
GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS GAZA; INAUGURATES NEW UNRWA SCHOOL IN BEACH REFUGEE CAMP**03 June 2015****gaza**

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Gaza on 1 June to meet with refugee families and get a first-hand impression of the current situation in the Gaza Strip. Foreign Minister Steinmeier also met with UNRWA Director of Operations in Gaza Robert Turner. Whilst in Gaza, the Foreign Minister inaugurated a new UNRWA school that was built with Germany's support. Asma Prep Girls A&B School, in central Gaza's Beach refugee camp, will host 2,000 students between grades 5-7 from the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, at the end of August.

Whilst in Gaza, the Foreign Minister also met with Palestinian fishermen in the harbour of Gaza City who are benefiting from a project funded by the German government. Both projects are implemented through KfW Development Bank.

Germany is the second-largest supporter of the UNRWA response to the humanitarian crisis resulting from the 2014 conflict in Gaza, with a total contribution of EUR 80 million (US\$ 93 million) to UNRWA programmes in Gaza to date. This support allowed UNRWA to initiate its emergency shelter assistance programme and to support the most vulnerable. In 2014, Germany was the fifth-largest UNRWA donor in overall terms, with a total contribution of US\$ 79 million. In 2015, Germany has so far contributed and pledged over US\$ 60 million to support UNRWA work.

"We are delighted to host the Foreign Minister here today and are incredibly grateful to Germany for its ongoing commitment to Palestine refugees in Gaza, through the provision of key funding support to UNRWA," said Mr. Turner. "Without such generosity for our ongoing and emergency programmes, we could do far less to meet the needs of an extremely vulnerable population. Nevertheless, we continue to call for a political solution to the underlying causes of the conflict and a full lifting of the blockade."

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 more than US\$ 106 million.

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