

SUPPORT TO CIVILIANS REMAINS TOP PRIORITY, AS UNRWA CALLS ON ALL PARTIES TO CEASE HOSTILITIES

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Gaza

[مع دعوة الأونروا لجميع الأطراف إلى وقف الأعمال العدائية، يبقى دعم المدنيين أولويتها القصوى](#)

A resumption of hostilities between Hamas and Israel over the past 48 hours has placed even greater urgency on the need for continued support and protection of civilians in Gaza. As numbers in its shelters climb to almost 280,000, UNRWA remains extremely concerned about the current and ongoing humanitarian crisis that has already had a devastating effect across all five areas of the Gaza Strip.

UNRWA has operated in Gaza since 1950 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to registered Palestinian refugees, pending a just solution to their plight. During times of conflict, in addition to serving 1.2 million refugees in Gaza, the Agency expands its operations to provide services for all people in need.

"The support and protection of all people in Gaza remains our number one priority," said Scott Anderson, Deputy Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza. "We are very concerned about the sharp escalation of violence over the past two days, and we will continue to do everything we can to ensure displaced women, men and children have adequate shelter, and that every family in Gaza has access to sufficient food, water and other vital supplies."

In addition to managing 83 emergency shelters in its schools, UNRWA's emergency response interventions include an exceptional food distribution in partnership with WFP, the provision of food and non food items to community organizations, availability of refugee health clinic services to non-refugees and support to internally displaced persons in both UNRWA and non-UNRWA shelters. The Agency is also working closely with other humanitarian organizations to assist families that are hosting displaced relatives or who do not have access to vital services.

The current crisis comes at an especially difficult time, with the Israeli blockade of Gaza having entered its 8th year in June. The blockade continues to have a devastating effect as access to markets and people's movement to and from the Gaza Strip remain severely restricted. The economy and its capacity to create jobs has been devastated, with the majority of the population becoming dependent on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs. The number of Palestine refugees relying on UNRWA for food aid has increased from fewer than 80,000 in 2000 to over 830,000 today.

UNRWA reiterates the United Nations Secretary General's grave disappointment at the return to hostilities and calls for an end to the conflict. "The human impact of this war is unacceptable and the devastation unprecedented," said Mr Anderson. "We call on all parties to cease hostilities immediately and end the bloodshed."

Due to escalated violence over the past six weeks almost 2,000 lives have been lost in Gaza, including eleven UNRWA personnel and 467 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\$ 70.5 million.

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