
A WEEK AFTER CAIRO CONFERENCE UNRWA STEPS UP RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN GAZA

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Jerusalem

[الأونروا تسرع في جهودها لإعادة إعمار غزة بعد أسبوع من مؤتمر القاهرة](#)

A week after the Cairo conference and the recent visits to Gaza by the Palestinian Prime Minister, Ramri Hamdallah and UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, UNRWA is scaling up its response to meet critical needs of people in the Strip. We are focusing on providing food, water and sanitation services to over 40,000 displaced people in 18 of our installations, psycho-social support particularly for children, cash grants to the homeless for rent, as well as urgent repairs to 118 UNRWA installations, so that we can bring our services to full capacity. Our immediate aim is to help ensure that some of the most seriously affected families are able to improve their situation rapidly.

The critical priority remains urgently needed reconstruction for large numbers of people. As assessments continue, we have revised upwards figures of homes destroyed and people affected. We now estimate that over 100,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, affecting more than 600,000 people. These are the latest figures and are likely to rise as UNRWA social workers and engineers continue their homes visits and inspections.

"The enormity of the task ahead is becoming clear and UNRWA's increased pace of recovery and emergency work reflects this," said Pierre Krähenbühl, UNRWA Commissioner General. "Cairo saw important commitments made, which we welcome. On the ground we are confronted with high expectations by thousands of families in critical need. We therefore urge that pledges be rapidly transformed into actual contributions that will allow us to start the process of rebuilding."

Access for building materials is critical. We have consistently called for the lifting of the blockade and again stress that this is an essential parameter to enable Gaza to emerge from years of suffering, joblessness and a lack of prospects. In the immediate weeks ahead, access for material must be facilitated by the recently negotiated temporary mechanism. As the UN Secretary General indicated, if applied in good faith it could make an important difference in terms of enabling reconstruction to take place.

The people of Gaza need attention and support in this critical phase, in particular with the winter approaching. They also need a paradigm shift, with an end to aid dependency, an end to the restrictions on movement, trade and employment imposed by the blockade. Freedom to travel, to import and export, to attain self-sufficiency remains a critical imperative.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance. Financial support to UNRWA has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees, expanding need, and deepening poverty. As a result, the Agency's General Fund (GF), supporting UNRWA's core activities and 97 per cent reliant on voluntary contributions, has begun each year with a large projected deficit. Currently the deficit stands at US\$ 56 million.

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