PRESS RELEASE

UNRWA Launches US$ 800 Million Emergency Appeal for Syria, Gaza and the West Bank



UNRWA Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähebühl, launches the UNRWA Emergency Appeal for Syria, Gaza and the West Bank during a press conference at the UNOG Palais des Nations in Geneva on 30 January 2018.
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East Jerusalem

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has launched an appeal for its emergency programmes of over US$ 800 million; approximately US$ 400 million each for Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), which consists of Gaza and the West Bank. The appeal also covers some 50,000 Palestine refugees from Syria who have fled to Lebanon and Jordan.

At a launch event in Geneva, UNRWA Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl, explained that the majority of Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory and from Syria "rely on UNRWA to provide aid which is literally life-saving, including food, water, shelter and medical assistance. Our appeal," he said, "enables UNRWA to continue delivering desperately needed relief to those affected by deepening emergency situations. However, the Agency's critical financial crisis following the reduction in US funds threatens our ability to deliver these vital services."

Inside Syria, UNRWA is reaching over 400,000 Palestine refugees with cash assistance, one of the largest such programmes in an active conflict setting anywhere in the world. Despite the immense security challenges, UNRWA is providing education to over 47,000 Palestine refugees, supplementing regular classes with psychosocial support and safety-awareness training. For those unable to reach our classrooms, UNRWA has developed distance-learning materials.

In Gaza, with employment opportunities stifled by the decade-old blockade – the unemployment rate remains among the highest worldwide – almost one million Palestine refugees are dependent on UNRWA for emergency food assistance, a tenfold increase on the 100,000 that required such support in 2000. Three and a half years on from the 2014 hostilities, which caused unprecedented destruction and loss of life, thousands of Palestine refugee families remain displaced and repairs to over fifty thousand homes have yet to be completed.

The situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains fragile. Palestine refugees continue to experience difficult socioeconomic conditions rooted in occupation-related policies and practices imposed by the Israeli authorities. In addition to continued movement and access restrictions and shelter demolitions, Palestine refugees in the West Bank experience high levels of food insecurity.

Mr. Krähenbühl stressed that “supporting UNRWA emergency appeals is not a substitute for an urgently needed political solution to the underlying conflict. It is, however, fundamental to sustaining the dignity and strength inherent in the Palestine refugee community.”

A week ago, in response to an unprecedented financial crisis, UNRWA launched the global fundraising campaign #DignityIsPriceless. For more details, visit www.unrwa.org/donate .

For more information, read the 2018 oPt Emergency Appeal and the 2018 Syria Regional Crisis 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. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency’s Programme Budget. 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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