
PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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UNRWA's services fully restored despite uncertainty in Gaza

The Dead Sea- Jordan: The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency said today that UNRWA's operations in Gaza "had returned to levels seen before the current round of fighting". Speaking at a meeting of UNRWA's Advisory Commission in Jordan, Karen AbuZayd said: "I am delighted to announce that we are now operating in Gaza as we did before the recent violence. UNRWA is working at full capacity once again, delivering services to a population that has been so badly affected by chronic insecurity". UNRWA was forced to suspend temporarily all but its emergency health and food programmes following the killing of two of its workers last week. "I remain cautious but I am pleased that the security situation is returning to a point where we can get on with our job. However, I am painfully aware of the potential threat to my staff on the ground and I am keeping the security situation under constant review", said AbuZayd.

Asked by journalists about media reports that the Israeli authorities planned to cut water, electricity and fuel supplies to Gaza, AbuZayd said "We have had no such indications from our contacts with Israeli authorities. It would not be in anyone's interests to take measures that would aggravate the already desperate situation in Gaza".

Commenting on the situation at the Nahr El Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon, AbuZayd told the Advisory Commission that "the task ahead would result in considerable additional demands on UNRWA. Once the guns have fallen silent, we will need to get into the camp and begin the long task of reconstruction. Before we can even do that, we will need to clear unexploded ordnance so that the camp is safe for returning refugees". After weeks of fighting, many believe that a substantial part of the Nahr El Bared camp has been destroyed. Following an appeal two weeks ago, UNRWA received pledges in excess of the 13 million US dollars requested to assist refugees fleeing Nahr El Bared to neighbouring Beddawi Camp. "We are grateful for the generosity of our donors", said AbuZayd. "The funds received will also give us a head start in planning for Nahr El Bared: it is already clear that the longer term reconstruction of the camp will take time and place new financial burdens on UNRWA".

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Background: The Advisory Commission was established under the same General Assembly resolution as UNRWA itself, 302(IV) of 8 December 1949 to advise and assist the Commissioner-General of UNRWA in the execution of the programme. On 9 November 2005, the General Assembly approved an increase in the membership of the Advisory Commission to include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, whose contributions to the Agency have exceeded an annual average of \$5 millions over the past three years. The General Assembly also invited Palestine to attend and fully participate in the meetings as an observer, and invited the European Community and the League of Arab States to attend as observers.

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