



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva**

Statement

89th Session of the Standing Committee of UNHCR

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Bilal Ahmad,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan
On Behalf of the OIC Group**

**Agenda Item 3 (vii) : Regional Activities and Global Programmes
Middle East and North Africa**

(14 March 2024)

Chairperson,

High Commissioner/Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees

Excellencies and Colleagues,

The OIC Group thanks UNHCR for the update on its operations in OIC countries including in MENA region, the Asia-Pacific, and the Africa regions.

The Group also applauds UNHCR staff in headquarters, regional bureaus and in the field for their relentless efforts on protection and solutions for refugees in the OIC countries.

Chair,

For the past five months, the people of Gaza have been languishing under horrific starvation, blockade, indiscriminate bombardment, and targeted

attacks against civilian infrastructure including health facilities and refugee camps by the occupation forces.

Incessant violations of international law including International Humanitarian Law and human rights have exacerbated protection crisis of Palestinian women, children, and the elderly to unprecedented levels.

Irrespective of the question of mandate, the plight of Gaza should prick our collective conscience.

The Occupying Power's aggression and oppression against Palestinian people must end now.

We condemn in strongest terms the non-compliance by the Occupying Power with the provisional measures ruled by the International Court of Justice and demand a complete and comprehensive cessation of war crimes and all brutal acts of genocide, including killing, displacement, and destruction of Palestinian people by the occupation forces.

The OIC Group notes with appreciation that UNHCR has echoed the right of Palestinian people to return to their homeland.

The Group rejects any prejudice to the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Refugees (UNRWA), including cancelling its mandate.

We denounce all pressures and blackmail to which the agency is exposed through resource constraints and incitement campaigns with the desire to liquidate its existence.

States which have resumed funding of UNRWA have done the right thing.

We urge all States to assume their responsibilities in providing unimpeded and adequate humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

Chair,

The OIC Group is deeply concerned over the budget cuts in UNHCR programmes in OIC countries.

Most of the refugees and other displaced persons are hosted by low and middle income OIC countries. They have been disproportionately shouldering a large portion of the global burden to host, assist and protect refugees.

The Group is especially concerned over the situation of humanitarian needs in Sudan.

We recall the principle of equitable burden and responsibility sharing, which requires UNHCR and international community to provide enhanced assistance to the OIC countries hosting large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, as well as countries of origin to cater for returnees, through humanitarian and development assistance.

Before concluding, the OIC Group would like to appreciate UNHCR for continued efforts on the mandate of measuring the impact of hosting, assisting, and protecting refugees.

We look forward to working closely on the next steps of this exercise.

I thank you.
