
UNRWA GAZA DIRECTOR TO LEAVE IN JULY

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Jerusalem

The Director of UNRWA operations in Gaza, Robert Turner, has announced his intention to leave his post in mid-July, after serving with the Agency since 1 May 2012.

"It's been the most rewarding and challenging three years of my professional life," said Mr Turner, "I shall miss my team and working alongside the communities in Gaza. Rest assured that I will continue to advocate for Gaza and for the Palestine refugees. If there is one lesson I take away, it is that the denial of their right to a just and durable solution remains at the heart of their humanitarian plight. But I refuse to yield to pessimism. Gaza is a place where the human spirit has shown its indomitability time and time again."

Mr. Turner has served in Gaza through two conflicts. His term comes amid one of the most severe financial crises the agency has seen in its history.

"Bob's contribution has been extraordinary at a very demanding time for the agency and the refugees we serve", said UNRWA Commissioner General, Pierre Krähenbühl. "His leadership of our response to the Gaza conflict last summer rightly won UNRWA and his team in Gaza widespread admiration. I take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of all of us in the Agency."

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.

For more information, please contact:**Christopher Gunness**

Spokesperson, Director of Advocacy & Strategic Communications

Mobile:

+972 (0)54 240 2659

Office:

+972 (0)2 589 0267

c.gunness@unrwa.org

Sami Mshasha

Chief of Communications & Arabic Language Spokesperson

Mobile:

+972 (0)54 216 8295

Office:

+972 (0)2 589 0724

s.mshasha@unrwa.org

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