Press Release
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European diplomats visit educational institutions near East Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank

At the start of the new academic year, a group of European diplomats visited two Palestinian schools near East Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank. The delegation included representatives of the European Union, EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. The delegation was briefed on the educational situation and the challenges facing students and schools.

The delegation visited two schools **near East Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank**: Qalandia UNRWA Girls School No. 1 and Abu Nuwar elementary school.

In Qalandia, UNRWA briefed the delegation on the challenging environment in which the school, the teachers and the pupils have to operate. Teachers voiced concern about the impact of incursions and clashes on their students' emotional and psychosocial well-being, citing this as a key factor of poor academic achievement and behavioural issues in the classroom. This is intensified by the impoverishment of many families, which is an underlying factor of school dropouts, particularly among boys. Qalandia refugee camp is located in the Area C of the West Bank on the outskirts of East Jerusalem, near the main checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem.

UNRWA-Schools for hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children across Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria re-opened over the past weekend. The EU and Member States are collectively the largest contributors to UNRWA's work in providing essential services to Palestine refugees.

The second school visited lies in Abu Nuwar and receives support from international NGOs with EU-funding. Abu Nuwar's school infrastructure has been repeatedly targeted since 2016. Parts of the school were demolished and confiscated five times by Israeli authorities, forcing children to follow classes in temporary learning spaces provided by NGOs, the Palestinian Authority and inhabitants. The Bedouin and refugee community is located in Area C on the outskirts of Jerusalem and the school is still facing threats of demolition. Currently, around 50 schools in the West Bank are under threat of demolition, impeding the right to education.

The EU is a strong supporter of the right to education as well as access to vocational and continuing training. The EU Human Rights and Democracy Strategy for 2016-2020 identified the Rights of the Child as a priority area.

The Palestinian Authority and Israel have both ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Optional Protocol for the rights of the child in armed conflict. The Palestinian Authority has also signed the Safe Schools Declaration.

States have an obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of the child, by ensuring that schools are inviolable safe spaces for children.

For more information:
The Office of the European Union Representative
Shadi Othman (02 5415 867, 0599 673 958); Inas Abu Shirbi (02 541 5 859, 0599 673 957)
http://eeas.europa.eu/palestine