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Mr. Ban Ki-moon
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27 October 2010

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Last week I visited the Palestinian territories. During my stay in Ramallah I learned about the deplorable situation that currently exists at the local UNRWA office. I met with Agency's elected workers' representative, representing 3,800 UNRWA employees who have been on strike since the 14th of October, seeking an improvement in their difficult working and living conditions.

At the time, I thought that this was like any other workplace dispute which could undoubtedly be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties through negotiation, particularly considering that the employer is an agency of the United Nations. However, I was surprised to learn this morning that the strike is still ongoing – now in its fourteenth day - and that the UNRWA representative had just issued a statement to the Press that talks would only begin with the trade union when the strike has been called off.

Mr. Secretary General, as you know, the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining are fundamental international rights, and the relevant International Labour Organisation Conventions have been ratified by the majority of the UN Member States who currently fund the UNRWA.

In addition to this serious denial of basic rights by the UNRWA representative, the position taken by UNRWA in this case is contrary to the Agency's core mission to provide material assistance to the Palestinian people whilst fully respecting their fundamental rights and their dignity. This situation should not be allowed to continue and to tarnish the reputation of this Agency, which fulfils an essential humanitarian role to people who are in dire need and who have put their trust in the UN.

I would therefore request that you use your good offices to help bring about the necessary change in the position being taken by UNRWA, in order to ensure that negotiations can take place to settle the dispute in good faith and without pre-conditions. With thanks in anticipation for your attention to this matter,

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary