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oPt Humanitarian Fund releases US$ 2.2 million in funds to meet urgent humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip

Today, the Humanitarian Fund for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt HF) announced the release of US$ 2.2 million to address urgent humanitarian needs resulting from the massive rise in Palestinian casualties in the Gaza Strip.

“Over the course of four Fridays of demonstrations, far more Palestinians have been injured in the Gaza Strip than in the preceding three years combined” said the Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Jamie McGoldrick. “This staggering rise has had a catastrophic impact on the already-struggling Gaza health sector, and is worsened by violence against health staff providing first aid in the field and the difficulties facing some patients in accessing urgently-needed care outside of Gaza.”

Since 30 March 2018, Israeli forces have killed 40 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly in the context of demonstrations. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 5,511 Palestinians have been wounded during the Gaza demonstrations, of whom 1,499 were hospitalized in governmental hospitals following injury by live ammunition.

Through this grant, the oPt HF will support health and protection actors in Gaza, through providing funds for urgently-needed drugs, medical disposables and laboratory items for frontline medical care and in-hospital, as well as enabling the deployment of specialized emergency medical teams required for complex surgeries, among other critical needs. The allocation will also enable those who are directly affected by the crisis to receive appropriate mental health and psychosocial support services; support the monitoring, verification and documentation of possible protection violations; as well as support injured individuals who have been denied exit by the Israeli authorities, to secure permits for urgent medical treatment outside Gaza.

“For every Palestinian killed or injured in recent weeks, there is a family that is also affected. The physical and psychological impact of recent events will last for years,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “The oPt HF allocation is an important step towards ensuring that Palestinian victims of violence receive the treatment they need in the short-term. However, it is critical that other donors step up their contributions as well.”

Humanitarian partners require another US$3 million immediately to respond to needs emerging since 30 March, on top of the $406 million required in 2018 to meet

humanitarian needs in Gaza, stemming primarily from the ongoing Israeli blockade, alongside internal Palestinian political divisions.

The oPt HF is an emergency pooled fund supported in 2017 and 2018 by Belgium, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. It is managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator to support the delivery of strategic humanitarian responses identified under the Humanitarian Response Plan as well as to support responses to unforeseen events.

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Background

Since 30 March 2018, the Gaza Strip has witnessed a significant increase in Palestinian casualties in the context of mass demonstrations taking place along Israel's perimeter fence with Gaza. The demonstrations have occurred as part of the 'Great March of Return', a series of mass protests, expected to continue up to 15 May. The large number of casualties among unarmed demonstrators, including a high percentage of demonstrators hit by live ammunition, has raised concerns about excessive use of force by Israeli forces. A number of healthcare staff have also been injured and medical assets have been damaged by Israeli fire.