STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO UNRWA SPOKESPERSON CHRIS GUNNESS

UNRWA: "No Plans to Close Gaza Headquarters"

Denies False Reports

26 May 2016

Several media outlets have reported that UNRWA intends to close its headquarters in Gaza. These reports are false. UNRWA HQ Gaza is not closing. The Agency affirms categorically that there are no plans to do so and staff are not being let go.

UNRWA is fully committed to maintaining its presence in the Gaza Strip, which represents the largest of UNRWA's field operations and is vital to serving and protecting the Palestine refugees, who make up two thirds of the population of Gaza.

UNRWA continues to work closely with staff and their representatives in order to ensure programmes and reforms are implemented for the benefit of Palestine refugees. UNRWA's staff are indispensable to our humanitarian work and we continue to rely on them for the effective and efficient delivery of services.

– Ends –

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, protection and microfinance .

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