
UNRWA REOPENS SCHOOL IN KHUZA'A, GAZA

[الأونروا تعيد افتتاح مدرسة في منطقة خزاة في غزة](#)

23 March 2015**Gaza**

UNRWA Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl today reopened the Khuza'a Elementary Co-ed A&B School, in eastern Khan Younis, Gaza Strip. The school hosts over 1,100 students, who returned to classrooms in mid-March. Its refurbishment was made possible by remarkable donations from international partners and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai who contributed US\$ 50,000 - her entire monetary award from the prestigious World's Children's Prize.

The building was one of 83 schools impacted during the hostilities. Damage and destruction to the Khuza'a school occurred on or about 28 July 2014, contrary to the inviolability of UN premises under international law. This was concurrent with Israeli Defense Force ground operations in and around the vicinity of the school, during which an entire wing of classrooms, a toilet block and a boundary wall were demolished. There was also some damage caused by ordnance and small arms fire.

When she made the announcement of the donation, Malala said, "The needs are overwhelming – more than half of Gaza's population is under 18 years of age. They want and deserve quality education, hope and real opportunities to build a future. This funding will help rebuild the 83 schools damaged during the recent conflict. Innocent Palestinian children have suffered terribly and for too long. We must all work to ensure Palestinian boys and girls, and all children everywhere, receive a quality education in a safe environment. Because without education, there will never be peace. Let us stand together for peace and education because together we are more powerful."

In the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire on 26 August 2014, UNRWA began repair works on all damaged schools in Gaza, including Khuza'a. 240,000 students were able to start the school year in September, though many could not immediately do so in their usual school buildings.

"I am very pleased to reopen this school in Gaza today, after the damage it sustained during the height of the conflict. Those were very dark days for children in Gaza" said the Commissioner-General. "It is heartening to witness the return to school here of 1,100 Palestine refugee children and the fact that our premises is once again a ground of learning. This would not have been possible without the important support of our donors. Our special gratitude also goes to Malala Yousafzai for her most generous contribution. She is a role model for millions including for Palestinian girls and boys. I am also thankful to UNRWA staff in Gaza for their considerable efforts in carrying out the repair work."

During the ceremony today, Ms. Rua' Kdeih, an eleven-year old Khuza'a student, read a poem about courage and steadfastness. These words were from a partially burned notebook of hers found by UNRWA staff during a visit to the school after it was damaged. Rua' and her family had to flee their home during the war and lived with relatives, displaced like hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza. At the ceremony she spoke confidently, saying she had always known she would one day be back in her school. The Commissioner-General visited Rua's classroom and talked with students about the importance of hope and pursuing their dreams despite the current extreme hardship in Gaza.

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\$ 100 million.

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