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**PRESS RELEASE**

**25 July 2014**

**UNFPA Alarmed Over Devastating Impact of Gaza Violence on Women, Girls**

**UNITED NATIONS, New York**—UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is deeply concerned about the impact of the ongoing Gaza conflict on women's health and their access to safe births.

Reports of the destruction of hospitals and health facilities are particularly disturbing as some 45,000 pregnant women in Gaza are currently in need of maternity care. About 5,000 of those are among the 140,000 internally displaced people in temporary shelters throughout Gaza. Due to mounting stress and anxiety, many of these women are likely to face obstetric complications, while access to maternal health services is increasingly limited by the conflict.

"It is critical that humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies and equipment, be given safe passage into Gaza to enable us to provide the much-needed assistance to pregnant women," said UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin. "Pregnant women in particular must be allowed unhindered access to maternal health services to ensure their safety throughout their pregnancy and childbirth."

Several emergency maternity centres, established with UNFPA support in previous years, have been affected and are no longer operational, leaving many women without access to safe delivery services.

Working with other United Nations agencies and other partners, UNFPA is supporting lifesaving reproductive and maternal health services by delivering medicine and surgical instruments to Gaza's hospitals, as well as hygiene products and first aid supplies to families in Gaza. UNFPA is also supporting the provision of psychosocial support, through its youth network in Gaza, to internally displaced women, girls and families in evacuation shelters.

With the possibility of a further escalation in violence, UNFPA joins the Security Council in calling on all sides to urgently exercise maximum restraint and ensure the protection of civilians. UNFPA also reiterates the call of Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, for an immediate ceasefire and for the protection of the vulnerable population, particularly women and children.

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