Gaza's children deserve much better

Statement attributable to Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa

AMMAN, 4 May, 2018 - "Over the past five weeks, five children were killed and hundreds were injured in largely peaceful protests in Gaza.

"Power cuts and shortages of fuel, medicine and equipment are straining an already fragile health system and complicating access to treatment for the injured.

"In addition to physical injuries, children are showing signs of severe distress and trauma.

"Yesterday, our UNICEF Special Representative visited a 14-year-old boy who suffered a gunshot wound, causing a severe injury close to his heart. He is now home recovering after being in hospital for two weeks. It is hard for him to be optimistic through the pain, but when he gets better, he wants to be a doctor, like the ones who helped him survive.

"The escalating violence in Gaza has exacerbated the suffering of children whose lives have already been unbearably difficult for several years. Half of all children depend on humanitarian assistance, and one in four needs psychosocial care.

"Schools are overcrowded and operating on triple shifts, limiting children's learning prospects.

"The minimal power supply in Gaza has disrupted water and sanitation services, severely reducing the availability of drinking water – nine out of 10 families do not have regular access to safe water.

"UNICEF continues its lifesaving assistance for children in health, water, sanitation, hygiene, education and protection.

"UNICEF renews its calls for all those with influence to protect children and keep them out

of harm's way. Children belong in schools, homes and playgrounds – they should never be targeted or encouraged to participate in violence."

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