



*For immediate release*

### **UNITED NATIONS AND NGOs INCREASE EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR PALESTINIANS BY 80 PERCENT**

JERUSALEM, 31 May 2006 – THE UNITED NATIONS and a number of NGOs operating in the occupied Palestinian territory today launched an emergency Appeal for additional funding in the face of a deepening humanitarian crisis.

With the Palestinian Authority operating at only a quarter of its 2005 budget, access to food, jobs and basic services are seriously under threat.

The worsening situation has prompted humanitarian agencies to revise upwards their 2006 emergency Appeal by 80 per cent – from \$215million to \$385 million. The bulk of the new funding will go towards boosting emergency employment programmes, expanding food aid and increasing the amount spent on essential medical supplies to cover shortages.

“We have been compelled to revise our original Appeal in the face of the desperate need. It is particularly aimed at assisting the most vulnerable Palestinians, including children who make up half the population”, said David Shearer, Head of the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

“The World Food Programme warns that growing numbers of people are unable to cover their daily food needs and other agencies report basic services such as health care and education are deteriorating and set to worsen much further”, he added.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd says that “the impact of the deteriorating economic conditions is becoming visible by the day.” A clear sign is the dramatic increase in demands for emergency employment under our programmes,” she says. “Over 100,000 refugees are waiting in line to get short-term jobs in Gaza, and the same programme in the West Bank has seen an increase of 600% in applications compared to April last year. In the West Bank, we normally get 1,500 applications for teachers’ jobs every year - this year we are already at 5,000.”

Humanitarian agencies revised the emergency Appeal to international donors in the wake of:

- The non-payment of salaries since March to 152,000 Palestinian Authority workers, including hospital staff and teachers
- Shortages in basic services, including medical care
- The prospect of violence increasing as a result of factional in-fighting and growing desperation in the wake of job losses
- The increasing restrictions imposed by Israel on Palestinian movement that has stifled the economy

“The humanitarian community is not in a position to provide the full range services offered by the Palestinian Authority – and has no ambitions to do so. But we are anxious to help support those structures that have delivered services such as health and education so effectively over many years and to which donors have contributed more than \$7bn,” said David Shearer.

**For more information please contact**

Gina Benevento, UNRWA, 054-240-2631, 059-9-428008

Juliette Touma, OCHA, 054-81-555-46

Chris Gunness, UNSCO, 054-5-627-825