

UNRWA CALLS FOR RESTRAINT AS VIOLENCE ESCALATES IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY AND WARNS OF DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES FOR CIVILIANS**STATEMENT BY UNRWA SPOKESPERSON CHRIS GUNNESS**

2 July 2014

الأونروا تدعو لضبط النفس مع تصاعد العنف في الأراضي الفلسطينية المحتلة وتحذر من عواقب وخيمة على المدنيين

UNRWA is increasingly disturbed by the rising levels of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We echo the strong condemnation and the statements by the UN Secretary-General and other senior UN officials on the abduction on 12 June and subsequent killing of three Israelis, including two children. We also strongly condemn the reported abduction and killing this morning of a Palestinian child in East Jerusalem.

At the same time we urge maximum restraint from all parties to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. We call for strict compliance with international law by all relevant actors to avoid further loss of life, injuries and suffering. We again call on the Israeli authorities to refrain from punishing individuals for offences they themselves have not personally committed. Collective punishment is illegal under international law. UNRWA will continue to monitor its impact on the population we serve.

The human impact on all sides caused by the events of the last three weeks is grave. From 13 June to 1 July 7 Palestinians have been killed among them 5 registered refugees. Almost 200 have been injured. UNRWA is aware of 88 people being detained from Palestine refugee camps resulting from Israeli army operations.

The recent escalation continues an upward trend in the number of Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank. Since the beginning of 2014 to the present time 12 refugees have been killed by Israeli security forces, while during the same period in 2013 there were 6 such fatalities. The continued use of live ammunition in densely populated refugee camps increases the likelihood of serious injury or even death to civilians and remains of serious concern.

In Gaza, with the military escalation in its third week, civilians are increasingly at risk. 47 Palestinians have been injured in Gaza, most of who were civilians. Three Israeli civilians were injured in Sderot as a result of Palestinian rocket fire. We call on all actors to take all possible measures to de-escalate tensions and to avoid actions which history has shown can have devastating consequences for civilians, particularly children.

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\$ 69 million.

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