

## LACK OF FUNDS FORCES UNRWA TO SUSPEND CASH ASSISTANCE FOR REPAIRS TO DAMAGED AND DESTROYED HOMES IN GAZA

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Gaza

[الأونروا تضطر لتعليق المساعدات النقدية لإصلاح البيوت المتضررة والمدمرة في غزة بسبب نقص الأموال](#)

UNRWA has been forced to suspend its cash assistance programme in Gaza to tens of thousands of people for repairs to damaged and destroyed homes and for rental subsidies to the homeless. Over 96,000 Palestine refugee family homes were damaged or destroyed during last summer's conflict and US\$ 720 million is required to address this need. To date, UNRWA has received only US\$ 135 million in pledges, leaving a shortfall of US\$ 585 million. While some funds remain available to begin the reconstruction of totally destroyed homes, UNRWA has exhausted all funding to support repairs and rental subsidies.

"UNRWA in Gaza has so far provided over US\$ 77 million to 66,000 Palestine refugee families to repair their homes or find a temporary alternative," said UNRWA Director in Gaza Robert Turner. "This is a tremendous achievement; it is also wholly insufficient. It is easy to look at these numbers and lose sight of the fact that we are talking about thousands of families who continue to suffer through this cold winter with inadequate shelter. People are literally sleeping amongst the rubble; children have died of hypothermia. US\$ 5.4 billion was pledged at the Cairo conference last October and virtually none of it has reached Gaza. This is distressing and unacceptable.

"It is unclear why this funding has not been forthcoming," added Mr. Turner. "But UNRWA has been a stabilizing factor in a very challenging political and security context and if we cannot continue the programme, it will have grave consequences for affected communities in Gaza. People are desperate and the international community cannot even provide the bare minimum – for example a repaired home in winter – let alone a lifting of the blockade, access to markets or freedom of movement. We've said before that quiet will not last, and now the quiet is at risk."

UNRWA urgently requires US\$ 100 million in the first quarter of this year to allow families with minor damage to repair their homes and to provide ongoing rental subsidies, including to the thousands of families who left UNRWA-run collective centers and found alternative rental accommodation. UNRWA is concerned that if it cannot continue to provide rental subsidies, large numbers may return to the collective centers, where almost 12,000 displaced Palestinians continue to seek shelter.

### 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\$ 81 million.

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