PRESS RELEASE

UNRWA appeals for over US$ 800 million for Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory

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East Jerusalem

As the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) today launches its US$ 817 million emergency appeals for Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), these contexts continue to experience the relentless effects of conflict, occupation and blockade.

The majority of the estimated 450,000 Palestine refugees in Syria are displaced and 95 percent of them rely on UNRWA for assistance. Thousands remain trapped in areas of active conflict, where they face appalling suffering. Tens of thousands have fled to Lebanon and Jordan where, despite the generosity of host countries, they face increasing marginalization and despair.

In the oPt, Palestine refugees are exposed to the lasting consequences of an occupation now approaching 50 years and a decade-long blockade, which define every aspect of their lives. While in the year 2000, roughly 80,000 people in Gaza were reliant on humanitarian assistance, the figure has risen to over 830,000 today. In the West Bank, settlement building activity has left many thousands at risk of forced displacement and dispossession.

"In the absence of prospects for political solutions, UNRWA will mobilize its humanitarian experience and commitment to address the multiplicity of emergency needs facing Palestine refugees", said Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl. "We will also steadfastly advocate for an improved respect of their rights. The support to our appeals contributes both to a measure of stability at a time of spreading radicalization and a measure of dignity for a community that has been deprived of a just solution for far too long".

The presence of UNRWA, its operational capacity and the courage of its staff will enable the Agency to preserve and where possible expand its response to critical needs. In the oPt, the response will particularly focus on the needs of Palestine refugees exposed to displacement and home demolitions, as well as on reconstruction efforts in Gaza. In Syria, UNRWA will, in 2016, run one of the largest cash assistance programs in an active conflict zone. It will also be an essential provider of innovative education programs benefitting hundreds of thousands of Palestinian and Syrian children, including by means of distance-learning material and a dedicated satellite channel - UNRWA TV.

Watch 'A lifeline to Palestine refugees in Syria', a short video about the critical humanitarian assistance UNRWA provides to Palestine refugees from Syria.

Read the 2016 Syria emergency appeal

Read the 2016 oPt emergency appeal

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Background information

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine Refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services operates with a large shortfall, projected for 2016 to stand at US$ 81 million. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance.

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