



syria regional crisis

yarmouk: emergency call for funds

90-day rapid response

april, 2015

foreword by the commissioner-general

Dear colleagues,

When I visited Yarmouk in March, I saw in the eyes and frail bodies of the people a depth of suffering that was already unbearable, following two years of conflict and siege. Little more than a month later, Yarmouk experiences an unprecedented eruption of violence that threatens the lives and wellbeing of every civilian remaining in the area.

Yarmouk has come to symbolize the severe human suffering experienced by civilians in the Syria conflict. It symbolizes the recurring dispossession and displacement of Palestine refugees for more than six decades. Images we released in February 2014 showed seas of desperate people, queuing for food amidst their destroyed homes, having endured months of isolation, hunger and deprivation. 18,000 civilians, Palestine refugees and Syrians, and including some 3,500 children, were trapped in Yarmouk, deprived of food, water and medicine; health clinics and schools have been closed and access to the outside world largely cut off. Despite UNRWA distributing humanitarian assistance whenever possible, the situation in Yarmouk in 2014 remained one of extraordinary misery and violence.

On 1 April, armed groups notorious for their brutality swept into Yarmouk. The continuous

violence that followed has left civilians trapped and terrified in the wreckage of their homes. Women, men and children fear violence if they dare to venture out in search of food or water. UNRWA has provided a broad range of humanitarian assistance to the few that have managed to flee. The thousands that remain are currently without help.

The situation in Yarmouk, like the Syria conflict as a whole, demands a concerted and rapid response from the international community. The most immediate priority is the protection and humanitarian needs of civilians trapped in the area or seeking safety elsewhere. Throughout the crisis, UNRWA has called for all parties in the conflict to respect their obligations under international law to cease hostilities that endanger civilians. To enforce this message, I now call on Member States of the United Nations, particularly those with influence over parties to the conflict, to directly and urgently bring their influence to bear in a focused and peaceful manner. Should this effort fail, the consequences will be disastrous.

I took my concerns directly to Damascus, visiting civilians recently displaced from Yarmouk and seeking improved access possibilities for UNRWA teams to men, women and children fleeing the fighting. There have been encouraging signs and I am grateful for the resolve of UNRWA teams going into sensitive areas to deliver much needed assistance.

If safe humanitarian access is granted, UNRWA has both the capacity and the unwavering commitment to assist all 18,000 civilians in Yarmouk and those displaced to surrounding areas – Palestinian and Syrian alike.

We must not forget that Yarmouk is just one crisis among many faced by the 480,000 Palestine refugees in Syria. More than half of this vulnerable population has been internally displaced by violence, many on more than one occasion. Ninety-five per cent rely on UNRWA for their basic humanitarian needs. At least 80,000 have been displaced to Lebanon, Jordan or further afield. The Yarmouk emergency forms part of a far broader crisis affecting all Palestine refugees in Syria and for this reason, this call for funds seeks emergency contributions to the Syria Crisis Appeal for 2015, which delivers humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected Palestine refugees across Syria. The Yarmouk Call for Funds seeks an immediate injection of US\$ 30 million, which will allow UNRWA to respond to humanitarian needs in Yarmouk and other parts of Syria, ensuring that all Palestine refugees, host communities and others have the assistance they need to endure.

The eyes of the world are on Yarmouk. But the eyes of all Palestine refugees in Syria are on us. Let us make sure they will not find our resolve wanting.

Pierre Krahenbühl

Commissioner-General UNRWA

executive summary

The 18,000 Palestinian and Syrian civilians remaining in Yarmouk have experienced extreme suffering, siege and exposure to armed conflict for a period of more than two years. Today, they face their worst crisis since 2012, as conflict engulfs their homes and threatens to expose them to the most severe violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

UNRWA urgently calls on the international community to support its emergency relief effort for civilians in Yarmouk and Palestine refugees affected by conflict across Syria engulfed by conflict. This call for funds outlines how, with the generosity of donors and in coordination with other humanitarian actors, UNRWA will provide emergency supplies, shelter and essential services for civilians caught in the violence in Yarmouk and other areas of Syria, for an initial period 90 days.

This call for funds falls under the UNRWA Syria Crisis Appeal for 2015 that covers the minimum humanitarian needs of the 480,000 Palestine refugees remaining in Syria, plus the tens of thousands that have fled to Lebanon and Jordan.

Since 1 April 2015, when intensive clashes erupted as armed groups swept into Yarmouk, approximately 18,000 Palestine refugees and Syrian civilians, including 3,500 children, have been sheltering in the wreckage of their homes.

To date, only a few hundred families have escaped from Yarmouk, with thousands remaining trapped inside. UNRWA is currently providing humanitarian support to displaced civilians and host communities in two areas adjacent to Yarmouk: Tadamoun to the east and Yalda to the south and east, with plans to expand this operation to the neighbouring areas of Babila and Beit Saham. At present, security in these areas remains tense but adequate, without major obstructions to access.

Rapid needs assessments conducted in Tadamoun and Yalda found an extreme degree of humanitarian need among civilians fleeing Yarmouk, most immediately in relation to food, shelter and safe water, but including severe vulnerabilities relating to lack of medical care and non-food items, such as blankets and bedding. There is a high risk of communicable disease, particularly as temperatures rise during the spring and summer months. To date, the assistance provided includes food, clothing, water treatments, bedding, kitchen sets, hygiene products and medical services.

The situation is fluid, with a high risk of sudden and large scale displacement in the near future, or of a large population remaining inaccessible inside Yarmouk.

UNRWA stands ready to assist the civilians of Yarmouk in any scenario — both to resume humanitarian operations inside Yarmouk and to assist those civilians who are displaced to other areas. Assistance will be provided in cooperation with United Nations and humanitarian partners.

As in Yarmouk, Palestine refugees in other parts of Syria remain in profound state of vulnerability and deprivation. The concentration of Palestine refugee camps and gatherings on urban peripheries, which have become active front lines, has exposed the population to disproportionately high levels of armed violence and displacement. Over 280,000 Palestine refugees, more than half the population, have been displaced by violence within Syria, with a further 80,000 displaced to neighbouring countries and further afield. Over 95 percent of the Palestine refugee population in Syria is dependent on UNRWA humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs, including cash, food, water and sanitation and health services. These critical humanitarian activities remain under severe threat as a result of chronic underfunding, with the Syria Crisis Appeal currently standing at 18.5 percent. The core of this response is the UNRWA emergency cash assistance programme, which provides small grants to 470,000 Palestine refugees across Syria. UNRWA will be forced to suspend this programme in early June, unless additional funding can be secured, leaving this deeply vulnerable population without support.

With unprecedented violence sweeping over a civilian population already hungry and weakened by two years of siege, the needs of the civilian population in Yarmouk are extreme. UNRWA continues to reiterate its strong demands for the establishment of secure conditions under which the Agency can deliver life-sustaining humanitarian assistance. UNRWA will also continue to demand that all parties respect, and comply with, their obligations to protect civilians.

The deprivation of even the most basic requirements for human survival — food and safe water — for a period of two years has left the population in Yarmouk in a state of severe physical vulnerability. In 2014, tenuous and intermittent access allowed UNRWA to distribute 32,503 food parcels over 131 days spread over the year. This is equivalent to only 400 calories per person per day, drastically short of the daily intake of 2,100 calories recommended by the World Food Programme for civilians in emergencies.

UNRWA rapid needs assessments in Yalda found food, shelter and safe water to be the most urgent humanitarian needs, with civilians displaying signs of malnutrition and dehydration. UNRWA medical personnel treated a range of communicable and chronic conditions, which have been severely aggravated by exposure to armed violence and associated isolation. The civilian character of the population in Yarmouk means there are significant numbers of infants, children and pregnant women in the area. Ongoing armed clashes continue to injure and kill civilians across Yarmouk.

The conflict in Yarmouk and throughout Syria has had devastating effects on the social fabric of Palestinian society, greatly increasing protection risks. In the context of rapid displacement and intense violence, family separation is a particular concern for the 3,500 children remaining in Yarmouk. While UNRWA staff have significant capacity to address protection issues — such as support to unaccompanied minors, family reunification and psychosocial support — technical management and protection capacity requires further strengthening.

The humanitarian needs of civilians from Yarmouk are shared, at varying intensity, by Palestine refugees across Syria. Several locations in Damascus, Aleppo and Dera'a remain inaccessible, with residents unable to receive assistance, malnourished and suffering extreme deprivation. Displaced Palestine refugees in other areas are forced to survive in overcrowded and extremely expensive rental accommodation or UNRWA collective shelters, lacking the income or assets to meet their minimum humanitarian needs.

operational approach

UNRWA has prepared for a range of scenarios in responding to Yarmouk, including mass displacement to the north and east, where UNRWA has access, and displacement to the south, where UNRWA does not currently have access due to ongoing and intensive armed engagements. UNRWA has developed preparedness plans and established stand-by teams for all humanitarian sectors. In coordination with partners, the Agency is establishing large stocks of essential goods and materials for rapid deployment.

UNRWA works closely with the United Nations Country Team in Syria, coordinating both humanitarian response and advocacy. UNRWA is also liaising closely with the Syrian authorities, who have facilitated rapid access to the first groups of displaced people in Tadamon and Yalda. In response to the Yarmouk emergency, UNRWA will provide assistance to Palestine refugees and Syrian civilians without discrimination in hard to reach areas, including Yarmouk itself and surrounding communities.

UNRWA will continue to refine its response as the situation in Yarmouk develops. Significant operational challenges are likely to remain:

- **Ongoing and intensive armed conflict currently prevents any direct access to civilians trapped in Yarmouk. If UNRWA were to enter the area, civilians would experience risks in accessing any distribution point.**
- **Access also remains a major challenge in regard to adjacent areas of Yarmouk, as many remain highly insecure. UNRWA will continue to work with a range of local and national parties to expand this access.**
- **UNRWA's collective centres are already operating at maximum capacity, hosting more than 8,000 internally displaced people in its installations for more than two years. UNRWA is working to identify and secure alternative locations in the event of large-scale displacement from Yarmouk.**

UNRWA retains full or partial access to the majority of the Palestine refugee population in other parts of Syria, with permanent operations across in governorates of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and Dera'a. In these locations, UNRWA has the capacity to provide a broad range of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected Palestine refugees, provided sufficient funding is available. The UNRWA emergency cash assistance programme is the largest, most effective and most efficient humanitarian intervention in these areas, capable of providing grants to over 470,000 individuals in a matter of weeks, while avoiding the efficiency losses of direct procurement of humanitarian items. The recent independent evaluation of the emergency cash assistance program demonstrated the operational rigour and effectiveness of this intervention, with strong protections against diversion or misuse.

requirements

After four years of conflict in Syria, UNRWA has strong, flexible and field-tested capacity to respond to rapid-onset crises. However, any such response is predicated on sufficient and timely available funding. The activities outlined in the table below relate to the most pressing emergency requirements for the response to Yarmouk crisis and conflict-affected Palestine refugees across Syria, including strengthening of preparedness and technical capacity.

In total, UNRWA requires an immediate injection of US\$ 30 million to ensure that the most urgent needs of civilians in Yarmouk and Palestine refugees across Syria are met, during an initial 90 day rapid response window. This emergency call for funds will cover 18,000 civilians in Yarmouk, both Palestinian and Syrian, families displaced from Yarmouk and host families. It will also cover the most urgent needs of 234,116 conflict-affected Palestine refugees in other parts of Syria.

Activity	Target Population	Funding required (US\$)
Cash assistance to all civilians residing in Yarmouk or displaced from Yarmouk, plus host families.	Up to 18,000 individuals (4,500 families) either in or displaced from Yarmouk, plus host families	3,340,406
Cash assistance to conflict-affected Palestine refugees across Syria	Up to 234,116 conflict affected Palestine refugees (59,824 families)	16,693,820
Emergency food parcels to all civilians currently residing in Yarmouk or recently displaced, plus host families.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	1,793,980
Non-food items (NFI) including bedding, blankets and kitchen sets to all civilians currently residing in Yarmouk or recently displaced, plus host families.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	889,875
Non-food items (NFI) to civilians displaced from other parts of Syria.	105,400 individuals displaced from other parts of Syria.	4,268,236
Hygiene items to all families currently residing in Yarmouk or recently displaced, plus host families.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	507,000
Supplementary stocks of drugs, medicines and medical items. Direct delivery of health services to residents of Yarmouk and displaced families. Preventative campaigns to reduce the risk of communicable disease.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	324,000
Establishment and management of collective shelters for families displaced from Yarmouk, including provision of essential services and humanitarian assistance.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas.	720,000
Water treatments to all families currently residing in Yarmouk or recently displaced, sufficient for one month. Trucking of water plus jerry cans to residents of Yarmouk and displaced families. Repair of water infrastructure and installation of wells in areas hosting displaced civilians.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	490,000
Emergency education services to children in Yarmouk and those displaced to other areas.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	194,250
Psycho-social support services to families in Yarmouk or those displaced to other areas.	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families	173,500
Protection services focusing on prevention of family separation, family tracing and reunification in the event of mass displacement	18,000 individuals either in Yarmouk or displaced to other areas, plus host families. Particular focus on those with acute protection vulnerabilities, especially the 3,500 children currently remaining in Yarmouk	192,988
Emergency staff, working in procurement, logistics, security, field operations, medical services, education, psychosocial support and coordination/management.	18,000 individuals from Yarmouk, plus host communities in the event of displacement	446,250
TOTAL (US\$)		30,034,305

* 11percent of PSC is include in each budget line.

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