Gaza

By AFP

January 30, 2024



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Russian Foreign Ministry press service**

Russia on Tuesday criticized a decision by several countries to suspend their funding for the United Nations' Palestinian refugee agency, calling it a form of "collective punishment."

A number of donors including the United States announced they would halt funding to the UNRWA agency over Israel's accusations that some of its staff were involved in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack.

"What has happened and is happening is collective punishment, prohibited by international humanitarian law," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

An investigation into accusations UNRWA staff were involved in the Oct. 7 attack should not be replaced by "collective punishment" of the agency and Gazan people, he added.

"If that investigation is implemented, then the facts will be established," Lavrov said.

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"But if the investigation is replaced by collective punishment of both UNRWA and, most importantly, those to whom the UN has provided invaluable assistance, then I think that is the wrong decision," he added.

The foreign minister was speaking at a press conference alongside his Gambian counterpart.

UNRWA has fired several employees since Israel's accusations and promised a thorough investigation into the claims, which were not specified.

Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures. Militants also seized about 250 hostages.

Israel's relentless military offensive since Oct. 7 then has killed at least 26,751 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

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