Press Release

Six months of violence along the fence in Gaza: UNRWA deplores Palestine refugee fatalities and the deteriorating humanitarian crisis

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Jerusalem

On 28 September, violence in Gaza led to the death of seven Palestinians including two children, one of whom was an UNRWA student. This latest death brings to 13 the total number of UNRWA students who have been killed since 30 March 2018 in the context of the so-called “Great March of Return” demonstrations near the fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip. Many other children enrolled in UNRWA schools have been wounded in the demonstrations.

Between 31 March and 30 September, UNRWA’s 22 health centres across the Gaza Strip have provided 4,104 consultations for injuries sustained in the protests, more than 770 of which related to children. The majority of these (86 per cent) have been gunshot injuries, often resulting in serious bodily harm. Wounds can be dressed. But for casualties of such violence and all involved in their care, the effects are lasting; rehabilitation is often long, costly and uncertain.

UNRWA deplores the loss of life and the devastating impact that the deaths and injuries have on individuals and families. Every effort must be made to protect more effectively those who are exposed to this tragic situation.

The latest violence inflicts further pain and suffering on an already traumatized Palestine refugee population that has endured occupation, over a decade of blockade, and recurrent hostilities. In recent months, the deepening humanitarian crisis has further ravaged the Gaza Strip and stretched an already fragile health system to breaking point.

We are witnessing an extreme phase in Gaza, as living conditions – already intolerable – continue deteriorating. The sense of hope for its roughly two million people, 70% of whom are refugees, is receding. While all parties must take action to ensure further violence is prevented, rights and dignity are imperative for Gaza and the horizon of its people, in the context of a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem 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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