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## **1. What is UNRWA, and why have Western countries paused its funding amid Gaza war?**

### **Why in news?**

UN officials urged countries to reconsider their decision to suspend the funding for the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), assuring that it would take strict action against any staff member found to be involved in Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel.

The agency also highlighted that two million Palestinians in Gaza are dependent on UNRWA services that would be scaled back as soon as February if the funding is not restored.

The US and eight other Western countries, which together provided more than half of UNRWA's 2022 budget, cut the money after Israel accused some of the agency's staff members of involvement in the October 7 attack.

### **What is UNRWA?**

UNRWA stands for UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East. It was founded in 1949 to provide aid to about 700,000 Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

The UN agency operates in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan — countries where the refugees took shelter after their expulsion. According to UNRWA's website, it runs education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance programmes inside and outside refugee camps based in the aforementioned areas.

Currently, around 5.9 million Palestine refugees — most of them are descendants of original refugees — access the agency's services.

### **What has Israel accused UNRWA of?**

The details of the accusations are scant. Israel has alleged that 12 staff members of UNRWA were involved in the October 7 attack. It has also claimed that Hamas siphons off funds given to UNRWA and fights from in and around the agency's facilities.

Israel has alleged that Hamas tunnels (are) running next to or under UNRWA facilities and accuses the agency of teaching hatred of Israel in its schools.

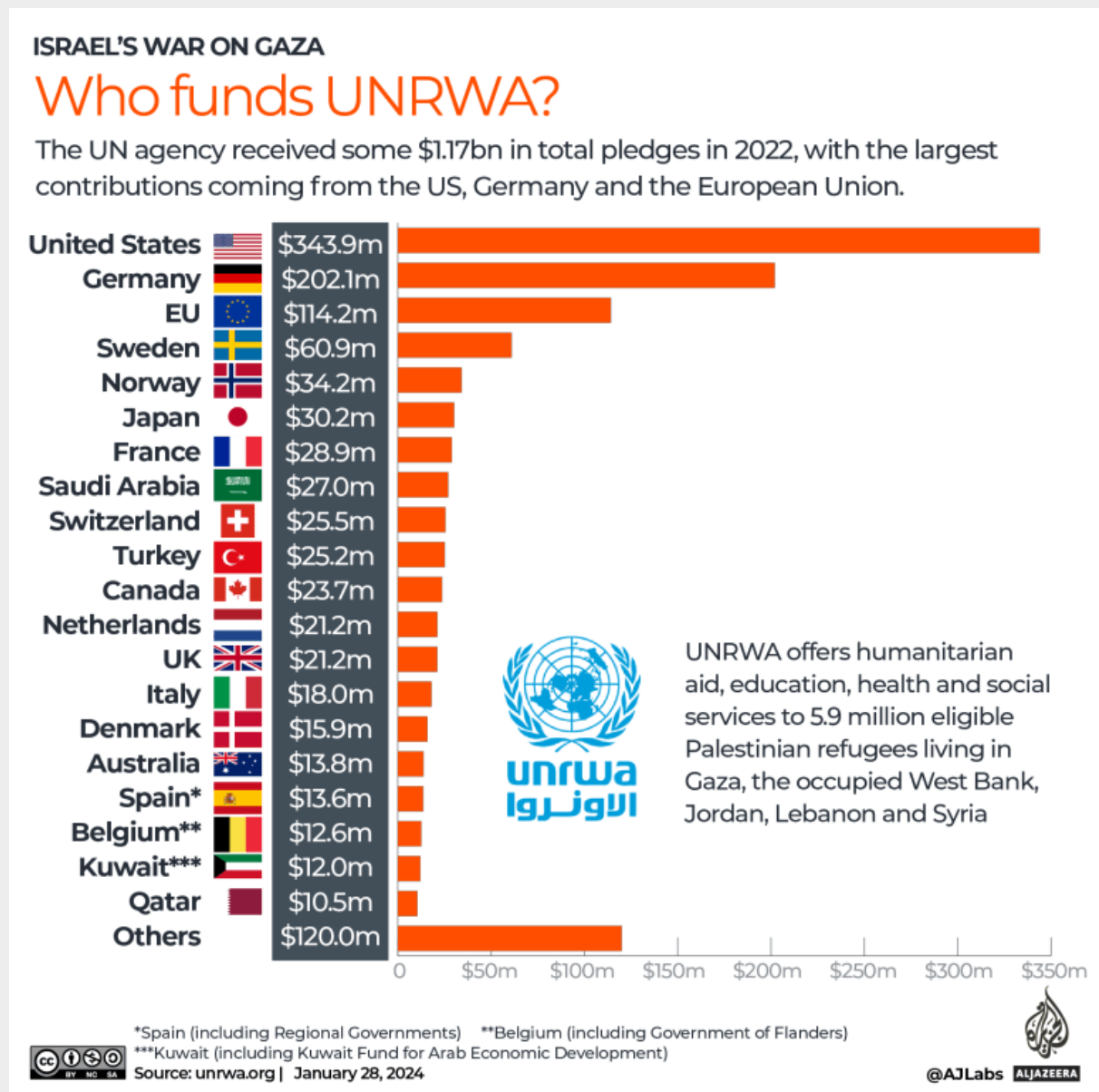
### **How has UNRWA responded?**

The UNRWA has denied all the allegations, saying it has no links to Hamas. In the statement, UN officials said out of 12 staff members who were accused of being involved in the attack,

nine have been terminated. One is confirmed dead and the identity of the two others is being clarified.

### What happens now?

UNRWA is crucial for the survival of people living in Gaza, which has plunged into a humanitarian crisis after the outbreak of the conflict. The agency has been the main supplier of food, water and shelter to civilians of the enclave. UNRWA, however, would run out of money needed for its aid work within weeks if the funding isn't restored, according to Guinness.



Although Imran has claimed that the cable is proof of a US conspiracy to push the Pakistani military to oust him in a parliamentary vote in 2022, he has denied revealing its content publicly — the former PM has said news outlets got the document from other sources.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Indian Express and Aljazeera

## 2. What is the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, which has claimed responsibility for killing 3 US soldiers in Jordan?

### Why in news?

Three US military servicemen were killed in a drone attack on their outpost in Jordan, marking the first time that US soldiers have died in the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

US President Joe Biden said in a statement that “radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq” were behind the strikes. A group known as the Islamic Resistance of Iraq (IRI) claimed responsibility for the strikes.

### Why were US troops stationed in Jordan?

The strikes targeted Tower 22, a US military outpost (a smaller version of a military base) in Jordan. The country is bordered by Israel to its west, Saudi Arabia to its southeast, Iraq to its northeast and Syria to its north.



Map showing Jordan and the Middle East.

Tower 22 is near the Al Tanf garrison, located in Syria. US troops used the garrison while fighting against the Islamic State (IS), which emerged amid the Syrian Civil War. That conflict broke out in the early 2010s when a section of Syrians attempted to dislodge President Bashar al-Assad from power. His father had ruled the country for decades before him, and this uprising also came from issues such as high inflation and unemployment.

### **What is the Islamic Resistance of Iraq?**

In Iraq and Syria, US forces have come under repeated assault by a newly created group of Iran-backed militias known as the Islamic Resistance of Iraq.

The group is part of the 'Axis of Resistance' – the multiple groups that Iran backs as part of its anti-Western and anti-USA stance. "Analysts believe the "Islamic Resistance of Iraq" is a front for Iranian-backed factions within an umbrella of militias known as Hashd al-Shaabi. These have become powerful military and political forces, boast tens of thousands of fighters and are also integrated into the state.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Indian Express

### **3. Latest All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE)**

#### **Why in news?**

The report of the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22 found that 4.33 crore students are currently enrolled in a higher educational institute — up from 4.14 crore in 2020–21, and 3.42 crore in 2014–15.

The survey captures total student enrolment in eight different levels: undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, MPhil, diploma, PG diploma, certificate, and integrated programmes. In all, 10,576 standalone institutions, 42,825 colleges, and 1,162 universities/university level institutions responded to the survey.

The key takeaways of the Survey are as follows:

#### **Female enrolment greater than male**

The number of women enrolled in higher educational institutes has steadily increased, the AISHE report showed.

From 1.5 crore women enrolled in 2014–15, there has been a jump of 32% to 2.07 crores enrolled in 2021–22. In the last five years, the number of women enrolled increased by 18.7%, from 1.74 crore in 2017–18.

The proportion of women enrolled in higher education, compared to men, has also gone up. Of the 91 lakh more students to have joined higher educational institutes in 2021–22 (when compared to 2014–15), 55% were women. The proportion of women is highest at the post graduate level, where 55.4% students are female.

#### **GER and Gender Parity**

Gross Enrollment Ratio indicates how many students are part of the higher education system in a given population. The estimated GER for the age group 18–23 years in India is 28.4, the AISHE 2021–22 report said (based on population data from the 2011 census).

In terms of state-wise data, Chandigarh, at 64.8%, boasts of the highest GER, followed by Puducherry at 61.5%, Delhi at 49%, and Tamil Nadu at 47%.

Another indicator called the Gender Parity Index (GPI) shows the ratio of the female GER to male GER. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the two genders; any number between 0 and 1 shows a disparity in favour of males, whereas a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females.

The survey observed that in 26 states and Union Territories, the GER is in favour of women. At the all-India level, GPI is 1.01.

### **Arts over the sciences in graduation, PG**

The survey showed that the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme has the highest enrolment, with 1.13 crore students — 34.2% of total undergraduate enrolment across India. In all, 3.41 crore students are enrolled in UG programmes.

Among disciplines at undergraduate level, in 2021-22, the enrollment is highest in Arts (34.2%), followed by science (14.8%), commerce (13.3%) and engineering and technology (11.8%). BA(Hons) accounts for 20.4 lakh (6.2%), the survey shows.

The latest survey shows that the Master of Arts (MA) programme has the highest enrolment, with 20.9 lakh students, which is 40.7% of total postgraduate enrolment.

### **Primacy of government institutions**

Interestingly, 73.7% of all students attend government universities, which make up only 58.6% of all universities.

### **Demographics of students graduating**

During the 2021–22 academic year, 1.07 crore students were estimated to have graduated from undergraduate, graduate, doctorate, master's, and other diploma/certificate programmes. Among these 1.07 crore students, 54.6 lakh or roughly 50.8% are women.

Category-wise, in 2021-22, around 35% of the students belong to Other Backward Classes (OBC), 13% are from Scheduled Caste (SC) community and 5.7% of the graduates are from Scheduled Tribe (ST) community.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Indian Society

Source: The Indian Express