

US cuts in Palestinian refugee aid mitigated by new pledges

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Mon, 2018-11-19 (All day)

JORDAN: The UN agency for Palestinian refugees says it has nearly closed its funding gap after securing new donor pledges to make up for US aid cuts. Pierre Kraehenbuehl, the head of the UN Relief and Works Agency, said Monday that the shortfall was reduced from \$446 million to \$21 million, singling out donors from Europe and the Gulf region.

He says the agency no longer faces the "critical situation" created by a US decision earlier this year to cut nearly \$300 million of aid.

The agency provides health care, education and social services to 5.4 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The agency was created after the mass displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 war over Israel's creation.



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Trump aid cuts embolden Israel but hurt peace prospects: Analysts
Across the Mideast, Palestinians brace for Trump aid cuts

[Airbnb to remove listings in West Bank settlements](#)

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Reuters

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Mon, 2018-11-19 15:44

JERUSALEM: Home-renting company Airbnb Inc. said on Monday that it had decided to remove its listings in Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, enclaves that most world powers consider illegal for taking up land where Palestinians seek statehood.

A statement on Airbnb's website said: "We concluded that we should remove listings in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank that are at the core of the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians."

It did not say when the decision, which according to Airbnb affects some 200 listings, would take effect.



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[Airbnb](#)

[West Bank](#)

Paris official seeks to outlaw Airbnb rentals in city center
Palestinians in West Bank strike over Israel's nation law

[Spanish PM visits Morocco to boost migration cooperation](#)

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AFP

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Mon, 2018-11-19 14:53

RABAT: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Monday made his first official visit to Morocco, where he pushed for greater cooperation between the two countries on tackling migration.

Spain has this year become the main entry point for migrants crossing the Mediterranean, the majority departing from Morocco.

“Migration is a shared responsibility and we must reinforce our cooperation in this area,” Sanchez said following talks with his Moroccan counterpart Saad Eddine el Othmani.

More than 50,000 migrants have crossed into Spain so far this year, according to figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Madrid has for months been pressing the European Union to unlock funds for Morocco to better tackle people smuggling into the bloc.

Throughout the year, numerous Spanish ministers and officials have traveled to Rabat to discuss security issues and migration.

Sanchez was accompanied by a government delegation for his first visit to the North African nation since taking office in June.

Othmani said Morocco was doing “all that is in its power regarding the fight against illegal immigration.”

Moroccan authorities say that between January and the end of September they stopped some 68,000 illegal attempts to cross into Europe and dismantled 122 people smuggling gangs.

“The migration question is complex and it cannot be resolved solely through a security approach, despite its importance, it’s necessary to favor the development of departure countries in Africa,” said Othmani.

Many seeking to reach Europe are from sub-Saharan Africa, but in recent years there has been an increasing number of Moroccans seeking to leave the country.

While the majority of migrants have taken the perilous sea journey in rubber dinghies, others have scaled fences into the Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla which border Morocco.



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[UN draft resolution calls for Yemen truce, two weeks to unblock Hodeidah port for aid shipments](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2018-11-19 14:49

UN, NEW YORK: A UN draft resolution on Yemen presented to the Security Council on Monday calls for an immediate truce in the port city of Hodeidah and sets a two-week deadline for removing all barriers to humanitarian aid, according to the draft seen by AFP.

Britain circulated the draft to the 14 other council members after hearing a report on Friday from a UN envoy working to arrange [peace talks in Sweden](#) to end the nearly four-year war.

A vote on the measure has yet to be scheduled.

The proposed resolution would significantly ratchet up the pressure to find a negotiated settlement in Yemen, where millions are on the brink of starvation.

The UN considers Yemen the world's biggest humanitarian crisis and has warned that without a stop to the fighting, the country will face one of the worst famines in decades.

The draft text calls "on the parties to introduce a cessation of hostilities in Hodeidah governorate, to end all attacks on densely populated civilian areas across Yemen and to cease all missile and UAV attacks against regional countries and maritime areas."

The Red Sea port of Hodeidah, which is controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia and is a key point of entry for aid and imports to Yemen, has seen heavy fighting over the past weeks.

The text calls on warring sides to "facilitate the unhindered flow of commercial and humanitarian food, water, fuel, medicine and other essential imports across the country, including by removing within two weeks of the adoption of this resolution, any bureaucratic impediments that could restrict such flows."

The truce would go into effect on the day of the adoption of the resolution. Under the proposed measures, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres would report to the council within two weeks on the cessation of hostilities.

The council said it was ready to "consider further measures" to support a political solution the war, the draft said.

The measure calls for a large injection of foreign currency into the economy

through the central bank to support the collapsing currency and for salaries of civil servants, teachers and health workers to be paid within one month. It supports a series of confidence-building measures aimed at paving the way to peace talks including the release of prisoners, the re-opening of the airport in the rebel-held capital Sanaa to commercial flights and strengthening the central bank.

Both sides are urged to engage with UN envoy Martin Griffiths, who is due to travel to Sanaa this week to finalize arrangements for the peace talks that he hopes to convene soon.

Yemen's internationally recognized government said Monday it will take part in the talks, hours after the Houthi leader, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, said he was ready to freeze military operations.

The Saudi Arabian-led coalition has been fighting the Houthis in order to restore to power Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, whose government is recognized by the UN.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt arrived Monday in Iran for the first time to discuss Tehran's role in Yemen, meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif.



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UN calls for Hodeidah ceasefire as momentum gathers for Yemen peace talks
Yemeni forces launch massive new offensive to capture Hodeidah from Houthis

[Putin and Erdogan in Turkey to mark key phase in pipeline](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2018-11-19 (All day)

ISTANBUL: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are in Istanbul to mark the completion of a key phase in a natural gas pipeline.

The two leaders on Monday are marking the completion of the offshore part of TurkStream's two lines that will carry natural gas from Russia to Turkey. The lines when finished are expected to supply Russian gas to European markets through Turkish territories. Together the two 930-kilometer (578-mile) lines via the Black Sea will carry 31.5 billion cubic meters (1.1 trillion cubic feet) of natural gas annually.

Turkey relies on imports for its energy needs and Russia is its top supplier for natural gas. It bought 28 billion cubic meters last year. That gas is currently transported through another line under the Black Sea and the onshore West Line through Ukraine, which is mired in conflict with Russia.



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Turkey, Russia, Iran to hold Syria talks next week
Turkey says US support for Syrian Kurdish YPG a "big mistake"